

# Alaska State Museums Bulletin 39

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## Spherically Speaking!

*Using the “Science on a Sphere” to Communicate Science and History* by Sara Lee, Museum Protection and Visitor Services Assistant

Science on a Sphere was developed by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) as a means of visualizing scientific models of planetary processes. The system uses fairly ordinary desktop computers to drive four digital projectors that cast seamless synchronized images onto a six-foot suspended globe. Available datasets range from real-time earthquakes to airplane traffic and current weather patterns. There is even imagery of the moon and the other planets.



*Visitors viewing the “Blue Marble” satellite imagery that gives the sense of the wonder of our world as seen in true colors from outer space.*

At first, I viewed the big globe with some trepidation when it was installed at Alaska State Museum in the spring of 2009. As a relatively new employee, I was just beginning to feel comfortable with my many duties focused on interpreting Alaska culture and history through the extraordinary objects exhibited in the permanent galleries. SOS seemed to have little to do with Alaska or cultural history and appeared to be a complication to my busy workday. However, the Sphere also had a strange gravitational pull, perhaps because of my background in the biological sciences, and my love of maps as a geographer's daughter.

I soon became the primary SOS presenter, giving over 500 formal programs and countless impromptu spins of the sphere. Many other staff and long-time dedicated volunteer docents were reticent to incorporate SOS into their regular tours. The "hightech-iness" was a barrier, and many of the datasets were well removed from our usual Alaskan cultural topics. The Visitor Services section staff had automated playlists with the most appropriate imagery cued for play; however, during the first year we did not have explanatory signage and we often needed someone posted near the Sphere to answer questions. Visitors loved the Sphere and their questions and requests to see additional imagery would often take us far from Alaska history delving into contemporary issues like global climate change and even spinning into outer space!



*Sara Lee in front of the Alaska State Museum Science on a Sphere exhibit presenting the real-time dataset on the earthquakes of the world.*

Science on a Sphere definitely pushed, pulled, and extended us beyond our normal sphere of operations. And in some cases, we were taken out of our comfort zone not only into the realm of complicated

technology and science but also into the bewildering universe of politics. NOAA has developed a number of datasets that address climate change. Satellite imagery of the changes in sea ice coverage are perhaps the most compelling and relevant to Alaskans. Playing the dataset showing the modeled change in global temperatures would often spark heated discussion. In December 2010, we were linked up with all of the 50 or so other SOS installations through a live sphere-cast, hearing and seeing some of the presentations at the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen.

During the second year of conducting spherical programs, the State Museum invested in a large flat-screen monitor to concurrently display information on the datasets being played. More energy could be diverted into answering visitors' deeper questions and developing presentations customized to visitor interests. I turned my attention to creating additional datasets to help us better use SOS to display and discuss topics relevant to Alaska. New datasets include climatic zones, permafrost coverage, glacier status, top 10 earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanic eruptions, major oil spills, important archeological and shipwreck sites, epic animal migrations, and routes of the early European explorers. I primarily used lower cost software and freeware to assist in dataset development. Some datasets originated from information already in a map format, but I developed some datasets by compiling the original research data and then spatially plotting it. I used Photoshop to do final preparation with graphics and labeling. My next step will be animating some of the images in order to better display time sequences. It will be fun to watch a tiny version of Vancouver's ship, the Discovery sail, around the world and visit sites in Alaska. Seeing the imagery in the spherical context is great, but viewing those images animated with movement is even better!

By demonstrating that this inexperienced "low techie" can create SOS imagery, I hope to inspire artists, scientists, students, historians, and educators to create their own imagery. I'd love to hear what other Alaskans might envision being shown on the Sphere, and if any researchers have some data that might be interesting to show in the spherical context. I also foresee opportunities for youth to make global connections through the Sphere. The technology is in place for classes to create and then present their imagery through live simultaneous sphere-casts to students at other SOS locations on the other side of the world. What a way for Alaskans to act locally, think globally, and speak spherically!

## Ask ASM



**Question:** I want to store my dance regalia on roll storage tubes and tissue – what is the better diameter for the rolls and should I use buffered or un-buffered tissue?

**ASM:** Most of our regalia are rolled on 6 or 8 inch rolls. We use washed unbleached cotton muslin to cover them. Also if you can't get acid free rolls, you need to cover the roll with Mylar or marvelseal before you put the regalia on it. Un-buffered tissue is best for regalia. There is some concern with buffered tissue paper that the buffering agent which is alkaline (to absorb acids) might affect the artifact it is in contact with.



