CMC
COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE
Texas Association of Museums

Collections Communiqué

Autumn 2012

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Looking for a job?

TAM Job Bank

AAM Job Center

Have something for the next newsletter?
Email submissions by January 15, 2013 to Elizabeth Martindale at elizmart1@yahoo.com.

CMC Officers

Chris Godbold, Chair
Term 2012-2014
Fort Bend County Museum Association
PO Drawer 460
Richmond, TX 77406
(281) 342-1256
cgodbold@fortbendmuseum.org

Lisa E. Worley, Vice Chair
Term 2011-2013
Museum Curator
Goodwill Computer Museum
1015 Norwood Park Blvd.
Austin, TX 78753-6600
512-637-7536
Lisa.Worley@austingoodwill.org

From the Chair

To all members of CMC:

Happy Fall! Hopefully, it has finally arrived for most of you. It came to Richmond with a vengeance. I'm sure you have heard more about the recent presidential election than you ever wanted to know.

We have elections, too. First, please make sure to get your TAM Council nominations into Cliff Vanderpool ASAP. Second, there are three positions on the TAM Board that will be up for election in 2013. Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Member at Large-Newsletter will be chosen next year. If you are interested in stepping up your involvement with the CMC or with TAM then please send me an email nomination at   . You may also nominate someone else. Please send in nominations by the end of the year. Elections will be held prior to the 2013 TAM annual meeting and the results will be announced at our business meeting during the annual meeting.

The Board would also like to know what you, our membership, would like to learn more about. Please send any workshop ideas you might have to the Vice-Chair, Lisa Worley or check out her wallwisher page at http://wallwisher.com/wall/cmcworkshops. Your feedback is much appreciated!

Fall is the time for thanksgiving. I give thanks for all of you, my wonderful colleagues at Texas museums. Best wishes for the remainder of 2012 and an early Merry Christmas to you all.

Sincerely,

Chris Godbold
Chair, Collections Managers Committee

Donna Meadows, Treasurer
Term 2012-2014
Houston Museum of Natural Science
5555 Hermann Park Drive
Houston, TX 77030-1799
(713) 639-4629
dmeadows@hmns.org

Toyia Pointer, Secretary
Term 2011-2013
A.W. Perry Homestead Museum
1509 N. Perry Road
Carrollton, TX 75001
(972) 466-6382
Toyia.Pointer@cityofcarrollton.com

Julie Holcomb, Officer at Large
(Special Projects)
Term 2012-2014
Baylor University—Dept of Museum Studies
1 Bear Pl Unit 97154
Waco, TX 76657
(254) 710-6614
Julie_Holcomb@baylor.edu

Elizabeth Martindale, Officer at Large
(Newsletter Editor)
Term 2011-2013
Texas Historical Commission
108 W. 16th Street
Austin, Texas 78701
(512) 463-6252
elizabeth.martindale@thc.state.tx.us

Leslie Meyer, Officer at Large
(Technology/Webmaster)
Term 2012-2014
The Petroleum Museum
1500 Interstate 20 West
Midland, TX 79701
(432) 683-4403
lmeyer@petroleummuseum.org

Kim Cupit, Past Chair
(Ex-Officio)
Term 2012-2014
Denton County Museums
110 W. Hickory
Denton, TX 76201
(940) 349-2853
kim.cupit@dentoncounty.com

Don't Forget your CMC Membership!

Please don't forget to renew your CMC membership. It's even easier to do now. Just go to the TAM website where you can join or renew both your TAM and CMC membership at the same time. Or you can still mail a check to TAM if that suits you. Go to https://www.prismnet.com/tam/membershipapp.html for more information.

CMC just had a sold-out workshop on intellectual property and copyrights and there are more to come. So please take a moment to re-up your CMC membership or join us for the first time for 2013. That way you'll remain in the loop about upcoming workshops, the TAM annual meeting, and get all the good information provided by this newsletter. The strength of CMC and its ability to serve museum collections professionals throughout Texas relies on our members. Please join us so we can all help our professional community be the best it can be and make the museums of Texas even better.

