

# Registrar's Quarterly

Fall 2020





*page 7* 2020 CSI:Registrars Update

*page 11* 2020 RC-WR Business Meeting Update

Courier & Technology Considerations  
During a Pandemic *page 17*

*page 23* Fall Member Survey Results

The Devil in the Details / Confronting  
Racism in Exhibitions *page 27*

Time to Renew Your RC-WR Membership  
*page 33* (and get some great stuff!)

New Reads by Nancy Arms Simon  
*page 43*



*pages 35-41*  
State Updates



Since 1979, the RC-WR has cooperated with the CS-AAM in advocating for the profession of Registrars and Collections Managers across the states of Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington, and promotes high standards and best practices in registration.

COVER:  
This year's participants in our first ever  
digital CSI:Registrars program.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



**HAPPY FALL  
RC-WR MEMBERS!**

And what a year it's been so far. As we make our way into the cozy season, some of us are preparing to reopen our museums, some are already open, and many others are still working from home with no opening date in sight. As the pandemic marches on, we're all continuing to face new challenges and growing through the experience, and the content in this issue reflects that growth and ingenuity.

In this issue we recap our annual events that took place earlier this month, including our Annual Business Meeting and our annual CSI: Registrars program, both of which went virtual for the first time ever, and both of which were great successes! It was really wonderful to be able to see & speak to more of you than ever, so much so that we are considering making our Annual Meeting virtual from here on out and converting what would normally be a luncheon during WMA to a different type of event like a reception. And, we're looking at more ways to add a virtual component to future CSI: Registrars events, so that even the ones held in-person can also be attended virtually by those who were unable to make it to the conference. We'd love to hear feedback from all of you on these ideas, so feel free to reach out at any time!

We also take a look at “Courier & Technology Considerations During a Pandemic” compiled by experienced registrars, one professional’s decision to remove an Aunt Jemima bottle from display (and the ensuing discussion), and we ask you all about the most surprising object you’ve ever discovered in your collection—with some hilarious results! In this Quarter’s New Reads, Nancy Arms Simon gives her take on the surprisingly accessible and user-friendly *Rights and Reproductions: The Handbook for Cultural Institutions* and the ongoing controversy at the Guggenheim. And don’t skip out on the State Reports! Now more than ever they’re filled with fun links like virtual gallery guides and exhibitions to explore from the comfort of your own home.

In other news, this year is an **ELECTION YEAR** for RC-WR! Elections will be held in October of 2021, but it’s never too early to start considering whether a Board position could be the next step in your professional development. We are seeking nominations and self-nominations for all four board positions, including Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. More info on the individual duties of each position can be found in our Bylaws at this link—[rcwr.org/about/bylaws](https://rcwr.org/about/bylaws)—or you can email me with questions and submissions any time at [rcwrchair@gmail.com](mailto:rcwrchair@gmail.com).

Finally, it’s that time of year again—time to renew your membership! At just \$15/year, RC-WR is the most affordable professional organization out there, and this year we’re committed to reaching more of you than ever with our planned virtual programs, hands-on conservation webinars, and enhanced newsletter content. We want you to be a part of the exciting things we’re doing! You can renew your membership at any time by logging in to your profile on our website at [rcwr.org](https://rcwr.org). Any renewals submitted from October onward will be good all the way through the end of 2021. If you have any questions or need help logging in to the website, please reach out to our Secretary Helen Fedchak at [rcwrsecretary@gmail.com](mailto:rcwrsecretary@gmail.com).

Thank you all for being a part of the RC-WR community this year—we are grateful to serve each and every one of you! I hope that you all have a safe happy holiday season. **Please remember to VOTE in this year’s presidential election on November 3rd!!!** See you all for our next edition in January!

With Gratitude,  
Katy Hess | RC-WR Chair  
Registrar, Bowers Museum, Santa Ana, California

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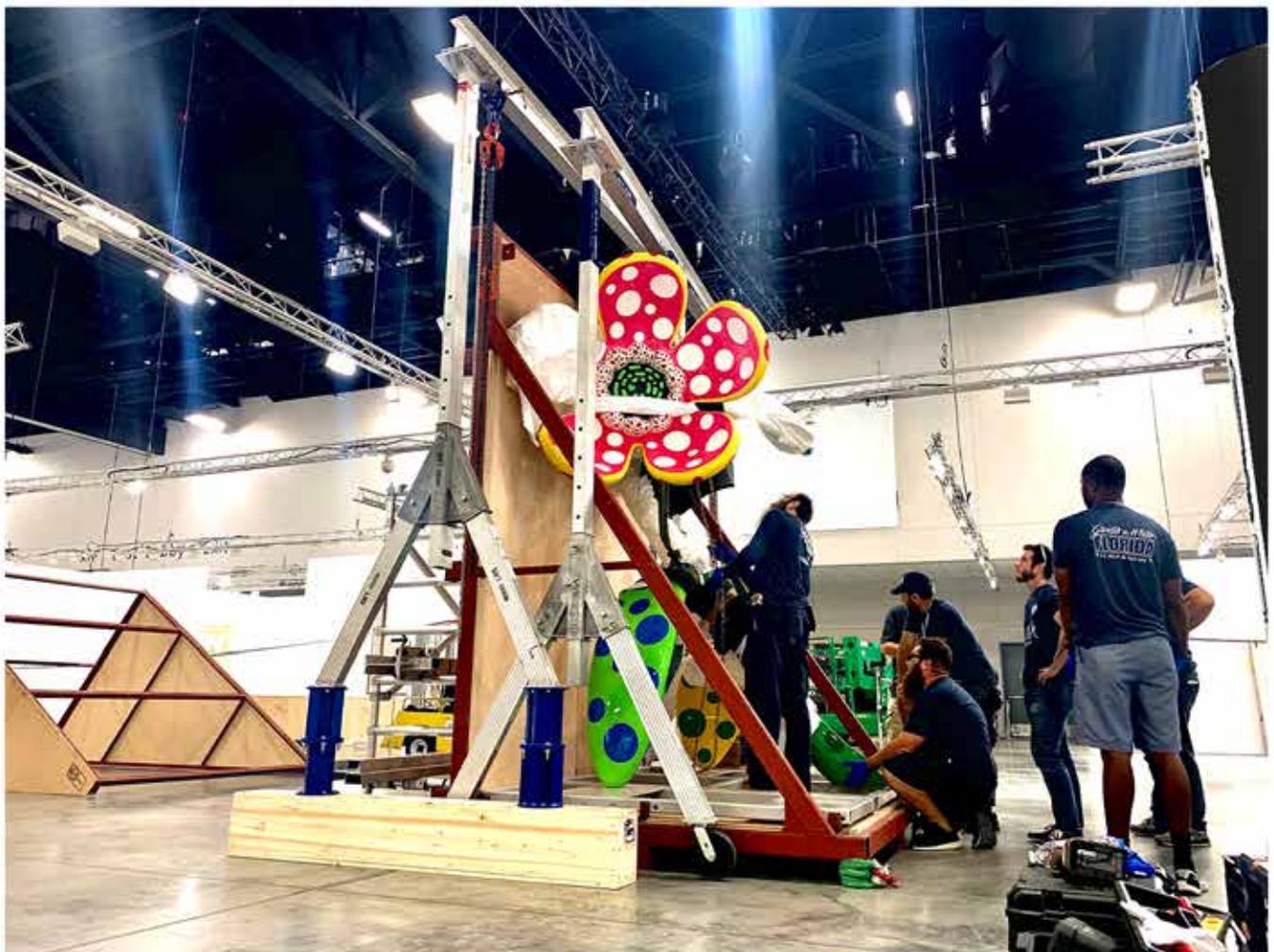


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# CSI: REGISTRARS 2020

## UPDATE



—By Beth Sanders, RC-WR Vice Chair

368 objects cataloged. I feel like I need to say that again, 368 objects cataloged in one morning! Every year, in conjunction with the Western Museums Association Annual Meeting, RC-WR hosts its annual Collections Service Initiative, or “CSI:Registrars”. This year, with the WMA meeting postponed, RC-WR took our day of giving back to the community virtual—and we had so much fun doing it.

