

MRC Courier

COMMITTEE

Volume 26, Number 2

Summer 2014

MRC UNDER THE ARCH

For those MRC members attending the Association of Midwest Museums Annual Conference in St. Louis, there were plenty of activities to connect in addition to the regular conference offerings.

We had a wonderful MRC business lunch meeting at Bar Italia, generously sponsored by Huntington T. Block. At the meeting we listened to updates from the state representatives, and Terry Segal introduced the winners of the travel stipends awarded for the annual meeting. Our generous stipend sponsors were Terry Dowd; The Conservation Center, Chicago; U.S. Art Company; Tru-View; Masterpiece and the MRC. Craig Hadley submitted his membership report and



spoke about our newly created MRC website (midwestregistrars.org); Jennifer Noffze submitted the treasurer's report and Cristin Waterbury reported the results of the 2014 MRC Board elections.

Stacie Petersen organized a wonderful Mighty Rescue Crew making mounts for African American Cap/Head Coverings at the Griot Museum of Black History in St. Louis. By the end of the day, numerous pieces had new custom mounts.

We finished up the conference with a MRC Social at the hotel bar, sponsored by Willis Fine Art, Jewelry and Specie. Once again, it was a great conference for all—making new friends, connecting with old ones and getting new inspiration for the wonderful world we work in!



From the MRC Chair

Rachel Vargas

Happy Fall! For those of us who work at university art museums, September seems like the “new year” to us. I always feel an urge to buy notebooks and pencils, and of course, books! For those of you who could not attend the annual Association of Midwest Museum meetings in St. Louis this past July, this issue will detail some of the interesting information that was presented at the sessions and the wonderful activities members of MRC were involved in.

In addition to all the excitement of the AMM meeting, MRC has had a few changes to our roster of state representatives: Anna Cannizzo returned to Wisconsin in August to become the Durow Curator of Decorative Arts, so she had to resign her position as Ohio State Representative. Robin Goodman, who was the Michigan representative, started a new job at Kenyon College in Ohio this September, so she will take over the vacant Ohio job. Moving into her position in Michigan will be Roberta Frey Gilboe, who recently became the Chief Registrar at the University of Michigan Museum of Art. Laura McDowell Hopper has come on as the Illinois representative.

Changes occurred within the ranks of the remaining members of the MRC Board as well. Terry Segal has come on board as our Development officer and Craig Hadley has moved from Secretary into a newly created position of webmaster. Karen Dively was elected as Secretary.

For the upcoming year, we are going to focus on adding content to our website and Devon Pyle-Vowles, our Vice-Chair, is working with Laura Hopper on developing a website for marking objects, expanding the *Beyond Fingernail Polish*.

As always, if you have any comments, suggestions, concerns or would like to be more involved with the MRC, please feel free to contact me at vargasr@msu.edu or (517) 884-0651.



BARBARA CORVINO
Willis Fine Art, Jewelry & Specie
Metro DC Office
301 581 4382

MICHAEL CRISWELL
Willis Fine Art, Jewelry & Specie
Chicago Office
312 288 7299

From the Editor

Tamara Lange

I will fully admit that I had grand plans of getting this newsletter out in the second week of September. I even had it mapped out on my calendar — that is a sure fire guarantee, right?!? Yet somehow it is now the end of September and I am just managing to put the finishing touches on the late summer edition of the *MRC Courier*. Hmm.... How did that happen?

Interestingly enough, I feel like I have heard more people ask what happened to September (and August) this year than in the recent past. Perhaps it was the unusual weather of the summer or maybe just some kind of crazy time/ space continuum that occurred. There has to be some kind of logical explanation!

This issue features some of the highlights from the Association of Midwest Museums Annual Conference this summer. For those of us that were unable to attend, these are great ways to share the excitement and information of the conference (and of course, create absolutely no jealous feelings). I think it is safe to say that a good time was had by all who were able to attend.

