

MANUSCRIPT REPOSITORIES NEWSLETTER

A Newsletter from the Manuscript Repositories Section of the Society of American Archivists

FALL 2018

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FROM THE CHAIR

*Ashley Todd-Diaz, Head of Special Collections and University Archives
Towson University*

Happy fall everyone!

It was great to see so many of you at this year's annual meeting in Washington DC! In addition to the typical business meeting, this year's section meeting featured a panel the Manuscripts Repository Section (MRS) co-organized with the Student and New Archival Professionals (SNAP) Section. The panel focused on the current labor landscape of our profession and featured Dorothy Berry of Harvard University, Melissa Gonzalez of Houston Community College, and Beth Myers of Smith College. The speakers addressed topics of transitioning between positions, non-salary negotiations, generalist vs. project positions, de-valuing professional skills, and tips for new professionals of all ages to be competitive. We had an impressive turnout of over 150 attendees who not only submitted thoughtful questions for the panelists in advance, but also

contributed to an engaging question and answer session. Thank you to everyone who attended and contributed questions!

I'm also happy to provide an update on the resume review initiative we launched this summer in partnership with SAA's Career Development Committee. In an effort to provide career development opportunities to all section members on a year-round basis, this initiative allowed section members to submit resumes and receive feedback from peers in order to hone their job hunting skills. The call for participants went out mid-summer, and we received a great amount of interest in participating from both resume reviewers and reviewees. We are currently working on gathering feedback on the initiative to help us plan the next steps and determine whether it is a sustainable initiative that can be implemented in a more formal way moving forward.

It is bittersweet that this wraps up my duties as section chair, but I am happy to pass the reins to our new chair, Alison Clemens. Thank you to everyone for a great 2017-18 year, I thoroughly enjoyed serving in this role. I look forward to the year ahead with so much positive momentum in the MRS section.

Best,

Ashley

SECTION ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

4:00-5:15

Approximately 150 attendees

Welcome and introductions – Ashley Todd-Diaz, Section Chair

Reports

Nominating and Elections Committee – Ashley Todd-Diaz, Section Chair

Section Chair Ashley Todd-Diaz reported on the work of the elections committee. Ballots for section elections was sent in June. The results of the election were:

Vice Chair/Chair-Elect: Brenna Edwards, Emory University

Steering Committee:

- Jennifer Motszko, University of Wisconsin - Whitewater
- Nathan Saunders, University of North Carolina Wilmington
- Florence Turcotte, University of Florida

Technical Subcommittee for Describing Archives: A Content Standard – Adrien Hilton

Adrian Hilton reported that TS-DACS is seeking community feedback on revised Statement of Principles for Describing Archives: A Content Standard.

Program

The Students and New Professionals Section and the Manuscript Repositories Section partnered to provide a panel discussion on labor issues in the archival profession. Panelists included Dorothy Berry (Digital Collections Program Manager, Houghton Library, Harvard University), Melissa Gonzales (Director of Records Management, Houston Community College), and Elizabeth Myers (Director of Special Collections, Smith College). Alison Clemens moderated the panel discussion, which included responses to pre-determined questions on labor issues, as well as an audience question-and-answer portion.

Following the program, Ashley closed the meeting.

SECTION STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, August 15, 2018

5:15-6:00

Present: Ashley Todd-Diaz, Alison Clemens, Jillian Cuellar, Nathan Sanders, Flo Turcotte, Jennifer Motszko, Rebecca May-Petersen, Lori Birrell

The meeting opened with a welcome to new Steering Committee members and introductions. The Steering Committee then discussed their reflections on the Annual Meeting program, which they considered a successful collaboration with the Students and New Archival Professionals Section.

The Steering Committee reviewed initiatives for the past year, including the resume review pilot, which included 17 reviewers and 9 reviewees. The Steering Committee will seek feedback from participants to decide how to proceed with the pilot.

