

MRC Courier

COMMITTEE

Volume 28, Number 2

Fall 2016



MRC Luncheon
AMM Annual Conference
2016



Voting membership in the Midwest Registrars Committee is open to those museum professionals who support the objectives of the MRC, who reside in the Midwest region (including Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin), and who hold positions such as registrar, collections manager, curator, volunteer, administrator, conservator, corporate registrar, or student.

A non-voting membership is available for individuals who are associated with for-profit organizations such as shipping companies, customs brokers, insurance firms, and other suppliers of materials and services, and individuals who reside outside of the Midwest region.

The membership period covers the calendar year (from January 1 through December 31). Annual dues are \$10.00 per year. For more information on the Midwest Registrars Committee or to join MRC, visit <http://midwestregistrars.org/>

From the Chair

Waaaaay back in the Summer, 2014 edition of the *Courier*, MRC Chair Rachel Vargas wrote, “For those of us who work at university art museums, September seems like the “new year” to us.” Quoting Rachel seems poignant to me for two reasons: first, it is the first time I will be greeting students’ returning to academic life at my museum. It also serves as a reminder that as I begin first my term as Chair, I have big shoes to fill. Under Rachel’s leadership, the MRC has continued to thrive, and we are fortunate to have her continue on the Board as Vice Chair.



On that note, thank you to MRC Nominations Chair, Cristin Waterbury; and Secretary, Ashleigh Herrera for organizing and administering the recent Board elections. With the highly qualified candidates running this year, the Committee would have been in great hands regardless of who was elected. Please help me welcome the MRC 2016-2018 Board:

- Chair: Andy Near, Kruienza Art Museum, Hope College, Holland, MI
- Vice Chair: Rachel Vargas, Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum, Michigan State University, Lansing, MI
- Secretary: Ashleigh Herrera, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI
- Treasurer: Tamara Lange, Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum, Sheboygan, WI

As we welcome Tamara Lange to Treasurer, we lose our talented editor, and are now on the search for the MRC *Courier* Editor. Tamara took on editorship of the *Courier* in 2011, and has maintained the high quality of the publication. The Editor solicits contributions, edits copy, and lays out the newsletter all while getting to know the Midwest regions’ talented registration and collections staff. This is a fantastic opportunity to become more involved with the MRC. If interested, please call me at 616-395-6402 or email near@hope.edu.

In addition to Board elections, this year’s AMM Annual Meeting was held in St. Paul/Minneapolis, which was disaster planning central! With great appreciation we received sponsorship from Willis Fine Art, Willis Towers Watson for the Social, Huntington T. Block, Inc. for the Luncheon as well as Terry Dowd Inc., US Art Co., and Masterpiece International for sponsoring travel stipends. I look forward to reading the articles from the conference recap. Thank you Development Officer, Terry Segal, for maintaining these relationships.

Now for a little bit about myself:

Starting off as a student assistant near the end of my collegiate years, I inadvertently stumbled onto the path that I now call my career. Upon graduating from Grand Valley State University in west Michigan, I was offered the opportunity to stay on at the gallery as a preparator. After taking the job—waiting for that next, big exciting step in life—I began learning more and more about museum processes. After several years and with some encouragement, I set off for Illinois to attend graduate school at Eastern Illinois University. I took a short internship at the Mint Museum in North Carolina, and then returned to the Midwest via Ohio to serve as registrar—also acting as interim director for a New York minute—at the Zanesville Museum of Art. While I enjoyed my new home in Ohio, Lake Michigan (and my family) called for my return to west Michigan. And just over a year ago, I found my way back as collections manager at the Kruienza Art Museum at Hope College. I am now starting my second year at the museum, and welcoming the new and returning students. I am honored to have this opportunity to serve the MRC. I hope that with the support of the Board and Membership, we can continue to strengthen the organization and support our community.

From the Editor



How I would love this Harley-Davidson scooter... but I guess I will just have to visit it at the HD Museum.

When Rachel and Andy asked me how long I had been editing the *Courier* for, I had to take a minute. It seems like just yesterday that Jamie Merkel and I took over the reins of the publication. Of course, my sense of time is, well, shall we say, less than stellar. The good news, is I have developed a handicap for my sense of time much like I have developed a handicap for how level something is when having to judge by myself. So just like appearing slightly elevated to the right means it is close to level, yesterday means it was likely 3-4 years ago. At least it gave me a starting point for when to look!

