

Society of American Archivists

Museum Archives Section Standards and Best Practices Working Group

Museum Archives Advocacy Project

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Advocating for Museum Archives, an Introduction to Contributed Essays

In response to our Section's focus on advocacy this year, the Museum Archives Section's Standards and Best Practices Working Group issued a call to museum archivists for personal narrative essays demonstrating the importance of museum archivists and museum archives. It was our hope that these essays would help us collectively articulate our roles within our institutions, local communities, and the professional archives field.

We asked authors to address any or all of the following questions in their essays:

- What is a museum archivist?
- What is the significance of museum archives?
- Why does a museum need an archives?
- If you're a museum without an archives, what is the argument for why you should have an archives?
- Why is it important to have a professional archivist at a museum?
- Is a museum archivist/archives different from other types of archivists/archives?
- Has the role of a museum archivist changed due to born-digital records?
- Where do museum archivists fall in your museum's organizational chart, and where should the archives fit in an organizational hierarchy or structure?

Superficially, these questions appear quite straightforward. But, as anyone who has tried to explain to their museum colleagues what a museum archivist is or does – in practice, answering these questions can be remarkably difficult.

Common themes are shared among the essays. Collectively, they investigate what museum archives are and how they have the potential to support and, in turn, transform their parent organizations. Many of the essays address the importance of born-digital records to the modern museum archives and discuss the opportunity for museum archivists to make important contributions to their parent organizations by getting involved earlier in the lifecycle of records, thereby helping to guide museums through the challenges presented by the twenty-first century's unabashedly electronic landscape.

Many of these essays also address the inherent relationship of museum archives to other collections at their institutions, including library and object collections. By definition, museum archivists have an implicit relationship to the museum field, and, since many archivists report to library directors, their relationship is analogously defined. When archivists speak of "GLAM," often referring to the integration of gallery, library, archives, and museum collections in searchable databases or catalogues, there is no group more interested in these possible convergences and collaborations than museum archivists. Our collections must be integrated into a larger sphere of collections, knowledge, research, and information sharing within the museum, whether that be through integrated collection catalogues, exhibitions, public programs, or a new institutional mindset that places museum archives on par with other collections and departments. These essays very significantly convey the message that museum archives, and in turn, museum archivists, must be viewed within a continuum of professions.

There is no doubt that these essays demonstrate the importance of being able to articulate what makes our role as a museum archivist significant—whether it's by explaining our function, providing concrete examples of our contributions, or communicating the worth of the work we already do. It's clear that we find ourselves at the hubs of our institutions: we support research on the museums' collections of

objects; we maintain documentation of the work of every department; we often provide the necessary evidence to win a case in court, prove ownership of our collections, support emergent scholarship, or build links with local communities, and the list goes on. Yet, we also need to be able to explain and highlight for others what we can achieve while located at the museum's core; without this articulation, our work can go unnoticed and unchampioned. We hope these essays will help us all continue to have a voice at our institutions, in the broader archives field, and among our colleagues working in libraries and museums.

The essays are organized based on the date they were received. We hope you enjoy reading them.

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Emily Rafferty, Baltimore Museum of Art

People are often aware of the numerous staff needed to interpret, promote, and care for a museum's collection and building, but the important role archivists play is not as obvious. A museum's archives connects each of these functions and tells the story of the institution as a whole, from the beginning. It isn't just about the art after all; archival records also document how the museum came to be, what it has done, and how it has impacted the community.

I began my career as a librarian rather than an archivist, and when I started working at the Baltimore Museum of Art in 2000, the archives was not part of my job description. In fact, several archives-related classes in graduate school had convinced me that an archives job was not for me. When my supervisor offered me the chance to take responsibility for the BMA's archives, it took some time for me to warm up to the idea. Once I started browsing through the collection and saw how useful its contents were for researchers, I grew to love it and focused as much of my work as possible on improving access to this part of the collection. Despite this, it took an incident over a decade later to help me fully understand the fundamental *need* for a museum archives.

In September 2012, I heard news reports about a Renoir painting that had been found at a flea market in West Virginia and was to be sold at an auction. The reports mentioned that the painting may have had a connection to the BMA—a label on the back included the name Herbert May, ex-husband of one of the museum's major benefactors, Saidie A. May. May's papers are held by the archives, so I looked through them for receipts or other mentions of the painting, but did not find anything. Then a call came from *Washington Post* reporter Ian Shapira, who was determined to leave no stone unturned in the story behind the flea market Renoir and wanted to look through the May papers himself. When Shapira arrived for his appointment the next day and began scrolling through the microfilm, it didn't take him long to find a clue. A list of gifts and loans from May written in 1940 mentioned Renoir's *On the Shore of the Seine* along with a loan number. With the number in hand, I went to the registration department to see if they could at least determine that this was *not* the painting in question. While the staff there had already checked their object files thoroughly, with this number they could check their loan files and when they did, there was a card for the painting with the notation, "STOLEN FROM THE GALLERY, Nov. 17, 1951."

The loan card set off a frenzy of activity at the museum and an intensive search for evidence to prove that the painting should be returned to the BMA. Records from every department were potentially useful, but because it had been over 60 years since the painting was stolen, the archives was likely to be the source of any trace of its time at the BMA. Thankfully, in 2012 the BMA not only had an archivist on staff (me) and a library director who was fiercely supportive of the archives, the library was also in the midst of a major grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission and had a project archivist who was processing a backlog of nearly 1,000 linear feet of institutional records. The project archivist and I had already carefully reviewed many of the boxes of unprocessed records stored in an offsite warehouse and knew what records were where. We had nearly finished work on developing a records management program and as a result had a clear understanding of what types of records the BMA created. If there could be a good time for such an event, this was probably it.

In the end, most of the evidence that supported the BMA's claim of ownership came from the archives. A record of the payout from the Fireman's Insurance Company for the painting was found in a ledger book in the archives. A letter from Saidie May about sending the painting to the BMA and photographs of the painting in her apartment were found in the archives. Board of trustees minutes discussing the theft were found in the archives. These documents supporting the BMA's claim were presented in a hearing before U.S. District Judge Leonie Brinkema (who coincidentally has an MLS) accompanied by a declaration outlining my professional qualifications and my knowledge of the authenticity of the records. This was established through my familiarity with May's handwriting (developed when processing her papers), my knowledge of how BMA records are stored and described, and the style and condition of documents from similar time periods. The declaration also established me as the BMA's custodian of archival financial and business records. On January 10, 2014, sixteen months after Ian Shapira's visit to the archives, Brinkema awarded ownership of the painting to the BMA.

What if the BMA had not had the benefit of a professional archivist when the Renoir turned up at the auction? Records would have been stored in heaps of boxes in a warehouse, and searching through them would have been incredibly time consuming. Some records, like the ledger book, would have been destroyed, because they were no longer useful and it was not obvious that they might be valuable in the future. Shapira likely would not have found the list of May's loans that included the painting because public access to records would be extremely limited. It is very possible that no one would have

discovered that the painting at the flea market was the same painting that had been stolen from the BMA at all.

While the drama of stolen artwork and the search for clues may make for entertaining books and movies, it is not something that any museum's staff wants to experience—and yet they should be prepared for the possibility. A professional archivist is an essential part of preparation, ensuring that the proper records are preserved, arranged and described, and accessible.

Lorraine A. Stuart, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston

In the 1970s, under the auspices of what was then the American Association of Museums, museums in the US embarked on an introspective examination, asking such essential questions as “What is the museum’s role in society?” and “What does it mean to be a museum professional?” The introspection broadened the museum’s focus from its historic metric—the breadth and depth of its collection—to educational engagement with the public. It led also to the codification of the key museum profession, curatorship.

Museum archivists too often retain an anachronistic focus on the archival collection. Museum archivists have much to offer beyond the scope of their (admittedly wonderful) collections. Archival expertise in conducting research, in descriptive practices, and in digital preservation and management are among the skills of particular value within the museum setting. In recent years, administration at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) has not drawn the “research request” line at the Archives’ door, instead calling upon departmental staff to research records outside of the collection such as land titles, articles of incorporation, Sanborn maps, city directories and even cemetery records. They trust in the archivists’ ability to identify resources and analyze findings—in archival skills, rather than simply the collection.

