

Bulletin

ALASKA STATE MUSEUM, JUNEAU • SHELDON JACKSON MUSEUM, SITKA

ALASKA
STATE
MUSEUMS

The Alaska State Museums Hires a New Conservator

Juneau resident Ellen Carrlee has been named Conservator for the Alaska State Museums. Ellen received her master's degree in art history and art conservation from New York University in 2000, and studied at the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Peabody Museum



Ellen Carrlee, the new Alaska State Museums conservator, will focus her expertise on the care and preservation of the state's collection.

at Harvard, the Corning Museum of Glass and the Harvard/Cornell archaeological excavations in Sardis, Turkey. For the past five years, Ellen has been the Curator of Collections and Exhibits at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum.

Q: You worked at the City Museum for 5 years. That is a good chunk of time. What were your best experiences there?

Ellen: The best part of that job (Curator of Collections and Exhibits) was getting immersed in Juneau history and community identity. This town is like a huge epic novel, and I was able to connect with a lot of people who know an incredible amount about this place. I felt like I became part of the community in a hurry. I loved it when people would call and say, "I have an idea for the City Museum." And certainly the Montana Creek Fish Trap project was very gratifying. I was able to do a major conservation treatment, but the exciting part was the way it fit in creating an exhibit, the educational programming, and the replica-building.

Q: Why did you make the change?

Ellen: I told the staff at the Juneau-Douglas City Museum that the Conservator position at the ASM was the only job in Juneau I would leave them for. The City Museum is in a growth period right now, and the JDCM Curator position is very gratifying and challenging. However, I went to graduate school for four years to be a conservator, and I knew my choice to move to Alaska would make a career in my specialty difficult. The ASM is the only museum in Alaska to have a conservator position, and I feel incredibly lucky that the opportunity arose.

Q: What are some of your plans for your new position?

Ellen: With the previous conservator (Scott Carrlee) doing outreach in the capacity of Curator of Statewide Services, that will allow my position to concentrate on internal issues, meaning more attention for the ASM collections, including more treatments for important artifacts that are damaged and cannot be loaned or exhibited. I would like to see the conservation lab become more active as a

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Ask ASM

Q: What is a "Scope of Collections"?

A: The Scope of Collections is a mission statement for permanent collections. Drawing from the institution's mission, it formally defines what the museum collects, and is approved by the governing body of the museum and embodied in museum

policies and procedures. A scope of collections might specify a geographic region, culture area, historical period, and/or association with specific events and people. The scope provides a focus to your collection, and while it can't answer all questions, it is useful in identifying items that are clearly not related, and in revealing grey areas for

further analysis. On a practical level, it is helpful to have these basic guidelines on hand to explain to potential donors that his grandmother's baby shoes from the Ukraine are not appropriate for the collection—or ARE appropriate, if your mission is to disseminate knowledge of Ukrainian shoes.

laboratory, doing treatments and research on Alaskan materials. The ASM is in a unique position to be at the forefront of how Alaskan artifacts are cared for, and I think having two people on staff trained as conservators will be a real strength of the institution, and provide a major service to other museums and cultural centers statewide.

Q: What do you hope to accomplish in the next year or so?

Ellen: Turning the focus of the lab over from outreach to examination and treatment will be a priority, now that Scott Carrlee is handling most of the day-to-day outreach. However, I enjoy writing, and I'd like to see some of the expertise from the ASM shared. For example, I'd like to produce "care sheets" or leaflets about Native regalia that people outside the museum profession can use and understand. It would also be terrific to regularize the conservation intern program. Not only can these students do amazing work, they bring with them the latest information from the graduate training programs.

Q: How do you like working as a museum professional in Alaska? What is the current state of conservation in Alaska as you see it?

Ellen: In general, people are intensely proud to be "Alaskan" and the history here is as rich and exciting as the landscape. You can see that reflected in the number of tourists who visit our museums. But Alaska can also be small and intimate because our population is small and that means professionally there are more opportunities here to become involved and active, both sharing your own expertise and asking others for information. That's very gratifying. Conservators have taken an interest in Alaska since the profession really got rolling in the 1970s, and as a result even the small institutions in the state have an idea what conservation is and some of the basic concepts. Best of all, there tends to be a hunger for the information instead of resistance to it. However, there are only a handful of conservators in the state. Either more conservation positions need to be established or better connections with outside conservation services (and the funding to pursue them) need to be

forged. In the meantime, we need to help people who care for collections do what they can do themselves.

