



REGISTRARS' COMMITTEE  
WESTERN REGION

# Registrars' Quarterly

Winter ❄ 2006

## CHAIR'S REPORT By Ted Greenberg, Chair



As your new chair, I would first like to thank **Susan Dolan**, **Tim Campbell** and **Susanne Lambert** for the great work they did for the past two years. As past elected officials for the committee, I know how much time they spent on their duties to help keep things running as well as do their normal office jobs. I would also like to thank all those appointed positions and State reps for their continued hard work.

For the next two years, myself along with Vice Chair, **Kristen Schmidt**, Assistant Registrar from the Tucson Museum of Art; Secretary, **Anne Mersmann**, Assistant Registrar from the Santa Barbara Museum of Art and Treasurer, **Betsi Meissner**, Assistant Registrar, from the Center for Creative Photography in Tucson will be here to serve your needs and lead this committee. We as a group are looking for some exciting programs, possible changes and a more open forum for communication between colleagues.

I would like to welcome and say farewell to some State Reps and appointed positions. It is always exciting to get new people involved and sad to see people leaving. In the State Rep area, welcome after many years of being vacant someone from Alaska, **Angela J. Linn** Collections Manager, Ethnology & History, University of Alaska Museum of the North, Fairbanks, AK has stepped forward. **Kari R. Kohlhoff**, Registrar, Museum of Northern Arizona, Flagstaff, AZ has replaced **Elaine Hughes** as the co-State Rep for Arizona. **Britney Whiting** from the Basque Museum and Cultural Center in Boise has had to step down, so all you people in Idaho come on and step up to the plate. We still need someone from Oregon. Let me know if you are interested and we can talk about what the job entails. Our New Reads Editor is **Zita Cup Choy**, Registrar/ Docent Educator at the Friends of 'Iolani Palace in Hawaii. **Olivia S. Anastasiadis** from the Nixon Library

has also requested to step down but I have asked her to try to stay on and maybe work as a co-development officer so that the job will not be as stressful. Again, if someone want to help this is one of our most important positions to keep us going as a viable organization.

Speaking of viable organizations, at the recent WMA meeting in Pasadena, there were quite a number of discussions from concerned members about RC-WR. Our finances and membership have dwindled. Many people were concerned with where our committee is headed. Some of the questions were:

- Why has membership declined?
- What new programs can be offered to peak interest?
- Are our museums keeping us to busy to volunteer to serve?
- Is my \$15 worth joining?
- Did you just forget to join?

**Dafna Zilafro**, Director of Marketing, SPF:architects, was at our luncheon and has offered to send out a survey to our membership consisting of 5 survey questions with hypothetical answer choices. She will draft a quick web survey for us to test out. The questions will be directed toward past members who have not renewed.

*Continued*

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Kristen has experimented with the first PDF version of the Newsletter. A positive response was received to continue, as you read the second one we hope that it will only get better. We are striving to get the next Membership Roster out this year. It has been too late in coming and I know it is a great resource for everyone, so if you join up early and get your correct information to Betsi and Anne we can start compiling the information to get this published.



## Classifieds

### **The RC-WR is looking for a few good volunteers!**

The committee is only as good as its members; these are important positions: We need an Idaho state representative, an Oregon state representative, and a new Development officer. Contact Ted Greenberg, Chair, if you are interested in filling one of our vacancies.

## CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

As the American Association of Museums celebrates its 100th anniversary, we would like to take this opportunity to recognize registrars and other professionals who have made a contribution to the museum community.



Do you have a professional mentor? Is it a teacher, a professor, your first boss, a colleague? What would you like us to know about them?

Take a moment to record any anecdote, story, tribute, or testimony of any length about the person who made the greatest impact on your career. Send it to the Newsletter Editor, Trinity Parker at [parkert@ccp.library.arizona.edu](mailto:parkert@ccp.library.arizona.edu), for inclusion in newsletter issues throughout the year.

### **Have you renewed your membership?**

Membership in the RC-WR spans from January through December. Please print page 18 of this newsletter and send it with your dues and optional donation, to the RC-WR Treasurer:

Betsi Meissner, Assistant Registrar  
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Many future committee communications will be made via e-mail, so it is particularly important at this time to provide an accurate e-mail address to the Treasurer! Thanks very much for your cooperation.

### **Workshop Announcement**

Wednesday, October 11, 2006



In keeping with the theme of the Western Museums Association annual meeting, *Frontier Without Limits*, this year's pre-conference activity demonstrates the cooperative spirit of Registrars Without Borders. In other words, a Helping Hands Brigade!

The day will be spent assisting in the completion of simple tasks at a museum that needs just a few more experienced hands to get the job done.

Join your fellow registrars for camaraderie, for the good feeling of a job well done, for lunch. Look for details in the program of the WMA annual meeting!

WMA Annual Meeting  
*Frontier Without Limits: High Desert Rendezvous*  
October 11-15, 2006  
Boise, Idaho

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# Roses are Red, Violets are Blue, When I'm a Courier, What Do I Do?

## Overseeing Special Shipments

### Session Review, WMA Annual Meeting 2005

By Sharon Steckline

The moderator for this panel discussion was Janae Huber, Collections Manager, Art in Public Places Program, Washington State Arts Commission. Janae was a former Registrar at the Tacoma Art Museum.

The Panelists included Nick Dorman, Chief Conservator, Seattle Art Museum; Martha West, Branch Manger, Seattle office, Masterpiece International; Steve Kern - Curator of European Art, San Diego Museum of Art

It is challenging to present a session on the last day of the WMA meeting. Fortunately, it seemed to be a topic that resonated with many people and there was good audience turnout. Janae Huber did a wonderful job with the selection of panelists and organization of the session. I was glad that I did not leave the meeting on Friday, as some people did. The panelists knew their topic quite well and had some wonderful personal stories, some made us cringe and some made us laugh.

#### Nick Dorman

Nick Dorman discussed *Aspiring to Best Practice for the Courier* and asked the question, "Why do you need a courier?" The answer included: they complement the system, they are a redundant necessity, having a courier present reduces risk to objects, they provide focus and consistency.

Nick shared that every six months they conduct courier training at the Seattle Art Museum (SAM), which is a prerequisite for courier work. The training includes an overview so they know what is expected of them, responsibilities, guidelines, policies and procedures.



At Seattle, the decision to send a courier is made in consultation with the Loan Committee, which is made up of the Chief Registrar, Loans Registrar, Director, Chief Curator and the Chief Conservator. The decision is based on the following criteria:

*International transit:* Nick recommended that museums always send a courier if the art is traveling overseas, except possibly with large consolidated loan shipments.

*Insurance requires it:* Based on the value of the loan or if it is required by the Federal Indemnity.

*The condition of the artwork is fragile.*

*Complex installation or deinstallation:* Perhaps a conservator or mountmaker should be present.