CSI:Registrars is an opportunity for our community to give back to a museum in the area hosting the annual conference. We lend our collective expertise to make substantial progress on a collections project. Despite the shift to a virtual setting, this year was no different. RC-WR was able to assist the Oregon Historical Society with cataloging a large collection of political buttons. This collection was acquired in 1987, and includes approximately 7,000 buttons from political campaigns spanning decades, but it never had complete item-level cataloging.

*368 objects cataloged  
in one morning!*

The morning started with Helen Fedchak, Curator of Collections at the Oregon Historical Society and Secretary of RC-WR, introducing us to the collection. Fifteen members joined us for the event.

Helen provided participants with some cataloging guidance, and assigned each of us a batch of catalog numbers. Photographs of each button were provided, and we all worked in a Google Sheet to describe and condition report our batch. Over the two and a half hours of the official event, we processed an incredible 337 buttons, and then some of us (myself included) felt inclined to go in and finish our sections after our wrap-up meeting, bringing the total number of cataloged buttons to 368.

The idea for this project came from my museum, the U.S. Naval Undersea Museum, looking for a virtual collections project for a long-time volunteer. We recognized that, while volunteers could not be physically in the building due to COVID-related restrictions, a great amount

of work could be accomplished from photographs. We started with transcription projects, and then moved on to cataloging projects, so when the RC-WR board was discussing ideas for this year's CSI, I shared our success with remote cataloging.

We looked for an Oregon museum that could pull together this type of project with staffing limitations, and Helen suggested that these buttons might be perfect as they were already photographed. She then took the idea and ran with it, drafting easy to follow guidelines, assessing the merits of several file sharing platforms, discussing the logistics of data import into Argus, and organizing a wonderful and productive day. I can't imagine ever accessioning a political campaign button into my collection (the Hatch Act makes it unlikely for there to ever be a relevant one), so I enjoyed getting to spend the time looking at their variety. The batch that I cataloged were mostly related to FDR's third term re-election campaign, which is also a good reminder of the history of term limits.

So many of our institutions have small collections teams caring for thousands, if not tens (or hundreds) of thousands of objects, so RC-WR is thrilled that we are able to arrange these projects each year. Not only does it give us the opportunity to support the museum community as an organization, but it also allows us to support one another as individu-



als. If you think your institution would be a good candidate to host a future CSI:Registrars, don't hesitate to let us know. Thank you *so much* to those who participated, and to Helen and the Oregon Historical Society for making this day so successful; we hope you had as much fun as we did!

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We know that your profession is important to you, but foremost, we hope that you are staying safe. This historic event is not lost on us. This is a moment for assessing priorities and gaining perspective to get through the hard times. A4 greatly appreciates everyone's patience and looks forward to serving you now and in the future. More than ever, we are indeed, all in this together!



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# RC-WR

## Annual Business Meeting 2020

October 8, 2019 / 12:00 PM Pacific Time / Virtual Meeting Via Zoom

### Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the RC-WR Chair, Katy Hess.

### Chair's Report

#### Updates from 2020

1. Katy Hess welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced herself and the RC-WR Board, including Vice Chair Beth Sanders, Secretary Helen Fedchak, and Treasurer Maggie Leak, and also introduced Lindsay Palaima, representing CSAAM. Katy explained that as WMA was cancelled due to COVID-19 precautions, the RC-WR annual meeting was virtual this year, rather than the usual in-person luncheon during WMA.
2. Katy recapped some events that took place early in the year (pre-coronavirus):
  - Full-day shipping essentials workshop hosted at the Broad museum in January, organized by Jacqueline Cabrera and our SoCal state rep Elizabeth Hanson. We are hoping to convert this into a webinar in the future.
  - Time-Based Media workshop hosted at the Hearst Museum in Berkeley, also in January. This was organized by our NorCal state rep Linda Waterfield. We have a recording of this event and will be adding it to the workshops section of our website soon.
  - We also recently had a virtual happy hour for Washington members, hosted by our Washington state rep Nives Mestrovic.
  - Additional events had to be cancelled but we hope to reschedule them when we can meet in person again.
3. Katy thanked the Board members for sticking it out during a difficult year and then acknowledged and thanked all our state reps and appointed positions. Our state reps are: Alaska - Savanna Bradley; Arizona - Lindsey Vogel-Teeter; NorCal - Linda Waterfield; SoCal - Elizabeth Hanson; Hawai'i - Charmaine Wong; Idaho - Nicole Inghilterra; Nevada - Brian Eyler; Oregon - Meg Glazier-Anderson; Utah - Zaira

Arredondo; Washington - Nives Mestrovic. Appointed positions are: Membership Coordinator - Emmeline Yen; New Reads Author - Nancy Arms Simon; Newsletter Editor - Indie Audra O'Sidhe.

4. In 2021 we will be making a push to include more curated articles in the newsletter that are relevant to current social and professional topics.
5. Planning a conservation webinar series for 2021 - more to follow in the meeting.
6. Katy mentioned the current poll question for the newsletter - "what is the most surprising question you have encountered in your institution's collection?" Deadline for answers is October 12th and the link was shared in the chat box.
7. A reminder that we have merchandise available in return for a donation on the website, which is a fundraising initiative. We have women's and men's t-shirts, and half-aprons with pockets, perfect for working in collections!

### Thank You to our 2020 Sponsors

RC-WR Vice-Chair Beth Sanders thanked our sponsors for their financial support in putting together the newsletter and underwriting the stipend program for in-person workshops and conferences, which we hope to be able to offer again next year. This year's annual meeting sponsor would have been ACLA. Beth shared a short message from ACLA to the membership.

Beth thanked our other 2020 sponsors:

- Cookes Crating
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- Gander & White
- ArtWork Fine Art Services
- Atelier 4
- Huntington T. Block
- Willis Towers Watson
- Artworks San Diego
- Crozier
- Hollinger Metal Edge

### CSI: Registrars Reminder

RC-WR will be holding a virtual CSI: Registrars event on Saturday, October 10, 2020, from 10am, to 1 pm Pacific Time. As Portland was supposed to be the host city for the Annual Meeting, we're keeping it in Oregon and helping out the Oregon Historical Society with cataloging a large collection of political buttons. We've had such a good response to this that we only have three more spots remaining for members who would like to join in. Helen Fedchak thanked all of those who have already signed up.

## Secretary's Report

### Membership Growth in 2020

RC-WR Secretary Helen Fedchak gave an update on membership numbers. Last year at the annual meeting we had 205 members. This year we have 240 members, of whom 202 are voting members and 38 are non-voting members.

Membership numbers by state are as follows:

- Alaska - 5
- Arizona - 8
- California - 126
- Hawaii - 6
- Idaho - 7
- Nevada - 6
- Oregon - 15
- Utah - 4
- Washington - 44

Helen thanked our new Membership Coordinator, Emmeline Yen, and all our state reps for all their help.

### Time to Renew Membership

Memberships run for the calendar year, so Helen announced that email reminders to renew will be going out closer to the end of the year. Members who have not renewed by February 1, 2021 will be considered lapsed and will not receive emails or be able to log on to the website. Please contact Helen with any problems renewing or logging on to the website.

## Treasurer's Report

### Report on 2020 Actuals

RC-WR Treasurer Maggie Leak gave a brief summary of the 2020 budget vs. 2020 actual expenses. Budget details were shared on the screen for attendees to review. Maggie noted that due to COVID-19 precautions we were not able to spend our money the way we had planned, most notably on stipends, so we end the year with an unexpectedly large surplus. We have been thinking creatively about the best ways to serve members, with more digital content and more webinars, so the 2021 budget includes a rollover from 2020 to help cover the cost of providing these new initiatives.

### Membership Vote on Proposed 2021 Budget

A poll for voting was shared on the Zoom screen for a membership vote to approve the budget. The budget was unanimously approved.