We are also introducing a column from the Conservation Center of Chicago highlighting some of the work that goes into saving some of the Midwest's treasured artifacts. Though many of our institutions are fortunate to have on-staff expertise, others must rely on outside assistance. And in the case of a large scale emergency, it is almost guaranteed that reinforcements would be called in. I know this first article has already given me another item to contemplate about as we go into reworking our institutions Emergency and Disaster Plan.

As I look out the window today and see the leaves turning to the golden hues of fall and realize that it is a few short months away from our Winter *Courier* issue, I encourage every one of us at MRC to think about one or two stories from the past months that we could share with our colleagues. Our state reps do a great job of getting information, but I know we all have bits and pieces to share. Don't wait until the call comes out for news in early December. Send it on to your state rep or myself right away — because you never know how fast a month (or two) can fly by!

2014 MRC Directory Now Available!!

Thank you to all who renewed their membership and to our new members for this year! An updated (as of the end of July) MRC Directory is now available and was distributed via email at the end of July. To get a copy, email [Karen Dively](#), MRC Secretatry.

A second edition will likely come out toward the end of 2014. If there are any problems with your information, please don't hesitate to let Karen know so she can update information.

2014 Travel Stipends

Sponsored by the Chicago Conservation Center, Masterpiece International, Terry Dowd, Inc., Tru-View, US Art and the Midwest Registrars Committee, five lucky MRC members received travel stipends in support of their attendance at the 2014 Association of Midwest Museums Conference in St. Louis. Over the next two issues, the Travel Stipend Award Recipients will share a little bit about their experience at AMM. Congratulations again to:

Karen Dively = Masterpiece International and MRC

Aaron Graham = US Art

Stacie Petersen = Tru-View and MRC

Ashleigh Herrera = Terry Dowd, Inc.

Laura McDowell-Hopper = Chicago Conservation Center

An AMM Lesson in Disaster Planning ■ Aaron Graham

I was fortunate to be able to attend the AMM conference in St. Louis this year. This was my first conference and I was able to attend because I received a travel stipend. As someone going through a period of career transition, I was grateful for the opportunity to network with other museum professionals. There were also so many great sessions and events that it would be impossible to do justice to them all. As such, I will focus on one session that stood out to me.

Gretchen Shoemaker, a preservation specialist at the National Archives in St. Louis, ran a session entitled "Emergency! Tips for Disaster Planning and Response." Gretchen began the session by stressing the importance of disaster planning for museums by citing an example from her own institution—the 1973 fire that destroyed a huge number of military service records. Recovery from this disaster continues to this day.

Gretchen went on to discuss the first step in disaster planning—conducting a survey of collections and facilities. There is a great deal of information that needs to be gathered through this survey. It will provide knowledge of what types of materials are in the collections. This will become important when establishing salvage priorities. The current condition of the collection will need to be noted as well. Additionally, this is the time to assess the potential for damage to the collection and take photos of the collections and storage spaces.

The survey will help when formulating a disaster plan. As noted establishing salvage priorities is important. Some materials can wait for treatment while others will need to be dealt with as soon as possible. The highest priority materials include organic material and vinyl, lower priority materials would include stone and plastics. Another important element of disaster planning is establishing a response team. This ensures that everyone knows what their responsibilities are and that nothing is forgotten.

I found this session to be the best presentation of the principles and application of disaster planning I have seen. Gretchen did an excellent job of establishing the need for disaster planning and then providing practical steps to take when a disaster does strike. She clearly laid out the important points such as salvage priorities and elements of a collections survey. Overall, the presentation was concise yet comprehensive. This is information that everyone in the museum profession should have on board.

Emerging Museum Professionalism ■ Ashleigh Herrera

Though there has never been a term for it before, many fit the AAM approved qualifications for Emerging Professionals:

“Have you been in the museum profession less than ten years?”

“Are you interested in connecting with your peers?”

“Do you want to learn more about our offerings to help your professional development?”

“Have you been looking for additional resources to guide your career path?”

