



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE
Texas Association of Museums

Collections Communique

Summer 2010

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Looking for a job?

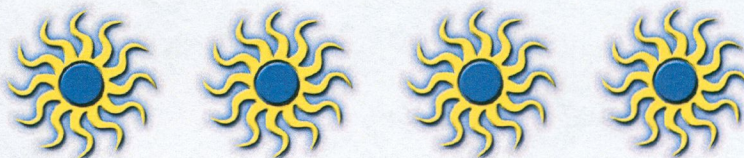
TAM Job Bank

AAM Job Center

Have something for the next newsletter?
Email submissions by August 15, 2010, to
Lisa Worley at
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From the Chair

Change is inevitable – except from a vending machine --- Robert C. Gallagher

Many of us are experiencing change right now. Our museums may be undergoing staff changes, restructuring, or evaluations of the mission and collections. Some of us are going through personal changes. CMC is currently in the process of changing, primarily in its relationship with TAM. TAM is evaluating the relationship between its office and the affinity groups. The main change will be who manages the money and how that money is collected. But it will also help define our relationship with TAM, something I have wanted to do since joining the board. I will keep the membership up-to-date as soon as I know more. If you have any questions, please contact me. I will pass your questions and concerns on to Ruth Ann. Change can be a scary thing, but it can also be a good thing.

If nothing ever changed, there would be no butterflies. --- unknown

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Leaving Your Mark on History: Marking Historical Artifacts and Documents Workshop

Allison Bouwman
Assistant Registrar
Witte Museum

The workshop, "Leaving Your Mark on History: Marking and Labeling Historical Artifacts and Documents" brought together an experienced panel of museum professionals to discuss the basics of numbering and marking the collections of museums and historical societies. Speakers included Lindsey Richardson, Collections Manager at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza; Sally Baulch-Rhoden, Curator for Austin Curatorial Services, Interpretive Service Branch, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; Donna Meadows, Associate Registrar, Acquisitions at the Houston Museum of Natural Science; Terri L. Carnes, Collections Manager Anthropology Division at the Museum of Texas Tech University; Cyndi Lopez, Conservator at the Museum of Texas Tech University; and Heath Garner, Curator of Mammals, Natural Science Research Laboratory at the Museum of Texas Tech University.

The first three panelists spent the morning detailing the process of numbering and labeling artifacts. Topics covered the least to most invasive techniques, preferred supplies for tags and physical markings, and the best choice for labeling various artifact mediums. The workshop provided hands-on instruction and samples of preferred archival supplies donated by Gaylord Bros and the speakers. Samples included Acryloid B-72, Stabilo pencils, Kaiser pens, Tyvek and Teslin labels, and much more.

The remaining panelists spoke about the emerging barcode and RFID technologies for museum collections. The Museum of Texas Tech University has fully integrated barcoding into their museum, and according to Terri Carnes, "turning a four year inventory process into four months." Barcoding offers the museum a linking tool to connect artifacts to database information and can save time, money, and effort during the inventory process. RFID or Radio Frequency Identification holds exciting new possibilities for museum. An RFID tag on every artifact could simplify an inventory down to hours. Both

barcoding and RFID have the potential to change the standards for museum collections care. Museums looking for ways to organize their collection and simplify the inventory process should further research this topic.

Workshop attendance exceeded expectations and attendees came from state institutions, museums, and historical societies. In addition to presentations by the panelists, supplemental information was provided which details the standardized techniques for numbering and labeling different collections. A portion of the information presented in workshop can be found under more details from this workshop on the workshop archive section of the CMC website. Information includes labeling and marking guidelines, how to assembling an archival marking kit, and instructions for how to make and use Acryloid B-72. The workshop was generously hosted by the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum.

Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation

Allison Bouwman
Assistant Registrar
Witte Museum

College Station, Texas, offered a unique experience for visiting museum professionals at this year's TAM Annual Meetings with a Thursday afternoon tour of the Center for Maritime Archaeology and Conservation facilities. The tour centered around the many site laboratories, conservation techniques, and the monumental work on the *La Belle* shipwreck, a French ship found in the Gulf of Mexico.

