

Museum Archivist

August 2022

Summer 2022, Issue 32, Volume 1

A Message From the MAS Outgoing Chair, Katrina O'Brien



It has been a great pleasure to be part of the MAS leadership over the past five years, first as Newsletter Editor and then as Vice/Chair, and then accepting a second term as we navigated through COVID--as did Tara and Shannon, who both have done an excellent job. In that time, whether through members surveys, working group activities, in-person introductions, or online inquiries, I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of you and with that, steering a section with the focus on meeting the needs and interests of its members.

During that time, I moved from Head of Archives & Collections at World of Speed Motorsports Museum to Director of Programs & Services at Oregon Military Museum. Building and growing museum archives programs continues to be a source of pride and growth, and I continue to look to and support MAS and its members in museum archives programs and professional development. Last year brought new blood with the addition of Janeen and Jenna. While Shannon and I are taking our leave, Tara has stepped up as the incoming Vice/Chair candidate. I am excited to hand over the reins to these women along with the newest members of the MAS leadership. Thank you for allowing me to be part of your section leadership. It has been an honor and a pleasure.

~Katrina O'Brien, Director of Programs and Services, Oregon Military Museum

A Message from the MAS Incoming Chair, Jenna Stout



As the incoming Chair for 2022/2023, I'm excited to serve our vibrant community of museum archival workers. I'm still relatively new to the museum archives field. In the spring of 2019, I transitioned from working in a local government archives to the Museum Archivist position at the Saint Louis Art Museum. The Museum Archives Section proved to be an invaluable resource as I navigated through the unfamiliar terrain of a museum archives setting. I spent much of my first year referring almost daily to the Museum Archives Section Guidelines. During this past year, I've had the privilege to meet, work, and learn alongside colleagues serving on the steering committee.

As I look to this next year, I would like to see the Museum Archives Section offer more opportunities for members to engage through various formats. The Museum Archives Section has weathered through much since the Museum Archives Roundtable first met in August 1986. The last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic though have taken a toll on all archival workers and the burnout is palatable. It's my hope that the MAS can continue to provide a forum for professional dialogue outside the environs of our museum spaces. Returning and new leadership will be seeking input on how to best serve membership needs. I look forward to seeing where this year takes us!

~ Jenna Stout, Museum Archivist, Saint Louis Art Museum

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Final Letter from the MAS Standards and Best Practices Working Group

Dear Colleagues,

We usually write this update from the Museum Archives Section's Standards and Best Practices Working Group in the form of a report, but, at this moment, it feels most appropriate in the form of a letter. We are writing to each and every one of you!

This Working Group was established about a decade ago to further activate our Section and to work toward addressing issues in the field that were important to us. We worked hard to develop our online resource guide and developed an annual symposium to make sure that we had time on the SAA program to discuss and address topics of importance to museum archivists.

Most recently, we revised the Museum Archives Guidelines, which were originally developed in 1998, and approved and endorsed by SAA Council in 2003. After a multi-year revision process in which many members of the Section took part, the updated Guidelines were endorsed by SAA Council in February of this year. This was a major endeavor we were proud to complete.

Based on the Working Group's activities, annual topical investigations, and member participation, we also endeavored to create a new publication. *Museum Archives: Practice, Issues, Advocacy*, edited by Rachel Chatalbash, Susan Hernandez, and Megan Schwenke, and featuring chapters authored by a number of Section members, will be released by SAA this year.

Thank you to everyone who made it possible to achieve our projects and initiatives over the past ten years and who helped us grow—as individual archivists and as a field of museum archivists. You have always been wonderful partners, participants, advocates, and supporters. This Working Group has enriched our professional lives and those of our Section, and for that we are immensely grateful. We look forward to passing our Working Group's torch and seeing everything that is coming next.

Wishing everyone all the best,

Rachel Chatalbash and Megan Schwenke, Working Group Co-Chairs

Increasing Visibility of Emerging and Underrepresented Artists through NARs

By Andrea Belair, Library Project Specialist for Collections Management, Clark Art Institute

I am in a grant-funded, term position as the Library Project Specialist for Collections Management at the art library of the Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute (aka “the Clark”) in Williamstown, Massachusetts. One of the primary duties of my position is to create NARs, or Name Authority Records. My current position was developed by Andrea Puccio, the Collections Development Librarian, at the Clark’s library; its purpose is to identify and repair some of the gaps in the collection here, since it has been dominated by classically-trained, Western-centric male artists for most of its existence.

For many years, I have worked professionally in archival roles, so it has been interesting to see how that work informs and intersects with other areas of librarianship. All that I need to create a NAR is enough information to distinguish one creator from another. Through NACO, a cooperative program within the Program for Cooperative Cataloging, organizations contribute to the Name Authority File which is held and authorized by the Library of Congress. Participants of NACO create NARs through a submission process. Once entered into the Library of Congress, these authority records become LCSH standards and can be used by catalogers across the globe and accessed most via their website. Below is a screenshot of a NAR being created for the artist and quiltmaker Mozell Benson, who is not yet in the Library of Congress authority file. Building this record starts the process, and Mozell Benson will be assigned a LCSH authority heading once this record is approved.

The screenshot shows a MARC record creation interface. At the top, it says 'ARN NEW'. Below that is a table of fields with their respective values and codes. The fields are: Rec.stat (n), Entered (20220622), Replaced, Type (z), Upd.status (a), Enc.ly (n), Source (c), Roman (checkbox), Ref.status (n), Mod.rec (checkbox), Name.use (a), Govt.app (checkbox), Auth.status (a), Subj (a), Subj.use (a), Series (n), Auth.ref (a), Geo.subd (n), Ser.use (b), Ser.num (n), Name (a), Subdiv.to (n), Rules (z). Below the table is a list of MARC fields with their values: 040 | MWICA #b eng #e rda #c MWICA, 046 | #f 1934 #2 edtf, 100 1 | Benson, Mozell, 370 | Lee County (Ala.) #2 naf, 374 | Artists #a Quiltmakers #2 lcsh, 670 | Signs and symbols, 1993: #b page 1 (Mozell Benson; artist and quiltmaker; born in 1934 in Lee County, Alabama).

