

## Archives Management Round Table

Wednesday, August 19, 2015

### **Sherry Williams**

Chair Sherry Williams called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. She introduced Susan Malbin, who described the presentation being given by herself, Tamara Livingston, and Linda Whitaker, entitled “Better Together? Institutional Affiliation and Archival Advocacy: Challenges and Opportunities.”

Susan welcomed everyone to the Archives Management roundtable program and introduced the other panelists, Tamara Livingston and Linda Whitaker. The scheduled moderator, Daria D’Arienzo, unfortunately couldn’t attend for family health reasons.

Susan presented the opening and contextual remarks on behalf of Daria, who had shared her comments with the panelists before the meeting. As Daria wrote, this collegial discussion grew out of a search for concrete information about what impact organizational placement has on archival effectiveness, particularly on advocacy efforts. It was no surprise that the search did not yield very much. A better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that archival affiliation has for archival advocacy can make us better advocates and thus better leaders.

Archives have a range of affiliations, including history centers, libraries, museums, and businesses and religious organizations. Placement of archives within an institution can be all over the map: as separate entities, in libraries, in special collections, in academic alumni offices, under institutional Secretaries or Presidents, as units of marketing departments, as parts of Town Clerks offices or incorporated into local history collections, among others. Even independent archival repositories can have affiliations within their communities and with other cultural entities. And it is clear that where an archives is placed in a larger organization or institution has significant impact on the archives in terms of mission, collection development, resources, and patrons.

What does that all mean in terms of advocating for an archives and for getting the job done? Is there an ideal organizational placement that will help you to get to be a model archives? The documentation void raised several questions, which led to the idea for this session as focus-on-the-problem discussion between colleagues.

These were the questions that were put on the table to consider:

1. Where are your archives/department placed in your institution?
2. Does this placement support your work and allow you to get your job done?

3. In what ways does it not work or hinder your work?
4. What are you doing about it?
5. How can we, in this roundtable, collectively help each other?

A number of thoughts emerged from pre-AMRT talks and these were offered as context for the discussion.

1. The critical perspective in advocating for your archives is that your archives is essential to your institution's mission and can advance that mission and enable the institution to do lots of other things.
2. It is important to find inclusive and cooperative partners. Collaboration, whether with other segments of your own organization or with similar and complementary corresponding groups in your own community, really depends on individual relationships and relationship tending. In practical terms, personalities and flexibility can be key -- the "how well you play in the sandbox" thing. For many, the perspective, "help other collaborators because in the long run it helps you" is critical.

The opening remarks ended by returning to Daria's original question: what impact does organizational placement have on archival effectiveness? The programs' working group concluded that one size does not fit all. One way to look at it is to find placement where you have the ability to reach your resource allocator easily. Look for the most direct relationship possible.

The presentation then continued when each panelist began her presentation by listing three statements or strategies that she has used to make her archives as strong as possible, and then described her own work environment, talking about her experience and providing practical tips and creative strategies.

### **Tamara Livingston**

*Tamara is Executive Director of the Department of Museums, Archives & Rare Books and founder of the Kennesaw State University Archives. There she is also an adjunct lecturer in Public History and offers a course on Archives and Records Management for undergraduates. Dr. Livingston holds a PHD in Ethnomusicology.*

At Kennesaw State University, Tamara's department is Museums, Archives, Rare Books and Records Management, established in 2004. Just to clarify the affiliation and organizational placement, MARB reports directly to the Chief Information Officer/Chief Business Officer/Operations, not through the Library. This has been the constant in the growth of the archives from a one-person shop back in 2004 through merger with

Bentley Rare Books in 2009 (moved from Library to Archives/RM), and other cultural assets at the university, such as the archives, the art collection, a museum program, a holocaust education program. This placement has been very beneficial.

Tamara's remarks refer to the top-level affiliation – KSU Archives and KSU Records Management. These were her top three strategies:

1. Understand how your resource allocators work, and connect them with your collections in personal and public ways.

Example: The KSU Archives was founded as an institutional repository for the university but interestingly it was the acquisition of their first major collection from the community, the historical records of the Cobb County Branch of the NAACP, that gave them a significant reason to bring together senior administration with prominent members of the black community and the media together to celebrate it as an historic moment for KSU. Now their President reminds Tamara of this collection if she neglects to mention it as one of their resources.