The tour began by detailing the exciting and complicated procedures undertaken at the Center. The laboratory tables were filled with drawings and artifacts in the process of being studied and restored. Alongside the buildings were large open drums and containers filled with cannons and armaments undergoing treatment. Staff members showed how casts could be taken of missing sections in artifacts that when molded would recreate detail not found in the artifact itself. The tour concluded with a presentation about one of the Center's most popular projects, the conservation of the *La Belle*. Conserved artifacts from the *La*

Belle have been disseminated across the state and can be seen in certain partnering museums.

The Center has conserved human remains, land-based artifacts, metal and wood artifacts discovered underwater. It is a valuable resource for Texas museums, with conservation skills for all varieties of artifacts. In their future is the addition of a state-of-the-art freeze-dryer capable of holding ship-sized material. To date, the Center has conserved over two million artifacts and continues to gather new projects.

News from Denton County Museums

Robyn Lorraine Lee
Museum Manager
Denton County Museums

Saturday, June 19: 9 – Noon: Denton County Fruit, Vegetable, Herb, and Flower Show: Bring entries to the Denton County Fire Fighters Memorial Park at 9 a.m. Denton County Master Gardeners will have tables for the displays, judges make their decisions, while participants and other visitors enjoy some other activities set up by 4H, or tour the Victorian-style gardens next door at the Bayless-Selby House Museum. Both the house museum and the African American Museum will open at 10 for tours. Awards are announced and prizes given at noon. Further information: 940.349.2883.

Friday Lecture at Courthouse Museum: Friday, July 16: 12:15: Jo Williams, Denton's nationally-known and acclaimed watercolorist and teacher, will present her program on *Pioneers in Modernism*. Jo curated the VAST show in January – February, 2010 and will speak about her research for that marvelous show.

Quilting Workshops: Quilting has quite a following: So many people made reservations for the January workshop that we scheduled additional workshops. Don't miss out on the next quilting workshop on Saturday, July 31 at 1:30 p.m. Call for reservations: 940.349.2865. Admission of \$5 includes the use of tools, instruction, and supplies. Take what you make!

August Programs: Dr. Gerry Veeder gave a program a few years

ago about how cookbooks tell so much more than "how much whatever to put in," and on Saturday, August 7, at 1:30 there will be a program along that line that will talk about how cookbooks spill the beans. \$5. For more information and reservations call 940.349.2865.

The ever-popular, and well-attended programs on etiquette will be continued Saturday, August 28, with a special emphasis on the significance of manners in the presence of others. It is free and will begin at 2 p.m.

Grant Received: The Greater Denton Arts Council has once again given a generous grant toward presentation of the Victorian-style Holiday Musicales that have been enjoyed since 2003 at the Bayless-Selby House Museum. This grant is supported by The Arts Guild of Denton, the Texas Commission on the Arts, and the National endowment for the Arts. The Musicales will feature local musicians performing in the Music Room on Saturday, December 11, 3:00 – 4:30 p.m. and Thursday, December 16, 6 – 8 p.m. Free.

Thinking Outside of the Acid-free Box: Museum Archival Collections

Dana Oglesby
Business/Museum Coordinator
The Republic of Texas Museum

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend the Annual Meeting of Texas Association of Museum due to the scholarship I received from the Collections Managers Committee. While I was there I had the opportunity to attend several different sessions, and the two most benefiting my current position at the Republic of Texas Museum were dealing with collections.

This session, chaired by Julie Holcomb of Baylor University of Waco, was quite informative on the importance and care of an institution's archival collection. Often curators and collections managers can see the archival collection as secondary, just paperwork or letters that tie into a collection's artifact; however, we must realize the wealth of information these artifacts hold and give them the respect they

deserve!

Having just recently accepted a rather large collection of family papers and history, this session hit home for me, as collections manager and curator of the Republic of Texas Museum. I find myself faced with some serious decisions to make regarding a rather odd and seemingly endless box of papers, letters, envelopes, documents, and their corresponding transcriptions. The key is to keep things all together and to be able to correctly relate them back to a collection's artifact so that they can sufficiently provide context to an object. It is these archives from which we do our research and write our exhibit labels; it is these archives that we actually do exhibit (sometimes) to provide a legitimate source of information. And it is these archives that need to be preserved just as our collections artifacts are, because it is through these documents that we can preserve the memory of our institution and our collection's artifacts.

