



Alaska State Museums Bulletin 71

December 2013

Contents:

The Museums Big Move

Ask ASM

Shaking the Money Tree

Spotlight on Grant in Aid

Alaska Museums in the News

Professional Development/Training Opportunities

Professional Time Wasting on the Web

The Museum's Big Move

A perspective from Lisa Golisek, Alaska State Museum Protections and Visitors Services Manager (aka Office Move Branch Team Leader)

It's December 2013 and we are in the midst of the Alaska State Museum's "big move." A move that encompasses relocating the Alaska State Museum's collections, staff, supplies and equipment by May - just six months away. As I write this article about a discrete aspect of this *moving experience*, I'm able to look out my office window and see part of a new building or what I refer to as the "back third of the new SLAM" facility towering above the museum.

SLAM stands for State Libraries, Archives and Museums. The completion of the back third of SLAM is a critical component to the museum's big move as it houses the new collection storage vault. The new vault, with functioning fire, security, and mechanical systems, is to be ready to receive the museum's collections by February 28, less than 3 months from now. From the close of business at the end of February, we have six weeks to move 32,000 objects that are on exhibit or in storage into the new vault. Before the close of business at February's end, all the staff will be moved offsite and the supplies and equipment will be moved into long-term storage.



Construction underway of the back third of the State Libraries, Archives and Museums (SLAM) building.

The Alaska State Museum building, as we currently know it, will be torn down to make way for the rest of the SLAM building that is to be completed by the spring of 2016.



The Alaska State Museum, built in 1967, as a Centennial Project will be torn down in 2014 to make way for the new State Libraries, Archives and Museum facility.



Architect's rendering of the new State Libraries, Archives and Museum facility.

For the past year, a few of our employees were instrumental in meeting and deciding to adapt FEMA's Incident Command System (ICS) to execute our big move. One day last July, I was sent a copy of the move organizational chart produced as a result of these meetings. The chart had two main move branches – the Collections Move Branch and the Office Move Branch. The teams under these headings would be responsible for moving everything from the museum -- from the file cabinets to the lighthouse lens. My name was in the block titled, "Office Move Branch Team Leader." I wasn't sure who to curse or thank for this role, but the count down to the February closing date was 7 months out, and we needed to get most of the "office branch" moved by then. True, planning for the office moves had been well underway prior to July, as the director and deputy director had been working for six months finding space within the state library and archives to squeeze in the museum staff desks. However, there was still more to be done under the title of "office move."

Goals for the "Office Move Branch Team:

1. Develop and execute a plan for organizing, packing and moving the "low hanging fruit: or those items that are fairly easy to pack up and move out and which no one person claims responsibility for
2. Schedule staff and office move dates, oversee moves
3. Organize and pack for long-term storage those items we will need in the future museum but we can do without now
4. Reduce supply consumable inventory – museum publications, gallery guides, and posters
5. Create space to pile up property to be sent to the State Surplus for redistribution and sale
6. Create space in-house to organize and pack
7. Manage the teams of the office move branch

Admittedly I am one of 95% of the museum's permanent, fulltime staff involved in a major museum move for the first time. However, we are learning *moving* lessons every day, and hopefully a few of these lessons will be of benefit to you.

Lesson: It's called Low Hanging Fruit because it's the easiest to pick!

Not everyone in a museum has the skills of a registrar or an archivist, but they all collect. It is amazing the morass of “stuff” an agency can accumulate in 46 years that no one person accepts responsibility for, and how readily staff embrace the idea of someone else organizing it and packing it up.

To make sure we had a complete list of “low hanging fruit”, I visited with staff and informally asked staff three helpful questions:

- 1) What's in your area that you are not personally responsible for?
- 2) What equipment and supplies do you no longer want or need?
- 3) If someone could assist you, what would you like have them pack for long-term storage?

