

From the Chair

2.0 Degrees of Separation

Arlene Schmuland

Living where I do, it is easy to feel isolated personally and professionally. Not just geographically, but time-wise. As busy as we all are, it's difficult to find time to connect via phone, letters, or email with friends, family, and colleagues. One of the ways I keep connected is Facebook. For those of you who haven't used Facebook (or MySpace or other social networking sites), you sign in, add pictures if you want, go find people and add them as "friends," post updates about what you're doing, join groups, or become a fan of tartar sauce or all things orange. Not too long ago I was reacquainted with a high school friend, Cheryl McKinnon, via Facebook's classmate search mechanism. One of Facebook's functions is that once you are linked with somebody else you can view their online profile and status updates.

Senior Year Photos



Arlene



Cheryl

I don't think Cheryl and I have seen or talked to each other since high school graduation night, which was, ouch, more than 20 years ago now. We did the basics of "you're living where and WHY?"—she in Kitchener, I in Anchorage—and that was about it. Because Facebook associates us as friends and she is a prolific poster, her "what I'm doing now" updates usually show up when I log into my account. Not too long ago she posted a link to a white paper she'd written on 2.0. I had all sorts of reasons to follow the link and read the paper, but the most compelling one was that I didn't have any excuses left if somebody my age (one day younger, actually) knew 2.0 well enough to write a white paper on it.

Turns out, Cheryl's paper is about 2.0 applications and ramifications for records management. Miles MacDonnell Collegiate, our high school, had a graduating class of about 170 that year. That's over one percent of the graduating class ending up in two low-populated and closely related fields. I'll admit I don't know the statistical odds, but it seems unlikely to me. When I pointed this out to Cheryl, she said "you couldn't take the geek out of the girl." I refuse to claim geekhood now, but will admit we had a fairly high count of geeks at the time of graduation and though I don't know what happened to the rest, I'm thinking the math and computing genius whose Facebook profile claims a residence in the Cayman Islands probably chose something other than RM or Archives as a career. Since the vast majority of my friends group on Facebook consists of professional colleagues who have become good friends, it was fun to discover one who represented the reverse chronology.

At any rate, Cheryl had some interesting and pithy things to say about administering information developed in a 2.0 environment. The paper made me think about retention issues in a new way. She

also provided a few good ideas for how to make 2.0 technologies enable access to records. I never would have found this document on my own, or if I had, I wonder if I would have ever recognized my high school friend in the author's name?

This past year or so, 2.0 has really come onto the RAO radar (you knew I'd get around to the RAO connect eventually, didn't you?) and I expect we all will be investigating it for some time. I'll confess, prior to the '08 section meeting presentation, I cringed every time I heard "2.0." I didn't know what it encompassed, I couldn't figure out how any of it related to me or to my work. The presentation provided connects and building blocks, including making me realize that I'm already using some of these technologies both in my personal and professional life. From keeping in touch with friends, family and colleagues via Facebook, I've discovered that some aspects of 2.0 aren't all that scary. This fall I created a Facebook page for my department—it's pretty simplistic because I don't know how to make the most of it yet—but it's there. I can see the beginnings of how to use it for outreach, less so for reference and access, but at least we'll save a few minutes in setup when we figure out what comes next. Soon you will be seeing some RAO working groups looking at various 2.0 tools to come up with suggestions and pointers to share. If you would like to participate, please contact me and I'll be happy to hook you up.

For those of you who haven't yet investigated the networking sites like MySpace or Facebook, consider taking a little time out of your schedule to play with them. You might not end up a fan. However, understanding how these sites function will help you make better decisions about using them.



I don't recall quite when or why I joined Facebook, but I didn't make use of it until last February during a Kodiak blizzard with all my airport novels read and nothing to keep me entertained but free wireless. Now? I check it near daily, sometimes several times a day. I see what is happening in many friends' and family members' lives and feel like I am more in touch with them than ever before. It's a bit voyeuristic at times, but I hear about the great exhibits and programs and projects they are working on and occasionally I read something by a friend that makes me rethink my work. A social tool that serves to educate: now that's an effective reference, access, and outreach mechanism we should all be studying closely.