The Steering Committee then discussed points of interest and focus for the upcoming year. Steering Committee members discussed the past success of the Jump In Initiative and their interest in labor issues, usability testing, and donor relations. Steering Committee members decided to meet bimonthly for the upcoming year and decided to focus their initial meeting on brainstorming and prioritization for the upcoming year.

NEWS FROM MEMBERS

University of Wisconsin-Madison University Archives Acquires Collection Related to Jimi Reinke

*Katie Nash, University Archivist and Head of University of Wisconsin Archives
University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries*



Artwork by Jimi Reinke

The University of Wisconsin-Madison University Archives recently acquired a collection of poetry, art work, artifacts, newspaper articles, exhibit panels, and other biographical documents related to Jimi Reinke. Reinke was an artist, activist, and public health worker who helped operate a needle exchange program for injectable drug users across Dane County for 18 years during the 1980s-1990s. This collection will be added to the ever-growing LGBTQ Archive which is a community archive maintained and accessible through UW-Madison. Currently the LGBTQ Archive contains oral histories, personal papers, photographs, ephemera and organizational records related to LGBTQ life in Madison and Dane County from the 1940s to today. Beginning with only a few oral histories, the collection has grown to include an increasingly diverse array of materials and voices from the LGBTQ community. Please visit the LGBTQ archive for more

information: [Madison's LGBTQ Community](#)

Sonny Rollins Papers Open for Research at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library

*Matt Snyder, Archivist
The New York Public Library*

The Sonny Rollins papers are now open for research at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The New York Public Library.

[Sonny Rollins Papers Finding Aid](#)

Abstract:

Theodore Walter "Sonny" Rollins (born September 7th, 1930) is an American jazz tenor saxophonist. His papers, dating from the 1910s to 2015 (the bulk dates from the 1950s onward), document the musical, personal, and career development of one of the most important musicians and artists of the 20th and early 21st centuries. This development can be most clearly observed in his music manuscripts and practice material; personal writings; letters;

and professional business records. Rollins's career is also illustrated by an extensive set of photographs and a large collection of unique sound and video recordings.

Michigan State University's Special Collections Wins \$11,000 Campus Creating Inclusive Excellence Grant

Michigan State University Libraries

Michigan State University's Special Collections has won an \$11,000 campus Creating Inclusive Excellence Grant to fund the processing and selective digitization of the Gladys-Marie Fry papers. Dr. Gladys-Marie Fry (1931-2015) was a leading scholar of African American quilts and folklore and her personal papers are a rich resource on those topics. An initial survey of the approximately 80-linear ft collection reveals interview recordings and transcripts of survivors of slavery, drafts of her research and publications, correspondence, and other documentation of her professional and scholarly life. The project will be overseen by MSU Special Collections Archivist-Librarian Dr. Lydia Tang.

Please Forward Our Mail....The Phillips Library Has Moved (Again!)

Hilary Streifer, Assistant Manuscript Librarian (hilary_streifer@pem.org)

Phillips Library

The Phillips Library, the rare book and special collections library of the Peabody Essex Museum, has relocated its entire collection, for a second time, to its new permanent home in Rowley, Massachusetts. The Phillips Library is the rare book and special collections library of the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts. Originally housed in two historic houses across from the Museum, the Phillips Library was moved into a temporary facility in 2011, in the neighboring city of Peabody, so critically needed preservation and renovation work could take place on the buildings. This move into what we called the Interim Storage Facility (ISF) allowed the library staff to better house materials and reunite parts of collections that had been tucked away for decades in cramped quarters as the collection outgrew its space. This move also provided the opportunity for a retrospective conversion and reclassification.

Unfortunately, after careful architectural analysis it became apparent that the climate control and storage needs of the collection were at odds with the structural realities of the historic buildings to which they were supposed to return. These logistical challenges led to an opportunity for the Phillips Library to join the Museum's collection at a new 120,000-square-foot Collections Center located in Rowley. The new site, while off campus, keeps the library collection accessible in Essex County, and features a highly secure, climate-controlled space for storage of the collections, space for a library reading room, staff offices, conservation, room for growth, and other operations. Thus, when our lease at the ISF came to an end at the beginning of this year, we packed up and moved...everything!

