

Museum Archivist

August 2025

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Letter from the outgoing MAS Chair, Laura Uglean Jackson



Laura Uglean Jackson
Digital Archivist, Denver Museum of Nature & Science

As my term as Chair of the Museum Archives Section comes to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on this past year and to thank each of you for the opportunity to serve in this role. While I didn't accomplish all of the goals I had originally set, I do think the Section is still going strong and poised for active participation this upcoming year.

When I started my term, I had high hopes of offering Pop-up presentations quarterly, but was only able to schedule two during the year. I had also wanted to make a more strategic effort to update the [Standards and Best Practices Resource Guide](#), but this completely fell off my radar and still needs updating. Like many of us, I found it hard to balance aspirations with capacity, but I hope this can be revisited in the future.

I'm grateful to the 2024-2025 Steering Committee for the progress we did make and hope it lays the groundwork for continued momentum. I enjoyed working with all of you and am grateful for your time in sustaining this Section's health. It takes real commitment to volunteer on top of the day-to-day demands of our jobs, and I've appreciated your energy and collegiality throughout the year. A sincere thank you to Kelly, Lena, Kim, and Celia. So, what progress did we make?

In March, Al Stanton-Hagan presented on processing exhibition files. The session was well-attended and met with enthusiasm and numerous questions. In July, we held our annual meeting in conjunction with the Science, Health Care, and Technology Committee. Around 70 people attended to hear from two fantastic presenters, Laura Weis and Abigail Guay, who spoke about incorporating archives into exhibitions. A recording of these presentations can be found here: <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/science-technology-and-health-care-section/2025-sthc-mas-joint->

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We also held elections this spring. I’m thrilled to welcome **Madelaine Davis** as our new Newsletter Editor—congratulations, Madelaine! And I’m confident the section is in good hands with **Celia Emmelhainz** stepping into the role of Chair. And, great news- a member came forward to run for vice-chair/chair elect in an off-cycle election. More information will be shared as SAA facilitates this in the upcoming weeks.

Thank you again for the honor of serving as Chair. It’s a joy to be part of this smart, resourceful, and generous community.

Warmly,

Laura Uglean Jackson

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Dear MAS newsletter reader:

If you would like to include an article, news, or highlight piece to the upcoming Winter 2025 newsletter, please email saamasnewsletter@gmail.com for more information or pitch us an idea. We rely on this community to keep the newsletter engaging and informative. We look forward to learning more about our museum archives community. Enjoy reading the Summer 2025 MAS newsletter!

Letter from the incoming MAS Chair, Celia Emmelhainz

Welcome to another year with the SAA!

I'm excited to be coming on as chair of this Section, and particularly want to thank our most recent Past Chair, Laura Uglean-Jackson, for her invaluable work in building community over the past year, keeping online events going, and shepherding our section through election season. Thanks also to Kelly Schulz, our outgoing newsletter editor, for the vitality she has brought to the newsletter.

We're excited to welcome in Madelaine Davis as our incoming newsletter editor, and are working on lining up an incoming vice chair as well.

This has been a challenging year for many of us, with cuts to grant funding for museums, uncertainty for federal affiliates, and shifts in political support for urgent issues in archives.

For many of us with materials related to North American Indigenous communities, we're also waiting on results from SAA's Archival Repatriation Committee. Many of us continue to adjust our archival practices, particularly in what we post online, to the changing realities around shared stewardship and data sovereignty in archival materials.

MAS anticipates continuing to host pop-up web presentations on topics related to museum archives, and to build community this year; please contact me if there's something you would like to host or present on.

I'm looking forward to serving as your section chair over the next year. Don't be afraid to reach out to your [section officers](#) if you have questions, or ideas for events you'd like to lead for the Museum Archives Section.

Best,

Celia Emmelhainz

Senior Archivist, Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology.



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Archaeology & Ethnology

News from the Museum Archives Section

Museum Archives Section Annual Business Meeting, July 23, 2025

The Museum Archive Section hosted its 2025 virtual business meeting on July 23 as part of the ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2025 annual meeting. This was a joint meeting with the Science, Technology, and Health Care (STHC) section. The meeting included SAA Council updates from both sections' Council Liason, Eira Tansey, and business portions for both sections.