With broad-based knowledge of descriptive standards, archivists are an excellent resource for shared-data projects. This is particularly useful within museums that manage a variety of collections with systems adhering to applicable descriptive structural standards. Employed at the MFAH are systems complying with Categories for the Description of Works of Art (CDWA), VRA Core, MARC 21, Qualified Dublin Core, EAD and ISAD(G). Each adheres to its correlating descriptive content standard and vocabularies. Archivists readily perceive the applicability, the dissimilarities, and the relationships between the descriptive standards. Who better to enlist in efforts to share data than museum archivists, many of whom are involved in inter-institutional projects?

For a number of reasons, the management and preservation of digital materials will become increasingly central to museum operations. Following the passage of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (SOX) in reaction to Enron’s collapse, AAM adopted its record-keeping requirements as a model for transparency and accountability in museum operations. It is the only archives/records management question that survived the recent streamlining of AAM’s self-study for museums seeking re-accreditation; that alone elevates

the importance of electronic records management in museums. The underlying need is apparent to those challenged by massive amounts of unstructured data—much comprising visual collections—and permanently valuable structured data. Moreover, funding agencies are increasingly concerned with the preservation of the digital results of their grants—whether images, APIs, or datasets—or the digital documentation of their grants, such as a moving image recording of a funded performance. Museum archivists who keep abreast of emerging tools for the auto-classification of textual materials, image recognition, and, particularly, digital preservation are rendering a vital service to their institutions—perhaps before the depth of the need is recognized. The profession’s investigation of digital preservation has clear relevance for digital and time-based objects in the museum collection. Those museum archivists not tackling the tough digital issues are relegating themselves to obsolescence, and leaving these issues in the hands of other disciplines less equipped to address them.

Although there are others, these are three key areas of museum operations that call for archival expertise over collections and are applicable whether the museum archives answer to a parent institution or a governing body. There are also, of course, ways in which the archival collection itself supports the museum’s mission. Most significantly, the archives contextualize the collection—whether it is artistic, historic or scientific in nature. In some instances, the archives may engage audiences that the museum as a whole may not. The MFAH Archives, in chronicling the museum’s development, likewise capture Houston’s history. There is, as well, a wealth of information on local and regional artists from the era in which annual exhibitions were held. While local history and regional art rarely figure into current exhibition or programming schedules, those interests are supported by the Archives through minor or online exhibitions and through its research function.

Each museum archivist knows the myriad small ways that it supports the mission of its parent organization or governing body. Is the reverse true? Dutiful as archivists tend to be, “taking credit” is one area that is almost universally neglected. Recently I received a routine note of appreciation from a researcher whose dissertation had been published; on an impulse, I forwarded it on to the MFAH director. It led to further inquiry on his part and the unplanned inclusion of archival material in his presentations that week. A small but happy return for simply hitting the forward button.

Beyond asking in which ways, both significant and small, can museum archives contribute and be credited, archivists should also ask which paths the profession as a whole can take to support its

members. AAM's assessment of the museum state in the 1970s produced meaningful results, such as the recognition of the museum as an educational institution. The codification of the curatorial profession led to increased scholarship and stature. If, like our museum colleagues, we are to continue to thrive, it is time to ask ourselves and our professional organizations some particular questions (such as what skills are needed and what curricula within which graduate programs supports them, or, is it time for an institutional archival certification program) and at least this essential one—what does it mean to be a museum archivist?

Caroline Dechert, Librarian and Archivist, Museum of International Folk Art

Shortly after I came to work at the Museum of International Folk Art, one of our excellent guards stopped me in the hallway and asked if he could bring two visitors back to the library to learn more about two samplers they had seen in our Multiple Visions exhibition. As it happens, our archives hold ledgers and photographs providing details on all the samplers in the collection of Marshall Cutler, including these two. Cutler was the grandfather of mid-century modern designer Alexander Girard. It was Girard, a great collector of folk art, who designed the Multiple Visions exhibit. The visitors were delighted to learn more, and to see from the ledger entries how and when the samplers were collected by Cutler, and how much they cost.

From this encounter I learned (or was reminded of) many things.

First, the archivists reading this will instantly wonder why the guard asked to bring the visitors to the museum library when the material is archival. In our museum, there was no archives program before 1990, when the Librarian successfully advocated for its creation. Archives needs are paid for from the library budget. There was a part-time archives manager on staff for a few years, but the position was lost in budget cuts, so a single “librarianandarchivist” now reigns over the whole mixed domain. The mix makes things murky. I learned early on that I would need to make a clear distinction in my own mind, and that I would need to be clear with museum staff about several issues. What’s the dividing line? What makes material archival? What’s the difference in organization and philosophy between libraries and archives?

Second, I began to learn that most visitors to a museum can understand and relate to a library, but are mystified or intimidated by the idea of going into the archives. Surely normal people don’t go there? That’s for... well, curators and scholars and researchers, not for ordinary people with questions. Hmmm, perhaps a bit of education and outreach are needed?

Third, and happiest, my two sampler lovers confirmed just how much people love stories. They soaked up the stories of the travels of the samplers from the women who sewed them all the way to the museum exhibit.

People know that the objects in an exhibition are not just objects. They know there is more to these objects than can fit in the display text. These things are parts of stories of the people who create them, sell them, collect them, donate them, parts of stories of the curators who choose them (and don't choose other things), parts of the story of the museum.

The stories are in the archives. The archives are the home of the rich context of the museum's life.

In the archives, an object from an exhibition may be made richer by the collector's donated papers. It is no longer "a" sampler from Italy. It is "this" sampler, chosen by this collector and bought on this date in this place. It belongs with all these other samplers he selected, and passed to his grandson who passed them to the Museum. It was chosen in this way to be part of this exhibit. It is surrounded by stories.

In our archives, there are threads of discussion we can trace since before the museum opened. Questions arise over and over. For example, every fifteen years or so some group of papers revisits the perennial question "what is folk art?" and each time the answer is a little different. Understanding the differences, we can see subtle differences in exhibits. We've held multiple exhibits featuring aspects of Swedish folk art, for example. Want to know how they differed, and a bit of why? The answer is in the archives, and before planning the next related exhibit, it is worth seeing what's been shown before.

What is a museum anyway? Is it the collection of objects it houses? Is it the exhibits alone, or the research, or the publications, or the people who work there, or the people who come through the door? Is it in the building, or the website, or the Facebook page? Or is it the liminal non-place where all these things and people intermingle and interact?

The threads of stories and questions and images that mark out the true extent of the museum are in the archives.

And all of that is very moving and poetic – at least to an archivist – but what does it mean in practice? What's it good for?

Research. Information. Preservation. Documentation. All primary goals for most museums. All goals furthered by strong archives.

Inspiration. Wonder. Surprise. All available to be experienced serendipitously in the archives. All contributing to great exhibitions and publications.

Stories. Stories that lead from one archival collection to the next. People love stories. People connect to stories, and are moved by them. Stories catch people's interest and engage them. Stories are what people are about. Engagement with the stories of the museum is the best tool for advocacy, and the best stories are in the archives.

Jessica Gambling, Archivist, Los Angeles County Museum of Art

I am the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's second institutional archivist. The museum's Registrar's Office applied for and managed grant projects to establish the archives, and hired the first archivist in 2004. During the middle of the implementation grant, which was awarded in 2007, everything switched gears. The archivist left the project and the whole endeavor moved from the purview of the Registrar to LACMA's Balch Art Research Library. It took a while to get things rolling again and I was hired as the new archivist in October, 2010.

I found that until the Research Library took over the project, LACMA had a very different idea of what it meant to have an institutional archives from what I was used to. The idea of actual records had barely been addressed, but some in-depth history projects and digitization had taken place. In my first meeting with the museum president, who had taken an interest in the archives project, I mentioned the large number of mysterious file boxes stored in a basement storage room. She indicated that we should probably digitize whatever paper there was and throw away the originals. I had been used to working in places where I was surrounded with archivists. I had just started at the museum and I was nervous, but luckily I wasn't too nervous to explain how expensive and onerous that would be. I wasn't used to being on my own and was taken aback by how little familiarity any of my colleagues outside of the library had with what an archivist was or why our historic records were valuable. It seems silly now that I was surprised.