Preparations began a year in advance, with the library remaining open to patrons until September 1, 2017. Our full-time staff of six, one dedicated volunteer, and one fantastic Project Manager began planning everything from cleaning, material housing options, shelf-by-shelf configurations, and packing and security procedures to move several hundred thousand books and 5,500 linear feet of manuscripts. Analysis of each collection's current and future needs, housing, growth, shelving size, and in what order the collections and shelves would be moved were all discussed and carefully considered. Plans, contingency plans, maps, spreadsheets, check lists, lots of signs, and practice runs were made.

Specific preparations for the manuscripts included measuring, rehousing, cleaning, inventorying and labeling. While our new shelves are deep enough to ensure that boxes don't hang over the edge, they are six inches shorter, and the bays are four feet taller than those at the ISF. This meant that we had figure out how much space we would need, not just for regular and oversized manuscript boxes, but for loose volumes, account books, and logbooks. In order to maximize our space, we narrowed the height between the individual shelves, allowing us to put more shelves on each bay; unfortunately this meant that unprocessed materials that had been moved to the ISF in mover's boxes needed to be rehoused in smaller bankers' boxes in order to fit on the new shelves. However, the deeper shelves allowed us to rotate some boxes, so that they took up less space on the shelf, length-wise. Additionally, by condensing the distance



Manuscript collections being shelved in Rowley

between shelves, we saved enough room to be able to add an additional shelf at the top of each bay for future growth, should we run out of growth space elsewhere. Any boxes that looked excessively worn were replaced, loose items were boxed, and labels that were falling off, fading, or missing were replaced; post-it notes anywhere in the collection were replaced with more permanent labels. All of our manuscript boxes were dusted using unscented Swiffer dust cloths—this wasn't really necessary for the move, but we decided not to bring the dust with us. Volumes that were in particularly bad shape, both print and manuscript, received custom made CMI boxes. Finally, the decision was made to reconfigure the order of our different manuscript collections (Essex County, Natural History, Ethology, etc.), putting the more heavily used collections closer to the door, to make pulling them a little bit easier.

On January 29, 2018, after more than a few delays due to construction, the move began. Imagine bookcases on wheels, wrapped in plastic wrap to ensure that nothing fell off the cart. That's what we saw, inventoried, pushed, and counted until

the last truck of collection materials left the ISF on March 26. At the end, there were 2,844 carts, 285 additional items (flat files, microfilm drawers, file cabinets, and pallets), office furniture, and dozens of rows of eight and twelve-foot high shelving, all moved with the help of up to 25 art/book handlers, and a shelving vendor.



Book carts waiting to be loaded with regular size print collections. Our main print collection filled 960 of these carts!



Book carts in Rowley waiting to be shelved

In the end our planning payed off and we were able to vacate the ISF two days early. Of course there were a few surprises: delayed shelving deliveries; running out of certain sized book carts which impacted the order in which certain collections were moved; storms; power outages; and third party vendors' scheduling conflicts; but everyone involved would agree that the move was a great success. So if you find yourself near Rowley, Massachusetts, please stop by the Phillips Library, we love to have visitors. Oh, I forgot to mention, the tens of thousands of museum collections that were stored at the ISF were moving out the same time as the library materials! Visit [Mission Impossible: The Great Collection Move of 2018](#) to hear more about the move.

SECTION LEADERSHIP

Alison Clemens, *Chair*
Brenna Edwards, *Vice Chair/Chair Elect*
Ashley Todd-Diaz, *Immediate Past Chair*
Brenda Gunn, *Council Liaison*

Steering Committee Members:

Sarah Bost
Anne Jenner
Rebecca Petersen May
Jennifer Motszko
Nathan Saunders
Florence Turcotte

THE DEADLINE FOR THE SPRING NEWSLETTER IS *1 FEBRUARY 2019*.