## **Shaking the Money Tree**

### **Grants Grants and More Grants**

#### ***Alaska State Museums Grant in Aid***

The FY2012 Grant applications are now available. The deadline is June 1<sup>st</sup> 2011. You can do the mini-grant entirely online and get an immediate confirmation that your application is filed. You can also attach any of the applications to an email by 4:30 pm AKST on June 1 and I will send you a confirmation email. If you mail your application, the postmark must be no later than June 1<sup>st</sup>.

You can download the applications from our website <http://www.museums.state.ak.us/grants.html>

## ***National Endowment for the Humanities***

You should already be writing your National Endowment for the Humanities “Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions.”

Deadline: May 3, 2011

Eligible organizations:

United States nonprofit organizations; state and local government agencies

Complete guidelines:

Visit [NEH's website](http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html) (<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/pag.html>)

The next Institute for Museums and Library Services grant opportunity is for the “Save America’s Treasures” program

Deadline: May 21, 2010. This is NOT a postmark deadline.

For more information: <http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/index.htm>

IMLS Contacts: Connie Bodner, Senior Program Officer

Phone: 202/653-4636

E-mail: [cbodner@imls.gov](mailto:cbodner@imls.gov)

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## ***Save America’s Treasures***

Save America’s Treasures makes critical investments in the preservation of our nation’s most significant and endangered cultural treasures, which illustrate, interpret, and embody the great events, ideas, and individuals that contribute to America’s history and culture. This legacy includes the built environment as well as documents, records, artifacts, and artistic works. Collectively, Save America’s Treasures projects tell our nation’s story and ensure that our legacy is passed on to future generations.

Administered by the National Park Service in collaboration with the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, Save America’s Treasures involves other federal agency partners, including the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services. The National Trust for Historic Preservation has been the program’s principal private partner since its inception. Museums and libraries are encouraged to apply.

[View Save America’s Treasures application instructions](http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/application.htm)

(<http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/application.htm>)

[View sample narratives from past grantees](http://www.imls.gov/applicants/sample.shtm#SAT)

(<http://www.imls.gov/applicants/sample.shtm#SAT>)

## *Other news for grants*

Unfortunately, the budget pain was spread broadly across nearly every federal agency, including the Office of Museum Services within the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Although information about the specific allocation of funds within IMLS is not yet available, AAM issued a statement yesterday that the agency funding would fall from \$265,869,000 in FY10 to just \$237,393,262 in FY11. This represents a 10.7% reduction over current levels, and will have to be absorbed within the remaining six months of the current fiscal year (FY11) that ends September 30, 2011.

Let your Members of Congress know how important funding for the Office of Museum Services is to you by visiting

<http://www.congressweb.com/cweb2/index.cfm/siteid/AAM/action/TakeAction.Contact/lettergroupid/9>.

The newsletter of the AASLH Small Museum Affinity Group has a an article on “Small Museum Friendly Grants.” You should check it out.

<http://www.mynewsletterbuilder.com/email/newsletter/1410719137>

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## **Spotlight on Grant-in-Aid** *Juneau Douglas City Museum*

*by Jennifer Brown*



*Collections Processing Room at the beginning of the project*

In 2007, The Juneau Douglas City Museum assembled a team of professionals to make an assessment of where the facility was meeting needs and where it was not. One of the recommendations provided by this study was to better utilize existing collections processing and storage areas in the basement by moving the archival, photograph and reference collections out of the compactor storage unit into underutilized areas of the basement. As part of the FY2010 Grant-in-Aid program, the Alaska State Museum awarded the

City Museum \$5,654 to assist with the improvement of their archival storage area, as suggested by this assessment.



*Collections Processing Room at the end of the project*

This grant allowed the Juneau-Douglas City Museum to buy new archival storage materials and to move archives and photograph collections from the coveted space in the compactor storage unit to new shelving units. The new shelves were placed in a freshly painted area of the Collections Processing Room. The museum hired contractor Brenda Wright to assist with moving the collection materials to the new shelves. Through this process, they changed the location on 2,634 historic photographs and 1,683 archive records, as well as partially creating digital images for the catalog database and correcting cataloging errors. The long-term physical safety of the collections was also improved by the installation of a new water alarm system. As a result of these changes, the museum improved access to the collections while gaining much needed additional storage space.

## **ASM on the Road**

### *On the Road in Fairbanks*



*Fairbanks Art Association*

From March 27 – 29, 2011, Exhibit Specialist Jackie Manning traveled to Fairbanks, Alaska to jury the 26th Interior Artisans Exhibit and give a lecture. This is an annual exhibit sponsored by the Fairbanks Art Association to showcase original works by artists of Alaska's Interior Doyon Region. The exhibit showcases works created through various artistic processes that use a diverse range of media. Sculpture, quilts, jewelry, and mixed media paintings take a contemporary twist on traditional media. Interior Artisans will be on display at the Bear Gallery through the month of April.