By the way, if you want to read Cheryl's short, informative, and entertaining piece, it's at:
<http://www.kmworld.com/Articles/White-Paper/Article/Are-You-Ready-for-Enterprise-2.0What-Records-Managers-Need-to-Know-51343.aspx>. The site requires a free login. As do most of the social networking sites. Join one. You'll find you're among friends.

Notes from the RAO Business Meeting

The Chair passed along information regarding session proposals presented, along with information pre-conference workshops.

National History Day Task Force:
Susan McElrath reported on the survey completed by the NHD Task Force.

MPLP Task Force:

Joanne Archer, Shannon Bowen, Jackie Dean presented information on the MPLP Task Force. Report available on-line. http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/rao/MPLPTF_survey_report.pdf

Discussion of Workshop and Program ideas: Sustaining traffic in a digital age; History Day; Basics of Archives workshops, including diversity of people we are hoping to include in outreach efforts; Impact of Technology (remote users; mass digitization's impact on reference ; topical collection guides; variety of access points)

Election of officers

Presentations

Northwest Digital Archives Receives IMLS Collaborative Planning Grant November 2008

Jodi Allison-Bunnell

The Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA), a program that provides enhanced access to archival collections and facilitates collaboration among archives, libraries, and museums in Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, and Alaska, has received a \$38,844 Collaborative Planning grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

The grant, part of a long-range planning process for a digital services program, will support the second stage of planning, in which the group will determine solutions to specific problems that are currently impeding the development of sustainable digital programs. The project will be a collaborative effort of the Alliance, Washington State University, Lewis & Clark College, Whitman College, and Whitworth University.

The NWDA program currently offers a database of EAD-encoded finding aids, located at <http://nwda.wsulibs.wsu.edu/>. There, researchers can find information

about archival collections through keyword, subject, repository, and genre searches. The database offers researchers the ability to find information about collections across institutions, at a greater level of detail than is available through any other tool. The collection information is also exposed to search engines

Founded with NEH and NHPRC funding in 2002, NWDA became part of the Orbis Cascade Alliance in 2007. Members pay annual fees based on institution type that cover the costs of technical, administrative, and fiscal support services.

Current NWDA member institutions are the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, Gonzaga University, Idaho State Historical Society, Seattle Museum of History & Industry, Whitman College, Montana Historical Society, University of Montana, Oregon Historical Society, Oregon State University, University of Oregon, Western Washington University, Pacific Lutheran University, University of Washington, Washington State University, Lane Community College, University of Alaska Fairbanks, the Alaska State Library's Historical Collections, Whitworth University, Lewis & Clark College, the University of Idaho, Portland State University, the Seattle Municipal Archives, Central Washington University, Eastern Washington University, Willamette University, Western Oregon University, Portland Community College, Oregon Health & Sciences University, Central Oregon Community College, and Oregon Institute of Technology.

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Judging National History Day in Pennsylvania

Doris Malkmus

A colleague of mine, who for many years had judged at the Pennsylvania History Day, asked if I would take her place as a History Day judge, noting, “They always need judges.” Knowing nothing about History Day, but attracted to the idea of teaching history through primary sources, I sent in my name to the History Day coordinator in Pennsylvania. In the NHD program students compete first locally, with winners advancing to the regional, state, and national competitions. My colleague had always judged at the state level and so did I, but to volunteer locally, contact the state coordinator listed on the History Day Web site (<http://www.nhd.org/Coordinators.htm>).

I found competitions are organized to the smallest detail, divided into junior and senior levels, group or individual works, and performance, documentary, exhibit, or historical paper categories. Students have explicit guidelines to follow, and these exactly matched the rubrics judges use in evaluation. Rules are specific, clear, and encourage students to highest standards.