Christina Stopka, Deputy Director of the Texas Ranger Hall of Fame and Museum in Waco, and Lorraine Stuart, Archives Director of the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston, presented some interesting points. The first was making sure these archives also fit within the scope of your museum. These archives should be accounted for in your donation forms and your deeds of gifts. They will be cataloged differently than museum collections, but they will still have an accession number, and you have to try and balance preservation with accessibility (done best with digitization of your archives collection), and accessibility for the museum staff as well as for public use (research). Most importantly is to remember that with museum objects, context is important but not essential; however, archives need to remain within their original record group (and order) to preserve context, which is essential.

They also stressed that archives are not always paper. All too often we associate archives with the letters and countless pages of correspondence referring to a particular artifact of significance; however, we need to realize that archives can encompass many different types of things, not just 2D things. Curators and collections managers need to realize that archival collections can and should be treated on a case-by-case basis, not to get so hung up on the theory

of it all, and to learn that it is ok to compromise and be flexible. Remember: real balance (and sanity) is achieved in consistency and availability.

News from The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

Lindsey Richardson
Collections Manager
The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

New Reading Room: Opening to the public in June 2010, the Reading Room overlooks Dealey Plaza and provides a reflective environment for people of all ages seeking information and understanding about the assassination and legacy of President John F. Kennedy. The Reading Room provides access to more than 4,000 books, magazines, newspapers and videos, and covers topics ranging from Kennedy's life and legacy to conspiracy theories to 1960s pop culture. For more about the collections available in the Reading Room, please visit this website: <http://www.jfk.org/go/reading-room/reading-room-highlights>.

New Museum Store + Café: In July 2010, The Sixth Floor Museum's new Museum Store + Café will open at 501 Elm Street. Overlooking Dealey Plaza, the Store will allow visitors to enrich their Museum visit by discovering books, media, unique gifts and souvenirs related to the life, era and legacy of JFK. The Café, featuring LaDuni Coffee Studio products such as coffee, fresh lemonade, pastries and frozen yogurt, will be the perfect place to begin and end Museum visits.

Upcoming CMC Workshop Preserving History's Stories: Creating and Caring for Oral Histories

As history passes us by everyday, we see the importance of recording our points of view of the events. As this trend grows, as care takers of collections we need to understand how best to

capture this source of information as well as provide the proper way to store and access these growing collections. Join CMC, Stephen Fagin, Associate Curator at The Sixth Floor Museum, and other speakers, on August 16th, 2010, at The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza for our Fall workshop *Preserving History's Stories: Creating and Caring for Oral Histories*.

Don't forget to mark your calendars for August 16th and keep an eye out for workshop registration forms to come out in late June. Please contact Kathleen Stiefel, CMC Vice-Chair, at kathleen.stiefel@thestoryoftexas.com for further information.

Connecting to Collections: Findings and Outcomes

Dana Oglesby
Business/Museum Coordinator
Republic of Texas Museum

On Wednesday, I attended the Connecting to Collections Initiative: Outcomes and Findings session, presented by Danielle Cunniff Plumer from the Texas State Library and Archives Commission, Austin. The focus of the session was on smaller institutions and how collections and their care often get overlooked due to lack of financial support. How many of us have artifacts just sitting in our collections areas, desperately needing to be restored, conserved or properly preserved? How many of us feel like we have to beg, borrow, or steal (for lack of a better word), to get our hands on proper archival supplies? How many of us have museum patrons who have no idea what kind of conditions our most valued artifacts are in? Too many-- and that is a problem!

Danielle challenged us to take the initiative and to take a more proactive approach to collections care. She offered simple suggestions, such as searching out grants geared towards proper artifact preservation and conservation; approaching our Board with suggestions and making sure they are aware of the situation; and most importantly, making our donors aware of our needs. People want to know that when they donate money to an institution that they are going to put it to good use. Starting up an "Adopt-an-Artifact" program (The Republic of Texas Museum hopes to have one in full

swing in the near future) lets your donors know exactly what their money is doing-- saving our artifacts for generations to come.

