

Sharing More Than Space: The Outcomes of Merging Archives and Museum Practices at Seton Hall University

Amanda Mita, Archives & Special Collections Technical Services Head | Seton Hall University Libraries

Hybrid Repository

The Archives & Special Collections Center at Seton Hall University Libraries is the repository for both University Archives and the Walsh Gallery and houses:

- Rare books and manuscripts
- Historical objects and ephemera
- University Art Collection
- Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology Collection
- Archdiocese of Newark archival and patrimonial collections
- University Records Management files



Problem

As a dual repository for the University Archives and the Walsh Gallery, archives and gallery staff regularly faced miscommunications about collections management, space management, environmental and security issues, and the interpretation of policies and procedures.

These miscommunications were a result of differences in professional training, education, and understanding of collections care practices and significantly hindered the progress of both units. Constant misunderstanding not only impeded progress in collections management, but also generated a great deal of relational strain among colleagues. In order to share a space and manage our collections effectively, we needed to bridge the gap between our professional practices and standards and modify our facility to accommodate both museum and archival collections. Given the disjointed nature of what should be integrated professional fields, there was no cut and dried approach to synthesizing our expertise and practices.

Actions Taken

Vault Task Force

- Committee formed to review and revise existing policies and to create new joint policies and procedures consistent with both museum and archival standards and best practices
- Review and approve all new major accessions and deaccessions
- Jointly decide on matters of space, security, and access
- A weekly forum for general communication and clarification on collections care matters

Large-Scale Inventory

- Large-scale, top-level inventory of vault conducted by both Archives and Gallery staff over course of 3 months
- Designed to gain a better understanding of the nature and specific preservation needs of our collections
- Includes descriptions, condition reports, treatment recommendations, and staff assignments
- Inventory serves as strategic collections management document for the Vault Task Force

Project Development

- As a result of the inventory, several immediate projects were created:
- Accession Project - Reviewed all existing documentation for archival collections
 - Athletics Project – Surveyed Athletics Collection and created new collecting policy
 - Print Project – Surveyed University Art and archival prints; rehoused in proper painting racks and made preservation recommendations
 - Blueprints Project – Effort to gain control over extensive blueprint collection

Policies

Combined Collecting Policy

"Both units are committed to a responsible level of collecting by staying within the constraints of available storage space, ability to process material within a reasonable amount of time, and ability to provide for the care and preservation of, and access to, the material."

Archives, Art, and Artifact Policy

"The Seton Hall University Museum and Art Collections and the Msgr. William Noé Field Archives and Special Collections Center work closely to preserve collections that may overlap at times. This policy outlines those things that would clearly belong to the Museum and Art Collections [art, cultural artifact], those that would fall under the Archives [records, manuscript collections], and those that will be judged by representatives of both groups individually."

Vault/Restricted Work Areas Access Policy

"SPC and Walsh Gallery's shared vault facilities are for the storage of its various collections. The restricted work areas beyond the reception desk are for activities related to the documentation, maintenance, and cataloging (processing/accessioning) of collections materials. This policy balances the need for access to secured storage and restricted work areas, with collections care and security in mind, for the best interests of the collections' long-term care, safety and preservation. It designates the policies and procedures as well as the staff members who may approve or grant access to restricted work areas and the vault."

Role Delineation and Collections Care

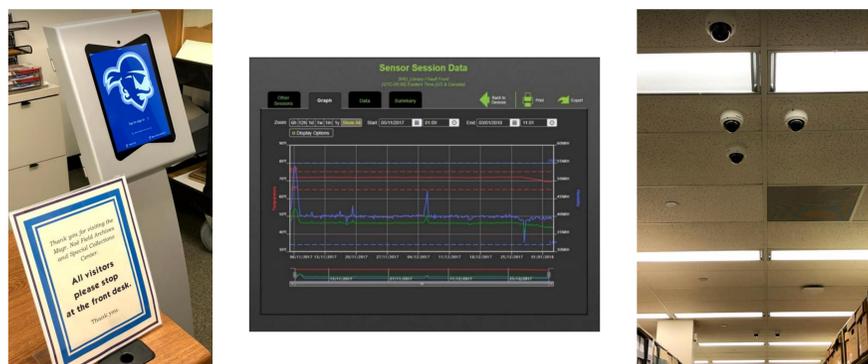
The Inventory Project was designed to expose the nature of our collections and the kind of care required to maintain them properly. In doing so, we were able to determine which unit should care for certain kinds of materials, regardless of whether those materials belonged to archival or museum collections. In our "Recommendations" column, we indicated whether materials should be transferred to the care of Gallery or Archives staff, among other options. In making these recommendations, we discovered how heavily we would rely upon one another in the care of our collections moving forward.

