

Date: November 2, 2010

Name of Section/Roundtable: Manuscript Repositories Section

Officers:

Fernanda Perrone, Chair

Elizabeth Russey Roke, Vice-Chair/Chair Elect/Newsletter Editor

Sammie Morris, Past Chair

Laura Carroll, Web Liaison

Steering Committee:

Chris Burns, 2009-2011

Deborah Dandridge, 2009-2011

Ellen Doon, 2010-2012

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin, 2010-2011

Renna Tuten, 2010-2012

Anke Voss, 2010-2012

Report from annual meeting:

- Number of attendees: 126
- Election results: The membership elected Elizabeth Russey Roke as Vice-Chair/Chair Elect and Ellen Doon, Renna Tuten, and Anke Voss to the Steering Committee.
- Summary of meeting activities:

Minutes, Manuscript Repositories Section Meeting

August 12, 2010

Washington, D.C.

Section Chair Sammie Morris convened the meeting at 2:00 p.m. She introduced the section leadership and thanked the outgoing members of the Steering Committee. Nominations Committee Chair Mat Darby announced the winners of the steering committee elections and thanked the nominating committee. The following individuals were elected:

Elizabeth Russey Roke, Emory University: Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect

Ellen Doon, Yale University (two-year term)

Anke Voss, The Urbana Free Public Library (two-year term)

Renna Tuten, University of Georgia (two-year term)

Rebecca Johnson Melvin, University of Delaware (one year completing unexpired term)

Tom Hyry, SAA Council Liaison reported on three developments:

- 1) Council has drafted a statement of Core Values for Archivists, which members are encouraged to review.
- 2) Council has approved a statement on diversity, one of SAA's three strategic priorities. Diversity is understood to encompass socio-cultural, geographic, and professional factors.

3) Council has proposed a dues increase that will be voted on at the business meeting. The dues increase is seen as necessary to maintain the physical health of the organization. Everyone was encouraged to attend the business meeting. The last dues increase was three years ago.

Brenda Gunn of the 2011 Program Committee encouraged the membership to propose sessions for next year's meeting in Chicago, ARCHIVES 360. The deadline for submissions is October 1. Endorsements are due October 15. Proposals should be sent to both the SAA and the section/roundtable for endorsement by October 1 and should be as complete as possible. More information can be found on the SAA Web site.

Jennifer Schaffner of OCLC/RLG Partnership gave a report on the Special Collections Survey, which used an ARL survey completed ten years ago as a benchmark. The overall size of special collections is growing, but staffing is not increasing, so backlogs continue to grow. Seventy-five percent of respondents reported that their budgets had been cut, while 88 percent reported that usage had risen. The complete survey results will be published later this year.

Lucy Bates from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) encouraged members to submit proposals for Basic Processing Grants. The NHPRC has a booth in the Exhibit Hall.

The Chair invited announcements from the floor and then introduced the program speakers, William Reese of William Reese Company in New Haven, Connecticut; and Ronald Becker, Head of Special Collections at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J. The title of the program was "The Manuscripts Marketplace."

From the perspective of the dealer, Reese explained how to navigate a marketplace that is not an orderly place because every item is unique. Manuscripts can be obtained from three sources: dealers, auction houses, and private individuals. From World War II to the 1970s, institutions were the primary buyers, while private collectors dominated the high end of the market. The only professional organization of manuscript sellers is the Professional Autograph Dealers Association, which does not represent the whole community or enforce standards. Membership in the Manuscripts Society, another association, is open to everyone. Many manuscript dealers are members of the Antiquarian Booksellers of America/International League of Antiquarian Booksellers, which has an ethics committee and works with the FBI on a database for stolen materials. The used book market has suffered recently from the availability of digital material, but the high end of the market has not been affected. Dealers charge commission for sales, but are aware of the market.

Auctions are the least regulated section of the market. The anonymity of online auctions has facilitated the offering of stolen goods, as was seen in a recent case at Yale University. The largest "brick & mortar" houses are Sotheby's and Christie's. The best way to participate is in person or by phone rather than leaving a bid with the house. Standards regarding auctions differ by state and county.

The popularity of *Antiques Roadshow* has encouraged individuals to enter the market.

It is important for dealers to develop relationships with major private collectors. The biggest issue dividing archivists and donors is replevin. Often private collectors buy materials in good faith. The need to recover materials should be balanced by concern for maintaining good public relations.