The meeting also included the following two presentations on the topic of incorporating archives into exhibits:

Laura Weis, PhD

Project Archivist, Bernard Becker Medical Library at Washington University in St. Louis

Laura shared how she endeavored to convey both the breadth and depth of WashU's contributions to the evolution of computers in medicine, as well as how she approached communicating scientific, technological, and medical concepts to a non-specialist audience.

Abigail Guay

Director of Library and Archives at Crystal Bridges Art Museum

As part of a strategic vision and plan for the library and archives, Abigail successfully advocated for the inclusion of library and archival collections materials (presented and interpreted on the same level as artwork) in every permanent collection gallery.

If you were unable to join, you can view the recording on the STHC section microsite and review the meeting minutes on the MAS microsite. Both are linked here:

[Watch the STHC and MAS joint business meeting recording](#)

(Note: Due to a delay in recording, the STHC business portion of the meeting is missing.)

[View the annual section meeting round-up](#)

Special thank you to MAS secretary, Kim Bradshaw for her detailed meeting minutes!

Section Steering Committee

Museum Archives Section Steering Committee 2025-2026

Celia Emmelhainz	Chair	Harvard's Peabody Museum of Archaeology & Ethnology
Kim Bradshaw	Secretary	Memphis Brooks Museum of Art
Lena Hansen	Web Liaison	Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory
Madelaine Davis	Newsletter Editor	LSU School of Information Studies

The Steering Committee would like to thank Laura Uglean Jackson, outgoing Chair; and Kelly Schulz, outgoing Newsletter Editor, for all of your hard work!

Award News - Kathleen Williams



Kathleen Williams was recognized at the 2025 annual meeting of NAGARA (National Association of Government Archives and Record Administrators) with its outstanding contribution award in archives and records management as well as to the association itself. Williams served for 30 years in government archives (10 at the Smithsonian Institution, 12 at the National Archives, and 8 at National Gallery of Art) before retiring in May 2024 as Chief of Archives at the gallery. Prior to her federal service, Williams held archivist positions at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston and the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. She was named a Fellow of SAA in 2015.

Williams attended the NAGARA annual meeting in Oklahoma City in July to receive the award at its opening luncheon. She is pictured here with Caryn Wojcik, senior records analyst of Michigan, who nominated her for the award.

Processing Ink-Drawn Moments of Early MoMA History

By Rachel Garbade, Assistant Archivist, The Museum of Modern Art

Almost three years ago I began a somewhat unusual position in MoMA's Archives, Library, and Research Collections department. As Assistant Archivist, I have been processing the wide-ranging and materially diverse backlog, rather than one large collection—as is more typical of contract-based archival work. To date, my work has impacted forty-three existing collections and created thirteen new ones, comprising both institutional records and personal papers. This includes accessions to directors' papers, exhibition and department records, artists', art dealers', and art collectors' papers, curators' and other staff members' files, and so much more. Overwhelmingly, these accretions come in the form of correspondence, but also include photographs, exhibition ephemera, committee meeting minutes, reports, clippings, inventories, invoices, research, manuscripts, and more. Occasionally, an unprocessed collection comes across my desk that defies the norm of archival records. This was certainly the case with a portfolio of cartoon drawings penned by Jere Abbott, MoMA's first associate director, donated to the archives by the son of another early staff member Mary Sands Thompson. This collection of almost 140 drawings ended up being a treasure trove of small moments that captured the start-up energy of MoMA's early years.

Jere Abbott was born in 1897. In the mid 1920s, while studying physics at Harvard University, he met Alfred H. Barr, Jr., who was working on his PhD in art history and curating exhibitions at the university's Fogg Museum, still a few years out from his role as founding director of The Museum of Modern Art. Barr introduced Abbott to the field of art history, ultimately changing the trajectory of his studies and career path. In the subsequent years, Abbott studied art history in Europe and at Princeton University before establishing the Department of Fine Arts at Wesleyan University in 1929. Abbott then worked under Barr at MoMA as the first associate director from 1929 to 1932. Mary Sands Thompson (then known as Mary Sands) was born in 1896 and received her Bachelor of Arts from Radcliffe College in 1917. Also part of the Harvard community, she was the secretary for Edward Forbes, director of the Fogg. Abbott and Barr likely heard her lectures when she substituted for Fogg associate director Paul J. Sach in his museum course. And given her experience in the director's office of a museum, they recruited her to join MoMA. From 1929 to 1931 she served as the Museum's first executive secretary, joining Barr and Abbott among the first five staff members on MoMA's payroll. The names of several other MoMA associates and early employees appear in the cartoons,



"The Director arranging the [Gaston] Lachaise exhibit." (Here, Alfred H. Barr, Jr. is depicted by only his iconic glasses.) Jere Abbott Drawings, I.1. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.



