

# *Collections Research News*

Fall 1999

## 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.)

### Protecting Cultural Property An Essay

During a recent walk along the interpretive trail at Bandelier National Monument I began to think about the signs admonishing visitors not to touch, climb on, or otherwise deface the ruins and I was struck by the fact that preservation of our cultural heritage is everybody's responsibility. It is not only the responsibility of museums, conservators, historic preservation officers/practitioners and the National Park Service, but every citizen of the world.

Those of us who work in museums realize the importance of preserving and caring for cultural artifacts. Conservators make sure our material culture lasts into the future. Historic Preservationists preserve and protect historic buildings and other structures. The National Park Service protects and preserves our public lands and monuments, both scenic and cultural. What can each of us do to aid in this effort? I would like to list some things that come to mind as I think about this issue.

#### WHAT'S NEW AT CRM

In June, 1999 our principle traveled to Uvlade, TX to present a week-long Cataloging/Collections Management training class that discussed the basics of museum record keeping, handling and cataloging. The host for this session was the John Nance Garner Museum and the class was attended by a full complement of folks from the Garner Museum, plus several other local museums, libraries and volunteer organizations. The class seem to be well received and our principle was delighted with the hospitality afforded her.

**FILEMAKER® PRO CATALOGING  
TEMPLATES NOW AVAILABLE FROM CRM**  
Collections Research for Museums has created a collection database using the commercial software FileMaker® Pro. Cataloging templets are available for object collections, photographic collections and archival collections. We will also 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. Contact us for details and pricing.

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First, we can obey those 'do not touch, climb on or otherwise deface' signs when we are out with our families and friends. We can educate others about the reasons why those signs are there - namely if everyone were to handle, climb on, take a piece of or carve their names in these sites there would be nothing left to see. Clearly, as I looked into the soot-blackened caves of Bandelier and saw the hundreds of names carved on the walls I realized that many of us believe those signs do not apply to us. Many do not see the need to preserve the past for the future. As participants in the protection, preservation and presentation of culture and cultural artifacts, we can speak up when cultural property is threatened. This can happen in a number of ways: 1) politely and calmly suggest that the offending individual cease their destructive activities or 2) enlist the aid of a staff person to halt the destructive activity.

Second, those of us who work in museums and other cultural institutions must be ever vigilant in the protection of the artifacts and sites in our charge. We can greet our visitors warmly at the entrance and make eye contact with them. We can educate our visitors about the fragility of the collections, be they objects, structures or landscapes, and the importance of preserving them for our children's

children. We can politely but firmly tell visitors not to touch the buffalo or the painting or the site walls and make sure they understand why. We can make sure that the entire staff participates in the protection of the collections, the building, the visitor, the site and their fellow staff members.

Education is the key to the protection of artifacts, historic or archaeological sites, historic landscapes and historic buildings. As purveyors of cultural history we have an obligation not only to educate the public about specific 'things', people and places but also to teach the importance of protecting these 'things' and places for future generations. In addition we must be sure our staff, volunteers and contract workers understand and are periodically reminded of the importance of protecting the objects and sites under our care through training, disaster planning and drills. Protection of our cultural heritage is everyone's business.

#### **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 is still offering **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 are also still offering 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 still 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. Questions, comments or story suggestions are always welcome.)