

# *MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION NEWSLETTER*

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Manuscript Repositories Section of the Society of American Archivists

Spring 2000

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## **From the Chair**

**by Christine Weideman**

Our next annual meeting is to be held in Denver at the Adam's Mark Hotel, and as many of you know, the United States Justice Department recently filed suit against the hotel for discriminatory practices against minorities. It is difficult to predict what the situation will be when you receive this newsletter, but I urge all of you to review the February statement by SAA president Tom Hickerson about the actions taken by SAA Council in response to the suit and to let Council know how you feel about them. Whether you agree or disagree with Council's stance, it is important that the members of SAA express their opinions. Council's liaison with the Manuscript Repositories Section is Mark Greene. He can be reached at: MarkGr@hfmvgv.org or (313) 271-1620. You can also contact Tom directly at: hth2@cornell.edu or (607) 255-9965. In February, the NAACP called for a national boycott of the hotel. We all hope that the hotel reaches a settlement with the Justice Department, but if it doesn't, Council will need to know how members feel about meeting at the Adam's Mark in Denver as it further deliberates this issue. I would also urge Council, when situations like this occur, to use the SAA web site as a forum to provide information and to answer the questions of members. The Organization of American Historians, which has been grappling with this issue because its annual meeting in March was originally to be held at the St. Louis Adam's Mark Hotel, used its web site (<http://www.oah.org/>) to keep its members informed of leadership decisions, contract liabilities, and to answer frequently asked questions. It served that membership well, and SAA needs to do the same.

On a different note entirely, an important issue facing archivists today is how repositories with limited resources can get their finding aids online. Through NUCMC, they have a way to get collection-level descriptions into RLIN's bibliographic database, thus making their holdings much better known to the researcher community. The next obvious step is to have their finding aids available online to those researchers. The Online Archive of California (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org/cgi-bin/oac>) is one such effort where repositories of all sizes, especially those lacking resources to mark up their finding aids and mount them online, were and are provided with the

means to do so. In our next issue, we will provide details on this project and the interesting issues it raises about the role that statewide databases of finding aids play versus the role played by comparable national and international databases. We would welcome hearing from you about other such efforts underway around the country, so that we can publicize them as well.

"And Now for Something Completely Different"\* \*(apologies to Monty Python)

## Measure for Measure: A Useful Archival Glossary

by Todd Daniels-Howell, Mark Greene, and Lydia Lucas

(with important assistance from Kathy Marquis, Dennis Meissner, Charles Rodgers, Duane Swanson, and Cheryl Thies)

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In 1992, Lewis Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo published an updated *Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* as part of SAA's Archival Fundamentals Series. The glossary was an impressive achievement. Still, notable flaws exist in it. A review of the *Glossary* by Terry Eastwood in *American Archivist* (Summer 1992) criticizes particularly the authors' failure to clearly distinguish the meaning of such fundamental terms as "records" from "archives" and "primary value" from "secondary value." In concluding, Eastwood opined that, "Much as this effort is an improvement on the earlier, groundbreaking Evans glossary, there is still a considerable way to go." Certainly he is right, but we think he missed the major shortcoming of this as well as of previous glossaries. Worrying about defining "records" is all well and good, but what the profession *really* needs is some practical and consistent terminology to define less abstract aspects of our work. For example, we have no universal word for the different boxes we put things in. Are those brown, cubic-foot boxes Paige boxes (even when they're not made by Paige)? RC (record center) cartons? BA cases (Business Archives cases)? And those gray boxes: Hollinger boxes (even when they're not made by Hollinger)? Document boxes? Flip-top boxes? Forget worrying about the precise definition of documentation strategy: if our profession doesn't even know what to name our boxes we are building our claims to be a mature profession on a foundation of sand.

Even more embarrassing, however, is the fact that archivists do not have consistent terminology for quantity. Cubic feet? Linear feet? Linear inches? Items? As confusing as this cacophony of terms is—even were we to select one and make it the "universal measurement of archival quantity" (UMAQ)—we would have little advanced the cause of a practical archival vocabulary. Every archivist knows, or should know, that quantity is not absolute but relative. (Margaret Cross Norton apparently first made this observation, but we have only a citation on a bathroom wall at the Bismarck hotel. (If you have been a member of MAC for under five years, we apologize for this seemingly obscure reference) as hard evidence.) Twenty-five cubic feet of files intelligently arranged in 12 ½ files drawers is *less* than 25 cubic feet of correspondence, invoices, junk mail, and receipts tossed with no order into two refrigerator cartons. The scientific theorem (thank goodness that so many archivists are now information or library *scientists*, otherwise this equation never would have been developed) for this important aspect of relativity is  $E=MD^2$ . That is, the Energy necessary to appraise and process a collection is equal to the square of the collection's Mass times its Disorganization. But, as we are neither scientists nor theoreticians and are, instead, concerned with enhancing our professional vocabulary, let's cut to the chase. We need a glossary that will assist us to express, in standardized terms, useful measurements of archival quantity. A modest proposal to that end follows (in ascending order of E).