“Mr. Ross exhausted after a day of it.” Jere Abbott Drawings, I.4.
The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.



“Oh clap, clap your hands and shout out with glee, for Christmas is coming and happy are we.” Jere Abbott Drawings, I.4. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

Cary Ross, curator Philip Johnson, architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock, and art historian (and as of 1930 Alfred Barr’s wife) Margaret Scolari Barr. The drawings suggest a camaraderie and jovial office culture present at MoMA.

When processing a new collection, I first survey the material and then research the main characters to prepare for writing the contextual notes of the finding aid. Sent from Jere Abbott to Mary Sands Thompson, the cartoons were almost all ink drawings, but their sizes ranged from a business card to a 10 x 14 inch sheet of paper. Their contents captured snapshots of daily museum life, such as an artwork arriving from Europe, exhibition installations, a business lunch, or scenes from director Alfred H. Barr, Jr.’s summers on the Adriatic Sea. There were also more general greetings, such as Christmas wishes, a report of a day spent at the beach, and three separate cow-related drawings (perhaps an inside joke between the two?). The drawings’ subject matter ran the gamut, minimal in their design and almost always accompanied by a short, punchy caption and date. (Any archivist knows how thrilling it is to find recorded dates while processing!) The captions frequently added a humorous touch to the composition that made flipping through the collection uniquely amusing.

After reviewing the material and placing everything in acid-free folders, I began the research phase of my work. The drawings were largely dated from 1930 to 1932, so I knew Abbott’s casual artworks were products of MoMA’s early



“Research Dept. M. of M. A. trying to find out what Mary Sands + J. Abbott did at the Museum!” Jere Abbott Drawings, I.1. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

years, after its founding in 1929. Luckily, this collection was neither Abbott’s or Sands Thompson’s first archival collection. I was able to consult finding aids at [Smith College Archives](#) and at the [Schlesinger Library at Harvard Radcliffe Institute](#) to learn more about both people. I also consulted Russell Lynes’ book, *Good Old Modern: An Intimate Portrait of The Museum of Modern Art* book, an unofficial historical account of MoMA from 1929 to 1972. From these sources, Abbott’s and Sands Thompson’s identities began to take shape alongside the ink drawings exchanged during what must have been an exuberant friendship. Throughout the article are a selection of highlights from this collection, now called Jere Abbott Drawings, unique for its content, and a true pleasure to process.

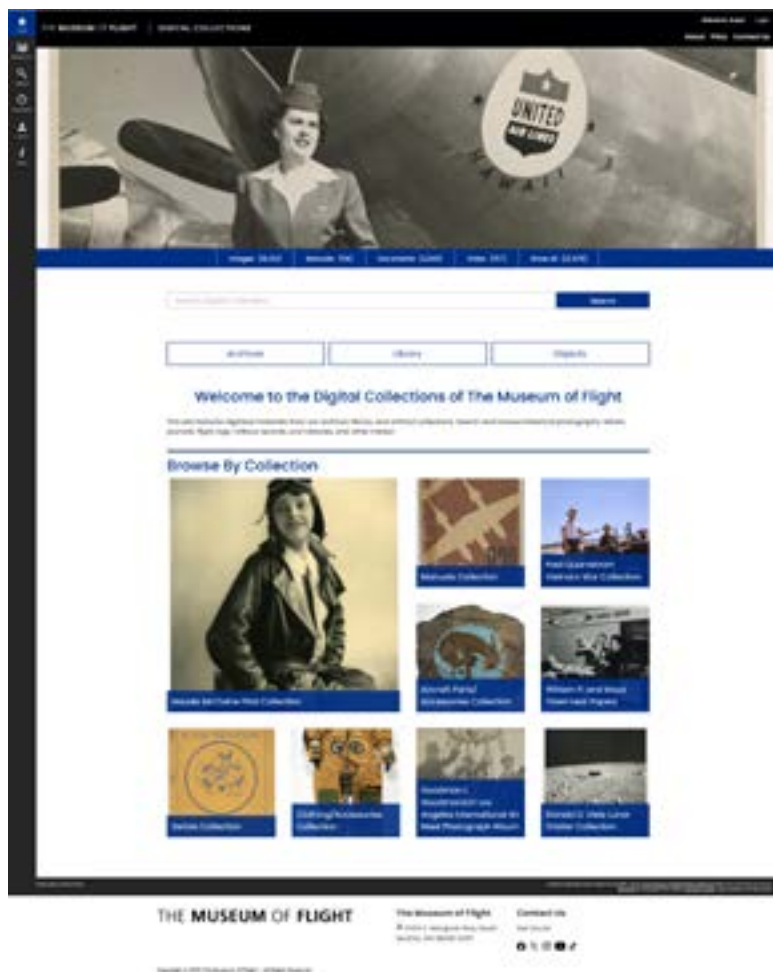
Museum of Flight Relaunches Digital Collections Site!