Donna Meadows
CMC Treasurer

Check out the CMC website

Did you know that the CMC has its own website? Check it out for links to grants and great collections management information!

www.cmc-tam.org

Upcoming Meetings

American Alliance of Museums Extends Open Invitation to Houston Event Nov. 13

As part of its ongoing effort to apprise its membership of the major changes taking place with the organization, the American Alliance of Museums has scheduled a Membership event for November 13 in Houston. Sponsored by Duane Morris LLP's Houston office, the event will be hosted by Van Romans, President of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History and an Alliance board member.

Following the debut of AAM's new name, logo, museum membership structure and other innovations on September 5, the Alliance has held a series of these intimate, informal gatherings all across the country. The receptions are designed to give both members and non-members a closer look at all that is new, as well as explore with Alliance leadership what the changes mean for their museum and their career.

The event is set for Tuesday, November 13, 5-7 p.m., at the Duane Morris LLP Houston office, 1330 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 800, Houston. Please RSVP by November 6 to aamrsvp@aam-us.org, subject line: Houston.

Next TAM Council Meeting

The next meeting of TAM Council is on Friday, December 7 at 10:00 a.m. at the National Scouting Museum in Irving. All TAM members are welcome to attend.

TAM Workshops

SIGN UP NOW FOR NOVEMBER WORKSHOPS

New Ways to Look at Historic Houses

Directors of historic house museums find innovative ways to use their sites to increase visibility and attract contemporary visitors. This one-day workshop will lead participants in an exploration of new approaches to space utilization, public access, and audience cultivation. Designed especially for staff at historic sites and house museums, this session will address common challenges to space management, storage, and maintaining a modern work space. "New Ways to Look at Historic Houses" will be presented by Marsha Hendrix, Site Manager for the Fulton Mansion, an established authority with over 20 years of experience specializing both professionally and academically in historic preservation and interpretation.

Instructor: Marsha Hendrix, Site Manager, Fulton Mansion State Historic Site, Rockport

Date: Wednesday, November 14, 2012
Time: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Registration at 8:30 a.m. Lunch break at noon)
Location: El Paso Museum of Art
C2 Gallery Space
One Arts Festival Plaza
El Paso, Texas 79901

$30 fee includes materials and box lunch.

Please register early as space is limited. Advance registration is required. Limit two registrations per organization.

Registration: Online only via TAM website.

Note: This workshop will be repeated on Thursday, December 13, at The Heritage Society in Houston. (**Registration for the December workshop opens November 12**)

Charting Your Organization's Course for the Future

Planning is essential for healthy organizational development. This workshop will outline the basics of planning in museums and why each step is important. What is strategic planning and how does it differ from long-range planning and which makes sense for your museum? Learn the terminology and the elements of sequencing a successful plan, as well as strategies for making it stick. The presentation concludes with tips for establishing criteria for success and evaluating a plan's effectiveness. "Charting Your Organization's Course for the Future" will be presented by Gary Smith, a respected leader in the Texas museum community who has directed museums for three decades and taught in the museum studies program at Baylor University.

Instructor: Gary Smith, President, Dallas Heritage Village, Dallas

Date: Friday, November 16, 2012
Time: 9:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. (Registration at 8:30 a.m. Lunch break at noon)