1. **not-worth-the-paperwork**: self-explanatory; true whether you keep this or get rid of it.
2. **bitsy**: one or a few items, usually arriving independently of other materials and, therefore, needing a home in an existing collection/series or (as a last resort) separate cataloging (see "not-worth-the paperwork" above).
3. **bit**: marginal or better material of insufficient quantity to comfortably fill a half-width Hollinger box and, hence, requiring special housing or support; if a donor consistently transfers material in bits, the quantity

becomes a "dribble" and the donor is henceforth known as a "dribbler."

4. **clump**: a "mess" (see below) small enough to carry in two hands.
5. **glomp** (also **glumph**): a group of stuff (generally having some order or organic unity), but not too much to carry around in two hands.
6. **batch**: a cohesive unit of material (especially newsletters, programs, or other near-print items) that will more than fill a Hollinger box but will not fill a record center carton.
7. **nest**: a smallish group of stuff ("glomp" size or smaller, usually), found among a larger group of otherwise cohesive stuff in a box or other container; unlike a "pocket" (see below), a nest usually has no internal cohesion and frequently has only tangential (if any) relationship to the materials it was found with. The element of surprise often comes into play in the initial discovery of a nest.
8. **bunch**: when used alone (i.e. "a bunch"), signifies a "glomp" which is too large to carry; alternative usage (i.e., a "bunch of crap") is a qualitative rather than a quantitative application, and can be appropriately applied to quantities from two inches to two hundred cubic feet.
9. **pocket**: a group of stuff found as a more or less cohesive unit among a larger group of stuff in a box or series; hence, its size is relative to the parent unit but is commonly no more than three cubic feet.
10. **glop**: a grouping of mismatched and/or structurally unsound containers heaped together into roughly the size of the average Barcalounger<sup>(R)</sup> (For those readers younger than 35, substitute "La-Z-Boy<sup>(R)</sup>" for "Barcalounger<sup>(R)</sup> .")
11. **mess**: organizational state is self-explanatory; in terms of size, if it will take less than half a day to straighten out, the quantity is not a mess but a "clump" (see above).
12. **gob**: (also **oodle**; both commonly used as plural): more than two and less than 30 cubic feet, quantity parameters being somewhat dependent on organizational state.
13. **pile** (commonly but not exclusively used as plural): the maximum amount of any material capable of maintaining vertical stability (this will be larger for folders than for business envelopes, for example).
14. **mass**: approximately the amount of material that will fit securely on one or two wooden pallets.
15. **mega-glop**: a disorganized collection of crushed and crumbling boxes not taller than the average archivist nor wider than an average garage door.
16. **mountain**: sufficient file drawers and boxes (on shelves) to fill a small warehouse or the basement of a modest office building; something of a misnomer, because if such a quantity were actually heaped into the shape of a mountain, it would be "way-too-much" (see below).
17. **way-too-much**: who was the idiot who let *this* through the door?
18. **ton** (commonly but not exclusively used as a plural): once thought to be used only by government archivists, this term is also the province of manuscripts curators who appraise the records of modern business and members of Congress; refers generally to the quantity of material stored by a Fortune 500 company, a government department, or a U.S. senator for 15 years—or the quantity stored by such creators for one hundred years *before* the archivists are called in.

Readers will be glad to know that we are planning a lexicon to supplement this glossary, though proving the origins of many of these terms has proven to be problematic. In the meantime, our attention has been drawn to the fact that the SAA glossary is now woefully out of date. Within the last eight years, we have seen a near revolution in archival terminology. But those in our profession charged with monitoring its language have permitted important gaps to grow in what is an increasingly "professional" vocabulary (a "professional" vocabulary is, of course, one that cannot be understood except by true professionals).

For example, the glossary contains an entry for "Documentation Strategy" (determining, in consultation with users and creators, the right things to create or to collect in order to adequately document a certain region or topic) but not its near cousin, "Documentation Planning" (determining, in consultation with users and creators, the right things to create or to collect in order to adequately document a certain institution). The profession has not even bothered to coin a phrase for the vast amount of archival work omitted from both terms. We propose the term **Tactical Documentation**: determining, all by yourself, what's important to collect.

Since the publication of the official glossary we have also seen the birth and acceptance of Functional Analysis: studying the functions of an institution or organization, in order to determine the information or records needed

to document those functions. It follows, then, that studying the records needed to document late twentieth-century American families must heretofore be known as "Dysfunctional Analysis."