I learned to quickly and very plainly explain why my position even existed to everyone I met. I developed an elevator speech. "I take care of the museum's historic records." Why would LACMA want to do that? "It is important for art historians to know about the exhibitions we have organized and how our collections have developed." Isn't that all in Mimsy (the collection management system)? "Well, not everything about what the museum does is in there. We can use the records to make the database more complete *and* to help us learn about things that aren't tracked in the database, like performances, educational programming, and film screenings." And on and on, in various permutations.

I got better and better at thinking of ways the archives were useful to whoever I was talking to. If nothing else, I could at least help locate records in the basement, or move boxes of files created by a predecessor out from under a desk. This process made me articulate why archives and being an archivist are important at all, in any context. Practically, I helped people find information and locate their documents, but I could also help the museum fulfill its responsibilities to the community and to

scholarship by maintaining the documentary evidence of its activities. The archives contains interesting tidbits that are fun to display, but just having an archives with collections that are described and discoverable, demonstrates LACMA's intention to act ethically and responsibly.

LACMA has gone from zero to archives in four and a half years, with one full time staff person. It's a tiny program, a tiny part of the museum as a whole, and in my opinion benefits the museum to a far greater extent than its size would suggest. Lore such as the Mies van der Rohe proposal for the museum campus, and the storage facility water damage caused by fire sprinklers during the LA Riots in 1992 can now be confirmed through documentary evidence. Now in the museum's fiftieth year, archival collection material is being used in exhibitions on LACMA's history and on the Art and Technology program of 1968 through 1971. Documents and architectural models from the archives were displayed in an exhibition announcing the new proposed plan for the museum campus by architect Peter Zumthor. Our architectural collections are also used by engineers to figure out how to execute that new Zumthor building on this site. It is amazing that the archives can both contribute to exhibitions that the public can enjoy and to contribute to answering the most fundamental facilities challenges, like how to build a huge museum on top of a methane gas field.

It's been ten years since LACMA started to establish an archives and get a handle on its history but only four and a half years since we started tackling the museum's records. Looking back, as an archivist, I'm most proud of how it now looks like a real institutional archives. It has processed collections with EAD finding aids, an instance of Archivists' Toolkit to manage collections, and a huge backlog of unprocessed and lightly described records, just like any other institutional archives. We are *almost* ready to adopt a records management policy and know we need to do more with electronic records management and digital preservation, just like any other institutional archives. We've made it. We have an archives. There's so much work to do.

Sally Brazil, Chief, Archives and Records Management, The Frick Collection

With the exception of a year working in a manuscript repository in California, my entire professional career has been centered in New York City, a fact I had never stopped to consider until I drafted this essay. During the first half of my archival career, I worked in a variety of settings – corporate, academic, philanthropic, religious, and artistic. I've worked as a lone arranger and as a member of an archival team on both long-term and short-lived projects in at least a dozen New York institutions. I've handled archival material in four of five New York City boroughs (sorry The Bronx!). Having experienced the range of professional archival opportunities available in a city as varied as New York, I can speak with authority on the richness of the city's archival treasures. After several years as a corporate archivist and, later, a consultant for a wide range of organizations, I realized that my most enjoyable work experiences were at art-related institutions, specifically the Isamu Noguchi Museum and the Pierre Matisse Foundation. When Deb Wythe of the Brooklyn Museum alerted me to an opportunity to survey the institutional records and to write recommendations to establish an archival program at The Frick Collection, I was hopeful that my art museum streak would continue.

Eighteen years later, I can say that my years as a museum archivist at The Frick Collection have been the most rewarding of my professional career. To state the obvious, the fact that I am free to begin and end (and interrupt) my day with a walk through the museum's galleries gives me enormous pleasure. The Frick Collection is a glorious museum and knowing that the museum's archives contain documentation directly connected to every painting, sculpture, piece of porcelain or furniture, even the original owners and the construction of the house, energizes me and contributes to building rapport with my colleagues. I am sure this is true for many museum archives, but from my vantage point museum archivists have a terrific opportunity to collaborate with every department of the institution, as well as to support curatorial research efforts.

Museum archives, while holding much in common with other institutional repositories, can occupy a central position in museums due to the nature of the records that fall under their purview. While some records stay with the office of origin, so much else concerning acquisitions, construction projects, exhibitions, education, and the museum's founders and curators comes to the archives for retention and thus, in our case, making the archives a part of any programming activity. Working at a museum with people who are continually searching for program and exhibition ideas and who are interested in mining

the back stories of all the museum's holdings for publications, social media and as adjuncts to programmatic shifts and developments means that we hear from everyone.

In my own situation, I am also fortunate that the museum archives is embedded in the Frick Art Reference Library, a part of the museum but also a world-renowned art library that serves an international group of researchers. This connection to the scholarly community outside of The Frick Collection has broadened our user base and has allowed us to raise our profile locally and internationally and to share our holdings with many people. I also think that museum archivists are generous collaborators within their institutions and amongst their professional peers. In my own case, it has been fruitful to be in daily contact with people passionate about art and who appreciate that the past we preserve in analog and digital forms in our museum archives can be used to celebrate the beauty displayed on the walls and surroundings of a New York City gem and international treasure.

Katharine Rovanpera, The Museum of Modern Art

"Preserving History, Guiding the Future at The Museum of Modern Art Archives"

The role of the art museum archivist is inherently transformative: as stewards of institutional records, we are responsible for collecting and preserving the documents that form a museum's history, history which then takes on a new life as museum archivists provide a new generation of curators, scholars, artists, and writers with access to museum records. The Museum of Modern Art Archives provides a window into the history of the creation, collection, and connoisseurship of modern art and forms the foundation upon which new ideas and new works of art are built. Archives are the underpinning of our permanent collection, they inform future exhibitions, and in some cases they also become art objects through re-appropriation or exhibition.

As museum archivists we come to know our institution intimately through detailed description of and reflection on the records that comprise our museum's history. There is unique privilege in being in constant contact with the physical document: we read the correspondence and notes of curators, artists, and patrons; we touch every photograph, invitation, telegram, and annotated checklist; we personally serve every folder to each researcher who consults these materials.

While I work on a team that preserves and describes the Museum's exhibition records, my colleagues also fulfill a wide variety of roles. They provide reference to Museum staff and an international pool of outside researchers; they work with artists who mine archival documents and data to create new works of art; they facilitate reproduction and citation of archival materials for publication; they provide a context for Museum employees, artists, and scholars to tell their stories through oral history interviews; and they work to create a future in which the line between archive and art object is increasingly blurred, bringing archives out from behind the scenes and into the gallery, into publication, and onto the stage for the enrichment of the larger public. We are both information professionals and scholars in our own right.

At The Museum of Modern Art, we feel the significance of our work as museum archivists acutely. It is evidenced in our reading rooms, perpetually full of researchers from all over the world, as well as in the fervor generated around new collections before they are made available to the public and in the success of recent exhibitions such as *Abstract Expressionist New York* (2010) and *James Lee Byars: ½ an Autobiography* (2014, at MoMA PS1), which drew heavily on materials from the archives. The increased visibility of museum archives through exhibition and digital points of access, combined with the growing

scholarly and artistic enthusiasm for archival materials, has led the museum archivist to assume a more dynamic, collaborative role within the institution and in the archives profession.

Samantha Norling, Archivist, Indianapolis Museum of Art

While U.S. museums have been successfully stewarding local, national, and international collections of cultural objects and works of art for hundreds of years, the importance of collecting and preserving a museum's institutional history through its records and artifacts has often been overlooked. Since the 1980s, when the "Museum Archives Movement" gained momentum, many museum boards, directors, and staff members have experienced the benefits of having a professional archivist on staff and an institutional archives on site. At the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA), which was established in 1883, these benefits were not realized until 2010 when the IMA Archives was officially established and joined the museum's Stout Reference Library to form the new Library & Archives Department. As the second professional archivist to manage the IMA Archives, my first year in this role has given me some insights into the unique space that the archivist and archives occupy within the museum and the ability of both to enhance all aspects of museum operations while opening up the institution's historical records to outside researchers.