I have greatly enjoyed the last 5 (!!!) years of working on the *MRC Courier*. It is exciting to read the news, look at the photos and then fit all the pieces together. Luckily I have had incredible support over the years, both from members of the MRC Executive Committee and from the many talented MRC members. It certainly makes my life a lot easier. And while I have enjoyed it immensely, I knew that it was time to start thinking about turning the reins over to a new editor. Change can be a good thing — especially because it brings fresh eyes and ideas. I know that I leave the *Courier* in a good place, ready for someone to take to the next fabulous level.

Of course, that doesn't mean you are rid of me yet! After publishing this issue, I will work closely with Jennifer Noffze to take over the reins of the finances, beginning a two year term as the Treasurer of Midwest Registrars Committee. Additionally, I will assist our next Editor (or Editors) as much (or as little) as they need to make the newsletter transition.

As you likely realize, we don't officially have a successor lined up, but I know that one of our great MRC members will step up to the plate. If you have any questions that might make the decision easier, I would be happy to answer them. The layout is roughly there already (currently, it is a Microsoft Publisher file, but it could easily be converted) and you can think of the position as that of a conductor — fitting all the pieces together to create a symphony!

Thanks again for all the support over the last years. The *Courier* is a great publication because of all of you!

An advertisement for The Campbell Center Historic Preservation Studies. At the top is the center's logo, which includes a stylized window icon and the text "The Campbell Center Historic Preservation Studies". Below the logo is a large white box with black text that reads: "MRC MEMBER DISCOUNT! 10% off any 2016 course at the Campbell Center! Promo Code: MRC2016". Underneath this box, it says: "Choose from over 80 hands-on collections care, historic preservation, and conservation refresher training courses at the Campbell Center for Historic Preservation Studies located right here in the Midwest!". At the bottom of the ad is the website "www.campbellcenter.org". The background of the ad shows a collage of images related to historic preservation, including a building, people working with artifacts, and a person using a microscope.

The newsletter of the Midwest Registrars Committee, the *MRC Courier*, is published three times a year. Members and Vendors, please submit news, articles, announcements, photographs, and ideas for future issues to Tamara Lange, Curator of Collections & Exhibits, Sheboygan County Historical Society and Museum. Phone: 920-458-1103 or Email: tamara.lange@sheboygancounty.com

Travel Stipends 2016

Three members of the Midwest Registrars Committee were able to attend the 2016 Association of Midwest Museums Annual Conference in Minneapolis + St. Paul in part thanks to generous support from Masterpiece International, Ltd., Terry Dowd Inc., and US Art, along with MRC. Congratulations to:

Masterpiece International, Ltd.—Julie Conklin, Associate Registrar, Grand Rapids Art Museum

Terry Dowd, Inc.—Hannah Frederick, Collections Manager & Volunteer Coordinator, Ames Historical Society

US Art—Amy Dunn, Registration Assistant, Detroit Institute of Arts

Here is the first travel stipend reflection from *Innovation: Become the Unexpected!*

Defogging the Rose Colored Glass... Compote

Amy Dunn

Thank you to Terry Dowd Inc. for generously sponsoring my attendance at the Association of Midwest Museums 2016 Conference in Minneapolis + St. Paul. Thank you as well to the MRC, for selecting my application, welcoming me to their city, and for the plentiful fond memories that arose from this wonderful opportunity.

Resiliency and rebounding in the wake of tragedy were the key concepts at this year's AMM conference sessions. The ways in which planning, strategy, recovery systems, and infrastructure vulnerabilities can be tested when tragedy strikes were explored in sessions such as *Expect the Unexpected...How to prepare for Disasters and Survive (Even Thrive) When They Happen; Maintaining Your Disaster Plan: Collection Preservation, Protection and Salvage; Resiliency Infrastructure Planning: Preparing to Preserve and Protect; and The Glass is Half-Full: Moving Collection Stewardship beyond Disaster*. From these sessions on preparedness and recovery, I took away a heightened appreciation of the means which museums have at their disposal to safeguard and protect their collections. A museum's dual role in prolonging the cultural impact of objects and facilitating scholarship for future generations comprises what makes them the representation of a city to the world and therefore promotes sustainability.



