

RCWR NEWSLETTER

Summer 1994

A Publication of the Registrars Committee-Western Region

STORAGE ON A SHOESTRING: RENOVATING A TEXTILE COLLECTION AREA

The time had come for upgrading the Riverside municipal Museum's textile and costume collection storage area. Armed with an IMS Conservation Grant, museum staff members, and a consulting conservator, used limited funds and extensive ingenuity to create a safe, stable environment for the collection.

Along the edge of the designated Textile Storage room portion of the museum's storage annex a 14' high by 24' long frame of 2x4s was assembled. This frame was divided into four vertical components. The size of the subdivisions vary to accommodate the salvaged metal rods from the old garment storage rack.

The top plate of the frame was secured to the ceiling with nails, and the bottom plate to the floor with cement nails. Depending on ceiling or floor material other securing methods could be used: such as bolting the frame to the rafter, or using lag-bolts on the floor.

The uprights were cut 1/8" longer than necessary to wedge against the top and bottom plates. To further insure stability 45° angle brackets were installed on each side of the uprights. Additional subdivision support was provided by horizontal 2x4s. To prevent damage from possible wood splinters all boards, that might come in contact with hanging garments, were covered with cotton muslin.

Galvanized 3/4" water pipe, recycled from the old garment storage rack, was used for the clothes rod. A stronger, more rigid material would be metal black gas pipe. The longest piece in use is 61", with minimal bowing, it supports the weight of approximately 20 items, including a heavy wool officer's coat from the Spanish American War. The rods are supported by 4x4" wooden blocks with 1" holes drilled in the

cont. page 2

HINDSIGHT

Reprinted from the Museum Computer Network Journal, SPECTRA, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring, 1984.

It has often been remarked, usually by me, that the first MCN museum catalogs were built the wrong way. That is, lengthwise instead of sidewise. What I mean is that one record was captured after another, in a sensible manner.

The time was 1968 and I was working at The Museum of Modern Art. For several years we had been retyping catalog cards in a standard format. Careful not to miss any accessions, we started at the beginning with number 1.29¹ and worked forward. The decision to use a computer and the GRIPHOS system was approached as a fresh start to the same process. The cards that had been retyped simply made our input easier.

The companion project was that of The Metropolitan Museum of Art.² Nearly every detail was handled in the same way at both museums. The

exception was that the Met's staff could plainly see the folly of starting with 1870. They proceeded from the present back in time.

We were both moving lengthwise, pulling one card after another, checking facts to a limited extent, excluding a few (too few) data categories as inappropriate for the "computer file" and transcribing what was left. We put whole records in returning to "finished" ones only to correct errors. We were beginners.

It doesn't take much imagination to guess, if anyone doesn't already know, the fate of the twin projects. The "little" one (26,000 records) at MoMA was finished—insofar as a growing file can be finished—in about two years, at too great cost and with too many "typos". The "big" twin never made it, stopping near the 15,000-record mark in 1971. In retrospect it never had a chance: the estimated goal had been a quarter million.³

Nobody thought of the alternative, which would have been to build *from left to right* instead of from top to

cont. page 10

TABLE OF CONTENTS

From the Chairperson	3
New Faces, New Places	4
Dates at a Glance	5
Candidates Statements	6
Reports From Our Nine States	9

center. One of each pair was cut to allow for pipe insertion.

To provide a clean, smooth wall surface and to form a dust barrier, cotton muslin was used to create a "giant garment bag". Vertical sheets of muslin were stapled to the wall, and connected to the top and bottom plates with nails.

Because large pieces of hanging muslin are heavy and awkward to work with, the front cover was divided vertically into four overlapping pieces. Borrowing from the design of a shower curtain the top was secured to the ceiling by means of rings through brass grommets. A short muslin valance was hung in front of this to serve as a dust barrier. Finally, a muslin-covered wooden kick plate will be installed to prevent the entrance of dust from under the bottom edge of the curtain.

Due to the configuration of the room, the assembled frame could not extend the full length of the room. Plywood boards scrapped from old exhibits were transformed into modular shelves and placed at each end of the frame. The shelves of these units were placed to accommodate two stacked textile storage boxes, which will allow easy retrieval by one person. The higher shelves were earmarked for hat boxes, as their small size and light weight facilitates handling from the steps of a 12' rolling ladder.

Quilts, coverlets, and other large textiles are currently stored on three rolled textile racks. These sealed plywood racks are enclosed on all sides except the front. An acid-free tissue-wrapped 1" wooden dowel is used as the center of the roll. The three racks are of varying lengths, but many of the longer items still require a fold. The textiles are rolled right-side out and are loosely tied with strips of white cotton fabric. White cotton sheets cover the fronts of the racks. Consulting Conservator, Catherine C. McLean, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, has suggested the following rack modifications: two of the existing racks

should be joined and converted to allow the largest pieces to be rolled without folds; some of the quilts, particularly crazy quilts and others made with deteriorating weighted silks should be stored flat. These quilts will be carefully folded around padded cotton-knit covered bolsters and housed on shelves.