Q: Many people already know you through your work at the City Museum and through your contributions to the Museums Alaska organization. Tell us something about you that people probably don't know.

Ellen: I'm in training with my dog, ZigZag, to learn wilderness and avalanche search and rescue techniques. We are part of a team called Avadogs here in Juneau, and are pursuing national certification through the National Association for Search and Rescue (NASAR.) Ziggy is still very young, and we are leapfrogging each other in our skill levels. Eventually, we will test as a dog-and-handler team and become certified to participate in actual search and rescue missions. In the meantime, the program is motivating me to step up my level of fitness, first aid training, disaster preparedness, and knowledge of the Alaskan environment.

IMLS to Explore Feasibility of State Formula Grant for Museums

Washington, DC—Dr. Anne-Imelda M. Radice, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), announced recently that the agency will undertake an effort to explore the feasibility of formula grants to the states to support museum services.

Dr. Radice said, "For fifty years there has been a population-based formula grant to each state and the territories to support library services. In recent years the museum community has been engaged in discussions about the feasibility of a similar program for museum services, and the agency has received several requests from members of Congress to explore the issue.

This is a serious issue and must be

fully examined by bringing a variety of voices to the table. I have asked Celeste Colgan to lead this effort. Celeste is an outstanding strategist and policy advisor with a passion for education and a keen interest in the role of cultural institutions in the United States. I am delighted that she has agreed to take on this important task."

In the coming year Dr. Colgan will review relevant funding models and work with community leaders, museum professionals, and educators across the country to convene local hearings to investigate the public's needs for museum services and the potential for meeting these needs through federal grants to the states. She will also convene national leaders to discuss her findings. A report will be published in December 2007.

Dr. Colgan is a consultant on higher education academic matters and the intermountain coordinator for the American Council of Trustees and Alumni for teacher preparation reform. Her academic and policy roles have included senior fellow at the National Center for Policy Analysis (NCPA), director of the State of Wyoming Department of Commerce, and deputy chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities. She was also an adjunct professor at the University of Wyoming and the chairman of the Division of Language and Literature at Casper College. Dr. Colgan received a B.A. and M.A. from the University of Wyoming and a Ph.D. from the University of Maryland.

Alaska State Museums Curator of Exhibitions Retires After Over 20 Years of Service

Curator of Museum Services Scott Carrlee interviewed Mark Daughhete as Daughhete prepared to transition from the position that he has held with the Alaska State Museums since 1986.

Mark Daughhete moved to Juneau from Los Angeles in 1977. After several years of work as a graphic designer for both the Alaska State Museum and the Department of Education, he finally settled into a long and fruitful career in exhibits at the museum. In addition to his museum work, Mark is recognized as one of Alaska's preeminent artists, with over 100 exhibitions to his credit. He has participated in exhibitions in 14 U.S. states, Russia and the former Soviet Far East, including solo exhibitions in Alaska, California, Texas and Washington. His photographs are included in all of Alaska's major collections as well as collections outside of Alaska notably the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. In 2005 he was selected as a Master Artist in Residence for the University of Alaska Museum of the North, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Art Department and the Alaska Native Artist Center and was the recipient of a Rasmuson Foundation project award.

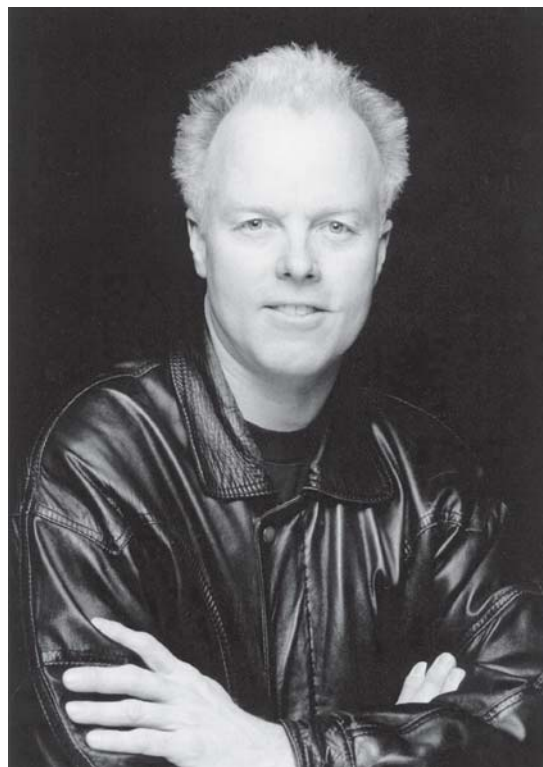
Q: What do you consider your most significant contributions to the Alaska State Museum during your time here?

