Notes from the Chair

Fall is always a time for reflection and regeneration for me. I get energized by connections with colleagues at the SAA conference; the temperature begins to drop here in Athens, Georgia; and thousands of students return to campus ready to make their mark on the campus, if not the world. This renewed vigor and enthusiasm has dovetailed wonderfully with the beginning of my tenure as chair of the Reference, Access and Outreach Section (RAO). At our section meeting back in August the RAO steering committee and I set an agenda for the year ahead that builds on the wonderful work of past committees and explores new directions for the section. At the core of this agenda is a commitment to be responsive to the needs and interests of members of RAO, and to ensure that each member has a clear path to share ideas and concerns and to become an active member in the organization—in short, that all RAO members have a place at the table.

There are many ways for us to make the most of the place at the table. RAO has several active working groups devoted to many if not all the key challenges and opportunities we face providing reference, access and outreach, and the chairs for these groups certainly welcome new members ready to roll up their sleeves and share ideas and imagine solutions. Information about all the active working groups is available at the RAO website and updates from many appear in this and other newsletters. If you have an idea or a concern that RAO needs to take up, then get in touch with me or a member of the steering committee. Another great way to experience the full magic of RAO is to give the section your two cents. This newsletter provides a forum for members to share projects and photographs, to weigh tough tradeoffs and benefits, to test new theories or approaches, to commune over good news and bad, and to offer opportunities and to find partners. Section leaders will always keep members apprised of relevant news or actions from SAA and other allied professional organizations, but what makes the newsletter valuable is the writing submitted by members. RAO Communications Liaison Lisa Sjoberg sends out a call for content for the newsletter a few weeks before each edition comes out. I challenge all members to answer this call!

Of course, the newsletter is only one of many ways to share your two cents. Thanks to the explosion of social media tools RAO members can chat with each other in real time all the time via RAO’s Facebook page or even via the listserv. If you haven’t already “liked” the RAO Facebook page, please get clicking! In between newsletters and hanging out on Facebook, the RAO listserv and website serve as the communication hubs for all official communications about the section. If you have questions about the website, please contact Aimee Morgan, who has just begun her tenure as RAO’s Web Liaison. Finally, remember that RAO Section leaders are just a phone call or an email away.

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Notes from the Chair, continued

Perhaps the activity that reflects the relative vibrancy of a section or roundtable is its annual membership meeting and program. Last year the RAO steers tried out a new scheme for the section program format—a Marketplace for Ideas—that we hoped would respond to members’ requests for more time to interact/network informally and more opportunities to thresh relevant ideas with RAO colleagues. The room was too small, too loud, and the meeting time too short, but even in spite of these logistical challenges, feedback from many members through word of mouth and the follow up survey suggests that the Marketplace concept has fans. As we look ahead to the next section meeting in New Orleans, the program committee has decided to try the Marketplace concept again with some refinements and some new twists. However, what will remain the same is that there will be many opportunities for members to volunteer to be “vendors,” “hawkers,” and “shoppers.” Stay tuned to the listserv for more details about this exciting program and opportunities to join in the fun.

Wanted: Photographs of Archivists in Action!

The RAO Section is seeking submissions of photographs for our Facebook page, website and newsletter. Here are some of the possibilities for content:

- Archivists teaching or training
- Archivists developing/installing exhibits
- Archivists hosting programs and events
- Archivists working one on one with patrons
- Archivists working out database structures on a white board or working at computer
- National History Day (e.g., events, working with competitors, final projects)
- American Archives Month (e.g., events, publications)

Images of our day-to-day lives as RAO archivists are ideal. Please send submissions to Lisa Sjoberg, sjoberg@cord.edu, or Aimee Morgan, amorgan2@stanford.edu.

Thank you!
Fifty Years of Loaning Archival Material Between Archives

Yes folks, it has been fifty years since the founding of the Wisconsin Area Research Center network. One of the most important features of the network is the transfer of archival materials between the various Area Research Centers (ARCs) and the mother ship, the Wisconsin Historical Society. The Wisconsin Historical Society and the University of Wisconsin (UW) System cooperate in this network of Area Research Centers, which are located at UW campus libraries throughout the state and at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. Each Area Research Center serves a specific geographic region. Records created in and focused on the region served by a particular ARC are housed permanently at the appropriate Center. The Society maintains a courier service which allows members of the network to borrow collections housed elsewhere for use by their local patrons.