By Ali Lane, Digital Asset Coordinator, The Museum of Flight

The Museum of Flight is beyond excited to announce the relaunch of our Digital Collections site! The site address is unchanged from before—digitalcollections.museumofflight.org—but the look, feel, and structure have been completely revamped. It is now easier than ever to search and browse our vast collection of digital materials, ranging from photographs to flight logs, manuals to maps, and oral histories to 3D objects.

The first iteration of our Digital Collections site was launched in 2017 and, at the time, primarily showcased our World War I materials and our oral histories with American Fighter Aces. With over 5,000 photographs and documents and almost 200 hours of digitized audio, it was a solid resource on military aviation in the first half of the 20th century. But we were just getting started! By the beginning of 2025, our site boasted a whopping 25,000 digital records, totaling over 20 terabytes of data and covering a broad span of topics from across the full run of aviation history, including commercial aviation, Pacific Northwest aviation, aerospace history, and women in aeronautics.

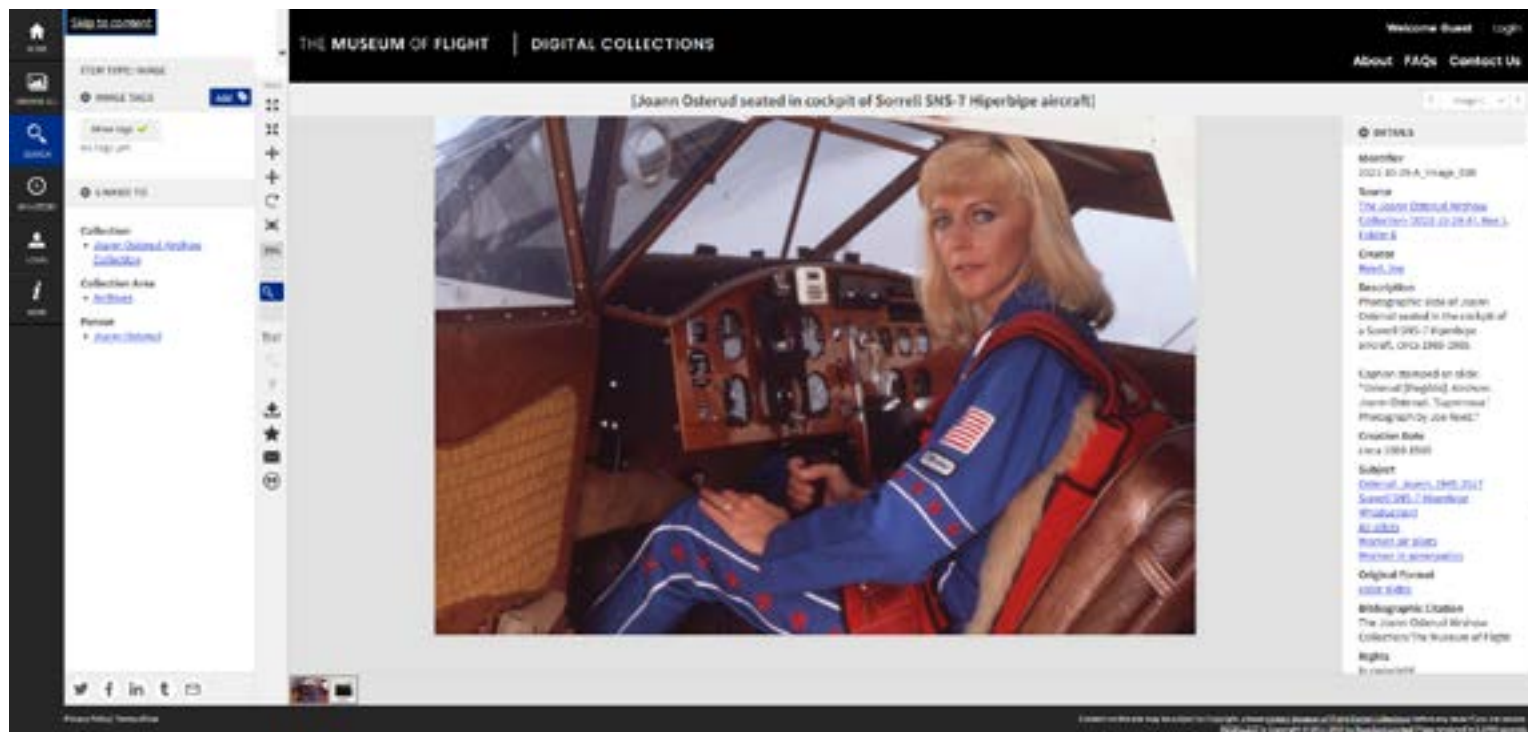
Unfortunately, we soon realized that we had become victims of our own success—our mighty output taxed our poor web server, which grew increasingly sluggish as it struggled to index and search such a huge amount of data.