Mark: In 1986 I took the newly created Coordinator of Traveling Exhibitions position for the Alaska State Museum. During my time in that position the museum significantly expanded its statewide reach by bringing compact traveling shows to many of the state's smaller museums. When I began my position as Curator of Exhibitions I reinstated the dormant Alaska artist solo exhibition series. That exhibition series and the traveling

exhibition program continue enjoy great success to this day.

Q: What will be your fondest memories of working at ASM?

Mark: There are many memorable vignettes that I could cite – the sprint to the finish line to get exhibitions open on time; working with the many



Mark Daughhete

Alaska Positive jurors that we have hosted over the years and the many Alaska artists that have mounted solo exhibitions at the museum; and getting to know so many people in Alaska's museum community. But one memory that remains indelible was the Karaoke send-off with museum staff for a former museum clerk that spread to a collection of hosting venues in Juneau well into the night. Talk about a traveling show!

Q: Would you do it all over again?

Mark: No, it's time to do something else.

Q: How has the Alaska State Museum specifically and the museum profession in general changed during your career?

Mark: My first experience with the Alaska State Museum was in 1977 when I was the graphic designer and preparator for the museum's Alaska Multi-media Education program. The now defunct program created learning kits based on the museum's collection that were circulated to school districts around the state. At that time cutting and pasting was done with a knife and glue. The biggest change in the museum culture in the past 30 years may well be the ease of communication and accessibility that computers have provided.

Q: What words of wisdom would you give someone new coming into your position?

Mark: Get a big calendar.

Q: What are your plans for the future? How will you be spending your new free time?

Mark: Free time! What's that? In January of 2007 my wife and I plan to relocate to Seattle. After 30 years in Alaska it is time for a change. I look forward to having less structured time and hope to spend more of it making art, traveling and testing the culinary offerings that a larger city has to offer.

Q: What will you miss most about Alaska?

Mark: Aside from the long winters, slush-clogged streets and Taku winds, I am sure it will be the many friends and associates that I have made over the years. Alaska has been good to me and for that I am grateful. I will particularly miss Alaska's community of artists that I have had the privilege of working with during my time here.

Conference Updates:

American Association of State and Local History (AASLH)

Annual Meeting Phoenix, AZ Sept. 13-16

Here is a brief description of three initiatives at AASLH that are of interest to Alaskan museums.

Federal Formula Grant Funding

AASLH is serving as the Coalition Administrator for the Federal Formula Grants for Museums Coalition, fostering a national movement for increased funding for museums through IMLS. Federal formula grants to the states for museums can leverage better ways to ensure the long-term stewardship of collections, to grow the professional skills of staff, and to give everyone in our hometown access to educational opportunity, information, and the cultural heritage that define us as a nation. Federal formula grants would be modeled after a similar program for the nation's libraries. Museums Alaska is a member of the Federal Formula Grants Coalition.

Incremental Standards for Museums

Since last October, AASLH has been working with members from across the country to develop an incremental standards program for small- and mid-sized history museums and historical organizations. The three-year project is funded by a grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. In addition to creating a set of voluntary standards, the project includes the development of a framework for assisting institutions that use the standards by drawing on the technical assistance services of existing field service offices and state and regional museum associations. Also, a "train the trainer" component will be developed to strengthen the capacity of service providers including those in states and territories that currently do not have ongoing field assistance programs.

The five core standards areas will be:

1. Mission, Vision and Governance
2. Management (divided into two sub-sections: financial/human resources and operations)
3. Audience
4. Interpretation
5. Stewardship (divided into two sub-sections: collections and historic structures).

Performance Management Program

Performance Management, developed in partnership with the Center for Nonprofit Management of Nashville, provides participating institutions with a scientific and tested visitor survey template, professional data analysis, and a final report that identifies weaknesses in facility access and upkeep, visitor services, programming, marketing, and other areas *from the visitor's point of view*. Institutional strengths are also identified and are valuable support material for fund raising, marketing, and program development.

