



Alaska State Museums Bulletin 66

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The Big Move: Part 1

By Addison Field, Registrar Alaska State Museum

I'm supposed to write an article about how to move a museum collection. I need to state up front that I've never moved a museum collection before; this is my first time. Since it feels a little presumptuous to be writing this article now, I'm just going to try to impart a few lessons I have learned thus far. These lessons are primarily for registrars and collections care types, all other museum professionals might want to stop reading now, or risk being offended.

Our Goal: move 32, 000 museum objects from our current facility, through a 90' long 8' x 8' tunnel, a parking garage, a slightly larger than normal size elevator and an incomplete building, to our new state of the "contract" storage vault.



Our Time frame: 6 weeks, in March and April, 2014. That is 30 working days. I know I'm a humanities person but, when you add in the (+/-) 10% of objects we may or may not have in the building, that translates to roughly 1,100 object per day.

Recommendations:

- 1.) Don't panic. I almost do it at about 8:40 every morning. On days where I do panic, I don't get a lot done. Another cup of coffee doesn't help.
- 2.) Get someone else to do your regular job for you. Seriously. I'm not going to say anything else about that.
- 3.) Establish suspense dates. A "suspense date" is a fancy way of saying "give them a due date," like I was given for this article, which is already four days overdue. A suspense date is not a difficult concept for people in the Exhibits Department to understand, they have hard openings ... and soft openings, all the time. Curators, however, will look at you like you have grown another eyeball, be prepared for that. Once you have all agreed on specific dates by which you are going to get things done, you can move to my next recommendation: You can back-plan.
- 4.) Back Plan. Back-planning, or top down planning, is a good way to work from your final goal, backward in time, through each logical step in the process that must be completed to attain your goal. In other words: "Start at the future and plan your way to the present." In our case, the new vault is going to be turned over to us on March 1, 2014. That is a Saturday, which means D-Day is Monday, March 3, 2014. I'm expecting three feet of snow on Monday morning. All planning for the move began at that date, and we worked our way back to the present. By listing the sequence of events that has to happen, and the order in which the events need to happen, you can then make your very own Synchronization Matrix.
- 5.) Make a Synchronization Matrix. A Synch Matrix is a planning tool through which different staff sections can synchronize their actions across time, space and purpose in relation to the other staff sections. Yeah, that's right! Go into a meeting and start off with "suspense dates,"

move to “back-planning” and close with discussion about a “synch matrix.” Then sit back and see how many of the educator’s heads explode.



6.) Get Buy in. There are going to be a lot of decisions to make. If you start out by getting consensus on your major goals and the general way you are going to get there, you will build trust. Down the line, that will make it easier for everyone to believe that the right decisions are being made. When it comes to certain decisions, I won’t dwell on specifics, you may need to lock certain staff and/or administrators into a room with a granola bar and a fruit smoothie and not let them out until they’ve reached a consensus, or collapse from dehydration, whichever comes first. You could have to do this periodically.

7.) Expect emotion. You and your coworkers will get emotional about the strangest things. It’s all good, I adore my red stapler. That roll of Marvel Seal from 1992... someone will get misty when you use the last bit. And the storage cabinet with the broken door way back in the vault under the air duct and next to the macramé folk art from the ‘70s: that was the very first purpose-built cabinet the museum ever bought and there will be someone who is emotionally attached to it.

8.) Expect the unexpected. You know the donor who has been holding on to his collection of 10,000 priceless whose-a-whatsits that your curator has been coveting since he/she was an undergrad? They will chose this time to donate it to you because they want to be sure you go right into a strait jacket, ehr, put it into the new exhibits.

9.) A New Normal. SNAFU. If you don’t know what it means, look it up. Just don’t use your work computer. Things may seem like this a lot of the time, with staff, contractors, architects, designers and project managers pushing their own agendas and moving in their own directions with very little apparent structure, but it's not that bad. Buildings get built all the time...apparently.

10.) Write the stories down. Former staff, employees and old volunteers are going to come out of the woodwork. All of them will have a funny story about the history of your building or

why your museum is the way it is, don't miss a chance to gather valuable institutional knowledge. You know there is a reason for the "No Smoking" sign on the collections room door. And the fume hood wasn't always used for M77. So take the time to enjoy yourself, and write the stories down, because you probably won't get another chance.