*New loan relationship:* If no one from your museum has been to the borrowing institution before; if the building is new, or some other new situation.

*Transit complexity.*

*Unusual circumstances.*

Couriers must supervise the packing, all handling, unpacking and installation. They need to know the object(s) and how it is packed in advance, and should be present during the condition checking and packing prior to shipment. Completing an accurate condition report, with good photo documentation, for each object is a critical aspect of the loan. If the lending museum has no conservator on staff it is recommended that they hire an outside contractor to complete a condition report. If there are many objects it is more challenging. Making sure that the objects are crated and packed well is also important.

Responsibilities of couriers require that they are prepared for any situation that may arise. They must have the authority to be responsible for the art. They also need to know the plan, possess and read all necessary paperwork, be familiar with the route, and possess all names and contact information. They should know where they are going and who is going to meet them at the other end. It is helpful to know in advance what type of infrastructure the borrowing institution has.

Couriers must remain alert at all times to assess and deal with changes to the plan. Couriers are there to handle any emergencies and should remain calm. They should speak up if they have any concerns regarding packing, handling, and security questions. It is advisable to take a camera to document questionable situations. They should also have access to a cell phone with international service.

*Roses are Red continued on Page 11*

## NEW PLACES/NEW FACES

**Franak Hilloowala** (formerly of the **Mesa Southwest Museum**) joined the staff at the **Pueblo Grande Museum** as a new Museum Assistant for Collections.



The **Phippen Museum** welcomes a new staff member, **James Ward**, as Special Events and Volunteer Coordinator. He brings a solid background of museum experience from both the **Hall of Flame** and the **Arizona Museum of Youth**.

The Collections Department of the **Museum of Northern Arizona**, with IMLS and NPS NAGPRA funding, has hired **Kari Kolhoff** as the Registrar, **Dustin Blodgett** as a Collections Assistant, **Gloria Lomaheftewa** as the NAGPRA Specialist, and Brandon Williams as a NAGPRA Intern. Kari has an MA in Historical Administration and Museum Studies from the University of Kansas and recently worked in the ASU Archives and Special Collections. Dustin has an MA in Anthropology/Museum Studies from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and came to the MNA as a summer intern in 2004. Gloria has 19 years of museum experience and was recently the Native American Relations Assistant at the Heard Museum. Brandon is currently in the Applied Indigenous Studies program at Northern Arizona University.

The **Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art** has a new Assistant Preparator, **Jes Gettler**.

New staff members have joined the Registrar's Office at the **Los Angeles County Museum of Art**. **Lynette Johnson** is the new Registrarial Assistant, Gifts. Lynette previously worked at AXA Art Insurance Corporation as an underwriting assistant and at the Daniel Weinberg Gallery, where she was an assistant to the Director and Office Manager. Lynette received her Masters in Art History from the University of Manchester and also studied at Sotheby's Institute of Fine Art in London. **Brittainy Welt** is the new Registrarial Assistant, Incoming and Outgoing Loans. Brittainy recently completed an internship with the LACMA Registrar's Office. She has also worked as the Tasting Room Supervisor at Firestone Vineyard Winery in Los Olivos, CA and as the Secretarial Assistant in the Fine Arts Department of Allan Hancock College in Santa Monica, CA. **Janet Ciciarelli** has replaced **Michele Ahern** as Assistant Registrar, Outgoing Loans. Janet formerly served as Registrarial Assistant in the same office. Michele is now the Collection Manager at the Cotsen Foundation.

**Vicki Gambill** (former Assistant Newsletter Editor) has left her position as Chief Registrar at the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County to be the new Registrar at **The Broad Art Foundation** in Santa Monica, CA. **Susan Oshima** is now the acting Chief Registrar at NHM and **Darienne Hetherman** is the acting Associate Registrar.

The **Museum of Flight** has a new President and CEO. **Dr. Bonnie Dunbar** was a NASA astronaut and is a veteran of 5 Space Shuttle missions. A native of Sunnyside, Washington, Dr. Dunbar received her bachelor's and master's degree in ceramic engineering from the University of Washington and a doctorate in mechanical/biomedical engineering from the University of Houston. She has also been a private pilot since the 1970s and is restoring a 1946 Ercoup light plane. Dr. Dunbar has a passionate commitment to youth education which is central to the mission of The Museum of Flight.

**Congratulations to all!**



## IN MEMORIAM

Sharesse von Strauss, who served for seven years as the Northern Gila County Historical Society's one and only director, passed away on October 13, 2005 at the age of 50. One of von Strauss' greatest accomplishments during her tenure was the creation of the Museum of Rim Country Archaeology, which opened in 2002 in the portion of the Payson Woman's Club formerly occupied by the old Payson Public Library.



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## Collection Notes

By Susan Oshima

### ARIZONA (Elaine Hughes and Leesha Alston)

**Holly Young** at the **Pueblo Grande Museum** is forming a museum collections help group in Arizona (similar to groups in other parts of the country) tentatively entitled the "Go-To Gang." The group will get together each year in conjunction with the Museum Association of Arizona Annual Meeting. They will provide help with a project to one of the museums in the region where the meeting is being held. The projects will be designed to be mutually beneficial for the host institution, as well as the participants. The host institution will get a project done and to the participants will learn how to implement a new technique – or a new twist on an old one. In addition, the participants will also get a behind-the-scenes peek at another museum. This year, the MAA annual meeting is in Flagstaff and the Museum of Northern Arizona will be the focus of the group's first effort.

The **Bead Museum** is undergoing an expansion and renovation project that will add gallery space, offices, storage area, classrooms and a lecture space to the facility. The project will nearly double the area of the museum. It also includes a park connecting the museum with the Glendale Civic Center. The work will be completed in April of 2006. A gala event is scheduled for April 7, 2006.

The **Center for Creative Photography** was awarded \$270,000 from the Save America's Treasures grant to conserve and provide appropriate archival rehousing for the Ansel Adams Archive. The archive includes prints, negatives, transparencies, personal books, papers and correspondence, photographic equipment, and other personal possessions associated with the famed photographer.

The **Riordan Mansion State Historic Park** offered guided holiday tours that included glimpses of folklore and traditions of Christmas, both past and present. The Mansion was festively decorated in turn-of-the-century style with wreaths, garlands, greenery and a towering fir tree trimmed with old-fashioned ornaments.

**Tony Schierl**, Park Ranger II at the Riordan Mansion State Historic Park, has been chosen by Arizona State Parks as Interpreter of the Year 2005. Arizona State Parks Park Rangers serve in many capacities at their respective Parks. At Riordan Mansion State Historic Park, Ranger Schierl has taken on many duties. In addition to providing excellent tours of the 1904 American Arts and Crafts style Riordan family home, he serves as photographer, videographer and photo archivist. His photos have been incorporated into interpretive display

panels in the Park Visitor Center, as well as his copies of historic photos. Ranger Schierl also volunteered to build the new display panels in preparation for the Centennial celebrations in 2004. This was the first redesign of the Park's Visitor Center displays since opening in 1983. Ranger Schierl single-handedly designed their construction, and did so in the Craftsman style that is such a part of the Riordan Mansion.