With groups in Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, and as of August 14, Kansas City, it is clear the Midwest has a strong interest in this new AAM subgroup. As an emerging professional myself, I’ve followed the blog, listserv, and joined the LinkedIn and Facebook groups. However, in a field that can be technologically averse, it can be difficult to connect online.

To fit with this year’s AMM conference theme of “Connecting People and Ideas,” Craig Hadley, Maris Gillette, and I proposed the roundtable “Launching Your Museum Career” on emerging museum professionalism. The goal of this discussion was to connect in person with other EMPs to share advice on successful (and not so successful) career moves, professional development, and networking. After a short introduction from the facilitators and session attendees, the group of roughly thirty split into 3 groups to focus on different topics: jobs and internships, professional development, and educational paths into the museum field. In addition to the session at the conference, participants were given a handout and access to an online Google document with links to professional development resources.

Within the job-seeking group, many expressed frustration with applying to jobs, especially at larger institutions. Some possible solutions that arose in discussion included tailoring job searches to specific institutions (apply to jobs like you would apply to colleges, research the institutions first to determine personal fit, and then apply for jobs within the institution), using alumni and job networks to seek common connections (and not just online, but by meeting individuals in “dream positions” and seeking their advice), and being in tune with future goals to determine how a job would contribute to that goal. Success stories revolved around keeping in touch with past interviewers and connections to keep up on “insider” information (especially through the use of thank-you notes and regular check-ins).

The group discussing professional development shared their collective knowledge on professional development opportunities and regional resources. Several of us asked for help with identifying funding sources to support these efforts. Ideas included AAM’s Museum Assessment Program, cost-effective regional workshops through MACC and the Campbell Center, professional membership with MRC (travel stipends and mini-grants), and small grants from state-level museum associations.

The group discussing educational paths considered when more school was useful and how to tailor one’s existing skills to suit attractive jobs. This group also considered the advantages and disadvantages of specialization. Here too, the importance of networks and using connections to learn more about educational as well as job opportunities emerged as a crucial element of professional development.

In the final 15 minutes, the three groups reconvened to share stories and created a network to share advice through the Google Document. To get involved with this conversation, feel free to send me an email at ash-leighherrera@gmail.com to join the Google document and share your own personal experience!

Many thanks to Terry Dowd Inc. for sponsoring the MRC Travel Award that allowed me to attend the conference this year!

PHOTOS NEEDED!!

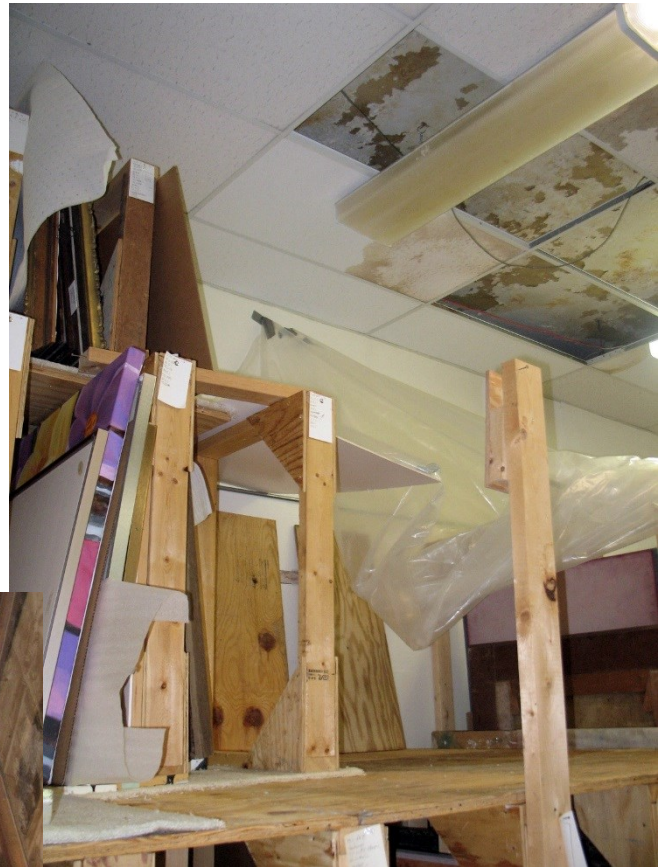
MRC members—we are looking for the best photographs of your collection, staff, building, or an event. Please submit one photograph from your institution to info@midwestregistrars.org, and we will feature it on our website in the future.