The partnership between the Cobb County Branch of the NAACP and the archives represents the university's emphasis in community collaboration and engagement. The partnership, along with other active living partnerships with non-KSU, regional collections, also ensures the continued existence of the archives. It is important for the university as well.

2. Do not assume anyone understands what archives do or how they operate - even your own institutional colleagues. Take every opportunity to educate up (to the Administration), down and laterally, inside and outside the institution.

Tamara uses the records management program as a means of educating KSU folks, dispelling their notions of what is worthy of inclusion in the KSU Archives and reminding them that the archives doesn't have something if it's not given to the archives. They send out a records management/archives SWAT team to do records consults, especially those resulting from consolidation.

She also uses the lack of records that people are looking for as an opportunity to educate WHY archives matter, especially for the details of institutional history (i.e. lists of Chairs, Deans, etc.). For example, the archives may not have records from the 1980s from a particular department because nobody from that department saved them and sent them to the archives. At a state university, records retentions schedules need to be followed; people don't get to pick and choose what they send to be preserved, and when.

3. Partner with key stakeholders so that they cannot imagine a world without your archives.

Tamara's department carried the institution's 50th anniversary celebration by creating an exhibit, website, and book. Nothing was being done to mark the celebration until her department pushed to get the ball rolling. They did something good for the university and for the President, and hopefully he'll remember them for it.

So - because of the institution's interest in community engagement, doing things internally for the university, and pairing with the records management program – these three things have helped enormously within the institutional environment.

Tamara then described the benefits of her MARB department being situated in a non-library environment reporting directly to the CIO, as:

- Maintain direct line to VP for Operations (one step under the President)
- Benefit from FT graphic designer (hired for Museum of History and Holocaust Education, now heavily used by Zuckerman Museum of Art), and PR specialist (same)
- Benefit from internal collaboration with MHHE/ZMA on exhibits allowing greater exposure and awareness of Archives
- Benefit from colleagues who understand collections management and care

Challenges:

- Internally and externally, they have different ways of assessing value (ZMA emphasizes modern curated exhibits of materials; number of people served as a museum facility; MHHE has no objects, just panel exhibits but does lots of programming and has a museum facility – again, number of people served); MARB success rate is more of a community engagement component and records management service than a number of people served
- MARB value is harder to express in terms of a dollar amount or number of people served as it is NOT a museum facility (but working to make the Rare Book room just that!)
- They are often viewed, even within MARB, as ONLY a place to park things, and are often contacted once a project is completed, rather than as an active project partner.

For KSU archives, though, this arrangement has benefitted MARB greatly, and Tamara has had to work hard to keep all of the units together.

## **Linda Whitaker**

*Linda serves as the Director of the Library and Archives Division of the Arizona Historical Society, where she is responsible for the library and archives branches statewide. She is the Vice Chair of the Archives Management Roundtable. She is a certified archivist with a master's degree in library science.*

Linda's perspective was quite different than Tamara's and Susan's, and she has seen it from both sides. For three and a half years, she has been working in the Arizona Historical Society, a mid-sized historical society with a \$4M operating fund, 80% public, 20% private, 21 historic properties, 4 branches of libraries and archives. She has served twice as the interim museum director (16 months). The three statements that she submitted to the other panelists were:

1. If I can change archival practice at a 150 year old institution, you can, too.
2. Don't be afraid of an amicable divorce for a better placement within the organization.
3. Always make more political capital than you spend.

1. Archival practice is different from library practice is different from museum practice. The library and archives in Tucson reported to a Museum director and curator. When she was put in charge as interim museum director, she found that, essentially, there was almost no archival presence in that organization. The archival practice across the museums and libraries was thin. Only some things were cataloged, and most of that was in Tucson. The emphasis was on item-level cataloging of books. The access and reference services focused on the Tucson branch. Linda had to start from the ground up, rewrite everyone's job description, and then eventually, she had to ask for everyone to become certified archivists. That changed policies and procedures, and the whole dynamics.

2. An earlier 35% reduction in staff had resulted in a closure of the Tempe Library and Archives. In renegotiating its reopening, Linda and two others stood up for Library and Archives, demanding that the four branches be united into their own division which would have parity with the Museums with respect to access and distribution of resources. Their goals were to have equitable distribution of resources in space, standardize and implement policies and procedures, fill in the gaps in the record, with no duplication between and non-compete between branches, and standardize internal and external access to materials. These policies and procedures served to democratize

the library and archives collections so that the rules that applied to external researchers would now apply to internal researchers as well. So the 'amicable divorce' of Library and Archives' from under the 'Museums' umbrella worked to the 'Library and Archives' benefit.