### AZ Exhibition News

**Pueblo Grande** has opened its redesigned interactive gallery, *Dig It!*, much to the delight of children of all ages. The changing exhibit, *Flight Over Phoenix*, opened in November. This exhibit follows an aerial photographic survey taken in 1930 to document the Hohokam canal system in the Salt and Gila River Valleys. A lobby exhibit features Indian Market poster artist Randy Kemp. In addition, the museum has worked on an off-site exhibit at Phoenix College Library, to complement their grant-funded lecture series. Pueblo Grande's always popular Indian Market took place December 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at Indian School Park.

The **Bead Museum's** current major exhibit is *Tribal Asia: Beading and Weaving Connections to Identity*. This exhibit features beads, textiles and adornment from Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Tibet, Nepal, and the Indian states of Gujarat and Nagaland. It will be on display until March 15, 2006

The exhibition, *Ralph Eugene Meatyard*, is in the main gallery at the **Center for Creative Photography** until January 8, 2006. Opening on January 27 is *Harry Callahan: The Photographer at Work*, in conjunction with a publication release of the same name. A symposium on Callahan will be held at the CCP on March 3-4 featuring keynote speaker Peter Schjeldahl, writer and critic from *The New Yorker* magazine.

*The Jewelry of Ben Nighthorse* continues through February 13, 2006 at the **Arizona State Museum**. Former U.S. Senator, Ben Nighthorse Campbell (Northern Cheyenne), has long been a highly visible and effective advocate for Native American arts and culture. During his term in public office, Nighthorse was instrumental in securing funding to establish the **Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian** (NMAI) and helped strengthen the Indian Arts and Crafts Act. An artist in his own right, Nighthorse's jewelry is shown and sold across the country including in the shops of New York's Madison Avenue. His work

*Collection Notes continued on Page 10*

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## Accountability, Auditing and Automation (I)

### Session Review, WMA Annual Meeting 2005

By Kara Hurst

Session Organizer/Speaker: Ted A. Greenberg, Head Registrar, Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Session Speakers: Kittu Longstreth-Brown, Registrar, retired; Amy Walsh, Art Historian; Beverly Herman, Head Archivist, Dreamworks; Joe King, Registrar, Walker Art Museum; Rob Green, Managing Director, ISIS Limited.

Ted Greenberg welcomed the speakers and participants and provided a brief introduction prior to each speaker. Kittu Longstreth-Brown opened the session and with her wide breadth of collections experience from state, municipal, and private museums over the course of her career, she encouraged discussion from the audience tying into the keywords of the session: *Accountability, Auditing, Automation*. Using hypothetical examples as well, discussion from the audience helped to determine the base of the audience's perceptions of the topics presented.

What is the difference between accountability versus blame? In general, the consensus allowed that one is held to a certain professional level of accountability in one's position but that if a situation occurs where the system fails, then one can be blamed by others for the negative situation. Drawing from the Registrar's Committee Code of Ethics, Ms. Longstreth-Brown highlighted that "Registrars' obligations to their museums' collections, to loaned objects, and to the associated records are paramount." Discussing accurate records, she asks, "Why is it important that records are complete and accurate?" Museums are accountable to their constituents and have a commitment of service to the public. The American Association of Museums Code of Ethics has stated this since the inception of their code in 1925 that "Museums in the United States are grounded in the tradition of public service. They are organized as public trusts, holding their collections and information as a benefit for those they were established to serve." A museum, reflecting its unique mission statement, will mention its constituents, whether they are the citizens in the state of incorporation, a municipal museum's city residents, etc. The museum has a duty to these constituents and must be accountable to them. Registrars must be vigilant and do their part to uphold the public trust by keeping accurate records of the collections held in trust.

Historian Amy Walsh then discussed accountability in light of her research. Having had experience cataloging numerous European paintings at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art and other institutions, Ms. Walsh is well versed in provenance research and accountability concerns. Provenance re-

search has been at the forefront of museum accountability discussions in light of Nazi-era issues. As defined by Merriam-Webster dictionary, provenance is "the history of ownership of a valued object or work of art or literature." Known provenance of an object verifies legal ownership for a museum if clear title has been transferred with each owner of the object.



Museums, in upholding their public trust responsibilities should strive to provide transparency in all their transactions. As part of this responsibility, museums should undertake due diligence in provenance research prior to acquiring a work of art, especially any object that may have been involved in Nazi-era transactions or where title is not immediately ascertainable. In 1933 when the Nazi party rose to power, Adolf Hitler sought to purge public institutions of "degenerate" art and instead uphold the superiority of the German people. Through his systematic approach of later looting and pillaging private collections, accurate records were kept to help support a perception of legality. It is by examining these records that answers can be uncovered as to original and legitimate ownership of many Nazi-era works of art. Throughout history, cultural patrimony has often been plundered -- from earlier civilizations, to Napoleon, to Hitler. In World War II, Allied leaders worked with groups of art historians to identify religious buildings as well as buildings of art, science and history that would be avoided by Allied troops during bombing raids. Additionally, at the end of the war, Allied troops undertook the task of making best judgments to return looted works of art back to the owners and/or heirs.

Various laws have been enacted to stem the tide of illegal commerce in art and antiquities objects. In the United States, these include such laws as the American Antiquities Act of 1906, National Stolen Property Act of 1948, Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990. In 1970 the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) passed what is known as the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property. Numer-

*Accountability (I) continued on Page 13*

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## Have Art, Will Travel: Life as an American Federation of Arts Registrar

By Jennifer Hefner

“So, what museum do you work for?” is a question that I’m frequently asked when I’m introduced as a fine arts registrar. I am not, in fact, employed by a museum. I’m one of four full-time registrars who work for the American Federation of Arts (AFA), a non-profit arts organization based in Manhattan. My route to New York began in the west, with my work after college as a gallery curator of prints in Seattle. Several years later, I had the good fortune to do an internship at the Center for Creative Photography as part of my graduate degree. This, in turn, led to a full-time position as Associate Registrar, allowing me to work almost exclusively with the collection of legendary photographer Richard Avedon. It was the opportunity to work at Avedon’s studio in New York that took me east and ultimately led me to the AFA.

Unlike a museum, the AFA does not house collections. Rather, the AFA collaborates with major museums and private collectors around the world to organize exhibitions that travel to the nearly three hundred AFA-member museums both in the US and abroad. Born out of an act of Congress in 1909 and charged with the mission of bringing art to the remotest regions of a young America, the AFA has mounted over a thousand touring exhibitions. Nearly a century later, museums from all parts of the country – large and small, remote and urban – augment their permanent exhibition schedule with traveling exhibitions organized by the AFA.