Location: Mesquite Arts Center
Rehearsal Hall
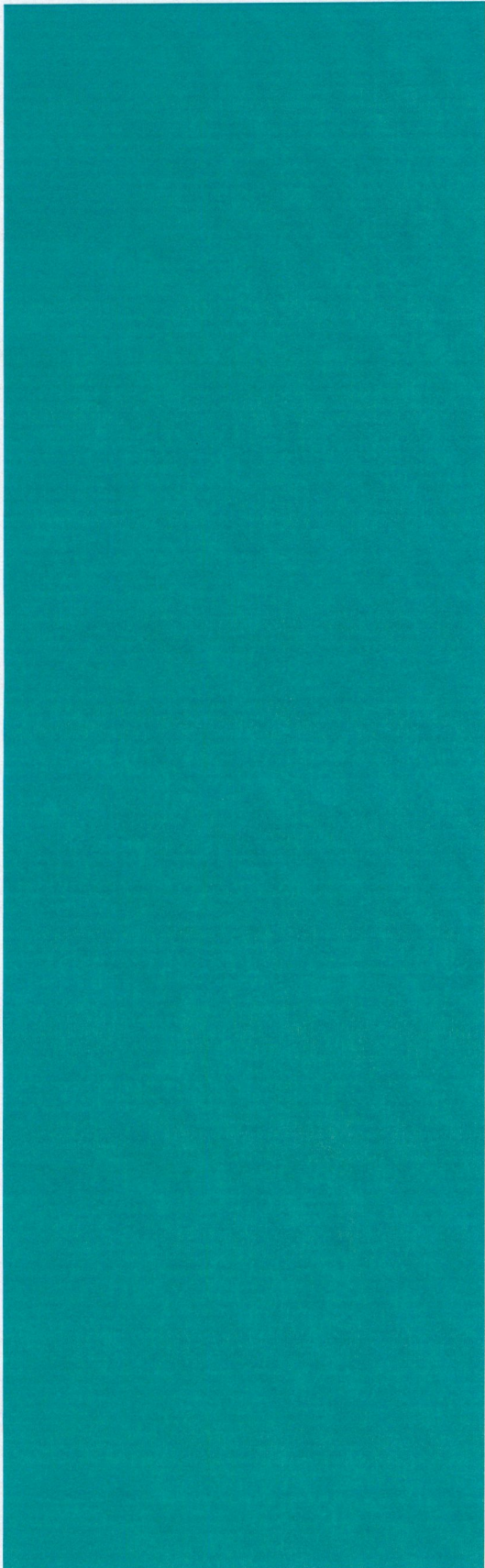1527 North Galloway Avenue
Mesquite, Texas 75185

$30 fee includes materials and box lunch.

Please register early as space is limited. Advance registration is required. Limit two registrations per organization.

Registration: Online only via TAM website.

These workshops are presented jointly by Texas Association of Museums and Texas Historical Commission. The curriculum was developed by the American Association for State and Local History with grant funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. Copyright 2010 by the American Association for State and Local History. All rights reserved.

TAM Professional Development Certificate Program These workshops qualify! For more information on TAM's Certificate Program, go to

Heritage Preservation: 2013 Conservation Assessment Program (CAP)

2013 Conservation Assessment Program Application Deadline is December 3, 2012

The 2013 Conservation Assessment Program (CAP) application is available at http://www.heritagepreservation.org. CAP is a federally-funded program that provides professional conservation assessments for small to mid-sized museums of all types. The deadline to submit 2013 applications is 11:59 p.m. on Monday, December 3, 2012. For more information, please contact the CAP staff at cap@heritagepreservation.org or 202-233-0800.

Eligibility: Any not-for-profit museum that cares for and owns or uses tangible objects, exhibits them on a regular basis, is open to the public at least 90 days annually, has at least one full-time paid or volunteer staff person or the equivalent, and is located in one of the 50 states of the Union, the District of Columbia, or U.S. territories is eligible to apply.

All types of museums may participate: aquariums; arboreta, botanical gardens and nature centers; art museums/centers; children's museums; historic houses and sites; history, science and natural history museums; science technology centers and planetariums; specialized museums; and zoos. Institutions with fully surveyed living animal collections (such as those accredited by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association) may use CAP to assess the conservation needs of their non-living collections only.

CAP is designed to serve only those museums whose collections and facilities can be assessed in a two-day period. Museums whose collections and/or facilities cannot be surveyed within two days should apply for a general conservation survey grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services' (IMLS) Conservation Project Support program.

TAM Annual Meeting Session Review

Navigating the River Styx: Dealing with Paranormal Investigators

Noel Harris Freeze

Have you ever wondered if someone is sifting through your museum's collection after the staff has gone home? The TAM conference's session entitled "Navigating the River Styx: Dealing with Paranormal Investigators" helped museum professionals to consider the potential for expanding museum programs, audience and income by including paranormal events to the museum's program.