The 1" dowels in current use with the rolled textiles will be replaced with 4" diameter, acid-free textile rolling tubes. The greater diameter of the rods will help to alleviate the stress of rolling on the artifact. The rolled textile will be covered with a mylar sheet, open at the ends for air circulation, and tied loosely with cotton fabric or twill tape. The cotton sheet covers will be retained for the front of the rack to cut down on potential light damage and dust accumulation.

Other conservation procedures have been implemented in the room as well. A form-fitting filter made of cheesecloth covers the air conditioner vent. Two other non-functional ceiling vents have been covered, thus cutting down on insect and dust migration. Additional weatherstripping was applied around the two doorways leading to the main history collection storage and archival storage. UV filter sleeves were installed to cover the existing fluorescent lights.

Specific artifact treatment includes the following: cotton muslin garment bags have been made for each fur item; muslin-covered padded hangers are being used with all hanging garments; and all textile items have had their old paper tags replaced with sewn-in cotton twill-tape labels. To minimize garment disturbance an attempt was made to standardize label placement (dependent upon item condition). Because people have a tendency to hang clothes facing to the left, and tend to approach garment racks in a left-to-right manner, the labels were placed in the left sleeve or cuff.

Acid-free textile storage boxes, with items carefully packed with acid-free tissue, are being used for flat storage. Box label information includes

accession numbers and brief descriptions of the garments contained within. Three textile storage boxes (60" x 18" x 5") and one archival storage carton (12" x 15" x 10") can fit on one shelf of our custom-made "salvage storage shelf."

Discarded motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle racks, obtained from dealers, were used as shelf frames. These rectangular metal frames, each with three cross braces, were coupled with four perforated steel angled-corner brackets to form a frame. After cleaning the components and wiping them down with a degreaser, they were sprayed with a rust inhibitor, primer, and enamel. Tempered masonite was inserted for shelves. Shelf size can be modified by cutting down the motorcycle racks, or additional shelves can be added through the use of longer corner brackets. Cross braces can be added across the back for more stability. Plywood or particle board are alternative shelf materials; however, be sure to properly seal these woods to prevent the off-gassing of harmful vapors.

The room is furnished with a large work table, the top of which is covered with a cotton mattress pad sewn to fit. A 6' folding table is also on hand to provide extra table space for examining garments, staging exhibitions, etc. Necessary items such as cloth measuring tapes, needles, thread, and scissors have been gathered into a portable kit for use within the textile room and on locale during exhibit installations.

The goal of this project was to provide an environmentally safe storage room for the textile and costume collection of the Riverside Municipal Museum. It began with choosing a storage room that needed few structural changes. Next, brainstorming along conservational guidelines provided the framework for the space-efficient design of the hanging garment rack and modular shelving units. The professional consultation of the

conservator helped to expand the scope of identified problems within the collection. Her proposals for treatment provided solutions to these problems. Finally, the clever use of a number of salvaged items allowed more of the limited monies to be spent on conservation materials such as textile storage boxes. Faced with limited resources, creative use of recycled materials can become a means to a successful end.

*Bryn Marie Barabas
Registrar
Riverside Municipal Museum
Riverside, California*

CHAIR REPORT - May 1991

There is a new job opening in RC-WR: *Newsletter Publisher!* We're so sorry to see Dan Ratcliff go...but we wish him well! Three years ago, thanks to Dan,

our publication took on a new masthead and a new look. Please call me if you would like to try your hand...

On June 19th, the Registrars Committee will sponsor an informative workshop focusing on **IMS Conservation Grants**. It will take place at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. As always, all who are interested are encouraged to attend. Please direct inquiries to Sara Kennington at UCLA, (213) 825-4563.

You will soon be receiving your RC-WR Ballot. Please fill it out as soon as possible and send it back. Our responsiveness shows that RC-WR is an active organization and our participation is reported at annual AAM-RC and WMC board meetings. The Nominations Chair for the 1991 RC-WR elections, Ted Greenberg will announce the results of the RC-WR elections at the Registrars Committee

Annual Meeting on September 24th at the WMC Meeting.

Ted Greenberg will also serve as Chair for our pre-conference session on September 23rd, "Perspectives on Collection Values," which will deal with appraisals. Assisting him will be new joint Nevada State Representatives, Gloria Harjes and Shawn Hall, both of the Nevada State Museum in Carson City. Among the speakers will be Bill Allen and Sara Conklin-Halaj.