The Canadians have given us the concept of "Total Archives:" archives that collect material in all media and from both private and public sources. Presumably, a repository that does not succeed in being (or want to be) "total" must have a name as well. Why not "Product 19 (TM) Archives"? Also from north of our border comes "Macroappraisal" (sadly missing from the 1992 glossary): appraising not records but the functions of records creators. Less well known, though not necessarily less useful, is a self-explanatory term gaining vogue in California and Colorado: "Macrame Appraisal."

There is clearly much work to be done. It is our hope that perhaps others—younger, stronger, better educated—will take up the work. Or, if not them, then at least some archival graduate students with time on their hands.

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## News, Notes, & Announcements

### University Archives of the Scott Memorial Library Receives Grant Award

The Scott Memorial Library of Thomas Jefferson University recently received a grant in the amount of \$15,000 from the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. The grant provides funds to hire a project archivist to process, arrange, and describe the papers of the Solis-Cohen family located in Jefferson's University Archives and Special Collections Department. At 110 linear feet, the Solis-Cohen family papers is the largest collection of manuscript materials held by the Archives. It is also the largest collection of Solis-Cohen materials in the Philadelphia area. Dating from the early 1850s through 1960, the collection documents more than 100 years of one of the most significant eras in the history of medicine through the papers of one of the most prominent Jewish families in the Philadelphia area. The materials mainly focus on the education, professional career, and medical practice of Dr. Jacob daSilva Solis-Cohen and his son, Dr. Myer Solis-Cohen. For additional information, contact University Archivist Beth Bensman at (215) 503-8097 or [beth.bensman@mail.tju.edu](mailto:beth.bensman@mail.tju.edu).

*Beth Bensman, Thomas Jefferson University*

### Kansas History Goes Hi-Tech

Soon portions of the Research Library at the Kansas State Historical Society and the Kansas Collection of the University of Kansas (KU) Libraries will be available 24 hours a day. Even in the middle of the night a researcher will be able to look up approximately 1,000 original documents from the Territorial Kansas period on the Internet thanks to a federal grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) awarded to KU and the Kansas State Historical Society.

The \$224,076 IMLS grant provides funds to scan the best Territorial Kansas information and artifacts from both institutions and put them on the Internet. Primary sources from this period of United States history are critical to understanding the beginnings of the Civil War.

Along with the digitized documents and artifacts, the grant will help the libraries develop teaching materials for instructors at middle schools, high schools, and colleges to be used with the Internet collection. The materials will fulfill portions of the Kansas Department of Education's recently drafted history standards for US and Kansas history. Grant funds were distributed in December 1999 and the scanning could start in Spring 2000. Project completion is slated for late 2002. Contact Mary Rosenbloom at (785) 864-8921 or [mrosenbl@ukans.edu](mailto:mrosenbl@ukans.edu).

*Sherry Williams, University of Kansas*

### Moorland-Spingarn Research Center Launches Electronic Journal

Howard University has collaborated with MCI WorldCom to create an electronic journal, *HUArchivesNet*, which is hosted by the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center. Funded by a \$100,000 grant from MCI WorldCom, the journal's premier issue was launched on the university's web site in August 1999. The theme of that first issue was *Race and Culture: The Progressive Era, 1865-1910*. More recent issues explored the themes *The Voting Rights Act, 1965* (November 1999) and *"We Wish to Plead Our Own Cause": The Black Press: Past, Present, and Future* (February 2000). These first issues provide a rare and unique look into African American history and culture reflected in the archival resources housed at Howard University and in the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center particularly. Each issue of the journal bears a theme and includes feature articles on that theme by guest contributors both within and outside the Howard University community; teaching documents; items of interest for young historians; book reviews; a gallery of images; bibliographies; and columns written by the directors of the university's programs in Afro-American Studies and International Affairs. To take this journey into the past, visit the web site at [www.huarchivesnet.howard.edu](http://www.huarchivesnet.howard.edu).

*Joellen ElBashir, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University*

### **It Takes a Village to Process a Collection**

Treasures are emerging daily and a number of people are getting involved as part of the St. Johnsbury Archives Collaborative, a unique three-year partnership to catalog the documentary record of the community. The latest discovery emerged at St. Johnsbury Academy. It is an oversized, hand-colored photograph in an enormous gilt frame bearing the caption "From Artists Point, Yosemite." Jeff Gilbert, a photo-historian volunteer for the collaborative, identified it as the work of William Henry Jackson, a pioneer photographer of the Western landscape during the railroad expansion era. Jackson was affiliated with the Detroit Publishing Company, which in 1904 published seven million images of the American West. His work is credited with influencing public opinion to the extent that President Ulysses S. Grant inaugurated the National Park system. Jackson's works are included in prominent photograph collections, such as the International Museum of Photography at the George Eastman House in New York, the Smithsonian Institution, the Chicago Historical Society, and the Library of Congress.