## CSAAM Report

Lindsay Palaima, Secretary of CS AAM gave a report. She is also an RC-WR member. Updates on CSAAM activities during the year:

- AAM was supposed to be in San Francisco this year but was cancelled, so CSAAM held a virtual conference with four sessions, which had about 2600 registrants.
- AAM also had a virtual conference, which went better than expected!
- CSAAM presented an updated general facility report, which is now available for purchase at the AAM bookstore.
- Worked on the deaccession toolbox, which can be found on the AAM website and the CSAAM website.
- Presented webinars on various collection topics which are all available on the website.
- For next year - there are CSAAM elections coming up and they are seeking nominations for Chair-elect and Secretary-elect.
- Working on updating the code of ethics in partnership with ARCS.
- Updating courier document.
- Created an idea committee for DEAI.
- AAM 2021 will probably be a hybrid conference in Chicago and online.
- New Facebook group for emerging museum professions for a no-judgment zone!

## Conservation Webinars

### Planned webinars on conservation issues

Beth updated the membership on an upcoming webinar series RC-WR is planning about basic conservation techniques for museum professionals. Board members have been reaching out to conservators in various disciplines to see what kind of webinars we can present. Hoping that the series will start in mid-November.

### Poll for the Membership

Beth shared two poll questions about the types of collections that members would most like to see conservation webinars about, and what content those webinars should include. Poll results were shared, with most votes going to works on paper, followed by general objects, costume & textiles, ethnographic, and paintings. Stabilization of an object in poor condition was the most popular topic for content.

## Additional Business

Katy thanked everyone for attending. RC-WR is also having elections in 2021 and accepting nominations, or self-nominations, for all four board member positions. Katy asked for any additional comments in the chat box. No additional comments or questions.

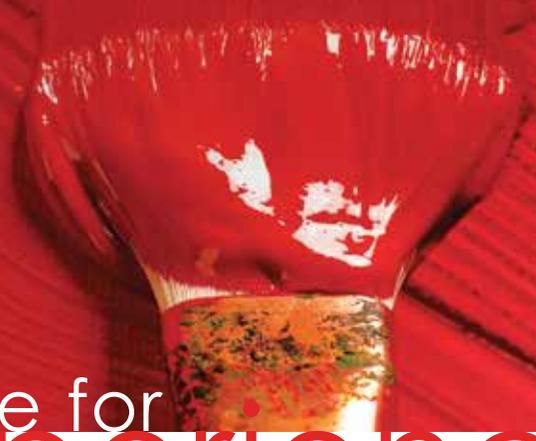
## Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned. ●



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# COURIER & TECHNOLOGY CONSIDERATIONS DURING A PANDEMIC

PRESENTED BY

THE REGISTRAR HOUR

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COMPILED IN AUGUST 2020

## Introduction

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The purpose of this paper is to address the temporary modifications made in lieu of sending a physical courier due to travel restrictions. It is a shared concern within the international community of museum registrars, collection specialists, insurers, and underwriters, that these emergency measures may be viewed as a replacement for established industry standards. Recognizing the immediate short-term and potential long-term effects on couriered shipments facing the Museum community due to the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) pandemic, this paper will:

1. Identify temporary measures taken to address immediate obstacles;
2. Recognize the full and potential impact of such measures;
3. Agree that short-term, urgent solutions neither equal nor replace industry standards; and
4. Acknowledge that a return to best practices is the ultimate goal.

With travel prohibited or discouraged, the Museum community has quickly adapted to providing the best oversight and care possible through advanced technology and enhanced communication in lieu of physical courier accompaniment.

- Registrars collaborating with assigned couriers are overseeing outgoing & incoming installations, packing & handling, shipments, and condition reporting on a virtual platform (hence the term “virtual courier”).
- Where physical courier travel is not permitted, museums are providing staff on the front and back ends of shipments (hence the term “bookend courier”).
- Additionally, digital tracking devices (“trackers”) are being used to illustrate the shipments’ movement, location and other external factors (vibrations, temperature, humidity, etc.).

For each platform that offers a real solution, other concerns are raised, such as security, quality of care, and immediacy of action.

## Technology

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Various types of video streaming software are being used to provide oversight, such as FaceTime, Zoom, Teams, Google, and WhatsApp. While these technologies enable significant involvement in real time, some challenges remain:

- Difficulty with sight lines.
- Difficulty with clarity and viewing detail.
- Reliance on a person correctly positioning the camera.
- Reliance on a good cellular/Wi-Fi connection.
- Scheduling the appointment in varying time zones.
- Agreed use of the type of streaming software.
- Agreement to the security measures of the streaming software.

Various types of Global Positioning Systems (GPS), commonly referred to as trackers, have been used in other markets for transport of high value goods and are now gaining increased use in the museum industry. While trackers may prove beneficial in aiding the courier by capturing temperature, humidity and vibration, there are some issues and unanswered questions that remain:

- Inconsistent approval by airports, airlines or fine art trucking companies.
- Regulation by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) due to lithium ion battery components.
- Location tracking is inoperable in flight and during ground transport without cellular connection.
- Security concerns regarding inadequate encryption and lack of password protection.
- Inconsistent cost structure and related budgetary considerations.

## Insurance considerations

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Fine art insurance, either commercial or indemnity schemes, carry the expectation of best practices for the preparation and oversight of shipments. Mitigation of risk in transit is a shared concern

among the Museum and Insurance communities. Courier oversight remains not only an industry standard, but also an essential tool for reducing risk.

Upon consultation, fine art insurance brokers, underwriters and the Administrator for the US Government Indemnity program responded as follows to the temporary short term measures defined above.

United States Government Indemnity (USGI): In response to an appeal letter from the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD), USGI official policy remains intact: *A physical courier is required on each conveyance.* However, considerations will be made on a case-by-case basis for shipments through December 2020.

Commercial Fine Art Insurance:

Museums have benefited from a 75% reduction in insurance premiums over the past 30 years due to the expansion of the registrar's role and implementation of best practices. The Insurance community relies upon registrars to apply industry standards for shipments by risk category and expects that changes to current courier policies are only enacted temporarily out of necessity. Concerns are as follows:

- Lack of a courier accompaniment could negatively impact conveyance value limits.
- Underwriters have expressed concern about cyber-security. While most U.S. policies include coverage due to a cyber-attack, it does vary by country and policy. Any loss resulting from a cyber-attack could invalidate coverage and affect premiums industry wide.
- There is plausible risk for an unvetted fourth party (supplier of GPS tracker) with access to this sensitive information.
- Reliance upon technology to replace the physical courier.

Assignment of a physical courier is internationally considered an essential element of overall risk management. Permanent changes to courier policies must be considered very carefully as changes may affect premiums and policy terms. The Insurance industry is reactive to loss and, in the current climate, one large loss could have a domino effect on premium rates world-wide.

## Courier Requirements

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Based on the specific needs of the artworks, the following criteria should be examined when assigning a courier:

- Fragility
- Multiple transit and handlings
- High value
- Installation concerns
- New borrower/facility
- Insurance requirements
- Exhibition condition check and installation oversight

These basic considerations are universal and existed before the pandemic; they should remain in place through the pandemic and into the future. Refer to Appendix A for some examples of risks averted when a physical courier was present.

## Conclusion

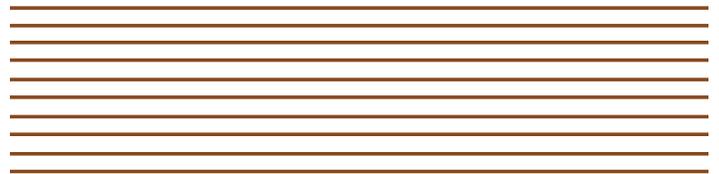
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The impact of this rapid shift in industry operations should not be assessed in isolation, but rather as a whole and with a view to the future. The technologies are helpful in augmenting the physical courier model, while maintaining our best practices without risk to our collections. Pre-pandemic, the Museum community experienced historic low insurance rates with deference to the registrar's judgement and best practices as our objectives aligned. Registrars, conservators and insurance brokers agree that the highest risk of loss or damage to an object is during transit and the second highest vulnerability occurs when the object is in

the care, custody and control of those unfamiliar with it. The modifications necessitated to the physical courier due to the pandemic are not the ideal; they are instead temporary measures meant to augment existing physical oversight and should be re-assessed as the situation evolves.