How does the borrowing/loaning work, you ask? The requests are made by one ARC to another by a simple e-mail asking to borrow something. The loaning ARC responds whether the collection is available. Then arrangements are made with the transfer service for pick-up. The material is carefully packed in a gray bin with the appropriate transfer paperwork and the bin is then sealed. The courier service that operates between UW campus libraries to transfer inter-library loan (ILL) materials in red bins also picks up the archives’ gray bins. Once a bin arrives at the borrowing ARC, the materials are unpacked and checked against the paperwork. The researcher is notified and they have, usually, 30 days to use the materials, with extensions being authorized if needed. When the researcher is finished, the whole process is repeated in reverse.

One of the exceptions to how this works is the ARC in Ashland, Wisconsin, which is not on a UW campus but at the Northern Great Lakes Visitor Center. Transfers with Ashland occur the way all transfers used to happen before the advent of the courier service. A staff member of the Ashland ARC, the borrowing ARC, or the Wisconsin Historical Society has to actually come or go from Ashland (way up on Lake Superior), carrying the boxes in their car. Often the material will come from Ashland to the Wisconsin Historical Society and then back out through the courier service to the ARC requesting the material.

The whole ARC network transfer system worked for many years like transfers to Ashland now work. It could take a very long time for a researcher to get the requested material! Today, a researcher requesting material from another ARC can often be using the borrowed archives collection in two days because the courier system runs every week day! Archival materials may be borrowed for research, for exhibit, or for class instruction. The service is used by students, professors, genealogists, and the general public. For those of you who shiver at the thought of archival material leaving your archives, it should be noted that not one single item in fifty years has been lost. Best of all, our researchers love the service!

For more information, contact Kathryn Otto
Head, University Archives and Area Research Center
University of Wisconsin-River Falls
(715) 425-3567 or kathryn.otto.uwrf.edu

RAO Recommends Endorsement of Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Archives and Special Collections Materials to SAA

After careful consideration and input from membership at the August 2012 RAO Section meeting and the RAO steering committee, Jill Severn as Chair of RAO has submitted a recommendation to the SAA Standards Committee to endorse a new set of external guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loan of Archives and Special Collections Materials. RAO joins the Archives Management Roundtable in this recommendation. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), a division of the American Library Association (ALA) developed these guidelines and the Board of Directors of ACRL adopted them in January 2012. The full text of the guidelines is available at www.ala.org/acrl/standards/specialcollections. Jennifer Schaffner and Christian Du Pont brought the guidelines to the attention of the RAO steering committee and assisted with the preparation of the recommendation document.
Collaboration, Partnerships & Community: Reaching Out to Genealogists

Recent successes in crowdsourcing, collaboration, and partnerships in the genealogical community have directly impacted archives and archivists. Genealogists rely on archivists and archives for their collection knowledge, expertise and innovative outlook, but genealogists can and should also be a resource for archivists. Whether through social media or local activism, genealogists are goal-oriented and willing to help!

Current Environment: Common Interests

One great example from 2012 of genealogists collaborating with archivists is the indexing of the 1940 census. With 160,000 volunteers indexing the April release of the 1940 Federal census, a projected six-month project took 124 days. This had such a positive impact that FamilySearch now has another project, the indexing of Immigration and Naturalization records. Another ongoing project is the War of 1812 Digitization Project, which involves the Federations of Genealogical Societies (FGS), the National Archives, Fold3, and Ancestry.com. With the War of 1812 pensions in such fragile condition, the urgently needed digitization will not only result in providing free access for all, but will electronically preserve 180,000 files!

Reconnecting with your Local Genealogists: Online and in Person

There are several avenues to connect with genealogists online ranging from Geneabloggers and Twitter to the Records Preservation and Access Committee (RPAC). Geneabloggers is a collaborative where bloggers who focus on genealogy and family history come together. Several of them are also on Twitter. Many genealogists use Twitter to follow trends and specifically follow the SAA feed because that news directly impacts them. For example, if local archives are going to be affected by budget cuts that might result in shorter hours or staff reductions, genealogists will need to know this and will be most interested in anything they can do to help. Another way to connect is to reach out to RPAC, which is a joint committee formed “to advise the genealogical community on ensuring proper access to historical records of genealogical value in whatever media they are recorded...” and includes the collaborative work of the National Genealogical Society, FGS, and the International Association of Jewish Genealogical Societies.