3. Political capital: Archivists bring a lot to the table, and they could fill in gaps that the agency didn't have: IT, IT infrastructure, and IT savvy. Archivists could broaden their reach statewide, illustrating sustainable software and hardware, and reasonable digital projects that were sustainable. Linda's group generated revenue, and they shared revenue for improving specific projects. They were the only grant writers in the organization, and their success rate is almost 100%. They also increased state and regional connections. They forged new partnerships, being entrepreneurial with targeted outreach. They created a new catalog with new web content, have become active participants in social media, and have experienced concrete outcomes in the last three and a half years.

As a result, some of their best work is not centered in Tuscon anymore. The Library and Archives group has processed over a thousand linear feet in Yuma, and have partnered with a public library. The bottom line is that they made the most of an opportunity to change something. They exploited an organization's weaknesses to the betterment of the entire organization, and they put libraries and archives as players at the table. If they can do it, anyone in the roundtable can do it as well.

## **Susan Malbin**

*Susan is the Director of Library & Archives, American Jewish Historical Society. She was a Senior Program Officer at the IMLS for the National Leadership Program and served as Chief of the Washingtoniana Division of the District of Columbia Public Library. She is also adjunct faculty in the Pratt Institute SLIS graduate school. Under her leadership, the American Jewish Historical Society is at present building a Portal to American Jewish History, now in its beta phase.*

Susan described herself as the archives director of a small ethnic historical society. She said that her group is generally underfunded, overworked, and probably underpaid, compared to university archivists or corporate archivists.

Her statements were:

1. Collaboration is key to getting some things done in small/smallish non-profit agencies.

2. I have a permanent staff of three and project staff of five. Partnering, trade-offs, collaborating and 'networks' are all part of what makes it possible to get more things done
3. Personal relationships go a long way to building inter- and intra- institutional operations

American Jewish Historical Society is one of five independent 501c3 cultural heritage partners housed in the Center for Jewish History complex. Contributors to the Cause was a flat panel exhibit called the Cultural History of Jewish Philanthropy in America, an overview that went on display in Oct. 2013 and came down in Feb. 2014, sponsored by Center for Jewish History. The exhibit displayed 200 onscreen images of archival material dating from the 1700s through the 20th century. Originally, all five partners were supposed to participate and share images, but only American Jewish Historical Society cooperated easily and made their images readily available. They have standard forms, so they just loaned things to the building, just the same as sending it outside the building. In the end, all of the images came from American Jewish Historical Society, which is how they had an exhibit that didn't cost their agency anything.

Another example is the Portal to American Jewish History, which is a web aggregator that they developed. They work with a large variety of partners on adding metadata records to the portal, from university-sized special collections departments like Temple University's Jewish History Collection, and UC Berkeley, to very small rural historical societies, like a lone arranger shop with little technical knowledge who may need help entering data into a CSV spreadsheet. They work with the Center archivists who go out and help collect data. There are eleven partners represented in the portal.

In drawing an end to the panel presentations, Susan returned to Daria's projected outcomes for the presentation: that hearing from the panelists would help the Archives Management Roundtable members to:

1. Advocate for a strategic move within their institution, if that seems best for their archives
2. Take actions to help strengthen their archives where they are, if that is their best placement
3. Dispel the notion that change is not possible
4. Recognize that they are not alone—we all face these challenges—and can offer support and sounding boards as they think things through

5. Take away some concrete solutions—that will make a difference in advocating for their archives, and, provide additional means to engender respect for their archival work.

### **Audience Participation**

At this point, the audience was invited to contribute their observations, remarks, and details on their particular circumstances.

One commentator mentioned that she has an archives with a records management component, and while the business side of her university understands what she's doing, she is located within a library setting, and they don't understand what she is doing or why. This is a critical time for her to hear this discussion, as she was traveling back to her university to make a recommendation that the archives be moved out of the library after the weekend. When asked where she was going to recommend that the archives be moved, she said that the records management portion should be moved to the finance and business offices, so that they would be under ethics, compliance, and risk management. The library just can't support the needs of the archives.

Within the world of records management, there needs to be a clear chain of authority. Placement is critical.

Records and archives are institutional assets. With having to 'value your archival collection' now, now we can talk about assets, risk management, and liability. Resource allocators really understand that language.

