

# Alaska State Museums Bulletin 62

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## Interview with Claire Imamura



Claire Imamura

We have broken Ground! That SLAM building project is now a reality! To keep things running smoothly through this dynamic time, the Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums has hired Claire Imamura as Project Assistant for the move of collections. In her new position, Claire will work closely with Museum Registrar Addison Field to prepare, catalogue and relocate the Museum's collection as it is moved. Imamura will also assist with the relocation of the State's Historical Collections, followed by the Archives' and Library collections.

Claire has immersed herself in collections storage since starting in September. The following is an interview that was conducted in late December during a quiet time between the holidays.

ASM: So you went off to the University of Washington and got a master's in Library and Information Science but you also have experience working in museums. This seems to be an ideal background for your current position to assist with the move of not only the State Museum's collection but the State Library and Archives as well. Which one of these institutions do you have the most affinity for?

Claire: Right now, I've been up to my eyes in the museum collections for several months, so I feel most closely involved with the museum. But, one of my first jobs after college was as the periodicals clerk at the Alaska State Library and my student job while in grad school was in an archive, so I have great fondness for this entire division.

ASM: You were born in Juneau and grew up here. Do you think it is a necessary part of your personal growth to go away from Juneau and Alaska for a while?

Claire: Definitely. When I was in high school, all I wanted to was to get out of Juneau, so I went to college out of state, traveled, and lived abroad. All of those experiences were special and incredible, but I also got homesick. Being away from Alaska gave me a much greater appreciation for it.

ASM: What is it like being a twenty something Professional working in Juneau? Was it hard to find an ideal job?

Claire: I feel very lucky to have found a job that fits my interests and background so soon after graduating. Juneau has been extremely good to me professionally, giving me opportunities to explore my areas of interest and the connections and experience I needed to pursue them. I think a lot of my classmates have been coming back in the past few years for that same reason.

ASM: Have you ever thought about working somewhere else in Alaska or down South?

Claire: There are so many places that I would like to explore, both in Alaska and down South. This job is a four-year assignment, so maybe I'll be ready to go somewhere new once it's over. I look forward to seeing where my career takes me.

ASM: Your current job is to help prepare for the move of collections into a new storage facility. What made you want to take this job?

Claire: The opportunity to work with all three sections of LAM was very appealing to me, and I knew that preparing these amazing and diverse collections for the move would be a unique challenge. I also have great admiration for the people in this division and I knew that working with them would be a fantastic learning experience for me.

ASM: What has been the most interesting part of the job thus far, and what do you see as the greatest challenges over the next few years?

Claire: Even for me, there's a certain mystique about what's behind the closed doors at a museum, so being able to see the collections up close has been really fun. The variety of the museum's collection, from shipwreck artifacts from the Princess Sophia to thousand-year-old baskets to an entire collection of empty milk cartons, makes me think about Alaskan history with a wider perspective. As far as challenges, I think we all see moving the museum's collection as the biggest hurdle. Every one of the 32,000 objects in the collection has to be prepared, custom packed, and tracked as it moves from the old building to the new one. The logistics of this project are just astounding to me.

ASM: So this job will take you through the moving of all the sections of the Division of Libraries, Archives and Museums into the new combined facility. Where do you see yourself in ten years?

Claire: That's a tough question. I went to library school thinking about a career in museums or historical libraries, but I also feel a deep connection to public libraries and everything that they do for their communities. And I think there are interesting ways to apply a library science degree in unconventional settings. I feel open to many possibilities.

## Ask ASM

Question: I have frost "growing" on my house posts as well as between the floor boards. We are working on the floor, adding more ventilation but in the meantime, should I be brushing off any frost that's "growing" on the house posts? If so, what should I use? Or should I just leave it alone?



house post frost

ASM: I am assuming you are talking about house posts inside an unheated clan house. If so, I would say that brushing the frost off and sweeping it up would help to keep the moisture levels down in there. It will eventually thaw and become liquid water which will run and could make water stains that could look bad and are really hard to remove. As for what to use, if you have electricity out there, the best thing to do would be to vacuum them up with a wet dry vac. If you can't do that then I would try just a regular floor brush like the one you can buy that comes with the dust pan. Like the brush that you would use to sweep the pile into the dust pan after you have swept it into a pile with a broom. Getting more ventilation in there is a good thing. These damp areas are prime spots for mold to grow when it gets warm again in the spring.

## **Shaking the Money Tree**

NEH

There is still time to apply for a National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant for Smaller Institutions.

Deadline is May 1st. For more information:

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/preservation-assistance-grants-smaller-institutions>

## **Spotlight on Grant in Aid**

The Sitka Historical Society was very pleased to receive a grant-in-aid award of \$2,000 and has been able to use the awarded funding to better fulfill its public trust responsibilities, maximize its extremely limited storage space, and safeguard collections from light damage via the improvement of environmental conditions in storage and exhibition spaces.