The traditional departments that make up a museum (Registration, Curatorial, Conservation, Education, and many more), though they serve different functions, all work together to fulfill the institution's mission. The permanent collection of artifacts and artworks is often a major component of the museum's mission and vision, and naturally serves as the hub around which all departments function. The museum archives functions as one of many spokes coming off of this hub by supporting the efforts of the other departments to successfully collect, preserve, and interpret the permanent collection. The museum archivist champions this supporting role by safeguarding the museum's non-active records with enduring value and making them available to staff when these permanent records can contribute to current collecting, preservation, and interpretation activities of the museum.

While this supportive function is integral to a museum archives' operation, in reality the archives is so much more than a supporting collection—it also serves as the museum's institutional memory. In this role, the archives documents the myriad changes that a cultural institution goes through as staff members come and go, as the organizational structure and culture shift, as the mission and vision of the institution change, and as the activities of the museum evolve along with these changes. By documenting every stage in the history of a complex cultural institution, the museum archives becomes

an important collection in its own right—one that can be a valuable resource not only to the museum staff, but also to outside researchers.

In order to successfully open museum archives to outside researchers, it is essential to have a professional archivist stewarding these collections. Not only are archivists trained to appraise, preserve, arrange, and describe these archival records, but today's archivists are also the product of a long history of professionals who have grappled with ethical issues surrounding privacy and access. As a result, a professional archivist is uniquely equipped to find the balance between providing outside access to institutional records and protecting a museum's many assets and the privacy of museum staff, donors, and other stakeholders.

Because the Indianapolis Museum of Art (IMA) Archives is still relatively young, museum staff are still discovering the many benefits of having collections of historical institutional records on hand, and of having a professional archivist managing the collections and making them available. On a regular basis, these records have proven vital for curators as they piece together the provenance of specific works of art. When the Development Department needs to track down the specific conditions of a planned giving donation, the IMA Archives is quickly becoming the first place that they consult. As the fortieth season of the museum's popular outdoor film series approaches, the Public Programs and Marketing Departments have discovered a complete run of movie line-ups for every season, along with amazing photographs from the "First museum version of the drive-in movies," and both will be incorporated into the museum's promotion of the upcoming season.

The future of the IMA Archives within the museum is very bright, owing to a variety of upcoming projects that will make the Archives even more integral to the operations of the museum. The advent of Indiana's bicentennial year in 2016 has inspired a series of historical exhibitions in which curators plan to include archival items alongside the Permanent Collection items on display. The Photography Department has approached me to transfer their full historical collection of photographs to the IMA Archives. Once these images are properly preserved, arranged, and described, the museum will have a vast collection of previously unavailable assets to draw on for a multitude of uses. And as the IMA moves to new digital asset and document management systems, both digitized and born-digital items from the IMA Archives will live alongside and link to the permanent collection digital assets from every

other museum department. This will make for a much richer research experience, not only for IMA staff, but for the general public searching for information about the museum's collection.

Each of these developments is another step towards integrating the relatively new IMA Archives into the everyday operations of the museum, opening new possibilities for staff projects and audience explorations of our collections in the process. The Indianapolis Museum of Art is not alone in seeing these benefits, as every museum that begins and supports an archival program managed by a professional archivist can reap these rewards as well.

Sang Ae Park, Archivist, Nam June Paik Art Center

“Art Museum Archives in South Korea: Beginning of a New Era”

In 2009, I started work as an archivist at the Nam June Paik Art Center in South Korea. Over the last six years, the topography of art museum archives in South Korea has changed. As an active member of the museum archives community, I would like to share my thoughts and experiences with my colleagues in the US.

In 1999 the Archives of Korean Art, whose parent institution was the Samsung Museum of Art, began gathering a record of South Korean art through an oral history project documenting Korean modern visual art. The interviews and primary materials collected from the interviewees were some of the first archival materials documenting art in Korea. Later, the Korean National Archives of the Arts, a national art library established in 1979, succeeded in conducting oral history projects and expanded their scope to the fields of performing and theatrical arts. However, except for these oral history projects, no other public or private art museums had any archives programs at an institutional level during the early 2000s in South Korea. By the mid-2000s, however, art professionals in South Korea were focused on archival practices: archives-based exhibitions, artistic works dealing with archival topics, and theoretical and philosophical research in art archives.

The Nam June Paik Art Center, the first and only museum named after the video artist, Nam June Paik, launched the first museum archives in South Korea in 2009. Its major collections are not institutional records but manuscript collections. As of 2015, NJPAC holds twelve collections related to Paik, including a video archives collection consisting of 2,285 analog videotapes that Paik himself used for his artwork. Using standards applied in the US, where I received my professional education and training, I processed these materials and prepared finding aids for researchers. In addition to constructing a basic archives program, I created an oral history project, titled the NJPAC Interview Project, and an archives research project, titled the Video Tape Analysis Project. I found it interesting to conduct analog and digital processing at the same time, because it showed me that I should develop digital strategy while planning and processing archives in analog forms, rather than shaping digital planning for completely processed archival materials.

While managing and servicing archival collections from the NJPAC, I lectured at the Korean National Archives of the Arts. I taught a basic museum archives course, covering acquisition, evaluation, arrangement, preservation and service. The need for museum archives had greatly increased because of practical interests among art professionals. The course was open to students for six years, and many archivists-to-be and curators from small art museums took my course and obtained basic knowledge on what museum archives are and how to manage them.

Even though the NJPAC is a public art museum, the budget and current staffing are not sufficient to drive the development of art museum archives at a national level. The National Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Korea (MMCA) opened in 1969 and manages three different venues in Seoul and its outlying neighborhoods. It is able to support research in modern and contemporary art at a national level. The MMCA launched the Art Research Center (ARC) in 2013, which fully supports art museum archives and research. The MMCA collects manuscripts from artists, critics, theorists, and curators; processes its institutional records for historical evidence of a national art museum; and has created several retrospective solo shows comprised of archival items relating to artists. As the MMCA actively participates in managing its archives program, its museum archives seem to shape its basic programs and to extend the boundaries of its practice.

Art museum archives in South Korea are in a stage of infancy, and we have many issues to address: 1) we need to secure budgets for archives and develop long-term plans for hiring full-time archivists at the institutional level; 2) we need to consider the scope of museum archives in a Korean context – i.e., medium-specific archives, artist archives, and interdisciplinary archives, among others; 3) we need to develop processing and metadata standards to reflect unique characteristics of the art field in South Korea; 4) we need to propose a digital strategy for all art resources in a museum context while constructing an archives platform in an analogue format; 5) we need to set up a code of ethics for professional museum archivists and train young archivists about these standards; 6) we need to broaden the public's understanding of museums archives.

With its rich history of 5,000 years, South Korea is an iconic example of the rapid economic and technological development happening in Asia. This history of speedy development can also be seen in its art museum archives, considering the short time frame during which

analog and digital art museum archives have advanced. Even though only the public sector is currently on this track, I believe the private sector will also soon be interested in developing archives in a museum context. Art museum archives in South Korea are just beginning to emerge, but will surely grow rapidly and provide the foundation to document and support developments in modern and contemporary art, as well as the history of South Korea's art museums.

Dawn Sueoka, Shangri La, Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art

Shangri La is the Honolulu home of American philanthropist and collector Doris Duke (1912–1993). Built in the modernist style, it incorporates architectural features from the Middle East and houses Doris Duke's collection of Islamic art. The Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art was established by Doris Duke's will to preserve and manage the property, and to promote the study and understanding of Islamic arts and cultures. Today, Shangri La is open to the public for guided tours, lectures, performances, and symposia.

As a historic house, we rely on archival information in a very immediate way. We need to know what the interior structures of the dining room columns look like so that they can be repaired; we need to identify the hardware on the sliding marble doors so that they can be restored; we need to see the original planting scheme for the private garden so that our grounds staff can recreate the space. All of these details are found in the archives.