The authors of this paper have a combined 153 years of registration, art and artifact collections management, and exhibitions experience at internationally recognized federal, state, private and university museums in the US. They have held leadership roles in Association of Registrars and Collections Specialists (ARCS), Collections Stewardship – American Alliance of Museums (CS-AAM), Western Museum of Association (WMA), New England Museum Association (NEMA), and the Registrars Committee – Western Region (RCWR), have presented at numerous conferences and taught graduate level courses in museum studies and law.



## Appendix A

All events cited below were collected from a variety of North American registrars.

### Installation issues:

- “Borrower requested to install a very fragile sculpture in a vitrine on a free-standing pedestal without weights or floor attachments/anchoring.” The courier reduced the possibility of damage by addressing the unprepared borrower.

### Multiple transits and handlings:

- “Arrived at an international cargo terminal, to find crates already depalletized and loaded on the truck. I asked that they open the truck so I could see the loaded crates before departing the airport, only to find that none of the crates were strapped down.” The courier discovered failure on the part of the drivers, who had not completed the basic task of strapping freight to ensure safe transport.

- “Upon arrival at an international destination (with a subsequent 10-hour truck trip), the truck assigned to transport the loans had a full-size image of a painting on the side of the truck. That painting was among those going in the truck.” The courier directed the drivers to cover the image with tape thereby eliminating the security risk caused by the fine arts shipping company.

- “During a cross country transport of an artist’s retrospective, the truck’s wheels locked causing the rubber of the tires to drag while at a high speed creating a large volume of smoke. The truck pulled over immediately to find the tires were on fire. The driver was about to unhitch the trailer from the tractor thinking the value of the tractor was greater than that of the contents of the trailer. I intervened and instructed the driver to get the fire extinguisher and put out the fire.” The courier averted the loss of multiple high value objects of great cultural heritage and compensated for the driver’s poor judgement.

**Fragility:**

- “In a domestic cargo terminal, a forklift driver wasn’t careful and instead of placing the forks beneath a crate, he hit the crate and knocked it over. It contained an extremely high value painting glazed with glass. Our delivery truck had already departed, so we had to find another truck to come back, pick up the crated piece and bring it back to the museum so it could be checked. The flight had to be rebooked for another day, as did the supervision/pickup arrangements in the country of origin.” The courier witnessed the forklift driver’s negligence ensuring that there was no question about liability resting with the airline company; a primary matter for the ensuing claim.

- “Overseeing crates being palletized in an outdoor cargo shed in a Latin American city, I informed the airport supervisor assigned to my shipment that one of the crates had wax objects and should not sit in the sun. While we waited for palletization, it took the inexperienced agent over an hour to have

the crate moved by cargo personnel. He was not assertive, and since my site line was limited at times, I could not see what he was doing. Only after I became insistent did he have the crate moved out of the sun.” The courier witnessed a high probability of damage to art owing to the failure of the airport supervisor to advocate for the shipment.

- “In the cargo area at the airport, a small ride flat crate stacked on top of another (unknown) crate that was 7-8 feet tall. There was no courier for the cargo.” The airport supervisor failed to represent the client by allowing an art crate to be stacked, thereby exposing it to unnecessary risk.

- “Waiting to board a plane, I could clearly see my container sitting on the tarmac. The gate agent called “final boarding” but I refused to board without an explanation of when my freight would load. The gate agent called cargo and found that the freight-loading mechanism on the plane had broken. I gave my seat away and called the airport supervisor, who had already left the airport. Had we not sent a courier a painting significant to our collection would have been abandoned planeside.” The courier prevented possible damage or loss by compensating for the failure of the airport supervisor to do his job. ●



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# FALL MEMBER SURVEY

WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING OBJECT YOU'VE EVER DISCOVERED IN YOUR COLLECTION  
—PRESENT OR PAST INSTITUTIONS?

Tough call! One top candidate is the bloody scarf that was allegedly worn by Mary Lincoln on the night of Abraham Lincoln's assassination. (Very unlikely)

—Clara Berg, Museum of History & Industry, WA



▲ A rare Coast Salish blanket woven from woolly dog hair, a species of now extinct domestic dogs.

—Hollye Keister, Burke Museum, WA

Painting/collage of a deer that had been shot...not going to be on display any time soon!

—Jessica Bocinski, Escalette Collection of Art, CA

An Enema applicator  
—Lindsey Vogel-Teeter, Pueblo Grande Museum, AZ

I encountered a ▶ blank object record, the 17th object ever cataloged in our collection, with only the object name "What-not," which I assumed meant the cataloger didn't know what the object was. After poring over the files trying to identify the now-deaccessioned item, I eventually discovered that "What-not" is actually a term for a small piece of furniture with multiple tiers of shelving!

Our collection also has a tiny ceramic scale-model of King Tut's sarcophagus including (rather than a mummy) an anatomically correct skeleton, all made by a Swiss dentist in the late 1920s using her dental tools.

—Katy Hess, Bowers Museum, CA



Surprising in the bad way—a tie between a cheap, beaten up Santa sculpture found in the bottom of a box in the collection of a University president (I was reprimanded for laughing even after we determined it had

no significant historical or even sentimental value!).

Surprising in a good way—photographs by a well-known photographer of a series he did on the Twin Towers taken from his apartment window.

—Ellen Freebys, a public university in CA

A Sea Slug collected in 1937.

—Jess Milhausen, Burke Museum of Natural History & Culture, WA

An ancient textile with a mummified finger still stuck to it  
—Maggie Leak, Utah Museum of Fine Arts, UT



A painted depiction of *The Last Supper*, on the head of a pin!  
—Cory Gooch, Frye Art Museum, WA

It wasn't in my current institution's collection, but at a mu-

seum I worked with in the UK, I found a box of Roman-era human teeth mixed in with a collection of stone tools. We wound up having to separate the teeth to be stored with other human remains.  
—Beth Sanders, U.S. Naval Undersea Museum, WA

A lock of hair from Narcissa Whitman.  
—Nancy S. Jackson, Washington State Historical Society, WA

At a previous institution in Minnesota, a horse-drawn hearse!  
—A. Indie O'Sidhe, OR

▼ We found a pickle in a bottle in one of our storage rooms. Firstly, the pickle is huge so it



must have been grown in the bottle. Secondly, it had this note with it: "In the middle 1860s Jos. Miller purchased a furnished house in Eugene, for his bride. This bottled

cucumber was part of the furnishing. It has to be over 110 years old." Sadly, there was no donation information with the pickle when we found it, so we don't know who to thank for this ancient cucumber.  
—Helen Fedchak, Oregon Historical Society, OR



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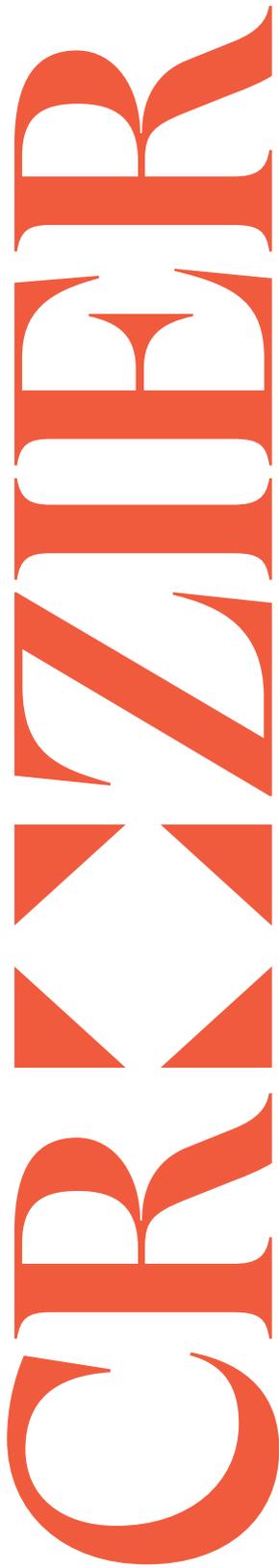
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# The Devil in the Details of Exhibits



—By *Carl Aldrich*, Fielding Garr Ranch Manager,  
Antelope Island State Park, UT

By way of introduction, context, and perhaps disclaimer, I try to pick apart aspects of racism in this article. I try to understand multiple perspectives in this article. I even feel a bit uncomfortable being asked to represent museum professionals on race issues. I am a white man in a very homogenous white community. Movements like Black Lives Matter push me into thinking about how I, as both a professional and a human, relate to people of color. I regret and would love to deny that it takes such a movement for me to pay attention,

but I feel it is more important to be open and mindful from the start about where I come from. I do not presume to speak for people of color, and I think that perspective would be invaluable to the issues brought up in this article.