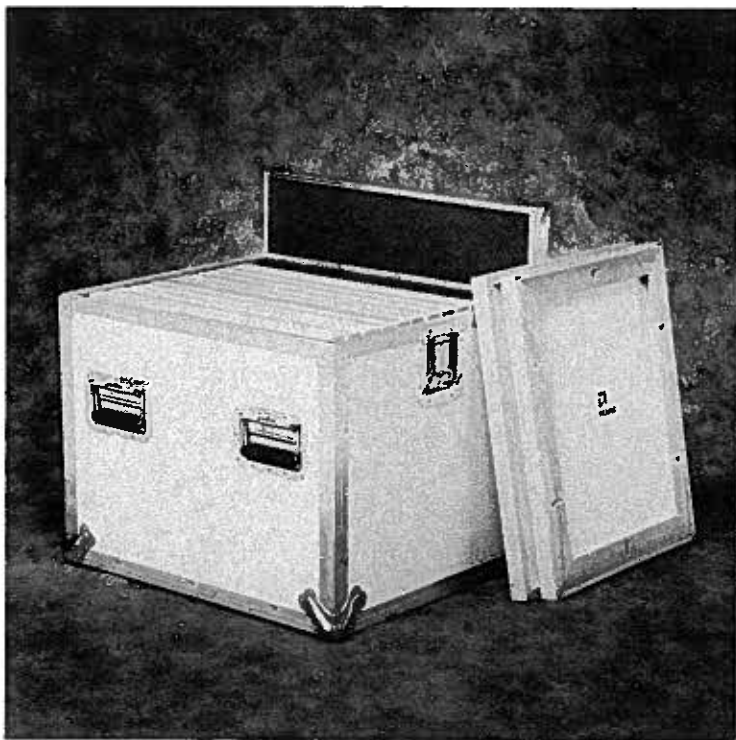
PUT LAS VEGAS ON YOUR CALENDAR:

Sept. 23 - RC-WR
PRECONFERENCE

Sept. 24-27 WMC Annual Meeting

Sept. 24, Noon-2:00, RC-WR Annual Meeting

Sept. 26, 7:15-8:45, RC-WR Breakfast



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Sept. 26, Day 2 Exchange Forum (RC-WR is collaborating with other Standing Professional Committees (SPCs) on at least two presentations. This is WMC's response to a hands-on component.)

Good show! to Gail Joyce for her part in the "Natural Disaster Workshop" sponsored by the American Institute for Conservation in New Mexico, June 3 and 4. Thanks to Debra Cooper and the Oakland Museum for making "Image Access; Computer Access to Visual Collections," available to all Registrars Committee members on May 3rd. On May 4th Sara Kennington presented a workshop at the Fowler Museum of Cultural History, UCLA. The workshop centered on the museum's move into new quarters and the resultant Inventory and Conservation Survey.

Note, conference proposals for the next AAM meeting are due this fall, WMC proposals are due in winter.

REMEMBER! All museums are encouraged to supply AAM with information regarding donations received during the 1991 tax "window." Hopefully, this information will help to influence a permanent broadening and extension of the tax deduction.

*Faye Jonason
RC-WR Chair*

EDITOR'S COMMENT

As editor for the past three years it has been my privilege to work with Dan Ratcliff, RC-WR *Newsletter* Publisher. The new look to the *Newsletter* has been entirely his production and I relished the ease with which I could do my job knowing he would take my many pages and make them look very professional. Thanks Dan, it's been a good team and I wish you much contentment in this next segment on your path.

TREASURER'S COLUMN

In an attempt to save on mailing costs, membership renewal forms for 1991 were printed in both the Winter and Spring issues of the *Newsletter*, rather than doing a separate mailing to the

membership. I was pleased with the response to the renewal forms, but would appreciate your comments on using this system again in the future. About 50% of the membership responded by sending in their 1991 dues. A mailing went out to the other 50% on April 30. This *Newsletter* is being mailed only to current members who have paid dues for 1991.

The major responsibility of the treasurer is to maintain up-to-date, easily accessible membership records. I now have all of the 1991 membership information in my own computer, and will soon be able to "cut the cord" to the computer service the RC-WR has used for the past four years. This should result in a substantial saving for the RC-WR. I will now be generating the mailing labels and various membership lists for the organization out of my office.

Every few months I will send an updated membership listing to each of our state representatives. Please contact me if your need mailing labels or have questions about members in your region.

RC-WR Chair Faye Jonason and I have been discussing the 1991 Membership Roster. We will be working on it over the summer and plan to have it printed in time for distribution at the WMC Annual Meeting in Las Vegas at the end of September. Rosters will be mailed out to the members not attending the meeting.

The RC-WR travel stipend guidelines were published in the Winter 1991 issue of the *Newsletter* I am sad to report that no one has applied for travel assistance through that program since the guidelines were printed. The RC-WR will make stipends available to members to assist with travel to workshops and meetings. Please refer to the guidelines if you would like to be considered as a stipend recipient.

*Kathy Clewell
Treasurer, RC-WR*

NEW FACES

Cathryn Westfel, former Administrative Assistant and Registrar, Schneider Museum, Southern Oregon State College, Ashland, is the new Executive Registrar with the Whatcom Museum, Bellingham, WA. Welcome Cathryn!

Deborah Slaney has filled the position of Registrar at The Heard Museum, Phoenix. She was formerly the Registrar at the Anniston Museum of Natural History in Anniston, Alabama. Welcome Deborah!

FORMS CLEARINGHOUSE UPDATE - CALL FOR NEW SAMPLE FORMS

The clearinghouse maintains a file of sample museum forms from a wide variety of institutions. Any member of RC-WR may request these forms by contacting Welles Franklin, Forms Clearinghouse Coordinator (see officers page for address).