Screenshot of digital collections website homepage.

After consulting with data experts at LYRASIS, we decided the best course of action was to find a new content management system to replace our current platform (a hodge-podge of homegrown databases coupled with the Omeka web-publishing tool). We ultimately chose Recollect, a robust CMS that functions as both a back-end database for managing digital assets and a front-end search portal.

For the past six months, we've been hard at work transferring our data and building this new, enhanced version of our Digital Collections website. As of July 2nd, the site is now live and freely available to all. We would love if you stopped by for a look! Visit the link (<https://digitalcollections.museumofflight.org/>) to browse, search, and explore the many, many treasures in our amazing collection. I guarantee you'll find something new each time you visit the site!



Screenshot of record from digital collections website.

Blueprinting Glencairn

By Gregory A. Jackson, Archivist, Bryn Athyn Historic District/Academy of the New Church



Glencairn, built between 1928 and 1939 in Bryn Athyn, Pennsylvania, was once the home of Raymond and Mildred (Glenn) Pitcairn and their children. The building now serves as a not-for-profit museum of religious art and history. Collections include ancient Egyptian, ancient Greek and Roman, medieval Christian, Islamic, Asian, and Indigenous American art and artifacts.

All images are courtesy of the Glencairn Museum.

Glencairn Museum was originally constructed as the home of Raymond and Mildred Glenn Pitcairn to house and display their extensive collection of medieval art. Much of this collection had been acquired to serve as reference material for the artisans working on the nearby Bryn Athyn Cathedral. Construction began in 1928, with Pitcairn envisioning the residence not simply as a private home, but as a contextualized setting for the art – a vision reminiscent of George Grey Barnard’s Cloisters, now The Met Cloisters in New York¹. Initially conceived as a modest Romanesque or early Gothic studio “to incorporate my little collection,”² the project evolved into a monumental Romanesque-inspired stone structure. Dominating the surrounding landscape from a prominent hilltop, Glencairn featured a tower, nearly 150-feet tall with commanding views of Bryn Athyn Cathedral and the surrounding area. Despite lacking formal architectural training, Raymond Pitcairn – having gained experience overseeing the construction of the Cathedral – personally directed the design and construction process and funded the project. The name “Glencairn” reflects the union of the Glenn and Pitcairn families. Construction was completed in 1939.

The building served as the Pitcairn family residence until the death of Mildred Pitcairn in 1979 (Raymond had passed in 1966). In 1982, following the family’s donation of the estate and its collections, Glencairn was opened to the public as a museum operated by the Academy of the New Church. In 2008, Glencairn became a contributing structure within the Bryn Athyn Historic District, which was designated a National Historic Landmark.³

The Bryn Athyn Historic District Archives at Glencairn Museum houses a significant collection of original architectural materials related to the construction of Glencairn. The collection includes approximately 1,600 architectural drawings in blueprint, linen, blueline, and tissue formats. This number does not include additional plans related to later work in the 1980s or to auxiliary buildings such as the original heating plant or pump house.