One member was from the Texas State Library Archives Division. The Archives and Information Services holds the state archives, the manuscripts collections, and all of the publicly accessible materials (three reading rooms) in the information services area: state and federal depository materials, the genealogical collection, and state records materials on Texas. The archivist also has a regional facility in Liberty, Texas, with library materials and historic buildings. She cannot determine how she can separate out functions and collections. The libraries have been going through a valuation in which assets are being entered into a state assets database, and she's being asked to put a price on her archival collections. Individual items may be able to be appraised, but how do you put a dollar value on a whole collection of records? How can you monetize the historical research value of a collection? It's been a constant fight with the auditors.

One member asked the panel, "How does placement of archives affect outreach, access and usage, and who are your best partners in your institutions for those kinds of consortia?"

Linda answered that her best partners have been found externally in departments in other organizations, such as academic campuses and public libraries. It's been a real disappointment that her partners have not been internal.

Others concurred that most of their outreach has been outside of the institution or outside of the library. They have had to separate their catalog outside of the library's catalog, because it wasn't allowing them to get the description of their collections into the proper format. They had to have an 'amicable divorce', and have now gone into ArchivesSpace.

One member from ACLU talked about transferring her records from one vendor to another, and the insurance company only wanted to pay insurance on the value of the box, not the contents, since they couldn't tell what was in the box! The archives had to pay the insurance on the contents. Regarding the placement of her archives, the archives are under Administration and Finance Management, with good financial support for hiring and systems. ACLU has many legal programs, and the archivists and records managers have had to define procedures for how to handle the legal files, which is difficult when they are not lawyers.

One member from NARA mentioned having gotten away from the GSA 30 years ago, and that it was an important historic move that SAA helped to make happen.

Tamara mentioned that it is frustrating that so many places still have such a disconnect between thought and action. She knows of one place that offers a Masters in Archival Studies program, yet their archives has a lone arranger. She wished that as a profession, we would have instilled in our archivists, 'this is where you should be, and where you need to, if you can, ask to be'.

One member said that she was at a small university, and in that environment, she could not be a stand-alone department. Having to deal with all of the political wrangling would take up too much of her time. She sees her department's placement as directly related to how she defines the priorities and the mission. For the university, the top priority is education. If they are not serving the university curriculum and faculty and students, then she is not serving the mission. Records management is an increasingly important part of her role, so she works closely with IT because they control a lot of the tools that are needed for her to be able to do her work as well. Partnering with them, even though they may have different points of view and different lines of reporting, furthers everyone's progress.

With that final thought, the general meeting ended. Susan solicited comments from the audience, saying that they were going to put together a panel for next year's meeting.

## **Business Meeting**

Sherry joined the audience in thanking the panel for their presentations, and began the business portion of the meeting at 6:08 p.m. by announcing the results of the recent election:

Sherry Williams, Chair

Jelain Chubb, Vice-Chair

Ann Case, Secretary

India Spartz, Steering Committee

Tamara Livingston, Steering Committee

Sherry also thanked those who are stepping down from service:

Linda Whitaker is leaving as Vice-Chair

Kate Crowe is leaving the Steering Committee

Katie Nash is leaving the Steering Committee

Lynn Eaton, from the Program Committee, talked about the Pop-Up sessions that are new offerings for this year. She said that five programs were pre-selected for Thursday, and that other proposals will be put on the board by the Registration Desk for members to vote on for Friday and Saturday. There are five slots to be filled.

Sherry said that she had expected to a plea for someone to fill the position of web liaison, the person who keeps the AMRT microsite up-to-date with the minutes of the meetings and other reports and pieces of information that we want to share, but that Ann Case had volunteered before the beginning of this meeting to serve in that capacity.

Shortly after last year's meeting, AMRT leaders had an email exchange with the steering committee members regarding ways to engage and to serve our members more directly by use of social media. Caryn Radick had spearheaded this discussion and she talked in greater detail about her ideas to reach more of our members.

Caryn said that idea this ties in with the membership affinity groups topic that is in discussion, because part of it does talk about structural issues between sections and roundtables, and one part talks about what value people get from roundtables – what happens between the annual meetings that make the roundtables and sections worthwhile. The annual meetings are great, the presentations and discussions are wonderful, but we only get together once a year, and there are only about 30 people

here in the room, whereas there are about 1500 people signed up as members in the group. Other avenues need to exist for us to have these discussions throughout the year. This past year, we tried to ask, "What do you want to do to further communication, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, or something else?" but no one seems to have an answer. So – is the best thing just to pick something and go with it and see how it goes?

