

Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable

NEWSLETTER

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SAA MEETS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Society of American Archivists returns to the nation's capital after more than a decade to hold its 59th Annual Meeting, August 28th - September 3, 1995. Illustrating that variety is also the spice of archives and reflecting the city's international flavor, the Program Committee has organized an array of sessions around the theme, "Archival Oneness in the Midst of Archival Diversity." Topics range from such broad concerns as documentation, appraisal, preservation, access and legal issues, to the administration of specific media such as electronic records and visual materials. International Archives Day, Saturday, September 2, highlights the conference. Throughout the day, archivists from several countries will share theoretical and practical concerns in concurrent sessions. (See SAA MEETS page 7)

CO-CHAIR BIDS FAREWELL

By Deborah L. Dandridge

As my term as co-chair concludes, I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to the members of the Roundtable for your support. Particularly, I thank you for giving me an opportunity to serve in a leadership role in our national professional organization, despite my recent entry into the archival field. You enabled me to expand greatly my familiarity with those in the profession and to enhance my knowledge of the (See FAREWELL page 6)

GUEST EDITOR

Kathryn M. Neal, first recipient of the SAA Minority Student Award in 1994, is the guest editor of this issue. She has also agreed to become co-editor. Look for her name on the masthead in coming issues.

Ms. Neal received her MLS degree from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor in 1994, where she specialized in archival administration. She earned a Master's degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota in 1991. With these credentials, she is well-qualified for the task.

Ms. Neal was recently hired as an assistant archivist at the Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa. During this two-year appointment, she will focus primarily on collecting the papers of African American women in the state of Iowa, as well as conducting oral history interviews of selected subjects.

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**PEOPLE,
PLACES,
PUBLICATIONS,
PROJECTS AND EVENTS**

In celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the **Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture** and the Centennial of the New York Public Library, the Schomburg Center presents an **Arturo Alfonso Schomburg 70th Anniversary Tribute**. The tribute features exhibitions on the life of Mr. Schomburg entitled, "Arturo Alfonso Schomburg: The Man and His Times" and "Arturo...: Race Man." Both are on view through January 14, 1996 at the Schomburg Center. The exhibition "...Race Man" presents some of the evidence Schomburg acquired and preserved to demonstrate that blacks were not inferior to whites. It contains a selection of objects from Schomburg's original collection which illustrate the ways in which he documented the place and role of African peoples in the making of world civilization. His original collection of 10,000 items became the nucleus of the NYPL's Division of Negro History, Literature and Prints -- the Schomburg Center.

The National Endowment for the Humanities has awarded the **Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center at Jackson State University** a \$36,000 grant to sponsor a national research conference titled, "Collecting Our Past to Secure Our Future: A Historiography of African American Documents." Scheduled for November 30 - December 2, the conference is a continuation of the Alexander Research Center's mission to collect, preserve and interpret the 20th century African American experience through archival and manuscript records. Twenty-one presenters from throughout the nation have been chosen to focus on four phases of collecting African American documents that span from the American Revolution to the present. Research topic sessions are **Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Public and Private; Other Major Educational Institutions, Public and Private; Private Institutions and Public Institutions, Federal, State and Local.**

To encourage participation, thirty-five \$200 stipends are available to assist with accommodations and group meals for junior faculty and graduate students. Applications must be postmarked on or before Sept. 30. For more information, contact Dr. Alferdteen Harrison, Director, Margaret Walker Alexander National Research Center at (601) 968-2055 or P. O. Box 17008, Jackson, MS 39217.

Colin L. Murray, Curator of the Harold Washington Archives and Collection, Chicago Public Library, died in Baltimore, January 31, 1995, at the age of 30. Born, raised and educated in Baltimore, he began his professional career at the Enoch Pratt Free Library. He earned his MLS from the University of Pittsburgh in 1989. Most notable of his professional contributions was his service as the first curator for the archives of Chicago's first black mayor, Harold Washington. Because of his research on the Guide to Afro-American Resources in Illinois, scholars will be able to locate African American history materials statewide. He also helped draft the first successful scholarship proposal to aid minority students in their quest to become archivists. At the request of the Murray family, the Colin L. Murray Fund has been established at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. It will be administered by Carla Hayden and E.J. Josey. If you wish to donate to the Fund, please contact Beverly Cook, Special Collections and Preservation Division, Chicago Public Library at (312) 747-4883.

