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ASSOCIATION OF
MIDWEST MUSEUMS
(AMM)

From the Chair - Sarah Humes

As we continue navigating the challenges of a rapidly changing cultural landscape, I wanted to take a moment to address the recent cuts to funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), as well as the evolving landscape of Diversity, Equity, inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). While these changes have created uncertainty for many of us in the cultural heritage field, I want to offer my heartfelt support and reassure you that our collective resilience remains a guiding force.



The funding reductions have been deeply felt by many of our institutions and the communities we serve. These are difficult times, no doubt, and it's easy to feel discouraged. However, it is important to remember that, together, we can adapt, innovate, and continue to make meaningful impacts in our work. We've always found ways to collaborate, to support one another, and to move forward even when faced with adversity. Our commitment to preserving and sharing history, culture, and knowledge remains as strong as ever.

We must continue to focus on creating inclusive, equitable spaces for all voices, cultures, and histories. Each of us has a role in shaping the future of our field, as we look to the future, there is hope.

Upcoming AMM Conference in the Quad Cities

I'm pleased to announce that this year's Association of Midwest Museums conference will be held in the vibrant and historic Quad Cities region from July 30th - August 2nd. A virtual component will take place on July 23rd.

Join the MRC for lunch and fun at our Annual Business Meeting at [Tiphany's](#) (210 E 2nd St, Davenport), just a short walk from the RiverCenter south building 2nd Street entrance. This lunch meeting is open to current and new members of the Midwest Registrars Committee only. Join or renew your membership with MRC for \$10/year at midwestregistrars.org. Please RSVP during registration. This is a fantastic opportunity to gather with colleagues, share stories, and reflect on our shared goals and challenges.



Thanks to our generous sponsors, [Dietl](#), [Guardian Fine Art Services](#), and [Masterpiece International](#), lunch will be provided.

The AMM conference promises to be a time of inspiration, learning, and camaraderie, and I look forward to seeing many of you there. It's a reminder that, even in the face of adversity, we remain a passionate, committed community—stronger together and ready to move forward with hope.

As always, if you have any questions or would like to connect, don't hesitate to reach out.



News From The Midwest

ILLINOIS

Christine McNulty

I'm struggling to know what to write about for this issue of the Courier. In the last few weeks, the museum and library fields have been rocked by a shocking set of decisions. I've always possessed a sizable dose of cynicism, but these unprecedented set of steps dismantling the structures our field relies upon so heavily has even me floored.

It was a federal grant that provided me with my first museum job, serving as a bridge between internships and operating staff. Had that not existed, where would I be? I have no idea, because I have spent the entirety of my career in museums. I've devoted my professional life to caring for material culture, preserving archives and making them accessible, exhibiting artwork, and recording oral histories. I've been privileged to meet artists and authors, musicians and dancers, scholars and survivors. Thanks to my time in museums, I can explain the difference between a couch and a sofa, hang pictures securely in my home at the proper height, and can drive a pallet jack like a boss. I've taught myself many things because I've just had to. While that gets overwhelming at times, the challenge fuels me, keeps me growing, and I can say with absolute confidence that I can do a whole lot with very little.

But what about this? Can I, can we get through this? This is unlike anything any of us have seen before. Well, yes. Just like that time you had to get that piece through customs, or finalize that year-end gift, or condition report hundreds of objects in a span of time in which no one person should be expected to complete such a task, but somehow you are expected to do it and so you did. And so we will. I don't know precisely what that looks like yet, but I do know that people who work in museums, archives, and libraries are some of the best problem solvers out there and so we will get through this as an industry. Because we have to.



Horsing Around - New Toy Donated to Raupp Museum

Marina Mayne, Museum Registrar & Public Educator

The Raupp Museum in Buffalo Grove, Illinois welcomed a new object into our collection recently, a unique late 19th century toy horse. The horse belonged to a long-time local resident, whose mother received the toy horse from her parents in the 1930s. Staff noticed right away that this toy horse was a little bit different from others in the collection. It wasn't a typically wooden pull toy, but was made to look very realistic.



The horse sits on a wooden platform with wheels, and has horse hide covering the body, along with horse or cow tail hairs for the tail. The sewn lines where the hide has been stretched over the wooden frame show where pieces were joined. Upon close inspection, pieces are missing on those spots, most likely a saddle, reins, bridles, bits and harnesses. This toy had clearly seen lots of play time in its life, and no longer stands up straight on the board.