Nevertheless, these are still just facts. The historic preservation and interpretation of the site are based not only on the facts themselves, but also on their significance with respect to Doris Duke. For instance, in what ways did Doris Duke's vision for the house change in response to her 1938 travels in the Middle East, and who were the individuals charged with realizing those ideas? What was day to day life like at Shangri La when Doris Duke was in residence? The answers to questions like these are more elusive. They have often been found in the ways that records are arranged, and in the stories of the records creators.

The same holds true for institutional records—including born-digital records. Capturing and maintaining information about the creation and original context of digital files, and being able to verify their authenticity, is essential to discovering not just the facts contained in the records, but also the connections within and among the records. Though this dimension of meaning is less readily apparent, it is often central to our work of preserving and interpreting the site and the collection.

Yet a museum archives serves more constituencies than just its staff and has a broader mandate than simply ensuring business continuity. The archives at Shangri La helps to support our artist-in-residence program, providing material that has been incorporated into performances and projects. The archives

also supports scholarly research on architecture, on specific collections objects, on Doris Duke herself, and on the history of collecting and exhibiting Islamic art, among other topics. Furthermore, museum archives serve a public accountability function by maintaining and facilitating access to records that demonstrate the institution's responsible and respectful stewardship of works of cultural heritage.

A professional archivist is trained to recognize, preserve, and communicate the different facets of meaning that can be found in records, regardless of their medium. Supported by a network of colleagues and a large and constantly evolving body of professional literature and standards, the archivist makes decisions, crafts policies, and carries out work to ensure the long-term preservation and accessibility of the museum's history. In this way, the archivist plays a critical role in helping to carry out the museum's mission.

Heather Slania, Director of the Betty Boyd Dettre Library and Research Center, National Museum of Women in the Arts

“Why Museum Archives?”

Museums collect and interpret items of historical value, allowing participants the ability to situate our present and envision our future through the study of the past. Archival repositories collect historical records and items for research, permitting knowledge production that can reinterpret and/or revise current thought as well as create avenues for new discoveries. Archives within museums:

1. provide context for collection objects for scholars, curators, and visitors;
2. situate the museum as a locus for knowledge creation;
3. document the museum’s influence on our cultural heritage.

A museum archivist must balance all these functions. Museum archives may include the museum’s institutional archives, collections of personal papers and organizational records which support the museum’s functions, or both. While all museum archivists must keep in mind future scholars and scholarship, those who include a contemporary scope in their mission have a special duty to preserve present history.

Despite how important museum archives are, very few museums support a robust archival program. Even in places that employ professional archivists, it is difficult for them to keep up with all the work, especially considering the increased importance of born-digital records. Many museums do not have a strong IT staff, which is necessary to help support archivists working with digital material.

In a world of “big data” and increased connectivity, large collections of unique materials are becoming more important to collect, make available, and support. Paper, audio-visual, and digital records can support a museum’s mission and provide the basis for new stories that connect people to the past. The work museum archivists can and must do is crucial to the survival of the museum as an institution. It is not enough to just display works, no matter how great. Museums must become active centers of knowledge creation and community building—functions that archives can help create and support.

Melanie Tran, Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum

I am the collections assistant at a small historic museum with a relatively short time span of institutional records. The Workman and Temple Family Homestead Museum, in existence since 1981, does not have a formalized museum archives. Currently, museum records, including artifact accession records, are stored in the basement of a historic Spanish Colonial Revival mansion from the 1920s, of adobe construction. The records have recently been appraised and arranged but lack description and a finding aid. In addition to institutional records, the museum collects, preserves, interprets, and provides access to papers from the Workman and Temple families as well as artifacts that provide a context for Los Angeles regional history.

The museum employs a staff of ten, with additional support from volunteers. As a small museum, we must get creative to promote our historical significance through programming and research. For institutions with limited resources, programming and more public-oriented efforts tend to be the focus instead of seemingly internal operations. As a result, museum archives and other important aspects of running a museum are sometimes not given higher priority for funds and personnel. It is generally thought that a small paid staff—even with volunteer support—can only accomplish so much. But as museums have evolved, roles that were once specialized have broadened, making it possible to prioritize professionally-managed museum archives.

Museum archives are as valuable to the community as they are to the institution. The Homestead Museum community ranges from the staff and volunteers to the Workman and Temple family descendants and residents of historically-related regions of Los Angeles. Institutional records not only provide data and facts regarding official business, but they also provide a network of information about the people involved. The connections the museum has created among the different facets of this community are argument enough to preserve the documents and records generated by it. The museum has been fortunate to have several volunteers serve for up to two or three decades, with a majority of volunteers residing in neighboring cities. Preserving documentation of their involvement with the museum is a method of preserving a part of their lives—as well as official museum business. The museum's institutional memory endures in its volunteers, staff, and Workman and Temple family descendants, among others. Loss of this irreplaceable memory would affect more than the institution; it would also affect the stories of the people who have made it successful.

Being a small museum with limited resources is no longer an excuse for relegating daunting tasks to future generations. Self-preservation starts with taking on responsibilities with the future in mind. We cannot wait for others to act in place of us. I, for one, am poised to further develop museum archives by advocating the community story.

Marilyn Nazar, Archivist, Art Gallery of Ontario

“From Custodian to Collaborator: The Transformation of the Role of Archivist at the Art Gallery of Ontario”

The Art Gallery of Ontario has a unique history. Founded in 1900 as the Art Museum of Toronto, it did not have a permanent residence until 1911 when the Grange, the family estate built in 1817 by D’Arcy Boulton, was bequeathed to the Gallery by Harriet Smith (widow of William Henry Boulton) upon the death of her second husband Goldwin Smith.

Archival records relating to this historical landmark date back to early 1800s and extend to the Gallery’s building expansion starting in 1918 with the first addition of three new galleries to Frank Gehry’s landmark transformation of the Gallery in 2008. Together with the records of our exhibition, education, programming and collections histories at the Gallery dating back to 1906, these records form the Gallery’s institutional archives.

However, the archives was not officially established until 1975. It was the creation of one dedicated staff person, Margaret Matchell, Custodian of the Grange, who, despite her lack of formal archival training, collected, organized and preserved the historic household records of the Grange and the early records of the Gallery. She was named the first archivist of the AGO in 1979. On staff from 1941 to 1989, Matchell had a long history with the gallery during its formative years and it is largely because of her efforts that we have such rich documentation from the early years of this institution. Ms. Matchell passed away in February 2015, and it is with a debt of gratitude to her that I write this narrative.

Initially, the archives was situated in administrative services and part of the records management function of the Gallery. The focus was on archival stewardship and preservation. In 1989 the archives became part of the E.P. Taylor Research Library and Archives – the research hub of the Gallery – as demand for access to the exhibition, programming and collection records grew. A natural synergy for researchers had developed between the institutional archives and the library’s existing exhibition catalogues, books, artist papers and the private papers of artists and collectors.

As the first archivist on staff at the Gallery in almost 20 years, I have had the daunting task of rebuilding the institutional archives from the ground up. The first order of business has been to develop records transfer guidelines and procedures to deal with the backlog of records that had not been transferred to the archives. I conducted records surveys, studied existing holdings and met with key records keepers. I also set priorities to resolve storage issues and manage an influx of over 300 banker’s boxes transferred

to the archives in addition to 20 years of photographic documentation of exhibitions, artwork and events within the first two years.

Priority has also been given to developing online finding aids since there was nothing but outdated electronic shelf lists in outmoded file formats that were not easily accessible or readable for researchers. In addition, records transferred post-1980s need to be arranged and described, and in some cases appraised and accessioned.

Another critical aspect of my newfound position has been to advocate for and develop a proposal for a records management program, particularly with regard to the management of electronic and born-digital records. This corresponds to Gallery-wide efforts to manage all digital assets such as new media artworks, digital images of our collections and within our collections, and audio visual documentation of events, interviews and exhibitions. And in 2013 a new Digital Resources Division was established to oversee the management of all digital assets including institutional archives.

In this scenario, my role of archivist has shifted to that of collaborator and sometimes consultant as I forge new partnerships with Information Technology, Image and Media Resources, Conservation, New Media, and Curatorial staff in order to ensure the management of digital institutional records as part of the larger digital assets of the organization. While I continue to facilitate access to and the proper arrangement and metadata description of the archival assets, the digital records themselves may no longer strictly reside or be managed within the Library and Archives.

