

# *MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION NEWSLETTER*

---

Manuscript Repositories Section of the Society of American Archivists

Fall 2000

---

[From the Chair](#)

[SAA Committee on Ethics and Profession Conduct \(CEPC\) Update](#)

[The Beinecke Library Acquires the Papers of Caribbean Novelist Caryl Phillips](#)

[Manuscripts for Sale: Changing Aspects of the Auction Environment](#)

[Congressional Papers Roundtable to Hold Forum at SAA's 2001 Annual Meeting](#)

[Historical Kansas Maps will be Available Next Year](#)

[Bell Papers Digital Project Receives Update](#)

[Leadership and Next Deadline](#)

---

## **From the Chair**

**by Christine Weideman**

Our section meeting at SAA's annual meeting in Denver was thought provoking. Two historians, Mark Foster, senior professor in American History at the University of Colorado Denver, and Philip Deloria, a junior professor in American Studies at the University of Colorado at Boulder, joined us to talk about research trends in Western history and the types and kinds of materials archivists should be collecting to document that region's history. Although each engaged the audience in discussion of how historians can find materials relevant to their research, both evidenced a less-than-firm understanding of the descriptive tools, such as RLIN/Eureka, available to researchers. As a result, the section steering committee is undertaking a project to make our descriptive tools better known to the historical profession. The committee will first determine what regional and national organizations of American historians hold regular meetings and how often. We will then contact the various program committees for the meetings and determine if we can present a session on searching for and finding primary source materials. The committee will put together a packet that can be used by the presenters at such sessions. We are still in the early stages of this project, but we will probably be asking for volunteers who work in or near the sites of the meetings to be session presenters.

A second project the steering committee is beginning work on is further development of the section's web site. Craig Wright, Mark Shelstad, and Karen Spicher are developing a gateway web page of links to information resources for archivists working in manuscript repositories. This page will consist of links to other web sites concerning professional organizations, descriptive standards, conservation resources, reference tools, and other professional topics. The page will be intended especially as an information resource for new archivists or lone arrangers. The section web site, <http://www.library.yale.edu/%7Ekspicher/mssrepos/>, will eventually include a link to the new page through the heading "Resources."

Finally, several members of the steering committee attended a session on Native American archives. We learned that there are excellent primary source materials available in the libraries and archives of the Tribal Colleges and Universities (There are thirty-two in the country), but word about them hasn't reached the research community. The steering committee is going to explore whether there are ways the section can be of assistance in making descriptions of these materials better known to the research community.

In upcoming newsletters we will keep section members apprised of all of the projects the steering committee has undertaken. If you are interested in one or more of them or have suggestions, please contact Kathryn Neal, section chair.

We also held elections at the section meeting, and I want to thank all of the candidates who filled the slate. Our incoming vice chair/chair elect is Peter Blodgett, from the Huntington Library, and we have three new steering committee members: Susan Dick, Georgia Historical Society; Mark Shelstad, University of Wyoming; and Karen Spicher, Beinecke Library, Yale University. We actually had a tie for one seat on the steering committee between Karen Spicher and Kathryn Allamong Jacob of the Schlesinger Library. Karen will start her term this year, and Kathryn will join the committee a year from now.

Many thanks to all of the steering committee and section members who made this such an enjoyable year for me as section chair.

---

## **SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct (CEPC) Update**

The CEPC addresses issues related to the ethical and professional conduct of the archival profession, and specifically, it monitors the SAA Code of Ethics and promotes its usage. The committee has been working for the past few years in different areas for guiding appropriate professional behavior for archivists.

In January 2000, the SAA Council approved a revision of the *Guidelines for Inquiries and Mediation of Disputes Regarding the Code of Ethics for Archivists*. The revised guidelines create a process for providing a fair airing of alleged violations of the code and to help the parties resolve the dispute themselves. The CEPC however, will not address situations involving alleged violations of the law or employment disputes. The CEPC also cannot take action on behalf of SAA but can recommend a course of action to SAA Council. It is expected that the guidelines will be distributed to the SAA membership via *Archival Outlook*.

Committee member and past chair Karen Benedict is also working towards the publication of an ethics manual in early 2001 to be part of the SAA fundamentals series. Benedict's research on other archival ethical codes or statements has suggested that the code would be strengthened by a clearer and briefer statement of our ethical principles that underlie and govern the professional conduct of individuals and institutions. Discussion of how those principles are to be applied within the context of different institutions and varying situations can be better and more fully discussed outside of the code itself.

The committee is interested in hearing from the Manuscripts Repositories Section how the Code applies to manuscript collections, such as donor relations, purchasing of collections, or the ethics of collecting. The committee would also like to engage in discussion with other roundtables and sections in terms of discussing ethical precepts and their application in actual daily practice. Comments about the Code or the committee's work can be sent to chair Lynn Smith at:

Lynn A. Smith, CA  
Archivist  
Herbert Hoover Presidential Library  
210 Parkside Drive  
West Branch, IA 52358  
O: 319-643-5301  
F: 319-643-5825  
E: [lynn.smith@hoover.nara.gov](mailto:lynn.smith@hoover.nara.gov)

The SAA Code of Ethics for Archivists is available at  
[http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app\\_ethics.html](http://www.archivists.org/governance/handbook/app_ethics.html).