Thank you!

When AC Goes Astray

■ Chai Lee, Conservation Center

On a lovely Saturday afternoon, 40 members of the Freeport Art Museum (FAM), Freeport, Illinois, and members of the Conservation Center staff came together in celebration of the end of a two year project that at the beginning hardly would have been worth of festivities. It was spring 2012 when an air conditioning unit in the attic above FAM's two dimensional storage facility began to malfunction. As FAM's business manager, Carrie Baxter, recounted "By the time we discovered it we found water on the floor, the ceiling tiles were destroyed, and water had come in contact with several of the works. They had streak marks from where water had dripped and run down the surface of the paintings." Once the extent of the damage had been properly assessed, FAM contacted both The Conservation Center and art appraisal firm Kramer and Associates in a joint effort to save the collection.



A malfunctioning air-conditioning unit did not take long to create a swath of damage at the Freeport Art Museum in 2012



One of the affected pieces was by the 19th century Italian painter Luigi Agristi. Titled *Interior Domestic Scene*, the oil on canvas painting exhibited ripples and various punctures and tears, in addition to having a foot long streak of dirt and grime. Conservators began by cleaning both sides of the canvas, followed by varnish removal, leaving the paint layer undisturbed. Tears on the canvas were then carefully aligned and mended with conservation adhesives. In order to flatten the painting and smooth out the ripples, a combination of heat, suction, humidity, and weight techniques were utilized. After the piece was stretched to a new, custom-built stretcher, conservation grade paints, reversible and detectable to professionals, were added to the areas of loss. Finally, a layer of varnish was applied to integrate the surface. Due to the extensive damage to the original frame,





the painting was reinstalled into a period reproduction frame, similar to the original, by The Center's Custom Framing department.

Perhaps the most important piece of art restored during this whole process was the oil painting *Brimming Holland* by James Clarke Hook. The importance of the piece itself was something that FAM was unaware of until appraisal work done by Roberta Kramer. "The most interesting discovery for us was the provenance and exhibition history of *Brimming Holland*. James Clarke Hook was a 19th century academy painter who is quite well known in the art world. The piece in question was not only exhibited twice at the Royal Academy, London, but it has an excellent provenance. That is, we

can trace who owned the painting and when it changed hands all the way back to the artist from the time it was given to the Freeport Art Museum."

But that discovery was the silver lining dependent on recovering *Brimming Holland* from water damage that warranted conservation treatment—both to the painting and the frame. Paintings conservators at The Center first had to stabilize the canvas. A thorough cleaning, followed by varnish removal and canvas flattening, had to be performed. The process of inpainting was carried out in areas of loss and abrasion using reversible conservation paints. Finally, a very fine layer of varnish was sprayed onto the surface. Separately, the Center's Frames and Gilding department worked on bringing the original frame back to life. Miters were stabilized to ensure the frame's solid structure; compo, gesso, and gilding were also consolidated with appropriate conservation adhesives. The conservator then inpainted new abrasions to emulate the surrounding surface, in addition to recasting and ingilding frame decorations. *Brimming Holland* once again brimmed with verve.



In all, seven works were treated in groups over a 10-month period for The Freeport Art Museum. FAM's Executive Director, Jessica Caddell, summarized the effort applied by all: "Everyone at The Conservation Center and Roberta Kramer were not only highly professional but it quickly became apparent that each representative is a passionate advocate for the preservation of art." Truly, this is a story with a happy ending.