If you are in the process of designing a new form, consider requesting samples of forms from other museums. There is no cost, just send a stamped envelope with your return address. The clearinghouse has samples of many forms, including the following: deed of gift, loan agreements, photography releases, damage reports, and many others. Those who contribute or request forms represent a wide range of institutions, from small historical societies to major art museums.

To keep our forms relevant we need new examples. Most of the forms are now four or five years old. It is easy to contribute; just send a voided blank form to the clearinghouse coordinator. If your form is computer-generated, please indicate what program was used to create it. With everyone's contributions the clearinghouse will continue to provide a means for sharing our ideas with each other.

DATES AT A GLANCE

June 4-5	Disaster Preparedness Workshop	Honolulu, HI
June 9-21	Western Archives Institute	Berkeley, CA
June 13-14	Washington Museum Association Meeting	Pullman, WA
June 15	Heritage Resources Center Workshop "Generating Earned Income"	Pullman, WA
June 15-20	Association of Living Hist. Farms and Agricultural Museums Annual Meeting	Alberta, Canada
June 16-27	National Hist. Pub. & Records Commission Institute for Editing Hist. Documents	Madison, WI
June 19	RC-WR/SC "Conservation Surveys"	LACMNH
June 12	Oklahoma Historical Society Seminar on Museum Security	Oklahoma City, OK
June 19-30	Santa Barbara Botanical Garden Symposium on Contemporary Designs for CA Gardens	Santa Barbara, CA
June 30-July 5	Museum Management Program "Critical Issues in Museum Management"	Boulder, CO
July 19-21	Creative Arts Dept., Purdue University 9th Annual Conf. on Textiles	West Lafayette, IN
August 21-24	AASLH Meeting	Dearborn, MI
Sept. 23	RC-WR Pre-WMC Conference Session "Perspectives on Coll. Values"	Las Vegas, NV
Sept. 24	RC-WR Annual Meeting 12:00-2:00	Las Vegas, NV
Sept. 26	RC-WR Breakfast 7:15-8:45	Las Vegas, NV
Sept. 24-27	WMC Annual Meeting	Las Vegas, NV
Oct. 22-26	Museums Alaska Meeting "Preservation and Dissemination of Cultural Heritage"	Haines, AK

DEADLINES:

June 10	NEW	Utilization of Museum resources, collection presentation, education and catalogs
July 15	NEH	Travel to Collections
July 26	IMS, MAP II	(Collections Management)
Aug. 1	NEA	Care of Collections: conservation and collection management
Aug. 1	NSF	Informal Science Education
Aug. 16	IMS, MAP III	(Public Dimension)
Sept. 1	NEH	Reference Materials Program
Sept. 16	NEA	Care of Collections - conservation and collection maintenance
Nov. 1	NEH	National Heritage Preservation Program
Dec. 1	NEH	Preservation of Library and Archival Materials and U.S. Newspaper Program
Dec. 1	NSF	Informal Science Education

**CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT
- For the Office of
Chairperson, RC-WR**

Working as Registrar of the Armand Hammer Foundation and as Chief Registrar of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, I have had the opportunity to visit a great number of museums and work along side museum registrars around the world. Observing the high standards of my colleagues working in those museums has reinforced the pride I feel as a member of our profession.

Since the 1970s, I have seen many changes in the nature and scope of responsibility assigned to registrars and the respect accorded the profession. Nevertheless, there remains a continuing need to inform our colleagues and the general public about the appropriate role of the museum registrar. There exists a wide disparity in registrarial methods and procedures practiced at various museums. Despite the diversity of objects entrusted in our care, we share certain fundamental responsibilities. We must continue to develop common standards and practices by which these responsibilities are discharged.

As public awareness increases the accountability of museums, as cultural exchanges multiply, as grant writing becomes a greater prerequisite for survival, as legal, tax and financial matters force registrars to become increasingly specialized, the demands and expectations placed on the registrar will expand correspondingly. It is only by sharing resources, improving communication, providing support and maintaining a high professional profile that our progress can continue. It is my desire as Chairperson of the Registrar's Committee-Western Region to be a part of that process.

*Lella F. Smith, Registrar
Natural History Museum of
Los Angeles County*

**CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT
- For the Office of Secretary,
RC-WR**

I have been the Registrar at the Idaho State Historical Society and a member of the RC-WR since 1985. Joining the RC-WR was one of the first and most important things I did as a new registrar in Idaho. I am also a member of the Idaho Association of Museums and currently hold an office.

As your RC-WR Secretary for the past two years, I have grown to respect more and more the power of our organization as an educational tool and resource. The RC-WR benefits not only registrars but also many other regional museum professionals. Being involved in both state and regional organizations, I have seen for myself the benefits of working together to better professionalism in the museum field. I would like the opportunity to continue to promote and build the RC-WR resource network. I am currently working on updating the membership survey which provides us with needed information concerning the varied expertise of our members. This is only one of the vital services our organization provides for museum professionals currently working in our region. I would also like to work with our membership to further communication within our organization. I appreciate and thank you for your consideration. I have enjoyed serving as Secretary and would like to continue.

