Wilmington Welcomes MARAC

Come to Wilmington in the Fall of 1995. We’re ready to give you the business - the business of archives, that is! Wilmington has always been a town ready to do a deal, and MARAC’s return trip for the first of three successive years will be no different.

First settled in 1638 by Swedish colonists, Wilmington really got going in the eighteenth century when Thomas Willing laid out the street plan. His lavishly imitative copy of Philadelphia’s perpendicular street plan stretching between two rivers survives to this day, and many people consider Wilmington a model of rectilinearity. This squareness, however, attracted a sizable citizenry of Quaker millers and merchants, who turned the town into a thriving mill center by the time of the American Revolution. When the British attacked Philadelphia in 1777, the flour mills on the Brandywine were one of their objectives. Oliver Evans was an important early American inventor from Newport, Delaware, whose design for an automated mill was adopted by the Wilmington mills. Brandywine Village, a section of town

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8:00 pm, the electrical alarm panel sounded indicating a sprinkler event in the fourth floor stack, housing the still photos. Security checked the stack, but did not see anything unusual. With no other indication of a problem, the first alarm was seen as a "bug in the system" of a new facility, and the computer was reset. After the second alarm sounded, the open sprinkler was identified when security saw water coming from the vault.

Initially, the problem was undetected because the open sprinkler was within a refrigerator vault with blocked access. What should have taken 15 minutes to turn off, took 80 minutes. During that time, 5,000 gallons of water escaped into the stack and leaked to the floor below. Heat from the nearby refrigeration unit coil is the probable cause for the sprinkler’s response. Sprinkler heads near these units have since been adjusted to open at 265°F instead of 165°F.

Ms. Ritzenthaler explained the recovery process took about four days. Immediate action included putting plastic sheeting on the shelves and using the wet/dry vacs to get the water off the floor. The greatest amount of water accumulated in the cartographic records stack, the floor below, affecting about 2,500 oversized ship plans. These plans presented special problems because they are physically made up of a variety of materials, starched linen and different color inks. After unrolling the plans, they were stacked and kept slightly damp so the starch would not stick together. The goal was to prevent sticking, blocking (keeping dimensionally stable), and mold growth. After drying, the ship plans were rerolled because there was no time to put these records through archival processing.

Other records affected by the water included aerial film. Approximately 1,500 cans of film were sitting in water. Conservation staff placed the cans in the freezer until after the ship plans were handled. Only 100 cans of the 1,500 had leakage. The films were air dried without suffering from sticking, blocking, or breaks at splice points.

—Jennie Diaz Guibaud

Falling into the WEB: Decision-Making Strategies When Making Information Available on the Internet

Before mounting finding aids on a Gopher server or World Wide Web site, archivists need to understand what questions to ask themselves and what decisions they must make. Jackie Esposito explained the step-by-step decision-making process using flow charts. The major questions to ask are: Do I want to do this? What do I put on the Gopher? How will the finding aids be searched? How will I advertise access? And, how will the list be updated? Esposito stressed learning the language of systems people to converse with them, developing a mission statement with criteria and guidelines for what is mounted, understanding size limits within Gopher files, reconfiguring computer files to AGCII flat files, and training archives staff first on how to access and use the Gopher.

Brian Harrington recounted the history of the Johns Hopkins University’s Special Collections Gopher which he began in the summer of 1992 because they had no money to publish a printed guide to their collections. He extolled the benefits of local control on a personal computer (286 as the minimum workable computer) versus a university systems office with their other, usually higher priorities. Johns Hopkins is now working on creating a national online database of finding aids and cross-Gopher searching.

Barbara Smith discussed Sailor, Maryland’s public information network on the Gopher. Designed to emphasize state and local government and consumer health information for state residents, Sailor provides local area dial-up access throughout the state and acts as a gateway to the Internet.

The overflow crowd asked questions of each of the speakers and left with Esposito’s flowcharts and Smith’s Sailor handouts.