The third question often unveiled items staff inherited from their predecessors but they had never gone through. Staff showed me stuff that was stuffed in drawers and stashed in corners. The list quickly got lengthy, and repetitive. It was surprising how much of the same kinds of materials everyone had -- photos and slides, multiple copies of exhibit catalogs and museum technical papers, CD's of images and files, old temporary exhibit photo murals on the walls, and dozens of uncatalogued reference books. Despite the lengthy list, I also went on a little tour of the building and grounds and compiled a list of everything that I knew wasn't collections related that we would likely need to keep or figure out what to do with it. At this point, it was time to put together a team – I needed help.

This project was happening during the busy summer tourist season, and fortunately, the need for additional support was obvious to our Deputy Director who found a way to add 30 hours per week to the budget to add on some non-permanent staff. My section already uses non-permanent employees to cover leave and assist with special events, and I have the good fortune of having a few devoted and semi-retired employees with long tenure. I asked two of them if they would work together 15 hours per week to complete the assignment of dealing with our low hanging fruit and they enthusiastically agreed.

The credit for compiling, organizing and packing the items goes almost entirely these two individuals, and I can't brag and thank them enough for what they accomplished in the past four months. Our organizers started with rounding up "like" materials – all the magnetic media, all the reference books, all the exhibit catalogs and publications, all the slides and photographs and assisted in further categorizing them.

Ten Categories of Items from the List of Low Hanging Fruit

1. Staff reference library
2. Photos and slides of everything from the museum's 1987 volleyball team to photos from the millennium gala
3. Magnetic and digital media – from commercially produced to museum event coverage,
4. Museum publications – exhibits catalogs, posters, gallery guides and rack cards
5. Awards, Plaques and Banners
6. Newspaper clippings
7. Memorial plaques and trees
8. Office wall art – which include large reproductions used in old temporary exhibits as well as work to return to the art bank
9. Support materials from discontinued programs – the learning kit program and museum graphics
10. Old equipment and supplies

Once the team had most of a like materials rounded up – then the organizing, inventorying, archiving, culling, packing, and moving could begin in earnest. Going through thousands of slides is a monumental task, but the pace of these employees was good and what didn't get done then, probably never would.

Although some things might not have receive enough attention, everything was inventoried and boxes were labeled. We developed a simple tracking label for boxes with a label template that prints on standard shipping label stock. The labels are color coded for each museum section: Museum services is blue, administration is green, collections is purple, etc. In our case we are moving all of this material twice so the box label lists both the temporary storage location and its final destination in the new SLAM. We used the room numbers to identify rooms in the new building since all the blueprints are done and room numbers won't change.

The image shows a sheet of Avery 5164 tracking labels. The sheet is divided into six sections, each containing a label template. The labels are color-coded with a blue header and footer. The labels are for 'Museum Services' and each has a unique tracking number. The fields on each label include: Tracking #, Content, Packed by, Origin, Temp location, and Destination SLAM room #. The Avery logo and product number 5164 are visible at the top and bottom of the sheet.

The best lesson learned on this project was not necessarily how to handle low hanging fruit but who should pick it!

- Pairing up two people for 15 hours per week got more than twice as much done.
- Pairing up individuals with compatible but complimentary skills sets was a huge asset. One had spent a couple years working at the library and understands libraries and archives culture. The other one was a former museum employee and has institutional memory as well as understands our personalities and culture well. They both have a long history with the community.
- The individuals not burdened by the responsibilities associated with a full-time position so they could stay focused on the task at hand.
- The individuals had exceptional spatial reasoning skills – if I had to select people for this process that I didn't know, I might hand them a Rubik's cube and watch how easy was for them to solve.

Other lessons learned:

- Starting with low hanging fruit was a good decision. It is the easiest thing for staff to let go of so you can get these packed well ahead of time.
- Removing office wall art and emptying shelves gives the appearance that you are moving and this motivates staff to pack.
- Rounding up "like" materials allowed us to get rid of redundancy, know how much stock we had, and provide us with an accurate inventory so we could distribute the excess to school, libraries, and other museums.
- Through the process piles of old equipment and supplies were amassed to go to surplus.
- In the end, we are rewarded with much needed space

One could say with more fruit idioms, the *fruits of our labor on the low hanging fruit....well, bore fruit!*

Ask ASM

Question: How does your museum currently prevent bugs, rodents, light and moisture from affecting the collection?