Major recent tours have included: *Eternal Egypt: Masterworks of Ancient Art from the British Museum*; and *Millet to Matisse: Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century French Paintings from the Kelvingrove Art Gallery, Glasgow*, as well as exhibitions profiling the work of Degas, Manet, Boucher, ter Borch, and Tissot, among others. Venues have ranged from the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC to the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts in Kalamazoo, Michigan to as far as Fundación La Caixa in Palma, Spain.



As a registrar, my docket of tours is my universe. At any given time, I can be working on half a dozen shows in varying states of development. Preparations for each

project typically commence four to five years prior to the scheduled opening date at the first venue and begin with intense budget forecasting to determine feasibility. With a theoretical loan checklist in hand, estimates from domestic and international vendors must be gathered for everything from mount fabrication to crate construction to courier airline tickets.

Budgets call for exactitude, but social and political climates can undermine the best laid plans. Case in point: insurance premiums that rose significantly after September 11<sup>th</sup> as foreign lenders required costly terrorism and war risk coverage in response to the attacks in our country. Soaring fuel prices this winter are another example of an economic factor that could not have been anticipated when budgets were written several years ago, and has severely impacted shipping charges.

After the intense preliminary planning period, each exhibition evolves from an abstract mathematical problem into a true exhibition. Since the AFA markets exhibitions covering all aspects and periods of art, each registrar is challenged to adapt to the medium or material of each project, ranging from 8<sup>th</sup> century manuscripts to contemporary installation art to monolithic Egyptian art. One has to quickly become something of subject specialist. For me, this process has included: studying a foreign language, consulting art historical and technical texts, as well as conferring with specialists ranging from manuscript and object conservators to riggers. The endless variety is thrilling and nerve-wracking at the same time.

In addition to the preparatory planning, registrars supervise each installation and deinstallation, as well as act as couriers when required. My first week on the job found me on a tractor-trailer with a broken climate control unit in northern Canada—in January. As I stood in three feet of snow, making the best game-plan that I could under the circumstances, I realized that this is the essence of being a registrar.

To some extent, each trip is a problem-solving opportunity: freight elevators that are smaller than suspected, freak blizzards, a loading dock under construction, being held at the border, a broken forklift, drivers that speak little to no English, leaks in crate storage, a nine-hour ride on a Turkish cargo ship with no food, etc.

But for all the snags, there are as many deeply satisfying episodes to balance it. Gazing around a fully-installed gallery is perhaps the most rewarding feeling.

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## A Balancing Act: Ethics, the Law, and Collections Management

### Session Review, WMA Annual Meeting 2005

By Michelle Gallagher

Moderator: Sarah Kennington; Presenters: Stephen Vollmer, Curator, Tucson Museum of Art; Grant Hughes, Director, Curatorial Services Branch, Royal British Columbia Museum; Christine Steiner, Attorney, The Law Office of Christine Steiner.



Museums are facing tougher scrutiny over their ethical and legal rights to acquire objects for their permanent collections. The Getty's troubles have brought this issue to national attention. Ignorance of US and foreign laws is no longer an excuse. While some museums and their staff have taken a "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy in the past, this is no longer acceptable. Every object should be treated as guilty until proven innocent in regard to its provenance. The level of inquiry once reserved only for NAGPRA and Nazi-era objects is now being applied to all collection items.

As Christine Steiner discussed during her talk, international laws are being upheld in the United States as being applicable to people bringing goods out of foreign countries. Museum personnel need to know the import, export, national cultural property and the stolen property laws for the countries of origin as well as American laws. The International Foundation for Art Research (IFAR) will be compiling and translating source country laws on their website as an inclusive source of information for museum staff. Currently, there is no comprehensive site for reference.

Above all, museums must be transparent, observe due diligence and if an object with dubious provenance is in their collections, they must provide prompt disclosure. In 2002, the Association of Art Museum Directors issued a position paper entitled *Art Museums and the International Exchange of Cultural Artifacts*. In the paper, AAMD outlined standards and principles of conduct for their member institutions. However, the paper is a good standard regardless of membership.

It is available on the AAMD website ([www.aamd.org](http://www.aamd.org)). There are several other good reference books covering this subject, including [A Legal Primer on Managing Museum Collections](#) by Marie C. Malero and [Art, Artifact & Architecture Law](#) by Jessica L. Darraby.

The International Council on Museums (ICOM) issued a 2004 revision of their Code of Ethics (<http://icom.museum/ethics.html>). Stephen Vollmer believes they provide a minimal standard for behavior and practices when dealing with collections. It is important the profession self regulate otherwise the government will do it for us. Following ICOM's Code is one way to initiate dialogue and create mutual respect between equal partners.

Grant Hughes from the Royal British Columbia Museum provided a different perspective for ethical and legal dealings with Native collections. The Canadian federal government must negotiate with First Nations and not allow their dealings to play out in the courts. Objects which entered Federal museums prior to 1951 are all open for repatriation as a part of larger treaty negotiations. Collections are divided into equal groups by curators and then the Tribe picks which group they want repatriated. All human remains are being transferred to the First Nations. As in the United States, overlapping territories complicate the repatriation process.

What all agree on is that the debate over cultural patrimony and rightful ownership is still evolving. More and more communities will be taking up this issue with cultural institutions around the world.





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## Accountability, Auditing and Automation (II)

### Session Review, WMA Annual Meeting 2005

By Holly Chase

Moderator: Ted Greenberg, Head Registrar for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Presenters included Kittu Longstreth-Brown, retired Registrar; Amy Walsh, Art Historian; Beverly Herman, Head Archivist at DreamWorks; Joe King, Assoc. Registrar at Walker Art Museum; Tom McCloskey of Applied Security Logistics; and Robert Green of ISIS, Ltd.

#### Accountability

The day-long workshop began with a discussion on accountability. Ted Greenberg and other presenters made clear that as registrars, collection managers, keepers of collections, we are held accountable for the safety, location, and whereabouts of the objects in our care. Whether on exhibition, in storage, or out on loan to another institution we are responsible to know where objects are at all times and to ensure that accurate records are created and maintained.

Because the inventory procedure is often slow and painstaking, we may find ourselves setting it aside for more exciting work such as installing new exhibits. Performing inventory may not seem like an urgent priority so we put it off to meet more pressing deadlines and demands. No one may notice that we are a month behind in accessioning new works but if we are not careful the inventory can eventually grow a backlog that is years behind in its records.



Why does it matter if we let the inventory fall behind? Obviously, without an accurate inventory, there can be no accountability for the collection. Museums hold a public trust to preserve and maintain the collection. We serve the public and have a duty to uphold the public trust. When referring to our jobs, we sometimes catch ourselves saying “my collection” and “my museum” and tend to forget that it is the public’s museum and the public’s collection. Back in the 1980’s and 1990’s a few museums were even sued for not being accountable to the public and losing portions of the collections due to negligence. Striving towards AAM standards and accreditation helps us stay on track to preserve the collection and uphold that trust.