—Susan Hamburger

Cataloging Oral History Collections

Once an archives receives an oral history collection—audiotapes, videotapes, and/or transcripts—access needs to be provided through finding aids, computer databases, and/or MARC cataloging. Choices depend upon the extent of the collection, the repository, the expertise of the archivist, and the users.

Pamela Cassidy argued for in-house computer databases in small, homogeneous repositories instead of MARC cataloging. She uses the database to create finding aids using the Zylindex program. With this in-house system, she must create local authority files to provide consistency to subject access.

Lynn Wojcik demonstrated MARC:amc tagging in a NOTIS online public access computer system (OPAC) and RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network) national online catalog. By using the standardized MARC:amc format, a small repository can start with a local system [such as Minaret or MicroMarc] and later integrate it into a larger, combined catalog with other local repositories. She introduced the forthcoming Oral History Cataloging Manual by Marion Matters to be published in 1995 by SAA as the new guideline to follow for cataloging oral histories in MARC format.

Brenda Hearing stressed the importance of subject access to oral history collections, using the Columbia Oral History Project as an example of the disparate topics covered within one interview. She emphasized that subject analysis belongs in the realm of professional catalogers whose role is crucial to provide subject access to bottom-up oral history.
The audience asked several questions following the presentations, particularly about ZylIndex.
—Susan Hamburger

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User Education for Archivists: An Introduction

Danna Bell-Russell began by asking the audience members what they expected to get out of the session. She explained bibliographic instruction (BI) and how to develop a successful program to teach students how to use archives. Focusing on classroom instruction, Bell-Russell suggested sources of information outside the archives for assistance with BI, including publications and librarians experienced in BI. She stressed complementing what other parts of the library are already doing and tying in the archives rather than floundering alone, duplicating, or conflicting with the reference department's BI.

Before embarking on BI, archivists must decide if they can and want to teach or if they would be more effective working with a colleague who is more comfortable and more dynamic with groups. Bell-Russell suggested that given limited class time, archivists should decide what they want the students to learn about the archives, focus the class session, not try to cram too much in, use humor (if they are comfortable with it), involve the students by asking questions, keep control of the class, and not use jargon. The most effective BI includes active learning—forcing students to be involved through group problem solving. Involve the faculty member before and after course assignments; ask for comments from the faculty and/or results of the students' research papers after their presentation to evaluate your effectiveness.

Bell-Russell offered a dynamic presentation, demonstrating good and bad speaking, posture, gestures, and body movements. She provided handouts, displayed key publications, and asked questions of the audience during her talk to keep them interested, allowing for a question and answer session at the end.
—Susan Hamburger

Call For Presentations

The "Call For Presentations" for the 1996 ARMA International Conference, in Denver, October 13-16, 1996 have been mailed to all ARMA members. Theme for the '96 conference is "Exploring The RIM Frontier".

The Program Committee has started working on the '96 conference program and is looking for outstanding presenters to provide advanced, in-depth sessions on a wide array of subjects, such as:

- Electronic Data Interchange, Use of the Internet, Worldwide Web, E-mail Policy Development, ISO 9000 Documentation, Long-term Access to Electronic Images, Vital Records, Grant Writing, Mobile Office/Telecommuting, Forms Management (Electronic & Paper), Dealing With Harassment, Micrographics, Virtual Reality, International Issues, Team Development, etc.

If you are knowledgeable in any of these subjects or other records management & information topics and would like to be considered a speaker for the '96 ARMA Conference, complete the "Call For Presentations" application and mail to me at the address on the application.

To receive a copy of the "Call For Presentation", you can contact: ARMA International, 4200 Somerset Dr, Ste. 215, Prairie Village, KS 66208. FAX: (913) 341-3742, Phone: 1 (800) 422-2762, E-mail: 76015.3151@COMPUSERVE.COM

OR

WayneDuncan, University of Missouri, 2910 LeMone Blvd, Columbia, MO 65201, FAX: (413) 884-4498, Phone: (314) 882-6362, E-mail:

duncanw@ext.missouri.edu

To be considered for a presentation, application, abstract, biography and session synopsis must be postmarked by October 31, 1995.
Wayne Duncan
1996 ARMA International Conference Program Chair