I chose to judge exhibits and my group of three judges evaluated all exhibits in our category, and judged the run-off the following day. My team included two experienced judges who helped me identify the criteria for judging. While each judge wrote his or her own comments (which the students received later), our overall decision was consensual.

Most of the exhibits I judged were extraordinarily well done, in terms of content and visual appeal. Students used a wide range of primary sources. Each exhibit had an accompanying design paper citing sources and explaining how they (and their families) drove to archives during vacations, interviewed famous scientists or politicians, and acquired memorabilia. History Day

exhibits clearly challenged teachers to keep fresh each year. History Day encouraged students and their families to create something memorable together. It also offered me, as an archivist and judge, the chance to see how historical primary source materials could be used to engage and ignite these creative young minds.

I contacted the Pennsylvania coordinator about a related matter and she suggested that an archivist propose to teach a short workshop in archival research at the National History Day competition in the Washington, D.C. area. Teachers have seldom done any archival research. Offering a workshop for History Day teachers, just like serving as a judge, provides an archivist with an excellent opportunity to get to know this potentially large community of teachers and students.

Global Archives Management Professional Delegation to China

Kathy Marquis

This October, I joined 19 colleagues and several assorted spouses on the trip of a lifetime to China. The Global Archives Management Professional Delegation to China was organized by People to People Citizen Ambassador Programs (<http://www.citizenambassadors.org/>) and led by former SAA President, Elizabeth Adkins. Her account of our tour appears in the Nov/Dec issue of Archival Outlook. This experience was stunning in many different ways. The historic sites were beautiful and, though very crowded, still echoed with hundreds (in some cases thousands) of years of Chinese culture. As a child of the late sixties and early seventies, I had not yet wrapped my mind around the lightening speed with which urban China has modernized and embraced a market economy. The only version of Mao’s famous little red book of quotations which I saw on my travels was a cheap version being hawked by omnipresent vendors in Tiananmen Square...

I was excited to participate in this tour in large part because People to People specializes in arranging for exchanges between professionals in different nations and cultures. During our ten days there, we were able to meet – and exchange questions and answers – with archivists at the Beijing Municipal Archives, the Shanghai Municipal Archives, and with representatives of the Chinese Archives Society. We also met with faculty and students at Renmin University’s School of Information Resource Management, which offers archives degrees from bachelors through PhD.



The sign says it all: “Welcome Global Archives Management Professional Delegation to China” At Renmin University, Beijing

I had actually had the opportunity previously to meet with archivists from the State Archives Administration of China, over two different summer seminars held at the Bentley Historical Library, in 1999 and 2001. (This exchange between the two institutions still continues, sending nearly 30 archivists from China every other summer, and a smaller delegation of archivists from the Bentley to Beijing in the intervening years: <http://bentley.umich.edu/academic/china/chronology.php>.) This trip, however, was an opportunity to tour their “shops,” and learn more about their archival priorities.

For a more extensive set of impressions of this trip, please see the group blog that we have created (<http://p2p-aa2c.blogspot.com/>) and, soon (as soon as I

make it happen!) a flickr site with all of our photographs. In the meantime, I will just comment a bit on some of the exchanges between our group and the Chinese archivists and students with whom we met. First and foremost: they were too brief! A lot of time was taken up in translation back and forth (our guide/translator had a superhuman task and she did an amazing job. We were moved that she actually read a book on Chinese archives before leading our tour – then jumped into similar work for an entirely different profession the day after we left...) One of the main impressions we all received from our hosts was that digitization is as much of a craze in China as it is here. More so, in fact. However, our concerns about how to determine which materials to digitize are not their concerns. They have no shortage of labor, and their labor costs are much lower than ours. So they are planning to digitize nearly everything in their holdings. In many cases, items are digitized as soon as they are received. We raised the issue of digital preservation with them, but this was not their major focus.

