



WASHINGTON CONSERVATION GUILD NEWSLETTER

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From the Desk of the President

Hello members,

The fall and winter meetings are behind us and spring is here. In the spring meetings we will hear what some of the interns who are members of WCG have been doing, and as the 2011-2012 season concludes, we will conduct our annual raffle and business meeting before we adjourn for summer. Of course the May business meeting also means elections will be at hand, and we need YOU, the membership, there to vote for the people you would like to direct the Guild's course. We have a number of positions open. So if you know a colleague who (or if you yourself) might be interested in helping shape the programming and direction of WCG, please consider adding their (or your) name to the ballot. Serving on the board is the best way to ensure that programs you would like to see happen make it to the agenda. Please do not hesitate to contact Eliza Giligan if you have a nomination to add to the ballot.

The lectures and meetings have been very successful this season with good attendance and positive feedback from the membership. I want to applaud (and you should also) the board members for making our meetings a success. In doing so, I would also like to highlight for the membership the behind the scenes efforts that make the meetings seem as if they just happen. While meetings are planned in advance, there always seem to be inevitable hurdles that must be overcome. These hurdles may come as the illness for the board member assigned to coordinate a meeting or the caterer shorting the food order on the day of the meeting, but increasingly finding venues for the Guild meetings has be-

come a challenge. The challenges of securing a venue take many forms, from the loss of a contact at the venue, to new policies at old venues requiring rental fees for space and equipment, or catering requirements that are beyond the Guild's financial means. We try our best to retain good relationships with the venues that have so generously hosted our meetings and, in doing so, try not to call on their hospitality too frequently. Because of the continued difficulty in securing "ideal" meeting locations, I am making an appeal to the members to think creatively and use your personal and professional networks to identify potential locations for future meetings. If you have an idea for a location that is near public transit and can accommodate one of the Guild's monthly meetings, please contact Vice President Jane Klinger.

Carrying on in the spirit of my predecessor, Eliza Gilligan, I have continued to try to identify ways to modify and streamline the Guild's structure to closer reflect the way the Guild currently conducts its business. One such change under consideration is the unification of the Outreach Booth and Public Lecture committees into one "Outreach" committee with co-chairpersons. This change has the potential to build on the success of the outreach booth by offering public lectures, career day speakers, conservation education activities, and preservation partnership activities. This consolidation of the

current committees will allow us to better organize our outreach and partnership efforts, particularly as we find ourselves partnering with other cultural organizations such as the Association for Preservation Technology (APT DC) and the National Park Service (NPS) to support the common goal of preservation.

In closing I want to encourage members to please contact me or another board member with ideas for programs or for making the Guild a more vibrant and relevant professional gathering place. I would also like to encourage members who know of other relevant conservation programs happening in the Washington, DC, metro area to share the information by contacting Annie Wilker (Newsletter) or Erin Blake (Website). Members may also bring an announcement or flier to share with your colleagues during the reception hour.

See you at the next meeting!

L. H. (Hugh) Shockey Jr.
President - WCG



Do you have photographs for the WCG archives?

The WCG archives, held in the Smithsonian Institution Archives, does not have many photographs, so we are appealing to members to provide photographs of people and events from all periods of WCG's history. The archives can accept color and black-and-white prints or digital images. Every photo must have a caption, and ideally every person in the photo will be identified. If you have photographs to submit, please send an email (not the photos!) to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org.

RECENT MEETINGS AND EVENTS

December Meeting

“Conservation on \$5 a day” (How to use household goods and dry goods store items to outfit a conservation studio)

Donald C. Williams, Senior Furniture Conservator, Smithsonian Institution’s Museum Conservation Institute

At the Annual December Holiday Meeting, Mr. Donald Williams presented his talk, “Conservation on \$5 a day” (How to use household goods and dry goods store items to outfit a conservation studio) to an audience of approximately sixty people. Mr. Williams is a Senior Furniture Conservator at the Smithsonian Institution’s Museum Conservation Institute, has published many papers on a range of conservation subjects, and co-authored the book *Saving Stuff* (2005). This book details steps to care for household treasures ranging from plastic action figures to ivory and tortoiseshell.

Speaker Donald C. Williams



Mr. Williams began by noting the importance of thinking like an economist and introduced three kinds of capital:

- time - the one asset you can't replace
- talent
- treasures - money and material goods

Mr. Williams then moved on to discuss a variety of tools and materials he recommends for use in preservation. He began by discussing different types of fans and how to manipulate them to your needs. The rationale for this is that dust can be detrimental to artifacts, as well as your health, and should be dealt with. For example, in order to control dust in the studio, one can attach an electrostatic filter to the back of a box fan which should be running all the time. When the filter gets clogged and dusty, it can be rinsed out with a hose and reused. Another useful product is a computer fan, which can be removed from an old computer or purchased at Radio Shack for under \$10. When attached to a box filled with activated charcoal, this little fan provides air scrubbing in a specific location, removing organic solvents especially well. The same unit also does wonders de-odorizing a musty-smelling space.