In June 2020, I quietly removed a glass Mrs. Buttersworth syrup bottle from a display at Fielding Garr Ranch, a historic site I manage at Antelope Island State Park in Utah. It was not an easy decision to make. At first, I wanted to keep quiet about it. Few people, if any, would even notice it was gone. After a couple of days, however, I felt the need to post about it on my personal Facebook page. Staying silent about racism only serves to perpetuate the problem. I wanted my friends to know where I stood with regard to racial issues. This is how moving a bottle turned into a small controversy.

I have since deleted my Facebook account for separate reasons and, regrettably, did not preserve the actual post and comments. In sum, visitors to Fielding Garr Ranch are left to reach their own conclusions and meanings with little interpretation offered. Some of the most frequent comments I hear romanticize the past and wish for a return to “the good old days.” To many of my visitors, Fielding Garr Ranch is representative of a better time.



The bottle in question was frequently assumed to be Aunt Jemima. Even those who collect and sell bottles frequently confuse Mrs. Buttersworth and Aunt Jemima, and since my bottle was not labeled and I did not come to my position with knowledge of historical syrup brands, it was even Aunt Jemima to me. So, for all intents and purposes, the bottle is Aunt Jemima. With no interpretation or labeling, visitors connected the bottle with the racist “mammy” character and then connected the display as a whole to an idyllic life in a simpler time. Fielding Garr Ranch’s mission and vision statements do not leave room for racism of any kind to be presented in a positive way. Therefore, I no longer felt it was appropriate to display this artifact in that context.



My Facebook post took off quickly. I expected some blowback, but it still took me by surprise and was upsetting based on who was reacting negatively. Although several people commented, the majority could be lumped into two categories.

### Too PC

One commenter’s assumption was that I had done it simply to erase history and avoid the possibility of controversy. “It’s just the world we live in now,”

she wrote. The implication of the full comment was that I had given in to some sort of societal pressure to remove all traces of things deemed racist – using logic along the lines of removing Confederate monuments being equal to removing historical events from our country’s narrative. This friend was apologetic that I am living in a time where, apparently, my ability to do honest history work is compromised by politics.

In fact, I had worried that removing the bottle would be controversial for opposite reasons. I never worried about Black Lives Matter activists descending upon my out-of-the-way historic site because of a single bottle. Instead, I imagined frequent Caucasian visitors would notice the change and take offense. No one had ever complained about the bottle being displayed. It was not actively and immediately a problem that I needed to deal with. I figured it was only a matter of time before someone took the removal as a personal slight against them for being white.

But that friend’s assumption was not completely wrong. 2020 is a vastly different world than the second half of the 20th Century she grew up in. “The world we live in now” has progressed to a point where we expect everyone to be at least considered—if not actively involved and represented—when designing historical exhibits. I have a long way to go before I can say I have enough context to re-introduce that Mrs. Buttersworth (aka Aunt Jemima) bottle. If it returns, I believe it deserves explanation and a look into the racist past of Aunt Jemima.

### Implications of Racism

The “R” word, racist, is a heavy label to place on a person. When someone hears that word in relation to something they have done or said, the immediate reaction that I generally see is defensive. As though someone pointing out even the slightest racism on their part may as well be an accusation of all-out white supremacy. In some people’s minds, there is no middle



ground. A person is either burning crosses or building bridges. As a result, those people will immediately shut down rather than really consider whether what they are doing or saying is even the least bit racist, or at the very least informed by privilege.

One commenter on my post immediately defended her love for Aunt Jemima. Her family always had a bottle of the syrup ready to go. She grew up eating pancakes with her family, connecting the smiling face of Aunt Jemima with pleasant childhood memories. Living in rural Utah, she explained, this was her first exposure to people of color.

She is not responsible for the character existing. She likely did not buy the syrup with her own money as a child. It appears that seeing the character only instilled positive thoughts about people of color. But the fact remains that her first exposure to a black woman was in the form of this stereotypical and racist “mammy” character. I know this woman personally and can affirm that she is indeed a big-hearted person. Racist is absolutely not an adjective that I would use to describe her.

It was never my intention to imply that anyone was racist—only that the character the “Aunt Jemima” bottle represented was. And perhaps that defensive reaction just comes with age. At my previous museum, there is a stash of photographs from a community play. Many of them feature individuals in Redface. Hopefully, those pictures will never make it into an exhibit without a lot of careful interpretation.

I wonder about the people photographed. To them, at that time in history, Redface was just something they did. No one bothered to talk to the nearby tribe about how they felt about their representation in the play and costumes. There is no easy way to confirm, but I wonder if those people consciously knew that what they were doing was hurtful. In any case, their actions were racist. They were based on and perpetuating the caricatured stereotype of Native Americans.

Understand I am not excusing the use of Redface, Blackface, or other insulting depictions of any race or culture. I just wonder how many of those actors would be

shocked and upset to have that “racist” label attached to them. Like my friend’s family’s syrup choices, insensitive representations of minorities were just something that happened. Something the individual did not personally tie to racism because no one around them was questioning what they were doing. Maybe they even thought they were honoring those people they were stereotyping.



## Conclusion

The passionate response to moving a bottle was eye-opening. I expected some push-back but was not prepared for the deep dive into racism among people I love and respect. As a white man, it is easy for me to give people the benefit of the doubt. Someone doing a racist thing does not necessarily make them racist because racism exists systemically. There is middle ground.

I wish that more people could look at themselves and acknowledge that some amount of their past or present actions may have been influenced by systemic racism. I wish that more people could own up to those things that they have done, whether consciously or by participating in common practices of the day.

I also ask, at what point is a person racist? When they use Aunt Jemima syrup? Or when they learn that the Aunt Jemima character is inappropriate



and go on defense? Maybe when they tell people of color that they should or should not be offended because this person’s love of the character is informed by a personal, and limited, experience?

A few of my museum friends jumped in to help explain from a professional perspective what had happened. I have no regrets. I thought through as many implications as I could come up with when making the decision to move the bottle. Then again when I decided to speak out about it to friends, family, and colleagues. Removing the object until more appropriate interpretation can be applied to the exhibit fits the mission and vision of Fielding Garr Ranch. It fits with my conscience. ●

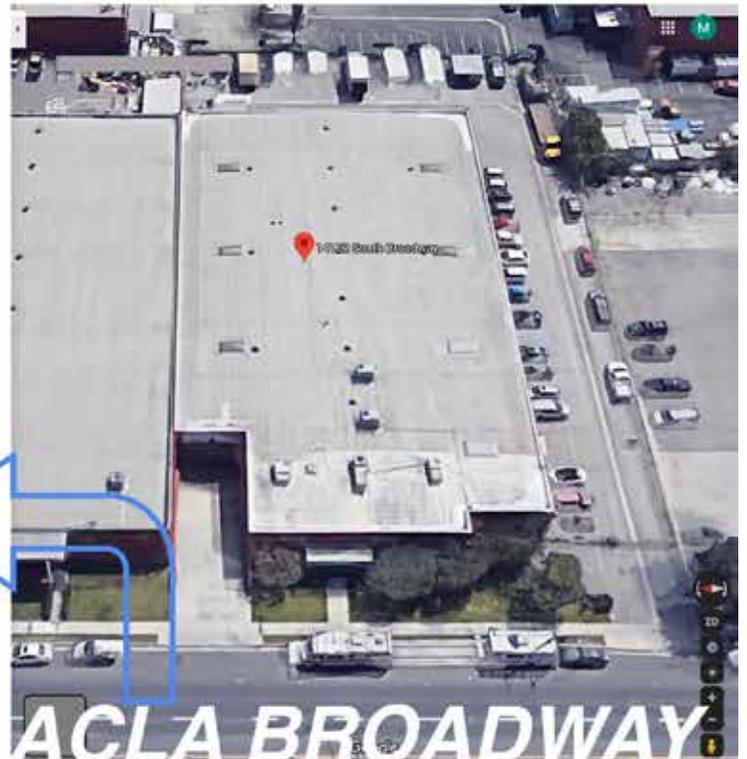
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# STATE UPDATES

## ALASKA

Like many of our colleagues in the Lower 48, the last few months have been decidedly non-traditional for collections staff in Alaska museums. Over the course of our Summer Season (Memorial Day–Labor Day), we saw some museums around the state slowly reopen to the public, often with limited hours, though many smaller organizations remain closed to this day. However, behind the scenes at many of our museums we have had a whirlwind of activity that is still happening to this day!

