

THE ACADEMIC ARCHIVIST
Newsletter of the College and University Section
Society of American Archivists

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/cnu/>

Vol. 21, No. 2, Summer 2004

FROM THE CHAIR

In September 2003, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) held a conference titled: “Exposing Hidden Collections”. (See, http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/ehc/EHC_conference_summary.html.) This meeting addressed the important challenges of providing access to uncataloged and unprocessed archival, manuscript, and rare book materials. In response to the conclusions reached at the conference, in January 2004, the C&UA Steering Committee endorsed, by a 5 to 1 vote (with one abstention), the statement of the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC) University Archivist Group. This statement is available at <http://www.cic.uiuc.edu/downloads/cic-uag-letter.pdf> and the ARL’s response is located at <http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/CICLtr.pdf>. If you are not already familiar with these proceedings, I encourage you to take some time to review these reports. Finally, at the SAA Annual Meeting, Tom Hyry will chair session #31 – “The Perfect Is the Enemy of the Good: Re-thinking the Problem of Backlogs,” which will be devoted to this very important issue.

Section members, in turn, have been working steadily on three main projects.

First, Christopher Prom and Ellen Swain of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign have shepherded the proposal for an updated College and University Archives Reader (Reader) through the SAA Publications Board. They, in turn, will edit the volume. Serving on the Reader Advisory Board are Brenda Burk, Tamar Chute, David Gartrell, Stephen Janick, Nancy Kunde, Chris Laico, Aaron Purcell, Elizabeth Slomba, and myself.

Second, Kate Bowers of Harvard has been spearheading an effort to create a thesaurus of terms for use in college and university archives. SAA has agreed to publish the thesaurus, and Kate is organizing a meeting for the editorial board and persons interested in the project to be held during the Annual Meeting in Boston.

Third, I have been working with Brian Doyle, the SAA Webmaster, on a listserv to improve on-going communication among the members of our Section. In the beginning of June, we attempted what turned out to be a premature launch of a discussion list, and I'd like to apologize a final time for any inconvenience you may have experienced. However, we do have a list established that will serve as a moderated announcement list for timely business communications from the Section Steering Committee. We will continue to work on creating a C&UA discussion list, which you will be “invited” to join, and which will foster a focused interchange about matters of interest to academic archivists.

Of course, the main event in the Section’s year is the upcoming SAA Meeting in Boston. Vice-Chair Tom Rosko has been working on a stimulating program for our Section meeting, which

will be held on Thursday morning, August 5, 2004 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM. We will also elect a new Chair. Since we have a more civilized hour for our meeting this year, please do come and join in.

Further, all of the Section endorsed session proposals were accepted by the Program Committee. Therefore, I encourage your attendance at the panels delineated below:

- | No. | Session Title |
|------------|--|
| 24. | “Digital Institutional Repositories: Opportunities for Archivists,” Friday, August 6, 2004, 11:00 AM-12:30 PM, chaired by Kevin Glick, Yale University |
| 31. | “The Perfect is the Enemy of the Good: Re-thinking the Problem of Backlogs,” Friday, August 6, 2:00 PM-3:30 PM, chaired by Tom Hyry, Yale University Library |
| 62. | “Real-World Archives: Reports from the 2003-2004 NHPRC Archival Research Fellows,” Saturday, August 7, 2004, 1:00 PM-2:30 PM, chaired by Brenda Lawson, Massachusetts Historical Society |

Some other particularly interesting sessions being presented by our colleagues include:

- | No. | Session Title |
|------------|--|
| 4. | “Managing the Digital Desktop: Research Results and Initial Findings,” Thursday, August 5, 2004, 1:45 PM-3:15 PM, chaired by Paul Conway, Duke University Libraries |
| 13. | “Facilitating Description: Developing Standard Series,” Thursday, August 5, 2004, 3:45 PM-5:15 PM, chaired by Lisa Mix, University of California San Francisco |
| 22. | “Information Technology for Practicing Archivists,” Friday, August 6, 2004, 11:00 AM-12:30 PM, chaired by Diane E. Kaplan, Yale University Library |
| 43. | “Say What? Best Practices and Sample Projects for Digital Audio with a Survey of the Current State of Audio Collections,” Friday, August 6, 2004, 4:00 PM-5:30 PM, chaired by Mark Shelstad, University of Wyoming |
| 59. | “All for One and One for All? Cataloging All Kinds of Collections in One System,” Saturday, August 7, 2004, 1:00 PM-2:30 PM, chaired by Laurie A. Baty, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum |

Please do let me know, in turn, if you have any concerns that you'd like to see our Section address. Finally, I look forward to seeing some of you in Boston.

Claude Zachary
University of Southern California

BOSTON 2004: SAA's 68th Annual Meeting

College and University Archives Section Meeting (Thursday, August 5, 10:00 AM – Noon)

The College and University Archives Section meeting will include discussions about the current issues facing college and university archivists such as managing the multitude of descriptive tools; coming to grips with the competing interests of records management and archival concerns; and addressing the expectations of the small college archives.