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1. Husband, Timothy B. “CREATING THE CLOISTERS.” The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin 70, no. 4 (2013): 1–48. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24413280>.

2. E. Bruce Glenn, Glencairn: The Story of a Home (Bryn Athyn, PA: Academy of the New Church, 1980), [p. 15].

3. The Bryn Athyn Historic District was designated a National Historic Landmark on October 6, 2008. Contributing buildings are Glencairn Museum®, Cairnwood Estate®, Bryn Athyn Cathedral, and Cairncrest. For further information see <https://www.bahistoricdistrict.org/>



Images 1,2,3. Original storage containers, stored drawings, and roll-end damage.

The drawings were likely first cataloged in the 1970s by a volunteer. They were tightly rolled and stored in cardboard containers (Image 1, which were housed in the garden house of Cairnwood Estate—then serving as an archive and exhibition space for the papers of John and Gertrude (Starkey) Pitcairn, Raymond’s parents. Over the decades, limited access and improper handling led to significant damage: drawings became torn, soiled, brittle, or otherwise compromised (Images 2 and 3). Many were in such fragile condition that handling them posed a risk of further deterioration.



Image 4 Drawing missing a large section, stabilized by backing with Japanese paper, adhered with wheat starch paste.



Image 5 Newly purchased flat files.

In 2022, Glencairn undertook an 18-month renovation project that included replacement of the electrical power supply and wiring, much of the buildings plumbing, a new heating plant, air conditioning, and adding an upgraded emergency generator. As many of the electrical cableways, conduits, and plumbing system pipes were concealed behind concrete or stone walls, access to the original blueprints was critical. To locate and interpret the systems, many drawings needed to be unrolled, repaired, and stabilized. Some required only flattening; others suffered from extensive damage such as tears, folds, or missing sections (Image 4). Conservation efforts prioritized stabilization sufficient for safe handling and digital imaging. Japanese paper in varying thicknesses and reversible wheat starch paste were used to repair tears and reinforce weak fold lines. While this work was labor-intensive, the goal was not full restoration but stabilization for documentation and storage.

Recognizing the vulnerability of the collection, it was determined that the drawings should not be returned to their original storage. Six sets of large flat files were purchased to serve as new housing. The conservation and flattening of the drawings were incorporated into the archives’ strategic plan.

Following consultations with the building manager, director, and the strategic planning committee, the project expanded in scope to include digitization and metadata indexing to reduce the need for physical handling. At the same time, it was also decided that minimal digital processing would be done, showing the drawings in their original condition.

With support from the Museum's graphic design team, each roll was flattened, repaired, and photographed. Drawing numbers were digitally placed on the images, maintaining the original numbering convention.

The original file list, compiled decades earlier, contained numerous errors—unnumbered drawings, misidentified sheets, and inconsistent descriptions. The decision was made to abandon the legacy finding aid and construct a new digital index from the ground up. Each drawing was assigned a unique entry in a standardized spreadsheet including file number, format, title or description, physical dimensions, and digital file size. Descriptive terms were standardized to allow users – including museum staff, contractors, and the building manager – to sort drawings by category (e.g., elevations, floor plans, sections, or details), minimizing time spent searching for specific documents.

The ongoing preservation and digitization of Glencairn's architectural drawings reflects the Museum's continuing commitment to stewardship and accessibility. By stabilizing, rehousing, and indexing these materials, Glencairn ensures that its architectural legacy remains a vital resource for conservation, research, and public engagement for years to come.

50 Years On: Remembering *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China*

By Tara Laver, Senior Archivist, The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art

Fifty years ago this past April, *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China* opened at the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri. The exhibit was an important international diplomatic event that illustrated a belief in the power of art to bring together peoples and nations.

After opening in Paris in 1973, the exhibit traveled to London, Vienna, Stockholm, Toronto, and the National Gallery in Washington, D.C., before coming to the Nelson-Atkins and continuing to the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco. Its showing in the U.S. resulted from the thawing of relations between the United States and the People's Republic of China that had begun during President Richard Nixon's administration.

Comprised of 385 textiles, bronze and ceramic vessels, pieces of statuary, tools, and other objects discovered in excavations carried out by the Chinese government 1949-1972, *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China* brought people in the United States into contact with Chinese civilization in an unprecedented way. The artifacts illustrated over 500,000 years of Chinese history, the material culture of daily life, and the development of various creative techniques.