#### Inventory/Auditing

Each museum should have a policy in place that states how often inventory should be completed. This helps us to keep a regular inventory practice a priority, especially when justifying it to administration. The LACMA, for example, has a policy that states a complete inventory should be completed every 10 years with frequent spot inventories.

LACMA is regularly audited by Deloitte and Touche which helps them to stay on track with keeping their inventory up to date and a priority. Ted Greenberg explained that LACMA’s collection is stored in several different locations, overseen by a variety of staff members, and is moved at a rapid pace so it is imperative that the records are current. Currently, the inventory is performed using the traditional paper and pencil method and the data is entered into a Multi MIMSY database.

Beverly Herman of DreamWorks said her situation is unique to museums because she works for a corporation. Ms. Herman and her staff are accountable to the stockholders, not the public, and thanks to Sarbanes-Oxley their collection is audited every month. DreamWorks also schedules random audits of the 67,000 piece collection.

Doing a complete inventory for any sized museum is a major commitment; a period has to be set where no object will be moved for any purpose during the inventory process and the collection staff is entirely dedicated to the project until its completion. The length of time set depends largely on the size of the collection and the number of staff employees.

#### Provenance Records

Art Historian Amy Walsh discussed how provenance records are also a critical part of accountability. Provenance is a history of ownership to establish the authenticity of the object as well as legal ownership. Provenance establishes an uninterrupted line of ownership from artist/maker down to the current owner. In the past many museums, artists, and dealers did not always keep good records and some even fabricated their records. It is interesting to note that about \$10 billion dollars worth of art treasures are stolen and traded around the world every year. The looting of artwork has occurred throughout world history. Conquerors often claim they have the capacity and finances to care for the plundered treasures better than the original owners can. Lord Elgin’s marble friezes taken from the Parthenon are still part of an on

was featured at the opening of NMAI last fall in the exhibition that is now at Arizona State Museum. This traveling exhibition was curated by the **Center of Southwest Studies**, Fort Lewis College, Durango, CO.

*Lingerie: Secrets of Elegance* opened in November, 2005 at the **Phoenix Art Museum**. The exhibition explores how changes in lingerie styles become a key to the understanding of a society. This exhibition features selected examples of lingerie from the museum's permanent collection and from contemporary designers that will shed light on the questions of why lingerie is important not only for what it covers but its ornamentation of the body. *Keeping Shadows: Photography from the Worcester Art Museum* runs from December 11, 2005–March, 2006. This exhibition encompasses more than 150 years of photography, with more than 100 photographs from one of the finest photographic collections in the nation. Works from the 1840s by such innovators as William Henry Fox Talbot to recent, computer generated images from NASA are shown. The exhibition includes works by such icons of the medium as Ansel Adams, Alfred Stieglitz, Timothy O'Sullivan, Lewis Carroll, Julia Margaret Cameron, Eadweard Muybridge, Paul Strand, Cecil Beaton, Walker Evans, Margaret Bourke-White, Robert Capa, Imogen Cunningham, Man Ray, Edward Steichen, Jacob Riis, Diane Arbus, Richard Avedon, Cindy Sherman, Henri Le Secq, and Bernice Abbott.

*Andy Warhol's Dream America: Screenprints from the Collection of the Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation* will be on display at the **Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art** January 14–May 28, 2006. The exhibition includes 97 prints dating from 1967-1981. It features Warhol's iconic series: "Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn)" (1967), "Campbell's Soup I" (1968), "Mao" (1972), "Jews of the Twentieth Century" (1980), and "Cowboys and Indians" (1986). Also on view at SMOCA is *Petah Coyne: Above and Beneath the Skin* (January 21–May 7, 2006). This exhibit features sculptures over ten feet tall that are suspended from the ceiling and strangely encrusted with flowers, ribbons and birds, all dripping with a carpet of wax. Coyne belongs to a generation of sculptors—many of them women—who came of age in the late 1980s and forever changed the muscular practice of sculpture with their new interest in nature and a penchant for painstaking craftsmanship, domestic references and psychological metaphor.

#### **NORTHERN CALIFORNIA** 🌲 (Maren Jones)

For its inaugural weekend (October 15-16, 2005), the new **de Young Museum** was open free to the public, non-stop for a 31-hour "museum marathon." Visitors were encouraged to celebrate the de Young's return to Golden Gate Park in a new facility designed by the Swiss architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, and Fong

& Chan Architects in San Francisco. Landscape architect Walter Hood, of Hood Design, created an enchanting indoor-outdoor environment for museum visitors to enjoy. The new de Young will provide San Francisco with a landmark art museum to showcase its extensive collections of American art from the 17<sup>th</sup> through the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, modern and contemporary art, international textiles, and art from Central and South America, the Pacific, and Africa.

To celebrate the de Young's re-opening and many years of companionship and shared history in Golden Gate Park, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco extended a special offer to their visitors. By showing proof of their recent de Young admission at the Asian Art Museum, visitors received two AAM tickets for the price of one.

The **Janet Turner Print Museum** in Chico will be hosting its 6<sup>th</sup> National Print Competition February 2-28, 2006. Juror **Deborah Cornell** from Boston University was at CSU Chico for a public lecture on February 8 at 5:00 PM.

#### **HAWAII** 🌋 (Malia Baron)

The Science Adventure Center at the **Bishop Museum** opened to the public on November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2005. The SAC will offer learning experiences focused on Hawaii's volcanic, biological and oceanic resources. For a virtual tour, visit <http://www.bishopmuseum.org/sac.html>.

The **Hawaii Museums Association** has announced their 2006 annual conference titled, "Views, Voices and Visitor." The conference is scheduled for May 25-26, 2006 and will focus on topics of technology in the museum world, and include presentations on visitor services. If you are interested in suggesting a session, please contact **Betty Lou Kam**, HMA Secretary at [bettyk@bishopmuseum.org](mailto:bettyk@bishopmuseum.org).

#### **IDAHO** 🌲 (Britney M. Whiting)

The **Idaho Museum of Natural History** in Pocatello, Idaho was recently the proud recipient of a spectacular Shoshone pot, a gift from a private donor. The pot is a rare find due to the fact that it is not only complete, but very large. It stands 12 inches high and is 12 inches in diameter at its largest point. **Dr. Patricia Dean**, a research associate at ISU with expertise in pottery, believes the pot could be as much as 1,500 years old. The pot is in pristine condition, and the IMNH is certainly pleased to add it to their Anthropology collection.

#### **ID Exhibition News**

At the **Boise Art Museum**, *Northwest Perspectives*:

Another important aspect is to assess the performance of those involved in the shipment and installation. Documenting the borrower's performance, facility and equipment can be helpful if there were situations that could be avoided next time a loan goes to that institution.

