

On April 21, 2012 SCoSAA, along with SLA, hosted Simmons College first Graduate Symposium. This one-day event featured presentations from GSLIS students on their recent research. The variety of papers and topics demonstrated how GSLIS students plan to contribute to their respective fields once they graduate. All of these lively presentations sparked a fruitful conversation on the future of archives and archival practices. Please read the following panel reports to learn more about the papers presented. We hope that you will all consider attending or presenting next year. -- SCoSAA

### PANEL ONE

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS: NEW PERSPECTIVES ON ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVAL THEORY



**Moderator:** Elizabeth Mather, Archives Management

**Speakers:** Kristen Schuster and Aliza Leventhal

- Rachel Dwyer

Kristen Schuster began the session with her presentation “Provenance: Art Historical and Archival Perspectives,” presenting findings from her research on the different definitions of provenance among art historians, archivists, and historians. Specifically, Schuster focused

on art seized by the Nazis between 1933-1945; the questionable provenance of these works poses a challenge to researchers in each of these fields. Schuster conducted interviews with three archivists, four art historians (provenance researchers), and two historians, then analyzed the interviews for language relating to, as well as issues of access, use, experience, and historical content.

The unexpected conclusion was that interviewees from each field had a similar understanding of “provenance” as the history of an object. Differences emerged in how provenance was contextualized and used by archivists, art historians, and historians. Art historians were concerned with establishing legal title and discovering a museum’s ethical and legal right to an object; archivists were interested in documentation and supporting files; historians focused on the significance of the Holocaust on later ownership of stolen art.

Schuster also analyzed interviewees’ attitudes towards doing archival research, which one archivist equated to

cleaning a shag carpet, in that the more one looked into archival documents, the more one discovers. Fortunately, while all of these professionals had experience with doing research in the archives, only one group was dissatisfied with the archives. Historians expressed a need for greater accessibility to materials.

Schuster also found that interviewees believed that European archives are less service-oriented than their American counterparts and that legal restrictions, particularly with regard to World War II and Holocaust material, create greater barriers to access in Europe. Schuster hopes to conduct more interviews and further explore these issues of access.

Aliza Leventhal continued the theme of access with “Diaspora Manuscripts: Records Divided, Archival Collaboration.” Leventhal defined diaspora records as scattered and disconnected records and materials located in a variety of different institutes and archives. In order to demonstrate how dispersed a collection can be, Leventhal used the collections of Henry David Thoreau as a case study. Thoreau has a large volume of papers in many repositories. Unfortunately, these collections are treated and studied individually and most finding aids do not point to the other locations where researchers can find more of Thoreau’s papers. Leventhal argues that archives should make a concerted effort to both make their collections available and move beyond their borders and connect their materials to the materials in other repositories. For example, finding aids should acknowledge that one collection may not be everything, the entire *fonds*.

To ignore the greater context is in a sense disrespecting the *fonds*.

The implementation of tools and standards (such as *DACS*), as well as a cultural shift towards communication between archives, signals a movement towards increased access to diaspora manuscripts. At this point, everything is voluntary and there is a need for greater collaboration and sharing among archives and archivists. Leventhal sees this as an important undertaking that has the potential to create greater ease of access for users, but also benefit archivists by collaborating and sharing descriptive duties. Ultimately, the initiative must come from the entire archives community, acting not as individual authorities but participants in an undertaking that transcends physical boundaries.

## PANEL TWO

WEIGHING PRACTICE AGAINST THEORY: AN EXAMINATION OF ARCHIVAL POLICIES



**Moderator:** Brita Zitin, ALA Student Chapter Coordinator

**Speakers:** Laura Kitchings and Brian Shetler

- Megan Schwenke

Laura Kitchings of the Wellesley Historical Society opened this session on archival policy with her presentation “Item Level Description in the Era of More Product, Less Process: The Hazelton Collection.” Kitchings’ presentation explored her work providing item-level processing and description on The Hazelton Collection, which consists of assorted materials documenting the Hazelton family and features the Boston School painter Mary Brewster Hazelton. The Society is small and staffed entirely by part-time employees; as a result, there are a number of unprocessed and partially processed collections there. Therefore, the decision to process one collection down to the item level was considered carefully, and ultimately made for several reasons: the volume of research requests, the collection’s exhibition potential, preservation concerns for the collection, and the increased control over materials to ensure the collection’s security.

The collection was eventually processed and arranged by format, and then separated by each individual in the family. The project took nine months to complete and was done at considerable cost to the Society. Despite this, Kitchings and her co-workers feel that the work was worth it. Besides increased access to an important collection, the process gave the staff an opportunity to examine their current procedures and consider what tools, like *DACS*, they would employ in future processing projects. The work has also proved helpful in supporting the Society’s capital campaign, as it revealed the vast potential of materials that would have

remained hidden away if left under-processed or unprocessed altogether.

Kitchings’ presentation was followed by Brian Shetler’s “Through the Unlocked Door: Theft and Security in Archives.” Shetler’s presentation examined the vulnerabilities in archival security (illustrated with sensational cases of theft!) and provided solutions for improved protection of unique materials. A staggering 75 percent of archival thefts are inside jobs, and this may be due to several key weaknesses in repository security. The first is lax regulations for employees and staff members, which in one case enabled an archivist at the New York State Archives to steal and then sell off hundreds of items during his 29-year tenure there. Additionally, security may be tight within the archives but poorly enforced at the reading room door, where many institutions fail to ID patrons and check their belongings upon entrance and exit. In 1962, a couple pilfered materials from the National Archives that they had concealed in briefcases and purses that went unchecked. Pamphlets and maps are also a security liability, as they are not as easy to protect as bound volumes, and have been clandestinely removed or even sliced from books and smuggled away.

