ARCHIVES & ARCHIVISTS LISTSERV

By Jennifer Rawlings
Jefferson National Expansion Memorial
E-mail: jeff_archivist@nps.gov

A number of interesting questions sparked discussion on the Archives & Archivists Listserv over the past few months. If you would like to see the full discussion, the messages are available at the Listerv Web site: <http://listserv.muohio.edu/archives/archives.html>.

Ethical Question

A member of the Listserv posed a question about the ethical problems concerning archivists writing articles about their collections for magazines. Several interesting ethical questions arose out of this situation including: Can an archivist take pay for doing this? Can it be done on work time? Does this activity need to be approved by a supervisor?

The many responses to this situation showed that institutions all have different policies regarding this type of situation. Some archivists are expected to publish in order to receive tenure. Some institutions prefer their staff to pursue outside projects on their own time. Other institutions insist the staff cannot be paid for this type of work even if it is done on their own time. The majority believed that this is a common situation and workplace policies need to be consulted.

Lessons Learned in Houston

Tropical Storm Allison caused damage in several archival facilities in Houston this summer. Those who were stricken shared some things they learned about flooding and how to clean up water-damaged materials. The first piece of advice was to make sure your institution's disaster plan includes provisions for the destruction of sensitive records not worth the cost of preservation. Boxes of records can absorb 110 percent of their own weight and the cost of shipping them to be destroyed can be exorbitant. Once they have absorbed that much water the handles will not work and the boxes may have to be shoveled into removal containers. Additionally, the shelving units are then forced to support twice the weight they previously held.

Not only do the waterlogged boxes become heavier, the paper expands and can burst out of the box. One Listserv member suggested keeping 1.5-cubic-foot cardboard boxes in storage because they can hold the waterlogged contents of what was in a one-cubic-foot box. He also suggested lining the boxes with waxed paper prior to filling them with wet papers in order to keep the box dry enough to survive the trip to the conservation lamp.

A Rose by Any Other Name? I Don't Think So!

This discussion about how archivists perceive our profession as distinct from that of librarians generated numerous responses. The thread started with an archivist who, while attending a staff meeting, was asked if archivists are a subset of librarians. She responded that archivists were different from librarians and was challenged on the comment by librarian coworkers who felt it was much the same job. She asked the Listserv if this was a common problem and how others felt about this issue.

A common theme was that archivists see their work as more challenging than that of librarians since every collection is unique. Many respondents stressed the importance of educating management that archivists and librarians are not the same thing. The issue is complicated by the fact that many members of the Listserv work as both archivist and librarian for their institution. One respondent said that he describes the archives as a microcosm of the whole library where solicitation of materials, accessioning, cataloging, describing, and providing reference—every function performed in the entire library—happens on a small scale. Many people talked about the differences in organization of collections stressing the importance of provenance and organizational structure in archives.

Archives Listserv Web Announcements

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library at Curtin University of Technology is pleased to launch its new *Understanding Society Through Its Records* Web site, an educational resource on the importance of record keeping to society: <http://john.curtin.edu.au/society/>.

The Library of Congress's Manuscript Division, in conjunction with its American Memory Historical Collections, presents a digital version of the manuscript collection relating to the life and activities of the author, educator, and political philosopher Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) whose papers are a principal source for the study of modern intellectual life. Web site: <http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/arendthtml/>.

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The Pennsylvania State Archives Web site includes a new feature, "ARIAS" (the Archives Records Information Access System). Currently, ARIAS offers 200,000 images of military service cards relating to the participation of Pennsylvanians in the Revolutionary War, Spanish-American War, and World War I. In addition, 300,000 Civil War and Mexican Border Campaign service card images are being loaded into the system and will be available within the coming year. Web site: <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/>.

The University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) Libraries is proud to announce the launching of *Early Las Vegas*, a digital exhibition using historical photographs and research collections contained in the Special Collections Department of the UNLV Libraries. Web site: <http://library.nevada.edu/digproj/>.

Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections of Washington State University is pleased to announce the availability of a new on-line database of eight hundred photographs from the Frank Fuller Avery Collection. Avery worked as the superintendent of schools at the Colville Indian Agency and later as inspector of Colville Agency Day Schools. Through his photography, he documented life on the Colville Reservation between 1901 and 1916. You may search this collection alone at <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/holland/masc/xavery.html> or across a growing list of digital collections at <http://www.wsulibs.wsu.edu/holland/masc/imagedatabases.htm>.

The University of Southern Mississippi Libraries' Special Collections Digital Program announces the on-line release of correspondence and civil rights posters from the Joseph and Nancy Ellin Freedom Summer Collection. The finding aid for the Ellin collection (with hyperlinks to the digital items) is available at <http://www.lib.usm.edu/~archives/m323.htm> and the digital files from the Ellin collection, along with the rest of USM's digital archives, are searchable from <http://anna.lib.usm.edu/uhtbin/cgisirsi/x/0/57/49?user_id=ARCHIVE>.

Special Collections and Archives at the University of Idaho Library announced a new installment in the Web site *Digital Memories*. The most recent addition to the series is "Senator Borah considers the Presidency," which displays in a personal letter some of William E. Borah's thinking behind his unsuccessful bid for the 1936 Republican nomination. At the time of writing the letter, his concern over the party's direction was apparent but he had not yet decided to run. Web site: <http://www.lib.uidaho.edu/special-collections/>.

The Shubert Archive in New York City released its new Web site, which contains an illustrated overview of Shubert history and its collections: <http://www.shubert archive.org>.

Upcoming MAC Meeting Sites and Dates

Indianapolis, Indiana
October 18–20, 2001

Minneapolis, Minnesota
May 2–4, 2002

Rapid City, South Dakota
October 9–12, 2002

Spring 2003
Dates and Location Undetermined

Fall 2003
Dearborn, Michigan

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