

2002

Reports

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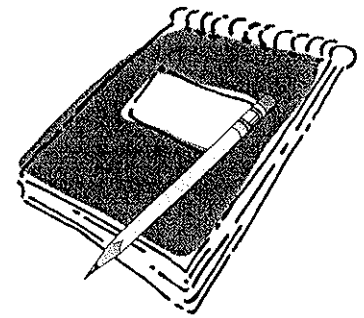
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Reports



SAA 2002 ANNUAL MEETING
AUGUST 19 - 25, 2002, BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA
SESSION REPORTS

Reported by Dr. Lynne Mueller, Special Collections Librarian, Mississippi State University Libraries

PRE-CONFERENCE WORKSHOP, "ECHOES OF THE OLD SOUTH: AFRICAN AMERICAN FAMILY HISTORY AND GENEALOGY AND ARCHIVAL REFERENCE SERVICES," AUGUST 19, 2002

Instructor Russell P. Baker, CA, archival manager and deputy director of the Arkansas History Commission and State Archives, conducted a one-day workshop for archivists and others who help African Americans research family history. He began with genealogy in general and the functions it fills as hobby, as connection between the individual and a broader heritage, and even as a source of medical information. He recommended that any researcher broaden his or her inquiries to include not only direct but collateral lines, a study that, in the South, is likely to require researching relatives of multiple races. Baker then concentrated on four areas: vital records and censuses; county and local records and newspapers; military and pre-Civil War records of both slaves and free Blacks; and Freedmen's Bureau records and other post-Civil War transitional records. He described the origins of these records, likely locations, indexing or other guides, and limitations in the records. Coverage of the record types made many of Baker's comments applicable to any genealogists regardless of race, but he made special mention of those sources particularly useful to African Americans. In addition, he included some special resources for those searching both African American and Native American ancestors.

"HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL RAMBLE TOUR IN THE ALABAMA BLACK BELT TOUR," AUGUST 21, 2002

Joyce Lamont, former curator of the Hoole Special Collections Library at the University of Alabama, and Alexander Sartwell of the Alabama Geological Survey, assisted by Jessica Lacher-Feldman, currently at the Hoole Library, led an all-day bus tour through the Alabama Black Belt. Sartwell outlined the geological development of Alabama and how the soil types and the rivers influenced history and the economy. The tour began in Eutaw, Alabama with a drive through some of the older neighborhoods to see examples of early farm and town houses. Near Forkland, the group toured Thornhill, an antebellum home still in private hands. Thornhill sits on an unusually high hill for the terrain with views covering several counties. Among the dependencies is one of the few remaining examples of a plantation school house, built as a miniature of the main house. Next, the tour stopped at Bluff Hall in Demopolis, built in 1832 for Francis Strother Lyon. The Marengo County Historical Society opened the Hall, and the neighboring Civic Center, with its view over the Tombigbee River limestone bluffs. Bluff Hall began as a simple Federal-style townhouse but was updated into the Greek Revival style by 1850. Lunch at Foscoe House, an antebellum farm house on the outskirts of Demopolis, was followed by a tour of Gaineswood, restored by the Alabama Historical Commission. George Strother Gaines originally built a two-story log

cabin on this site. His friend, Nathan Bryan Whitfield, bought the property and incorporated the original cabin into a stylish Greek Revival Home.

The afternoon included a visit to the Allen home near Old Spring Hill and St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, located in the heart of the Black Belt. St. Andrew's, built in 1858, is no longer an active church, although it is used for occasional special services. On the way back to Tuscaloosa and Birmingham, the bus drove through some of the older parts of Greensboro, another antebellum town of the region.

GROUP MEETING, "COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES SECTION," AUGUST 22, 2002

The meeting included discussion groups on archival outreach, public and private e-mail in colleges and universities, digitization projects, and university anniversaries as both opportunity and problem. The discussion on digitization projects highlighted the difficulties of turning easily-funded projects into ongoing programs, and the costs and benefits of applying resources to a digitization project. The subgroup discussing anniversaries talked about both the drain on resources to provide materials for an anniversary and the benefits of highlighting anniversaries in gaining new materials for collections.

