

# Alaska State Museums Bulletin 46

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## Nadia Jackinsky-Horrell: Sheldon Jackson Museum's New Curator of Collections

Brainchild of Rev. Dr. Sheldon Jackson, the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka, Alaska is Alaska's oldest museum—it's also the state's first concrete building.

Operated by the Alaska State Museums and jewel in the crown of its ethnographic collections, SJM houses some 6,000 artifacts, representing each of Alaska's Native groups.

And now, for the first time in quite some time, it has a new curator: Nadia Jackinsky-Horrell, an art historian specializing in Native Alaskan art.



Named curator this past June, Jackinsky-Horrell hit the ground running in August; she has already organized an Alaska Native film festival for November, put together a grant to continue the artist demonstration program, and is working to develop an Alaska Native advisory board for the museum. Still, by her own admission, she has some very large shoes to fill, replacing long-time curator Rosemary Carlton, who retired in 2010 after 25 years with SJM.

"Rosemary wrote excellent educational programs and started the popular Native Artist Demonstration Program," she says, noting plans to continue and expand these programs—for one, a fish skin sewing workshop next year. "Also, Peter Corey completed meticulous research on the museum's artifacts, and greatly expanded our basketry collection."

Jackinsky-Horrell brings an extensive background in Alaska Native art and archaeology, as well as a deep connection to Alaska, her home state. Growing up in Homer, she explains, which she describes as a dedicated art community, gave her a deep appreciation for the arts. Jackinsky-Horrell received a BA in art history from George Washington University in 2003, completed her MA from University of Washington in 2007 and coursework for her PhD in 2009.

But she also traces her interest in Native Alaskan art to the year she spent between undergraduate and graduate studies, teaching English in a public French high school—and taking courses—at the École du Louvre in Paris.

"One of the perks of teaching in France is you get passes to all the museums," she says. "Being so far away from home, I was very excited to find the Louvre's non-Western collections, which included Alutiiq and Yup'ik masks, Tlingit helmets, and Haida totem poles."

So, she decided to incorporate Native Alaskan material into her English classes. This led to further research. Soon, Jackinsky-Horrell found herself on an archaeological dig with Aron Crowell, director of the Arctic Studies Center's Alaska office, in Kenai Fjords National Park.

"Spending five weeks in the field was incredible," she says, crediting the experience with her decision to continue studying Native art formally. "It made me realize how much more work we need to do to understand and document Alaska's art traditions."

Since then, she has worked with ethnographic collections at a number of significant institutions, including the Burke Museum, the Seattle Art Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution's Arctic Studies Center in Anchorage and in Washington, D.C.

"This is the perfect job for me; now I get to work with collections representing all of Alaska's Native cultures."

If her duties at Sheldon Jackson Museum didn't keep her busy enough, Jackinsky-Horrell is simultaneously completing her doctorate at UW. Her dissertation focuses on the revitalization of Alaska Native art; for her master's thesis, she studied Alutiiq mask-making on Kodiak Island. In an interesting parallel, her predecessor, Rosemary Carlton, also earned advanced degrees while serving as curator.

For her dissertation, Jackinsky-Horrell examines various factors encouraging artistic revival in Alaska, including influences from the Alaska Native Regional Corporations, the art market, and government funding for art revival projects. Her study is based on interviews with artists, archival research, market and exhibit analysis for Native art, and fieldwork.

"Working in the museum while I'm completing my dissertation forces me to think about the practicality of using a graduate degree," Jackinsky-Horrell says. She expects to finish her PhD in the spring of 2012.

As curator, she says, her main focus is sharing museum work with the public.

"I'm particularly interested in connecting our collections with the Native communities they represent," Jackinsky-Horrell says, adding that she is looking forward to working to incorporate more indigenous voices and curatorial practices into the museum. "I'm really happy to be back in Alaska, working in with the communities I study."

## Ask ASM

*Question:* Our museum has a couple of mounted bald eagles that are in need of some TLC. What is the best way to clean them? The mounts are only about 20 years old but have quite a bit of dust and seem fairly fragile. Should I use one of those mini-vacuums, compressed air, or maybe just a feather duster (haha)? Is there any way to bring back some sheen to the feathers?



*ASM:* We have cleaned several eagle mounts in our museum. Most of them look better with just a simple brush and vacuum. The dust is what is making them look dull. We take the nozzle of the vacuum and get it close to the feathers (but not so close that it sucks up the feathers) and then brush with a soft bristled brush towards the nozzle.