Mozell Benson is a quiltmaker, yet her name does not appear in the Library of Congress authority file at the time of writing this article. Once added, her name will be available as an authorized heading for catalogers across the globe, and it will be searchable. It can be attached to other records that might hold her work, and it will increase visibility for her as an artist, as well as allow proper credit to be assigned to her as an artist and creator.

NARs can be harvested and used for other library catalogs and ILL systems, but they also have huge implications for Wikidata, SNAC, and other linked data projects. With the understanding of the possible intersections of NARs with archival work, I thought it might be helpful for archivists to understand a bit more about them and their potential to intersect with parallel projects through linked data. I hope that over the course of this year I will have created authority records that other institutions will use, which will increase the visibility and exposure of many of these lesser-known artists so that they might receive proper copyright credit for their creations or be rewarded with more recognition for their work.

(NEWSLETTER CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE)

Museum of Modern Art Reprocesses the Curt Valentin Papers

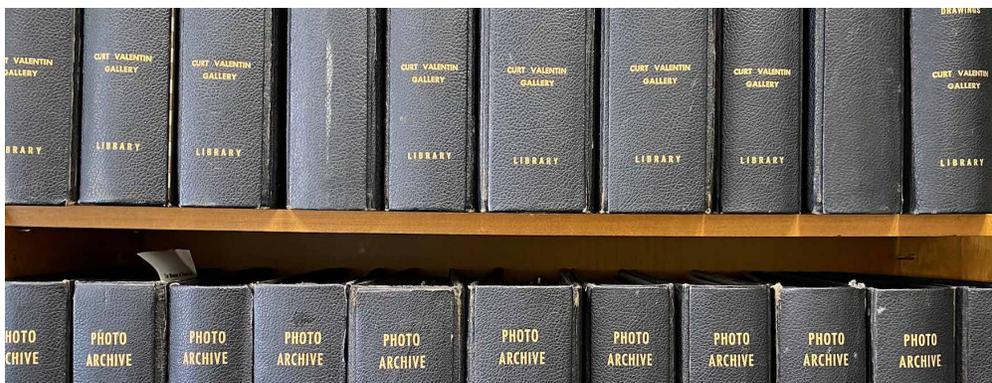
By Meagan Connolly, Assistant Archivist, Museum of Modern Art

The Museum of Modern Art is excited to announce the completion of the reprocessing project of the Curt Valentin Papers. The Curt Valentin Gallery was pivotal to the mid-century spread of European modern art to American collections and its records are now fully described and available to scholars for the first time.

Curt Valentin was a highly respected German-Jewish art dealer and gallerist born in 1902 in Hamburg, Germany. He worked at the Buchholz Gallery in Hamburg for 3 years before emigrating to the US in 1937 where he opened a gallery under the same name in New York City. During this time, he became an instrumental supporter of artists deemed “degenerate” by the Nazis such as Max Beckmann, Paul Klee, and E.L. Kirchner. He was also close friends with Alfred H. Barr, founding director of the MoMA, who aided him in gaining his US citizenship in 1942. In 1951 he renamed his establishment the Curt Valentin Gallery but in 1954 Valentin died abruptly of a heart attack while visiting artist Marino Marini in Italy, and the gallery closed soon after, in 1955. Many of the artworks in the MoMA collection today were acquired through the efforts of Valentin.

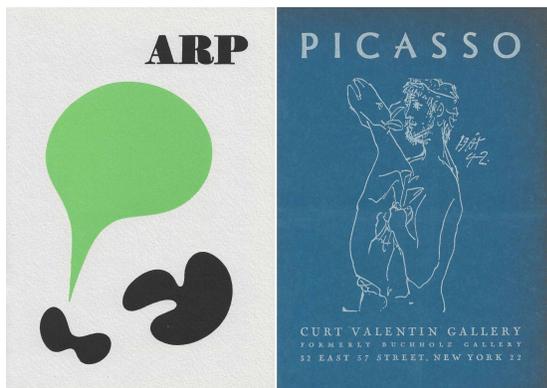
The Curt Valentin Papers were given to MoMA in 1956 in two parts: paper records of the gallery which went to the library, and extensive photograph albums of artworks sold and exhibited at the gallery, which went to the Office of Rights and Reproductions (which maintained MoMA’s photo archive). The paper records have always been available to the public but have lacked proper description and housing, making them difficult to navigate for both staff and researchers. The photo albums were never readily available or promoted as a research resource. Ever since the photo albums were given to the archives the reprocessing of the papers and albums to reunite them as a single collection has been a top priority.

Binders that previously housed Valentin’s personal photo archive.



Binders that previously housed Valentin’s personal photo archive. Courtesy Museum of Modern Art

The paper records include correspondence, exhibition catalogs, and business records, and span 25 linear feet. Valentin’s personal photo albums represents a very significant collection of object photography in the 1940’s and 50’s. The albums are split into two categories: the first being works specifically exhibited by Valentin, and the second a general collection of artworks by artists he represented. This will be the first time these albums will be fully described and officially available for public research.