Locally, there are several historical and genealogical societies where you can get involved. FGS has Society Hall, where you can see local historical and genealogical societies to connect with genealogists in person. The Association of Professional Genealogists (APG) may have a local Chapter you could contact to see about attending a meeting and starting a discussion. Cross collaboration through re-Tweets, blogging, Facebook and within your community can also enhance partnerships.

Keeping the Collaboration going!

Genealogists are scattered everywhere within your community and if your Archives is facing budget cuts, decreased hours or staff, genealogists want to help. You are the records whisperers genealogists depend on to know where things are and how to use and interpret them. Whether you are arranging a scanning project or creating indexing guidelines for volunteers, genealogists will always make their time available to ensure these records accessible to the next generation.

- Footnotes are available on the bottom of page 5
The Claude Pepper Library, part of the Florida State University Libraries’ Division of Special Collections and Archives, is in a three-year partnership with the Kettering Foundation and the Association of Centers for the Study of Congress (ACSC) to convene public issues forums sponsored by staff from the Pepper Library and the University Libraries.

Several University Libraries staff members moderated these forums, which followed Kettering’s “deliberative democracy exchange” format in which various groups from the campus and local community (faculty, students, and Tallahassee citizens) met to discuss issues of national importance for the purpose of learning how to become aware of and work through differences of opinion. Prior to the forums, each participant read an issues guide to become aware of the three options to be discussed as possible solutions to these problems.

Kettering has also been partnering with the presidential libraries to create these forums for public deliberation and as a way for these libraries to showcase their collections.

The forums we held covered the national debt, containing the costs of campaign spending, and health care. Feedback from participants were developed into a report sent to the Kettering Foundation, in Dayton Ohio. Kettering staff subsequently met with congressional representatives in Washington, D.C. to present these findings so that legislation could be created that would address community concerns on these issues.

In addressing each forum, staff from the Pepper Library and Special Collections promoted the political collections housed at the Pepper Library that contained content covering the specific issues that were discussed. For the health care forum, a short brochure was created that cited related resources in the collections, so that interested parties could follow up and learn more about the historical significance of these topics.

At present, Special Collections/Pepper Library staff members Burt Altman and Robert Rubero, and other ACSC representatives are engaged in the partnership’s second phase, involving “naming and framing” a topic for discussion and creating an issue guide that promotes their political collections and the study of Congress. The Claude Pepper Library and FSU Libraries plan to utilize the guide to sustain these forum outreach efforts.

For more information, contact Burton Altman
University Librarian/Archivist
Florida State University
(850) 645-7962 or baltman@fsu.edu

Reaching Out to Genealogists, continued


American Archives Month at Denver Water

Denver Water (DW) is a public utility in Colorado that employs over 1,000 people. I work there in the Records and Document Administration Section as a lone arranger and records analyst. DW is not a collecting institution, thus most of the use of our archival records is internal; we do receive outside requests for archival and historical records, such as water tap papers for people doing research on their homes. This year, a number of DW events featured archival records.

After years of doing nothing more than hanging up posters from SAA or the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists, I decided to get serious about American Archives Month. I advertised to my primary customers: fellow employees. The two activities were flyers about our history shown through archival records, and a presentation on the history of becoming a public entity.

To point up ways that employees can readily access historical materials on our intranet site, Inflow, I created five flyers about DW history: the Moffat Water Tunnel; a variety of projects focused on putting people to work during the Great Depression; a bagpiping employee who worked as a blacksmith; the City Ditch; and the first employees of DW.

As shown in the images above, one side of the flyers had a visual or two with the phrase “October is Archives Month.” The other side featured interpretive information (except the Moffat Water Tunnel, which was a two-sided promotional card), including additional archival material, along with sources to find said records. To design the flyers, I used what I refer to as Use Only What You Need orange. This is the slogan and color scheme DW uses in external advertising. Only the employment flyer was a traditional 8.5x11 inch size, which was to accommodate the details within the similarly sized original. The other flyers were all smaller than letter, as I hoped to draw people’s attention with unusual sizes.