News from the Midwest

Iowa ■ Teri Van Dorston, State Rep

Museum of Natural History, University of Iowa, Iowa City

The Museum of Natural History at the University of Iowa, Iowa City, has received funding from the State Historical Society of Iowa's Historical Resource Development Program to curate insects received from the UI Biology Department. The project title is "Upgrading and integrating a historic insect collection reunited with the Museum of Natural History." The award is \$15,206 for supplies and cabinets to rehouse approximately 15,000 specimens, many of which were originally museum specimens that moved away from the museum when researchers moved to a new biology building in 1927. Other insects in the biology collection were added in the meantime by instructors and students and used for instruction and research. The museum has just completed another HRDP grant project, for rehousing the original MNH insect collections-about 28,000 specimens-and has also received NSF ADBC PEN funding to digitize these insect collections. All of the insect collection projects have given students opportunities to gain hands-on experience in collection curation.

Michigan ■ Robin Goodman, State Rep

Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum, Mackinac State Historic Parks, Mackinaw City

Mackinac State Historic Parks will open a new building and exhibit on Friday September 26, 2014 at Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse in Mackinaw City, Michigan. The building will be a reproduction of the original 1890 fog signal building, which served as a warehouse after a second fog signal was constructed in 1907. The warehouse will house the new Straits of Mackinac Shipwreck Museum. The museum will house a number of shipwreck objects from vessels such as the Eber Ward, Cedarville, William H. Barnum and Northwest. The displays will include a map of the straits showing the location of wreck sites, models of three wrecks showing what they looked like while in service and three dioramas showing their current condition on the lake bottom. Topics such as salvage, diving and the Straits of Mackinac Underwater Preserve will be discussed. The exhibit was made possible through a generous donation of artifacts from Chuck and Jeri Feltner and other donors.



Missouri ■ Stacie Peterson, State Rep

National Museum of Toys and Miniatures, Kansas City

The National Museum of Toys and Miniatures is gathering small used toys for a two-story sculpture that will be displayed in the museum lobby when it reopens in early 2015. To see renderings or an animation of the sculpture in action visit: <http://toyandminiaturemuseum.org/calendar/> or visit the Museum's Pinterest page dedicated to the Toytisserie at <http://www.pinterest.com/toyminiature/toytisserie/>.



First floor rendering for the Toytisserie

National World War I Museum, Kansas City

The National World War I Museum recently formed a partnership with Google Cultural Institute. The inaugural digital exhibit, *Home Before the Leaves Fall*, can be viewed at <https://theworldwar.org/explore/exhibitions/online-exhibitions/google>.

The National World War I Museum has also formed a collaboration with Fold3, the U.S. military record website in the Ancestry.com family of brands. The collaboration will give the public the ability to create and share memorial pages for American ancestors who served during World War I. The Museum's landing page can be viewed at <http://go.fold3.com/wwi-museum/>.



Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City

A triangular-shaped, glass-walled labyrinth designed by acclaimed artist and Kansas City native Robert Morris has been installed in the Donald J. Hall Sculpture Park at The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art. This dynamic sculpture provides visitors with an intimate experience, enticing them to interact with the art by winding through the glass maze. The 62-foot by 62-foot by 62-foot, seven-foot-tall labyrinth, weighing more than 400 tons, opened to the public on May 22, 2014.

More information on the piece, including an aerial view of the labyrinth can be found at <http://www.nelson-atkins.org/collections/robert-morris-glass-labyrinth.cfm>.

Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the founding of St. Louis, the Saint Louis Art Museum will present *Louis IX: King, Saint, Namesake*, an exhibition highlighting both exceptional art from the reign of Louis IX and later works inspired by the 13th-century monarch. The free exhibition opened Friday, August 29 and runs through November 2. More information can be found at <http://www.slam.org/exhibitions/louisix.php>.



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://www.midwestmuseums.org/mrc.html>.

