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The photos on the front cover of this Spring/Summer issue of Sound Archivist are, top row from left, Fun Forest, 1970, Seattle Municipal Archives, Series 7613-05, Item No. 73211; Ravenna Park, 1909, Seattle Municipal Archives, Series 5801-01, Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, Item No. 30112; and Opening Day, Children’s Zoo, 1967, Seattle Municipal Archives, Series 5801-01, Don Sherwood Parks History Collection, Item No. 30872. The bottom image is from King County’s Children’s Outdoor Programs, 1955, King County Archives, Series 467 Box 13, Folder 11.

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Meet your new SeaAA Chair, Lindsay Zaborowski

Lindsay Zaborowski is Archivist at the Museum of Flight in Seattle, and also serves as Archives Coordinator for the Ballard Historical Society. She received her MSIS (Archives and Preservation) and MA in History from SUNY Albany in 2009. From 2011-2013, she served as Project Manager for Washington County Heritage Online, a cooperative grant project which drew together cultural organization from Washington County, Oregon.

See http://lindsayzaborowski.wordpress.com for more information about Lindsay’s background and interests.

Congratulations are in order!

Congratulations to UW Special Collections!
The University of Washington Libraries Special Collections documentary, Grays Harbor Happenings: the Newsreels of C.D. Anderson, has won the 2014 David Douglas Award from the Washington State Historical Society. This award “recognizes projects, exhibits, educational products or any other vehicle that informs or expands our appreciation of any field of Washington State history.” This is the first time that the Libraries was nominated for this annual award.

The documentary, Grays Harbor Happenings: the Newsreels of C.D. Anderson, was the culmination of eight years of work on a collection of 52 reels of nitrate news reel film made in the Grays Harbor County area in the 1920s. Once the collection was preserved, processed, and described online, the University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections worked with UWTV to produce a documentary about the preservation of the film and about Grays Harbor in the 1920s. UW Libraries staff will speak about the project and show the film at the upcoming Northwest Archivists conference in Spokane.

Congratulations to Leslie Schuyler!
Leslie’s article “Reflections on the importance of archives,” published in the Winter 2014 issue of Sound Archivist, was republished in the March/April issue of the Society of American Archivists journal Archival Outlook. Leslie is Lakeside School Archivist and a former SeaAA Steering Committee Member.
Recap of joint AKCHO-SeaAA meeting on the theme of collaboration

On February 25, over 40 members from Seattle Area Archivists and the Association of King County Historical Organizations met at the Allen Auditorium on the University of Washington campus for a joint AKCHO/SeaAA meeting, hosted by the University of Washington Special Collections.

Special Collections Associate Dean and Head of the University Libraries Special Collections Department Paul Constantine, Film Archivist Hannah Palin, and Visual Materials Curator Nicolette Bromberg spoke of recent collaboration with historical organizations and community members, including the Grays Harbor newsreel restoration project (described in the Fall 2013 issue of Sound Archivist) the King County Snapshots digital collection (http://content.lib.washington.edu/imls/kcsnapshots/), which features images from several AKCHO member organizations, and digitization of the Mountaineers’ photograph album collection (http://content.lib.washington.edu/mtnweb/index.html).

Associate Dean Constantine led a group discussion on how AKCHO members and area archives could collaborate, provide mutual support, and learn more about one another’s collections and resources. AKCHO members brought up specific research questions and preservation issues that might be answered by archivists. Historic Seattle’s series of “Digging Deeper” workshops held at local archives was given as an example of a cultural organization promoting (and to some extent demystifying) the use of archives in research.

Miguel Llanos, of the Redmond Historical Society, proposed that the AKCHO and SeaAA could collaborate on a joint exhibit, possibly relating to the Conservation Corps, bringing together material from the collections of local archives, historical societies, and other AKCHO member organizations.

The meeting concluded with a tour of UW Special Collections. To learn about AKCHO, see www.akcho.org.

Recap of joint SeaAA-Seattle Theater Archives Project meeting

On March 18, SeaAA met at the Paramount Theater. After the general business meeting, Helice Koffler, Manuscripts & Special Collections Materials Cataloging Librarian at the University of Washington Special Collections presented on her work with the American Theatre Archive Project. An initiative of the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR), ATAP is a network of archivists, dramaturgs, and scholars dedicated to preserving the legacy of the American theatre.