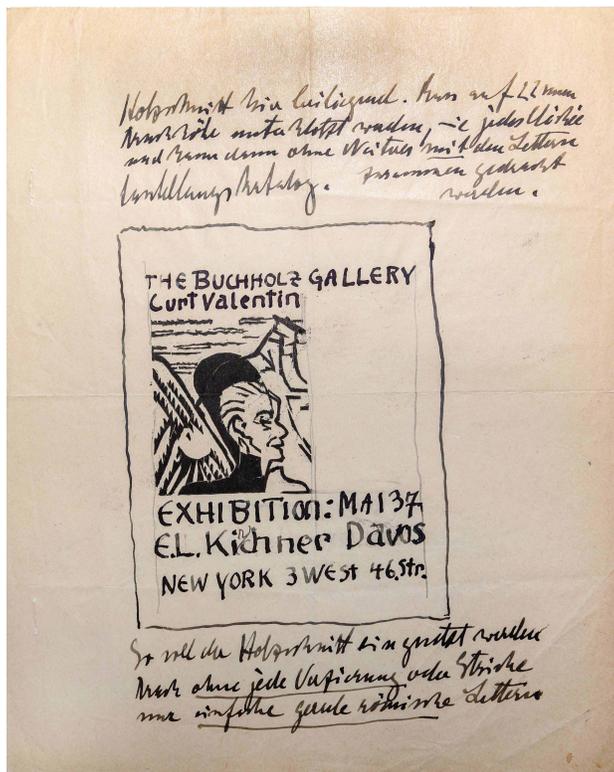


Curt Valentin Papers, [I.3] [I.166]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York

A major highlight of this collection are the exhibition catalogues. Valentin made original exhibition catalogs for the 185 exhibitions held at his Gallery, and this collection has 180 of these. This series of catalogs is also able to build upon the substantial collection already held in the MoMA library. Many

of these catalogs are annotated with prices and sale records, which is why this series is one of the countless reasons this collection is so important to provenance research.

The correspondence proved to be one of the most rewarding series to process. The materials found indicated a deep sense of collaboration with the artists Valentin worked with. For example, on the right is a letter from E.L. Kirchner to Valentin in which Kirchner sketched the cover of a prospective exhibition catalog for a show. This suggests how closely the artists were involved with the design and display of their work in Valentin’s gallery. Also, in these records were Christmas cards and personal photographs, which all point to Valentin not only being a gallerist, but a personal friend to the artists he represented, such as Doris Caesar and Marino Marini.



Curt Valentin Papers, [III.A.79]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.



Curt Valentin Papers, [III.A.122]. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

In a collection previously thought to be mostly correspondence and business records, there was some unexpected visual material. Pictured here are a few letters from cartoonist Robert Osborn to Valentin. Osborn was a noted illustrator, lending his work to the MoMA Publication “How to Build a House” in 1946. He was also the husband to a legendary MoMA employee Elodie Courter-Osborn, who quite literally wrote the “Manual on Traveling Exhibitions” in 1953. While the Curt Valentin Papers have previously been available to the public, this is the first time it has been archivally processed and meticulously described. With the new

addition of the photo albums, the reprocessed Curt Valentin Papers will become that much more pivotal for provenance research, and provide excellent source material for all types of research to come. The collection is now fully open for research, and the finding aid can be found [here](#).

Collection Feature from the Detroit Institute of Art on Scrapbooks

By Jamie Chmara, Research Library and Archives Intern, Detroit Institute of Arts

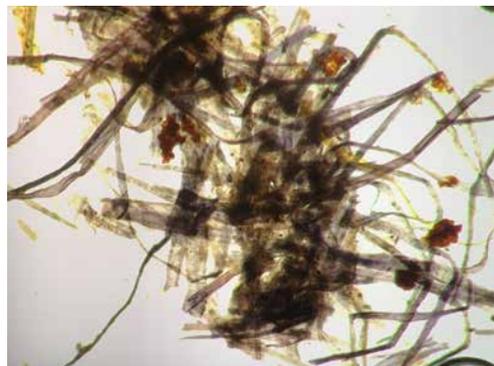
Starting as an intern at the Detroit Institute of Arts in October of 2021, my boss, Maria Ketcham, allowed me to take the reins and work on projects that fueled my interests. One of these projects was to catalog a series of over 100 scrapbooks ranging from 200-350 pages, that covered clippings of any mention of the museum from 1893 to 1991. While this started with creating bibliographic records for searchability, I found an opportunity to pair it with a graduate-level class I was taking on conservation of library and archival materials at Wayne State University. Our final paper was to address any topic on conservation in libraries and archives, and our professor mentioned that we could pair our paper with a conservation project in our working institution. Aligning perfectly with the work for my internship, I decided to focus my project on the condition of the scrapbooks, seeing as many have already deteriorated, showing signs of brittle paper and failed and yellowed adhesives. I researched scrapbook history, newspaper history, and adhesive history, finding which would be the most commonly used materials at the time of the scrapbooks’ creation.

Fortunately for me, my professor, Dr. Christina Bisulca, is also the conservation scientist at the DIA graciously allowed me to use her lab to run tests on the adhesives and paper. She brought the DIA's near infrared (NIR) spectrometer, a tool used to identify the make-up of materials, up to the library to get some preliminary scans of the adhesives from dried up tape and loose newspaper clippings. I then worked in her lab, conducting microchemical tests on paper samples. My first was the lignin test, and unsurprisingly, most of the samples, of both scrapbook paper and of some newspaper clippings, exhibited the presence of lignin.



Phloroglucinol stains indicating a presence of lignin in the paper. All photos courtesy of Jamie Chmara.

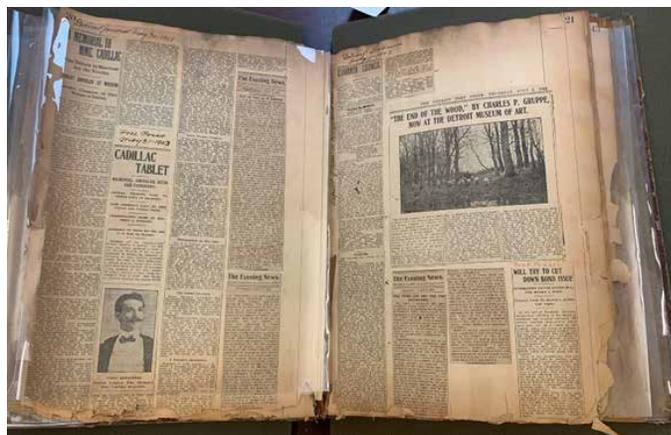
I followed that test with the Graff-C test, finding that nearly all of the samples that had a presence of lignin were also made from mechanical wood pulp. We did find a sample of chemical wood pulp in one of the newer scrapbooks, and again were surprised by a sample of rag paper from a piece of supplemental paper that listed the newspaper and its date. I contacted the company that made the scrapbooks at the time, but unfortunately due to changing hands and mergers, the information was lost.