Virtual programs of all types have become

exciting opportunities to share Collections with our communities, often in ways that would not otherwise have been possible without the help of technology. Many programs have gone live over the last few months that highlight collections management activities: #AskACurator, #WhatIsItWednesday, Tales from the Archives, Virtual Puzzles made from historic collections, History Tidbits, the Day By Day Project, Sound Collections, and Postcards from Unprecedented Times, to name just a few. Closed borders and restricted shipping and air travel caused many disruptions in exhibit



▲ Staff wear masks and practice social distancing while preparing for an exhibit at the Pratt Museum.

and project schedules but provided much-needed time for reflections and restructuring. Our statewide network, Museums Alaska, has been able to offer many virtual events for professional development during the months of quarantine and beyond, and has provided virtual space for our various organizations to discuss reopening procedures, COVID safety protocols, collections care during museum closures, and a means for sharing our successes and failures. This fall, numerous virtual, outdoor, and in-person (Socially Distant!) collections projects are moving forward around the state, with topics of conservation, condition reporting, what to collect to document the pandemic, digitization, and more.

There are too many exciting upcoming and ongoing activities to give justice to here, so be sure to check out our Alaska RC-WR Members' organizational websites and social media to see our programming and events in action!



▲ State Representative Savanna Bradley poses with the Pratt Museum's ornithological collections.



▲ Inspecting the Live Gull Cam on Gull Island nesting colony in Homer, Alaska.



## ARIZONA

Some Arizona museums have begun to reopen. Museums with an outdoor component, such as the **Desert Botanical Garden** and the **Phoenix Zoo**, were among the first to reopen.

**The Arizona Museum of Natural History** (AZMNH) will reopen on October 31st. During the Museum's closure, the AZMNH participated in the Collections Assessment for Preservation Program (CAP) with a site visit by assessors Nancy Odegaard from the Arizona State Museum and Brian Rickling of Heritage Architecture and Planning.

**Pueblo Grande Museum's** outdoor interpretive trail reopened on October 12th, however the Museum galleries and indoor facilities remain closed with no reopening date scheduled. During the closure, the Museum has focused on digital content and the development of a new changing exhibit *Rights and Resilience: Celebrating Native American Women*.

During the pandemic, the **Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community** (SRP-MIC) made significant progress on the construction of a state-of-the-art archaeological repository campus. On September 23rd, the SRP-MIC held a socially



▲ *Video Invaders* exhibit at the Tempe History Museum

distanced beam signing ceremony with the project team and members of the community.

The **Tempe History Museum** (THM) remains closed, with no opening date set. During the closure THM has focused on virtual programming for the public, including educational workshops on Zoom and concerts on Facebook Live. THM has also developed a new changing exhibit, *Video Invaders*, about retro video games and local arcade history. It will debut to the public as soon as the museum opens.

## NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Nicole Manis recently assumed the role of Exhibit and Digital Collections Registrar at the **California Academy of Sciences** in San Francisco. She is managing all the registration deliverables related to in-house and external exhibitions, as well as digital assets and records management. She is balancing her time working from home and from the museum, helping to prepare for new exhibit modifications to promote health and safety. Lindsay Palaima moved into the Research Collections Registrar role at the Academy last year and continues to manage research collections going out for display. She is mainly working from home and is updating the Collection Management Policy and Emergency Response Procedure. As a part of San Francisco

History Days, Lindsay Palaima and Head Librarian, Rebekah Kim, presented "Celebrating SF History Days—Academy Style" on the Academy's youtube channels and facebook. Following local City and County guidance, the Academy is reopening to the public on Friday 23 October. If you are not able to join us in person, check out the Academy @ Home for online content.

Noreen Ong has joined the **Asian Art Museum** as Head of Registration.

**San Francisco Museum of Modern Art** is open, with extra safety precautions for visitors and staff. Enjoy *David Park: A Retrospective*, new wall commissions by Bay Area artists, and our spacious galleries, outdoor terraces, and Living Wall. Tickets available at SFMOMA.org Staying remote? SFMOMA invites you to visit Museum From Home, Open Space or listen to Raw Material, an award-winning podcast.

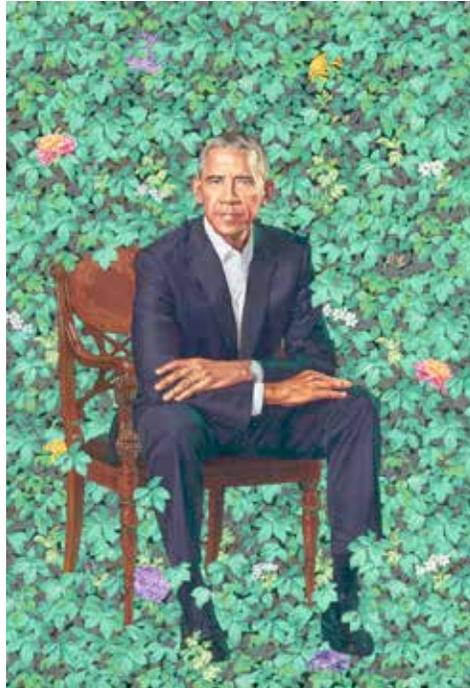
The **Hearst Museum of Anthropology** at UC Berkeley has joined the change network as part of OF/BY/FOR ALL, brainchild of Nina Simon, the former director of the Santa Cruz Museum of Art and History. The program helps institutions become vital parts of their communities and provides support on becoming relevant to underserved audiences.

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## SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

From the moment of their unveiling at the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in February 2018, the museum’s official portraits of President Barack Obama and Mrs. Michelle Obama have become iconic. Kehinde Wiley’s portrait of President Obama and Amy Sherald’s portrait of the former First Lady have inspired unprecedented responses from the public.

This five-city tour will travel to the Art Institute of Chicago, Brooklyn Museum, LACMA, High Art Museum, and The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston from June 2021 through



▲ The Obama portraits tour the Los Angeles County Museum of Art

May 2022 and is expected to reach millions of people who might not otherwise have an opportunity to view these remarkable paintings. In addition to the artworks themselves, the LACMA presentation of The Obama Portraits Tour will feature teacher workshops, curatorial tours, and a richly illustrated book. This special presentation will enhance the conversations surrounding the power of portraiture and its potential to engage communities.



The **Museum of Contemporary Art** (MOCA) launched limited-production, artist-designed face masks in response to the COVID-19 safety and health guidelines. The complete MOCA Masks collection is designed

by Mark Grotjahn, Barbara Kruger, Yoko Ono, Pipilotti Rist, and Hank Willis Thomas, in addition to the kids’ MOCA Masks artists. Many of the masks were exclusively designed by the artists for this project while others represent iconic works from the artists’ catalogue. The MOCA Masks project is made possible by Los Angeles-based denim brand Citizens of Humanity and MOCA Trustee Karyn Kohl who have donated all production costs so MOCA will benefit from each sale.



This year the **Museum of Latin American Art** (MOLAA) is officially listed as a Vote Center to provide additional spaces where individuals can cast their votes in person or drop off their ballots. This Voting Center will also provide Same Day Voter Registration. If you live in







historic logging equipment and one of the 10 historic buildings on site. Thankfully, most of the museum's 10,000 artifacts remain intact.