Another ideas that came up to increase engagement across the roundtable is the possibility of hosting webinars for facilitating learning (possible topics: promotion skills, security refresher course, how to deal with donors), having people provide a resource list of books that has helped them as managers, or offering their experiences in other roundtables. These are perhaps the types of ongoing interaction that SAA is expecting to see within a roundtable.

When Caryn was asked what other roundtables do vis-à-vis social media and website, she reported that different roundtables have wildly different levels of ongoing communication. Some are very active, others are just beginning. Linda Whitaker asked if SAA is looking at Google Analytics to see how many hits the microsites are getting; we don't know, but that would be a really good way of finding out how active microsites are on a regular basis.

Jelain Chubb asked about the availability of specific tools or programming for management problems in archives, such as how to make archival material available to blind and physically handicapped people.

When one member said that project management tools and budget management tools are needed, another member said that the California State Historical Records Advisory Board is putting the finishing touches on a workshop on Managing Archival Repositories, offered live and in webinar, that touches on all of these ideas (budget, personnel), and the consultant is Tom Wilsted. So be on the lookout.

SAA's Committee on Education has plans to work on a new certificate program on Management of Archives. It will follow the roll-out of the next certificate program already in progress, which is the Arrangement and Description Certificate. The creation of the Management of Archives curriculum and certificate program and provides an opportunity for this roundtable to have greater visibility and input.

The Business Archives Section is very active in sharing information and resources throughout the year, so they would be a good model for continued interaction.

One observation was that 'management' is a part of everything. Most roundtables and sections represent archival groups that relate to a specific topic, e.g. college and universities, business, government, digital, paper, manuscripts, records management, audiovisuals, women ... but all of them are managed by someone. It's not an

'either...or' situation, but an 'and' situation. Therefore, you're going to have a huge number of people who are associated with management issues to some degree.

There was a suggestion that we might partner with the Women Archivists roundtable.

Another suggestion was that someone be tasked with monitoring the other roundtable's websites and would report on the listserv what was going on around the SAA.

Sherry proposed that the Steering Committee consult about next steps and formulate a pilot to test the waters. We do need to find a way to reach more people as we move forward. Management is something that we care passionately about, and the comments and questions raised at this meeting demonstrate that there is a really need for a roundtable like this.

Regarding the affinity report, the question was raised whether our sheer numbers will secure us as a roundtable, or are we at risk? Do we need to demonstrate our viability? Caryn said that there are a large number of very small, very active groups, so numbers alone shouldn't define a group. There are people out there who are tired of large groups that do very little for much of the year but who want the space at the annual meeting. We don't want to become the model for that group. But these proposed changes won't happen quickly, so there is time for people to comment and to make suggestions.

Thanks to all who attended and participated today.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann E. Smith Case,

Recording Secretary

**Attendees:**

Ann E. Smith Case, Tulane University

Nicole B Casper, Stonehill College

Jelain Chubb, Texas State Library and Archives Commission

Richard Dine, NARA

Evan Earle, Cornell University

Lynn Eaton, James Madison University

Christine Engels, Cincinnati Museum Center

Jackie Esposito, Penn State University

Rosemary Flynn, University of North Dakota

Jennifer Ford, University of Mississippi

Anne Jenner, University of Washington

Sarah Keen, Colgate University

Dina Kellams, Indiana University

Tyson Koenig, Southeast Missouri State University

Beth Lathrop, The Strong

Nancy Lenoil, California State Archives

Mott Linn, Clark University

Tamara E. Livingston, Kennesaw State University

Susan Malbin, American Jewish Historical Society

David H. Mangold, University of Akron

Lisa Mix

Sean Noel, Boston University

Marilyn Rackley, Atlas Systems

Caryn Radick, Rutgers University

Nick Richbell, University of Waterloo

Christopher Ryland, Vanderbilt University

Shelby Sanett, NARA

India Spartz, Union College

Matt Strauss, Heinz History Center

Nathan Troup, Missouri Secretary of State

Christina Vignone, Tiffany & Co. Archives

Linda Whitaker, Arizona Historical Society

Sherry Williams, University of Kansas

Elizabeth Wittman, Chicago City Clerk's Office

Snow Zhu, American Civil Liberties Union