"The discovery of the Jackson photo epitomizes the many reasons for launching the St. Johnsbury Archives Collaborative," said Selene Colburn, who was hired by the collaborative as project archivist in October 1999. "There will be many more wonderful discoveries as the project advances. The information yielded from the project will reveal deeper and richer information about St. Johnsbury and how our town's collections fit in with trends and issues in national history."

The goal of the St. Johnsbury Archives Collaborative is to organize, catalog, preserve, and make accessible the holdings of the Fairbanks Museum, the St. Johnsbury Athenaeum, St. Johnsbury Academy, and the Town of St. Johnsbury. The St. Johnsbury Historical Society is also a partner in the project. The collaborative was funded in 1999 with a three-year \$143,191 grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). The St. Johnsbury material to be processed includes letters, diaries, account books, photographs of all types, scrapbooks, personal papers, institutional records, architectural drawings, and other materials. Colburn began work with the Fairbanks Museum archives last fall and is slated to work on the other partners' collections starting in fall 2000. She took time in January to survey the collections at the town, the academy, and the Athenaeum.

In addition to her involvement with the discovery of the Jackson photograph, Colburn has recruited Gilbert and GED students of Tom Woods at the Caledonia County Work Camp of the St. Johnsbury Correctional Center as volunteers at the Fairbanks Museum's archives. The students are cataloguing the diaries of George Felch, a piano tuner and town band leader. Among other volunteers are two Civil War re-enactors who are assisting Colburn with a collection of Civil War letters and diaries. The guide to the papers of William Henry Proctor has been completed, and descriptive data will soon be posted in ArcCat, a World Wide Web-accessible database of Vermont's archival holdings, which is hosted by University of Vermont's Bailey/Howe Library.

Beyond ensuring that the collections are properly preserved and made accessible to researchers on site and through ArcCat, the participants want St. Johnsbury's institutions to be able to continue to employ a professional archivist past the grant term date. Colburn and Ann Lawless, project manager and Fairbanks Museum Registrar, are busy with a campaign to engage further local, statewide, and national interest in the project. For more information, contact Ann Lawless at (802) 748-2372.

*Christine Weideman, Yale University*

### **Selections of Bernstein Collection Digitized**

The composer, conductor, writer, and teacher Leonard Bernstein (1918-1990) was one of 20<sup>th</sup>-century America's most important musical figures. Bernstein came to national prominence virtually overnight through a last-minute conducting debut with the New York Philharmonic, when he substituted for Bruno Walter on November 14, 1943. Because Bernstein was a national figure from the very beginning of his career, his friend and teacher Helen Coates, who became his secretary in 1944, maintained his papers meticulously and extensively annotated many of them.

The Library of Congress's Bernstein Collection, acquired over a forty-four-year time span, offers a remarkably complete record of his life and is one of the Music Division's richest repositories in the variety of scope of its materials. Its more than 400,000 items, including music and literary manuscripts, correspondence, photographs, audio and video recordings, fan mail, and other types of materials extensively document Bernstein's extraordinary life and career.

The online Leonard Bernstein Collection makes available a selection of 85 photographs, 177 scripts from the Young People's Concerts, 74 scripts from the Thursday Evening Previews, and more than 1,100 pieces of correspondence, in addition to the collection's complete finding aid. Three categories have been included from the personal correspondence: correspondence between Bernstein and his family; between Bernstein and Helen Coates; and between Bernstein and his two most significant mentors, Aaron Copland and Serge Koussevitzky.

Two special presentations highlight the online collection: the Photo Gallery, containing all the online photographs arranged chronologically; and "Professor Lenny" by Joseph Horowitz, an in-depth article on Bernstein as music educator originally published in *The New York Review of Books*. The Leonard Bernstein collection can be found at the following URL: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/lbhtml/> Please direct any questions to [ndlpcoll@loc.gov](mailto:ndlpcoll@loc.gov).

*Contributed by Mary M. Wolfskill, Library of Congress*

### **Section Website Update**

*by Craig Wright*

By the time you read this the section web site design should be finalized. Yale University has graciously agreed to host the site. The web committee, consisting of Christine Weideman, Miriam Spectre, Karen Spicher, and Craig Wright, has reviewed several versions and are currently putting on the finishing touches. This site should be online and accessible some time this spring.

The site content currently consists of the section bylaws, newsletter, leadership roster, and links to resources that the Section has helped create, such as the deeds of gift brochure. There is an additional section on section activities, which will link to section news about the SAA Denver meeting as soon as it becomes available.

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## **MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES SECTION**

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

Next deadline: June 16, 2000

Send to Kathryn M. Neal ([see address below](#))

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