SESSION, "WHEN YOU COME TO A FORK IN THE ROAD, TAKE IT: MANAGING MANDATED CHANGE IN THE ARCHIVES," AUGUST 22, 2002

Maria Schoeberl, of the Harley-Davidson Archives, began by describing the development of her corporate archives from its founding as part of the public relations department to its transfer to the newly-created museum department in preparation for the company's centennial. Her job changed from traditional archivist to museum curator; her clients changed from customers wanting help restoring motorcycles (and someone to listen to their enthusiasms) to museum designers and artists; her collection changed from corporate records to memorabilia. She had to reeducate herself to manage artifacts and to provide conservation for a broader variety of materials. Michael Moosberger of Dalhousie University Archives talked about change in a university setting. The previous archivist at Dalhousie had collected in response to his own interests rather than the needs of the university. An external review pointed out the need for a records management program, better control on collecting, and better relationships with the Nova Scotia archival community. The archives closed for several months while the staff inventoried, rearranged and weeded collections. Transferring non-University materials to other archives also helped bring about a province-wide acquisition strategy that benefitted everyone. Gail Redman of the Historical Society of Washington, D.C., traced the changes in her organization from an elite club housed in a nineteenth-century mansion to an organization representing the broader population and supporting community development and tourism through exhibits.

SESSION, "COLLEAGUES IN CULTURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: ARCHIVISTS, LIBRARIANS, CURATORS, AND CONSERVATORS," AUGUST 22, 2002

James Stimpert of Johns Hopkins University, began by discussing the difficulties of adapting archival procedures to fit an academic library, a sometimes frustrating exercise in trying to communicate the needs of the archive to individuals who think in library terms. Leon Stout of Pennsylvania State University talked about the differences between museums and archives. In particular, he discussed the ways museums and archives present history—archives give the researcher an array of documents and the time to analyze the facts while museums provide only an example of documents and a "canned" analysis that may be much more shallow. Miranda Martin of the National Archives also presented a paper on archivists and conservators.

GROUP MEETING, "REFERENCE, ACCESS, AND OUTREACH SECTION," 23 AUGUST 2002

Diane Kaplan of Yale University described the methods Yale uses to educate students in the use of archives, including one-on-one sessions, classroom instruction, and special sessions for teachers on how to incorporate the use of archives into their courses. Yale also offers a web-based tutorial to accommodate students' preferences for time. Marty Olliff, now of Troy State University at Dothan, described a similar website he created while working at Auburn University. The site explained what archives are, defines basic concepts (such as collections and finding aids), and lists departmental policies. He also suggested that some of this information could be linked into on-line guides to help the researcher follow through the appropriate

steps in accessing collections. Debbie Pendleton gave a general overview of her institution, the Alabama Department of Archives and History. She covered their funding from the state legislature and the use of friends' groups and a development foundation to tap private resources as well as the current construction of a new wing. She also discussed some of the changes in clientele in recent years with the advent of the web. Amy Leigh of Duke University's Sally Bingham Center on Women's History described the center's outreach program, which includes evenings of readings given at schools, nursing homes, and other sites to increase awareness of the archives.

PLENARY SESSION, "WITNESS TO HISTORY- ARCHIVISTS AND THE WORLD TRADE CENTER DISASTER," AUGUST 23, 2002

This plenary session was unusual because it was added to the program after the regular proposal date and because, traditionally, the Society of American Archivists does not have three plenary sessions at a conference. However, it was felt that there needed to be some recognition of the changes that 9/11 posed for archives as well as for society at large.

Robert Morris, of the National Archives and Records Administration Records Center in New York, witnessed the attack on the World Trade Center from his office just a few blocks away. He described his staff's reaction and their attempts to get home from the closed part of lower Manhattan. He also showed some slides taken by a staff member from their cafeteria window and in the street. The Record Center reopened to staff only on September 19, and they immediately began trying to determine what record losses may have occurred in the attack. No archivists were killed, but among the federal records lost were those of the U.S. Customs Service housed in the World Trade Center complex. Unfortunately, the Service stored their backup tapes in the same building. Federal court records stored nearby were also damaged and disrupted, although not completely destroyed. Federal emergency plans never envisioned such extensive damage for a range of sites, and are now under review. NARA and the Record Centers are also enhancing security and limiting access to identity sources that might aid terrorists.

George Tselos, with the National Park Service, was on his way to work on Ellis Island when the first plane struck the World Trade Center. Because an attack on Liberty Island was expected, all Park Service staff was evacuated from both islands. In accordance with the disaster plan in place, a triage station was set up on Ellis Island and Park Service boats that normally carry staff to the island began evacuating people from lower Manhattan. Archival collections at Ellis Island actually benefitted in the long run because Park Service staff from both Ellis and Liberty Islands processed papers in the period between the time they returned to work and the time tourists were allowed back. Tselos summarized new security policies instituted as a result of 9/11 and said that he believed the Statue of Liberty would never again have the unrestricted public access as in the past.

