

Collections Communiqué

Spring 2013

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Looking for a job?

TAM Job Bank

AAM Job Center

Have something for the next newsletter? Email submissions to Elizabeth Martindale at elizmart1@yahoo.com.

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From the Chair...

Happy 2013 everyone!

Boy, this year is already moving fast and so is CMC. The Board has chosen as a project this year and possibly next to update the environmental monitoring kits kept regionally across the state. These kits probably haven't been updated since they were put together in 1998. So, this is long overdue. We have already purchased new dataloggers for the kits and are now looking at other equipment and supplies to replace. We'll also need to rewrite the manual. If you have any comments or suggestions about the kits, please let me know.

The Texas Association of Museums annual meeting will be here before we know it. The meeting is April 2-5 in Beaumont. You can register now at the TAM website. There are a lot of good collections-related sessions. Of special note is the workshop sponsored by CMC on April 2 – Best Practices in Collections Stewardship: Writing a Collections Policy. If you need to revamp your collections management policy or write one for the first time then please plan to attend. Also, don't forget to come to the CMC annual business meeting on April 4 at 11:00.

The Collections Managers Committee is for you, the collections professionals of Texas. It functions best when the membership is engaged and involved. Please take the time to complete the workshop survey if you haven't yet filled it out or email your preferences/comments to me or Lisa Worley, our vice chair. We are also in the midst of our annual elections. Please take time to vote. If you would like to help with the environmental kits or get active in CMC in other ways, then please let me know. Thanks for all you do for Texas collections and the CMC.

I hope to see all of you in Beaumont!

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2013 Officers Election

Toyia Pointer, CMC Secretary

Hello CMC Members.

Thank you to everyone who has voted in the 2013 Officers Election. If you have not reviewed the ballot and voted please do so by March 12.

Link to Survey Monkey Ballot:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/KSZTVMR

Upcoming CMC Workshop: Best Practices in Collections Stewardship: Writing a Collections Policy

Texas Association of Museums Annual Meeting Beaumont, TX
Tuesday, April 2
1:30 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Museums strive to be good stewards of the resources they hold in public trust—their collections. An essential tool for responsible collections management is a collections policy. Does your museum have a written collections policy that is approved by the governing authority? Does it follow and support the museum's mission? This workshop will provide guidance to improve your current collections policy or perhaps write one for the first time. Hear expert advice on how to develop and implement an effective plan. Participants should bring with them (1) the museum's mission statement and (2) the museum's current collections policy or guidelines.

Speakers include:

- Lisa E. Worley, Curator, Goodwill Computer Museum, Austin
- David Aylsworth, Collections Registrar, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and
- Anne Ruppert, Curator, Sam Rayburn House Museum, Bonham

Participation is limited to 30. Registration fee is \$25.

To register, visit the TAM Annual Meeting Registration page: http://www.prismnet.com/~tam/annualmeeting2013/registration.html

TAM Collections-Related Sessions of Interest

Texas Association of Museums Annual Meeting Beaumont, TX April 2, 2013 thru April 5, 2013

Tuesday April 2nd Workshop

Best Practices in Collections Stewardship: Writing a Collections Policy

Wednesday April 3rd

Creating an Interactive Art Exhibition

After the Wind Dies Down: Museums Respond to Disaster

Thursday April 4th

From Wonder Cabinets to Museum Natural History Collections

Shouting in the Library: Using Social Media and Web 2.0 Tools to Promote Libraries, Archives, Living History Centers and More

CMC (Collections Managers Committee) Affinity Group Meeting

Maximizing Social Media for Meaning-Making

Ten Ways to Unify, Revitalize, Organize, or Simply Improve Your Exhibition Spaces

Texas Artisans and Artists Archive

Friday April 5th

Facilities Rentals: Things to Consider Before Renting Your Museum's Space

It's a Win Win: Museums Reach Out through The Portal to Texas History

Exhibit Design and the Effects of LED Lighting in the "New Museum"

Longtime CMC Member Leishawn Spotted Bear Featured in Star-Telegram

Assistant Curator at Forth Worth Museum Cares for Living Specimens

Some specimens at the museum are far from inanimate

By Terry Evans

tevans@star-telegram.com

12-26-2012

FORT WORTH -- Beyond the fossilized dinosaurs, past the stuffed birds and mammals, toward the back of the north wing of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, Leishawn Spotted Bear cares for a menagerie of living critters.