Elisa Redman, Ashleigh Herrera & Ann Sinfield presenting *Maintaining your Disaster Plan: Collection Preservation, Protection and Salvage*—One of several Disaster focused sessions at AMM presented by MRC members

Architectural elements, buildings' structural flaws, and their maintenance procedures can all be susceptible to disaster. In *Expect the Unexpected* and *The Glass is Half-Full* I became more aware of indicators regarding issues that could go unnoticed within a building's structure. Be it inaccessible rooms, old water piping, or electrical wiring not being properly disconnected within a building, various factors pose opportunities for problems to present themselves. In the case of natural disaster, in *Resiliency Infrastructure Planning*, the efficacy of FEMA maps of flood, wind and earthquake hazard zones in exposing vulnerabilities was explored. Also, in these

scenarios the obvious is -- if the weather is behaving abnormally then predictions of consequence should be close in mind. Forecasting risk, assessing risk and planning accordingly are elemental in understanding how facilities' collections are stored, and it's surely important to never discount the state of off-site storage facilities either! I was left with a strong sense of the importance of practicing table-top scenarios, including designating the roles of an emergency team's duties in the event of disaster. Overviewing and establishing the protocol, having a disaster plan, being aware of designated roles during disaster and always, always having up to date insurance valuations for your collection are of the utmost importance.

In *Thawing out the Period Room: Exploring Interventions in House Museums and Period Rooms for the 21st Century*, the care and restoration of architectural pieces within a collection were explored. Minneapolis Institute of Arts' "Living Rooms | The American Period Rooms: Inside/Out" (April 2, 2016 – October 30, 2016) features Anthony Marchetti's photography of the MIA's period rooms set in the landscape they existed in originally. Particularly, *The Connecticut Room, North Branford, CT, 2016*, resonates in juxtaposing the photography of disastrous events seen by museums presented in the sessions. A circa 1740 farmhouse, from which the hearth and panel of the MIA's *Connecticut Room* are taken, exemplifies the need for the protection of our own cultural heritage in the changing global landscape. The site at which the farmhouse stood in 1920 was used for a reservoir, Lake Gaillard, and in the creation of the reservoir many 1700s-built houses were demolished. The Connecticut Room depicted in Lake Gaillard, with water segmenting the image and reflecting the sky with the fireplace's mirrored void darkened in the reflected water, evokes a doorway or portal. This highlights the dualism between where and when artifacts, art exist in their current state and the significance of their own preservation story.

The Detroit Institute of Art's relief from the Palace of Ashurnasipal II at Nimrud, *The Assyrian King Tukul-apil-esharra III Receiving Homage*, demonstrates a museum's responsibility in safeguarding cultural heritage objects. In March 2015 the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) targeted Nimrud, bulldozing the site and destroying reliefs, structures, and idols. The relief holds a new significance in its preservation history after the events at Nimrud, and it highlights how collections such as the DIA's make further scholarship possible. In retaining such significant objects from world cultures, on a micro-scale the importance of prolonging the object's existence is evident, but the museum clearly holds a larger duty of cultural preservation while the object is in its care.

Thomas Fisher, professor and director of the Metropolitan Design Center, presented themes of preservation and museums' duties as a city's representation in terms of cultural object protection in his keynote speech *Museums in an On-Demand Economy*. He advocated a point in question of late regarding how museums demonstrate their prowess in the 21st century, so often through expansion wings, new galleries, and renamed galleries and structures -- the diminishingly apparent truth being that wealthy donors often donate for extravagance and not for the purpose of maintaining daily operations and collections care. This fact is relevant to many of the causes of disaster when a building's own infrastructure thus loses sustainability and creates a susceptibility to fire, flood, and human destruction. Fisher's questioning of the purpose of building expansions when such expansions frequently lack the staffing or sufficient funding to monitor, care and secure the accessions and objects rings true.