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Crowds waiting on the north side of the Nelson-Atkins Building to enter *The Exhibition of the Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China*. During the exhibit's run, April 20-June 8, 1975, over 289,000 guests from 50 states and 13 countries visited the show. The wait to enter could be two to three hours.
(RG 30, Spencer Art Reference Library Records/
Photo by John Lamberton)

The exhibition proved to be a seminal event in the history of the Nelson-Atkins. It was the museum's first "blockbuster" exhibit and highlighted the gallery on the world stage. An unprecedented heavy lift, it required the museum to stretch in all areas, hire large numbers of temporary, specialized staff, and employ public relations as never before. At the same time, it garnered much interest and engagement within the Kansas City region and boosted civic pride. Indeed, *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China* remains a touchstone and often-cited collective memory for many of our long-time visitors. It's seldom that I speak to a group in Kansas City that contains people of a certain age that somebody doesn't share that they saw that exhibit and how it has stayed with them. In addition, the exhibit is now a topic of scholarly interest, and I've received numerous requests from researchers asking if the archives from the exhibit had been digitized.



Children viewing *The Exhibition of the Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China*, 1975.

(RG 30, Spencer Art Reference Library Records/
Photo by John Lamberton)

The significance of the exhibit for relations with China, Kansas City, and the Nelson-Atkins and continued local and scholarly interest in it led me to organize a multi-faceted observance of the 50th anniversary of the showing of *The Archaeological Finds of the People's Republic of China*. This programming included an exhibition, presentation, and creating a digital collection of over 7000 pages of related records from across three archival collections. The effort was funded by donor Jeffrey Anthony in honor of his mother Trudy Anthony, who had been a docent at the time and was one of those people for whom the exhibition was a core connection with the museum.

Timed to coincide as much as possible with the run of the original exhibit, the 50th anniversary display, which was located in the museum library's reading room, opened April 10, 2025, and ended June 2. Organized into sections on the diplomatic context and the relationships between Nelson-Atkins staff and Chinese representatives, the complexities of its planning, promotion, and installation, and the local and regional reception of the exhibit, it featured photographs,

correspondence, ephemera, memos, publicity, a map of the exhibit, and the conservator's copy of the catalogue with his notes on how to install hundreds of objects. Additional photographs were available for viewing on a mounted iPad, and related publications comprised a book display.

Next, I teamed up with my colleague Curator, Chinese Art Ling-en Lu, to offer a public program. In her presentation, she highlighted selected objects in the exhibit, other diplomatically relevant exhibits around the time, and the Nelson-Atkins curators involved, while I covered and expanded on the themes in the exhibit. After our presentations, audience members who attended the 1975 exhibit shared their memories. We had included that they would have this opportunity in the publicity for the program and that they would be recorded for the archives. Many people came with notes! Their enthusiasm and memories confirmed the benefit of acknowledging the 50th anniversary, and now we have their experiences on the record.

Finally, the digitized exhibit records are now available in Internet Archive, <https://bit.ly/456JCWg>. Drawn from three record groups, the collection includes correspondence related to all aspects of the exhibit, public relations materials, installation and event photographs, tours, reports, grants, publicity, articles, statistics, education-related materials, and logistics and planning documents. Materials are presented at the folder level, and can be accessed directly in Internet Archive or linked from records in ArchivesSpace (collection level: <https://bit.ly/4m2yjV3>; file level: <https://bit.ly/3Jj3aOA>). As noted earlier, donor funds funded the overall project, including outsourcing digitization. Posters and oversized items digitized in-house as well as related audio-visual recordings will be added soon, helping to form a comprehensive archive of this exhibit that had significant international diplomatic implications and looms large in the history of the Nelson-Atkins.

Developing and Sustaining an Archival Volunteer Program

By Akio Lis, ANA Library Manager

The American Numismatic Association (ANA) is a national organization with the goal of supporting numismatic education for its membership and collectors, generally. The [Dwight N. Manley Numismatic Library \(online catalog\)](#) is its repository of both published materials (books, auction catalogs, periodicals, etc.) and historic archives, and provides research services to the public and circulation services to its members. Upon accepting the role of Library Manager for the organization in 2021 I realized that, to provide the greatest access to the historic archives, the ANA Library would need more staff hours than were available. This led to the development of a volunteer program that provides hundreds of hours of additional work each year with a majority of these hours supporting the archive collection.