Time will tell what long-term impact this will have on the role of archivist at the Art Gallery or where the archives will be situated. For now, the backlog of analog records, increased research demands and the development of a comprehensive records management program continue to keep the role of archivist as a vital component of the organization.

Katherine McCardwell, Colorado Railroad Museum

From 2012 until 2014, I served as the first and, to date, only, professional archivist at the Colorado Railroad Museum's Richardson Library, which houses library, two-dimensional art, and archival collections. The broader collection began as a private collection and contains full-sized railroad and train equipment, three-dimensional artifacts, and paper materials. In the 1960s, the private collection was transitioned to a registered 501(c)3 nonprofit, managed by a board of trustees and largely run by volunteers. The Library and Archives building was constructed in 1998, in effect allowing the Library and Archives to function as a separate department.

When I began my tenure at the Richardson Library, the Library was in a state of disarray after 14 years of management by a well-intentioned but untrained volunteer. Having served as a sort of "dumping ground" for railroad-related materials, with no explicit scope or collection policy, the collection was largely uncataloged and poorly housed and was thus unusable. Given the lack of organization within the Library, it entertained a mixed reputation: I was repeatedly told that our Library was one of the top railroad libraries and archives in the nation and that reputable institutions, such as the Smithsonian, had praised our archives. Given our "outsider" status in the Denver metro cultural scene, this was a point of pride for many staff and volunteers. In many cases, however, this claim actually worked against our further professionalization, as trustees and administrators would use this past praise as evidence that we didn't need to change our practices or invest in collections care. Despite this praise, would-be patrons from outside the traditional railfan community, as well as many CRRM staff, felt that the Library was a waste of resources because the lack of intellectual control over the collection prevented any meaningful research from occurring. Despite this fractured reputation, the executive director and some trustees felt that the Library and Archives could and should be the intellectual heart of the institution.

While the Library and Archives occupied the same organizational level as the operations, curatorial/exhibits, and education departments on paper, in reality the bulk of the board's interest and resources were invested in the Roundhouse, comprising the operations and restoration departments. This is understandable, given the history of the institution and the interests of the individuals involved. Additionally, visitors generally come to the Museum to experience the train rides featuring historic equipment.

Given these priorities and limitations, one of my main goals was to position the Library and Archives so that it became clear to the board that the operations department could not function well without the information contained in the Archives—essentially demonstrating the Archives' value in the way that the board most appreciated. While the archival collections do, of course, have their own value, building an appreciation of this intrinsic value of the collection was a longer-term project. Despite a history of contention between the Library and the Roundhouse, new staff in the Library and Roundhouse were able to collaborate on a number of projects. These projects were mutually beneficial and promoted the integration of the Library and Archives into a broader museum mission.

In addition to our particular attempts to reach out to the Roundhouse, we sought to support the Museum in all its functions. We provided content to our publicity contractors, to our social media coordinator, and to our video newsletter producers in order to inform a wider audience of the Museum's services, resources, and events. We provided digitized moving images to our development team, thus creating an exceptional promotional item to incentivize new membership. We provided public domain original documents for reprint to the gift shop, again supporting the Museum financially while protecting it legally. We properly stewarded institutional records, particularly with reference to abiding by records retention schedules; participated in the publications program, with a particular eye to establishing editorial and citation guidelines and avoiding copyright infringement; and built relationships with collections donors, thus protecting the institution from legal action with reference to physical and intellectual property ownership and licensing. We co-authored, with Roundhouse staff, nominations to have equipment listed on the State Historic Register and successful grants for restoration projects. By reaching out to different departments, we were able to highlight our collections while positioning ourselves as central to the operation of the entire Museum.

Finally, the Library and Archives sought to provide a social service, which, in many ways, led to its inability to function as a true archives. Because the Archives, and indeed, the Museum, had been volunteer-run for so long, the transition to a professional staff was highly emotionally charged. The executive director and I agreed that to professionalize the institution while estranging the bulk of our long-term supporters was to win the battle but lose the war. I tried to balance competing interests between the longtime Museum supporters with the very real needs of the collection and of newer constituencies. I sought to preserve the Library and Archives as a social space for volunteers and researchers, even those who were detractors of the Museum's new direction, because it was important

to me that the Library and Archives continue to be at the heart of the regional railfan community—the “third space” for this group of predominantly blue-collar older men who may not otherwise have had many social connections.

In the end, this last service was not a successful endeavor, due to lack of support, ultimately leading to my resignation. While I regret leaving the collection in only marginally better condition than I found it, I do believe that my work there accomplished many important projects and led to a more central role for the Library and Archives: it gave people at the CRRM an idea of what a museum archives can be, and hopefully planted a seed for more support for the professionalization of this Archives in the future.

David Farneth, Assistant Director, Getty Research Institute

“The archival enterprise is vast, and growing. We are not just about history anymore.”

Museum archives have changed significantly over the last twenty years, and their mission promises to remain dynamic into the future. While many museum archives were established to preserve the history of the institution, their remit has often expanded in recent years to include records management, knowledge management, digital asset management, digital preservation/curation, and more. Many museum archives have also taken on the extra task of acquiring and providing research access to archival collections from the external environment, sometimes coming into the institution through curatorial departments. Not only do museum archives identify and preserve the important knowledge, information, and documentation created by the institution through its activities over time, the archives has become an active partner in *leveraging* that knowledge to enhance the current and future work of the museum.

Why has the archival enterprise expanded so greatly in museums? One reason is that archivists bring a diverse set of skills crucial to many areas of museum management. Archivists embrace research and education, which are central activities in almost all museums today. They are also historians, preservationists, and information technology professionals. Much of a museum's work builds upon prior knowledge, and the archives is often the keeper of this knowledge for the next year, decade, or generation. Now that much of the museum's knowledge and information is stored electronically, the archivist is often called upon to assist with electronic records management, digital asset management (images, audio, video), and digital storage and preservation. In the electronic environment, preservation must happen while the records are still active, and not ten or more years after the fact (as was typical for paper-based records).

To undertake their work effectively, museum archivists must understand thoroughly the history and structure of the organization. As a result, they usually have a unique, upper-level understanding about how the various parts interoperate and have overall knowledge of the accomplishments of the institution over time. Archivists facilitate institutional continuity, and they help to ensure that knowledge and documentation does not walk out the door along with departing employees. Because of their cross-organizational perspective, archivists are often

asked to participate in disaster/business recovery planning, data preservation, and public relations activities. As stewards of the museum's intellectual property, archivists also become involved in publishing and legal matters. A museum archivist's duties are often diverse and exposed, and a day is never spent pursuing a solitary activity tucked away in basement or garret.

Apart from these day-to-day activities that often monopolize an archivist's time, the principle responsibilities of the archival program must remain focused on selecting, preserving, analyzing, interpreting, and providing access to the important records of the organization. To do this effectively the archivist must understand the organization's history, its organizational structure, and its place in the external environment. Like Janus, the archivist is constantly looking back at the past and ahead into future.

As mentioned previously, many museum archivists are expanding their activities to include the acquisition and management of archival collections that were not created by the museum. These might include the personal papers of individuals whose work is related to the museum's mission (artists, scientists, historians, collectors, donors, journalists) or the archives of related organizations (such as galleries or professional organizations). These collections provide expanded research opportunities by providing points of intellectual connection and context for the work undertaken by the museum.

Museum archives should report to the museum director, a deputy director, or to a senior administrative curator in charge of all collections. Because the archival program serves the *entire* organization, archivists need a significant level of authority to carry out their mandate. Archivists should be recognized as trusted members of the administrative team who routinely handle sensitive information with discretion and diplomacy. While museum archivists participate in research and educational activities consistent with the museum's mission, museum archivists serve first and foremost the entire organization. Placing the museum archives under a department that has a specific, functional mission fails to understand the archival mission and does not maximize the investment. Archival programs should be placed and supported in a manner commensurate to their value and expertise.