Laura Casey from the Museum Services Program of the Texas Historical Commission in Austin, and Gina Mink of AMIGOS in Dallas presented facts and numbers from a Focus Group they conducted and gave recommendations on how we can better manage our collections. They stressed using the resources within the IMLS (Institute of Museum and Library Sciences). Communication is key here, and so is bridging the gap between museums and libraries. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in other museum duties that we forget that collections care is the same, whether we work in a small history museum or a large state library archives. We need to start collaborating on the key principles of artifact care and preservation. It boils down to communication. We, as curators and collections managers, are the only voices for the artifacts, and if we do not let others know of their needs, how are we ever supposed to get on the right track to properly care for them?

Thoughts on the Relationship between CMC and TAM

Lindsey Richardson
Collections Manager
The Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza

At the annual meeting this year it was explained to all affinity groups that TAM's auditor had found irregularities in the way we were collectively reporting our finances. In the future, if an affinity group is affiliated with TAM, it needs to have clear, standardized accounting procedures that clearly demonstrate TAM is the parent organization. Affinity groups may elect to be independent – in which case they would no longer be affiliated with TAM and would need to set up their own 501(c)3 status, etc. Or they may be taken in under the TAM umbrella. This umbrella model will provide the sort of fiscal transparency the IRS requires. What is yet to be determined is exactly what model such a merger might follow – we could model ourselves after AAM, which bundles membership in the larger group with elected memberships (and dues) in affinity groups each year. Or we may end up with a slightly different model. We should know more later this summer. In the meantime, TAM has asked for our

input.

As we think about how our relationship with TAM might change because of these new accounting rules, here are some points to consider:

- **Staff, officers and communication.** TAM has a full-time staff of 2 people. CMC has a slate of 6 volunteer officers, one of whom acts as the Treasurer/Membership Coordinator for our organization. If TAM assumes responsibility for accepting payments such as membership dues and workshop fees, how much of that process will be automated? How will notice reach our Treasurer about payments made to CMC? What checks-and-balances will be built into this system so that CMC's books match TAM's account ?

The same questions about deposits apply to debits – when CMC needs to access our account to pay for annual meeting scholarships or reimbursements associated with workshop arrangements, how will we gain access to those funds? What will the turnaround time be for such withdrawals?

Kim Cupit – our new Chair, just recently served several years as our Treasurer – and other former Treasurers have stated that having a centralized accounting system can only help the person who holds that position. Accepting and tracking memberships, making many trips to banks to deposit checks, dealing with ever-changing bank policies and trying to transfer security clearance with every new round of office-holders – all of these onerous tasks would be made simpler if TAM was responsible for keeping track of money and membership, and dealing with banks and the IRS.

Ultimately, how do we ensure that TAM's and CMC's books both accurately reflect all payments in and all payments out? And how do we keep current with our roster of members?

- **Sponsorship.** For years as an affinity group with a certain amount of independence we have sponsored various things at the TAM annual meeting – booths in the Exhibit Hall,

special lunches or afternoon coffee breaks, etc. If CMC is brought closer into the TAM organization are these forms of sponsorship still appropriate or feasible? How will that work?

- **Collaboration.** It is possible that a standardized relationship with TAM and other affinity groups could foster easier forms of collaboration with other groups. For example, we might partner with TAMEC to put on workshops or with MELT to help sponsor special speakers at the annual meeting. The accounting for such joint ventures would be centralized so the logistics of payment and proper attribution could be streamlined.
- **Representation.** If CMC becomes to some extent enfolded into the TAM infrastructure, should we and other affinity groups each have our own representative on the TAM Council?
- **Philosophies.** Clarifying our affiliation with TAM can only be positive, but as we make it official, staff and officers of both groups should review missions and by-laws on both sides, ensuring that both parties are in agreement about our roles as advocates for the Texas museum community (in general, and for collections professionals in particular), and that we do not have any areas of potential conflict.
- **Memorandum of Understanding.** Will there be a standard document between each affinity group and TAM that clarifies the responsibilities, ethics and expectations in this new version of our relationship?

The exact format for the restructuring of TAM's relationships with its affinity groups has yet to be determined. But your feedback will help ensure that our concerns and ideas are included in the decision-making process. You can voice your questions or suggestions to us by emailing Lisa Worley at lworley@williamsonmuseum.org, and we will be sure to pass everything on to TAM.