Nick also discussed the physical rigors artworks go through during transport. These include: environmental threats such as the cycles of R/H and temperature, vibration inherent to mode of transport, shock and excess light at destination. He said that the most common incidents include poor handling which can result in disastrous events, and can't always be anticipated through advance preparation. The courier is the most important means of maintaining critical assessment of the quality of the crate and art handling. Poor packing can obviously lead to damage of the artwork. Sometimes objects that were too fragile to travel are sent off as loans. Changes in condition can also result from artwork being stored in an uncontrolled environment and then moved to a controlled environment. In addition, cargo is always susceptible to a pest infestation.

At the end of his talk Nick recommended some good resource material including, [Art in Transit: Handbook for Packing and Transporting Paintings](#), by Mervin Richard, Marion Mecklenburg, Ross M. Merrill, published by the National Gallery of Art, 1991.

#### Martha West

Martha West presented a lively presentation from the shipping agent's point of view. She included "Courier fashion dos and don'ts" with photos of different types of shoes and why they are not appropriate footwear for a courier.



Martha recommended giving the courier a copy of the Code of Practice for Couriers Museum Objects which was adopted in June 1986 by the Registrar's Committee of the American Association of Museums.

Martha's list of dos and don'ts:

#### **Don'ts:**

- When labeling the crates, be discrete, don't write the crate contents on the outside of the crate, i.e. "Van Gogh Exhibition". The agent will not discuss with anyone what is in the crates and neither should the courier.
- No drinking alcohol on the plane while you are accompanying the artwork, you are working.
- Attire is very important; you need to maintain a professional appearance with everyone you come in contact with, including the cargo personnel and the borrowing institution, (i.e no flip flops!).
- Don't wear complicated shoes that you will have to take off during the security screening or that you will not be able to stand in for hours on the concrete floor of the cargo facility. Martha noted that you may need to run to catch a plane.
- Don't sit on the crates
- Don't put your coffee on a crate.
- Don't walk past the yellow line without permission. If you need something, ask the agent (TSA guidelines require that visitors stay out the cargo area).
- Couriers should not check luggage if possible because it takes too much time.

The agent can assist in purchasing the airline ticket for the courier, but they are not travel agents so please don't ask them to purchase tickets for the family and friends of the courier. Don't request an airline because you have frequent flyer miles with them or ask them to purchase tickets for personal travel.

#### **Do's:**

- Always be pleasant and polite.
- Know your responsibilities and communicate in advance to the shipping agent.
- Always voice your questions and concerns to the agent and not the airline cargo personnel. The agent is the liaison between you and the cargo personnel.
- Know what is required of the shipment. Can the crates be stacked, do you have the appropriate directional arrows, and do you require a certain controlled temperature? She told a story of a courier and truck who arrived late to the airport and there was so little room left in cargo and that they were planning to stack the crates. The courier said that that the crates could not be stacked and the registrar in charge could not be reached to confirm that the crates could not be stacked. No one had notified the shipping agent about it.
- When riding on a truck, remember that you are a guest in the driver's home.
- Your focus must be on the crates.

*Continued*

Martha did a wonderful job explaining what the shipping agent does. Most of the time agents oversee shipments via air, and occasionally domestic trucking arrangements.

Martha does not recommend hand carried objects unless they cannot be avoided. Since 9/11 procedures have changed. The security personnel are not required to take you to a private area if they wish to open your hand carry for inspection or allow you to wear gloves, and there is no guarantee that an oversized hand carry will even get on the plane.

Regarding the supervisions at the airport cargo facility Martha pointed out that it can take a long time to process high volumes of crates. Often there can be an extremely long wait at the cargo area either before the departure or during a connection. It is the courier's responsibility to try not to leave the crates alone (to go to breakfast, etc.). Things can happen while you are gone. Many people request that their crates be oriented to coincide with a certain flight direction. Occasionally that can be detrimental to the cargo instead of making it safer. Most important is to make sure that they secure the pallets or the container properly. Make sure that the crates are consolidated and secured as tightly and compactly as possible.

It is most important that a courier traveling alone from a foreign institution be able to speak some English. Martha had a courier from Russia who came to the U.S. with someone able to translate for them, but they left on separate flights. If the courier is unable to understand the flight safety instructions they will not allow them to travel on the plane alone. They had to pull the cargo from the plane and ended up sending someone who could speak English with them on the return flight.



It is helpful to the agent for the courier to fly business class when traveling with the artwork. Couriers can board later and faster and it can be helpful if the flight is switched. The courier can do a better job when they arrive if they are comfortable and relaxed.

#### Steve Kern

Steve gave a hilarious presentation from the point of view of the curator as courier. He has traveled extensively as a courier all over the world and had some wonderful insights to present.

His pointers for what makes a good courier include:

- Be gracious, have stamina, be respectful and act

professionally.

- Be aware of cultural differences, wear professional attire and maintain professional behavior. Be receptive to other cultures, the equipment that they use and the food that they eat. You are representing your museum.
- There are registrar-type rules that need to be followed.
- The courier should know the objects strength and weaknesses.

On a trip to India the borrowing institution boasted that their security was so sensitive, that the movement of a rat could be picked up (!).

Steve has traveled all over the world and noted that trips can be the Good, the Bad and the Ugly. He told some wonderfully entertaining stories such as a courier trip in 1984 from Boston to Springfield in a hearse with a mummy, the first to arrive in the U.S. Steve also recalled watching the Aurora Borealis out of the plane window on another trip. Another time, he took his own van to transport a Gauguin painting to Canada, with his registrar wife as the second passenger. Upon discovering the unusual cargo the border patrol agent asked him where his gun was. Once on a SAS flight to Copenhagen with a Manet painting the landing gear had to be pulled out. You can never predict what can happen, such as when a volcano eruption forced the plane to turn around and return to Japan. On another trip he discovered that the borrowing venue had an elevator that was too narrow for the crates and they had to be hand-carried up a spiral staircase. Other not unusual situations include pilots on strike in Rome and customs personnel on strike in Paris. Preventable and unusual incidents should be reported to the registrar and the airlines

Weather can be an important factor, such as the time when accompanying cargo he was notified that there was a big storm headed their way and everything was shutting down. Fortunately he had all the necessary emergency contact phone numbers and was able to organize the change in plans.

Accurate paperwork is also critical. He was on a trip and the export paperwork incorrectly stated that there were 3 crates. In fact, one crate was supposed to be shipped each day for three days and the customs agents would not clear the cargo.



In conclusion, all three presenters spent a good deal of time preparing their presentations and I found the audience to be quite receptive. Thanks to all three and to Janae for providing us with such valuable information.





ous nations signed on to enforce this convention, but it was not until 1983 that the United States implemented a

portion of this convention agreeing to enforce import restrictions specific to individual countries when they petitioned the U.S. for assistance. In this manner, the U.S. requires that countries enforce their own export laws and police their own cultural sites before becoming involved.