Most specifically, Helice detailed her work with the Seattle Theatre Archive and the Northwest participants in the project. Afterwards, our gracious hosts at the Paramount Theatre, Lynn and Marian Thrasher spoke about their efforts to preserve the legacy of the theater and the creation of the Seattle Theatre Group Historic Theatres Library. Participants enjoyed a tour of this library and the theater itself.
Recap of SeaAA Spring meeting at the Living Computer Museum

Seattle Area Archivists membership met at the Living Computer Museum in Seattle’s SODO district on May 15. The Steering Committee recognized and thanked Elizabeth Knight for her service as Chair of the committee. During her term, Elizabeth provided leadership and vision and shared her professional knowledge and passion for the archival profession. Incoming Chair Lindsay Zaborowski was welcomed.

In her presentation, “Establishing an archive at the Charles Darwin Foundation in the Galapagos,” Elizabeth described her work as a volunteer at the Darwin Research Station in the Galapagos province of Ecuador. She shared how she was able to use her expertise to contribute to a cause that she values deeply, environmental conservation, and she encouraged other archivists to seek similar meaningful volunteer opportunities.

After Elizabeth’s presentation, our hosts at the Living Computer Museum provided a tour of the museum’s archival storage area and basement collection of yet-to-be resuscitated microcomputers and other machines that represent landmarks in the evolution of computing technology. SeaAA members passed what appeared to be a World War II era teletype machine that was part of a recent acquisition. The archives of the museum includes a library of functional (or potentially functional) circuit boards and a collection of technical manuals. Members were then given an extensive tour of the museum exhibition.

Academy of Certified Archivists exam

The latest word from the Academy of Certified Archivists is that the 2014 exam will be proctored for our region in Salem, Oregon on August 13. Contact the ACA for details.

Regional Archival Associations Consortium Update

Responses to our survey of SeaAA members regarding participation in RAAC weren’t many, but the feedback we did receive expressed the most interest in collaborating with other Northwest organizations by hosting shared educational events. Other areas of focus to choose from were disaster planning and recovery, advocacy, grant development, and public awareness. Carol Shenk is representing SeaAA on the RAAC, and, based on the survey results and additional member feedback, will be joining the Education Subcommittee. RAAC will be holding a Roundtable meeting in August at the SAA annual meeting where we will discuss next steps for this newly formed consortium.
Northwest Archivists Conference Highlight
Session 1: Primary Source Literacy
Special Collections and Archives in the Classroom
By Rebecca Pixler

In the session “Primary Source Literacy” at NWA’s annual conference, presenters discussed educational goals and pedagogical issues around introducing students to archives and special collections. The session was moderated by Elizabeth Joffrion of Western Washington University, with presentations from Anne Bahde, from Oregon State University, Trevor Bond of Washington State University, and Rozlind Koester from Western Washington University. Following is a summary of helpful hints from the three presentations, combined and paraphrased.

We are (untrained, informal) educators of our clients.
We learn to teach without courses in pedagogy.

What we can do:
- Teach critical thinking
- Teach how to use, judge and evaluate materials
- Educate future decision-makers about archival policy and programs
- Assert primary sources
- Promote holdings
- Draw in clients
- Encourage archival research
- Accept responsibility in educating younger archivists
- Demystify archives

On site tours:
- Stress the special and valuable nature of the materials
- Contrast libraries and archives
- Place archivists in the picture – what they do.
- Stress importance of a meaningful reference interview:
  - encourage forthcomingness in clients
- Suggestion: set up the research room with pre-selected documents (either “treasures” or theme-based)
- Let students/“tour-ists” take folders out of a box, open a volume, unroll a map: let them engage by touch.
  - Students like to have something to do

Working with/showing archival materials:
- Choose materials of slight ambiguity
- Choose materials that are provocative: (1) What research questions does this help answer? (2) What research questions does it raise?
- Give students time to wrestle with sources
- Explore context: what would have been your feelings if you had been living at that time?
- Consider linking local/regional with the larger picture
- Give elementary puzzles to solve
- Reassure that “there is no one right answer” when researching these materials
- Distinguish between content and artifact
- Build primary source literacy – ask students to ask questions about the items [a good list is in the Washington State Archives ‘Doing Historical Research’ pamphlet]
- Bring your own passion to the task

Documenting work as an archival educator:
- Critical to show impact – that educational programs (or, the time taken to educate clients) is worth the effort
- Document the classes or presentations that you give; keep files
- Report [meaningful] statistics: # of lectures, # of tours, # people at presentation
- Document the “shocking amount” [T. Bond] of time it takes to keep up social media

Rozlind Koester cited WWU’s online tutorial at http://libguides.wwu.edu/heritageresources_accessanduse.