The first presenters included three representatives from the Central Texas Paranormal Society. Each told the audience their basic process for conducting an investigation. (http://www.ctghost.org/team.php) "Pop" shared stories from when he experienced extraordinary occurrences at museums during investigations. Ed encouraged the audience to seek out a paranormal team to look for activity at their sites. Another CTPS representative mentioned that upon investigation of museum sites, CTPS is very careful not to tamper with the museum building or its collection. Oddly, she did tell a story about one investigation at a heritage site that did not go so well- an investigator had knocked over a table destroying collection objects. However, she assured the audience that this was not normal.

James Yasko, Director of Education at the Hermitage in Nashville, encouraged the audience to add a paranormal oriented event to their program for a different reason. Yasko explained that the Hermitage's paranormal program successfully takes place each Halloween. Each year the Hermitage presents their program and the audience grows, as does their opportunity to share the site's history with the public. Yasko's take on a paranormal-oriented event encompassed not only the possibility of an extraordinary presence at the site, but the opportunity to share the site's folklore, as well as the "officially" presented history with a broader audience. Each year the program is held, it lasts more and more nights, leaving Yasko to share that the museum allows him to work frequently through these periods, and use flextime later in the year for time off.

Lastly, Jack N. McKinney the Executive Director of the Dr. Pepper Museum also shared his experiences with holding tours that encompass both the site's regular interpretation as well as the inclusion of the possible paranormal element. McKinney had some interesting experiences to include, but most importantly gave advice on contacting and inviting a paranormal team to your site. He warned, in a very diplomatic manner, to be careful when

working with investigators. McKinney noted that the invitation for outside researchers could cause damage to your collection or building, be it from badly placed video surveillance equipment or from artifacts being knocked from their mounts while researchers wander in the dark.

Whether he paranormal beings exist or not, this session begged the audience to consider paranormal investigations from another perspective. The session successfully requested its attendees to consider how paranormal investigations add to the site's history, expand the site's folklore, and provide an opportunity to attract a large audience that may include many new visitors.

Collections Management Systems: Going Open Source

Lisa E. Worley, Curator
Goodwill Computer Museum
Austin, Texas

The Goodwill Computer Museum, located in Austin, has been slowly collecting vintage computer and video game objects since 1994 as part of Goodwill Industries of Central Texas's electronic recycling program. Over those years, the collection has grown from a few computer units on shelves in the Computer Works retail store, to thousands of pieces of hardware, software and documentation. In 2009, volunteer staff began to inventory the entire collection; however, lack of resources (time and space) resulted in less than 1000 items documented at the most basic level.

In 2012, GCM recognized the need for a complete inventory and catalogue of the entire collection. After assessing the current database situation (various excel spreadsheets, a non-functioning server holding the Fedora database, and a poorly populated DSpace database), we determined our best course of action would be to start completely from scratch. And, based on our resources, we created a short list of databases to research.

We knew we wanted:

1. Customizable metadata: our collection is a bit specialized, so being able to develop and import our own vocabularies was important.

2. Ability to upload images, audio files, videos and documents.

3. Tracking of location, donors, accession numbers, etc.

4. Ability to use barcodes.

5. Ability to control access to the database.

6. Ability to develop the front-end and make the database available online.

7. Easy to use, because we will be depending on mostly volunteer labor for the inventory project.

8. Support Dublin Core and/or other standards.

9. Access to LCSH for keyword searches.

Other features we were interested in, but weren't deal breakers: watermarking images, ease of installation/upkeep for our IT department, integration with our website and the visual look of the database.

There were a number of resources that we consulted in gathering information for our search.