On a more refreshing note, in cases such as MIA's Connecticut Room or the relief from the palace at Nimrud, institutions serve a vital function as historic sites housing pieces of cultural significance and identity and not all are losses in the grand scope. What is reborn from disaster and the resiliency of a collection can be inspiring and compelling to audiences. From mascot objects such as a 19-foot taxidermy crocodile restored from water damage (Burpee Museum) to a burned gnome serving as a reminder of the successful effort to fully restore Tiffany interiors in the wake of a fire (Oshkosh Public Museum), these objects can be embraced as symbols of triumph by visitors. The costly effects of disaster have a silver lining, possibly promoting better positioning in the future for the collection's good and impact on its community, albeit not without tears.

Thank you again to Terry Dowd Inc. and MRC, I'm honored to have attended my first AMM conference made possible by you!

News From the Midwest

Indiana Lana Newhart-Kellen

Statewide

The **Indianapolis Museum of Art** and the **Association of Indiana Museums** worked to modify Indiana's museum property law during the 2016 meeting of the Indiana General Assembly. Effective July 1, 2016, there were several changes, but the most significant is the reduction of the period museums and historical societies must wait before asserting ownership of abandoned property has been reduced from seven to three years. More information can be found at http://www.icontact-archive.com/uBzjhl_dSsrogAsRjnc7IYmVHdReWRq?w=4.

Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis:

As a part of the Indiana Bicentennial, the Indiana Historical Society awarded 25 Heritage Support grants for the first time, ranging from \$500 to more than \$50,000. The grants, made possible by the Lilly Endowment, are helping small institutions across the state to do basic building maintenance and collections care. John Herbst, CEO/President of the Indiana Historical Society, stated "IHS estimates more than 900 Indiana organizations hold collections that total more than 20 million historical objects and 424,000 feet of historical documents. We are proud to support their work in communities across Indiana." 2016 winners were:

- Brown County Art Gallery Foundation — Collections inventory project
- Daviess County Historical Society — Foundation stabilization
- Elkhart County Historical Society — Collections cataloging project
- Friends of the National New York Central Railroad Museum — Documents and research project
- Friends of the Fayette County Public Library — Archival supplies purchase
- Carnegie Center for Art & History, Inc. — Paintings conservation project
- Carmel Clay Historical Society — Collection records project
- Hendricks County Historical Museum — Photo archive project
- Henry County Historical Society — Building structure project
- Greentown Historical Society — Digitization project
- Howard County Historical Society — Building structure project: roof
- Jay County Historical Society — Exhibits and collections project
- Johnson County Museum of History — Scanner purchase
- Friends of the Knox County Public Library — Digitization project
- American Legion Auxiliary Foundation — Collections management project
- Freetown Village — Education specialist program development project
- Irvington Historical Society — Building structure project: elevator
- Marshall County Historical Society — Exhibit space preparatory project
- Lew Wallace Study Preservation Society, Inc. — Paintings conservation assessment
- Gene Stratton-Porter Memorial Society, Inc. — Building project: interpretive boardwalk
- Tell City Historical Society, Inc. — Building structure project: roof
- Friends of the Ward Township Dist. No. 5 School, Randolph Co., IN, Inc. — Building structure project
- Rush County Historical Society — Building structure project: attic storage
- Starke County Historical Society — Historic structure report project
- Wabash County Historical Museum — Archival storage stabilization project

Indiana Transportation Museum, Noblesville

The Indiana Transportation Museum has had all operations suspended by the Hoosier Heritage Port Authority due to an on-going investigation by the Indiana State Attorney General. This came about after a group of volunteers alleged that the museum was being mismanaged by the Board. The Indiana Transportation Museum is popular locally for their Indiana State Fair Train and Polar Express Train, which runs between Indianapolis and Tipton, Indiana. A statement from ITM's Board can be found at <http://itm.org/>.

Roberts Settlement, Atlanta

On July 2, an Indiana Historical Marker was dedicated at Roberts Settlement near Atlanta, Indiana. The marker commemorates one of the African-American settlements in Indiana. The marker states, "Free people of color left the South starting in the 1820s as threats to freedom and property escalated with slavery expansion. In 1835, Hansel and Elijah Roberts and Micajah Walden of North Carolina bought land in Hamilton County near anti-slavery Quakers. By 1838, Roberts Settlement farmers owned over 900 acres. In 1847, residents built school and church meetinghouse. Association with Wesleyan Methodism by late 1840s fostered ties with neighbors. Agricultural fortunes improved after the railroad's arrival in 1850s. By 1870, Roberts included over 200 residents and 1700 acres. Emphasis on education prepared new generations for college and careers such as medicine, law, and clergy. Descendants celebrate annually since 1924." More information about Roberts Settlement can be found at <http://www.robertssettlement.org/>.