Ms. Walsh stressed that in considering acquisitions of unknown provenance, due diligence in one's research, knowledge of the applicable laws and regulations, and professional judgment and transparency are essential. She recommended various resources to researchers including The Art Loss Register ([www.artloss.com/Default.asp](http://www.artloss.com/Default.asp)), the American Association of Museums ([www.aam-us.org](http://www.aam-us.org)) provenance research publications and Nazi-era web portal, as well as stressing the importance of still reviewing traditional methods of research such as document files, personal correspondence and dealer catalogues.

Next, Beverly Herman, Head Archivist for Dreamworks ([www.dreamworks.com](http://www.dreamworks.com)), discussed the challenges of accountability to stockholders. Dreamworks, an 11-year-old animation company that started privately, is now a public company owned by stockholders. Initial organization of the archives resulted in the necessity of re-organizing the archives professionally at a later date, including the database system. Presently, all objects are tracked via a bar-coding system. (There are no hard registrarial documents at Dreamworks but digital backups are performed frequently on a scheduled basis.) For stockholder accountability, the archive undergoes a random monthly auditing process. For this process, a barcode is selected randomly through a computer program organized with the assistance of the IT department. This barcode tracks to a box of collections, which are then manually confirmed against the database records.

Due to the Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 ([www.olaj.dol.gov](http://www.olaj.dol.gov) then search Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 or Public Law 107-204), publicly held companies are more accountable to their stockholders and the effect of that act is felt throughout the entire company structure at Dreamworks. Although the auditing Ms. Herman must accomplish each month is time-consuming, it is felt that this is an appropriate measure of accountability for Dreamworks.

Mr. Greenberg from LACMA then discussed procedures from his institution. He started by explaining the organizational structure at LACMA and general duties of the Registrar's office. Due to the size of LACMA collections, it is considered impossible to do a full inventory every 10 years (although that is what is stated in the inventory policy sec-

tion of their CMP) so spot-checks are manually performed periodically. Objects that are not located on the spot-check are tracked and listed on a "location research needed" report generated by each collection department. In this way, an ongoing process is available for tracking objects over time.

Periodically the LACMA Finance department will require spot-check audits which is mandated by the LACMA Board of Trustees. The auditors of record will audit all aspects of the museum, including financials, bookstore, collections, etc. For collections, a shortlist of object numbers is randomly generated, although attention is focused on drawing from collections with higher insurance values. Auditors come on-site and physically inspect each object and verify it with its record. In this method, the collections audit is verifiable by a third, disinterested party.

Joe King, Registrar at the Walker Art Museum next discussed radio-frequency identification (RFID) for internal tracking at his museum. RFID technology has been in use since WWII where it was used to determine whether an aircraft was friend or foe through radio waves transmitted between two devices.

Three components are necessary for the RFID process: a tag/transponder, an antenna, and a read/write device (i.e. interrogator). Two different tags are available: an active, battery-operated tag that can amplify a signal, or a passive, reactive tag that is active only when the interrogator sends a signal. The Walker Art Museum opted for the smaller, passive tags and worked with Northern Apex, Inc. (<http://www.northernapex-rfid.com/>) of Indiana to integrate RFID into the works on paper collection. Of the 27,000 permanent objects in the Walker collection, approximately 10,000 are slated for RFID tags, with the work 80% completed as of September 2005. During the Walker's expansion, the museum was closed for 14 months and during that time five staff members working 30 hours per week for 5 months dedicated their efforts to this project.

Mr. King initially researched bar-coding devices over a decade ago but decided it did not suit the needs of the Walker as the collections staff performs a complete inventory of the works on paper collection every three years, necessitating frequent handling of the collection. Through the use of RFID, it is projected that inventories will be conducted more safely and efficiently, locations can be automatically captured and data can be downloaded directly into the Walker's File Maker Pro collections database through the hand-held reader and docking system with the computer. As the Walker uses passive RFID tags, the interrogator sends out a signal in the direction of the tag, the tag receives the signal and information is bounced back to the interrogator from the tag. Not only can the tag provide a tracking number, but data from the object's catalog record can be stored on the tag as well. Mr. King noted the main drawback of the RFID passive system is that tags



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cannot be read when they are on or in close proximity to metal, such as cabinetry, shelves or drawers.

Prior to implementation, all materials that would be in contact with the work of art were sent to the Image Permanence Institute (IPI) which is a non-profit research institute dedicated to preservation. A Photographic Activity Test (PAT) conforming to the worldwide ISO Standard 14523 of measuring the archival quality in photographic enclosures was conducted on these materials. This test predicts possible interactions between photographic images and the enclosures in which they are stored. As Japanese Kozo paper and wheat starch paste are regularly used in conservation applications, the main concern was the tag. Results showed no negative ramifications of the encapsulated tag to the best of the test's ability to measure these materials.

For the protection of the works on paper, these passive tags (approximately the size of two postage stamps) were hand-trimmed to remove excess plastic to make the tags as small as possible. The tags were then encapsulated in Japanese Kozo paper that was trimmed to size using a wet tear method to retain the long fibers of the paper. Once encapsulated, the Kozo long fibers were adhered to the outside edge of the work of art so the encapsulated tag lies beside the work of art, as opposed to on the verso where it, although very small, could create an impression on the work itself while being stored flat.

During the Q&A period, Mr. King fielded questions on costs associated with implementing the RFID system at the Walker. General costs were provided, in that tags (Texas Instruments Tag-it HF Inlay, low-frequency) were approximately .54 cents each (10,000 purchased), two handheld interrogators (Symbol 8100 Pocket PC barcode reader with expansion RFID reader) \$1,800 each, and then include a dedicated networked desktop pc, software (File Maker Pro collections database and Northern Apex RFID software) and licenses and archival materials (wheat starch paste, Japanese Kozo paper, etc.). Completely funded by the Walker, the RFID system was not supported by grants or in-kind contributions.

The last speaker of the session, Rob Green, Managing Director, ISIS Limited, discussed the origins of his company. ISIS – Integrated Security Information Systems – produces software that is used in conjunction with other manufacturers' RFID tags. The company, based in London, UK, was launched in 1996 and in 1997 produced the first "real-time" corporate IT solution. ISIS software provides tracking and auditing security and was initially developed for the IT industry to secure expensive computer hardware. ISIS's museum software solution, Aspects™ ARTS, is suitable for museums, galleries and corporate art collections needing security management software and tracking of collections.

Mr. Green provided demonstrations of his software with different active tags. These tags, approximately the size of

a credit card, have an internal battery that can send out a signal that is in turn picked up by receivers located strategically throughout the building in zoned areas, and communicates directly with the ISIS software. Through the orientation of the active tag attached to a painting for example, it is possible to have the tag send out a signal as programmed to the networked pc so that a confirmation signal is sent every 15seconds or however programmed and security could know if the painting was touched(via vibrations), tilted or moved.