- Collection Management Systems: Features Matrix compiled by the California Digital Library (http://www.cdlib.org/services/dsc/tools/docs/cdams_sum mary_matrix.xls)

- Collections management systems paper by Elana C. Carpinone (http://0338c93.netsolhost.com/cms/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/Graduate-Studies-Thesis-Collections-Management-Elana-Carpinone.pdf)

- Collections Management Software Review by Canadian Heritage Information Network (http://www.pro.rcip-chin.gc.ca/gestion_collections-collections_management/evaluation_logiciels-software_review/index-eng.jsp)

- Museum Association of New York's Collection Management Software summary (http://manyonline.org/resources/collections-management-software/)

- Numerous conversations with other institutions including the Computer History Museum and the National September 11 Memorial & Museum

Fairly quickly, we were able to narrow our selection down to two databases: Collective Access and Collection Space. While I'll admit that one of the big draws to these open source options were the price (free), they were both solid choices. After a couple of face-to-face meetings with our IT department and consulting with our off-site data center providers, we agreed on Collective Access.

Collective Access (www.collectiveaccess.org) is a highly-configurable collections database. It's free and supports a number of metadata standards. There are two applications to Collective Access. Providence is the cataloguing tool and database application. Pawtucket is a public-access module that provides a web-based search and browse interface to your collections data. There are a number of institutions using Collective Access, including Historical Society of Pennsylvania, New York State Archives, National September 11 Memorial & Museum, and the American Museum of Natural History.

For our current project, we decided to only install Providence. We plan install Pawtucket within the next year when we're further along with the cataloguing project and have a new organizational website in place.

Once our IT and data center staff downloaded and configured the out-of-the-box program, I was able to easily configure screens, metadata and vocabulary how I needed them. Because Collective Access is web-based, you log into it via a web browser. All access is by login/password, and each user's privilege is limited by choosing roles and actions. I like this level of control, which is present on most collections databases. But what I really like is that the database is accessible from anywhere, so if I need to work on image metadata over the weekend I don't need to worry about VPN access. It is also to easily keep up with who (and when) has logged into the database via a widget on the customizable dashboard.
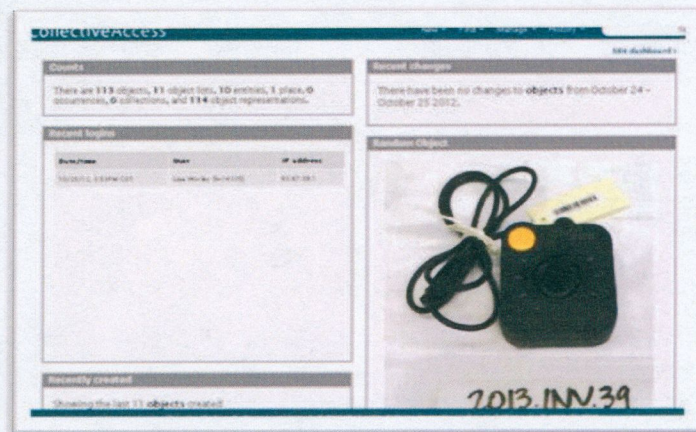

Figure 1. Dashboard showing Counts, Recent Logins, Recently created records, Recent changes and a Random object.

I began by testing the database to see what elements were included in the set up versus what elements I wanted to include. I also made sure to familiarize myself with the database's terminology.

- What do Concept, Facet, Guide Term and Hierarchy name mean within the system?

- Lot = type of donation.

- Entity = Donor, but was split into two options: individual or organization.

- Do we really need a Lot = Loans when there was already a Loans In and Loans out?

- Should object vocabulary be a selection under New-> Object-> Physical Object-> object name, or should it be a dropdown menu within the object record?

I cannot stress how important it is to really look at the screens, how they work together and what information goes where before you do any changes to the system. I mapped out relationships and the various screens comparing what I wanted to have for each record to what was/was not there, but I still ran into snags and had to delete records, reconfigure screens and then re-enter information.

Using the Collective Access wiki and the online support forum as my guides, I started to reconfigure the system. Caveat: while a much needed step-by-step resource, much of the wiki's terminology and navigation instructions are written for a previous version of the program. However, when I ran into an issue that I couldn't quite figure out, staff at Collective Access answered my email question very quickly. You'll need to take your time to ensure that you're clicking in the right place(s).

Because we are dealing with computer equipment, there were a number of fields that I needed to include in the object record: model numbers, serial numbers, part number, etc. Collective Access made it easy to add hierarchical lists, as well as these metadata fields. Once the information was added, I could go into the User Interfaces that dictate the layout of each of the screens in the database to choose what fields to include, which ones to take out and in what order they should appear.