The four major investments made with the grant funding included:

- 1) the purchase of ten NSF steel shelving units and the associated ferry tickets for transporting from Juneau (amounting to \$1,149.90 for shelving and \$274 for a round trip ferry ticket from Sitka to Juneau);
- 2) the purchase of twenty-two archival boxes for housing historic photo albums and two boxes of corrugated blue board for constructing custom-built boxes for albums (amounting to \$273.97);
- 3) the purchase of UV film, 3M double-sided tape and a breyer for applying the UV film to museum and storage windows (amounting to \$219.01); and finally,

4) the purchase of materials including peg boards and dowels to transform two of the steel shelving units into painting storage racks (amounting to \$235.44).



old wooden shelving

The Sitka Historical Society's grant award enabled the organization to dismantle a large wooden shelving unit approximately thirteen feet long and six feet tall, in its main collections storage room and replace the unit with newly purchased NSF steel shelving units on casters. The removal of the wooden shelving unit, which was likely installed back in the 1970s, and its replacement with steel shelving has helped minimize off-gassing of formaldehyde and dramatically improved and increased space usage. As a result, collections are all currently housed and shelved in appropriate archival boxes and within micro-environments; labels on the exterior of boxes listing contents are more easily viewed; handling of archival boxes has been decreased; and the rotation of collections objects on exhibit has been made easier due to the addition of space and improvements in organization.



new shelving units being organized

The grant-in-aid facilitated the purchase of archival boxes and corrugated archival blue board to create custom-built boxes for rehousing photo albums, the majority of which were previously unhoused and stacked one on the other on shelves. The addition of the archival boxes and custom-built boxes from the blue board has improved storage conditions of all of the SHS's historic photo albums. The addition of labels to the exterior of the boxes has drastically reduced the need for handling any albums, reducing the risk of contents becoming separated or damaged, and made it easier for staff to locate albums when needed. A long-needed improvement to collections storage and exhibit spaces at the Sitka Historical Society was the application of UV film to its windows. This was a recommendation made by the ASM's Curator of Museum Services back in 2008 when the Sitka Historical Society had hired its first professional curator. Thanks to the grant-in-aid award, UV film, a brayer roller, and the required 3M tape for the film's application was able to be purchased. (Originally, SHS had envisioned using funds to purchase UV filters, but the curator was able to locate filters to use on lights in-house and felt the investment in the film was therefore a priority and important expense to cover with the grant monies.)

The last investment made using the \$2,000 award to SHS was the purchase of six 4x4 pegboards and ninety dowels to use to transform two of the newly acquired NSF shelving units on casters into painting storage racks. This was considered vital since nearly 100 framed works were unsafely stacked or simply on the ground in collections storage when the current curator arrived. The framed works were all transferred to safe temporary storage at the museum's White House facility and will be placed on the painting storage racks after they are built early this year. The curator had hoped to reconfigure the units sooner, but was unable to due to time constraints. All of the materials required have been purchased for this last phase of the grant-in-aid projects and for the time being, the paintings are in a space where environmental controls are in place and being monitored on a regular basis, still a considerable improvement over their previous state of "storage." The Sitka Historical Society is pleased to have been able to make so many vital improvements to its storage and exhibition conditions with the award from the Alaska State Museum. The funding has made it possible to address fundamental collections storage and preservation issues in a holistic way and by helping SHS increase the longevity of the collections, has helped us better carry out our mission and serve the community of Sitka and all of our visitors.

## **Alaska Museums in the News**

Hammer Museum makes the news in Philly

[http://www.philly.com/philly/travel/20130310\\_Hammer\\_museum\\_in\\_Haines\\_Alaska\\_Tools\\_says\\_its\\_founder\\_that\\_make\\_an\\_impact.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/travel/20130310_Hammer_museum_in_Haines_Alaska_Tools_says_its_founder_that_make_an_impact.html)

Bethel Museum plans for new permanent exhibit



<http://www.deltadiscovery.com/story/2013/03/13/inside-bethel-news/museum-plans-for-new-permanent-exhibit/988.html>

## **Professional Development/Training Opportunities**

### **Image Permanence Institute**

Free webinars on the optimal preservation environment

The Image Permanence Institute is presenting a series of free webinars for collections care and facilities staff in cultural institutions designed to enable collections care and facilities staff in cultural institutions to work together to achieve an optimal preservation environment—one that combines the best possible preservation of collections with the least possible consumption of energy, and is sustainable over time. This series is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities Education & Training grant program.

Webinar presentations will focus on broad environmental challenges and provide useful and effective suggestions for dealing with them. Webinars will be presented by IPI staff unless noted otherwise. Each webinar will be presented on a Wednesday from 2:00 to 3:30 Eastern Standard Time. You can get additional details and register for webinars at <http://ipisustainability.org/>.

May 1, 2013

Best Practices for Collecting and Analyzing Environmental Data

June 5, 2013

Dealing with Summer Heat & Humidity

July 10, 2013

Investigate your HVAC System & Identify Potential Energy Savings – Guest Speaker  
Peter Herzog, Herzog/Wheeler & Associates, Energy Management Consultant

August 7, 2013

Practical Approaches to Environmental Control for Small Institutions – *Guest speaker, Richard Kerschner, Director of Preservation and Conservation, Shelburne Museum, Shelburne, Vermont*

September 4, 2013

Sustainable Preservation Practices—Key Team Activities

## Connecting to Collections April Webinar Series

Caring for Digital Materials: Preventing a Digital Dark Age.