▲ Logging Museum at the Collier Memorial State Park near Klamath Falls

The **Oregon Historical Society** reopened to the public on July 11th with two current exhibits: *Nevertheless, They Persisted: Women's Voting Rights and the 19th Amendment* and *We are the Rose City: A History of Soccer in Portland*. Along with these long-term exhibits, on view for the month of October is *Stitching History: The Afro-American Heritage Bicentennial Commemorative Quilt*, a collaboration with Portland Textile Month.

▼ A giant soccer ball greets visitors in *We are the Rose City!*  
Photography by Andrea Lonas Photography



This summer the **Columbia River Maritime Museum** received twin clocks originally gifted by the citizens of Astoria to the Great Northern Pacific Steamship Co. at the 1915 World's Fair. At least one clock is expected to be on display beginning this fall in a new exhibit about the twin luxury liners, the SS Great Northern and the SS Northern Pacific, serving to explain the chapter in the region's early development.

▲ The twin clocks from the Great Northern and the Northern Pacific—facing back to back—will be on display at the Columbia River Maritime Museum.



With spring conferences and workshops cancelled due to pandemic, the **Oregon Museums Association** has taken to the online platform offering a virtual workshop, "Moving Forward with NAGPRA," which will feature a panel of members with specialized knowledge about the law. The workshop will take place on November 10th.

## UTAH

The **Utah Museum of Fine Arts**, **Natural History Museum of Utah**, and the **Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art** are all open, and they are encouraging people to purchase tickets in advance or registering before their visit in order to keep the number in the galleries controlled and to the maximum allowed.

MEHMA recently opened two new exhibitions right as the semester started: *Women, Surrealism and Abstraction*, and *African American Art, Social Justice and Identity*. Right before that, they opened *The Day After Tomorrow: Art in Response to Turmoil and Hope*. All those exhibits have audio tours available online and virtual tours.



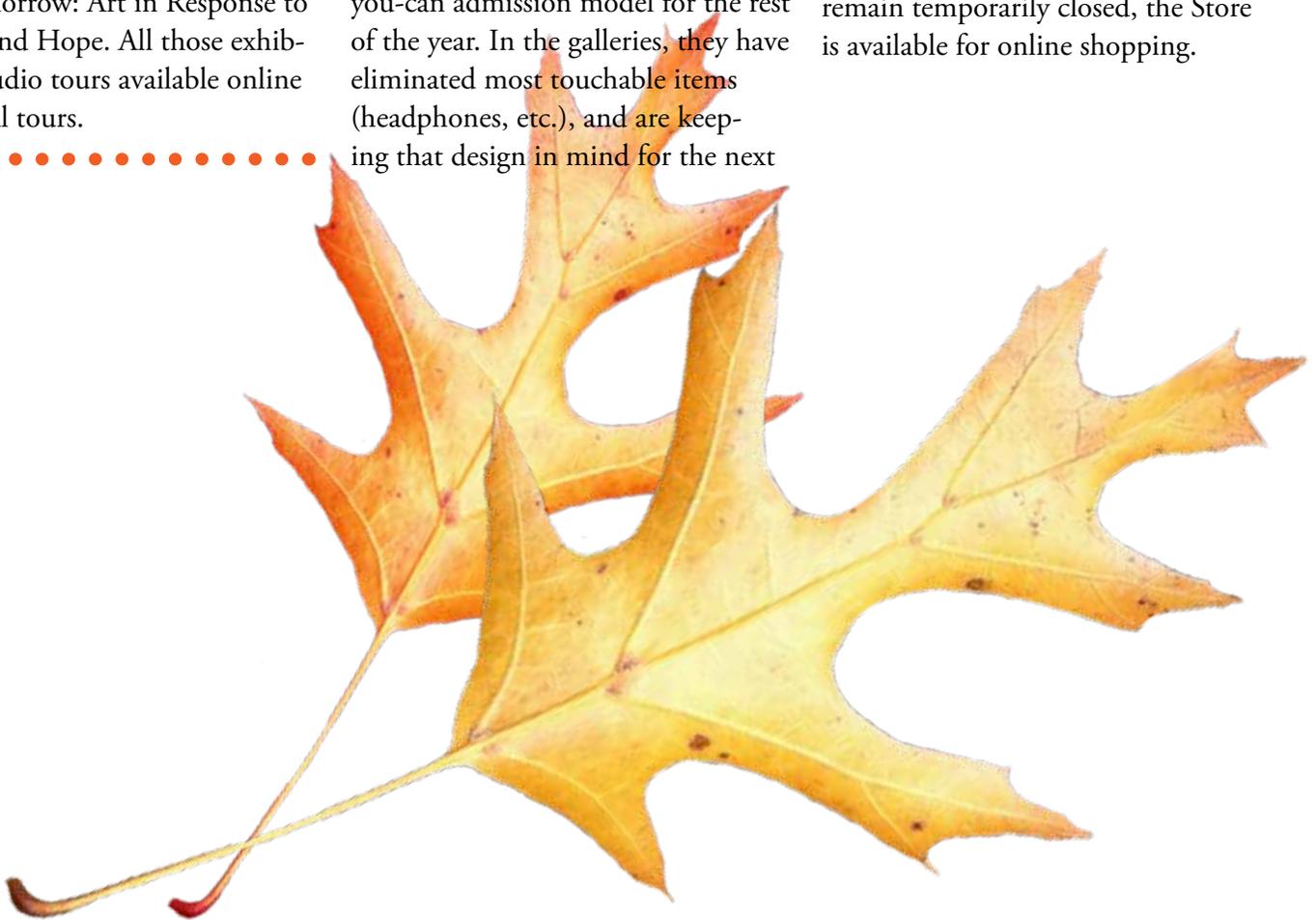
## WASHINGTON

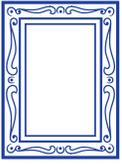
**Bellevue Arts Museum** retail space has been open for about 2 months, in accordance with state guidelines, while the museum galleries remained closed. The Museum had a soft reopening for Members only on September 26 and opened to the general public on September 31. Since reopening, they are only open 3 days of the week instead of the regular 5 days per week, and at less than the required 25% visitor capacity currently determined by the state. They are also using timed visitor entry with a new reservation system and exploring a pay-what-you-can admission model for the rest of the year. In the galleries, they have eliminated most touchable items (headphones, etc.), and are keeping that design in mind for the next

exhibition opening in early November. For everyone that is not able to visit in person, they are continuing to add new materials to the “BAM from Home” website.

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**Frye Art Museum** is happy to share with you that all staff who were fully or partially furloughed over the summer have been brought back to work. Since returning to work in early September, everyone has been working on planning the reopening. The Museum opened on October 22 for a Members only preview, and the general public will be welcomed back starting November 5. While Café Frieda and the Museum Store remain temporarily closed, the Store is available for online shopping.





