



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE  
Texas Association of Museums

# Collections Communiqué

Summer 2008

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## TAM Annual Meeting

March 17-20, 2009, El Paso

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**Have an idea for the next newsletter? Email submissions and photos by August 15 to:**

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## From the Chair...

In the past few weeks I have both praised and cursed the record keeping skills of those that came before me. When dealing with a legal issue I was pleased to find copies of all the correspondence, board and committee meeting minutes, logs of phone calls and conversations, as well as memos to the file that helped fill in the gaps. Records like this make our life easy. Unfortunately, this isn't always the case. How many times have we gone looking for information that wasn't there? Whether it was an object that was improperly or incompletely catalogued, or that the reasoning for a particular decision was never documented and has gone to the grave with a former employee. I have to constantly remind myself to take the time to make sure I have all of the documentation and that I have filled in the gaps so fifty years from now someone won't be cursing me.

Good record keeping and documentation is a thing of beauty. In honor of our Curator Emeritus, Cecilia Steinfeldt, who served as Registrar in the 1940s, and celebrated her 93<sup>rd</sup> birthday on May 24, I would like to share with you some of the beautifully illustrated records that she kept.

*Amy*



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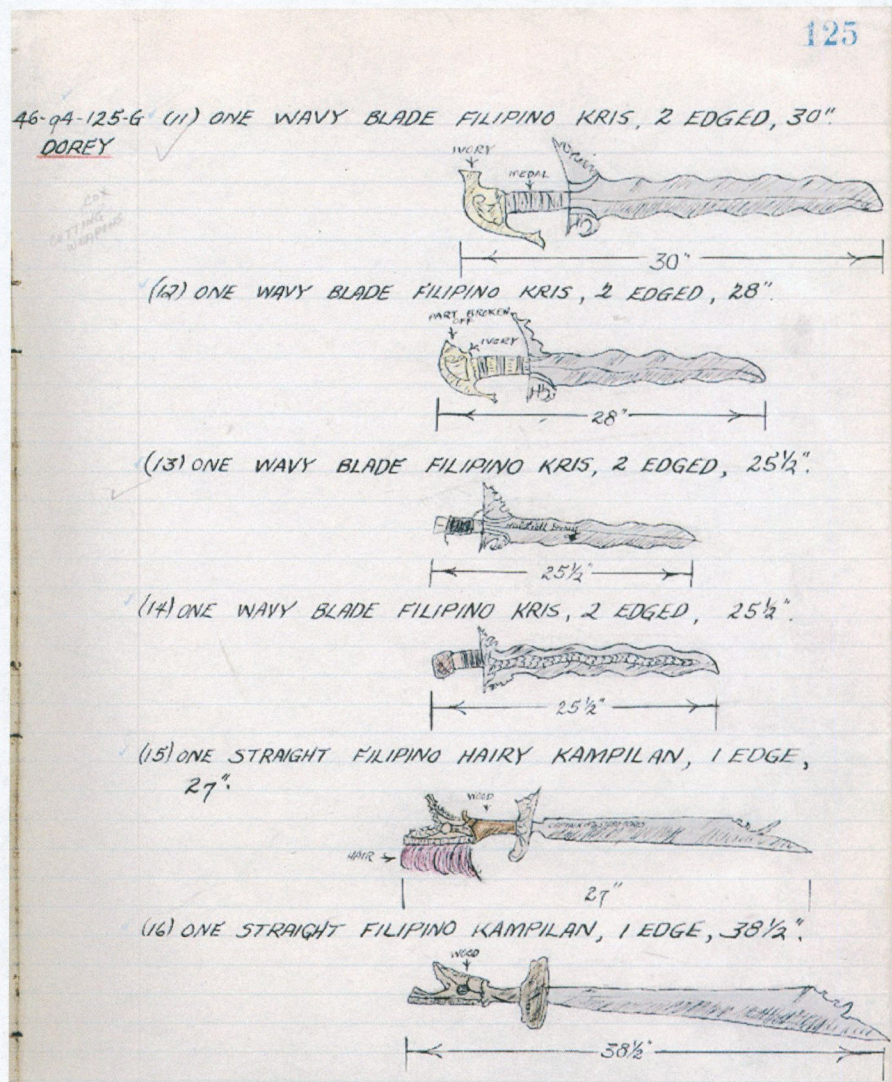
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[www.cmc-tam.org](http://www.cmc-tam.org)