Figure 2. Metadata fields.
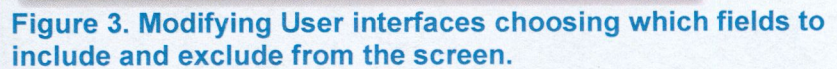
Figure 3. Modifying User interfaces choosing which fields to include and exclude from the screen.

After configuring the various screens, I tested the database by entering a couple of objects, a donor, and a lot (accession number). I quickly realized that some aspects that I had customized did not work in practice as well as they did in theory. Luckily, it was easy enough to delete the few items, modify the database and reenter the information.
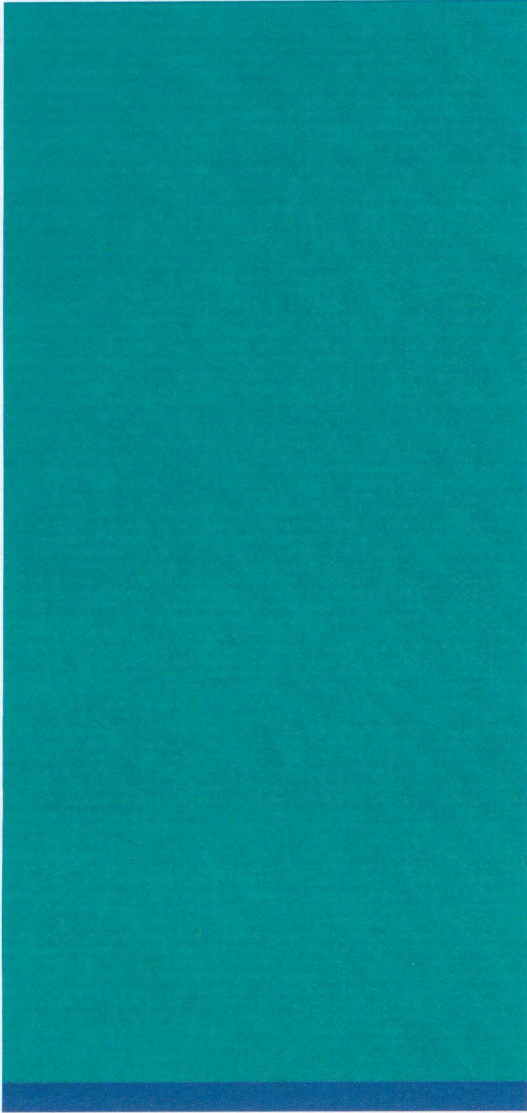
Figure 4. Screen shot of object record for first item in the database.

If you are planning on using the program as it comes, then it's ready to use as soon as you log in. However, I knew that we were going to customize the database and add our own standard vocabularies. The entire process of configuring, testing, reconfiguring and uploading images took about a week to figure out. I did learn some valuable lessons:

- Adding the standardized vocabulary for object categories to the main menu made it very bulky. It's better to create a metadata field with dropdown menu within the object screen.

- Searches and sorting are in numeric order in that we don't

have add the extra 0s in accession and object ID numbers. For example, in the past I would have used 2012.001, but with CA I can just use 2012.1.

- I initially added Temporary Custody as another option under Lots (accession types). At first this worked beautifully. However, when I went to transfer TCs to accessions, I realized there was no way to tie the two together—no changing overall categories. So, I deleted the TCs, added them as Donations with their status as "pending accession." Once the Deed of Gift is signed, I can move the TC number to "Alternate names," assign a "Lot identifier" (accession number) and change the accession status to "accessioned."

While I haven't used and/or explored all that it has to offer, all in all Collective Access is a great database. From the collections management standpoint, it is very robust and has all of the elements we need: tracking objects, donors, accessions, object movement, loans and more. It's easily customizable: we can add our own standard vocabularies and add metadata fields not included in the out-of-the-box set up for no extra charge. And once it's set up, it's extremely easy to use. I'm looking forward to implementing Pawtucket, the online portion, next year.