The archival enterprise in a museum is not a “project” that can be undertaken and accomplished in a year or two. It is a necessary and integrated function that must interact in a knowledgeable and trusted way across core mission and administrative departments alike. For this reason, museum archivists must have a range of competencies including strong leadership qualities; strategic and diplomatic skill; the intellectual ability to select records of enduring value for preservation; significant practical experience in traditional archival functions and the ability to translate that knowledge into the electronic environment; knowledge of cultural heritage organizations and how they work; and, ideally, subject expertise in the collecting strengths of the museum. Indeed, in some museums the archivists have the title of “curator.”

Starting a museum archives is analogous to starting a new curatorial department in the museum, and it requires a commitment to building an expert staff and providing the resources required to build, sustain, and share a cultural heritage collection. This, after all, is what museums do best.

Andrew Baraniak, Wisconsin Veterans Museum

The need for museum archives with professionally trained staff is more important than ever, as both institutional records and personal collections are increasingly created electronically rather than physically.

How do these changes affect museums? For starters, museums are creating institutional records in digital formats similar to those created in other institutions. Email serves as a standard communication tool between staff members. Marketing for events and exhibits is frequently promoted across digital media sources. Exhibitions are often designed with digital interactive components. These components play a major role in providing interpretive dialog about the materials on display. These elements, which used to be created in paper-based formats, still need to be preserved in order to capture institutional history.

Another issue facing museums is how to handle the increased frequency of materials donated in digital format. My institution, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, collects materials pertaining to the service of Wisconsin veterans from the Civil War up through our current conflicts. The museum has been functioning as a repository preserving the history of Wisconsin veterans since 1903, and the vast majority of the personal collections in the archives are paper-based. However, newer collections pertaining to current wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan include born-digital materials that will need to be captured, preserved, and stored.

Another major issue museum archivists should be aware of (namely those collecting current materials) is the fact that digital content should be aggressively pursued for capture sooner rather than later. In the case of the Wisconsin Veterans Museum, donors have traditionally waited many years before donating collections pertaining to their service. The potential issue faced today is that digital content collected by soldiers might not end up in an archivist's hands until it is too late to migrate that information for access. Also, soldiers and veterans should be made aware of the types of information they need to collect and in what formats in order to ensure that contemporary collections contain correspondence, audio and video recordings, and photographs, just like the collections of soldiers that came before.

While it might seem that born-digital materials have changed the role of museum archives, the function of the museum archivist essentially remains the same. What has changed is how a museum archivist

thinks about capturing, storing, and preserving information. Archivists must now have a basic understanding of how digital information is created, as well as how to create storage environments that both provide access and preserve information, all while monitoring against digital corruption. These issues accentuate the need for museums to establish a professional archives within their institution. Professional archivists have been discussing and taking steps to capture, store, and preserve digital materials for more than a decade. These discussions have helped archivists understand the changing ways in which we communicate and create records as well as preserve our digital footprint. And while museum archivists have to take into consideration how their collections contribute to describing the complete story of their museum using manuscripts and artifacts, the issues faced across institutions are similar when discussing digital content preservation. Having a professional archivist on staff can greatly improve a museum's ability to comprehend and deal with these factors.

The archives community has taken many steps to provide training and information regarding the various aspects of digital preservation and access. This community provides archivists with a ready-made network to answer important questions pertaining to digital storage. I personally have found conferences, listservs, blogs, and the relationships I have made with colleagues to be instrumental in building my understanding of crucial issues like establishing server storage needs, digital content management systems, and how to properly prepare for born-digital donations. The challenges faced by all institutions make having a professionally trained archivist on staff working in a professional archives invaluable to modern museums. Of course not all museums are equally provided with funding and physical space, but all museums should be aware of the issues faced when it comes to digital preservation, because we live in an age where digital files are the main medium we as a society create.

Peta Jane Jones, National Gallery of Australia Research Library and Archives

“Museum Archivists: Collaborative Relationships”

My role as an archivist at the National Gallery of Australia Research Library and Archives is threefold and includes being: a custodian of archives, an advocate for research, and a champion for donors (who are the most significant contributors). My management of the archival collections is directed by the National Gallery of Australia’s purpose statement, which aims to offer Australians a greater understanding of the National Art Collection held by the Gallery. My role is to acquire, process, and provide access to unique, primary research resources, while respecting the donors’ wishes.

It is accepted that unique research material is invaluable and the methods and theories for processing archives are well represented in the relevant literature. The importance of collaborative relationships in archival management, however, is not widely documented, as these are institution-specific and are therefore not standardized. Collaborative relationships are defined as working together towards a common end, in this instance the Gallery’s purpose statement. To undertake this in the Gallery, I have drawn upon the skill sets of registrars, art packers, conservators, imaging and multimedia staff, publishers, records managers, librarians, researchers, curators, and donors.

To detail this further I have defined managing the physical state of the archives appropriately as part of being a custodian of these collections, which includes working with the following gallery staff:

- Registration and documentation – to accession incoming collections and to document locations;
- Art packers – to make by hand storing solutions for archival items that are stable, safe, and compliant;
- Pest Management – to meet gallery standards of pest control (for example we are presently cleaning a mold infested paper-based collection in a quarantined environment);
- Conservation – liaising with conservators to maintain best practice standards;
- Other collecting institutions – sharing and learning from other collecting institutions.

As an advocate for research I need to ensure archival content is accessible, visible, and handled appropriately. To ensure this occurs I have established collaborative relationships with the following:

- Digital Asset Management (DAMS) – ingesting digital material into the DAMS system for online discoverability;
- Publishing/rights permissions – liaising with researchers and donors in regards to copyright;

- Records management – maintaining consistency in content (Commonwealth records are managed by the Records Management Unit);
- Librarians – ensuring archival collections are catalogued effectively in the library system;
- Library patrons – offering a comprehensive research reference service to our readers that includes online finding aids and catalogued entries in the library system;
- Curatorial staff – who actively research art, artists, and works of art to develop and promote the Gallery's collection, and to present exhibitions and associated programs such as talks and lectures, tours, conferences, and symposia.

Curators are the main initiators for collecting archival material as they have extensive networks and established relationships with artists and art organizations. They are often the first contact with potential donors of archival material, and therefore it is important as an archivist to manage curatorial relationships effectively. When a donor trusts and respects curators there should be consistency so that these qualities persevere, particularly through delicate times. Often archival collections are donated after the passing of an artist, so empathy and care are required. Including donors in the processing of an archival collection has proven not only to be prudent but beneficial to understanding the context and content of the material. Nurturing these relationships is paramount to good archival management and collection development and by clearly relating our purpose and goals with clarity to the donor(s) we are valuing these major contributors to archival content. We need to be champions of donors as they are vital to building archival collections.

As a result of these relationships my role has broadened and the archival collection has been discovered more intensely on a local scale, mainly by Gallery staff. The archives are now located on the electronic museum database and are better documented across several systems. They are housed to art conservation standard where required, and will have greater online visibility with correct rights permissions. As a direct response to this, researchers and curators are made more aware of archival content, and donors are reassured by the care archival collections receive.

As an archivist in a national cultural institution my role is positioned well within the organizational structure. From this vantage point I can take an interdisciplinary approach to archival management that benefits the physical and intellectual capacity of the collection and reaches a greater audience. It is the collaborative relationships that allow me to be a custodian, advocate, and champion for archives, research, and donors respectively.

Gregory Jackson, CA, Archivist, Glencairn Museum

“Why Does a Museum Need an Archives?”

Archives are, and should be, an integral part of museum operations. Museum archives serve the mission of the institution in various ways - the most obvious being the collection and maintenance of material documenting the function, operations and history of the institution. In addition, the archives provide research support for the collections and maintain special collections that don't necessarily fit into the main mission of the museum.

The function, operation and history of the institution support several activities. Historical information regarding the activities and history of the museum are usually necessary when submitting applications for grants or soliciting donations. Many fundraising activities, from membership drives to capital campaigns, are supported by written and photographic documentation. Images held in the archives are also used often in institutional brochures, mailings and other outreach activities. The material held in the archives often provides support for the “public face” of the institution.

Information regarding the construction of the building is also important, especially for older and historic buildings. Correspondence, photographs, blueprints and other architectural drawings are all necessary to the maintenance, repair and renovation of the building(s) and subsidiary mechanical systems. Preserving detailed original records increases the likelihood of successful rehabilitation, renovation and replacement of the building envelope or its systems.

