



COLLECTION MANAGERS COMMITTEE
Texas Association of Museums

Collections Communiqué

Winter 2012

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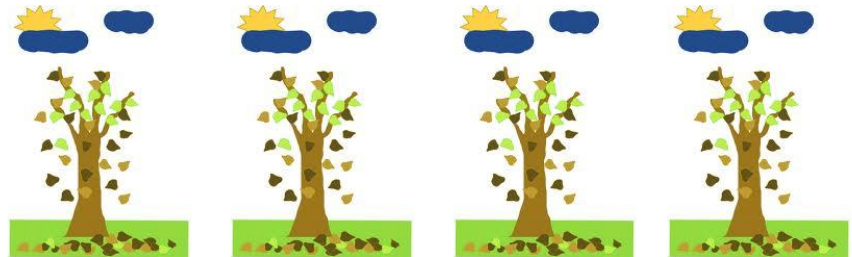
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Looking for a job?

TAM Job Bank

AAM Job Center

Have something for the next newsletter?
Email submissions by March 15, 2012, to
Elizabeth Martindale at
elizabeth.martindale@thc.state.tx.us.



CMC Offering Two Scholarships to 2012 TAM Annual Meeting

CMC is offering two “complete package” registration scholarships valued at \$375 each. Applicants must be a member of TAM and CMC. Recipients will be responsible for their travel, lodging, and incidental costs. In return, the recipients will be required to provide an article report/review on two of the TAM sessions on collections-related topics for the CMC Newsletter to be completed by May 1, 2012. Previous recipients are not eligible.

To apply please send a resume, references, and a one-page letter stating reasons for applying for the scholarship to admin@texasmuseums.org. Application deadline is **February 3, 2012**. Email applications are preferred. Applications should be sent directly to TAM.

Please contact Lindsey Richardson at lindseyr@jfk.org or Kim Cupit at kim.cupit@dentoncounty.com if you have questions.

Collections Related Sessions at the 2012 TAM Annual Meeting

Wednesday March 28th

Even a Caveman Can Do It! The 5-Step Plan to Museums and Searchable On-line Collections

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Conservation Roundtable

Working with Large Object Collections Storage: An Action Guide Approach

Collections Managers Committee (CMC) Affinity Group Meeting

Thursday March 29th

What Do You Do After the Waters Recede: Disaster Recovery

Friday March 30th

Collections Conundrums

CMC Workshop Schedule

Lisa E. Worley
Registrar
Carrabba Conservation

At the 2010 CMC board retreat, we created a three-year schedule for upcoming workshops and locations. While CMC does intend to continue to present collections-related workshops, the new management structure with TAM (approved at the 2011 annual meeting) means that we need to reassess our calendar and offerings.

The CMC board will be meeting soon to discuss this topic, as well as others. So, be on the lookout for a new schedule of workshops in the near future. In the mean time, if you have any suggestions for topics and/or speakers, please email me at worley.lisae@gmail.com.

Museum & Institutional Archives Workshop Roundup

Lisa E. Worley
Registrar
Carrabba Conservation

On October 28, 2011, CMC hosted an all-day workshop at the Mayborn Museum Complex entitled Museum & Institutional Archives. With 20 people in attendance, the workshop proved to be informative and lively. Claudia Anderson, Supervisory Archivist at the LBJ Library and Museum in Austin, spoke on the topic of archives management in a museum setting. She also related her experience working with extensive audio collections, and making all of the LBJ collections accessible to the public. Next, Julie Holcomb, Lecturer in the Museum Studies program at Baylor University, talked about institutional archives—what it is, what types of records go into them, and how museums can begin their own. In addition, she provided a great self-assessment handout for assisting in making those early

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decisions when beginning the process of developing institutional archives. Lastly, Eric Ames, Resources & Collections Management Services for Digital Projects for the Electronic Library at Baylor University, gave a presentation entitled Digitization 101. He gave pointers on how to plan and execute a digitization project on a shoestring, as well as resources for free or inexpensive tools for conducting digitization projects. All of the presentations and handouts from the workshop are available on CMC's website: www.cmc-tam.org.

TAM 2011 Session Review – Collections Conundrums

Ruth Goerger
Museum Technician
LBJ Library and Museum

Collections Conundrums is always a popular session, and this year didn't disappoint. The session attendees came loaded with questions, and panelists (and fellow attendees) tried hard to find solutions to everyone's particular conundrum.

Q: My museum collection has suffered from neglect. About 80% of the collection has no paper trail; no paperwork, with no donor card in the card file. Though technically not accessioned, can we assign numbers to these unknown objects?

A: There is more than one way to deal with this. You do not have to accession these items into the collection, but you can assign a tracking number. Create order out of chaos! If you later decide to accession these items into your collection, you may do so using "found in the collection" as your provenance.

Q: How do I respond to donors who are upset that their donation is not being displayed in the gallery?

A: This is a perfect chance for education. Explain to the donor why not all items can be put on display. It is also a good chance for the donor to "fill in some blanks" about their item for the museum. Take the time to get the rest of the story and you may be able to pick up further provenance about the object.

Q: My historic house is undergoing a major renovation. How do I pack and move my collection?