Michigan Julie Conklin

Michigan Collections Management Roundtable

The 10th Annual Michigan Collections Management Roundtable entitled *What now? Responding to Disasters* took place on July 26, 2016 hosted by the Grand Rapids Art Museum (GRAM). The all-day event was generously sponsored by the Midwest Registrars Committee and Tyler Supply Company/Borroughs of Kalamazoo, Michigan. Forty-one collections people from institutions across the state attended.



The roundtable centered around how museums can respond and prep for disasters. Samantha Engel, Director of Flint's Whaley Historic House Museum spoke about the fire that occurred at their museum in November 2015 and the recovery processes they are going through. Next Stacey Tvedten, Programs Manager at Grand Valley State University Art Gallery, gave a talk about the 2009 city-wide flood that caused damage to the Holland Museum where she was the Collections Manager at the time. After lunch, Brian Jaeschke, Registrar for Mackinac State Historic Parks, spoke about a mold issue in the archaeological remains of Fort Michilimackinac's Powder Keg and the steps they took to remediate it. Finally, Angela Riedel, Collections Manager at the Michigan Women's Historical Center & Hall of Fame, gave a brief talk on how to put together emergency response packs to get museums through the first 24-48



hours of a disaster.

Attendees next participated in an activity where groups were presented with a particular disaster scenario and were asked to come up with a supply list using only items found at a local convenience store. To end the day, attendees were treated to a behind-the-scenes tour of GRAM.



Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum, Grand Rapids

The Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum reopened to the public on June 7, 2016 after closing its doors in October 2015 for a full remodeling of the core exhibits and a building addition. This project ushered the Ford Museum into the 21st-century and is the result of nearly a decade of fundraising and planning. Gallagher and Associates designed the new core exhibits, while Xibitz of Grand Rapids fabricated and installed them.



The final product includes 340 artifacts, 180 facsimiles and period duplicates, 64 display cases, 550 photographs, and 50 interactives, all housed within 12,000 square feet of exhibit space. Overall, it's a huge departure from previous interpretation and presentation, allowing the Ford Museum to better fulfill its mission. One of the nice features of the new exhibits is that the new technology supplements, rather than replaced, artifacts on display. Visitors still enjoy the opportunity to view hundreds of artifacts that illuminate Gerald R. Ford's life and times, while at the same time interacting with 25 "Dig Deeper" touch screens to delve further into subjects of interest.

The Devos Learning Center compliments the displays by adding an additional two levels of classroom space to help meet President Ford's desire to make his museum "a classroom of democracy." Stop by and check out the new exhibits the next time you venture to Grand Rapids. For more information, visit the Ford Museum's website at www.fordlibrarymuseum.gov or contact Jamie Draper at James.Draper@nara.gov.

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Flint Institute of Arts, Flint

On June 30, the Flint Institute of Arts broke ground on a major new expansion on the east and west sides of the existing building, following three major gifts to the museum and art school.

On the east side, an 8,565 sq. ft. addition will be added to the permanent collection galleries creating a Contemporary Craft Wing. The Wing will serve as home for two of the most exceptional collections in the country: the Dr. Robert and Deanna Harris Burger collection of contemporary ceramics and the Isabel Foundation's permanent loan of the



Sherwin and Shirley Glass collection of contemporary glass. The two collections comprise outstanding works of art created by the foremost studio artists from around the world working within the field of glass and clay. The Contemporary Craft Wing will also provide opportunities to showcase temporary exhibitions and new acquisitions. The space will contain three distinct expansive galleries specifically designed for presentations of three-dimensional works of art. High ceilings, with skylights, will present a serene atmosphere and sophisticated backdrop for display of objects. Additional curatorial amenities include a large freight elevator providing access to a 5,900 sq. ft. lower level designed for art handling, preparation, crate storage, and a climatized vault.