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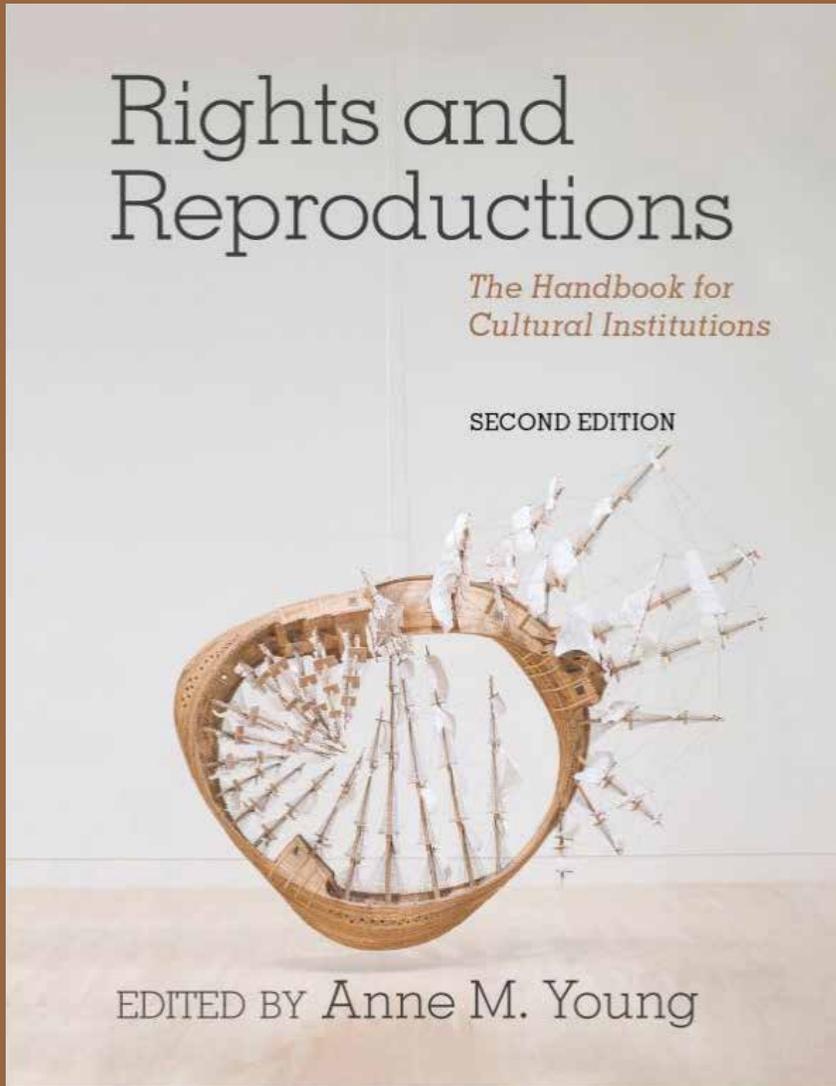
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# New Reads

by Nancy Arms Simon



Second Edition  
Edited by Anne M. Young  
American Alliance of Museums,  
Rowman & Littlefield,  
New York and London  
Copyright 2019

Intellectual Property questions often creep up on organizations. The person who gets tasked with finding the answers to these questions depends frequently on the size of the institution. Larger institutions often have a designated “Rights and Repros” person or department which smaller institutions do not. But even larger institutions, like a university, may leave the details of these issues to the person managing the particular collection or department. Or a University might have a strong policy in place for scholarly works created on campus, but nothing for a video of a performance in the theater department.

So, let’s say you are the one who has to make sure the right permissions are gathered and the right legal documents created, and you encounter someone within or outside your organization who wants to reproduce an image for a book. You start asking around about the image, only to find out that your institution was not given the copyright when you acquired the work. Soon, you’re trying to find contact information for the artist only to find out the artist is deceased. You end up emailing the Center for Photography, Getty Images, and the Artists Rights Society to see if they hold the copyright for the estate of the artist. Simultaneously you’re trying to give yourself a crash course in Intellectual Property law, its categories like Copyright, and its exceptions like Fair Use.

Consulting a lawyer may surface multiple layers of laws and legal jargon but may not get to the answers you need

for your particular case. Lawyers know the strictly legal side of IP law, but may not fully understand the industry, the collection, the collegial expectations, and the mission and policies of the institution.

This is precisely why *Rights and Reproductions: The Handbook for Cultural Institutions* is a must-have for every institution. It will give you the knowledge of where to start to deal with issues as they come up, help you reduce risk exposure, and guide you as you create an intellectual property assessment for the future (hint: knowing how you'll most often use an object can help you secure the right permissions when you acquire it).

Each of the seven chapters builds on the knowledge acquired in the previous chapters. I won't describe each chapter in detail here because each one is rich in detail, with full explanations, case studies, and "test your knowledge" sections. However, I will point out that chapter one, "Intellectual Property", delivers an accessible and fascinating explanation of "what is Intellectual Property", the theories behind it, and how it differs fundamentally from physical property. The handbook is directed towards cultural institutions and goes deep into copyright and fair use, one of the key exceptions to copyright in this industry.

*Rights and Reproductions* focuses on U.S. Law but includes some important sections about international cross-over, key international agreements that informed domestic law, and parallel laws and rulings. There are multiple case studies ranging from whether Martin Luther King's "I Have A Dream" speech was "published" when he delivered it in Washington D.C., to handling visitor photography and social media, to what laws apply when an artist or artwork's subject has two residences at the time of their death.

I was particularly impressed that in multiple chapters *Right and Reproductions* covers the rights of Indigenous peoples, discussing topics from human remains to traditional knowledge, and doesn't

mince words about cultural appropriation: "IP owners who are members of dominant cultural groups are recognized as 'new' and deserving of ownerships even when based on indigenous or marginalized people traditions". I also appreciated the extensive coverage of digital content. Chapters two through five have "test your skills" sections where you practice what you have learned.

I think anyone who reads this book would have a strong grasp on next steps if they found themselves in a copyright conundrum. *Rights and Reproductions* is so well organized you can look up terminology or key legal agreements quickly and easily in the glossary or index. (Although you will probably find yourself wanting to read the chapters beginning to end.) Appendix A lists international treaties, federal legal materials, and court decisions that deal with Intellectual Property, with full citations and short descriptions about the ruling for easy reference. Appendix B dedicates fifty-eight pages to sample documents and contract templates. Appendix C is a list of references and resources for more information on intellectual property including sections on musical works, comics and cartoons, surveys, and blogs.

I must admit that I didn't expect to enjoy this read as much as I did. The overlap of history, law, philosophy, theory, and pragmatics had me genuinely riveted. Before I read this, I had limited experience or knowledge about copyright. I didn't realize that copyright can be part of an estate. It can be redistributed in bankruptcy or divorce actions. It can be counted towards child support or a mortgage, and it can be confiscated in criminal cases! And possibly most importantly: the *right* to enforce a copyright is not the same as the *ability*. If at any point in your collections management career, you find yourself trying to sort out one or more questions about Intellectual Property, start by getting this book. Then keep it on your shelf and I guarantee you'll need to send fewer emails.

## New Reads / Online:



The glaring spotlight that shone on racism and economic inequities in early 2020 has not dimmed. I followed with particular interest as news unfolded about Chief Curator Nancy Spector at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Spector was accused of overt racism as well as appropriation of work by guest curator Chaédria LaBouvier. In addition, there's been sharp criticism from employees about everything from how the Guggenheim has handled employee furloughs and safety during the Covid-19 pandemic, to a history of unchecked sexual misconduct at the museum. There is a push right now to hold museums accountable for historic and systemic racism but also to make real changes to inequities in pay, opportunities, and who is heard. Because museums are just one microcosm of our country's wealth disparity and foundation on racial hierarchies, it will probably take a full-on revolution to change. But the conversation has started, and the pressure is on. The more steps taken forward now, the farther ahead we'll be if the movement recedes.

- Taylor Dafoe, "The Guggenheim's Curatorial Staff Call Out the Museum's 'Discriminatory Practices' in a Scathing Letter to Leadership", Artnet news, June 23, 2020. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/guggenheim-curatorial-staff-letter-1889290>
- Hakim Bishara, "Open for Exploitation: Artists Project Messages on Guggenheim Museum Ahead of Reopening", Hyperallergic, September 29, 2020. <https://hyperallergic.com/590869/guggenheim-museum-projections/>
- Hakim Bishara, "Guggenheim Union Greets Museum Members at Reopening With Protest", Hyperallergic, September 30, 2020. <https://hyperallergic.com/591484/guggenheim-union-protest-members-reopening/>
- Helen Stoilas, *Nancy Spector steps down as chief curator of the Guggenheim Museum, after months of controversy*, The Art Newspaper, October 8, 2020. <https://www.theart-newspaper.com/news/nancy-spector-steps-down-as-chief-curator-of-the-guggenheim-museum>
- Robin Pogrebin, *Guggenheim's Top Curator Is Out as Inquiry Into Basquiat Show Ends*, New York Times, October 8, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/10/08/arts/design/guggenheim-investigation-nancy-spector.html#:~:text=the%20main%20story-,Guggenheim's%20Top%20Curator%20Is%20Out%20as%20Inquiry%20Into%20Basquiat%20Show,is%20leaving%20after%2034%20years.>
- Instagram: @changethemuseum
- Instagram: @abetterguggenheim ●