**MIDWEST
ARCHIVES
CONFERENCE
(MAC) MINORITY
SCHOLARSHIP
EVOLVES,
DONATIONS
SOUGHT FOR
SECOND AWARD**

By Mark A. Greene

The second recipient of the annual MAC Minority Scholarship Award is Renee McKinney, a student at the University of Michigan's School of Information and Library Studies. Ms. McKinney completed her second semester of archival administration courses this spring and has taken classes in archival theory, electronic records, collection development, reference cataloging, online searching and library management. Ms. McKinney is active in the student chapters of the Society of American Archivists and hopes to find a career integrating archival and museum theory and practice, with a focus on documenting the lives and work of African American and other women of color in the first half of the 20th century.

The MAC Minority Scholarship Program was initiated with funds from the Conference's Program Innovation Fund (PIF). As specified by the PIF guidelines, such funding is only possible for two years. Because of the success of the program to date, MAC Council this spring unanimously approved funding future scholarships as a line item in the regular budget. Further, Council asked Deb Shapiro, MAC's Development Coordinator, to pursue outside funding for a second scholarship.

In the meantime, Council directed that a check-off be added to all dues renewal notices, soliciting donations to a **scholarship fund**. In any year in which there is at least \$500 in the scholarship fund, a second scholarship will be awarded (assuming there is a second qualified candidate). Two hundred dollars have already been donated to the fund; additional contributions can be sent to MAC Treasurer Steve McShane, Calumet Regional Archives, Indiana University Northwest, 3400 Broadway, Gary, IN 46408. (See MAC page 5)

**THE LOUIS
ARMSTRONG
ARCHIVES ARE
HOTTER THAN
THAT**

By Kathryn M. Neal

Louis Armstrong may not have blown his own horn... figuratively speaking. Yet the jazz trumpeter and vocalist recognized the importance of documenting his extraordinary life and career. Items from his personal collection make up the bulk of the Louis Armstrong Archives, which opened to researchers at Queens College/City University of New York (CUNY) in May 1994.

Materials in the collection include twelve linear feet of autobiographical manuscripts and other personal papers, 5000 photographs, 1000 commercial and private sound recordings, five trumpets, and more than 80 scrapbooks. The archives also features 650 reel-to-reel tapes and 500 tape boxes, which Armstrong himself decorated with collages. Donations of materials from private collectors round out the collection.

Director Michael Cogswell and archives staff spent three years arranging, preserving and cataloging the collection. Funding for the project was provided by the Louis Armstrong Educational Foundation, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Ford Foundation. The repository is located in the Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library.

Queens College also administers the Louis Armstrong House in Corona, Queens, where Armstrong lived with his wife Lucille until his death in 1971. The house was designated a national historic landmark in 1977. Currently, plans are underway to renovate the home and open it to the public as a museum.

For more information about the Archives, contact George Arevalo, Assistant to the Director, Armstrong Archives, Rosenthal Library, Queens College/Cuny, Flushing, NY 11367-1597; (718) 997-3670 or e-mail: mcsqc@cunyvm.

PAVING THE WAY IN PRESERVATION: PART ONE

By Kathryn M. Neal

As rare as the documents whose long-term maintenance they supervise are preservation administrators of African descent. Approximately five members of the Archives and Archivists of Color Roundtable (AAC) are serving or have served in this capacity. Three of them will be featured in this article: **Brenda Banks**, **Patricia Smith** and **Regina Sinclair**. Although this trio consists of one archival administrator and two library administrators, respectively, they nonetheless share responsibilities for guiding the preservation activities of their institutions.

Serendipity played a small role in shaping the careers of these administrators. After all, when **Brenda Banks** launched her archival career by taking an internship at the Georgia Department of Archives and History in Atlanta 23 years ago, she did not specifically request to be placed in the preservation unit.

"You're not going to believe this, but that's just where they assigned me during my internship," Banks says with a laugh. "I was just out of college. That was one of the two places where I worked during my internship." But that experience led to a position as a preservation technician for Banks, who has a B.A. in history from Spelman College and a master's degree in library and information administration from Atlanta University.