SAA Publishing Thesaurus of Terms for Use in College and University Archives

Great news: SAA is preparing to go ahead and publish the proposed thesaurus of terms for use in college and university archives, to be edited and compiled by Kate Bowers of the Harvard University Archives.

She is in the process of creating an editorial board for the purpose of setting policies and reviewing terms. She is seeking volunteers and nominations of people willing to serve as board members. She is also soliciting contact information from anyone who has an interest in the project and from those who wish to contribute terms – whether entire thesauri or a single term.

To ensure the broadest coverage and the selection of the most widely-used terms, board members are sought from as many different institutional settings as possible (large research institutions, small liberal arts colleges, large land-grant institutions, specialized research centers with an educational component, smaller state-funded institutions, historically African-American colleges, colleges affiliated with a single religious group, single-sex colleges, etc.) It is hoped that we can attract interest from colleagues in the U.K., Canada, and Australia in an effort to determine if it is possible to expand the range of institutional settings.

The editorial board will meet near the time of the SAA Annual Meeting in Boston. The Harvard University Archives in Cambridge (a quick ride on public transport) can provide the venue for this first meeting.

If you are interested in being a board member, please contact her with:

- *Your name
- *Job title
- *Institution name
- *Current and prior institutional description: location, size, focus, context, etc.
(For example: “45,000-student land-grant institution, emphasis on undergraduate education, most concentrations in agriculture and science, and with a teachers’ college and medical school. Founded as agricultural college in 1895.”)
- *Indicate if you are able to attend a meeting in Cambridge at about the same time as SAA in Boston.

Project web site URL: <http://hul.harvard.edu/~kate/thesaurus/>

“Archives in the Heritage Health Index”

In July of 2004, approximately 16,000 archives, libraries, museums, historical societies, and other collecting institutions will receive a questionnaire for the Heritage Health Index, the nation’s first comprehensive preservation needs assessment of cultural, historical, and scientific materials. The survey is being conducted by Heritage Preservation in partnership with the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The role of archives is crucial to this study, because archives: 1) hold unique materials, 2) contain all media and formats, 3) present a wide variety of conservation and preservation challenges, and 4) require more than minimal levels of access.

It can be a challenge to locate archives within the typical college and university structure. Like nesting dolls, archival units can often be found within Special Collections, which are themselves found within the academic library. In some cases, the institution’s own archives are kept separately from other archival units, which may be distributed across several administrative departments. Making sure that all archives within a single institution are included in the survey is the first challenge. Academic libraries and museums receiving the survey will be instructed to include their archival collections in their responses. If it appears that a college or university’s archival collections are administratively separate from, for instance, the library holdings, both the library and archives will receive their own Heritage Health Index questionnaires.

The second challenge is to look beyond institutional identity and attempt to document the significance of archives, not only in libraries but also in museums, historical societies, archaeological repositories, and scientific research collections held by university departments. In order to represent fully the role of archives in the collections that make up our nation’s heritage, the survey instrument was designed to capture both the primary function of the institution filling out the questionnaire and any other secondary functions. Responses to this issue will provide quantitative data on the role of archival work within institutions that do not identify themselves primarily as “archives.”

Only a high degree of participation can ensure reliable project results. It is critical for collecting institutions to respond to the survey and contribute information on the size and condition of their holdings, adequacy of storage, degree of access, and conservation and preservation needs. Tests of the survey questionnaire showed that institutions who participated considered the exercise a helpful self-assessment that put them in better shape to develop their own long-range preservation plans and pursue outside funding.

Support for the Heritage Health Index has been given by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Getty Grant Program, Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Bay Foundation, Peck Stacpoole Foundation, and Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation.

More information on the Heritage Health Index is available at: www.heritagepreservation.org.

IN THE NEWS

Arizona: Arizona State University Archives Releases First Digital Video Production

The Arizona State University Archives and University Libraries produced and released their first digital video production as part of Homecoming in October 2003. *ASU Generations* features historic film footage, still photographs and ASU Band music from the archives collections. It was presented online and in several venues during the weeklong Homecoming celebration and on laptops at several exhibits during the First Annual ASU Homecoming Block Party. The 16 minute-digital-video provides a glimpse at ASU from its founding in 1885 to 2003.

This visual history of the university was well-received by students, alumni, faculty and administrators; each college dean received a copy on DVD. Familiar campus scenes and historic views of university icons, like mascot Sparky, ignited school spirit amongst students, alumni and faculty. The celebration of ASU history continued this May, as *ASU Generations* played for an hour on 4 large video screens as the family and friends of the 5000 ASU graduates filed into ASU's Wells Fargo Arena for the 2004 commencement.

“This was an opportunity for us to showcase our film and video collections and demonstrate our ability to collaborate with technical staff from the Libraries’ technology department. We were delighted by the positive response we received from all corners of the university”, said University Archivist Rob Spindler.

The video includes digitized photographs, manuscripts, artifacts, ephemera, music and film clips selected from 30 different historic videotapes, films and vinyl audio recordings in the University Archives collections. Preservation copies of vintage film and video materials were made during the production process. *ASU Generations* is available in VHS and DVD, and also as a streaming video file online. High speed connectivity is required to view the online version, available at: <http://www.asu.edu/lib/archives/generations.htm>.