*Jody Hawley Ochoa, Registrar
Idaho State Historical Society
RC-WR Secretary*

**CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT
- For the Office of Treasurer,
RC-WR**

Serving as treasurer of the RC-WR since the last election has given me the opportunity to fully participate in one of the strongest professional museum organizations in the country. It is my hope to continue in this office and assist in maintaining our current programs

while helping to develop new benefits for our members.

The Treasurer of the RC-WR functions not only as the keeper of the funds, but also as the membership secretary of the organization. When elected to an office, there is usually a transition period, and as such, I continued to use the computer service that had been used by the previous RC-WR treasurer to hold the date base for the membership. Earlier this year, I began to input all current membership information into my own computer. All of the 1991 membership information is now handled on our system at the Palm Springs Desert Museum. The past years of membership history data held by the computer service will be transferred to a disk that can be accessed through our computer. Handling all of this information in my own office should result in a substantial saving for the RC-WR treasury. We are a large and active professional group. Keeping membership lists accurate and up to date is the greater part of the treasurer's job.

I have been registrar at the Palm Springs Desert Museum for over twelve years. My membership in the RC-WR goes back to 1981. I served two years as the Southern California state representative before becoming treasurer. I would be honored to continue in the office of treasurer for the next two years. Thank you very much for your consideration.

*Kathy Clewell, Registrar
Palm Spring Desert Museum
RC-WR Treasurer*

**CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT
- For the Office of Treasurer,
RC - WR**

Although I am new to the Western Region, I have been working in museum registration for over five years. I believe it is necessary to become involved with the local committee and other Registrars in order to help each other with the exchange of information and the development of new ideas. The opportunity to become a part of the

process that will shape the future of our profession should not be taken lightly or viewed as just one more thing to do.

As treasurer, I will continue to maintain the quality and accessibility of the office while striving to increase membership and involvement in the committee. As we work together we will become the dynamic, innovative organization that will take museum registration into the new century.

*Teresa Ridgeway, Registrar
Bowers Museum*

PUBLISHER POSITION OPEN

The RC-WR is searching for an enthusiastic and creative individual to produce the RC-WR *Newsletter* four times a year.

Brief job description: Upon receiving copy from the *Newsletter* editor, the publisher designs each layout and coordinates typesetting, printing and mailing. In addition, the publisher distributes advertising rates and coordinates details associated with placing ads.

Please contact RC-WR Chairperson Faye Jonason at (213) 744-2023 for more details.

CASSETTE LENDING LIBRARY

A four-tape set has been added to the Cassette Lending Library. It is a recording of the December 11, 1989, "Earthquake Symposium: Surviving the Quake of '89," held at the Gund Theater, University Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive, University of California at Berkeley and sponsored by the RC-WR, Northern California.

The cassettes can be borrowed for a period of two weeks by members in good standing. Return postage will be the responsibility of the borrower. Requests should be sent to: Louis Goldich, Registrar, San Diego Museum of Art, P. O. Box 2107, San Diego, California 92112-2107.

PROJECT SUCCESS THROUGH PROBLEM SOLVING WORKSHOP

On March 17, a three-day workshop began in Santa Monica, California. Of the 25 attendees from the United States and Canada, eight were from the Western Region. Most of the attendees work in registration, but some are in administration or exhibits. The workshop leader for the last two years has been Will Phillips of Faust Management Corporation.

As stated in the workshop binder, the primary purpose of the workshop was to increase one's ability to solve problems. A secondary purpose was to present the basics of project management and integrate these basics with the problem solving tools.

Mary Case, the Director of the Office of the Registrar, Smithsonian Institution, has worked with Faust Management Corporation to produce the workshop over the last two years. According to Ms. Case, the very positive reaction by participants to the workshop philosophy and tools "has encouraged us to seek ways of continuing and/or expanding this valuable resource that Will Phillips brings to the museum community."

One of the greatest strengths of the workshop was the academic approach. The sessions were more than clever ideas or gimmicky outlines designed to impress the attendees. We were presented with ideas supported by documented management experiences and research. Acknowledgements for concepts and exercises used in the workshop were respectfully cited at the outset. A substantial bibliography also supported the course content.

Will's enthusiasm and commitment to his challenge as workshop leader was outstanding. With phenomenal energy he facilitated the training prior to our return to our workplaces. I found that I returned with far more than a binder full of techniques. I learned perspectives and approaches of a fundamental nature that have helped immensely to get to the root of conducting business on a day-to-day basis: staff interaction, running meetings, making plans and making decisions. These building blocks have led to an improved work experience and will no doubt continue to contribute to effective problem solving.

If you haven't participated, find out more about next year's workshop, and make an effort to be there! If you have participated, continue to put what

ARTICLES/REPORTS FOR THE FALL RC-WR NEWSLETTER ARE DUE

August 10, 1991

DISCLAIMER:

The RC-WR *Newsletter* acts a source of information. The printing of an article does not mean that RC-WR endorses any suggested treatment, product, or service.

you've learned to good use and let your colleagues know how much you gained from Project Success Through Problem Solving.