To prepare herself for administrative work in whatever specialty was available, Banks gained experience in all other areas of archives. Now the assistant director of the Georgia Department of Archives and History, she jointly administers the preservation and reference programs. She supervises 28 professional, clerical and technical staff members.

Patricia Smith says that she also entered the area of preservation by chance. Having served as a children's librarian for 14 years and then an adult librarian at a public library in her native Bermuda, Smith decided to come to the U.S. to obtain an advanced certificate in librarianship from Columbia University in New York. While pursuing her studies, she enrolled in an introductory course on preservation and "was fascinated by it," she says. She completed Columbia's conservation program in 1986. (The program is now based at the University of Texas at Austin.)

Smith served as an intern at Stanford University following graduation. In 1988, she was hired by Ohio University in Athens to establish a preservation department and remains its administrator. "As the P.A. [Preservation Administrator], I'm responsible for the overall administration of the department, which is the preservation office, conservation and repair unit, and the brittle-books replacement unit," Smith explains. She currently supervises three full-time staff members, eight to ten students per academic year, and a volunteer. Writing grant proposals and administering an endowment program also fall under Smith's professional domain.

Fate entered into Smith's fellow library and preservation administrator **Regina Sinclair's** career choice in a slightly different way. Sinclair was encouraged to enter the area of preservation by Tom Shaughnessy, former director of the University of Missouri at Columbia's School of Library and Informational Science (and currently University Librarian at the University of Minnesota) in the fall of 1987. She had recently graduated from the library school and was working as an assistant professor and reference librarian at a small private college in the Missouri Ozarks.

"Tom promised me training, professional growth and challenges," Sinclair says in an article that she wrote for the BCALA Newsletter. "In weighing
(Continued on next page)

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my options, I consulted Louella Davis, a more experienced acquaintance at Emory University. My decision was [made] when she mentioned how comparatively few Black librarians were involved in technical services. This made getting into preservation all the more appealing."

Sinclair now heads the preservation department at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Md. Being head of the department provides Sinclair with a number of positive challenges. "I am relied upon for information others do not generally possess regarding the care and handling of paper-based materials," she notes, for example. Another aspect she cites is her enjoyment of striving to communicated effectively with her fellow staff members throughout the library.

Banks and Smith mention still more challenges that they have encountered or continue to face. The scarcity of women generally and people of color at the higher administrative level in state government archives sometimes makes for a rather solitary existence, Banks points out. Yet she also views the proliferation of technology as a challenge that will affect virtually all archives. "Technology continues to change the way we do our work and having to deal with a large staff and not having the resources to provide them all with things that they really need to be as effective as they can is extremely frustrating," she says. Smith considers the beginning stages of her establishing the preservation department at Ohio University to be the greatest challenge that she has faced so far. In those days, she found herself having to convince even her colleagues and the administration that preservation is a crucial endeavor and one which can be maintained through the library.

To aspiring preservation administrators of color, Smith encourages them "to go for it!" She adds: "I think that it's an exciting field. I feel like I'm part of history in the making because preservation is relatively new, and it's still evolving. I think [there's] certainly an open market for people of color because we are in such a minority." Banks takes this notion a step further, recommending that prospective preservation

administrators cultivate mentoring relationships early. "I think that one of the first things I'd say if you're an aspiring archivist or an aspiring preservation profession [is to find] a mentor who can provide that support, that nurturing, open doors, critique your career [and] your career goals. Those kinds of things, I think, are very important," she says. Yet Banks also calls for more established administrators to offer their guidance. "I think that we have a responsibility to make sure that we share the joys of our work and the fulfillment that we get from it with younger archivists and younger preservation administrators in such a way that they do appreciate the challenges of the work and will be enthusiastic about going into it and will know that there is a support network there," she says.

The scant number of preservation administrators of African descent reflects that more than documents need to be preserved: the very status of Blacks employed in this field should also be protected and the number entering the field increased. Perhaps Banks's suggestion that newcomers and established professionals aid each other will prove to be part of the solution for building on the niche that these archival and library administrators have carved for themselves so far.

(MAC from page 3)

To administer the scholarship, now that it is a permanent program, Council established a new standing committee. (Up to now, the MAC Education Committee has been responsible for the program.) Beverly Cook, Assistant Curator at the Chicago Public Library, has agreed to chair this committee. MAC remains committed to taking a leading role in fostering diversity in the archival profession. Suggestions for other programs or actions toward this end would be welcome. Send them to MAC President Mark Greene, Minnesota Historical Society, 345 Kellogg Blvd. West, St. Paul, MN 55102.