Webinar 1: Overview of digital preservation

Tuesday, April 2, 2013, 10 am – 11:30 am AKST

Instructor: Lauren Goodley

Why is it important to preserve digital materials? What items should we be preserving and why? This session will provide a general introduction to the series and offer strategies to help you identify and select items from your collections for digitization and digital preservation.

Webinar 2: Convert it to preserve it: Digitization and file conversion

Thursday, April 4, 2013, 10 am – 11:30 am AKST

Instructor: Jacob Nadal

Caring for digital objects often requires converting them from analog into digital or from a less common digital format to one that will be more likely to stand the test of time. In this session, we'll review recommended formats for photographs, documents, audio, and video and discuss strategies for digitization and conversion including tips on working with vendors.

Webinar 3: Describe it so you can find it: Metadata, finding aids, and digital asset management

Tuesday, April 9, 2013, 10 am – 11:30 am AKST

Instructor: Danielle Cunniff Plumer

This session will develop some common sense methods for describing the digital materials you have so that they can be more easily accessed in the future. We'll discuss some of the information that can be helpful as you manage digital objects for the long term and review resources you can use for more in-depth exploration of this topic.



Webinar 4: Practice safe archiving: Backups, copies, and what can go wrong

Wednesday, April 10, 2013, 10 am – 11:30 am AKST

Instructor: Jefferson Bailey

Digital disasters happen every day. Computer hard drives fail, viruses corrupt or erase digital files, and mother nature sometimes reminds us that water and electricity don't mix. This session will focus on policies that can help you recover from these disasters, such as making copies of your digital files and storing them in multiple locations.

Webinar 5: Partner to preserve: Digital preservation networks and collaboration

Monday, April 15, 2013, 10 am – 11:30 am AKST

Instructors: Liz Bishoff and Tom Clareson

Sometimes you just can't do it alone. In this session, we'll review some of the existing networks and collaborative projects that are available to help you preserve your digital materials. We'll also discuss ways you can partner with other institutions in your area to improve your chances for preservation success without spending a lot of money

To Register <http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/registration/>

## Connecting to Collections May Webinars

Webinar 1: Physical and Chemical Properties of Photographs

Tuesday, May 7, 2013

9:00-10:30 a.m. AKST

Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

This session will provide a basic familiarity with the fundamental physical and chemical properties of photographic print and negative collections, including albums and scrapbooks, and the causes and mechanisms of their deterioration.

Webinars 2 and 3: Technological Development of Photography

Thursday, May 9, 2013 and Thursday, May 16, 2013

9:00-10:30 a.m. AKST

Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

These sessions will focus on supplying a basic knowledge of the technological developments of photography in the 19<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries with special focus on albumen, silver gelatin, and chromogenic, print materials, and glass plate and film base negatives.

Webinar 4: Preventive Care of Photographs

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

9:00-10:30 a.m. AKST

Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

This session will look to give a basic understanding of and appreciation for issues relating to preventive care of photographic collections, including risk management; appropriate environmental conditions; handling and maintenance procedures for storage; exhibition and display parameters and monitoring techniques; and emergency preparedness, mitigation, and response.

Webinar 5: Advocating for the Care of Photographs

Thursday, May 23, 2013

9:00-10:30 a.m. AKST

Instructor: Debra Hess Norris

This session will provide a basic knowledge of best practices in photograph preservation and building a case statement for effective fund raising. Advocacy for collections will be stressed as a first step in raising awareness of the richness and importance of photographic heritage.

To Register <http://www.connectingtocollections.org/courses/registration/>

## **Professional Time Wasting on the Web**

Ongoing saga of the Museums of Contemporary Art in LA.

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/culture/la-et-cm-critics-notebook-moca-lacma-merger-20130307,0,3770516.story>

Armory Museum in Massachusetts closing for lack of “deep endowment”

<http://higgins.org/integration-worcester-art-museum>

Earlier blog posting about the Armory Museum

<http://hatfieldhistory.weebly.com/1/post/2011/05/hands-on-a-hit-for-all-ages.html>

Excellent Video about turning an historic factory building into an art center

<http://engagingplaces.net/2013/02/28/video-connecting-the-threads/>

A de-accessioning story with an Alaskan connections

[http://auburnpub.com/news/local/valuable-painting-formerly-on-display-in-seward-house-to-be/article\\_a5ed7b03-9468-576f-8603-c16237c46956.html](http://auburnpub.com/news/local/valuable-painting-formerly-on-display-in-seward-house-to-be/article_a5ed7b03-9468-576f-8603-c16237c46956.html)

Cool article about “de-silking” a document

<http://www.archives.nysed.gov/exhibitions/conservation/>

ASM Curator Steve Henrikson meets boyhood hero Buzz Aldrin after moon rocks returned to the state.



Buzz Aldrin and Steve Henrikson