*Mark Shelstad, University of Wyoming*

## The Beinecke Library Acquires the Papers of Caribbean Novelist Caryl Phillips

Born in 1958 on the island of St. Kitts in the West Indies, Caryl Phillips grew up in England, where he was educated at Oxford University. The author of six novels, two volumes of nonfiction, and many film and radio scripts, he is also a frequent contributor to British and American newspapers and to such periodicals as *Bomb* and *The New Republic*. Drawing on his own experience in two cultures, Phillips's fiction uses innovative narrative structures to describe the roots of racial prejudice in diverse historical settings. Phillips currently teaches at Barnard College, Columbia University, and serves as senior editor of the Faber and Faber Caribbean Series.

The archive now in the Beinecke Library, comprising all of Caryl Phillips's papers to date, includes holograph and typed drafts, notes, and research materials relating to seven published books, including his most recent novel, *The Nature of Blood* (1997). Also present are extensive files for the travelogue *The European Tribe* (1987) and the novels *Final Passage* (1985), *A State of Independence* (1986), *Higher Ground* (1989), *Cambridge* (1991), and *Crossing the River* (1993). The archive includes similar materials relating to Phillips's stage, film, and radio projects, as well as manuscripts of selected short fiction and articles. Substantial correspondence with such writers as Jamaica Kincaid, Peter Carey, and the Jamaican novelist Joan Riley are present in the archive, as well as exchanges with Toni Morrison, Michael Ondaatje, Salman Rushdie, Charles Simic, and Derek Walcott.

Caryl Phillips is the first Caribbean author to join the Beinecke Library's extensive holdings of the papers of contemporary writers. Phillips gave a successful pre-publication reading from *The Nature of Blood* at the Beinecke Library in May 1996.

*Karen Spicher, Yale University*

## Manuscripts for Sale: Changing Aspects of the Auction Environment

The stereotypically staid world of the auction house, cluttered with images of well-heeled connoisseurs fiercely pursuing great treasures of art, history, and literature, now seems teetering on the brink of considerable disarray. Sotheby's and Christie's, the two dominant international powers in the traditional auction setting, have been the subjects of a lengthy probe by the United States Justice Department into price-fixing allegations centering upon the fees charged by their fine arts departments to buyers and sellers. Such claims of wrongdoing have also motivated a civil lawsuit against each firm, filed by thousands of individual clients. Articles appearing through the *New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times* and the Bloomberg News Service in late September reported a proposed settlement to that civil suit, entailing the payment of \$256 million by each firm to settle the existing claims. Ongoing negotiations with the Justice Department to resolve its investigation may have wider ramifications for libraries and manuscript repositories if federal anti-trust lawyers force changes in such practices as the structure of commissions levied upon buyers and sellers.

In the meantime, the evolution of e-commerce continues to attract the attention of auctioneers and owners of anything that might be considered a "collectible," including manuscripts. The purchase by eBay of Butterfield and Butterfield (now known as "Butterfields, an eBay company"), like the strategic alliance between Amazon.com and Sotheby's, reflects a persistent belief in the potential (however unfulfilled) of online retailing. The acquisition of Butterfields, for instance, has given eBay the opportunity to open a "Great Collections" site intended "for fine art and collectibles from top auction houses and dealers." While it's hard to imagine eBay taking over the trade in major manuscript collections or exceptionally expensive collector's items, it is conceivable that it might become an important venue for single pieces or small groups of documents being sold by individuals or families. If so, some of eBay's departments such as "Antiques & Art" (the umbrella category for many books and manuscripts) and "Collectibles" (with its subfield of "autographs") may become a necessary stop on our acquisitions rounds. The anonymity of sellers and the lack of opportunity for first-hand inspection of potential purchases imposed by eBay's current structure, however, suggest that no better market exists in which to apply the phrase "caveat emptor."

*Peter J. Blodgett, Huntington Library*

## **Congressional Papers Roundtable to hold forum at SAA's 2001 Annual Meeting**

On Wednesday August 29, 2001 at the SAA Annual Meeting, the Congressional Papers Roundtable will sponsor an afternoon-long forum on congressional papers, open to all members but which should be of particular interest to members of the Manuscript Repositories Section. This meeting is an opportunity to join in a more expanded dialogue than the usual SAA session time provides. The focus will be the *3d Report of the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress* (to be released this winter). Topics addressed in this report include records management projects in members' offices, preservation and access, electronic records, fund raising, criteria for preserving a congressional collection, and cooperative ventures between the Center for Legislative Archives of the National Archives and Records Administration and repositories holding congressional collections.

Karen Paul, the Senate Archivist, is organizing this meeting. Further information is available from her at the Senate Historical Office and will be published in future newsletters. This meeting will interest archivists whose repositories already hold congressional collections or may receive one following the November general election and archivists who are interested in learning more about legislative papers.