A blue stain indicating chemical wood pulp and a red stain indicating rag paper.

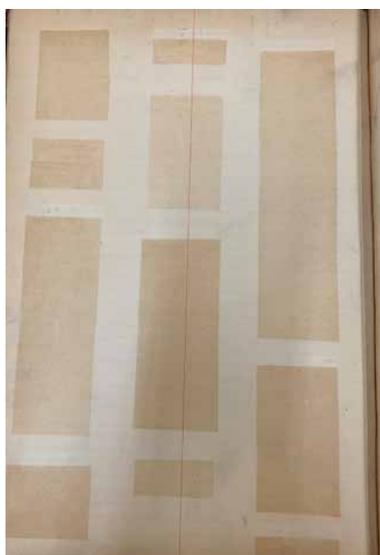
Along the way, I found some mysteries. It was no shock that the scrapbooks over 100 years old, were in the worst condition, with flaking paper, bleeding and lacing ink, and lifting adhesives. However, the scrapbook covering articles from 1954-1955 was in pristine condition, with barely any brittleness or lifting newspaper clippings, while the scrapbook from 1963 showed significant deterioration. The juxtaposition of the conditions, especially considering that one was nearly ten years older, was interesting and is most likely related to the manufacturing of the paper. It was also surprising to see some of the earlier adhesives used in the 1919 scrapbook had aged so well, until our archivist, James Hanks, provided us with the answer: rubber cement. There is little evidence of the adhesive damaging or burning through the clipping or the scrapbook paper and many of the lifted clippings do not have residue. Furthermore, how the scrapbooks were stored and the conditions of their location prior to 1979 is unknown, so we are unaware if any extenuating circumstances may have exacerbated deterioration. In 2002, archival enclosures were created, so for the past 20 years, they have been stored properly.

Regarding the condition of the scrapbooks, as previously mentioned, many have brittle paper, showing signs of flaking and tearing at the edges.



The oldest scrapbook in the collection, dating 1893-1902, in rough condition. Multiple torn pages and brittle edges, with some pages needing plastic coverings.

Furthermore, nearly all have some sort of yellowing from where two pages laid together, with a dark outline of one clipping burned onto the adjacent page. Some have darkened tape residue as well, where the tape has now dried out leaving a stain on the paper. The scrapbooks that need the most conservation interven-



Paper burn from the clippings on the adjacent page.

-tion have separated from the binding, numerous clippings lifting from the pages due to failed adhesive, and extremely fragile, embrittled paper. Along the same lines, some of the newspaper clippings are large and have been folded to fit onto the page and have started to tear along the folds. The older scrapbooks also have soot along the tops of the pages, which Dr. Bisulca explained could be from being stored near a wood-burning boiler. Practices such as placing buffer paper between pages, using washi tape to repair large tears, and using archival adhesive to reattach the clippings to the pages are most likely to be the majority of

the steps taken to conserve these scrapbooks. Another possibility is digitizing those in the most unstable condition, especially for the older and more fragile scrapbooks, to reduce handling and light exposure.

While this project started with creating bibliographic records for researcher access and information searching, it incorporated the work of conserving and preserving their contents. Tacking on this aspect also allowed for the addition of a condition report within the bibliographic record as a means for knowing which scrapbooks have had the most conservation work and which may need further assessment. Not only has this project given me the ability to see another side of library and archival work, but it has also sparked an interest in pursuing a career in paper and book conservation.

Every step of this project has been incredible and eye-opening, from seeing the legacy of the museum through the different eras and events of the 1900s to the scientific side of identifying paper and adhesive types. As this project continues, I am enthralled to learn and discover more about archival practices and preservation work.



A torn page from the binding. The adjacent page has a plastic sleeve covering due to flaking edges

Provenance Research in the Rosenberg & Stiebel Archive

By Elizabeth Kobert, Archivist, The Frick Collection and Frick Art Reference Library Archives

The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives has recently acquired the Rosenberg & Stiebel Archive, documenting a four-generation family business of German-Jewish art dealers. Founded by Jakob Rosenbaum in Frankfurt in the second half of the 19th century, the gallery primarily dealt in porcelains and other decorative objects, and sold works to major collectors like the Vienna branch of the Rothschild family. Jakob's son, Isaak Rosenbaum, moved the business to Amsterdam in the early 20th century along with his nephew Saemy Rosenberg, where they began to specialize in Old Master paintings and 18th-century French furniture. In 1939, Saemy and his cousins Eric Stiebel and Hans Stiebel founded Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc.,

in New York City, which operated concurrently with family businesses in London (S. & R. Rosenberg, Ltd.) and Paris (Stiebel et Cie). Eric's son, Gerald Stiebel, was brought into the business in the 1960s, later bringing in his wife Penelope Hunter-Stiebel as a partner, and they continued to deal in the same style of paintings and furniture, as well as a brief foray into modern and contemporary art in the 1990s.

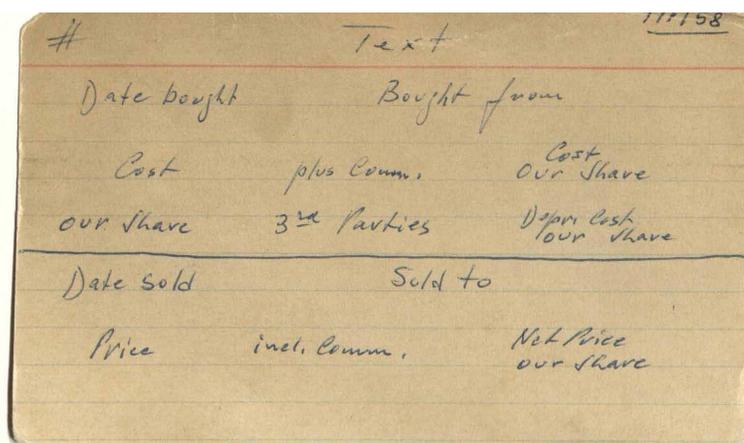


Storefront of the first family business in Frankfurt, Germany, circa 1870.
MS.065 Rosenberg & Stiebel Archive. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

After Eric Stiebel passed away in 2000, the gallery rebranded as Stiebel, Ltd., and continued to operate until around 2012. At this point, Gerald Stiebel moved all of the business records into storage, which could be consulted by provenance researchers. These records include subject files (correspondence, invoices, photographs, printed material,

etc.), photographs of artworks, ledgers, scrapbooks and framed photographs, auction catalogs, and card files, among other materials. After packing up the storage unit, our initial estimation of the size of the collection is around 450 linear feet. Though records of the firm's origins in Frankfurt and Amsterdam are scant, there is rich documentation of their activities in New York City from 1939 through the early 2010s.