My interest was, of course, in reference and access. Unfortunately, with so many professionals around the table, from both countries, it never seemed possible to ask my questions about how easy it is to gain access to the two archives we visited, what numbers of researchers they serve, what percentage of their holdings were open, etc. However, at the Beijing Municipal Archives there was an extended discussion of genealogical holdings and use by researchers. They asked “What specific families are you documenting? Do you take records of anyone?” We responded by telling them about how our very different repositories (university, religious, corporate, and historical society) all received such inquiries from our researchers. We explained that, as the United States was a nation of immigrants, most of us had mysterious ancestors whose histories we didn’t know, but loved to discover. The archivists at the BMA were amused to note that a large percentage of their international

inquiries came from California. We noted that a large number of immigrants from China had settled on the west coast (but I actually wondered if some large search engine/e-mail provider, like Google, might originate in California and thus all its subscribers seem to be from there?)



“Open Access to Government Information” sign, Beijing Municipal Archives

Our tour of this facility included a small conservation lab, a floor full of full-time digitizers, and the reading room. Unfortunately, it was the very end of the day, so there were no researchers left, but my photos below show the size and organization of the facilities. There was also a very nice lounge off the reading room – nicer than any I’ve seen here!



Reading Room, Beijing Municipal Archives



Lounge off reading room, Beijing Municipal Archives

The students at Renmin University asked for information on our Archives Month programs and were pleased to learn that there is a website they can access. We brought gifts to each site, including an institutional SAA membership (courtesy of SAA), and a variety of publications, including the Archives Month brochure from SAA. They also wanted to know if all students had access to our repositories, and they asked about how we handle privacy issues in our records. Having learned from my interactions with Chinese archivists at the Bentley Historical Library not to assume that they understood all the underpinnings of our culture or archival systems, I attempted to clarify this. I added that in the United States, papers of individuals, organizations and corporations were considered private property. These records were donated voluntarily to our repositories and the donors, as owners of the records, could set conditions on their use. It was up to archivists to limit the restrictions as much as possible, to promote access to them for our researchers. A student thanked me after the exchange for clarifying this; I realized that in some ways we were undoubtedly misunderstanding each other a good bit of the time, but it was, nonetheless thrilling to be talking face to face about these issues. This group of students was quite fluent in English and it was probably our greatest regret that our schedule didn’t permit us to follow this more formal interaction with a less formal, more social exchange.



*Delegates, and faculty, Renmin University
(back row is students in School of Information
Resource Management)*

Our visit to the Shanghai Municipal Archives, housed in an art deco building on the “Bund,” the older part of the city and heart of the colonial “concessions” to European nations, was equally illuminating. Like the Beijing Municipal Archives, this is a huge operation, occupying a large modern building. I can think of no municipal archives in the U.S. which is as well supported, large, or impressive as they were. In Shanghai, our exchange began with the showing of a ten minute DVD about the archives itself (very slick, but the projector stopped in the middle of the showing – nice to know some things are universal!) In the gift exchange we were presented with several “cultural products,” which we later saw again in their gift shop, showing us that they have quickly learned how to merchandize their archival holdings, just as we do. During our discussion, they noted that, “our storage is far away from our reading rooms. So, most of our reference is provided here by via the Internet. Starting in 2004 we have general public reference here in this building. The requests have really grown, especially for Internet access to documents – so we have been digitizing more and more. Paper records, after appraisal and consideration for open access, are digitized and mounted on the Internet. We have digitized 50% of our records. Last year only 1% of requested records had been digitized. This year 28% of requested records were already digitized.”

After our discussion, we were shown through their excellent city museum, a floor for the colonial period and a floor for the post-revolution period. I saw that they made excellent use of original and duplicate documents in the museum, something archivists in this country often have to haggle with museum curators to include. We also saw their beautiful “The City” café where researchers could take a break.



*“The City” lounge at Shanghai Municipal
Archives*

Yes, we did visit many wonderful cultural sites, as well. In fact, in the Forbidden City, the ancestral home of China’s emperor’s, I came upon a wonderful sign announcing that the chamber in front of me was called, “The Hall of Mental Cultivation.” I wanted to post it in my library... Our guide also introduced us to the concept of the “shopportunity,” – and we took advantage of many!