*Cynthia Pease Miller, Office of Senator Daniel P. Moynihan*

## **Historical Kansas maps will be available next year**

Finding a current map of Kansas is easy. Finding a map of Kansas that's more than 100 years old is much more difficult. Thanks to a \$10,000 grant from the Kansas Library Network Board (KLNB) to Wichita State University (WSU)'s Special Collections in Ablah Library, it will be easy to see what maps of Kansas looked like years ago.

The purpose of the grant, according to Mike Kelly, curator of WSU's Special Collections, is to fund a digitization project for Kansas maps in the Robert W. Baughman Map Collection. The collection contains more than 200 pre-1900 maps that depict Kansas or the area that was to become Kansas. In 1961, Baughman showcased many of his maps in the book *Kansas in Maps*, published by the Kansas State Historical Society and considered to be the best published work on Kansas maps. Among the maps to be digitized are the 1556 Italian map that records the first printed information about Kansas from Coronado's expedition, and the 1865 map of the Kansas gold fields printed in Lecompton, believed to be one of only a few known copies.

The maps will be scanned in full color at a resolution sufficient to enable a researcher to zoom in and clearly see small details exhibited on the maps using a multi-resolution seamless image database, known as MrSID. Once the project is completed in summer 2001, map images and information describing each map will be accessible through the WSU Special Collections web site, the WSU Ablah Library online catalog and the Kansas Digital Library. Eric Hanson, executive director of the KLNB, said, "Digitization of the historical Kansas maps into zoomable online images will be of value across all grade levels and research interests." For more information about the map digitization project, contact Mike Kelly, curator of Special Collections, Wichita State University, at (316) 978-3590 or via e-mail at [kelly@twsumv.uc.twsu.edu](mailto:kelly@twsumv.uc.twsu.edu).

*Mike Kelly and Mary Nelson, Wichita State University*

## **Bell Papers Digital Project Receives Update**

Through the generous support of the AT&T Foundation, the second release of digital images of the Alexander Graham Bell Family Papers from the holdings of the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress is now available at the following URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/bellhtml/>. This online collection will ultimately represent a portion selected from the original Bell Papers and comprise approximately 4,700 items, totaling about 38,000 images.

The second release contains more than 4,500 items consisting of correspondence, scientific notebooks, journals, blueprints, sketches, and photographs documenting Bell's invention of the telephone and his involvement in the first telephone company, his family life, his interest in the education of the deaf, and his aeronautical and other scientific research. Included among Bell's papers are his first sketch of the telephone and pages from an experimental notebook, dated March 10, 1876, that describe the first successful experiment with the telephone, during which he spoke through the instrument to his assistant, Thomas Watson, the famous words, "Mr. Watson - Come here - I want to see you." Also included in this update are Bell's notes and photographs of his aeronautical work and correspondence from such noted individuals as Helen Keller, Marie Curie, Edward Gallaudet, Joseph Henry, William James, and Guglielmo Marconi. Please direct any questions to NDLPOLL@loc.gov.

*Danna Bell-Russel, National Digital Library, Library of Congress*

---

**MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION**

**News items, articles, letters to the editor, and comments are welcome.**

**Next deadline: March 1, 2001**

**Send to Peter J. Blodgett ([see address below](#))**

**Chair (2000-2001)**

Kathryn M. Neal, Curator  
Givens Collection of African-American Literature  
Special Collections and Rare Books  
University of Minnesota  
111 Elmer L. Andersen Library  
222 21st Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55455  
612-624-3855  
FAX: 612-626-9353  
nealx008@tc.umn.edu

**Past Chair/Chair of Nominations (2000-2001)**

Christine Weideman  
Manuscripts and Archives  
Yale University Library  
P.O. Box 208240  
New Haven, CT 06520-8240  
203-432-1740  
FAX: 203-432-7231  
christine.weideman@yale.edu

**Vice Chair/ChairElect (2000-2001)**

Peter J. Blodgett  
H. E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery  
Manuscript Dept.  
1151 Oxford Rd.  
San Marino, CA 91108  
626-405-2207  
FAX: 626-449-5720  
pjblodgett@huntington.org

**Steering Committee**

**1999-2001**

Beth Bensman  
Thomas Jefferson University  
215-503-8097  
beth.bensman@mail.tju.edu

Cynthia Pease Miller  
Office of Senator Daniel P. Moynihan  
202-224-4451  
Cynthia\_Miller@dpm.senate.gov

Craig Wright  
Minnesota Historical Society  
651-296-7989  
craig.wright@mnhs.org

**2000-2002**

Susan E. Dick  
Georgia Historical Society  
912-651-2125  
sdick@georgiahistory.com

Mark Shelstad  
University of Wyoming  
307-766-2574  
shelstad@uwyo.edu

Karen Spicher  
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library  
Yale University  
203-432-4205  
karen.spicher@yale.edu

---

[Home](#) | [Bylaws](#) | [Leadership](#) | [Newsletter](#) | [Resources](#) | [Activities](#) |

This document maintained by [Web Liaison](#)  
Material Copyright © 2000. Last revised 2/27/2007