Gwynedd Cannan of Trinity Church Archives talked about her experiences. She was just exiting the subway when the first plane crashed, so she was able to get home without undue delay. Her office was in a building just behind Trinity Church, a few blocks from Ground Zero. Dust and ash did get into the building, but not into the actual record storage areas in the interior. St. Peter's Chapel, a dependency

of Trinity, was across the street from the World Trade Center and narrowly missed being crushed by a falling beam that hit a tree in the churchyard. Trinity Church itself became a care center for rescue crews, providing food, cots, and other necessities.

The last speaker, Dr. Thomas Terndrup, is a trauma physician at the University of Alabama Birmingham hospital. He and two of his staff were in a conference in Brooklyn, just a mile away from the World Trade Center. When they realized what had happened, all of the emergency personnel in the conference decided to help by doing what they were trained to do. They crossed the Brooklyn Bridge against most of the traffic, found usable space in nearby buildings and set up medical stations as close as they could. He also explained some of the planning now going on in medical circles to provide for future disasters of this magnitude.

SESSION, "ARCHIVES UNPLUGGED: ISSUES IN PRESERVATION OF ARCHIVAL MATERIALS," AUGUST 23, 2002

The "Archives Unplugged" sessions are one-hour versions of longer SAA workshops on general archival management, and several of these were held throughout the conference. Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, who frequently presents workshops on general paper and photographic conservation, provided an overall review of basic conservation principles. Anyone who has taken one of the longer workshops in the past could benefit from one of these quick sessions to learn of new products and the current thinking on handling materials.

SESSION, "FINDING OUR ROOTS, RESPECTING OUR ANCESTORS' PRIVACY: PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY ISSUES IN GENEALOGICAL RESEARCH," 23 AUGUST 2002

Timothy Salls of the New England Historic Genealogical Society described the development of his organization, an advocate of high standards in research. From the beginning, NEHGS has recommended a straightforward approach to "delicate discoveries" in order to make sure that the historical record is as complete as possible. At the same time, awkward facts should be weighted no more heavily than the good about an ancestor because scandal is not the point of scholarly history. Robert Johnson-Lally, of the Archdiocese of Boston, talked about the kinds of records in the church's archives that would be useful for genealogical research and about access to those records. Since many of these, particularly marriage, annulment, baptismal, and orphanage records, may give clues to old family secrets, they can be controversial. Typically, the Catholic Church leaves access policies to individual archives. Genealogists usually think of church records as open to all, but in reality, these are private as opposed to public records. The archives are under no obligation to open them at all. In practice, the Archdiocese of Boston uses the 72-year rule of census access to close recent files, and reviews older records on an individual basis before deciding how much to release to an individual. Arlene Schmuland of the Utah State Archives presented information on the Utah Government Records Law that went into effect in 1992. Surprisingly enough, Utah has major restrictions on death, adoption, and military records, even though it is the epicenter of genealogical research in the United States. The 1992 law has opened some of these records, but only after 50 to 100 years, and will actually be closing some records permanently. The Utah State Archives, however, does not get many genealogical requests since they are located only five blocks from the Family History Library.

SESSION, "MOLD: THE FUZZY REALITY," AUGUST 24, 2002

Robert B. Simmons, a biologist from Georgia State University, presented a slide show on fungi, describing the varieties that cause most reactions in human beings and the best methods used to control each variety. Mike Trinkley of the Chicora Foundation, Inc. reiterated most of this information in his segment. Hilary A. Kaplan of the Georgia Department of Archives and History reviewed some of the methods used to clean up a mold infestation, including legal requirements for protecting the individuals

doing the work. The general consensus was that mold can be controlled, but once damage is done to documents it cannot be reversed.

SESSION, "RESPONDING TO TERRORISM: THE ARCHIVAL CHALLENGE," AUGUST 24, 2002

This session, like the plenary session, was added after the normal proposal deadline. SAA recognizes that archivists are now faced with documenting the present in addition to the past, and the session concentrated on new documentation strategies under development.

Stephen Novak of Columbia University Medical Library dealt with the activities of New York area archivists immediately after 9/11. Their first response was to check on archivists known to work in Manhattan. About two weeks later, a group of twenty archivists began meeting to find out how much damage was done to collections and to begin documenting the event. Very little damage was done to collections not actually in the World Trade Center complex, but the New York Port Authority Archives and the records of the archaeological dig for the African Burial Ground in New York were both lost. The World Trade Center Documentation Task Force was the outgrowth of this group of twenty. They divided the project into six subgroups on government, health care, labor, emergency responses, entertainment, and other activities (including churches and charitable work), and outlined a strategy to collect materials and conduct oral histories. They hope that this may become part of a wider program to document New York City at the turn of the millennium.