The third part of institutional history relates to the founders, donors and supporters. In some institutions, the very important papers that document the founding or donation of buildings, collections and endowments are maintained in the archives, including correspondence with donors and founders that may shed light on the original intention of the gift. Having this type of documentation may help avoid future misunderstandings of intent that leads to later litigation between donors and the institution. In addition, documentation of donations and acquisitions help determine provenance of items that may not be included in accessions or later loaned or sold to another institution. Our institution has been contacted several times in relation to items they have in their collections that were once owned by a donor to our museum. In addition, many museum archives contain the information necessary for constructing a catalogue raisonné for a particular artist.

Closely related to support for institutional history is information required for collections research support and even preservation. This can include condition reports, conservation assessments (or actions), loans and even information about an institutional disaster (fire, flood, etc.) that might shed light on preservation or conservation actions for a particular item or collection. In addition, correspondence with other scholars or institutions regarding an object or object type can be very useful in scholarly or exhibition research.

While the functions of archives will vary from museum to museum, there can be no doubt that they are an important part of any museum. Whether it be the fundamental mission of all archives (collection, preservation, arrangement, description and access), exhibition support, collections research or marketing, archives are a necessary component of a well-rounded institution. As such, museum archives should be appropriately funded and staffed with properly trained and certified archivists.

Margaret Huang, Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens

The core competencies of a professional archivist are of great benefit to museums. Archivists have a deep conceptual and physical understanding of the nature of records and archival material. The conceptual understanding of records and archival material is reflected in archival theories such as *respect des fonds* or the principle of provenance. During my time as a volunteer at a public library, I helped with processing the library's historical institutional records. It quickly became clear to me that archival principles were not applied, as records from the various departments had been meshed together and arranged alphabetically according to subject. This resulted in a lack of context and an unsustainable arrangement system, as the assigning of subjects can be rather idiosyncratic. When museum records are managed by a capable archivist, on the other hand, the original purposes of the records as determined by their record creators are captured in an organic fashion that reflects the interrelated nature of records.

Since archivists recognize that not all records can be preserved in perpetuity, the theories of archival appraisal are also important for museums. Through methods such as functional analysis and documentation strategy, archivists ensure that records of institutional value will be captured for posterity. Efficient appraisal also prevents resources such as space and staff time from being dedicated to storing, describing, and searching superfluous records. As an archivist at a small community-based museum whose archival collections were managed by mostly volunteers, I saw the earnest efforts of volunteers squandered on unnecessary tasks. I often found that materials that lacked relevance to the museum's mission or which were just poor photocopies had been dutifully accessioned and described.

Archivists have preservation knowledge that helps to curtail the loss of information due to chemical or physical deterioration. Preservation is especially important in the digital age, as file formats, hardware, and software quickly become obsolete. It is a common misconception that electronic records are more reliable than paper records. They are in fact more volatile than paper will ever be. With electronic records becoming more and more prevalent, museums will require the skills of an archivist to ensure their born-digital materials such as exhibition designs, emails, and collection photography will remain usable for the long term.

Once archival records are acquired, archivists make those records accessible and discoverable. Archivists

can enhance the usefulness of museum records through activities such as description and reference. Archivists often have intimate knowledge of the collections under their care based on what they learn during processing, which makes reference a natural and valuable service they can offer to museums and their patrons. While working at an art museum that held the archives of a prominent artist, I often came across source material or correspondence that truly helped to illuminate the motivations of the artist and his work. Just as a curator is consulted for expertise on a certain object, the archivist can provide helpful insights into archival collections at museums. This kind of insight can support a range of projects and functions that the typical museum performs.

Since a significant portion of museum work depends on past precedent and research—such as working off existing research to create new exhibits or planning events that occur on an annual basis—well maintained institutional records are of great benefit. A professional archivist can address this by implementing and maintaining a records management program. This is one of my projects at my current institution, the Hillwood Estate, Museum & Gardens. The Hillwood Archives has been sporadically receiving institutional records from staff over the years, but it has never been a formalized process. I conducted record surveys and interviews with all the departments to determine their record keeping habits. I used this information, as well as research into local recordkeeping laws and regulations, to create a records management policy and record retention schedules. The records management program has been received well by staff, as they are eager for guidance regarding how long to retain records, what records can be destroyed, and what records should be transferred to the Hillwood Archives. The IT department is also relieved to have guidelines for dealing with legacy email. The records management program will ensure that Hillwood is systematically capturing records important for institutional history and complying with relevant record-keeping laws and regulations.

The value of a professional archivist on staff at a museum is boundless. Today's archivists are so diverse in their range of skills and knowledge that they can truly elevate a museum. Technologically savvy archivists often have creative ways to present archival material, such as interactive timelines or web exhibitions. A confident archivist can convince a reluctant donor to entrust their papers with a museum. A vivacious archivist can increase public awareness of a museum through captivating social media posts. The creative archivist can enhance museum exhibits by making relevant documentary material available for display. An archivist on staff at any institution can be a great boon, but there is an inherent and clear connection between the work of archives and museum professionals, namely that at the crux of both

professions is the idea of stewarding and presenting the diverse manifestations of society's cultural and material memory.

Polly Darnell, Shelburne Museum (retired)

When I was hired to establish a museum's institutional archives shortly before its 50th anniversary, I saw the institutional effects of not having an archivist. A family-run organization, the first employee with professional museum training – a conservator – was hired more than 30 years after the founding. With no organized archives, historical information was based on oral tradition, documentation was irretrievably lost, records of no value were consuming valuable space and obscuring needed records, and staff were hindered in doing their jobs. The oral tradition served the needs of the family, but resulted in significant flaws in interpretation of the collection, as well as problems in relationships with other individuals or organizations.

Documentation of the museum's history, meanwhile, was scattered, mostly inaccessible, and not serving current institutional or researcher needs. In preparation for the anniversary and establishment of an archives, a lot of preliminary work had been done, including identifying and securing some of the early records of the museum, but the limitations of the non-archivists' perspective were evident. The principles of provenance and original order had been repeatedly violated, obscuring the context and sometimes the significance of records, and increasing the amount of work needed to make them accessible. In some departments individuals had attempted to protect the records of greatest importance to the institution – or for their department's current use. Records were safe only as long as the person who had gathered them remained in place, or their long-term value as well as their immediate usefulness, was recognized.

Although I was administratively within the curatorial department for most of my tenure, I was given free rein and interacted independently with all the departments. That was more important than the archives' position in the organization chart. Of course knowledge of archival principles and procedures were of primary importance in caring for the museum's records, but I came to think that my relative independence and neutrality were also valuable. Different departments tend to have different perspectives and goals, as do individuals. There were curators who assumed records they had used in creating exhibits could be discarded, feeling that theirs was the last word on the subject, and educators who thought that copies of all the form letters they sent should be saved. Members of the registrar's department are taught to keep careful, complete records of every object. It can be difficult for them to get their heads around the idea of dealing with series of records, rather than individual documents or photographs. A practical consequence of these differences was the absolute necessity of networking

with archivists at other institutions. When I needed to talk over an archival dilemma, it made much more sense to ask another archivist, not another staff member.

Once the archives was established, it not only made existing records more accessible, it also attracted additional transfers and donations. Some of them, like family photograph albums documenting the provenance of objects, were family papers related to the museum. Others were museum records turned over by both current and former staff and trustees. A former executive director and a former president each independently turned over to the archives a stash of letters he'd received from the founder's son, which they considered official museum records, but so vitriolic that they hadn't wanted to leave them in the files. They were delighted to turn over the responsibility for an informed appraisal to a professional archivist.

As the relatively neutral, independent voice of the archives, I was not only able to negotiate the transfer of records from various departments, but also take on museum-wide projects, like coordinating development of a new museum-wide disaster plan and protocols for managing digital photographs. Institutional memory resided in long-time staff members, but the archives was crucial in capturing documentation of some of their knowledge and making it more widely accessible. Oral history interviews with staff as well as family members were used in documenting collections and buildings, as well as the development of exhibits.

Over the course of the last twenty years, the archives has become not only well established, but firmly embedded in the operations of the museum.