



Registrar's Committee

Western Region

American Association
of Museums

Winter/Spring

1980/1981

Chairperson's Report: 1980

Michael Bell was elected Chairperson in October 1979, and enthusiastically began planning and appointing. Appointees were given specific job descriptions. Michael left the Western Region in March and I became Chairperson.

Our first newsletter, sent all over the region as a membership solicitation, had noticeable and beneficial effects on the size of our membership.

The by-laws require appointment of a Communications Chairperson to keep membership rosters and send out regular mailings. Because the newsletter is a major activity, I appointed both a communications person to keep the roster, Sandy Troon, and an editor to concentrate on the newsletter, Harvey Freer.

At the WRC in October, the members of RC-WR present indicated a preference for two newsletters per year. Pat Nauert suggested we have certain members responsible for reading periodicals and noting articles of interest to registrars. With such references added as a newsletter feature, we can increase its usefulness. If you don't volunteer to be one of these readers, we'll have to draft you.

Two persons agreed to head the task forces for the next year: Betty Smart, on deaccessioning and solutions to deposited items unclaimed; Francine Bonello, on taking inventory - problems, methods, processes. Here's another way for you to contribute to and benefit from the Registrar's Committee: Join a task force.

To facilitate area programs, Louis Goldich agreed to be Southern California rep and to generate activity and/or meetings there.

Be sure to renew membership before you have a chance to forget or spend that \$5 on something frivolous.

Regards,
Kittu Gates, Chairperson

P.S. I move we find a less cumbersome word for "Chairperson"

REGISTRARS' COMMITTEE
WESTERN REGION
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS

WINTER/SPRING

1980 - 1981

1980 WAAM/WRC Joint Conference

Session on Managing Collections to Avoid Legal Problems

Thursday, October 30, 1980:

This session was divided into two portions which were moderated by Ms. Marie C. Malaro, Assistant General Counsel, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. For the most part, the first portion of the session can be found summarized in Marie Malaro's article "Collections Management Policies," Museum News, Vol. 58, No. 2 (November/December), pp. 57-61. Nevertheless, several salient points were made that merit noting:

- 1) A policy on collection management shouldn't be developed only after problems arise.
- 2) Museum trustees have a fiduciary responsibility to establish a collection policy.
- 3) All discussions and decisions concerning a collection policy must involve both trustees and staff.
- 4) Any collection policy should allow for periodic review and revision.

The second portion of the session involved an in-depth panel and audience discussion on three hypothetical collection management problems which were drawn from a set of twelve situations that were formulated and distributed to the audience. (Photocopies of these hypothetical situations can be obtained by writing: Registrar, San Diego Museum of Art, P.O. Box 2107, San Diego, CA 92112). The ensuing discussion of these problems brought to light many noteworthy points including:

- 1) The necessity of reporting losses (thefts) to authorities.
- 2) The importance of establishing the authenticity of and legal title to gifts and possible purchases prior to receiving them into your collection.
- 3) The importance of relinquishing control of objects by donors with regard to gifts.
- 4) The difficulty of interpreting intent of donors in regard to gifts,

loans, and other deposits, or abandoned objects in the absence of complete documentation

Louis M. Goldich
Registrar,
San Diego Museum of Art
Southern California Rep., RCWR

Western Regional Conference - American Association of Museums

Oct. 29 - Nov. 2, 1980 San Francisco

Registrar's Business Meeting Oct. 29, 1980

Treasurer Betty Smart, Sacramento, reported there are currently 71 members in the Registrar's Committee - Western Region (henceforth written RC-WR). Brief discussion netted no consensus about how to use the several hundred dollar balance in the treasury. Using the money to help defray state mailings is one of several possibilities.

Jack Foss, of the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, led a discussion of the AAM Long Range Goals as stated in May 1980 AVISO. Foss and five others will work on drafting a statement to AAM expressing RC-WR's views.

Ted Greenberg from Judah Magnes Museum in Berkeley reported the status of some task forces (National Salary Survey is being revamped, Condition Reports gathered lots of information but nothing of manageable size to disseminate). If you are interested in participating on a national task force, or have ideas you'd like to pursue at the regional level, get in touch with Greenberg. Also, Greenberg and Kittu Gates, RC-WR Chairperson, from Portland Art Museum, solicited the names of helpful publications. These can be reviewed in our Newsletter so, if you were not at the meeting, be sure to send in your recommendations.

Pat Nauert, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, led a point-by-point discussion of Philip Babcock's "Proposed Standard Museum Collections Insurance Policy". This policy is an attempt at a standardized "plain English" insurance policy which the author had hoped the Registrar's Committee would formally present to AAM. While there was agreement that the basic idea was reasonable (i.e. fairly standard, readable policies) there were a number of problems with the policy and the RC-WR will not endorse it as written.

The person originally slated for the computer discussion was not available.

Pat Nauert recommended a publication Automated Cataloguing for Museum Collections by Humphrey and Clausen from the Association for Systematics Collections in Lawrence, Kansas; it costs about \$5.

Legal Issues of Trusteeship: Duties, Liabilities, and Responsibilities
Oct. 30, 1980 with Helmut Naumer and Marie Malaro.