Since this acquisition was publicized in January, we have already received about a dozen reference requests from provenance researchers at museums, auction houses, and organizations dedicated to the restitution of Nazi-looted art, both in the United States and Europe. While I have not been able to complete



Template at the front of the card files arranged by inventory number.
MS.065 Rosenberg & Stiebel Archive. The Frick Collection/Frick Art Reference Library Archives.

all of these requests at this early stage of processing, it has been exciting to locate the desired information in a few instances, and to develop search strategies for future requests. One example is an independent researcher

working on a catalog of his great-grandfather's art collection, who wanted to confirm the provenance of a marble sculpture formerly in his collection and purchased by Rosenberg & Stiebel at an auction in 1952. Using a set of index cards that organize artworks by medium, I was able to identify the object in question and confirm that the provenance included the researcher's great-grandfather, as well as identify the date and price of the purchase, to whom the sculpture was later sold, and at what price.

Unfortunately, it is not always this simple – the set of card files that I used for this request is actually an index of the gallery's photograph archive, which means that works that were not photographed are not documented by medium. Instead, there is a separate run of card files arranged by inventory number. However, in addition to being incomplete, the only way that I've been able to determine an object's inventory number is to consult the sale and/or purchase invoice, which is located in the subject file for the client. As I process the subject files, I have been making note of every inventory number referenced in my processing spreadsheet, along with a brief description of the object and the year of the transaction.

This strategy has already proved helpful for another provenance request related to three objects acquired by Rosenberg & Stiebel from Baroness Clarice de Rothschild, wife of Baron Alphonse de Rothschild. One researcher from an auction house sent us photographs and lot descriptions for the objects, and I used several keywords to narrow down the possible transactions before consulting the card files and relevant invoices for information that would positively identify the sales. I was able to determine not only the inventory number for the objects purchased from or consigned by the Rothschild family, but also to whom they were later sold. This is particularly important because the vast majority of our collections are stored off-site while we work in a temporary location as the Frick undergoes major renovations – I call back subject files in batches of 3-5 boxes at a time, and then return them off-site once they are processed. Without the luxury of being able to peruse all of the collection material, it has been important to record as much detail as possible in the preliminary stages of describing the collection, in order to minimize the amount of material called back for reference requests.

While it can be challenging to field reference requests so early in the processing of a large collection, and it is generally not our policy to conduct research on an unprocessed collection, learning quickly about the type of inquiries we can expect to receive from researchers of this archive has informed my processing decisions and priorities. For example, after beginning with a subset of the subject files specific to Rosenberg & Stiebel, Inc., I plan to move onto a set of records designated by the donor as "Family History," which

include scrapbooks, photographs, and correspondence from the early days of the family's business in Germany and Amsterdam. Knowing that there is higher research interest in European collectors and transactions will enable us to serve researchers as quickly as is reasonable, shortening the queue for when the finding aid is published (currently projected for late 2023) and research appointments can be scheduled.

Exhibiting War: What's in a Name?

By Andrew Harman, Archivist, Leatherby Libraries at Chapman University

Cultural heritage institutions have many functions, some of which could be considered prime directives. Arguably the most important of these is access, but how institutions provide access may contain nuance. Public access in the form of exhibition offers opportunities and challenges, and even the smallest act of naming an exhibit could be fraught with controversy. Providing access, either through a finding aid or public exhibition, or both, has become further complicated in the twenty first century by the growing trend of institutions considering, rightfully so and far overdue, certain aspects of cultural heritage long overlooked. These aspects include repatriation of "stolen" artifacts, redescription of finding aids for accurate and sensitive naming of groups and historical events, and statements on potentially harmful content. Potential controversy, it seems, lurks around every corner and archival description is in a state of upheaval as many accepted narratives are being discarded for updated historical conceptualizations.

While designing an exhibit of war correspondence for the Center for American War Letters Archives at Chapman University's Leatherby Libraries, I found myself tackling some of these issues and questioning what I thought I knew. What is in a name? If an historical event has been called one thing for a very long time, is that not the accurate name? Are there reasons it should be changed? Are there differing opinions?

One example of both differing opinion and a change in narrative includes the Philippine-American War. Also known as the Filipino-American War, this conflict was previously referred to as the Philippine Insurrection (or Tagalog Insurgency), terms still used by the US Army and Congress, and even considered part of the continued Spanish-American War by some others.



Photo taken by me at the National Museum of African American History and Culture, “Double Victory: The African American Military Experience” exhibit

Those may be considered credible, though biased, sources from which to derive an appropriate title for this historical event. But when titling this section of the exhibit, something seemed wrong. The idea that this was an “insurrection” connotes a people rebelling against their government or “rightful” leaders, whereas a war with two sides proposes agency for both.

With a little research it doesn’t take long to

realize that this was in fact a war. The United States government signed a treaty with the Spanish after the conclusion of hostilities during the Spanish-American War (1898; note there is no problem with this terminology as Spain was and is an established nation). That treaty handed overrule of the Philippines from Spain to the US. But there’s a problem; the territory can easily be argued as not theirs to give, and the First Philippine Republic declared their independence, formalized through a constitution in January 1899 months before hostilities with the US.