While computer fans are useful, they draw the air through the motor, which can be potentially dangerous especially when using flammable solvents due to the heat produced by the motor. An alternative fan that eliminates this issue is a centrifugal, or squirrel cage, fan. Centrifugal fans, shaped like the number 6, feature a fan wheel in the center of the device. Air flows into the center of the fan wheel and due to centrifugal force, the airflow rotates 90 degrees and accelerates, therefore travelling over the fan blades and exiting the fan housing without passing over the motor. The fan can be placed in a window and effectively pump air out of the room to prevent heated air from blowing out of your window. When using this fan in the winter, place a pillow case (a flannel pillow case turned inside-out works best) over the output to help collect the dust. Additionally, the centrifugal fan can be modified by putting a dryer vent hose in the center of the fan wheel. This will create a partial vacuum and provide a method to filter air in a more localized location.

An assortment of containers that are useful in the studio can be found in your local supermarket. Both



peanut butter and mayonnaise jars are made of polyethylene terephthalate plastic ($(C_{10}H_8O_4)_n$), or PET, which is a very stable plastic. Biaxially-oriented polyethylene terephthalate is more commonly known by the trade name, Mylar. Polypropylene ($(C_3H_6)_n$) containers, such as those produced by the Lock & Lock Company, can also be found in supermarkets. Baby food jars are also handy to have around the lab.

Pipe insulation (polypropylene foam) can be used as bumpers when packing an artifact. An audience mem-



ber suggested that pool noodles can also be used as they are made of polyethylene ($(C_2H_4)_n$) foam, which is the same material that composes Ethafoam.

Pulverized limestone can be purchased at a hardware store and can be used as a bulking agent for primer and gesso. It can also be used to polish silver. A forty-lb bag can be bought for around \$5.

For warming up small quantities of liquids or gels, you can use a coffee cup warmer, or as suggested by an audience member, a baby bottle warmer which, according to this participant, is great for heating up gels.

A felt polishing wheel could be cut into triangles for easy use as a polishing block for granular abrasives such as whiting or alumina micro polishes.

Linen works great as a burnishing cloth. Make sure it is de-sized, and then it can be used on gesso and

WCG on Facebook

WCG members are invited to join our new Facebook group! The Washington Conservation Guild now has a Facebook page. Please join for updates on meetings, information, and announcements regarding WCG.

bole to create the high gloss substrate for laying gold leaf. Corn straw burnishers, like the brushes used to clean woks, are an excellent tool for burnishing the surface of wood prior to applying a coating. A case hardened concrete nail can be polished into an excellent tool for localized burnishing of pitted metals.

There are a variety of stores where one can purchase these materials. Williams mentioned thrift stores, recycling centers, hardware stores, yard sales, and scrap yards such as the Montgomery County Scrap Yard. Sheet metal shops sometimes have stainless steel tubes and sinks removed from gutted houses; these can be used for a number of purposes. One can purchase affordable scientific equipment from Scientific Equipment of Houston (www.lab-miser.com). Hancock Fabrics and other fabric stores sell Teflon sheets which can be used for ironing. Tacking irons can be purchased at hobby shops. One attendee suggested your dentist as a source for syringes and dental tools.

In addition to the above, Williams suggested a number of helpful tips ranging from using bamboo, boxwood or ivory instead of metal edged tools (they do not grab surfaces like a metal edge does) to customizing the tips of clothespins to fit your needs.

Williams distributed a shopping list that included many of the items he discussed in his talk.

Gaby Irving
Pre-Program Intern
United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

January Meeting

WCG THREE RING CIRCUS at the S. Dillon Ripley Center, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC

RING 1

**“The Use of Tablet Computers in Condition Surveys and Examination Documents”
Amber Kerr-Allison, Smithsonian American Art Museum**

The work of a museum conservator involves frequent and swift examination of artworks. It involves the survey of large groups of artworks, the preparation of artworks for loans, and the checking of artworks on return. Very often this work must be done in less than ideal working conditions and under tight deadlines. Anyone who has ever had to do this job knows how hard it is to keep track of all the necessary documents and how easy it is to have the papers pile up on their desk. This experience inspired Amber with an idea that she shared during her presentation on the use of a tablet computer for condition surveys and examination documents.