## ***On the Road in Kodiak***

*By Ellen Carrlee, Conservator*



*Ellen in Kodiak*

The Alutiiq Museum and Archaeological Repository (<http://alutiiqmuseum.org/>) in Kodiak recently received an IMLS grant to improve storage, inventory and access to the Karluk One (<http://alutiiqmuseum.org/files/News/alutiiq-autumn10-newsletter-web.pdf>) collection. As part of the grant, I was brought to Kodiak for four days in March to provide a conservation survey and training workshops.

The Karluk One archaeological site dates from 1400AD to 1800AD, and was remarkable for its preservation of organic materials such as wood, basketry, baleen, fur, feather and leather. Organics account for perhaps 70% of the more than 20,000 archaeological artifacts recovered. Most of the organic collection was treated from 1987-1996 with Carbowax (polyethylene glycol or PEG) or Acrysol WS-24 (aqueous acrylic dispersion.) Treatment and condition records are sparse and difficult to correlate to specific artifacts. This issue is compounded by the multiple cataloging systems the current project intends to resolve.



*Crumbly gravel-tempered pottery is a condition issue in many Alaskan archaeological collections.*



*Wooden artifact treated with a low molecular weight polyethylene glycol.*

If too much is used or there is no secondary cell wall left in the wood for bonding, the liquid-y PEG 400 slowly oozes back out of the wood and stains the surrounding tissue paper. Wooden artifacts treated with higher molecular weight PEG are not oozing.

Some artifacts were more deteriorated than others when collected, making condition assessment and evaluation of treatment protocols challenging. Overall the bone, antler, ivory and baleen artifacts are in good condition. The majority of wood and basketry is also well-preserved, although a few artifacts suffered from incorrect PEG treatment based on misunderstandings of the treatment protocols.

Recent improvements in collections storage have drastically improved the preservation forecast for this collection. Many of the housing and storage mounts, mainly implemented by Registrar Marnie Leist, are as good as any I have seen.



*Drawer of beautifully stored ivory, bone and antler archaeological artifacts*

Several Alutiiq Museum staff, Baranov Museum (<http://www.baranovmuseum.org/>) staff and volunteers attended two days of workshops. Topics the first day included Agents of Deterioration, Object Handling (<http://ellencarrlee.wordpress.com/2009/10/13/museum-object-handling/>), Artifact Cleaning, and Artifact Labeling. On the second day, we discussed the condition issues of various material groupings in the Karluk One collection with special emphasis on issues of consolidants, adhesives and impregnants that affect the collection. Perhaps the most dynamic workshop was “Do It Yourself or Get A Conservator?” We discussed the ethics and guidelines for appropriate conservation treatments, strategies to determine

the risks and consequences of various treatments, and the importance of conservation documentation including the main sections of a proper treatment report.

The opportunity to view the Karluk One material has been part of a busy spring of archaeology-related activities for me, which have also included the Alaska Anthropological Association (<http://www.alaskaanthropology.org/>) Conference in March and the annual archaeology workshop at the Office of History and Archaeology (<http://www.mapper.landrecords.info/parks/oha/index.htm>) in April.

## Alaska Museums in the News

Another great article about Jacqueline Fernandez, the new Curator at the Sitka Historical Museum.

<http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/community/2011/03/30/alaskan-museum-hires-latina-curator/>

Totem Poles: Myth and Fact From cultural emblems to kitsch souvenirs, it seems everyone takes a different view of this iconic Northwest art form.

<http://theyee.ca/Books/2011/03/31/TotemPoles/>

## Professional Development/Training Opportunities

The George Washington University's Distance Education Graduate Certificate Program in Museum Collections Management and Care is accepting applications for fall 2011.

The graduate certificate consists of 4 courses and is earned completely online. It is designed for those working or volunteering in museums with collections management responsibilities. The courses are ideal for museum professionals either lacking prior formal museum studies training or desiring a refresher.

For more information, please visit our website <http://ccas.gwu.edu/museum> or contact:

Mary Coughlin  
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## Internship Report

*by Jennifer Brown*

Last fall I jumped back into my unfinished degree program at the University of Alaska Southeast after a ten year break for working, moving across the country and back, and raising my three young kids. My background at UAS had been primarily in the studio arts, but I had learned in my years away that I wanted to develop a more composed academic goal. I figured that taking Zachary Jones' class "Introduction to Archives and Museums Theory and Practice" would be a good balance for my creative side as well as give me the structure that I was craving after years of being away from academia.