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY, 1996

National History Day, which occurs annually in June, was designed to give students the opportunity to do in depth research in history and to share their information in a creative and meaningful fashion. Throughout the school year, students engage in extensive research of primary sources to prepare papers, projects, performances and media presentations based on a historical theme. The 1996 theme is "Taking a Stand in History." Please make an effort to contact schools in your area. Teachers and students need to be aware of resources available for the projects. For additional information, contact: National History Day, University of Maryland, 0121 Caroline Hall, College Park, MD 20742; (301)314-9739.

CALL FOR CITATIONS

Donna Wells is compiling a bibliography of published material centered around Archives and Archivists of Color. Please send citations for guides to collections, descriptions of holdings, publications on theory and administration, core reference material, etc. to Donna M. Wells, 1334 'W' Street, Northeast, Washington, D.C. 20018; (202)806-7480.

COMING TO A CITY NEAR YOU!

Mark your calendars and make plans to meet with AAC at the upcoming SAA meetings.

- 1995 August 29-Sept 3 Washington, D.C.
- 1996 August 27-Sept 1 San Diego, CA
- 1997 September 3-7 Chicago, IL
- 1998 September 2-6 Orlando, FL

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governance of SAA. I am indeed grateful to you for affording me such a professionally and emotionally rewarding two years as your co-chair.

The Roundtable's founding mission and its tenets, besides addressing the needs of its members, continue to serve the interests of SAA and the profession in general. We are clearly implementing these principles as is shown in the increasing number and diversity of those who attend our annual business meetings, the recent decision to change our name to insure diverse participation, and our extremely generous donation to the SAA Minority Scholarship Award.

In addition, the growth and success of our outreach activities are reflected in our current project to compile and publish our second national directory of archivists of color, our semi-annual newsletter, and most gratefully, the ongoing support we receive from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center of Howard University for the publication of our newsletter. No doubt, our Roundtable is an established and important part of SAA and the archival profession.

To reap the ever-growing advantages that diversity of color and ethnicity bring to an organization and to a profession, we must intensify our participation in the governance of SAA - individually and collectively - and promote and encourage the entrance of more newcomers into the profession. Such efforts will determine our future. Again, I thank you so very much for your support.

The Archivist & Archives of Color Roundtable Newsletter is published twice a year. Questions? Contributions? Contact editor: Joellen ElBashir, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University, Washington, DC 20059; (202) 806-7480/FAX (202) 806-6405.

The AAC Newsletter is produced by Robin Rooks and financially supported by the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center and the Society of American Archivists.

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(SAA MEETS from page 1)

What follows is a sampling of sessions and activities that may appeal to AAC members:

- #14SR "The W.P.A. and Federal Project Number One: U.S. W.P.A. Archives"
- #15 "Cultural Identity and Other Optical Illusions"
- #18 "Supporting the Professional Development of Archivists: Envisioning the Role of Continuing Education within the SAA"
- #24 "Outreach to Nontraditional Audiences"
- #43SF "The African National Congress Archives"
- #49 "Creative Outreach Programs for Small Repositories"
- #52 "International Archives Day Plenary Session"
- #74 "Native American Archives"
- #76 "Finding Lost History: Surveying African America"
- #82 "Special Interest Priorities and Selecting for Preservation"

- #B1 Wednesday, August 30, 9:00 am - 12:00
Walking Tour of U Street/Shaw

Thursday, August 31, 10:00 am - 2:00 pm
Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Tour

Thursday, August 31, 1:30 pm - 3:30 pm
Mary McLeod Bethune Museum and Archives tour

Awards Ceremony, which includes recognition of the second Minority Student Award recipient, Thursday, August 31, 6:15 pm - 7:15 pm

- #D3 Friday, September 1, 1:00 - 4:30 pm
Black History Tour

Please plan to attend the annual business meeting of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable, Friday, September 1, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm in Jefferson East. Topics on the agenda include the election of a new co-chair and updates on two ongoing projects, the national directory of archivist of color and the survey distributed to trace minorities employed by archival institutions or enrolled in educational programs nationwide.

See you in D.C.!