On the west side, the existing 3,960 sq. ft. Art School exterior courtyard will be covered and converted into a year round “Makerspace.” This flexible space equipped with retractable stadium style seating will provide many options for public demonstrations, workshops, classes and more. The primary focus will be the hot glass making studio space equipped with furnaces, annealing ovens, and an adjacent cold shop for finishing. The space will also accommodate a metal

f foundry for casting bronze and aluminum. During demonstrations, electronic equipment designed specifically for the space will provide audiences with audio narration enhanced views on large mounted screens.

Construction will be completed by fall 2017.

Michigan Women’s Historical Center & Hall of Fame, Lansing

MWOF had a change in leadership in August with Emily Fijol, Director, taking a position at Michigan State University and Dr. Caitlyn Perry Dial stepping in as Interim Director.

Also in August, MWHOF announced this year’s Hall of Fame inductees of ten Michigan women of outstanding distinction (5 contemporary, 5 historical). All of these women have or had profound impacts on Michigan by breaking barriers and being role models for future generations. 2016 inductees include: Lou Anna Kimsey Simon, first female president of Michigan State University; Dr. Anan Ameri, TV producer, educator, community organizer, and main creator of the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan; Diana Ross, Motown singer, Rock ‘n’ Roll Hall of Fame Inductee, and Grammy winner; Daisy Elliott, Michigan legislator, civil rights advocate, and co-author of Michigan’s 1976 Elliott-Larsen Act; and Elizabeth Sparks Adams, first woman appointed to and to become president of the Michigan Historical Commission. The formal induction ceremony and dinner takes place on October 19th.



MWOF currently has the temporary exhibit Great Girls in Michigan History, featuring nine girls from across Michigan, including a wrestler, an activist, a writer, a pilot, and others all who did amazing things before they turned twenty. What makes you great? The exhibit will be up through February 25, 2017. The museum’s permanent exhibit in its Hall of Fame Gallery includes stories and personal objects of the inductees.

Ohio Robin Goodman

Bedford Historical Society, Bedford

Sometimes the stars align with the right project for the right volunteer. This happened at the Bedford Historical Society in Cuyahoga County, Ohio this spring. When one of Historical Society's Trustees from the Board passed away, she left specific instructions that her collection of costume jewelry was to come to the society. Staff were to pull any of the over 400 pieces for accessioning and dispense with the rest at the annual summer flea market.

As luck would have it, Bedford Historical Society had a volunteer knowledgeable about costume jewelry. She was asked to sort, clean and identify the pieces. The heirs were also asked if a special Tea could be held for the sale instead of a table at the flea market. It was an opportunity to honor a special Trustee and perhaps attract serious collectors of jewelry art.

Volunteers spent 3 months cleaning, researching and sorting the items. Curator Janet Caldwell pulled several pieces from different decades which were accessioned. Some of the pieces were returned to the family because they were of finer quality and value than what was considered 'costume'.



The Tea and Sale is set for this fall. The jewelry will be on display and sorted by current price range, which is quite reasonable. The knowledgeable volunteer, who has taught a course on jewelry and its proper cleaning and care, will do a short presentation on the topic and the Historical Society honor the memory of our Trustee with a short biography of her life. Members of the family will attend as guests. After the Tea and program, attendees will have plenty of time to purchase pieces for themselves or as gifts.

Gund Gallery, Kenyon College, Gambier

The Gund Gallery Art Loan Program gives current Kenyon students the opportunity to bring art into their living spaces and make it a part of their everyday lives. For the duration of a semester, Kenyon students can enjoy and critically study their chosen artwork in their dorm room. This close contact fosters an appreciation of art as students learn to care for the works, interpret their meanings, and come to understand the intrinsic power of art. The program launched last spring and then resumed this fall with 47 artworks available for loan. The artworks were successfully placed in student housing through a lottery system and the works were installed in the dorm rooms by Gund Gallery Associates (interns), who were trained in proper art handling and hanging techniques.

Share Your News!!

Make life for your State Rep a little easier by submitting a news story, interesting tidbit, or update for the next issue of the *MRC Courier*. Listings for each state and contact information can be found at the end of the *Courier*.

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