Eagle wing after cleaning

You can kind of tease the feathers with the brush a little bit to get them to release the dust. Then brush them down again to smooth out all the tines. We did have one eagle mount that had a lot of mildew spots on it. We used alcohol on a swab to remove the spots.

## Shaking the Money Tree

Have you heard about the Museum Assessment Program (MAP) and want to learn more? Are you curious how MAP can provide answers to help your museum move forward?

You are invited to join the American Association of Museums and the Institute of Museum and Library Services for a free webinar about MAP on Thursday, November 10 at 3pm Eastern Standard Time.

To connect to the webinar on your computer, use the following URL:

[https://imls.megameeting.com/?page=quest&conid=MAP\\_Applicants](https://imls.megameeting.com/?page=quest&conid=MAP_Applicants)

To connect to the audio portion of the webinar, use the following phone number and participant code:

1 (866) 459-4770

Participant code: 8452132

MAP helps all types of small and mid-size museums strengthen operations, plan for the future and meet standards through self-study and a consultative site visit from an expert peer reviewer. With over 4,300 participants since 1981, MAP has a strong record of successfully helping museums. Staff is also available to answer questions about MAP at [map@aam-us.org](mailto:map@aam-us.org) or 202-289-9118. Visit [www.aam-us.org/map](http://www.aam-us.org/map) for more information about MAP and to access the application. The next MAP application deadline is December 1.

MAP is administered by the American Association of Museums and supported through a cooperative agreement with the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

Alderson Internship Grant Program

*AASLH is offering its smaller institutional members the opportunity to apply for the Alderson Internship Program.*

Historically, AASLH hired an Alderson intern to work in the headquarters office. Recognizing the demand for students to gain "real world" experience and for its members to get qualified interns into their institutions, the AASLH now offers this internship opportunity (up to \$1,000) for three of its members to hire a summer intern. The host institution must provide information on what they expect their intern to do and match funds at a 1:4 level (that is \$1 for every \$4 AASLH provides).

Requirements:

- Applicants must be an institutional member of AASLH.
- Applicants must have an annual operating budget under \$250,000.
- Application must be received by AASLH office by 5 p.m. on December 9.

[Click here to download the application in Word format.](#)

Application deadline is December 9 for an internship beginning the following summer. *Please note that only three grants of \$1,000 each are awarded per year.* For more information or a hard copy of the application, contact Bethany Hawkins in the AASLH office at [hawkins@aslh.org](mailto:hawkins@aslh.org) or 615-320-3203.

# Spotlight on Grant in Aid

The Kodiak Maritime Museum (KMM) produced an exhibit that was a companion piece to their oral history project, "When Crab Was King: An Oral History of the Kodiak King Crab Fishery, 1950-1982."



Patty Mullan

The exhibit, on display at the Baranov Museum from May 7 to June 1, 2011, featured 24 large photographs by Alf Pryor of people who lived through the Kodiak King Crab fishery.



Exhibit at the Baranov Museum

An audio cell phone tour that accompanied the exhibit allowed visitors to hear the oral histories of the people in the images. The exhibit was seen by an estimated 1000 people, making it the most successful exhibit by KMM so far.



Carmen Lunde at the exhibit opening

At least part of the appeal of the exhibit stemmed from the fact that the people in the images were well-known in the community, and the stories they told in their associated oral histories are stories of the community.

## Alaska Museums in the News

In case you did not fly with Alaska Airlines in October, here is a look at the article on Alaskan museums in their in-flight magazine. Use the scroll bar at the bottom to quickly move to p.44.

<http://alaskaairlines.journalgraphicsdigital.com/oct11/>

Kodiak's Russian History

<http://www.thenewtribune.com/2011/10/09/1858476/upcoming-russian-miniseries-will.html>

<http://www.adn.com/2011/10/14/2120840/late-loved-ones-honored-in-annual.html>

<http://homertribune.com/2011/09/community-news-sept-21/>

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## Professional Development/Training Opportunities

*Call for Session Proposals for the 2012 International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums (November 15, 2011 Deadline)*

This is an invitation to submit proposals for sessions for the **2012 International Conference of Indigenous Archives, Libraries, and Museums** to be held June 4-7, 2012 in Tulsa, Oklahoma at the Cherokee-owned Hard Rock Casino and Resort. The four-day conference will bring together cultures from across the nation and around the world to exchange best practices for indigenous archives, libraries, and museums. The conference features six pre-conference workshops, two pre-conference tours, 56 concurrent sessions, two general sessions, three keynote luncheons, and a post-conference Town Hall-style meeting. Conference tracks focus on library, archive, and museum collections, programs, and services, as well as specialized topics such as cultural tourism, advocacy, oral history projects, language programs, digitization, preservation, and fundraising. The conference is funded by the **Institute of Museum and Library Services** and sponsored by the **Association of Tribal Archives, Libraries, and Museums** and the **Oklahoma Department of Libraries**. To view past conference programs and/or submit a proposal before the November 15 deadline, visit [www.atalm.org](http://www.atalm.org). Please direct questions to [atalminfo@gmail.com](mailto:atalminfo@gmail.com).