With some research, staff found a similar toy at the Powerhouse Museum Collection in Sydney. Their Assistant Curator in Science and Industry, Margaret Simpson, noted in the object record that many of these skin-covered toys were made in Germany, and exported around Europe and the Americas from the 1870s to 1930s. The process of preparing the skins involved some science: "The skins were cured by drying in the sun, using mineral salt mixed with alum, or sulphuric acid... Skins were applied wet, stretched tightly over the horse and held in place, and then cut to size" (Simpson, 2007). After this process, the pieces were sewed together.

Staff at the Raupp Museum are excited to share this new item in the collection and the story of how it was made. We think kids and adults will both be interested in exploring its history! Let us know if you have a similar toy in your collection – we would love to know its story.

To visit the full object record of the Raupp Museum's horse, visit the QR Code



To visit the similar horse in the Powerhouse Museum and learn more visit:
<https://collection.powerhouse.com.au/object/169139>.



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Grand Rapids Public Museum Opens New Play Ball! Exhibit

Sarah Humes, Registrar

On April 4, 2025, the Grand Rapids Public Museum opened its newest core exhibit [Play Ball! The World's Largest Collection of Detroit Tigers Baseballs](#). This exhibit showcases the incredible collection of autographed baseballs amassed by devoted Tigers fan, Steve Nagengast. Steve and Mary Nagengast generously donated Steve's collection of 1,200 autographed baseballs and other memorabilia dating between 1901 and 2020.

With a special focus on West Michigan connections, this one-of-a-kind exhibit provides a deeper look into the stories and memories of some of the most celebrated figures in baseball history. Visitors can explore the collection, sit in authentic Tiger stadium seats used from 1978-2008, and even imagine their own team through an interactive game.

The collection was donated to the museum in early 2024 and collections staff worked over the past year to document, photograph, number, and install the balls and other memorabilia. The exhibit team worked to create a space that could showcase the balls safely and in a dynamic way. They also created graphics, nameplates, mounts, and interactives for the exhibit.



Museum staff at the exhibit opening.



A small portion of the baseballs during installation.

Mackinac State Historic Parks Brian Jaeschke, Curator of Collections

Mackinac State Historic Parks (MSHP) has survived the unprecedented ice storm that hit Northern Michigan the weekend of March 29-30. Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency on March 31st and additional resources were sent to support the recovery efforts. Our office in Mackinaw City was closed for two days while power was restored although several staff including myself are still waiting for power to our residences. Mackinac Island had severe tree damage blocking the main road around the island and the trail system (shown here). It is currently being cleaned up by our park operations staff and the Michigan National Guard.



MSHP will have staggered openings for the summer season starting on May 2nd with Fort Mackinac. On May 6th, Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse will open in Mackinaw City followed by Colonial Michilimackinac on the 7th. Rounding out the openings will be the Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum and Biddle House Mackinac Island Native American Museum on May 9th. Historic Mill Creek is scheduled to open May 8th but may be delayed due to storm damage clean up.

Curator of Collections Brian Jaeschke has hired two collections intern to assist with the summer inventory on Mackinac Island. Elsa Miller from Grove City College in Pennsylvania and Brianna Birkle from Walsh University in Ohio will start work in May. They will be conducting object inventory of Fort Mackinac and Special Storage inside the Heritage Center. They will also be helping with cataloging, processing and photography for new accessions.

The interns will also be assisting with the installation of artifacts in the Fort Mackinac Soldiers Barracks. The previous barracks exhibits were removed last fall, and the building is currently being renovated (shown here) with new bathrooms, an HVAC system and new exhibits. The former exhibit, An Island Famous in These Region will get a refresh with some new artifacts as well as many previously displayed.



The orientation video for the fort will be moved to the second floor of the building in the room once used as the chapel. An exhibit on Fort Mackinac's military history will discuss the role of the fort from 1781 until 1895 and a new period setting with what life was like for the soldiers will complete the project.

The Richard and Jane Manoogian Mackinac Art Museum will exhibit the 2025 contemporary art contest “Iconic Mackinac” this summer. Out of 110 entries, an outside juror selected 20 pieces to be displayed until October 5, 2025. Mackinac State Historic Parks will host a grand opening and awards reception on Wednesday, June 18th at the museum.

This summer, we will be celebrating the 150th anniversary of the creation of Mackinac National Park. Mackinac Island was the second national park after Yellowstone and was managed by the United States Army until 1895. In that year, the soldiers left Fort Mackinac and the post was closed. Mackinac Island became Michigan’s first state park that same year. Several special events will take place to celebrate the island and its beautiful scenery.

Currently, the park is accepting applications for an archival/collections assistant who will fill a winter internship. The internship can start any time after November 1, 2025, has flexible end dates and can be used for college credit. The intern will be based in Mackinaw City at the Petersen Center with free housing provided. The intern is also provided with a stipend. Applications and a position description can be found on the parks’ website www.mackinacparks.com

Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Julie Bunke, Manager of Exhibits and Interactive Experiences

The Kalamazoo Valley Museum has two new exhibits on display now through August 31, 2025. Both exhibits were created in house to showcase the museums amazing collections in a fun and unique way.