Make sure you visit our website at [www.cmc-tam.org](http://www.cmc-tam.org). If you have any suggestions or additions for the website, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Chris Godbold at [cgodbold@fortbendmuseum.org](mailto:cgodbold@fortbendmuseum.org).

## Workshop Review

Barbara White  
Administrative Assistant  
Winedale

**Are Pests Bugging You? Integrated Pest Management in Museums** presented by John Jackman, Professor and Extension Entomologist, Dept. of Entomology, Texas A&M University.

Pest management seems to be a common problem with museums of all types, small or large. All museums have a low tolerance for pesticides because of our delicate displays. Our long visiting hours limit the time that pests can be dealt with.



Some of the pests that plague us are:

**Artifact, Clothing, and Exhibit destroyers:**

The Common Beetles, Cigarette Beetles, and Warehouse Beetles, Indian Meal Moths, Webbing Clothes Moths, silverfish, and Carpet Beetles are attracted to food, animal hair, fish meat, leather goods, fur, feathers, woolen carpets and synthetics.

**Wood destroyers:**

Powder Post Beetles-Lycid beetles lay eggs in hardwoods like Ash and Oak. Larva makes round holes in wood the size of pencil-lead and produce new sawdust daily. These larvae eat the wood until it is destroyed. They are found in furniture and fixtures but also in antique frames made of hardwood. The new sawdust is a sign you may have a problem. (These have to be treated with insecticide squirted into each hole using a syringe).

**Human detractors:**

Recluse spiders, Jumping spiders, Brown banded roaches and German roaches, fleas and ants are all pests that turn visitors away.

**Pest Identification** is important. Your monthly pest management company may be treating for pests you don't have and not treating for ones you do have. You can check what you do have by setting up "pheromone traps" by ALLURE. The pests that would be dangerous to your collection will be attracted to these traps. Also look on your windowsills, in light fixtures and behind artifacts to see what is in your museum. Make a record of insect presence at the same time every year. Inspect on a regular basis. Set traps for mice or pheromone traps at the edge of wall. Set out a Petri dish of flour for silverfish. Report these pests to your pest management company.

**Preventative measures you can use for pests:**

1. Look for conditions for shelter, food source, light source, etc. that would attract insects.
2. Sanitation practices-clean suspect areas more often to discourage pests.
3. Quarantine new items-put in freezer or isolated building.
4. Tighten up buildings-good seal on windows and doors.
5. Install yellow bulbs near buildings.
6. Move light bulbs away from buildings (lighter color buildings attract bugs).
7. Parking lot lights will attract pests away from buildings. (Most pests are active before midnight/change timers to come on after midnight.)
8. Keep shrubs away from buildings



9. Keep over hanging branches of trees away from bldgs.

**Treating for these pests:**

- Heat buildings for 24 hours at 120-150 degrees
- Heat an individual cereal box for 20 minutes at 150 degrees
- Cold-4 days in deep freeze will kill most pests drop picture frame in freezer
- Chemical control-pyrethrums for flying insects
- Aerosols are less effective on creeping insects
- Creepers will need crack and crevice treatment
- Commercial Fumigation, CO2 chamber-slow takes weeks or months

Fleas have to be treated in your yard, house and on animals in the area three times each because of the stages of development starting with eggs to adult. If the animals are wild, sevin dust should be used.

All natural products recommended: Pyrethrums (chrysanthemums), Neem products (oils or soaps) smother scale insects, zataratin, diatomaceous earth, and silica.