Archives must remain aware of these potential weaknesses in security to protect their collections. The repository should aim to have a good handle on its holdings, and consistently check materials after patron use to ensure nothing is missing. Security policies should be created and a security officer appointed to oversee enforcement.

Additional measures discussed included the (possibly creepy) use of video surveillance in the reading room, as well as thorough background checks for staff. Shelter demonstrated that should these efforts fail and a theft still occurs, it is best to publicize the incident rather than hide it. Publicizing the theft will enable the larger community to be alerted in case the materials resurface somewhere else.

### PANEL THREE

#### SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS IN CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES



**Moderator:** Sara Funke Donovan, SCoSAA Treasurer

**Speakers:** Rebecca Meyer, Phyllis Catsikis, and Shannon Struble

- Meghan Bailey

The speakers during this session jointly presented a paper titled “The Social, Economic, and Environmental Aspects of Sustainability in Libraries, Archives, and Museums.” Meyer, Catsikis, and Struble discussed the negative impact that buildings have on the environment and economy and examined how cultural heritage institutions can use their unique

position to demonstrate environmental awareness and sustainability through education, design, and practice.

Sustainability can be achieved through an approach that is sensitive to the environmental, economic, and social consequences of the decisions of cultural heritage sites. Cultural heritage institutions should consider whether the preservation and conservation materials they use are harmful to the environment and the collections. Rather than building larger buildings to house more collections, institutions should rethink the acquisitions process. For example, academic libraries can practice sustainability by bringing their collections to the people while limiting the growth of their collections by providing e-resources, ILL, scanning, and weeding.

Cultural heritage institutions should also reduce their consumption of water and energy, and engage in recycling. In addition, new buildings can incorporate green design while existing buildings can be retrofitted through small yet significant changes such as changing lights, electronics, and landscaping. Furthermore, people within the building’s space respond positively to green design that incorporates natural materials and mimics the natural environment. Over the long term, green buildings, whether they are newly constructed or retrofitted, will reduce operating costs and improve productivity and economic performance while maintaining the integrity of the collections.

Cultural heritage institutions can market their green design to draw more patrons, funding, and even donors. In addition, programming and collaboration with the community educates and raises awareness about the environment while encouraging the appreciation of nature. They can also use their collections as well as green architecture to educate the community and patrons. Overall, embracing sustainability is a beneficial model to follow and cultural heritage institutions should contribute their experiences to the literature.

### PANEL FOUR

HISTORY DETECTIVES: USING ARCHIVAL MATERIALS TO CONNECT PEOPLE TO COMMUNITIES



**Moderator:** Michelle Chiles, SCoSAA Archivist and Archives Program Assistant  
**Speakers:** Meghan Poepping; Caitlin Christian-Lamb, Taylor Kalloch, and Ana Knezevic

- *Elise Dunham*

Presenting on her thesis “Bloody Sunday 1972: Investigation, Reinvestigation, and Community Response,” Meghan Poepping summarized her research and exploration of Northern Ireland’s collective memory of the day now known as “Bloody Sunday.” On January 30, 1972 in Derry, Ireland, during a civil rights

march, British troops fired into the crowd and thirteen protestors were killed. The British government followed up on the shooting by opening an inquiry, and concluded that the British soldiers were justified in their actions. In 1998, Britain called for a reinvestigation, which yielded the opposite verdict: the attack was unprovoked and the soldiers were in the wrong. Poepping’s research was driven by her interest in these two disparate investigations and her question was whether there was a change in collective consciousness of the event after it was reexamined in 1998.

Poepping sought answers by traveling to Ireland to conduct archival research and faced some challenges in regards to access: there were restrictions on many of the collections, some of them were uncatalogued, and many did not have finding aids. Poepping said that the access struggles she faced as a researcher will inform her work as an archivist as she now understands first-hand the importance of having collection-level intellectual control over archival holdings. Despite her struggles, Poepping was able to conduct successful research, and her analysis has yielded the central argument of her thesis, which is that “the political climate of these particular moments not only shaped the perception of Bloody Sunday by the communities of Northern Ireland, but also contributed to how Bloody Sunday defined shifts in communal relations.”

Caitlin Christian-Lamb, Taylor Kalloch, and Ana Knezevic concluded the panel with their presentation on “Searching for Slaves and Servants: Investigating the

Silences at the Shirley-Eustis House.”

The Shirley-Eustis House is the last standing country house of a British Royal Governor in the United States located in the heart of Roxbury, Boston. One aspect of the House’s history that has received little attention is its potential connections to slavery and servant life. Christian-Lamb, Kalloch, and Knezevic found it particularly important to fill this gap in the historical record because 63 percent of Roxbury residents are people of color. They view their research as an effort to strengthen the connection of the House’s surrounding community to its history. However, they found their research challenging because sources directly relevant to the presence of slaves and/or servants in the House, if they ever existed, were not retained in any collection they could find. Therefore, the group had to use non-traditional sources and had to think creatively about how to explore the House’s connection with slavery. They looked at wills, family correspondence, baptismal records, diaries, and account books searching for evidence of slavery and/or servitude in the Shirley-Eustis House, and found promising leads in baptismal records, one letter, and an account book. They were able to develop a compelling case for the presence of slaves and servants in the House using this scant documentation. This project has greatly informed Christian-Lamb, Kalloch, and Knezevic’s understanding of the role the archivist takes on when appraising; archivists must always bear in mind that what is retained in many ways determines what is remembered.