*Phil Stoiber
Associate Registrar
Seattle Museum*

CAM ANNUAL MEETING - LOS ANGELES - JULY 18-19, 1991

The 1991 Annual Meeting of the California Association of Museums will open at the Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum, located in Griffith Park, on Thursday, July 18. The opening session will be an exciting presentation by Van Romans, head of the Walt Disney Imagineering group, followed by tours of the museum illustrating how the Imagineering process can be applied to planning a cultural and educational institution. A real old-fashioned Chuckwagon Barbecue lunch will follow. Two afternoon sessions will deal with practical aspects of caring for collections when the budget is tight, and with the critical ethical issues of collecting and collection interpretation.

At the end of the "business day," buses will carry CAM participants to the top of the park for a private party at the Griffith Observatory, recognized for its astronomical interactive exhibits and popular planetarium and lasarium theater presentation. A buffet supper in the galleries will be followed by a planetarium show. The evening will end with a sumptuous dessert buffet, hosted by Bill Allen of Allen Insurance Associates and the opportunity to view the stars from the Observatory's telescope.

On Friday morning participants will meet at the Southwest Museum, located just north of downtown Los Angeles. After enjoying a southwestern style breakfast, there will be time to examine one of the premier collections of Native American and Southwestern artifacts in the country.

The first session of the day will cover

corporate sponsorship issues, creating sponsorship relationships, and investigating the ethical and legal boundaries a museum must consider to avoid "selling out" its mission while trying to obtain funding or donations. The second session on Friday will cover current censorship issues. The line between sensitivity to community standards and artistic license, some practical suggestions about the pitfalls of allowing non-museum organizations to use museum facilities, and a report on a successful lawsuit against NEA restrictions will be discussed.

Watch for a detailed brochure and registration materials in the mail the first week of June. Register early! If you are not on the CAM mailing list and wish more information, send your name, address and phone number to the CAM office.

California Association of Museums
9000 Exposition Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90007
Telephone (213) 744-3343
FAX (213) 746-2999

A block of rooms is reserved for CAM Annual Meeting participants at a corporate discounted rate at the Burbank Airport Hilton Hotel. Hollywood-Burbank is the most convenient airport to use for this part of Los Angeles. Transportation will be available from the hotel to the meeting locations. To reserve your room, call (818) 843-6000 or (800) 643-7400 soon.

WESTERN MUSEUMS CONFERENCE SPRING 1991 MEMBERSHIP CAMPAIGN

Beginning in May we initiated a New Member Drive for WMC, with the goal of recruiting 250 new members by June 30. We're calling the campaign WMC 1000, for if successful, this New Member Drive will bring our membership above the 1,000 mark for the first time. Your contribution to this project will guarantee its success.

Here's how it works. We will send you three membership enrollment

forms and return envelopes, along with general information on WMC's activities and benefits. Using this material, we ask you to recruit at least three new members for WMC.

Whom do you ask? We suggest you appeal to colleagues at work or in your community, to active museum community volunteers, to vendors who serve our profession, and to anyone else you think has an interest in museums and would benefit from joining WMC.

It's that easy. In return, we want to say thank you for being a part of WMC 1000 by offering you two free months of membership for each new member you recruit.

To let us know you will participate, simply write to: Larry G. Westfall, Administrative Coordinator, Western Museum Conference, 5801 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90036, or call him at (213) 857-6307. Larry will be happy to answer any questions and to assist you in obtaining to forms.

NEW STATE REPRESENTATIVES

A big welcome to Glenda Harjes and Shawn Hall, Nevada State Museum, Carson City. They are the new co-reps for the state of Nevada!

NEW CATALOGUE OUT NOW

Look for the new spring catalogue from the AAM Bookstore for Museum Professionals. It contains 30 new titles covering topics of value to museum professionals of all fields and specialties. If you have not received a copy by the end of March write or call:

AAM Bookstore
1225 Eye St., NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005
Telephone (202) 289-1927

REPORTS FROM OUR NINE STATES:

ALASKA: Judith Hauck

The 1991 Museums Alaska will be held in Haines, October 22-26. The program is in the development stages but will focus on preservation and dissemination of cultural heritage. For more information please contact Michael Edgington at the Clausen Memorial Museum in Petersburg, (907) 772-3598.

Two bills pertaining to museums have recently been introduced in the Alaska legislature. HB 189 would establish the Alaska heritage endowment fund for acquisitions and HB 296 is an act relating to human remains and funerary objects. Both issues have drawn much attention but have not passed through in final form at this date.

The Alaska State Museum will begin to update the HVAC system in the fall of 1991. Because of the asbestos insulation that was used throughout the building the museum will have to close for one month during the initial work.

A year long weaving project that required over 7500 hours of volunteer work was celebrated with a dedication that included Tlingit dancers. A "Raven's Tail" robe has been completed. "Raven's Tail" is the earliest form of weaving of the native people of the Northwest Coast. The robe will be a part of a special collection of the Alaska State Museum.

SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: Sarah Kennington

The RC-WR/SC had its first 1991 workshop/meeting on Saturday, May 4 at the UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History. The museum's Collections Management staff told of the recent move of their 150,000+ artifacts. The project involved a comprehensive inventory and an IMS

funded conservation survey. The use of a computerized database to track and record the process, and the compact storage system were demonstrated.