ASM: The current pest control protocol in effect since at least 1990 at the Alaska State Museum has been the standard Integrated Pest Management System where we use preventive techniques to keep pests out, monitor with sticky traps on a quarterly basis and treat suspected infestations or incoming artifacts that may be at risk with low-temperature treatment in a freezer in our isolation room. The IPM procedure is described in the following

article: http://www.museums.state.ak.us/documents/bulletin_docs/bulletin_29.pdf

Light levels are controlled throughout the exhibits and storage areas. In exhibits, light levels are measured with a light meter and kept within accepted standards, typically around 5 footcandles for light sensitive materials such as dyes and watercolors, under 15 footcandles for most organics, and 30 footcandles for things that are not light sensitive like metals, ceramics and glass. In storage areas, the control is more in keeping the lights off whenever people are not immediately working in the collections room. Light levels need to be high enough in there to monitor condition, research artifacts, and perform collections management tasks, so the level is above 15 footcandles. But since light damage is cumulative, the brief periods of exposure are the control mechanism. Of course, the majority of the collections in storage are in cabinets and thus exposed to no light unless the cabinet is opened, even if the lights are on in the storage room.

Moisture is carefully tracked in the museum, since we live in a wet climate and the building has inherent flaws. We have electronic water monitors on the floor in several locations, and we actively monitor the ceiling and the floor for any signs of leaks. Again, cabinets provide significant protection. Our IPM system also provides data on moisture, as there are certain bugs that need high humidity levels to thrive. If we see those kinds of insects (sow bugs, springtails...typically non-heritage eaters) in traps, we suspect elevated moisture and investigate the issue. We have temperature and relative humidity data going back to 1983. The museum is typically around 68 degrees F and 45% RH.

Shaking the Money Tree

IMLS

Sparks! Ignition Grants for Libraries. The application deadline is February 3, 2014.

Sparks! Ignition Grants for Libraries are small grants that encourage libraries and archives to prototype and evaluate innovations that result in new tools, products, services, or organizational practices. They enable grantees to undertake activities that involve risk and require them to share project results—whether they succeed or fail—to provide valuable information to the library field and help improve the ways libraries serve their communities.

The funding range is from \$10,000 to \$25,000, and there are no matching requirements. Projects must begin on October 1, November 1, or December 1, 2014. [Click here for program guidelines and more information about the funding opportunity.](#)

AAM

The Alliance is accepting proposals for the 2014 cycle of the [Museums Connect: Building Global Communities](#) program. An initiative of the U.S. Department of State's [Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs](#) in conjunction with the Alliance, Museums Connect offers up to \$100,000 for museums throughout the U.S. and the world to partner with each other and their local communities around issues of mutual interest, creating opportunities for greater dialogue and cultural understanding. In the first phase of the [proposal process](#), museums submit a basic profile form and search for a partner. Many profiles of U.S. and non-U.S. museums have already been [posted online](#) for potential partners to review. After partnering, museums submit a statement of intent to propose, accepted on a rolling basis through Jan. 20.

Heritage Preservation

CAP Applications Available

Heritage Preservation is pleased to announce that the 2014 Conservation Assessment Program application are available at: <http://www.heritagepreservation.org/CAP/index.html>. Paper applications are available upon request.

Applications must be postmarked, submitted online, or emailed no later than 11:59 p.m. on Friday, February 14th. We encourage museums to apply as soon after the application release as possible, as we always receive more applicants than we are able to fund.

Questions may be directed to CAP staff at cap@heritagepreservation.org, or 202-233-0800.