I guess the take-away message here is: don't panic and try to have a good time. Work out a strong plan, get buy in, set suspense dates, and publish your plan so that everyone can see it and move in the same direction as a team. There are going to be so many fundamental collections management decisions that need to be made in the next few years, that you can't help but enjoy what you are doing. Expect some intense times, but you are in for a lot of fun, so enjoy it!

Ask ASM

Question: I have a question about dealing with mold/mildewed books and papers. We just received a gift of ledgers, receipt books and correspondence from a local packing company that includes lots of very interesting and valuable information, but all of it has suffered water damage, and looks thoroughly impregnated with mold or mildew or both. I've put it all in plastic bags for now, but what is the best treatment for these? Back in the shrouds of memory I think I was told that the best way to deal with this is to freeze it, then go through and vacuum or dust each page? Any suggestions would be appreciated.

ASM: I don't think the freezing step is absolutely necessary. It will deactivate the mold but so will just letting the papers dry out. Freezing does buy you time if the papers are still wet and you need time to process them. If they are relatively dry now then the mold is probably not active. The main thing is to vacuum the papers off as you suggested. You will obviously want to use a HEPA vacuum to keep the mold spores from blowing all over the museum and you will want to wear gloves and a dusk mask. Many people have allergic reactions to mold and mildew. Once they are vacuumed off and air out for a little while they should be fine. There are a lot of resources on the Web that provide additional information. Two links you might want to check out are from the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts http://www.ccaha.org/uploads/media_items/managing-a-mold-invasion-guidelines-for-disaster-response.original.pdf and the National Park Service Conserve-O-Gram <http://www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conserveogram/03-04.pdf>

Shaking the Money Tree

NEH

America's Historical and Cultural Organizations: Planning Grants

Division of Public Programs

Receipt Deadline August 14, 2013 for Projects Beginning April 2014

Brief Summary

America's Historical and Cultural Organizations (AHCO) grants provide support for museums, libraries, historic places, and other organizations that produce public programs in the humanities.

Grants support the following formats:

- exhibitions at museums, libraries, and other venues;
- interpretations of historic places, sites, or regions;
- book/film discussion programs; living history presentations; other face-to-face programs at libraries, community centers, and other public venues; and
- interpretive websites and other digital formats.
- Planning grants support the early stages of project development, including consultation with scholars, refinement of humanities themes, preliminary design, testing, and audience evaluation.

Program Statistics

In the last five competitions the America's Historical and Cultural Organizations: Planning Grants program received an average of 78 applications. The program made an average of seven awards per competition, for a funding ratio of 9 percent.

The number of applications to an NEH grant program can vary widely from competition to competition, as can the funding ratio. Information about the average number of applications and awards in recent competitions is meant only to provide historical context for the current competition. Information on the number of applications and awards in individual competitions is available from publicpgms@neh.gov.

Spotlight on Grant in Aid

The FY2014 Grant in Aid funds have been awarded. Below is a table of all the recipients for this year's awards.

Applicant	Project	Amount
<i>Simon Paneak Memorial Museum, Anaktuvuk Pass</i>	<i>Internship Program</i>	<i>5,400</i>
<i>Sheldon Museum and Cultural Center, Haines</i>	<i>Internship Program</i>	<i>3,800</i>