How, then, can we call this an insurrection, the definition of which is “a violent uprising against an authority or government?” This was in fact a war between the government and free people of the Philippines and the United States. It is important to distinguish that fact and treat the combatants of the war and the free peoples and lands over which they fought with respect. Sadly, this was not the only time the United States had been involved in wars with a free people that are relegated to the back pages of history. Some of the collections in the War Letters Archives contain correspondence from soldiers on the American “frontier,” writing home while engaging in the forgotten wars with Native Americans.

Throughout the nineteenth century, there was a collection of conflicts referred to by the umbrella designation, “the Indian Wars.” In the African American History and Culture Museum in Washington, DC, the period of armed conflict in the west is shortened to the last half of the century and termed the “Wars of American Expansion.” Apart from the insensitive elusion to Manifest Destiny, that it is the divine right of the American and thus European descendent people of this nation to rule from “sea to shining sea,” these terms are very reductive. I had the feeling that terms such as these, though technically accurate, were insensitive to the nuances and realities of a century of bloody conflict with the native people of this land. So, I did some more research, and quickly became overwhelmed.



Protecting the Settlers, by JR Browne. Illustrated for his work *The Indians of California*, 1864

While searching for more specificity, I discovered that the period of 1786 – 1924 saw eight larger wars conducted between Native American peoples and the United States Government, states' governments, and/or American civilians with some form of government backing. What may be surprising is that during the same period there were at least 78 smaller wars. Some clarification is still needed, but these all appear to have been legitimate wars given our above criteria, though they may never have been declared by Congress (only one of two sides which viewed itself as inherently superior and its ownership of the land divinely attained).

Those 78 wars were with very different people in very different places, though often for the same reason of American expansion and at times

attempted genocide. It may be unfair to say that a fight with the Cherokee in one area had anything to do with the Navajo in the Southwest. The Ute War had nothing to do with the Apache and Comanche Wars and those involving Texas any more than the Mariposa War, part of the California Genocide, had anything to do with the Great Sioux War or Yakima War in the Midwest and Washington territory respectively.

Though umbrella terms have their uses and provide a convenience, they miss the fact that these are very different cultural groups with very distinctive cultural identities. An example is another recently coined term, Asian-American and Pacific Islanders (AAPI). The term has become useful and ubiquitous, but motivations and shared histories of those described diverge in myriad ways. In the example of AAPI people, the recent history saw the conquering and subjugation of some people by different outsiders as well as other groups that also fall under that umbrella. The United States has seen emigration from these different groups over the last 150 years for a broad spectrum of socioeconomic reasons. They are not necessarily one and the same in all aspects.

Does the umbrella term work in the case of AAPI? For the Indian Wars? Should we be specific in every instance available? The answer may be yes to all. The answer may also be more nuanced and change over the next decade or two as our sentiments change in society. As such, it is a prime directive of the archivist and museum curator to understand these nuances. It is the job of the “cultural heritage professional” to live up to that name. What is in a name? Everything.

Collaboration and Community: The Resilience Project in St. Augustine

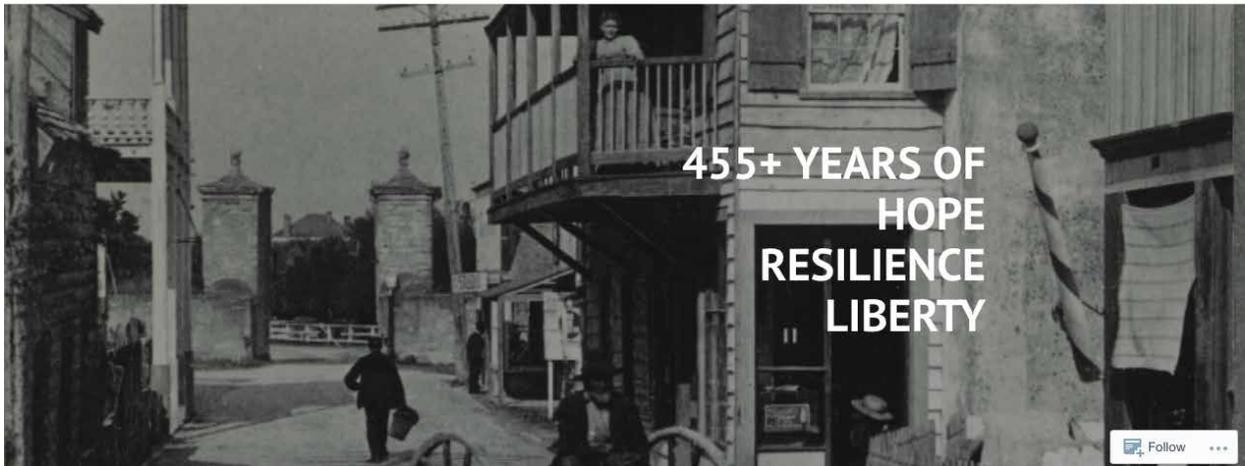
By **Kimberlyn Elliott**, Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center; **Laura Marion**, Governor's House Library, University of Florida; **Elizabeth Maycumber**, St. Johns County Public Library System; **Jeanette Vigliotti**, St. Augustine Historical Society; and **Casey Wooster**, Governor's House Library, University of Florida.

St. Augustine: "The Oldest City"

Social unrest, isolation, and uncertainty marked 2020. We all bore witness to our nation's reckoning with issues of racial inequalities in the wake of George Floyd's murder. The historic summer touched all corners of the country – including St. Augustine, Florida. Often referred to as the “nation's oldest city,” St. Augustine is a small city of about 15,000 residents that proudly boasts its status as the oldest continuously inhabited European settlement in the continental United States. Members of the St. Augustine Archives Society, an informal organization of local cultural and educational institutions, came together to ask questions: How can we be better allies to Black St. Augustinians? How can we move beyond a European-centered narrative? Whose stories remain left out, and how can we uplift their voices? Through a series of virtual conversations, *Resilience: Black Heritage in St. Augustine* – a year-long celebration throughout 2021 – emerged as a community collaboration between fourteen cultural institutions throughout northeast Florida. ¹

Digital Disruption in History-Telling

St. Augustine's recorded histories focus on the city's deep Hispanic roots. Although this is a significant part of St. Augustine and Florida's story, this white Eurocentric focus leaves out the stories of the many diverse members of this historic community, especially those of Black St. Augustinians. These stories of hope, resilience, and liberty begin long before 1619 – with the arrival of free and enslaved people of African descent to Florida in 1513 and St. Augustine in 1565. *Resilience* disrupted the existing dominant narrative by making space for Black history to shine. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued to unfurl, many planned in-person events and exhibits were forced to pivot online. Despite this unexpected challenge, project partners found ways to create meaningful and lasting impacts by fostering conversation and connection through digital tools.