New Jersey: Seton Hall University Presents Fourth Annual Monsignor William Field University History and New Jersey Catholicism Lecture Series

The Monsignor William N. Field Memorial Lecture Series on Catholic New Jersey and University History ended its fourth season and was a great success in terms of the quality of the presentations and attendance. A total of five different lectures were conducted from March to May 2004 and were attended by an average of 15 to 30 individuals. This series revolved around the theme of “Restoration, Research, Writing and Renewal” and included such titles/speakers as: “New Jersey Catholicism – A View from the New Jersey Turnpike and The Passionist Presence in Union City” by Father Rob Carbonneau, C.P., Historian/Director – Passionist Historical Archives; “Looking at the Art and Function of Books from the Seton Hall University Archives and Special Collections Center” by Heidi Stokes, Seton Hall University Graduate Student in Museum Professions; “Researching your New Jersey Catholic Ancestors Through Family History Resources” by Kate Dodds, Archives Assistant/Genealogist – Seton Hall University Archives; “A Historical Look at the Structures of the Archdiocese of Newark” by Greg Tobin,

Editor and Associate Publisher of *The Catholic Advocate*; and “The Building of the Cathedral Basilica of the Sacred Heart – A Family Perspective” by Liz Mitchell, Artist. Each of these presentations was aired live via Internet simulcast on the World Wide Web making these presentations truly global in reach. Many positive results were registered in response to this series which has contributed to our oral/video history collection in the process.

Recent updates, in turn, have been made to the Seton Hall University Archives & Special Collections homepage in the form of added information on research materials, links to Internet sites centered upon school history, the Archdiocese of Newark and Catholic New Jersey, Genealogy, Records Management and a new site devoted to Blessed Mother Elizabeth Ann Seton, our patroness and the first American-born Saint. This website can be viewed via the following URL: <http://library.shu.edu/sc-homepage.htm>. For more information about the Monsignor William N. Field Memorial Lecture Series, please see: <http://library.shu.edu/libnews/n20040206.htm>.

Oregon: “Alumna gift to improve accessibility of archives: Mary and Richard Solari's \$1.4 million gift will help improve the organization of the archives.” *Oregon Daily Emerald* (University of Oregon), by Chelsea Duncan (May 21, 2004)

A \$1.4 million gift will give University students, faculty and community members better access to the University’s 12,000 boxes of archive materials, which date back to 1873, according to a University press release.

Mary Solari, a 1946 graduate, and her husband – retired CEO, president and board chairman of Granite Construction Co. Richard Solari – donated the gift, which will endow the University’s historian archivist position.

Heather Briston, the University historian and archivist, said the gift will allow her to better catalogue the archives and do outreach to those who could benefit from the materials.

“Now I’ll be able to focus more on the archives,” she said, adding that her former job requirements included managing University records, such as student and personnel files. “Records management was a huge job.”

The library will also be able to hire a new employee to take on the records management position, giving Briston more time to collect materials.

The Solari family has provided support for the University Libraries since the late 1980s by contributing to the Knight Library’s expansion project, creating an endowment for information technology and teaching, establishing a faculty fellowship for library staff members and funding an endowment for library instructional services, according to the release.

The money counts toward the University's Campaign Oregon: Transforming Lives, a fundraising initiative that aims to raise \$600 million to support students, faculty, programs and facilities.

Briston said the gift will provide the means to educate those who are unaware of the archive materials’ diversity or their value to the community and the state.

“I have everything from the ridiculous to the sublime,” she said. She added that some of the memorabilia she has collected and seen over her two and a half years working at the University are the “weirdest” out of the materials.

“I don’t know why I have a stuffed iguana,” she said. “But I have a stuffed iguana.”

An alumna also donated a cowbell that was once used to heckle the Oregon State University crowds during Civil War games, she said. But while some materials have humorous historical value, others provide detailed accounts of notable events.

For example, Briston said there are documents detailing how the University came to be established as the first public institution of higher education in the state.

“All of these materials are unique,” she said.

Other items include the final screenplay draft of “Animal House,” student dissertations and theses and a collection of historical photographs. Briston said there is even a photo of the University's first day of classes.

Archive materials are located in the Knight Library, Fenton Hall and the Baker Downtown Center. The more than 12,000 boxes of material occupy over 19,000 linear feet of space.

Briston said the materials provide students, faculty and community members many research opportunities. She said students in the Clark Honors College are using the presidential office records and journalism students have used the photo archives to supplement documentaries.

“There’s lots of potential for use,” she said.

University Librarian Deborah Carver said the archives don’t just track the University's past but also show trends in higher education throughout history.

“I think there’s all sorts of lessons to be learned from the University’s past,” she said.

Briston said she hopes better accessibility will increase interest in the collection.

“I want to make sure everybody knows what I know,” she said.

For related articles, please see: http://www.dailyemerald.com/vnews/display.v/ART/2004/05/21/40ae2cb712e3d?in_archive=1

Please transmit your newsletter submissions to:

Christopher M. Laico, Archivist, Arthur W. Diamond Law Library,
Columbia University Law School at: claico@law.columbia.edu