"While I was in college, it never crossed my mind that I'd work in a museum," she said. "I started here as a volunteer 20 years ago while I was a student at Richland High School."

The museum offered Spotted Bear a part-time job during her first summer at Texas Wesleyan University. Since then, she has handled jobs from ticket seller to Omni Theater projectionist to volunteer coordinator. But she finally settled into one the science department's least-known niches.

It may surprise people who are familiar with some of the museum's 10,000 nonliving specimens to discover that its collection includes about 70 breathing animals. They're brought out most often for kids in a pair of two-hour daily sessions designed for very young scientists, said museum spokesman Philip Gonzalez.

"It's essential to the learning environment we provide, especially for children who attend the Museum School that runs pretty much like a regular preschool setting," he said. "My daughter and son came to the schools and that was one of the highlights, to see and touch the live animals."

The secret of successfully showing animals to children is to give the young humans control over when, how much and even whether they touch them, Spotted Bear said.

"It makes them more comfortable if we can keep them separate when we take [the animals] out," she said.

That's especially important the first time someone gets close to an animal they're afraid of, like a snake, or something that just disgusts

them, like a giant hissing cockroach, said Shannon Collins, Museum School director.

"Early teaching with our artifacts and animals stimulates a love of nature that blossoms from this point throughout their lives," she said. "We want children to appreciate nature. Instead of stepping on every bug they see, to set it off the sidewalk and let it live."

It would be hard to find anyone better than Spotted Bear at helping people get beyond their fear of animals, Gonzalez said.

As assistant curator, the 39-year-old of Native-American descent oversees the museum's live and preserved collections. She's half Mandan (her father, Justin Spotted Bear, was born in North Dakota) and a quarter Choctaw (her Oklahoma-born mother, Anna Weatherford, is half Choctaw).

"The remainder is mostly Irish," she said.

The larger percentage of Spotted Bear's job is acquiring and preparing specimens and bringing live and preserved animals into museum classrooms and natural-history programs. But she also performs at events like Family Science Night and Polar Express parties and in the museum's TV studio for the distance learning program.

That's when the teacher comes out. In the early 1990s, Spotted Bear specialized in life and earth sciences at Texas Wesleyan University, earning a bachelor's degree in human learning and development and a certificate to teach first through eighth grades.

But the museum position became her dream job. She gets to teach, which she loves; work with kids, which she really loves; and spend her days with the museum's animals, which she loves more than anything.

"Probably half of them have names," she said.

Providing the real names of live snakes, spiders and other animals when people bring them in is also part of the job, Spotted Bear said. So is providing them a home if needed.

"We got a call from someone who had six spotted ground squirrels and we're like 'OK, we'll take a couple,' and they said 'No, you have to take them all," she said

Many animals brought to the museum come from people who tried to raise them, but found that they couldn't, Spotted Bear said.

"They're animals that imprinted on people and can't be returned to the wild," she said.

One such animal was a bobcat named Rufus, which was brought in

by a rehabilitator, Spotted Bear said.

"The man had retrained Rufus to hunt in the wild, but he couldn't break him of wanting to play with people," she said.

Rufus liked to climb people's bodies and sit on their shoulders to be petted, Spotted Bear said.

"If he'd been released, the first time he tried to do that in the wild someone would have killed him," she said. "He lived in our lab for a long time, rubbing against our legs like a house cat. He died five years ago of kidney failure."