# Volunteer Viewpoint

*By Caroline Hedin*



For the past few months, I have been lucky enough to be a frequent volunteer at the ASM. I finished an undergraduate program in geography and British Columbian colonial history at Quest University, a progressive college near Vancouver this spring, and I have been trying to decide where my education will take me next. Although I didn't anticipate my interest in museum studies when I first began my undergraduate degree, it has since snuck up on me. From my experience this summer with the ASM, I am beginning to discover how the museum field unites many of my passions of place-based knowledge, local history, ecological studies and creative expression. Thanks to the ASM, I hope to follow my newly-cemented interest in the museum profession back to my hometown of Calgary, Alberta.

During my time as a volunteer, I have been able to move between various projects, and in the process, be exposed to multiple aspects of the museum. I worked with Scott on the administrative/museum services side, helping organize educational materials, researching for upcoming newsletters, and transferring data from dated formats to accessible files on the computer.

Then I had a chance to work with Ellen in the conservation department. I assisted with her prodigious fur identification project, where I took photos of fur scale patterns using a microscope equipped with a paxcam. From that close of a perspective, I was able to see evolutionary adaptations at the hair level!

Finally, I moved into the exhibit construction shop to help out with one of the ASM's upcoming shows entitled "Versatile Birch." While assisting with finishing touches on some building projects, I saw how much imagination and workmanship goes into the creation of exhibits. I was impressed by the artistry involved in creatively displaying objects while trying to capture the essence of the curatorial ideas. Although I'll miss the show, it was great to see a little bit of how exhibits come together.

As I have been moving between departments, I have also been contributing to an ongoing project to make line drawings of items in the permanent collection for in-museum education for kids. It was an incredible thing to help out with, since I was able to spend hours appreciating the beauty and craft of individual objects and in total awe of human creativity.

I have been fortunate to try my hand at a number of meaningful projects this summer, but more importantly, I have worked with such diverse, curious, and passionate brains at the ASM. They have taught me in the past few months what I have cherished most about my experience – some of the underlying purposes of the museum: to ask questions, to recognize the beauty and importance of cultural materials, and to promote understanding of local history through objects, their makers and context.

One of my most striking moments at the museum happened a few weeks ago when I was able to accompany a high school class as they walked through one of the ASM's exhibits, "Capturing New Frontier." The class was directed by their teacher, Museum Exhibits Curator Paul Gardinier, and the guest curator from the State Archives to think critically about the materials, and to start to question the significance and subtleties of early Alaskan photographs. It was special for me to see students involved with the museum, and getting exposure to some historically challenging subject matter. I felt like the museum was doing its job – helping people interpret their past, and understand how it fits into their present.

Although short, my time here has been profound, and has provided me with potential direction for the future. Thank you to all the dedicated and fascinating people at the Alaska State Museum. You gave me a wonderful summer, and I'm glad to have a little home here in Juneau, AK.

# Intern Report

*By Lisa Huntsha, Sitka Historical Society Intern*

Interning at The Sitka Historical Society has been an extremely valuable professional experience. Over the course of my ten weeks at the Society, I worked on numerous projects involving the collections, new exhibition planning, and research requests, as well as collaborated on projects with staff members and volunteers.



The majority of my time was spent cataloguing hundreds of photographs and archival documents using the PastPerfect software program. The Society's general photograph collection is quite large (about 25,000 photos) and covers a variety of aspects of Sitka's history. I scanned, input, and described over 200 of these photographs and hundreds of archival documents into the PastPerfect program. An important part of this project was the careful attachment of search terms to the record, since the Society often receives specific research requests and had been relying heavily on the card catalogue system to find related material. The card catalogue system functions, but is sometimes incomplete or has incorrect location information. Having the collections input in an easily searchable digital database is a very valuable tool.