Item/Collection Name	Accession Num	Box Number	Collection Number	Location	Brief Description	Condition	Recommendations	Rehous
AB Boland papers			ADN 2.6	101-A-1	chausable, 2 stoles, Mary statue	Fair	Transfer to Gallery	Yes
Dail Retrospective, 50 of 350 w/ certifi 84.2.32				101-A-1	large flat files, prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Dail Retrospective, 50 of 350 w/ certifi 84.2.33				101-A-1	large flat files, prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Dail Retrospective, 50 of 350 w/ certifi 84.2.34				101-A-1	large flat files, prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Dail Retrospective, 50 of 350 w/ certifi 84.2.31				101-A-1	large flat files, prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
AB Boland papers			ADN 2.6	101-A-2	2 mitres, 1 preaching stole, 1 commi Fair	Fair	Transfer to Gallery	Yes
AB Boland papers			ADN 2.6	101-A-3	Deacon's tunic, bishop's mitre, hume Fair	Fair	Transfer to Gallery	Yes
Facing East folio			RARE NC139.L47.M51.19	101-A-4	Folio, catalogued as Rare	Good	Other	
Cotanna Traiana folio			RARE NA0340.R8.C81.20	101-A-4	Folio, catalogued as Rare	Good	Other	
Jenny Lynn - Little Rituals photographs				101-A-4	matted prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Kristen Capp - Photographing Inside the Hutterite Community				101-A-4	matted prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Erica Lemard - Selected Images				101-A-4	matted prints	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
John Doran Songs and Sonnets: Lithographs by June Wayne				101-A-4	folio	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
Survey 1986 folio				101-A-4	folio	Good	Transfer to Gallery	
9 catalogued newspapers				101-A-5	catalogued newspapers in envelopes	Other	Other	
New York Tablet, 1857-58				101-A-5	periodical in green case	Poor	Other	
11 catalogued rare books				101-A-5	periodicals	Poor	Other	Yes
Centennial NY Archdiocese				101-A-5	periodical	Diaccession	Diaccession	

Selection from Inventory spreadsheet

Environmental and Security Controls

- Security cameras and card swipe access installed in vault area
- Electronic guest sign-in for reading room and restricted areas
- Museum lighting installed in vault area
- Temperature and humidity monitoring system installed



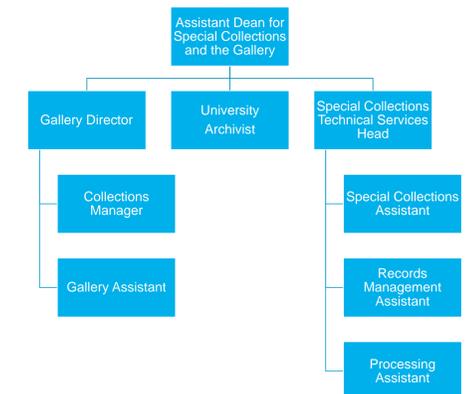
Outcomes

To share a space effectively, we needed to find ways to bridge the gap between our professional practices and standards.

- Enhanced Communication through daily SPALLERY email (Special Collections and Gallery Outlook Email Group) and weekly Vault Task Force Meeting
 - Heightened security and environmental controls
- Joint policies and collaborative projects; cross-training in museum and archival practices resulting in better collections care
- Hiring a hybrid manager with both museum and archives experience

Organizational Chart

While remaining separate units, the Archives and the Gallery now function as one Special Collections Center and fall under the supervision of an Assistant Dean with both museum and archival experience. This hybrid position was created in an effort to coordinate joint collections management efforts and maintain fluid lines of communication between our units.



Lessons Learned

- Professional terminology proved to be a challenge in interpreting policies and understanding one another's progress. Terms such as *accessioning* and *processing* have different meanings in the museum and archival professions.
- Letting go of territorialism related to collections is key to success. Territorialism arose where there was a lack of mutual understanding regarding professional practices. A museum professional may be better suited to care for certain archival objects, just as an archival professional may be better suited to care for certain museum objects.
- While our units have established productive working relationships, it was essential to bring someone on board who is able to tie everything together from an administrative perspective.

Implications for Archival Education

Current archival curriculum does not adequately equip professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to manage art, artifacts, and other three-dimensional objects.

In order to assess the current state of integration of museum and archival education, we conducted a survey of Masters-level archival studies programs listed in the SAA Directory of Archival Education. Of the 34 programs surveyed, the majority offered archival studies as a concentration or specialization within a Library and Information Science (LIS) program. Of those programs, only four offered courses focused on managing museum objects.

The prevalence of three-dimensional objects in archival collections and repositories calls for a revision of the core archival knowledge within the archival curriculum.