Spotlight on Grant in Aid

The Alutiiq Museum

The “Cultures Through Time” project has been successfully completed. Through the project, two separate but complimentary exhibits were created. First, five images were developed showcasing the five major periods of the Alutiiq culture. The design of the images was inspired by the children’s I Spy books, and feature many items from the Alutiiq Museum’s collections from each period.



The images were then printed onto 1/4 inch thick, 30 by 30 inch iZone panels and mounted in the children's Wamwik area of the museum's gallery. They are arranged in a way that is attractive and engaging, and highlights both the differences and similarities over time. For example, the shape of toggling harpoon points remained virtually identical over thousands of years and between periods, but the materials changed, from bone through to metal. By exploring the images, children can learn about change over time. The panels have proven to be highly popular and a wonderful resource during tours. Children often yell out when they spot an object, "I see it!" which has resonated deeply, since the exhibit is titled Tangraqa – I See It.



Beside the Wamwik is an exhibit case that serves as our introduction to Alutiiq culture through time. This exhibit was installed in 2001, and was never a very well laid out design. The case is large, but the space was not well used and was difficult to understand for those who did not have a basic understanding of Alutiiq culture or archaeology. This project allowed for a complete redesign, including a change from focusing on the scholarly names of the cultural time periods to a more widely understood use of terms (Ocean Bay became Early Hunters, Koniag became Chiefs and Slaves). The title of the exhibit also changes from Culture through Time, which did not emphasize the continuity

of culture to Cuumillallret – Our Ancestors. The case is vibrant and shares at least five times as many artifacts as the previous version, utilizing the space much more efficiently and attractively. Importantly, the two exhibits are complimentary in that they share many of the same artifacts. Pieces that are spotted in the Tangraqa images are displayed in the Cuumillallret case, pulling children’s attention into the gallery in a way that was not possible before. Additionally, the abundance of artifacts seen in the images and the case showcase the museum’s collections while educating our visitors in a more intuitive way about the Alutiiq culture through time.

Alaska Museums in the News

ASM IMLS Professional Development Project: Putting the State in Alaska State Museum

<http://www.alaskapublic.org/2013/12/10/putting-the-state-in-alaska-state-museum/>

<http://www.ktoo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/29Museum.mp3>

Cordova Museum Purchases work by Milo Burcham

<http://www.thecordovatimes.com/article/1349cordova-museum-purchases-work-by-milo-burcham>

Museum of the North gets new fish specimens

<http://fm.kuac.org/post/thousands-new-fish-specimens-double-museums-collection>

[return to top](#)

Professional Development/Training Opportunities

AASLH

Registration Open for January 2014 Online Training

[The Basics of Archives](#)

The Basics of Archives online course is designed to give organizations and individuals who are responsible for the care of historical records an introduction to the core aspects of managing and protecting historical records collections, using appropriate principles and best practices. Proceed at your own pace through this online workshop covering the

basics of archive management and practices. The course is web-based and takes 15-20 hours to complete.

- January 6, 2014 - February 7, 2014
- \$85 members / \$160 nonmembers

[Developing a Membership Marketing Plan](#)

Does your organization's membership program need a jumpstart? Do you want to grow new members? Join a lively discussion about how to develop a membership marketing plan for your organization and increase revenue. When the webinar is complete, you will take home not only a model on how to develop, but also real ideas and suggestions to put in that plan.

- January 15, 2014 @ 3:00 pm - 4:15 pm
- \$40 members/\$115 nonmembers

Professional Time Wasting on the Web

700,000 Year Old Horse discovered in the Yukon

<http://westerndigs.org/700000-year-old-horse-found-in-yukon-permafrost-yields-oldest-dna-ever-decoded/>

Alaskan Artist Larry Beck

<http://si-siris.blogspot.com/2013/04/larry-beck-native-american-art.html>

Please touch tour for the blind

<http://www.adn.com/2013/12/02/3209554/pa-museum-tells-blind-visitors.html>

AASLH unveils new website "Home for History"

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