Wisconsin ■ Elizabeth Frozena, State Rep

Racine Art Museum, Racine

To celebrate the art of storytelling, the Racine Art Museum welcomed Anja Notanja Sieger, founder of "La Prosette," to the museum on Friday, July 18. Sieger is a one-woman typewriter performance writing service that composes letters or "Prosettes" on behalf of her audience. Visitors to the museum were invited to make all manner of requests from poetry, love letters, and insult letters to Letters of Recommendation, short stories, or letters from their beloved pet.



Charlotte Kruk: Consumer Couture – The Politics of Having will be on exhibit from now through July 26, 2015 at RAM. With her own special twist on the idea of "eye candy," Charlotte Kruk uses recognizable consumer packaging—such as gum and candy wrappers, sugar and coffee bags, and food tins—to create garments and sculptures that reflect our material culture. Visually compelling and conceptually provocative, Kruk's work questions the relationship between dress, power, gender, and consumerism. With both humor and a serious intent, she has created a series of vignettes for RAM's Windows on 5th Gallery that explore the dynamics of a "disposable, packaged society."



A few last images from the Mighty Rescue Crew



Midwest Registrars Committee

CHAIR

Rachel Vargas, Registrar
Broad Art Museum
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
517-884-0651, vargasr@msu.edu

VICE-CHAIR & TRAVEL STIPENDS

Ms. Devon Pyle-Vowles, Artifact Collections Specialist
314 Hawthorn, B
Glencoe, Illinois 60022
847-242-0495 or 847-903-7940
dpvowles@comcast.net

SECRETARY

Karen Dively, Collection Manager
University of Michigan Museum of Anthropology
1109 Geddes Avenue
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109
734-764-6299, klobrien@umich.edu

TREASURER

Jennifer Noffze, Registrar/ Archivist
The Children's Museum of Indianapolis
PO Box 3000
Indianapolis, Indiana 46206
317-334-3722, jenn@childrensmuseum.org

ARCHIVES

Lauren Hancock
lhancock1030@yahoo.com

DEVELOPMENT

Terry Segal, Associate Registrar
Detroit Institute of Arts
5200 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, Michigan 48202
313-833-7907, tsegal@dia.org

NOMINATIONS

Cristin Waterbury, Curator
National Mississippi River Museum & Aquarium
350 East Third Street
Dubuque, Iowa 52001
563-557-9545, cwaterbury@rivermuseum.com

NEWSLETTER

Tamara R. Lange, Collection Coordinator/Registrar
Sheboygan County Historical Society & Museum
3110 Erie Avenue
Sheboygan, Wisconsin 53081
920-458-1103, tamara.lange@sheboygancounty.com

WEBSITE

Craig Hadley, Curator
DePauw University
10 W. Hanna
Greencastle, Indiana 46135
765-658-6556, craighadley@depauw.edu

ILLINOIS

Laura McDowell-Hopper, Curator
The Anthropology Museum, Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, Illinois 60115
248-462-3181, laura.mcdowell.hopper@gmail.com

INDIANA

Lana Newhart-Kellen, Registrar
Conner Prairie
13400 Allisonville Road
Fishers, Indiana 46038-4499
317-776-6000, newhart@connerprairie.org

IOWA

Teri Van Dorston, Assistant Director
Veterans Memorial Commission
50 2nd Avenue Bridge
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52401
319-286-5038, T.VanDorston@cedar-rapids.org

MICHIGAN

Robin Goodman, Registrar
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts
314 South Park Street
Kalamazoo, Michigan 49007
269-585-9271, robing@kiarts.org

MINNESOTA

Jackie Hoff, Director, Collection Services
Science Museum of Minnesota
120 West Kellogg Blvd.
St. Paul, Minnesota 55102
651-221-9435, jhoff@smm.org

MISSOURI

Stacie Petersen, Registrar
National World War I Museum at Liberty Memorial
100 W 26th Street
Kansas City, Missouri 64108
816-888-8119, Stacie.Petersen@theworldwar.org

OHIO

Vacant

WISCONSIN

Elizabeth Frozena, Registrar
Racine Art Museum
441 Main Street
Racine, WI 53401-0187
262-638-8300, x113, efrozena@ramart.org