The tutorial is assigned for student viewing prior to their site visits.

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Snapshots in time: 40 years of Asian American history revealed
By Eleanor Boba

The English-language pan-Asian newspaper International Examiner has provided a unique perspective on issues affecting Asian Pacific Americans in the Seattle area and beyond since its founding in 1974. Hundreds of the images taken on behalf of the paper have been gathering dust in file, some for decades. Images of protests and celebration, crime and tragedy, as well as daily life document the APA pursuit of both shared and distinctive identities.

Two years ago IE staff and board members launched a digital archives project with financial help from King County 4Culture. For the first time an effort was begun to catalog and preserve the photographs in the paper's possession. A year ago a second grant from the City of Seattle Department of Neighborhoods allowed the project to move toward creation of a curated online gallery of images available to the public.

This spring – just in time for the Examiner's 40th anniversary – we are able to unveil the results of the project: a catalog of nearly 2,000 images, organized, indexed and stored in appropriate archival materials, as well as a searchable, online gallery via Flickr, containing 200+ of the best and most informative images. All images have been tagged and captioned with information relating them to specific historical events, as well as to larger themes. A work in progress, the gallery continues to grow. View it at: http://www.flickr.com/photos/examinerarchives/

We have worked with the photographers (when we could find them), to provide as accurate information as possible. There is always room for improvement, however! Thanks to Flickr, viewers can weigh in with comments or corrections gently offered!

The IE Digital Archives Project team consisted of Project Managers Eleanor Boba, Stephen Jeong, and Tuyen Kim Than, Heritage Specialist Eleanor Boba, Archivist Ben Abraham, and interns Paige Minister, Debbie Wu, and Chelsea Yee, working with IE staff Kathy Ho, Travis Quezon, and Christina Twu. We have been ably assisted in relating the APA experience by community advisors and photographers too many to mention here.

The complete collection can be viewed by appointment at the offices of the International Examiner. Please contact Kathy Ho at Kathy.ho@IExaminer.org.

We are grateful to King County 4Culture and the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods for making this endeavor possible.

Candles light a vigil commemorating the tenth anniversary of the murder of Vincent Chin, a young Chinese-American beaten to death in Detroit in 1982 in a case with overtones of racial hatred and lenient sentencing of the men responsible. The case led to a public outcry around the country. Hing Hay Park, June 23, 1992. Michelle Corsilles (middle) and Anne Xuan Clark, right. Photo, Dean Wong.
indicated one third of their collections were in backlog. The average record processing time of 40 hours per cubic foot had to be reduced in order for repositories to keep up with acquisitions. Less processing was the way to get at the problem. MPLP performed correctly professed a processing speed of 8 hours per cubic foot. If successful in transitioning to MPLP, archivists could manage the growing list of repository responsibilities including processing acquisitions, digitizing records, cataloging records, administering the repository, managing a website, responding to user requests and not to forget outreach and connecting with potential donors. Indeed, MPLP provided a welcomed change.

Greene and Meissner established a “golden minimum” for processing records. Applying Schellenberg’s claim to “forgo the detailed description of individual records until all the summaries are complete and to stop arranging at the series level provides faster access to a collection” (Greene and Meissner, p. 227). MPLP’s “golden minimum” steps: 1) the processor understands the whole of the materials, 2) the processor identifies the major organic record groups (series and subgroups), 3) he or she organizes the records in regard to their natural relationships, and finally, folders are arranged after the series are in place.

Not all series and files need to be arranged at the same level of intensity with MPLP; for example, a large series such as a correspondence file does not need to be organized by date or decade, leaving some “treasure hunting” and investigative work for the researcher. The traditional step of “weeding” folders for duplicates is eliminated. For the description stage, processors are instructed to be brief when writing about the collection’s context or biographical sketch, not to go overboard with scope and content and number the files that are present in the series. Greene and Meissner addressed preservation concerns in their survey and concluded repositories rely on “environmental storage to carry the preservation burden,” thus if records were properly stored, in low light and temperature, and in archival boxes, original file folders were acceptable. MPLP processors are not required to refolder files and remove paper clips and metal fasteners from records, which are considered time consuming and expensive tasks. In addition, Greene and Meissner stated creating EAD finding aids and MARC21 cataloging did not increase processing demands. They believe once repository staff is trained, EAD and MARC21 are front end costs, not additional uses of resources; a convincing set of recommendations in providing swift processing solutions (Greene and Meissner, p. 252)