Community members and individual researchers often submit research requests concerning specific areas of interest. I would search the collections for answers to their questions, using the card catalogue and PastPerfect records, and respond to them with what I found, often directing them to further resources to consult. I particularly enjoyed helping with research requests as it allowed me to see some very different areas of the collection – the scope of the museum is surprisingly extensive! I also found it satisfying to search PastPerfect and pull up records that I had input into the system a few weeks earlier.

In addition to the collection work, I helped orient several volunteers who are working with a specific photograph collection. I helped to get them comfortable using the PastPerfect software, as well as the remote desktop that the Society utilizes. We discussed staying consistent by using authority files on the program and the same data fields for the records. I also worked with the volunteers to make them comfortable scanning the photographs, uploading and attaching them to the database.

Additionally, I helped design the World War II exhibit for the front window of the museum. This exhibit corresponds to a recently donated World War II Navy Uniform and a visit from that donor. I helped design the space and write the label text for this exhibit.

The last project I worked on was the preliminary plans for redesigning the exhibition space of the museum. While it is unclear how long the museum will be in its current location, it is important to make changes and updates now that will protect the collection, engage the community, and transition well into a new space. I sketched out a map of the most important stories of Sitka, the points that visitors – both tourists and locals – should understand about this unique place with rich Tlingit, Russian and American histories. I made suggestions of possible objects from the collection to place in the exhibit to illustrate these stories. I also wrote preliminary text panels that tell these stories in a brief, accessible manner. Lastly, I measured the museum floor space and display cases and input this information into a Google SketchUp model. This computerized 3D model will help facilitate further planning of the exhibition space.

I am thankful for my rich ten weeks spent in Sitka. I could not have asked for a better community, a more beautiful backdrop or more supportive coworkers. This experience has helped me discover my true passions in the museum world and helped me feel confident in my career choice.

## Standard in Excellence Program (StEPs)

Free Webinar, "Telling a Good Story"

"A good guided tour is a good story told well," says guest speaker Linda Norris. Join us to learn the basics of creating a meaningful tour and creative ways tour guides can connect with visitors who arrive at your site with many different interests.

Live session Nov. 17, 2011, 2-3:15 pm Eastern.

Pre-registration required.

<http://www.aash.org/workshop.htm>

Recording will be available on demand a few days after the live session. Funding provided by IMLS.

Free Webinar, "Creating Historic House Interpretive Plans that Connect"

Interpretive plans that connect with visitors and their lives are the keystone for a positive visitor experience. Guest speaker Nancy Bryk will show participants how research is an integral part of the interpretive planning process.

Live session Dec. 8, 2011, 2-3:15 pm Eastern. Registration opens October 15; preregistration required.

<http://www.aaslh.org/workshop.htm>

Recording will be available on demand a few days after the live session. Funding provided by IMLS.

Free Webinar, "Redefining Audiences"

Who are your current audiences and how can you engage new ones? Looking at the most recent U.S. Census, Susie Wilkening from Reach Advisors will discuss demographic change and the valuable ways in which history organizations can use census data.

Live session January 27, 2012, 2-3:15 p.m. Eastern. Registration opens December 1, 2011; preregistration required.

<http://www.aaslh.org/workshop.htm>

Recording will be available on demand a few days after the live session. Funding provided by IMLS.

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## Professional Time Wasting on the Web

Ancient Chinese buckle found in western Alaska

<http://www.alaskadispatch.com/article/ancient-bronze-buckle-asia-uneearthed-alaska>

Preservation doesn't cost; it pays! In the Preserve Minnesota conference keynote address, Bob Yapp gives practical, humorous and cutting edge advice on the economic benefits of historic preservation. Learn how to counteract property rights arguments using cost comparisons between rehabilitation and new construction projects.

<http://discussions.mnhs.org/shpo/2011/10/24/pm-n-2011-audio-preservation-doesn%E2%80%99t-cost-it-pays/>

Here is a good blog article about the inequality in the funding of the arts.

<http://museumtwo.blogspot.com/2011/10/equity-in-arts-funding-were-not-there.html>

Cool use of magnets in the service of preservation

<http://www.asianart.org/conservation/magnetmounts.htm>

The Artist Documentation Project (ADP) at the Menil. Interviews of artists conducted by conservators. Great way to see how artists feel about the longevity of their work.

<http://adp.menil.org/>

The Field Museum enters "Best Restroom" hall of fame.

[http://www.bestrestroom.com/us/hall\\_of\\_fame/2011/default.asp](http://www.bestrestroom.com/us/hall_of_fame/2011/default.asp)