Western Museums Association (WMA) Annual Meeting Boise ID, Oct. 11-14

The keynote speaker, Dr. Peter Bishop, a professor of Future Studies at the University of Houston, gave a thought-provoking list of five things that will disappear in the future and how this will affect the way museums do business. Although no one can accurately predict events in the future, according to Dr. Bishop technological advances and the social change they create will cause the following five things to disappear or diminish in importance in the near future: boundaries, the middle, space, time, and the traditional job. He further elaborated on what will be the impact on museums.

Boundaries: The boundaries between museums and communities will disappear. The traditional community defined by geography will be no more.

The Middle: The museum's role as the middleman between the patron and the information will be diminished. Patrons will come armed with their own questions and interests as well as the tools to satisfy their own needs.

Space: There will be less need to move around because the information can come to you.

Time: It will take less time than ever before to access the information we are interested in.

The Traditional Job: You used to know how to do your job. Now you have to do a job that you do not know how to do — a job that requires communication, problem solving, pattern recognition and creative thinking.

The world of the future world will be instantaneous, simultaneous and interconnected. The good news for museums is that in a dematerialized world the material stuff becomes more important.

Museums Alaska Annual Meeting Juneau, AK Oct. 4-7

Highlights of the annual meeting in Juneau were the keynote speech by Ron McCoy, who gave us a great perspective on presenting cultural heritage in museums; the public lecture by Harmer Johnson, who gave us a peek at the dramatic changes in the marketplace for Native Alaskan artifacts; and the talk by the Smithsonian's David Shayt, who made us ponder the difficulties of collecting artifacts from tragic events such as Hurricane Katrina and the terrorist attack of 9/11. The general session talks were tightly focused on the conference theme of ethics and museum collecting. From subsistence archaeology

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on St. Lawrence Island to consumptive use of collections, there was plenty to think about and apply to Alaskan museum situations. The pre-conference workshops held at the ASM were filled

to capacity. The participants of the mannequin workshop were able to complete a small mannequin during the three-hour workshop. The participants of the storage and shipping workshop

got the guilty pleasure of tossing a carefully packed artifact down a stairwell to see if it was packed correctly. Of course stunt doubles were used in place of real museum artifacts.



Diane Fleeks and Sherri Brown display a successfully packaged "artifact" during the Museums Alaska workshop on storage and shipping. Right, Scott Neel and Ryjil Christianson perform the two-story-drop to test the integrity of a package containing an "artifact".



The gallery of the Sheldon Jackson is resurfaced with new carpeting.

A Face-Lift for the Sheldon Jackson Museum

"After 20 years with the old carpet, it is nice not to have to stumble over the snags and the duct tape repairs" says Curator of Collections Rosemary Carlton. The new carpet, a mixture of light browns and blues, was installed in squares so that the large stuff like filing cabinets and desks did not have to be moved very far. "The installers started down the middle and then moved the stuff around as they went" said Lisa Bykonnen of Visitor Services. "They did a great job" she said. The museum was closed during the 4 days of the installation. Only a few patrons were turned away by the sign on the door and a couple of school groups had to reschedule their visit to the museum for January.

Alaska Museum Success Stories

The Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla was one of three Alaskan museums that participated in an ASM-sponsored Exhibit Development workshop in 2004 -05. Tonya Cribb, registrar of the Dorothy Page Museum at that time, embarked on an ambitious renovation of the museum's history gallery. The goal was to give the gallery a more open look while updating the historical information and better protecting the artifacts on display. The workshop participants spent three separate sessions throughout the year at the ASM where they learned the ins and outs of creating an engaging exhibit. Ken DeRoux, former ASM Curator of Museum Services, helped develop content and label copy while Paul Gardinier, ASM Exhibit Designer, provided expertise on exhibit construction and object mounting techniques. Information about how to protect objects on display was covered by conservator Scott Carrlee. Funding for the workshop was provided through the Grant-in-Aid on a competitive basis. The Dorothy Page project persevered after Tonya left the museum and was brought to completion by Margaret Rogers, the museum aide during the transition period between registrars. The exhibit looks terrific and shows what can be done in-house on a limited budget. Congratulations to the Dorothy Page Museum for a job well done.



A new exhibition at the Dorothy Page Museum in Wasilla was completed in 2006 with the support of an Alaska State Museum exhibit development workshop through the Grant-in-Aid program.

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