Justification for Creating a Volunteer Program

The ANA Library has had, at various times in its recent history, between one and four staff members, with staff often assigned duties outside of the library. Staff includes those working full time and part time schedules, with varying education levels in a variety of fields. When I started as ANA Library Manager, I was the sole member of the library staff; we since added a part-time assistant in 2024.

The holdings are specialized in the field of numismatics (the study of monetary objects and their history) and includes many rare and self-published documents. While organizing and cataloging archives is reserved for professional staff, much work can be completed by volunteers with staff oversight. Scanning the archives for digital presentation is a task largely covered by the volunteers due to the repetitive nature and the time involved. This makes unique materials available to researchers, many of which are stakeholders including donors and board members.

Preparations for Volunteer Program

To develop a reliable volunteer program, one must prepare as though the volunteers are a standard portion of the organization staff. This includes determining what tasks could be done with minimal training and oversight, could be done in multiple sittings, and would cause limited or no damage the library holdings if an error occurred. Tasks are then organized by complexity and a training schedule is established that each volunteer passes through to determine relevant skills and abilities. ANA's volunteer screening process includes a tour of the library facilities with an informal interview including questions that give insight to past work and education experience, volunteer work interests, and likely schedule.

Volunteer Recruitment

Recruiting volunteers includes identifying communities where recruitment will be successful and meeting with potential volunteers to describe the program and organizational needs. One must communicate openly and clearly with potential community partners about the work needed and the rewards and pitfalls of the program. Creating a list of volunteer tasks and allowing flexible volunteer schedules has led to the recruitment of several regularly scheduled volunteers and many more occasional volunteers.

The first organizations contacted were local coin club and included current and past volunteers and the ANA also has many local members who contribute time. Other identified groups that could contribute to the volunteer pool include high school and college students and those with an interest in archives and library science, and retired individuals with experience in history or library and information science. Although these communities have not been fully utilized as the current volunteer pool is near capacity, presentations regarding ANA materials and educational and research opportunities are prepared for use at community centers for future recruitment.

One must consider certain consequences of recruiting from communities that an organization has naturally close ties with. Some who express interest in volunteer work may realize they cannot commit time to volunteer or do not have an interest in performing the tasks volunteers are given. One must be prepared to interact with these individuals comfortably and know the rejection was not due to a fault of either party, but a mismatch in abilities and/or expectations.

Recruiting organization staff should also be prepared to give back in some form to community groups. This will vary depending on the needs of the organization and can take the form of providing materials, expertise, or reciprocal time. I choose to attend the Colorado Springs Coin Club monthly meetings, volunteer for occasional events, and participate as a club board member. Other ANA staff participate by presenting at meetings and joining as a member.

While recruiting and training volunteers will take significant time, long term volunteers can provide hundreds of hours of work that would not otherwise be available and require less oversight as their experience increases. The ANA Library has several regularly scheduled volunteers and many more occasional volunteers. In the four years that the Library volunteer program has existed in its current form, volunteers have contributed over 1700 hours (almost 650 hours in 2024), helping to start the program to digitize archives, and provide work that allows the professional staff to increase the proportion of time on organizing and cataloging archives. Some volunteers with a background in archives and data entry have contributed to cataloging materials; the time to review and adjust on the part of the professional staff is less than completing initial catalog work. In one case, a volunteer completing a Masters in Archive and Records Administration program provided catalog work while gaining practical experience in an archive.

Conclusions

The challenges caused by limited staff funding in archive programs are many and can decrease the information available to researchers. These limits can be partially off set by the recruitment and training of dedicated volunteers, whose work can lead to the implementation of projects and supplement current staff work. While volunteer programs require planning and training time on the part of archive staff, long term volunteers will contribute far more time than they use in training efforts and allow access to materials that would otherwise remain hidden. The ANA Library staff would like to thank the volunteers for their work on the many projects and events. Their efforts are essential to this institution's continued progress in providing new and unique research materials.

Reach out to Us!

saamasnewsletter@gmail.com

Visit our page to stay informed on all MAS news and programming:

<https://www2.archivists.org/groups/museum-archives-section>

Official SAA Museum Archives Email List

To connect via the official MAS email listserv, login or create a login for SAA Connect: <https://connect.archivists.org/home>. Once logged in, you can select to join the email list.



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