Leonora Gidlund from the New York Department of Records and Information Services showed slides and described methods used to document and preserve the Pier 94 WTC Memorial Wall set up by the Community Assistance Unit. This was the wall on which family members seeking help from the unit could leave messages. Ultimately, most of the wall was saved by photographing it in detail and parceling it out among several repositories.

Kathleen Lloyd of the Navy Historical Center and Capt. Michael McDaniel of the U.S. Navy Combat Documentation Team, talked about using their routine oral history techniques derived from after-combat reviews to document the attack on the Pentagon. They interviewed "first responders" first before going on to interview Navy personnel and civilian workers in the Pentagon. Because of the war in Afghanistan, many of the higher-ranking Navy officers have not yet been interviewed. Other branches of service also conducted interviews among their staff, but the Navy Historical Center will be combining much of this information into a book next year covering the experiences of all the services. Capt. McDaniel, who had previously led the team interviewing survivors on the U.S.S. *Cole*, talked about the difficulties interview teams themselves had in coping with the horrific stories they heard. The Navy Historical Center is recommending that FEMA include documentation of disasters as part of its mitigation planning in the future, both to create a base of information about disasters and to give survivors a psychological opportunity to "vent."

Reported by Dr. Toby Graham, Director, McCain Library & Archives, USM

THE METS METADATA ENCODING FRAMEWORK

The Society of American Archivists held its 66th annual meeting on August 19-25 in Birmingham, Alabama, at the Birmingham Sheraton Hotel. Featuring an extensive list of preconferences, local tours, plenary sessions, and concurrent programs, the SAA meeting offered programming of interest to individuals in virtually every area of archival work.

The conference's location lent a Southern flavor to the proceedings, however, and there were numerous events associated with documenting the history and culture of the region, particularly of Birmingham's own pivotal role in the Civil Rights Movement. In the first plenary session--following a talk by incoming SAA president Steve Hensen--the Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth delivered a rousing speech

giving the audience insight into the courage, faith, and commitment to justice of this leader of the Birmingham movement through the 1950s and 1960s.

In recognition of current national challenges, the second plenary session covered the role of archivists in documenting the World Trade Center disaster. The SAA also offered a popular series of programs on archival fundamentals, including sessions on acquisition and appraisal, arrangement and description, preservation, reference, and other topics on basic practices. Audio tapes of these proceedings are available through SAA.

Individuals from Mississippi institutions represented in the SAA proceedings included Dr. Charles Bolton (University of Southern Mississippi) who spoke on efforts by USM's Center for Oral History and Cultural Heritage to record and disseminate civil rights oral histories. Dr. Alferteen Harrison (Jackson State University) spoke on the relationship between African-American communities and the archives that document them. H. T. Holmes (Mississippi Department of Archives and History) reported on the ongoing construction of the new state archives building in Jackson.

A concurrent session of particular interest was on the emerging Metadata Encoding Transmission Standard (METS) given by Bernie Hurley (University of California, Berkeley), Carl Fleischhauer (Library of Congress), and Robin Chandler (California Digital Library). The goal of METS is to bring together under a single framework the several types of metadata associated with digital assets, including descriptive, administrative, and structural information. METS also is designed to describe complex digital objects. Examples include those with multiple files arranged in a hierarchical fashion, such as the pages in a book with images appearing on specific pages, or objects that combine a variety of file types, such as scanned image pages with accompanying e-text transcripts or multimedia files.

Rather than replacing established metadata standards, such as Dublin Core and MARC, the objective of the METS initiative is to incorporate them into the descriptive metadata section of the METS framework. When combined with technical requirements, rights and provenance information, a list of associated files, and a structural map of the resource being described, the result is an "information package" that, ideally, will enhance the ability of a repository to reformat or migrate data accurately, and, thus, promote the longevity of the digital object.

Though the University of California, Berkeley, the Library of Congress, and the California Digital Library each have METS generating tools currently under development, it remains to be seen whether this clearly promising standard can be made practical for use by the rank and file of cultural repositories. In the question and answer period, an individual from the audience asked whether the considerable "overhead" associated with implementing such a complex metadata framework would impede its general adoption. The consensus of the speakers seemed to be that METS currently is in a phase of development where implementers are exploring "what METS can do" rather than how it can gain wide acceptance outside of their own programs. Carl Fleischhauer suggested that METS might develop in a pattern resembling that of Text Encoding Initiative (TEI), where an over-elaborate XML standard eventually received wide adoption in a scaled down TEI Lite version.

The dues for SMA are usually collected at the annual meeting. Don't forget to pay in Cleveland or send your check to

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