Ron Becker, speaking from the perspective of the manuscripts curator, noted the importance of maintaining working relationships with dealers in three areas: 1) identifying collection needs 2) identifying stolen items 3) programming.

Unfortunately, many repositories do not have the resources to purchase material. For those who do, it is very important to develop a relationship with a reputable dealer. Dealers regularly attend auctions, especially local auctions that archivists may not be aware of. Dealers can also arrange for donations. Reputable dealers are alert and able to identify stolen property. Often dealers are willing to participate in "Appraisal Day" programs that can serve as an outreach tool for the repository.

Both speakers responded to a number of questions. *American Book Prices Current* (online from 1975) was mentioned as the major source of information about past sales. Americana Exchange is another important Web site. Attaching a price to manuscripts is a particularly challenging area because of the difficulty of bridging the gap between monetary and historical value. It was noted that the identification of forgeries required professional expertise. The importance of giving donors a list of licensed appraisers was also noted. The SAA Acquisition and Appraisal Section keep such a list for reference. In response to a question on how to cultivate a relationship with a dealer, it was mentioned that some teach at Rare Book School, which includes courses on manuscripts. The New York Book Fair was recommended as a good way to meet dealers.

At this point, the meeting divided into breakout groups, led by Steering Committee members. Summaries of these discussions are included below.

Collection Development Discussion Group

Members of this group started by introducing themselves and talking a little about the scope of their collections. Members represented regional repositories and those with a national focus.

The group discussed the balance of gifts vs. purchases and the influence eBay, the economy, and *Antiques Roadshow* is having on people's interest in selling their manuscript materials.

The group discussed a number of issues with tax implications, such as split gift/purchases and whether the IRS might frown on such a practice. The group discussed the practice of taking something in as a deposit, which is then donated after death so heirs get the tax deduction.

The group discussed how it seems like the trend is of things appraising high – much higher than expected. What drives the market is what dealers see as valuable – artifactual as opposed to research value. Autographs are a good example.

A question was raised as to whether there is a standard rate that appraisers charge.

Mention was made of the IRS policy that a donation of \$5,000 or less doesn't require a qualified appraisal.

Book fairs were mentioned as a good place to meet sellers and appraisers.

Buying off eBay – eBay mostly offers single items and most of us deal in aggregate. One person mentioned that an FBI cultural properties person told him that there are a high percentage of stolen or forged items for sale on eBay.

Ethics

Topics discussed:

- Is it okay for perform internal appraisals for items donated without appraisal?
- External appraisals are performed for archival gifts and insurance values.
- Replevin: when to do it?
- Collections that can't be unified physically can be unified intellectually through digitization.
- It is difficult to negotiate auctions because collections are divided for optimal profit rather than for intellectual reasons. It is difficult to pursue reunification of collections auctioned because of privacy of auction records
- What is the responsibility of the archivist when it comes to helping a donor accurately identify the value of a collection? Does the obligation differ between historical value and monetary value?
- How do abandoned property laws play into collections without deeds of gift?
- How is it best to deal with another repository that is competing for items? Participants recommended making collecting focus extremely transparent via finding aids, mission statements, and collecting policies.
- What are the implications of deaccessioning items and maybe selling them? One must consider public relations, donor relations, and for what the funds will be used.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Fernanda Perrone
Section Chair

Completed projects/activities

Newsletters

Published three issues on the section website, and publicized them on the archives and section listservs.

Annual meeting

Presented panel on the manuscripts marketplace with William Reese of William Reese Company and Ronald Becker, Head of Special Collections at Rutgers University.

Ongoing projects/activities

Immediate Past Chair Sammie Morris continues to work on the section history. Chair Fernanda Perrone and members of the Steering Committee are continuing to review the survey of the section membership conducted last year to continue identifying topics of high interest to section members for future programs.

New projects/activities***Session endorsements***

We reviewed five session proposals, and endorsed the following:

- “The Giver that Keeps on Giving: Donor Assisted Processing”
- “Design for the Next Larger Context: Exposing Architecture Collections for the Broadest Use”

Other projects

- Updating the section web site by moving content into Drupal and switching to creating PDF files for the newsletter so that they work better with Drupal and are easier to contribute to SAA’s archives
- Posting a brief history of the section on the web site in honor of SAA’s upcoming 75th anniversary
- Created guidelines for future newsletter editors of the section

Diversity initiatives

None at this time

Questions/concerns for Council attention

None at this time