A: Know what you are supposed to have, which means an inventory. Figure out what kind of inventory you want to do; whether it will include photos, if you will fix numbering problems, or purely a location-based inventory. If it is just a location-based inventory, resist the urge to fix small problems. A "I'll just fix this one thing" mentality will put you behind

schedule.

Follow-up Q: *We rent our storage space and it has caused us to have to move every 5-10 years. I have items that have locations from 2 moves ago.*

A: Make locations that aren't dependant on the space. Make sure the new facility has the same shelf locations. "You may not be moving forward with your storage organization, but at least you are not putting yourself behind."

Q: *How do you deal with "drive-by" donations? We had a crate of different barbed wire specimens dropped off at our museum. Are we obligated to keep it? Are we obligated to conserve it? How can I prevent "drive-bys" from happening?*

A: No, museums are not obligated to keep items like this according to Abandoned Property laws. If you have to chance to talk to the donor, suggest that the museum "will help them find a good home." If a museum doesn't want the item, it doesn't serve the museums, the objects, or the donor. You are not obligated to conserve the items. In the case of the barbed wire, it may be prudent to snip an 18" (collector's length) piece of each kind of wire. The rest can be disposed of.

Some suggestions on how to prevent "drive-bys:" 1) Utilize your website. Have a "how to donate" page on your website that explains the procedures for donating items to the collection. Include any donor paperwork or contacts for appointments. I might be helpful to have a "wish list" on this webpage, listing the kinds of items the museum is actively seeking to add to their collection.

Q: *How do you deal with "what do I have, what is it worth" questions?*

A: The Curse of the Antiques Roadshow. People have the misconception that museums can give valuations of objects. What people do not realize is that the IRS does not allow these practices. But, these kinds of questions are "social contracts" and must be treated with care. Even if the museum cannot do the work, they can send to person in the right direction. Always have a printout of research questions and resources for those people who are looking to find out what they have. Even something as simple as a Google search can yield results. Additionally, have printouts of local appraisers and contacts at the American Society of Appraisers for those people who are interested in the value of their item. You can also refer them to the websites for Antiques Roadshow, which has an index of appraisers. Some museums have even started an occasional identification day event sponsored by the museum. Local appraisers and historians are brought in to help the public identify the objects in their possession.

Q: *I do not have a full appraisal of my museum collection, but insurance agencies and auditors are screaming for this information. How can I get an appraisal of my collections cheaply and who can help me with that?*

A: A quick survey found that very few people in the session had item level appraisals for their collection. Most appraisals don't happen until prompted because of a loan inquiry. Museums lack a year-by-year feel for the market. A representative for Huntington Block said they do not require a full appraisal. Instead, they require the museum to provide a Top Ten list of the most valuable items.

Q: *In an historic home is everything to be left in the collection? Every time a nail falls out, does it need to be accessioned into the collection? What do you do with live plants?*

A: The group recommended that a sample of fallen hardware be kept; perhaps 1 to 2 examples of each piece of hardware per room and per renovation. As for the plant, it was established that it was not just decoration. It was a plant that had originally been in the house (for at least 25-26 years) and had been transplanted into larger pots several times. Neither the plant nor the pot had been accessioned into the collection. People recommended taking cuttings of the plant. Since it is not an accessioned object it is not necessary that the plant be kept in the house, however "historic homes cannot ignore the landscaping" as an essential part of the ambiance.

Collections Care and Preservation Online Courses

Stephanie Lehner Rowe
Program Coordinator / Regional Archivist
Museumwise

Was your New Year's resolution to take better care of your collections? Or are you just looking for basic training on a flexible schedule that won't break the bank? Either way, our online mini courses are for you!

Our slate of Collections Care and Preservation Online courses provide basic, practical training at a low fee (starting at only \$65!). These courses are designed for staff, volunteers, board members, or interns at small to mid-sized museums, historical societies, libraries and archives. Courses can be taken at your own pace, with 2-3 hours of work time per week to be completed at your convenience. The courses feature interaction with qualified instructors and assignments which are based on your own collections.

Spring Courses Include:

Introduction to Reformatting -- February 6 - March 2, 2012

This course should help you determine the best way to approach a digitization project for varying collections and is intended to take the mystery out of digitization vocabulary, while shedding light on technical issues.

Climate Control for Small Institutions -- March 5 - March 30, 2012

This course will allow participants to explore the issues that need to be considered when planning for climate controls including monitoring, testing, environmental analysis assessments, long-range planning, systems design, construction support, and operations training. Low cost-low tech solutions will be offered and discussed, providing participants with the background knowledge to assist them in making informed decisions that can be implemented at their own institutions

Conservation and Preservation of Photographs and Albums -- April 2 - April 27, 2012

Students will learn about photographs and their many formats - black & white, color, negative, prints, and albums. We will review the major processes, how to identify and date them, how to recognize their deterioration, and what can be done to preserve them.

Basic Preservation, Care & Handling of Paper Based Materials -- April 30 - May 25, 2012

Learn the mechanics behind the degradation of paper materials and how through passive activities and techniques you can slow down the march of time and safeguard your collections.

Visit our website for more information and to register:

<http://www.museumwise.org/services/online-courses/4-week-mini-courses>

Questions? call us at 800.895.1648 or email stephanie@museumwise.org