Hiring an IPM contractor: Interview the technician to develop detailed plan. Check to see if he is a BCE (certified entomologist). Conduct training with any new tech that comes to your facility. There is a high turnover in this industry.

You can see IPM is a lot more complicated than you think. The session was very informative and helpful. Mr. Jackman gave several websites and email addresses: <http://insect.tamu.edu>, <http://fireants.tamu.edu>, [www.insectslimited.com](http://www.insectslimited.com) (for fumigation details), [j-jackman@tamu.edu](mailto:j-jackman@tamu.edu) (for email questions).

The power point presentation was very helpful to be able to see what the pests actually look like. Searching online for pictures of these critters could be very helpful to your staff. Maybe you could make your own PowerPoint presentation and show them what to look for. It sounds like more than a one-man job. It's going to take the whole staff to be on the lookout for these tiny destroyers!

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## Workshop Review

Tracie Evans  
Collections Manager  
Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum

I was very excited to receive one of the two scholarships from the TAM Collections Manager's Committee for the 2008 TAM conference.

I attended many wonderful sessions throughout the conference including "Working



with Exhibit Designers.” This session featured two speakers: Bruce R. Taylor-Hille, Program Coordinator, Brazoria County Historical Museum, and Larry Francell, Director, Museum of the Big Bend, Sul Ross State University.

Bruce Taylor-Hille started off the program by explaining the relationship and responsibilities of both the exhibit designer and the museum staff. He defined the skills associated with exhibit design and included suggestions on locating these skills both in-house and through independent contractors. Additionally, he suggested using people from your community when possible. No matter who you hire, be sure to get everything in writing and keep good communications lines open with all contractors and in-house participants.

Larry Francell then walked the audience through the recently completed exhibits of the Museum of the Big Bend. He stressed the importance of fostering a team approach between the exhibit designers, museum staff, volunteers and other key stakeholders. In addition, he talked about cost saving measures such as building the exhibit in place, buying special or large items directly from outside vendors and use local skills when possible.

The audience took away from this program useful tips on the how to select and work with exhibit designers and other specialists that will make your next project work easier and less stressful.

Another useful session this year was the conservation session entitled “Do you have a Conservation Query?” This session featured representatives from Whitten and Proctor Fine Art Conservation, Houston; Catherine Williams, Object Conservator, Silver Lining Art Conservation, LLC, Austin; and Melanie Sanford, Textile Conservator, Textile Preservation Services of Texas, Red Oak.

This session started with a series of quick overviews by the various conservators present. Whitten and Proctor Fine Art Conservation walked the audience through the proper way to create and install backing boards for your art establishes a uniform microclimate throughout the framed piece. They also provided supply lists, a handout of properly attaching picture wire, and pamphlets on “Caring for your Paintings” and “Guidelines for Selecting a Conservator.”

Catherine Williams spoke briefly about the proper way to mark artifacts and provided a handout regarding the marking of objects and selecting the best method and supplies for marking objects. The final speaker was Melanie Sanford who discussed very briefly the basic way to store textiles including laying items flat, rolling textiles and padding textiles, and then opened the floor for questions.

Once all three speakers had completed their presentations, the session became a



one-on-one question and answer period where audience members could consult directly with the conservators on specific questions and issues.

Both of these sessions proved to be very useful and I look forward to putting the various suggestions to practice. Again, let me thank the CMC for their support and for selecting me as a scholarship recipient this year.

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## Workshop Review

Barbara White  
Administrative Assistant  
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**Didn't We Just Move? Moving Your Collection: It Doesn't Have to be so Overwhelming** presented by: John McAlpin, Associate Registrar, Houston Museum of Natural Science; and Jim Belknap, Installation Manager, Amon Carter Museum, Ft. Worth

The HMNS in Houston and ACM in Ft. Worth have recently gone through extensive moves of their artifacts and gave us some of the benefits of their experience.

The main idea is that prior planning can save you a lot of time and unexpected surprises. Here is some of the extensive planning that helped them through the process.