An active RFID device has an internal battery that lasts approximately 7 years providing a signal every 1.5 seconds and costs about \$25. It is important to consider how long the tag is needed for one's application given the battery limitations. Long-range receivers or hand-held readers can pick up the signal of the tag within 300 meters. The solution needed must be considered in conjunction with tag and receiver/reader costs. Active RFID tags differ from passive (non-battery powered) RFID tags in that passive RFID tags cannot be read through or in close proximity to metal, highly limiting their application as a security device.

In considering active RFID tags as a security measure in one's museum, although the initial costs may be high, the only ongoing costs may be limited to the purchase of additional tags as needed. These costs can be compared to the costs associated with performing routine gallery manual checklists for a large institution or inventorying an entire collection and the possible damage that can be incurred with frequent handling of objects. With Aspects™ ARTS software by ISIS, real-time information can be transmitted to the security control room and incorporated with existing CCTV technology.



Through a diverse panel and Q&A interactions with the participants, this session provided a broad range of discussion on *Accountability, Auditing and Automation*. My sincere appreciation goes to **Atelier 4** ([www.atelier4.com/](http://www.atelier4.com/)) for providing a scholarship to allow me to attend this and other sessions related to registration and the museum profession at the 2005 Western Museums Association annual conference.



Here in the western region, I have enjoyed working with both the Nevada Museum of Art (Reno, NV) and the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture (Spokane, WA) on *An Impressionist Eye: Painting and Sculpture from the Philip and Janice Levin Collection*. I've also had the pleasure of working with the Washington State Historical Society (Tacoma, WA) to mount the exhibition *Uncommon Legacies: Native American Art from the Peabody Essex Museum*.

My position also affords me a remarkable chance to get a behind-the-scenes look at individual museums and collections. An integral part of the process, indeed, is learning the intricacies of each facility, meeting the staff and building a relationship with a new registrar and installation crew at each venue. Initially, I was hesitant about what the reaction would be like to an outsider coming in to work in another institution. Would it be tense? Would I be stepping on toes? I can say that in every single case, I've been warmly received and given every professional courtesy. Typically, the installation team is very interested in working with a new collection and quite enthusiastic and responsive. For my part, after several months behind a desk between installations, I'm eager to get out into the field and meet and work with a new set of people.

One of my great career highlights at the AFA has been working with the exquisite collection of paintings on loan from the Kelvingrove Gallery in Glasgow, Scotland. In a year's time, I traveled over ten thousand miles by air, land and sea as a courier with the sixty-four works. I worked closely with over fifty staff members and visited store-rooms and galleries on two different continents. During my final condition reports, I paused an extra moment as I held Van Gogh's *Portrait of Alexander Reid* in my hands one last time as I realized what an exceptional situation I was in. I thought to myself, I wouldn't trade my job for anything in the world.



Accountability (II) continued from Page 7

going debate of ownership. The unlawful appropriation of artworks by Nazis and the looting of Native American lands are modern day examples that affect collections today. Clear provenance records are necessary to eliminate the likelihood of acquiring misappropriated works.

When establishing provenance we research all documentations, publications, journals, archeological records, dealer files and archives related to the object in question. If the museum is proposing an acquisition, we should require full disclosure of the object with warranties of full provenance. If there is no record accompanying the object it does not necessarily mean that it was illegally attained, it could mean that there is simply no record. Once an object is acquired, it is important to publish it with photographs immediately, including on the internet, which helps to publicly demonstrate new ownership in the event of theft.

## Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) and Automating Inventory

Joe King, Associate Registrar of the Walker Art Museum, introduced an exciting new method he developed that eliminates a lot of the painstaking work involved in inventorying collections. Mr. King's method utilizes a technology called Radio Frequency Identification, RFID, which provides automatic identification of objects using radio frequencies. This is not a new technology; the allies routinely used it in World War II to identify airplanes as friend or foe. Today we find RFID used in common applications such as Speedpasses at gas pumps, EZ pass toll cards, and even pet identification. RFID requires two devices. The first device is a tag or transponder that stores information and can be attached to objects, pets, and people. These tags are small, about the size of two postage stamps, and include internal antennas that receive and respond to radio-frequency queries from the second device, a transceiver/device interrogator, which picks up the information from the tags.

The Walker Art Museum performs a complete inventory every year of their 27,000 collection using the RFID technology. Registration staff programs individual RFID tags with object information such as accession number, artist, title, location, etc. After initializing the tags, staff attaches the tags to the respective works of art. Paintings, for example, have tags attached to the backs with wheat paste and Kozo Japanese conservation paper. Transceivers can then read tags even when the painting is behind a frame, glass, or mat. For sculptures, registrars enclosed the tags in small plastic cards that are then tied to the sculpture. For works on paper, Mr. King and conservators developed a technique of enclosing the tags within paper envelopes made from Kozo fibers and then hinged the envelopes to the artwork with wheat paste.

The entire project of developing and installing the RFID technology to the 27,000-piece art collection took fourteen months and took place while the museum was closed to the public for construction. During that time five staff members dedicated three-quarters of their time for five months to project. RFID tags cost about \$.54 cents a piece while the transceiver/readers cost about \$1800 each. The entire cost of the project was treated as a capital expense. Works are still marked with accession numbers but the addition of the RFID tags make the inventory process faster and easier to complete. As far as Joe King is aware, no other museum is utilizing this technique.

## RFID Automated Tracking and Security

Tom McCloskey of Applied Security Logistics and Robert Green of ISIS (Integrated Security Information Systems-[www.isisasset.com](http://www.isisasset.com)) discussed using **active** wireless RFID technology for enhanced real time object tracking and security. The difference between active and passive technology is that a passive tag, used by the Walker Art Museum,



is read and an active tag utilizing a battery, sends information immediately when an object is moved. For example, active tags can notify how many times a valuable tapestry is touched, or when a cabinet door is opened and provide "real time" object tracking if a painting is moved and indicate its current location (using global positioning systems). The active tags send this information to the receiver, which downloaded into Aspects ARTS (Art Register Tracking Software). The software then notifies security which object has been moved and where. This system will also audit an art collection automatically nearly 6,000 times a day. The Victoria and Albert Museum and the National Gallery in London currently use this system with great success.

In conclusion, we learned that museums must make maintaining accurate inventory records a high priority. Fortunately, new automated inventory processes make this easier and more efficient; therefore, more likely to be performed regularly.



Holly C. Chase served as Assistant Registrar and Traveling Exhibitions Coordinator at Brigham Young University Museum of Art in Utah for over 6 years, managing a collection of over 17,000 artworks. Currently, she is a Museum Administrator for the Chen Art Gallery of Sunrider International in Torrance, California where she manages one of the largest private collections of Chinese art and antiquities outside of Asia.



### **WHAT IS GOING ON AROUND HERE?**

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