

FRIDAY BULLETIN

NEWS FROM THE ALASKA DIVISION OF LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES & MUSEUMS

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This newsletter is available weekly and previous issues are available at http://lam.alaska.gov/about_lam/FridayBulletin.html.

Submissions for the Friday Bulletin should be sent to linda.thibodeau@alaska.gov and may be edited for content and length if used.

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NEWS FROM THE DIVISION

WHO WE ARE: STEVE HENRIKSON (CURATOR OF COLLECTIONS)



In 1988, I joined the staff of the Alaska State Museum as curator of collections, after serving as an interpreter and curator with the National Park Service in Astoria, Oregon, and Sitka, and as collections manager at the Burke Museum, University of Washington. I am currently completing my thesis for an MA degree in Museum Studies from the UW, and my undergraduate degrees are in history and anthropology from Portland State University. My specialties are Alaska Native art and material culture, and the history of North American westward expansion. My immersion in these areas extends to replicating traditional technology and producing new art with themes derived from Alaska Native cultures. I'm also very proud to be a member of a Tlingit clan, through adoption by Tlingit elder Mark Jacobs into the Dakl'aweidi (Killer Whale) clan of Angoon.

Like writing, artifacts and art are other forms of human expression, and we “speak the language”—we read the objects and interpret their many meanings, with help when needed from cultural historians and other specialists. We make our interpretations based not on our personal perspective but from within our position in the public trust—ideally exploring both settled history and issues of continued debate with

openness and a dedication to balance. That means pushing ourselves to being receptive to the lessons the objects have to teach us, centuries after their creation, in the long silenced voices of their creators. What did the objects mean then, and what do they mean now?

At the museum, I oversee the collections, comprised of approximately 25,000 objects and specimens, widely ranging from historical aircraft and totem poles to plant specimens, archaeological artifacts, and works of art, and just about anything in between, as long as it is connected to the history and cultures of Alaska. The collections are also supported by Registrar Sorrel Goodwin, and Ellen Carrlee, Conservator. My job involves researching and studying the history, provenance, significance and meaning of each object. To permanently link the objects to their history, I document this information and build accession files containing hard copies of all the documentation. Through frequent access to the collections over time, I have developed a general familiarity with the appearance and qualities of the individual objects and their parts, allowing me to provide assistance to others seeking certain types of objects.

My favorite activities include acquiring artifacts to fill gaps in the collection, and conducting research on various subjects in our collection and others. I help the public by identifying and assessing their own objects, provide public lectures and present research findings at professional conferences. I also curate special temporary exhibits, such as the one we installed in 2000 on the centennial of the Alaska Historical Library and Museum (now the state museum and state historical library). “Other duties as assigned” include working with the AG’s office on legal issues, couriering artifacts when they go out on loan, and occasionally going into the field for research or to collect artifacts.

All considered, I am fortunate to have such an engaging job that keeps my mind turning day and night with the thousands and thousands of years of human history, and thousands of personal stories, told by all those artifacts. The objects speak of the depths of disaster and war, the peaks of accomplishment and renewal, the sacred and the vernacular. Too often, these quintessentially Alaskan stories often go unheard and unheeded. Through our work at LAM, we can help others hear these stories and learn about the history—good and bad—that we share.

NEWSPAPERS: DITCH MICROFILM READERS IN FAVOR OF DVDS?

We’ve recently received inquiries from libraries with aging microfilm printer/readers about the possibility of digitizing their roll microfilm and using computer workstations to view the digitized newspapers.

The question “Can we digitize microfilm newspapers?” is actually two questions. One question involves copyright law and the other involves technology.

We turned to our resident copyright scholar, Freya Anderson, for “I am not a lawyer” guidance on the copyright issue. Here’s what she had to say for newspapers not in the public domain (from 1923 on):

According to US Copyright Law, section 108(c):

- (c) The right of reproduction under this section applies to three copies or phonorecords of a published work duplicated solely for the purpose of replacement of a copy or phonorecord that is damaged, deteriorating, lost, or stolen, or if the existing format in which the work is stored has become obsolete, if—
 - (1) the library or archives has, after a reasonable effort, determined that an unused replacement cannot be obtained at a fair price; and
 - (2) any such copy or phonorecord that is reproduced in digital format is not made available to the public in that format outside the premises of the library

or archives in lawful possession of such copy.

For purposes of this subsection, a format shall be considered obsolete if the machine or device necessary to render perceptible a work stored in that format is no longer manufactured or is no longer reasonably available in the commercial marketplace.

So, if this were only for newspapers that aren't currently available for purchase unused in some format that is not obsolete (microfilm is, of course, not obsolete), AND if it were replacing their current copies (microfilm and/or paper) AND if it were only available within the library (no interlibrary loan or internet access), it would probably be ok under copyright law. I think it would still be allowable for patrons to make their own copies under fair use, since the digital version would then be a legal copy, but the copies would need to be made by someone physically on-site.

Of course, if the publisher had rights in all of the content and gave permission, which I imagine might well be the case for some, then the library would be golden. Personally, I would be a little loath to digitize under such restrictions, both for the restrictions themselves and because I have a hard time imagining people sticking to them, but I certainly understand libraries making a different choice.

From a technological perspective, digitizing microfilm is relatively easy, more so if you don't care about searchable text. The equipment to do so yourself is expensive, but there are vendors who do this type of work. The Library of Michigan maintains a list of such vendors at http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-54504_50206_18643-146554--,00.html. Mention of this list is for information purposes only and does not constitute endorsement by the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums.

NEWS FROM OTHER L.A.M.S IN ALASKA

KENAI COMMUNITY LIBRARY IN LJ: LIKE MOTHS TO A FLAME

The Kenai Community Library reading room was featured in Library Journal's annual Architecture issue under the heading "Year in Architecture 2011: Fireside Chats" at <http://features.libraryjournal.com/architecture/library-buildings-2011/year-in-architecture-2011-fireside-chats/>.

The room is at the bottom of the page and looks lovely and welcoming. Librarian Mary Jo Joiner reports, "When we turn on the fireplace, it attracts people like moths to the proverbial flame."

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