2012 TAM Annual Meeting Session Review:

So Easy Even a Caveman Could Do It: A Plan for Museums & Searchable On-line Collections

Kendra A. Lemon 2012 CMC Scholarship Recipient

For those in the discipline of collections management with little to no experience in dealing with online collections, this session provided basic but very useful information that even a novice could follow. Danielle Plumer (Digital Projects Consultant), Leslie Meyer (Archives/Collections Director at The Petroleum Museum) and Dixie Hoover (Site Manager at the Confederate Reunion Grounds State Historic Site), presented guidelines for establishing and maintaining a searchable on-line collection that were summarized in a 10-step plan:

- 1. Choose the content
- 2. Plan the project
- Choose the system
- 4. Scan the content
- 5. Describe the content
- 6. Upload the content
- 7. Make the content shareable
- 8. Enjoy the content
- 9. Preserve the content

10. Evaluate the project (and revise as needed)

During the initial stages of developing a searchable on-line collection project, formal planning should be conducted envisioning where the project should be in the long-term (i.e. 5 - 10 years from now). This is the time to define the project by asking the questions: Who? What? When? Why? How? and How much? Serious thought should be given to deciding which Digital Asset Management System (DAMS, or digital object collection management database) will work best for the collection of the institution that is to be displayed on-line. Consider how accessible the on-line collection will be to the general public, the degree of difficulty and cost of maintaining it over time, and how it will integrate with the institution's current systems of operation.

Next, when describing the content, the descriptions of items within the collection (metadata) need to be more than just a file name, but rather, the descriptions should be meaningful, providing as much information as possible to allow for ease of searchable content later on. The session defined the term "metadata" as "...structured information that describes, explains, locates, or otherwise makes it easier to retrieve, use, or manage an information resource."

(Source: NISO, (2004) *Understanding Metadata*. Bethesda, MD: NISO Press, p.1)

Metadata is found to be very valuable as it can be used to:

- discover resources
- manage documents
- control intellectual property rights
- identify versions
- certify authenticity
- indicate status
- mark content structure
- situate geospatially
- describe processes
- bring together related materials

Partnering with other institutions can prove to be very beneficial to the preservation and sustainability of the on-line collection; this is particularly true for smaller institutions, with limited staff, time and budgets, who can team up with larger institutions that have more resources readily available to them.

In regards to additional resources, the Amigos Library Services in Dallas, TX offers online classes that can assist with some of the steps of the 10-step process. The offered classes include:

- Digital Project Planning and Management Basics (step 2), covering:
 - o Project Management
 - Online tools
 - Role and task definition
 - o Financial Control
 - Budgeting
 - Contracting
 - o Legal Issues
 - Copyright
 - Privacy
- Digital library Systems and Applications (step 3), covering:
 - Overview of Available Systems
 - Hosted and local systems
 - Metadata constraints
 - Developing Workflows
 - Quality assurance (volunteers/interns ability to input data accurately)
 - Technical Issues
 - Indexing
 - Interoperability
 - Migration and Preservation
- Metadata Standards & Crosswalks (step 5), covering:
 - Content Standards
 - AACR2R
 - CCO
 - DACS

- Syntaxes
 - Dublin Core
 - MARC
- Metadata Crosswalks
- Controlled Vocabulary & Thesaurus Design (step 7), covering:
 - o Review of available vocabularies
 - Library of Congress
 - Getty Vocabularies
 - Local controlled vocabularies
 - Using linked data
 - Using namespaces
 - Uncontrolled vocabularies
 - Tagging and keywords

In summary, I gain a wealth of knowledge from attending this session. While developing a searchable on-line collection is not a project that I foresee taking-on in the near future, I now feel comfortable enough to get started with such a project by using the 10-step plan to guide me in the process. Having the guideline to follow makes the daunting task of creating and sustaining a searchable on-line collection seem more manageable and doable for even a novice such as me. The three presenters provided a tremendous amount of additional resources for tackling an on-line collections project, much more than I could include in this summary report. If creating and maintaining a searchable on-line collection is something that you are particularly interested in, I highly recommend you contact the presenters to gain access to those additional resources. All of the information presented in the session, and even some extra information that was not presented, is available electronically if you email the session presenters.

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