Homepage of the Resilience: Black Heritage in St. Augustine Wordpress site, an online portal featuring institutions and places to visit, archives and collections, educational resources, and a calendar of virtual and in-person events.

Resilience collaborators created a website utilizing the free, open-source software WordPress. The website began as a way to centralize the many threads of Black history interwoven into the city and scattered across the Internet, but soon became a comprehensive starting point for anyone interested in learning more about local Black experiences. It features institutions and places to visit, archives and collections, educational resources, and a calendar of virtual and in-person events (no longer available as of February 2022). Additionally, *Resilience* collaborators looked inward, examining their collections and institutional stories for previously excluded or ignored BIPOC voices. This work resulted in a complementary digital collection by [Flagler College Proctor Library](#). Using the free, open-source software Omeka, eleven collaborating institutions uploaded artifacts from their collections. While the project concluded at the end of 2021, *Resilience's* [WordPress](#) and [Omeka](#) sites will live on, continually edited, and added to for the foreseeable future.

Thinking Outside “The Museum”

Even before the onset of the pandemic, gallery, library, archive, and museum (GLAM) professionals understood that many people do not feel comfortable in traditional museums and cultural institutions. While demographic data compiled over the last few years by the American Alliance of Museums from its Annual Survey of Museum-Goers illustrates that there is greater diversity among casual museum visitors than might typically be presumed, the core of frequent museum visitors nevertheless continues to skew towards individuals who are older, white, of higher socioeconomic status, and with higher levels of education.²

In light of this, an important consideration in planning Resilience was how we could best connect visitors from diverse origins and backgrounds to our various exhibits, lectures, and other events in a meaningful way. While COVID-19 created many new problems and uncertainties for each institution, it also presented an opportunity to try something new. We wondered: could we introduce a more nuanced understanding of local history and the larger *Resilience* project by taking authentic museum experiences outside the walls of our buildings?

One way we attempted to reach a broader audience was through collaboration with the [St. Johns County Public Library System \(SJCPLS\)](#). Public libraries are more than just repositories for books; they are community hubs for active learning. As public spaces, libraries attract widely diverse members of any community they serve, and it was therefore a natural opportunity for SJCPLS to act as a community bridge to the *Resilience* project as a whole. Throughout 2021, the library filmed virtual museum visits and interviews for its website and social media platforms in order to introduce some of the various *Resilience* institutional events to the wider community of St. Johns County, such as a tour of the [Women Who Made a Difference exhibit](#) at the Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center. These *Resilience* project highlights proved popular with the subset of SJCPLS patrons who interact with the library online, and continue to be accessible [on-demand](#).

SJCPLS also created its own original content, such as an interview with local photographer [Lenny Foster](#) to discuss *Where We Stand*, a photograph series of shoes placed at integral sites of the Civil Rights Movement in St. Augustine, a program that garnered nearly 800 combined views on Facebook and YouTube. The video's digital premiere coincided with a month-long display of Mr. Foster's work at the Main Library, exhibited in the computer area, a high-traffic section of an already busy library location. A significant portion of those using the library's public computers have no other way to access the Internet, and many of those same users are statistically less likely to frequently visit a traditional museum or interact online with institutional digital content.³ Thus, even within the orbit of the library's patron base, featuring Mr. Foster's photographs both virtually and in person created a bridge between users who might come to the library specifically seeking the opportunity to see his work, and users who only accidentally stumbled upon it by happenstance.

Collaborations and Connections

Throughout 2021, organizations within the Archives Society, community groups, and other cultural entities critically examined their collections and explored ways to incorporate more Black history into their programming.

In addition to creating institutional specific programming, many *Resilience* members worked together to develop engaging and accessible content. Each institution, through their collections and histories, added compelling perspectives of Black experiences in St. Augustine and engaged the community in a larger conversation about the city's relationship to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. One collaboration borne of *Resilience* was the *Washing Away History* virtual lecture series, hosted by [Governor's House Library](#) and Lincolnville Museum and Cultural Center, with support from [George A. Smathers Libraries](#) at the University of Florida and the [Florida Museum of Natural History](#).

More than 250 years ago, [Fort Mose](#), just north of the city of St. Augustine, became the first legally sanctioned free Black town in the present-day United States. Now a [Historic State Park](#), it is a critically significant site for American history. *Washing Away History*, a two-part panel series hosted on the Zoom platform, explored the past, present, and future of Fort Mose with renowned specialists from the fields of archaeology and history across the Southeast. Both events, "[Changing Tides at Fort Mose](#)", and "[Digging for the Future](#)" were held in July 2021. Over 300 virtual attendees tuned in to Zoom to watch the panels live, and the recordings on UF George A. Smathers Libraries' [YouTube channel](#) have garnered more than 560 combined views.

Creating Spaces, Not Monuments

Resilience was born as the United States struggled with twin pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism: one a novel public health crisis and the other a national tradition. Amid the backdrop of protests and violence, the conversation around the removal of Confederate monuments intensified nationally and locally. In contrast to the historical structures that perpetuate white supremacist power structures and the "Lost Cause" myth, *Resilience* created inclusive spaces of discussion and learning at a time when people could not physically gather.