Two case studies following Greene’s and Meissner’s research claimed success in reducing record backlog and revealed additional ways to reduce processing time. Donna McCrea wrote about her backlog experience in, “Getting More for Less: Testing a New Processing Model at the University of Montana.” McCrea joined the staff at University of Montana Archives when 25% of their holdings were in backlog. She calculated it would take 11.5 years to get through the backlog, processing on average 150-200 feet of material each year (McCrea, p. 285). McCrea was motivated to give MPLP a try. She hired a university student intern to help and within a year, they moved 464 linear feet in 623 hours, or 2 hours per linear foot. McCrea, now a believer in “do what is necessary to get records to users,” no longer apologizes for minimal processing. She stopped re-folding files, removing metal fasteners, sleeving photographs and item level preservation. She limits arrangement and description to series and folders but does recognize a gem when she sees one and admits to thorough description and preservation when processing exceptional materials (Weideman, p. 287).

McCrea sees the value in crowd sourcing and looks forward to when researchers adding description to a

(continued on next page)
Another convert, archivist Christine Weideman, applied MPLP recommendations to her repository and added a time saving idea that streamlined her processing (Weideman, p. 274). With a similar backlog to McCrea’s, Weideman was overwhelmed with keeping up with her work load especially with technical advances. In addition to trying MPLP, she involved donors with the preliminary processing steps prior to the collection reaching the repository. By having the donor assist in the initial stage, the collection got a head start in being processed sooner than later. Weideman reduced her backlog and became more efficient.

Yet there are consequences with MPLP recommendations. A hurried processor limited to the amount of time spent on Scope and Content does not go the extra mile in describing a series. Boxes may get a loosely fit title such as “Subject File.” The overused term “Subject File” for example in Kathleen Roe’s “Arranging & Describing, Archives & Manuscripts” seems to be a lazy way of saying, “I don’t know what else to call this file and I don’t have any time to figure it out.” One key step in processing as outlined by Fox and Wilkerson in “Tutorial: An Over the Shoulder View of an Archivist at Work,” and vital to user success is how one creates the description for catalog records and finding aids. This key step links the user to the record. If this step is rushed, or completed by an inexperienced person, the description becomes useless. Even if a user has the opportunity to add his or content to the record, the record needs to be accessible. Researchers still end up waiting for a collection to be accessible if the repository asks the donor to be involved in processing. Who is to say a donor works quickly? For example, The Friends of Seattle Olmsted Parks was asked to arrange their records before donating them to the University of Washington, and it has been four years thus far.

MPLP claims to have all the answers for streamlining processing time. Greene’s and Meissner’s call to change puts the researcher first in providing an overview of a repository’s “entire holdings.” Repositories using MPLP have had success; going from 40 hours in processing one cubic feet to eight hours is a significant accomplishment. However, an archivist’s analysis needs to be thorough in context and content when describing a collection in order to gain intellectual control over the records. How else will the user know whether the record is relevant if not by the way it is described? The archivists’ professional duty to act in a supervisory role when a student intern writes descriptions is crucial to a collection’s value. Preservation methods are at a bare minimum for MPLP takers; perhaps the most valued materials have already been preserved, but if not, a collection is at risk. On the other hand, MPLP guidelines make the most economical sense when the archival goal is to represent materials simply and quickly to those waiting to know what is in your collection. Processing technique continues to be a debatable subject — for now MPLP appears to be ideal.
In 2011, the Seattle Municipal Archives completed a two-year grant from NHPRC that allowed us to dig deep into our backlog and provide access to many records that were previously not processed or described in our databases. As part of the grant, we had to think about how we wanted to incorporate MPLP principles in order to strike the appropriate balance between processing speed and useful access.

Many institutions using MPLP do not describe records at more than the box or even the record series level. At SMA, one of our most useful tools for discovery is our folder database, which includes folder titles for all processed records in our collections. Searching on “Volunteer Park,” for example, will bring up results for records from City Council, Engineering, Parks, and other city departments. Since this is a heavily used database, it made sense for us to do folder-level cataloging instead of going with broader MPLP-style description practices.