<i>Eagle Historical Society and Museums, Eagle</i>	<i>Multi-media equipment</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Ahtna Heritage Foundation, Glennallen</i>	<i>Exhibit fabrication</i>	<i>1,350</i>
<i>Beringia Center of Culture and Science, Nome</i>	<i>Traveling Exhibit Development</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Carrie M. McLean Memorial Museum, Nome</i>	<i>Multi-media equipment</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Friends Tanana Valley Railroad Museum, Fairbanks</i>	<i>Exhibit fabrication</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Hope Sunrise Historical Society, Hope</i>	<i>Exhibit signage</i>	<i>1,039</i>
<i>Kodiak Maritime Museum, Kodiak</i>	<i>Office equipment</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Seldovia Museum, Seldovia</i>	<i>Exhibit Supplies</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Sitka Historical Society, Sitka</i>	<i>Collections internship</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Talkeetna Historical Society, Talkeetna</i>	<i>Heating system</i>	<i>2,000</i>
<i>Alpine Historical society, Sutton</i>	<i>Exhibit signage</i>	<i>7,995</i>
<i>Alutiiq Museum, Kodiak</i>	<i>Book publication</i>	<i>10,000</i>
<i>Anchorage Museum Association, Anchorage</i>	<i>Collections internship</i>	<i>6,824</i>
<i>Clausen Museum, Petersburg</i>	<i>Collections shelving</i>	<i>4,895</i>
<i>Cordova Historical Society, Cordova</i>	<i>Exhibit equipment</i>	<i>9,528</i>
<i>Inupiat Heritage Center, Barrow</i>	<i>Intuitional planning</i>	<i>6,780</i>
<i>Museum of the Aleutians, Unalaska</i>	<i>Artifact mounting for displays</i>	<i>10,000</i>
<i>Museums Alaska, Anchorage</i>	<i>Museum conference</i>	<i>9,000</i>
<i>Palmer Museum</i>	<i>display walls and cases</i>	<i>5,797</i>
<i>Pratt Museum, Homer</i>	<i>LED lighting upgrade</i>	<i>7,192</i>

Professional Development/Training Opportunities

Jump Right In: Getting Your Feet Wet with a Special Event Survey Webinar

Wednesday, July 31, 9to 10:30 a.m. AKST (login at 9:45 a.m.)

You are invited to the next FREE event from the AASLH Small Museums Online Community (www.smallmuseumcommunity.org), co-sponsored by the Visitors' Voices Affinity Group!

Have you thought about doing a survey or gathering visitor information, but were overwhelmed by the prospect? Are you looking for a place to start? The Visitors' Voices and Small Museums Committees of the American Association for State and Local History have a deal for you!

Join us for an online event to learn about a special event survey you can adapt in five minutes or less for your site. We will discuss training volunteers to interview visitors and additional questions you can add to the basic survey template. You will also have the chance to ask questions of real people who have used this template to evaluate recent events: Anne Kennedy, past board member and volunteer of the Miami County Museum in Peru, Indiana and Matt Schuld, museum director of the Elkhart County Historical Society and Museum in Bristol, Indiana.

We hope that by the end of the session, you'll be willing to try the survey template as the first step toward gathering visitor feedback on many aspects of your organization. This webinar is designed for those who work at small historic sites and museums who have had little or no experience in conducting surveys with visitors.

This Small Museum Online Community Event features Conny Graft, Consultant, Conny Graft Research and Evaluation and Stacy Klingler, Assistant Director, Local History Services, Indiana Historical Society. They are also co-authors of "In Lieu of Mind Reading: Visitor Studies and Evaluation" a chapter in the Small Museum Toolkit.

Learning Times will host this online event. If you've never participated in a Learning Times Event/Webinar, please go to <http://aaslhcommunity.org/tech-check/> right now to test your computer and ensure you can connect.

On Wednesday, July 31, about 15 minutes before the event starts, go to <http://aaslhcommunity.org/office/> to attend. You only need to enter your name and city to participate. (Please note: participation is limited to 100 logins, so come early and chat with other folks while you're waiting to guarantee your spot.)

The event will be archived in the Small Museums Online Community <http://www.smallmuseumcommunity.org/link-resources/event-archive/> and at the Visitors' Voices webpage <http://www.aaslh.org/visitors-voices.htm>.

If you have any questions about the event, please contact Terry Jackson at jackson@aaslh.org or 615-320-3203.

Professional Time Wasting on the Web

Rethinking the “Do Not Touch” Sign

<http://engagingplaces.net/2013/06/25/rethinking-the-do-not-touch-sign/>

Ancient Yukon Horse Yields Oldest Genome Ever

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/story/2013/06/26/science-ancient-horse-yukon.html?cmp=rss>

On the trail of the most prolific art forger, a registrar fights back

<http://world.museumsprojekte.de/?p=582>

Spit and Cotton Swabs, Tools for a Mummy Facelift

<http://www.npr.org/2013/06/11/190756396/spit-and-cotton-swabs-the-tools-for-a-mummy-facelift>