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The second aspect of Archives Month, the presentation, was composed entirely of archival records – no bullet lists for me! Using maps, drawings, report covers, agreements, photographs, etc., the presentation was intended to tell a story through archival materials. The first part featured the ten water companies that eventually merged into one company, the Denver Union Water Company, which the people of Denver voted to purchase in 1918. The second section focused on the many obstacles to public ownership. The third and final portion provided information on locating records physically and on Inflow, and information about other water archives, such as the Water Resources Archive at Colorado State University.

Aside from the Archives Month work, the archival records are getting good exposure through our PR department. I have worked to cultivate a relationship with our Communications and Marketing section, which has paid off in use of our materials for promotional events. In the last year, for instance, Denver Water celebrated the 75th anniversary of the Roberts Tunnel and the Moffat Collection System. Both the Roberts and Moffat tunnels are key components in bringing water from the mountains down to the arid plains where Denver resides. For both celebrations, historical photographs, maps, drawings, films, etc. were used by the Communications and Marketing folks. The commemorative events involved presentations, advertising, posters and displays, and a public celebration for Moffat that included dignitaries and members of the community.

Although I have not noticed an uptick in outside requests due to the Communications and Marketing activities, there has been additional traffic on our website and some inquiries made internally following Archives Month materials. For the intranet, the average visit to the web applications advertised in the month of October was six people per day; the first day I put out flyers, there were 19 visitors to our website. September totaled 145 visits, October 174 visits, and November 112 visits, so the Archives Month advertising probably caused the higher visitation numbers. There were 702 views of the pages in October, which are higher in number than actual visits since it is just means opening the page. The views for September numbered 630 and November 457.

At a minimum, I think the presentation and flyers offered employees interesting information about historical topics. I noticed many people reading the flyers in the cafeteria, even if just to alleviate the boredom of eating alone.

For more information, contact Holly Geist
Records Analyst/Archivist
Denver Water
Holly.Geist@denverwater.org
National History Day Task Force
The NHD subcommittee is working on migrating their online NHD toolkit website to Drupal. This will improve the content control and long-term stability of the Toolkit and will lead to an appearance more consistent with other SAA-related websites. Following the migration, the subcommittee will be looking at reviewing the content and appearance of the Toolkit to see where they can be improved. Additionally, the subcommittee will continue to work on publicizing the Toolkit to archivists, librarians, and teachers. If you or anyone you know are interested in joining the NHD subcommittee, please contact Shaun Hayes at shayes17@uwyo.edu.

Navigating Minimal Processing and Public Services Working Group
Over the past four months the Navigating Minimal Processing and Public Services Working Group focused its energy on updating its wiki/toolkit. The group is currently exploring sustainability issues regarding the long-term viability of the wiki/toolkit once the working group is disbanded. At present, these issues are still being explored and discussed. In the meantime, the working group hopes to release the wiki/toolkit for feedback from RAO members in the spring of 2013, with final revisions and improvements completed before the RAO section business meeting in New Orleans. While the wiki/toolkit is under review, the working group plans to discuss and explore the possibility of developing a best practices guide for archivists who provide access to minimally processing collections. If you would like to learn more about the Navigating Minimal Processing and Public Services Working Group please contact the group’s chair, Greg Kocken, at kockeng@uwec.edu.

Teaching with/about Primary Sources (TPS) Working Group
The TPS Working Group has been busily working on developing a survey to assess how archivists utilize primary sources in the teaching and learning that happens at their institutions. This survey was distributed last week, and we are excited to review your responses. We also continue to develop the bibliography of resources connected to TPS (http://www2.archivists.org/groups/reference-access-and-outreach-section/teaching-with-primary-sources-bibliography). Finally, we are brainstorming ways to create an online clearinghouse of lesson plans and materials connected to this topic. We are very excited about all of these projects and the possibilities to advance the role of archivists as educators. Please contact Mary Manning, mmmanning@uh.edu, or Lisa Sjoberg, sjoberg@cord.edu, co-chairs of the TPS working group, if you

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