Our three digital platforms, the Facebook page, the Omeka digital exhibit, and the WordPress website, prioritize some of the core values identified in developing the *Resilience* project: reflexivity, access, and community. Unlike a physical monument, which is fixed in time and place, our digital spaces remain open to continuous inquiry, scholarly engagement, and active knowledge production. Both sites act as a digital commons, a repository of “non exclusive digital information and knowledge resources that are collectively created...[and] used freely between and among the community.”⁴

The multi-institutional website has historical information readily accessible and easily circulated to members of the community. The "Learning Resources" section of the website contains free lesson plans, audio, and videos that can be easily utilized by anyone to learn and uncover St. Augustine stories they may not have previously known. The *Resilience* project Facebook page offers our community a space to gather, connect, and ask questions as stakeholders in knowledge production about St. Augustine’s rich Black experiences. This digital work in creating space for the community made a positive impact on the project’s ability to reach a wide and diverse audience.



Resilience Family Fest logo used to advertise the project’s end-cap event on social media.

Resilience partners facilitated these exchanges through exhibition spaces and guided tours. The project culminated in Resilience Family Fest, a free event celebrating the conclusion of the project and Black History Month. Held in a community center in one of St. Augustine’s Black neighborhoods, Resilience Family Fest gave institutional partners a vehicle to share their findings, exhibits, and programming directly with the community. The event also featured live music, dance, performances,

and food from local Black-owned businesses and Black artists. Over 400 people attended, and many drove in from outlying areas like Jacksonville. Guests evaluated the event very highly in surveys; one guest called it a “powerful community-building experience.” Another noted, “[w]e all loved the videos and my kids have a list of local places they want to go now.”



Nan Nkama Pan-African Drum and Dance Ensemble and the Melvin Smith Jazz Ensemble perform at Resilience Family Fest, an event celebrating both Black History Month and the end of the Resilience project.

Collaboration Challenges

Any collaboration with over forty representatives from fourteen institutions is full of challenges. While everyone faced the ever-changing responses to the COVID-19 pandemic, each institution also juggled their own unique challenges in the development and implementation of *Resilience: Black Heritage in St. Augustine*. For example, SJCPLS ran on a skeleton crew for much of 2020 and 2021. The shifting schedules and responsibilities in addition to staffing shortages made attending meetings difficult. While unique to their institution, similar situations occurred across the other participating organizations over the course of the project.

With an almost two-year time span, from the start of the collaboration to the conclusion, came additional challenges. Many local institutions and individuals at the outset of the initiative showed great excitement and interest in the project. However, over time the excitement, interest, and participation waned - except for a core group of collaborators. This in turn placed more work and responsibility on a few rather than spread out amongst a larger group. Over the course of the collaboration, only about a quarter of the larger group were able to attend the meetings on a regular basis. While the initiative grew organically with a general mission, there were no goals or rules established for the collaboration, which might have sustained the participation and clarified the roles of its members.

Lastly, *Resilience: Black Heritage in St. Augustine* operated without employees or staff as well as a budget or funding source (except for a small grant for a community endcap event). Neither did the project benefit from the support and/or participation of the city or county governments - outside of SJCPLS and St. Johns Cultural Council. Although St. Johns County issued a proclamation recognizing February as Black History Month for the first time in 2022, an event that brought together representatives from the County as well as from the cities of St. Augustine and St. Augustine Beach, St. Augustine continues to lack a public Black History Month celebration at the city or county level. So it was up to each collaborator to volunteer their time, energy, and resources to make the project happen and hopefully succeed. They spearheaded their own institutional contributions on top of their regular responsibilities to their employers. This meant they faced their own unique challenges. For example, Governor's House Library spent hours looking for the stories of Black St. Augustinians in their archives and collections, which were largely developed in the 1950s and 1960s to celebrate the city's European origins. They were not alone in this challenge for others faced similar issues in their own archival and curatorial reflections.

This only captures a few of the challenges faced in the creation of our collaboration. From these challenges, we found new insight and growth as individuals as well as a community of GLAM professionals.

Conclusion

The primary purpose of the *Resilience* project was collaboration and connection, both internally between its partners and externally with the St. Augustine community. First and foremost, the project was meant to bring Black stories and voices missing from local historical narratives to light, and secondly to present this project collaboratively as a show of force, demonstrating that northeast Florida GLAM institutions collectively believe these stories are important to tell. *Resilience* provided an opportunity to serve the local community in a way in which it is rarely served. The project was eye-opening for many of its participants in recognizing that not all stories and perspectives have been considered in their institution's interpretive decisions, and furthermore, that it is worth the ongoing time and effort that will be needed to ensure that all residents of St. Augustine have a voice and representation in the history telling space.

Though the *Resilience* project has come to an end, this work will never truly be done. It is our hope that through more diversity and inclusion in our collections, all underrepresented groups in St. Augustine will feel that their stories and contributions are recorded and celebrated in the cultural heritage of today and the future.

Endnotes

1 The institutions that collaborated together on *Resilience: Black Heritage in St. Augustine* include Accord Civil Rights Museum & Freedom Trail; Castillo de San Marcos National Monument; Flagler College Proctor Library; Flagler College Honors Program; Florida Museum of Natural History; Fort Mose Historical Society; Friends of the Main Library St. Augustine; Governor's House Cultural Center & Museum; Lincolnville Museum & Cultural Center; St. Augustine Historical Society; St. Johns County Public Library System; Timucuan Ecological & Historic Preserve; University of North Florida Digital Humanities Institute; and Ximenez-Fatio House Museum. In addition, St. Johns Cultural Council acted as a supporting partner.

2 Wilkening Consulting, on behalf of American Alliance of Museums. "Data Stories," Annual Survey of Museum-Goers. Accessed May 20, 2022. <https://museumgoers.aam-us.org/data-stories/> and Alexandra Olivares and Jaclyn Piatak. "Exhibiting Inclusion: An Examination of Race, Ethnicity, and Museum Participation," *Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 33 (2022), 121, accessed May 20, 2022, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s11266-021-00322-0.pdf>.

3 Ibid.

4 D'Alisa, G., Demaria, F., Kallis, G., & Morell, M. F. (2015). *Disobedience*. In *Degrowth: A vocabulary for a new era*. essay, Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.

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