

Collections Research News

Fall 2001

COLLECTIONS KORNER

(Collections Korner is a regular feature of *Collections Research News*. If there is any topic you would like to see covered in the future, give us a call or drop us a line.)

Collections Stewardship: What is it and why should you care?

With the publication by AAM of *The Accreditation Commission's Expectations Regarding Collections Stewardship*, collections stewardship is fast becoming the new topic for museum professionals. What exactly is collections stewardship and how does it affect you? According to the 'expectations' document, collections "Stewardship is the careful, sound and responsible management of that which is entrusted to your care."

All museums, whether they are active collecting institutions, non-collecting institutions or somewhere in-between, have collections of one kind or another because we all use 'things' to tell our story. These 'things' can take many forms. They can be works of art, historical/ethnographic objects, natural history specimens, live plants or animals, historic properties or interactive, hands-on exhibit objects. They can be owned by the institution or on loan from another source, but all should relate to and enhance the museum's mission.

The "careful, sound and responsible management" of these collections can be roughly divided into two main categories. The first is physical management. This includes providing an appropriate environment for the storage and exhibition of collections in our care and for the transportation of

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**IN REMEMBRANCE
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**



WE MUST REMAIN UNITED

FILEMAKER® PRO CATALOGING TEMPLATES NOW AVAILABLE FROM CRM

Collections Research for Museums has created a collection database using the commercial software FileMaker® Pro. Cataloging templates are available for object collections, photographic collections and archival collections. We will customize a cataloging screen for those of you who have specialized collections. We can also connect your database to an imaging system to allow photographs of the collection to be incorporated into the database. This is an opportunity for small museums to computerize their collection records using a very user friendly database software. Contact us for details and pricing.

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collections within and outside our institutions; providing physical security for collections in storage, on exhibit or moving through the institution or to/from another location; providing written procedures and proper training for monitoring, handling and care of collections; periodic inventories and designated storage/exhibit locations for collections; and addressing collections in disaster plans and drills. The second category is intellectual management. This involves the documentation of collections by accessioning, cataloging and documenting appropriateness to the museum's mission; established policies and procedures which outline the museum's responsibilities to the collections, reasons for acquiring them and appropriate uses for them; consistent record keeping and records management; and adherence to ethical, legal and moral obligations to the public

trust surrounding our collections and the public benefit derived from them.

All these things make good collections stewardship the responsibility of every person involved in the successful day-to-day operation of our institutions. It is the primary mission of all museums and cultural institutions to preserve collections for present and future generations, but also to make these 'things' available and accessible for the enjoyment and education of these same individuals. The balancing act of preservation versus accessibility is the essence of collections stewardship.

For more information or to receive a copy of *The Accreditation Commission's Expectations Regarding Collections Stewardship* contact AAM at www.aam-us.org or phone 202-289-9116.

SERVICES

Collections Research for Museums can now **assist small museums with computerizing their collection documentation** using off-the-shelf database software. Our current specialty is FileMaker® Pro databases (see article on Pg 1). For more information, give us a call at (303) 757-7962.

In addition, Collections Research for Museums offers **classes for small museums in Cataloging and Collections Management**. If you would like more information on topics covered and costs, give us a call at (303) 757-7962 or drop us a line.

We also offer a variety of **other services** to museums, large and small. These **range from simple inventories to complete and thorough cataloging of collections**. Feel free to contact us for more information. We provide a **free initial consultation**.

Also, if you need help preparing your NAGPRA summaries or inventories, we can help. Give us a call.

(*Collections Research News* is a service of Collections Research for Museums, Inc, 4830 E Kansas Dr, Denver, CO 80246 (303)757-7962, email: schaller@rmi.net. Questions, comments or story suggestions are always welcome.)