The RAO section hopes to be starting a blog soon. I encourage any of you who have experiences of archives in other cultures to share your impressions here. Soon we could have the largest collection of archival reading room photo galleries anywhere! (OK, I’m kidding, but, actually, I can see those photos coming in handy for archival students, presentations on reference in archives, etc.)

Announcements

RAO listserv

Some quick stats about the listserv you might find interesting:

The listserv hasn't been used extensively in the last year: 18 emails in total! Those include: 1 job ad, 1 roommate request, 5 RAO-related survey requests, and 9 requests related to seeking volunteers for various RAO activities and positions and elections.

We've asked, and it turns out that approximately 200-300 of the 854 RAO members are currently receiving RAO listserv posts. The default setting on SAA listservs is Nomail so if you're interested in receiving regular listserv traffic, instructions on how to change your settings follow. Given how much email we all field daily many of you may choose to keep the setting! The Steering Committee members have the ability to bypass the NOMAIL setting and send out what are called Blast emails to all RAO members, but we try to use that power sparingly and only for the most important items of RAO business such as election information, newsletter availability, and so forth. So if you'd like to receive posts, we've done a little bit of research for you:

Go to: <http://www.archivists.org/listservs/change.asp>. Log in. If you don't know your login information, underneath the login fields is a handy link to follow to assist you. Once you've logged in, you'll be taken to a page with a list of all of the SAA listservs and whether or not you are subscribed to them. Move on down the page to the SAA Reference, Access, and Outreach Section listing (in alpha order) and to the far right you'll see a drop-down menu that will tell you your settings. You have four options: Unsubscribe, Subscribe single, Subscribe digest, and Subscribe nomail. "Subscribe single" is the setting that will allow you to receive the postings.

RAO Wants YOU for the MPLP Task Force

Do you want to get more involved with RAO but don't know how? Are you interested in basic processing and how it affects reference service?

Would you like to help your colleagues understand basic processing better?

Would you like to understand it better yourself?

Then volunteer to be a part of the MPLP Task Force! At the annual meeting in San Francisco, the existing task force reported that the RAO membership wants more guidance about how and when to apply MPLP, and they want it in the form of a best practices guide. This process is going to require much legwork and teamwork, and we need more team members to make that happen. Your input can help us shape a best practices guide or steer us toward an even more effective dissemination method. Get involved to educate your colleagues while you educate yourself! To see what the MPLP Task Force doing in 2008, visit the section's web site at

<http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/rao/index.asp>. If you would like more information or know that you want to get involved in this effort, please contact steering committee member Shannon Bowen at <mailto://sebowen@uwyo.edu/> or 307-766-2579.

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Letter from the Editor

As you know, a task force appointed by the Steering Committee sent out a survey about the newsletter. During the period the survey was open (October 20-27, 2008), we received 36 responses. Thank you for your willingness to tell us about the kinds of communication you want from the section.

Section members want information communicated to them as it becomes available, and your preferences for distribution were blast e-mail, newsletter and blog. We believe that this means you support a desire for information on a regular, timely basis, and you still want a newsletter. Therefore, we created this [blog](#) the membership can contribute to by [sending](#) the content to the Newsletter Editor (yours truly). When there's enough to put together an actual newsletter, I will repackage the blog postings, with some additional content, into a newsletter. I will solicit content for the blog and newsletter at least once a quarter.

The responses indicated that you are most interested in news from repositories, reviews of relevant websites and books, and research project write ups. You also said you would contribute to a newsletter; a majority of the respondents indicated that they would forward their repositories' press releases or contribute when they "have news to report" or "something significant has occurred." I am hoping that you are willing to review websites and books and to write up the research project or local initiative you've been working on. Consider this my plea for help.

That's it for now, I'm sure I'll have more later.

Thanks, Nancy