A number of hypothetical situations were discussed in this session by Marie Malaro, Assistant General Counsel of the Smithsonian Institution and Helmut Naumer, Executive Director of San Antonio Museum Association and the author of Of Mutual Respect and Other Things: An Essay on Museum Trusteeship (available from AAM, Publications Dept.).

The main point of this discussion, certainly, was to emphasize that being a board member is not just a position of honor. The responsibilities and liabilities can indeed be onerous. Board members (trustees) can and have been personally sued for mismanagement i.e. for not setting and carrying out policy.

It was recommended that every museum obtain copies of the IRS publications on charitable contributions and on valuing charitable donations.

Roxanna Augusztiny

NOTE

There is an art law symposium titled "The Visual Artist and the Law" presented from Gonzaga University School of Law. Date: February 7th and 8th; place: Washington Plaza Hotel, Seattle, Washington. Fee due by January 26th. Cost: \$15 student, \$35 artist, all others \$65. For more information contact Barbara Boga-Rosh, 503-227-5613.

AND ESPECIALLY NOTE

It's time to renew your membership. According to the By-Laws of the Registrar's Committee, Western Region, dues are \$5.00, payable at the time of the annual meeting (November, 1980) and are considered in arrears if not paid by February 1, 1981. Active membership is open to those museum professionals who have the title Registrar, Assistant Registrar or who perform the duties usually associated with these titles and who live in the Western Region. Associate membership is open to all other persons who wish to support the Committee. Associate members can not vote but may enjoy all of the other privileges of

membership.

The Committee benefits from your expertise, interest, and support. Please renew your membership now using the form provided.

Letter from the Editor

Dear Registrars and friends: The newsletter you are now reading is a reflection of your needs, interests, and, above all, of your interest in the newsletter. Its content depends on your contributions of notices, information, queries, and items of interest. We have been a little short on such "audience participation" in this issue. We considered filling the gaps with "connect the dots" art works and a "find the missing objects in this landscape" picture, but decided instead to just be frank with you and to let you know that this is your newsletter, and its existence and worth depend on your making it a living and useful tool for registrars. We believe your ideas, activities and experience are valuable to all of us. Please share.

Harvey Fréer
Maryhill Museum of Art
Goldendale, Washington

An Opportunity

Washington State registrars can take advantage of a workshop for textile storage and care. It is to be offered on February 7th, from 1:00 to 4:00, at the Seattle Art Museum. The workshop will deal with storage techniques, textile conservation and textile exhibiting, and participants will view the "Patterns of Fiber" exhibit which features some 250 textiles "out" for the first time. The workshop is presented by Gail Joice-McKeown of the Seattle Art Museum.

Busy People

Chairperson Kittu Gates has received a Professional Fellowship Grant from the NEA, and has been visiting museums and registrars across the country to examine record keeping systems.

Barbara Zentner, Museum Registrar at the University of Oregon, is back from a visit to China, and should have some interesting information for the next issue on museum registration in modern China. Barbara is also doing a half-day workshop at the Corvallis, Oregon Art Center on January 19th. It will cover handling, storing, and contract paperwork for such organizations. Welcome back!

And:

Patricia Nauert of the Los Angeles County Art Museum has suggested a newsletter section on stolen and missing items. Please let us know if you have items to list.

Also:

Questions (and answers) on any aspect of registrarial work are welcome. If you would like to know how others handle problems, or tell us how you handle them, please drop us a note.

Who's Who

Useful addresses for recipients of this newsletter:

Arizona Representative:

Marcia Anderson, Registrar
Arizona Historical Society
949 East Second Street
Tucson, Arizona 85719

Co-California Reps: (Northern)

Gloria Jaramillo/Alison Wilbur
The Mexican Museum
1855 Folsom Street
San Francisco, California 94103

Oregon Representative:

Barbara Zentner, Registrar
Museum of Art, University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403

Washington Representative:

Gail Joice-McKeown, Registrar
Seattle Art Museum
Volunteer Park
Seattle, Washington 98112

Membership Development:

Sheridan Hatch, Membership
Sacramento Museum/History Dept.
1931 K Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Secretary-Treasurer

Betty Smart
California Dept. Parks & Recreation
Interpretive Collections
1280 Terminal Street
W. Sacramento, California 95691

Co-Program Chairpersons

Marsha Gallagher, Registrar
Museum of Northern Arizona AND
Rt. 4, Box 720
Flagstaff, Arizona 86001

Paula March, Registrar
California Palace of Legion of Honor
Lincoln Park
San Francisco, California 94121

Southern California Representative:

Louis Goldich, Registrar
San Diego Museum of Art, P.O. Box 2107
San Diego, CA 92112

What Do You Think...?

What do you think is the best way of getting an accession number on an article of buckskin in a stable manner which does no damage? Please let us know what you feel is the best method.

REGISTRARS COMMITTEE - WESTERN REGION
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF MUSEUMS
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION - 1981

INSTITUTION _____
MAILING ADDRESS _____ CITY _____
STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____
TELEPHONE _____

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY: ACTIVE \$5.00 ASSOCIATE \$5.00 CONTRIBUTION \$ _____

TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____ NEW MEMBER RENEWAL

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: REGISTRARS COMMITTEE - WESTERN REGION

MAIL TO: Sandra L. Troon
Communications, RCWR
Acting Registrar
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Portland, Oregon 97205

R C W R
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