This first-ever RC-WR/SC Saturday meeting was attended by 40 members from as far south as San Diego, as far west as Catalina Island, as far east as Palm Springs, and as far north as Santa Barbara.

For those contemplating a move this was a very beneficial day. Further, many participants walked away with more than just information. Large plastic bags filled with packing material to be recycled at their institutions were offered by the Fowler staff.

The second 1991 workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, June 19, at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History. Conservation surveys will be the topic. Lella Smith, Registrar, and Sharon Blank, LACMNH Conservator, will host the event. They will be joined by Diane Perloff, Collections Manager/Curator, California Museum of Science and Industry; Robin Chamberlin, UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History Conservator; and Glenn Wharton, a private conservator. The panel members will discuss their IMS and NIC sponsored conservation surveys. A report of this workshop will appear in the next *Newsletter*

HAWAII: Janet Ness

"Museums Alive" was the theme of the Hawaii Museums Association spring conference in Honolulu. Held on May 2-5, the conference addressed ramifications of exhibiting living collections. Two days of presentations were supplemented by a post conference workshop on interpreting science and natural history. The final day provided opportunities for field trips.

The March breakfast meeting for registrars hosted by Deborah Dunn and Janet was well attended. This is

planned to be a quarterly event.

June 4-5 are the dates of a Disaster Preparedness workshop in Honolulu. Sally Buchana, Assistant Director for Preservation Services, University of Pittsburgh Library System, is the visiting consultant. Participants are encouraged to produce written plans for their institutions through the workshop process, a follow-up session will be held in October.

IDAHO: Mary Sutter

The Idaho Association of Museums annual meeting on April 26-27 was well attended. Of major consideration on the agenda was the planning of an Idaho Traveling Exhibition program. The membership also approved the formation of a professional practices and museum assessment committee.

Several Idaho registrars, including Dorothy Dahlgren, Museum of North Idaho, Coeur d'Alene; Sandra Hanson, Cambridge Museum, Cambridge; Glenda Bean, Owhyee County Historical Society, Murphy; and Lora Feucht, Luna House Museum, Lewiston; will be participating in a state-wide program to bring Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibitions to Idaho. Each registrar's museum will be hosting 2 SITES exhibits over the next two years.

OREGON: Loretta Harrison

During a lunch-time session at the March Oregon Museums Association meeting in Corvallis, registrars and collections managers discussed workshop possibilities. As a result of this well-attended productive session a one-day workshop is being planned on ethics of textile conservation. Sandra Troon, Oregon Textile Workshop Conservator, Portland, will conduct the seminar. Watch for registration information in a future issue of the *RC-WR Newsletter*.

bottom. Specifically that would mean starting all the records at once with, of course, very little data in each. It would mean omitting not only "unimportant"(?! data but also some of the most vital—for the nonce. It would have entailed working through the files more than once, in what are called "multiple passes," consulting the same old cards and ledgers more than once. Some view this as inefficient, labor intensive and the like; and for small collections I have to agree.

The method also seems totally impractical at first sight. One imagines "starting all the new records at once" to involve consulting all the old ones, though taking just a little from each. That's not what is meant.

I would start by creating a skeletal framework of short entries, each holding a number, some blank space and nothing else. The aim would be to account for all the numbers and to hell, for now, with objects. What makes this reasonable is that museum numbers are *always assigned in uninterrupted series*. That's basic inventory control: a gap between numbers equals a missing object. If we have 1982.347, then *we must* account for 1982.346.

Series don't have to correspond to a calendar year's transactions though that's common. Whatever the organizing principle, each series begins with a serial number 1 (viz. 1.29) and ends with some recorded final value. The most usual convention is the one used at the Metropolitan, where number 1972.3.34 would have to be the thirty-fourth item of the third acquisition transaction of calendar 1972. If this number exists, then 1972.3.33 and 1972.2 do too. Given the museum's numbering rules and the end number of each series, the full set of dummy accession records can be created automatically in a matter of minutes, even for an enormous collection.

This may seem useless but it's not. From that instant the system has enough information to tell you, at any time, what is unaccounted for and what

information is missing from each record. It can ask you, on-line, for needed data in order: "source of 1.29?...source of 2.29?...3.29?..." It can keep your project on the track. It can bug you! Provided someone hasn't bugged it.

Since consecutive acquisitions are usually related (e.g., gifts of one donor), the bulk of an accession file can be created by copying data forward from one record to the next. For each entry in order, the system may display the next accession number and allow you to indicate, perhaps by a single keystroke, whether all the data are the same as in the preceding entry. Often they are, excepting of course the number. If not, there is still the option of copying the preceding entry and then retyping only data that are not the same. It's rare that this won't save time.

The discussion thus far relates more to accession files (transaction) than to catalogues (objects). This is sound, for accession files undergird all other collection records. Besides, they contain data such as source, method of acquisition, and number of objects covered, that should be set down first, being 1) essential, 2) likely to be known at the time of acquisition, and 3) just as likely to be forgotten if not recorded promptly.