However, we did use MPLP principles when it came to rehousing and other physical processing. We did not refolder records if the original folders were in decent shape, and we did not remove staples, paper clips, or other fasteners unless they added significant bulk and/or were noticeably rusty. We did, however, generally rebox records, as the original boxes almost never were clean and sturdy.

We did not go through the records page by page, again in line with MPLP principles. While this most likely led to increased bulk as duplicates and other non-archival records were not caught and removed, we felt the increased processing speed and the increased number of records made available to the public made up for the reduced weeding.

If adopted wholesale, MPLP principles can be as limiting as the old-fashioned pull-every-staple methods. However, there are many points on the continuum between minimal description at the access level and putting every document in chronological order. Each institution should find the balance that works best for them.

A good result: a few of hundreds of search results for a folder-level search on the term “Volunteer Park” in SMA’s subject files database.
Have you implemented MPLP tactics in any way?
With some of our collections, we simply create a folder level spreadsheet of box contents and immediately turn the collection into a MARC catalog record with the contents note in the 505 field for immediate access and searchability. We do not create traditional finding aids currently, but we are working on a plan to used OCLC’s CONTENTdm to display EAD finding aids which can then be cross-walked to MARC for the creation of the catalog record.

Working with digital collections in the past, we had analyzed the minimum and best metadata fields to apply to each individual collection to maximize the user experience. Recently, we worked collaboratively on a Dublin Core master data dictionary which will be used when processing all digital collections moving forward, offering a times savings in creating quality metadata, as well as greater consistency.

Also, we created an LCSH broad topics list of frequently used terms to describe photographs so that subject headings can be applied more expeditiously and with less pre-coordination.

Does your archives have defined minimum standards for preservation, arrangement, and description?
We currently have not recorded minimum standards for description (see above about the use of spreadsheets). However we do process materials for hazardous or harmful items (paperclips, rubber bands, dirt, etc.). The arrangement of the collections is largely based on their existing arrangement when they arrived in the library.

How are you handling backlogs?
By defining and standardizing processes and teaming up on processing and cataloging items, we are working through a number of past backlog issues. In addition, a collection need not be “perfect” in terms of description and preservation in order to be available for use.

To clarify, collections need to be in a useable form for the patrons and we need to be able to return items to their processed order.

How do you, or do you, provide access to unprocessed collections?
Historical knowledge of the contents of the collection is a great advantage when a researcher has a particular need to meet. We now try to strategically prioritize processing based on upcoming events to stay ahead of public requests. Relying on the knowledge of all our librarians, seasoned and green, is a bit of an issue and can create silos – we would like a catalog record for everything and eventually, this dream will be realized. This is an integral part of processing as far as public access goes.

We do not, however, allow public access to unprocessed collections or materials as a rule. Some level of processing is applied prior to use.

What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of MPLP? How do you balance minimal processing with preservation and access?
Even when trying to apply the tenets of MPLP, there is a certain amount of staff time and labor needed to even minimally describe a collection. That said, if you are touching something once, why not fully process the item?

Balance has been achieved through a variety of shortcuts – the development and implementation of streamlined and documented process (still in progress), improved technology and the daily reality of our staffing levels in the department.

Has minimal processing affected your knowledge of holdings? Your ability to provide effective reference services?
It is more difficult for new librarians to learn about the collection and to find the best resources to help patrons in their research if they do not have some hands-on experience with processing part of the collection. There are a variety of other ways for staff to learn the collection which can be quite complex in scope and contents. Hopefully, a combination of documentation, improved access to finding aids, and enhanced MARC records will result in a richer experience for patrons and staff alike.
Further reading on MPLP
Reading list provided by Elizabeth Knight


Dennis Meissner, Mark A. Greene. More Application while Less Appreciation: The Adopters and Antagonists of MPLP. *Journal of Archival Organization* Vol. 8, Iss. 3-4, 2010


The next Seattle Area Archivists meeting will be held jointly with the Greater Seattle Chapter of ARMA in October. Date, time, and location to be announced.

Happy Summer!!

Seattle World’s Fair Vending Machines, 1962. Item 90.2.0404, Series 275, Seattle-King County Department of Public Health, box 9, King County Archives
Sound Archivist is a publication of Seattle Area Archivists (SeaAA), a nonprofit organization serving the archival and records management community in the Seattle area and beyond.

SeaAA provides opportunities for the informal exchange of information among its members and promotes the preservation and use of archival, manuscript, and other specialized research materials.

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