Colorful Collections of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum

Featuring items from the permanent collection of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum displayed in a rainbow of hues. Delve into the color spectrum like never before as you make your way through the colors of the rainbow. Enjoy some of the brightest and boldest examples of artifacts from museums collection in this playful exhibit.



The Art of Advertising

Highlighting nostalgic signs and advertisements from local businesses from the permanent artifact collection of the Kalamazoo Valley Museum. Find yourself surrounded by an eclectic mix of advertising paraphernalia from bygone eras. From thermometers, mirrors and cookbooks to corkscrews, matches and letter openers, anything and everything was used to advertise businesses in Kalamazoo spanning the 1800s to present time.



DIETL



SET THE TONE

Photo: Faurischou

MINNESOTA

Painting in the Minneapolis Institute of Art's collection inspires musical composition

Leslie Ory Lewellen, Registrar for Collections at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, shared, "This past fall, I accompanied Ryan Lindveit, a professor of composition at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville, to view the Beauford Delaney [painting on the raincoat](#) in art storage. Ryan was commissioned to write a piece for wind ensemble inspired by Beauford Delaney, who grew up in Knoxville. This is doubly interesting for me also because I'm a musician who plays in a [wind ensemble](#), as well as an art historian. Ryan was searching for works of art by Delaney, and came across our painting, which was very inspiring for him. We talked about texture and color in the artwork, and texture and tone color in music. It was a great conversation."

Dr. Lindveit later wrote of his composition, "Although [Brilliant Brushstrokes](#) is tightly constructed around only a few melodic gestures, the music constantly cycles through changes in instrumental texture, density, harmony, and energy. Musical phrases are often cut-off abruptly with a quick down-up gesture that I view as related to the stitched seams on the raincoat. Overall, the composition uses the vast and variegated color palette of the wind ensemble to capture the inventive spirit and brilliant dynamism of Delaney's brushstrokes, splatters, and daubs."

The piece was premiered March 13 by the University of Tennessee, Knoxville Wind Ensemble, and performed again on March 27 at the College Band Directors National Association conference in Fort Worth.



Beauford Delaney, (1901–1979), [Untitled](#) (detail), 1954, oil on raincoat fragment. © Estate of Beauford Delaney / Derek L. Spratley, Esq., Court Appointed Administrator. Gift of Jacques and Solange du Closel 2003.106

The Gund at Kenyon College Achieves First-time Accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums, Robin Goodman

We are thrilled to share that The Gund at Kenyon College has officially been accredited by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM)—the field’s gold standard for museum excellence. Accreditation is not just a milestone; it’s a meaningful affirmation of the values that have guided us since our founding in 2012: care, excellence, and shared learning. This recognition reflects our steadfast commitment to curatorial rigor, collections stewardship, educational impact, and community engagement. Fewer than 5% of museums in the United States receive this distinction, and we are honored to join their ranks.

To earn accreditation, a museum submits a self-study questionnaire and key operational documents for evaluation, then undergoes a site visit by a two-person team of peer reviewers which produces a report for the Accreditation Commission. The Commission uses these materials and its collective expertise to determine whether to grant accreditation.

Accreditation does not change who we are—it strengthens and uplifts how we do what we do. We remain, above all, a teaching museum, committed to students, to artists, to our community, and to the transformative power of art. Accreditation means we now have a stronger foundation to support that kind of dialogue. It empowers us to ask bold questions, build better systems, and ensure that students—past, present, and future—continue to see themselves reflected in the museum’s program and priorities.

This moment is one of growth, reflection, and deepened purpose. Accreditation is a collective achievement and was made possible by the dedication of our staff, the support of the College, and our community. We look forward to what comes next.



The Gund



MRC Travel Stipends

The Midwest Registrars Committee board is very pleased to announce that the MRC will be awarding travel stipends to assist with registration and travel costs to attend the 2025 Association of Midwest Museums Conference in Davenport, Iowa. We are extremely grateful that these Travel stipends are being made possible by the generous sponsorships of Dietl, Guardian Fine Arts Services, and Masterpiece! There will be one day of virtual programming on July 23, and the in-person conference will be July 30-August 2. All recipients of conference stipends will be expected to write one article for the MRC's The Courier about a session at the conference as well as attend the MRC business meeting during the conference. If you know of any deserving students who are interested in registration and collections management, please encourage them to apply as well.

All applicants must be MRC members with 2025 dues paid, but applicants may join MRC at the time of their application submission.