**The very first plan should be a budget.** There are four parts to any budget.

**1. Labor:** Labor is the largest monetary drain, museum collections staff should do packing, if possible. Volunteers have drawbacks-need to be trained, tend to be slow packers, talking and socializing. Plan for packing time of 5 minutes per non-delicate objects. Delicate objects would average 15 minutes per object. Trained movers-Art handlers are paid \$65; regular movers-\$25.00 per hour.

**2. Materials:** included boxes, tissue, bubble, foam, staples, staple guns, plastic, tape, gloves, string tags and labels. Also container bins, bin boxes or gondola boxes ([www.mesi.com](http://www.mesi.com)) and materials used in transporting the collection should be added. Plan to have at least 3-5 days worth of materials on hand when packing. People who are packing will not tell you they are out of material until the day they run out, not in advance. ULINE will take an order by 6PM and get it to you the next day. They charge a high delivery fee, but you would not have a stop in your process because of lack of materials to keep your staff busy with the project. Two fifteen-minute breaks per day are essential to refresh and keep workers motivated.

**3. Equipment:** If the move is large, a pallet jack and four-wheel dollies should be



included in the budget. Moving company truck - \$25 per hour; Art Handling truck - \$100 per hour; Rental truck - \$85 per day + mileage and fuel. Forklift - \$400 per day; Rigging equipment \$200 per day; Rigger \$75 an hour (8 hour minimum).

**4. Contingency:** For unexpected costs usually add 10%-15% to the bottom line of the budget for good measure.

The budget gives you a good idea of the expense of the move but it is also very important to plan how you will accomplish the move and explain to your team what your objective is. A floor plan of both the museum and the new building is needed to make notes on, keep track of the progress of the packing and moving and to communicate with the team, other museum employees and the museum director or supervisor what has been accomplished.

**Divide collections into sections**, assign smaller teams to pack. Produce labels for packed objects and boxes. Each label should contain information on the section of collections the piece is located, the cabinet, row, etc. Create a 2-part inventory sheet for records-one is packed with the artifact and the other one is filed with the registrar. Registrars should be present during the move to change location of the object. Book item in/out, by whom, date, change to new location. Loose sheets could record the object if the mover finds the registrar away from the check-in desk. The completely filled out, signed loose sheet could be left at a designated place to record changes later.

**When moving**, hire even-numbered sets of movers or art handlers, unless the odd guy is hired as a supervisor. Always use enough personnel to safely move an object. The 3rd person can hold the door or a museum staff member could help with this instead of a supervisor. Sometimes a 3rd person puts the large object off balance and this creates a disaster. Cushioned boxes on wheels can reduce energy expended on setting and removing dollies from large container bins and heavy objects. Use your floor plan during the move. Designate a person in charge at the museum and a person in charge at the new facility. A floor plan at both locations will enable these two people to talk about where to put objects. Walkie-talkies or cell phones are a good way to keep in contact.

Archival materials can be used to line the new shelving in the new facility. HMNS has had success with volara.

Other tips that may help you in your move:

1. Write heights and widths on doorways that will be used a lot.
2. Glue and tape the bottom of bin boxes for extra strength.
3. Pedestal lifts ([www.glasbau-hahn.com](http://www.glasbau-hahn.com)), Johnson Bar, a dolly crate, lift tables





([www.bishamon.com](http://www.bishamon.com)), pneumatic scissor lifts for large objects.

4. 2"-4" foam to rest large object on or in bins or shock absorbing casters (great for painting carts, sculpture carts, lift tables), ([www.footmaster.com](http://www.footmaster.com)).

5. A person on your staff that is good with carpentry may be able to custom build moving crates.

A lot of planning can save you a lot of headaches during and after the process of your move. The plans in these cases were started about a year ahead because they were such large projects. Some unpacking is still not finished a year later, but they accurately recorded each object, so that the museum will still be able to find that object if needed. Hopefully, you will be able to plan ahead so there won't be any surprises for you in your future move. I know I will be pulling these notes out for reference during our next move!