Another nice feature of starting with accessions is that many of them are void, in one way or another, and once that fact is known, demand no further attention. Account for this stuff early and get it off your back. It includes items foolishly numbered in anticipation but never received. We all do it at least once. There are too the burnt, lost and stolen as well as things deaccessioned in what Alfred Barr used to call the catabolic process.

Sooner or later, however, a museum's attention is bound to focus upon objects and their significance; and here a technical problem often arises. It stems from the fact that, while each accession has one source, one mode of acquisition, one acceptance date, etc., it may include

any number of objects with any number of descriptions.

This may or may not demand starting a separate catalog file, joined to the accession file. "Joined" is a computer science term meaning that items in one file can borrow data from another; and in this case it means that an object record wouldn't have to carry such data as source, mode of acquisition, etc., provided the object file were joined to an accession file. There might be hundreds or thousands of objects in one accessioned lot, every one of their records borrowing data from just one place in a joined accession file. If, for example, the object number were 1980.49.4, the object entry would borrow data from accession record 1980.49.

At some museums, e.g., MoMA, it's customary to make nearly every artistic entity a separate accession, even when hundreds come from one legacy. This has the advantage that no second file is really needed and the disadvantage that the same accession data gets repeated exactly, in one object record after another, sometimes for very long series. With the more usual "lot" system, used by the Metropolitan and described above, it's hard to see how separate accession and object files would not be necessary.

Either way, with one file or two, accession data come first. Just one pass should quickly capture up to a half dozen basic data elements per accession, mostly by the simple expedient of copying forward from one record to the next. On-line this can be done very rapidly.

First among these elements, and absolutely vital, is the status of the number (e.g., void, canceled or active) and, for active numbers, the count of objects included. This count is the basis for building an object file. It tells how many descriptive records will be needed for each accession record and even what their numbers will be. Thus if accession 1980.49 has an item count of 4, then space will be needed for four

object records and they will initially contain the numbers 1980.49.1, 1980.49.2, 1980.49.3, and 1980.49.4 respectively.

Knowing this, your system is again in a position to build, again automatically, a skeletal file, this time for objects. Each record in it contains a number and, with this, *the implication that somewhere in the museum is an object with that number literally on it, wherever possible in paint!*

Just as a number's status and item count are prime targets for capture on the very first rapid pass through the accessions, a broad "object classification" is the key datum in an object file. It might, for example, be a taxonomic name or, for a man-made object, some term out of Chenhall's *Nomenclature*...⁴ The reason is that the classification can determine 1) who is responsible for the object, 2) where, in general, it will be kept and 3) what additional data should appear in the record. If, for example, 1980.49.4 is classified "drawing," then the well-trained computer will give you no peace until you either name the artist or admit you can't, with the ubiquitous "UNK." Or something equally silly. The system will have to accept provisional ignorance, once in a while, rather than bring data collection to a halt.

Otherwise the principles mentioned above apply as well to object data as to accessions. Again consecutive numbers often belong to similar objects so that much data can be carried forward from record to record. And again initiative may pass, in a sense, to an automated, interactive data entry system, once it knows (from the classification) which objects to ask which questions about.

I omit rather obvious variations that would accommodate such special cases as large blocks of void accession numbers, complexly organized natural history collections, "permanent loan" collections and other eccentricities.

Other notable advantages to sidewise file building:

1) There is no need for premature decisions. You don't have to think about what will go in on the second and subsequent passes until the first is done. The value of this can't be exaggerated. Many a museum data base project has been delayed or killed by pointless wrangling over data that might never have been wanted and decisions that couldn't be implemented. One's perceptions of what is practical and necessary change wonderfully, with the onset of experience.

2) "Global" queries become possible very early: upon completion of the first pass. A global query is one that needs a complete data base. The query "What kind of object is 72.2.3?" is not global. All it needs is one object entry, if that entry is the right one. The query "What spinning wheels are in the collection?" is global because the answer is not complete as long as a single item remains to be recorded. As a class, global queries are far more useful, not to say "satisfying," than others; and the most discouraging aspect of museum data base building is the interminable time it may take to cross the magical threshold into global querying.

3) No fear of that dread monster, the unfinishable data base.

Finally, remember that data bases serve research, not vice versa. To put research ahead (by *requiring* data that aren't at hand) is to stall both data capture and, ultimately, any genuine research that it might have supported.

David Vance

¹ MoMA is one of the few museums to write the serial part before the year, like most museums' loan numbers. The collection was started in 1929 with the gift of a Max Beckmann *Self Portrait* in drypoint.

² MANDEL, Hanni, "Scholarship on disks: the Museum's computerized catalogue," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, v29, n4, pp 185-190.

³ Excluding the enormous Print Room and Costume Institute collections.

⁴ CHENHALL, R.G. *Nomenclature for Museum Cataloging: A System for Classifying Man-Made Objects*, Nashville, 1978. AASLH.

FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGISTS

As a result of the request for more professional information concerning repatriation issues at last year's annual RC-WR meeting, the following list of Forensic Anthropologists was compiled by Margaret Bartholomew of NOR-CAM (California Association of Museums). There are, of course, many throughout the country, the ones listed are the ones in the western part of the country.

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