You can join or renew your MRC membership here:

<https://midwestregistrars.org/membership-2/joinrenew-membership/>

Link to download application: <https://midwestregistrars.org/grants-and-travel-stipends/>

The deadline for applications for MRC travel stipends is May 23. Anyone who is interested in attending the conference is STRONGLY URGED to apply!!

If you have any questions, contact MRC Vice-Chair Jennifer Rigsby at jrigsby@idiscovernewfields.org.

2025 MRC Stipend Application

The Midwest Registrars Committee is offering travel stipends at two levels (half-stipend of \$375 or full stipend of \$750) for members to attend the Association of Midwest Museums Conference, with virtual program day on July 23 and in-person program days from July 30-August 2, 2025, in Davenport, Iowa.

Applicants must be active members of the Midwest Registrars Committee--with dues paid for 2025--and work or attend college in the Midwest region. Selections will be based on the materials submitted to the Travel Stipend Committee. The recipients will attend the MRC business meeting at the conference and will write one article for MRC's "The Courier" about a session at the conference. Applicants awarded the MRC travel stipend for one of the last three conferences (2022-2024) will not be considered.

To apply, please complete the form below and attach the required additional information.

Name

Position/Title (or year in college)

Institution Name (or college name)

Street Address/P.O. Box

City

State

Zip

Email

Phone

Indicate if you are applying for a half or full stipend (check one):

☐

HALF stipend (\$375)

☐

FULL stipend (\$750)

Additional Information Required:

- ❖ Current resume (or CV if you are a student)
- ❖ Statement by applicant to include the following:
 - A brief description of your professional duties (or educational focus if you are a student)
 - Your involvement in and commitment to the profession
- ❖ One letter of recommendation

Application Deadline:

May 23, 2025

Recipients will be announced by June 5, 2025

**Send applications
and any questions to:**

Jennifer Gallatin Rigsby, Registrar for Permanent Collections and
MRC Vice-Chair

Indianapolis Museum of Art
4000 Michigan Road
Indianapolis, IN 46208

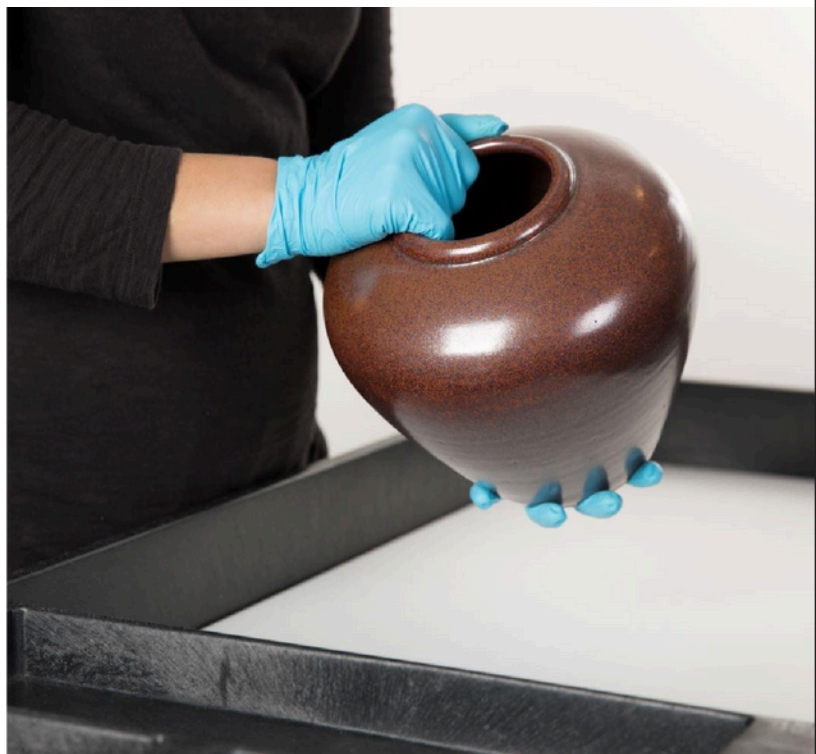
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cross currents cross currents

Virtual: July 23

In-Person:
July 30–August 2

**It's Time To
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Membership!**

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FOR 2025 TODAY**



Midwest Registrars Committee

Contact Us!

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DEVELOPMENT

Position available! Please contact MRC Chair Sarah Humes for more information on how you can help!

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IOWA

Position available! Please contact MRC Vice-Chair Jennifer Rigsby for more information on how you can help!

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Position available! Please contact MRC Vice-Chair Jennifer Rigsby for more information on how you can help!

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Position available! Please contact MRC Vice-Chair Jennifer Rigsby for more information on how you can help!

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