*Jennifer hanging labels for the All Alaska Juried Exhibition*

Opportunely for me, the class was being offered for the first time and brought an added bonus of the chance to apply for a competitive internship at a local repository during the spring semester. I applied for the position at the Alaska State Museum and was very excited to accept the position, and especially appreciative to learn that the Friends of the Museum had also offered me a scholarship that paid for my class.

I started my internship in January and have since been able to work with most of the museum staff on a wide variety of projects. My first task was to help move the museum newsletter from its old paper format into a more modern electronic publication. I have experience using WordPress software for my own personal blog, so I was able to hone those skills and collaborate with Museum Services Curator Scott Carrlee to create the new Alaska State Museums Bulletin blog. The blog will create a better avenue to connect with other museums around the state, share more information, and enable a more visual experience as the new form allows sharing more photos and other media.

I was lucky enough to be at the museum during the planning phases and the pulling together of the next big summer show, Old Hats. Not only did I gain exposure to the immense amount of work that goes into putting such a show together, I was able to see how all of the museum staff contribute to the big picture in their respective roles. Registrar Sorrel Goodwin gave me a briefing on ASM's collections database software and I was able to search for hats in the vast collection and organize them in a spreadsheet to help plan the show's layout. I attended a meeting in which I listened to Conservator Ellen Carrlee talk about issues that might arise with displaying these fragile hats and was intrigued by Curator of Exhibitions Paul Gardinier's suggestions for building mounts that would both be safe for the hats and visually appealing to the audience. I worked closely with Paul and Exhibits Specialist Jackie Manning to pull hats from the collections, measure them, and build the appropriate mounts for each hat. This experience provided such wide exposure to so many details, that I now feel confident that I understand the basic dynamics of creating an exhibition.



*Measuring hats with the exhibits team for the upcoming hat show*



*Preparing to carve a hat mount*

There were many other tasks that contributed to this wonderful learning experience. Notably, I helped with the hanging and take down of several shows which was a great opportunity to learn about the different issues that arise with each piece and strategies for arranging objects. Also, I was able to write the Condition Report for the All Alaska Juried Show. This was a neat chance to familiarize myself with many different types of media in the gallery.

Through my experiences, I was allowed great exposure to the ins and outs of the museum industry. Being hands on and working so closely with such experienced professionals was the highlight of my college experience. I was offered a perspective that no classroom setting could have achieved. Professor Jones says that there is talk of UAS offering both a Certificate of Museum Studies and a Certificate of Archival Studies, but nothing is official yet. For now, the introductory museums and archives class has been accepted as part of the UA curriculum and there is hope that the program will expand across the state. I am honored to have been the first in what will certainly be a wonderful learning opportunity for many more students to come. I also feel very grateful to the museum staff, who were all overly generous in sharing their knowledge with me.

## Standards and Excellence Program (StEPs)

AASLH regrets to announce that the webinar, “Hope is Not a Strategy: Raising Money in a Challenging Economy,” originally scheduled for Thursday, March 10th, 2011, has been postponed. They plan to reschedule the webinar for late April. There will be a posting of the new date as soon as the information is available.

In the meantime, check out the free recorded webinars of the previous two StEPs programs.

[Roadmap or Wheel of Fortune? Which Would You Stake Your Organization’s Future On?](http://www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps2011/webinar-1-archive/)

(<http://www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps2011/webinar-1-archive/>)

Recorded Jan. 27, 2011 – click on webinar title above to view archive

[Juggling Balls and Other High Wire Acts: How a Well-crafted Collections Management Policy Can be the Safety Net that Saves Your Collections](http://www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps2011/webinar-2-archive/)

(<http://www.aaslhnetwork.org/steps2011/webinar-2-archive/>)

Recorded Feb. 17, 2011 – click on webinar title above to view archive

## Professional Time Wasting on the Web

*Race to save Buddhist relics in Bin Laden’s former camp.*

<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/articles/Race+to+save+Buddhist+relics+in+former+Bin+Laden+camp/23443>

*National Portal to Historic Collections*

<http://50.56.66.97/search-collections>

*Rogue docent tours oh my!*

[http://www.southsidepride.com/2011/03/articles/rogue\\_documents.html](http://www.southsidepride.com/2011/03/articles/rogue_documents.html)

*An interesting Blog posting on Mission statements*

<http://leadingbydesign.blogspot.com/2011/04/backing-into-mission.html>