Amber pointed out that the process of preparing a loan condition report is not only very time- and paper-consuming but also involves many redundant steps such as printing, filling out and drawing on hard copies, transferring it to a computer, entering in the TMS, printing again, etc. Also, such condition checks oftentimes require a lot of moving around—for instance, when surveying the paintings in storage, or off-site. In order to be more efficient, this kind of work would greatly benefit from a portable, networked device that could track the conservator’s work. Amber explained how she has been successfully using an iPad with a PDF Notes App. The PDF Notes App allows her to read and highlight text, add simple drawings, bookmark, zoom in, and much more. You can even take a picture on the iPad to include in the condition report. This data can be emailed from the device in various types of pdf files—editable, non-editable etc. A PDF Notes App for the iPad is free with small ads appear-

ing at the bottom. A version without ads costs \$10. A paid version is available for Android and PC Tablets.

Amber discussed a case in which she wrote reports directly into a survey form on the iPad. This greatly improved her efficiency, and she was able to survey over one hundred George Catlin paintings in just a few hours. Around that time, the TMS at the SAAM underwent an important upgrade, and it is now possible to upload and attach the pdf files to the TMS entries. The only shortcoming is that the content of the attached pdf files is not searchable. Amber pointed out that this iPad-based system is convenient, easy, intuitive, and versatile and also has a growing platform of other useful apps. The main cons are that it cannot interact with TMS, it has a bulky stylus head, there is a reduction in image quality if copied/pasted, it is restricted to apps approved by Apple, and last but not least, the cost of an iPad is still very high.

There were two iPads and one Android available for the audience to try out after the presentation.

“Is there an App for that? Handy Apps for Smart Phones and Tablets”

Eliza Gilligan, University of Virginia Library, and Lisa Young, National Air and Space Museum

Eliza Gilligan and Lisa Young presented a list of Iphone and Android applications, which may be useful in the everyday work of a conservator. Many of these apps can be purchased or downloaded free through the Apple website. Searching for apps can be difficult as many of the apps, even similar in nature, can be listed under different categories and may be hard to find. Eliza and Lisa have surveyed these Apps and put together a handy list.

Speakers Eliza Gilligan and Lisa Young



The Apps were divided into two groups. In the “Utility Apps” category, one can find such tools as a light meter, flashlight, magnetic meter, level, angle meter, magnifier, or unit converter. The “Reference” group gives access to molecular models, polymers database, science glossary index, chemical and engineering news, chemical safety data sheets, guides to hazardous materials, FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency), and a guide to wood and insect identification. Eliza and Lisa also discussed a few more apps that they have not yet tried but are potentially interesting—such as a guide to galvanic corrosion or an App for converting photos of documents into pdfs.

Participants at the presentation received a list of the Apps with their different names and their prices for both the iPhone and Android versions.

“The Disaster Wheel Becomes an App”

Jenny Wiley, Heritage Preservation

Jenny Wiley presented a talk on the development of a Disaster Wheel App for iPhones. The Emergency Response and Salvage Wheel, also known as “The Disaster Wheel,” was designed in 1997 to provide staff at cultural institutions with immediate access to essential information on protecting and salvaging collections in case of an emergency. The wheel contains information developed and reviewed by preservation and conservation professionals. It gives instructions and actions that need to be taken in order to salvage and secure various objects of material and cultural heritage based upon their medium and degree of threat.

Thus far, the “Disaster Wheel” was available only in a hardcopy version and could be purchased for a small amount. However, soon the Wheel will be available in a digital version as an App for iPhones. The App will be free and includes all the content of the “traditional” Wheel. Additionally, it will comprise a glossary of terms useful in case of a disaster. The App will not depend on network connectivity and functions without an internet connection. A more comprehensive and interactive version will follow. This version will allow the user to enter content on the App including emergency contact information. Heritage Preservation will make an official announcement once this application is available for download.

Jenny had a working version of the Disaster Wheel App on her iPhone so the participants could try it out after the presentation.

Julia Burdajewicz
Post-Graduate Intern in Paintings Conservation
National Gallery of Art

RING 2

“The Age of Plastic”

Odile Madden, Research Scientist, Modern Materials Program, Museum Conservation Institute

Odile Madden, whose areas of expertise include natural and synthetic composite materials, Raman spectroscopy, and the study of pesticide residues, gave a presentation on the Age of Plastic initiative. A research project which focuses on the “material, cultural, and environmental phenomena of polymer composites,” the Age of Plastic straddles the sciences and humanities, combining the resources of twenty-four team members. Members range from conservators to veterinarians and come from organizations including the University of Maryland, the Denver Art Museum, the National Zoo, and the National Air and Space Museum, among others. While the Museum



Case Study #3: Edible Plastic



Food: Transforming the American Table, 1950-2000. Exhibit opening at NMAH in August 2012

Talks from Ring 2 on plastics

Conservation Institute serves as the hub for the project, Madden highlighted the cross-disciplinary nature of the project, citing multiple case studies undertaken by the initiative. Working with the National Air and Space Museum, the team is studying plastics throughout the history of aviation, as well as plastic aircraft recognition models from World War II, to determine issues specific to their degradation and stabilization. In another project, the Age of Plastic team is working with scientists at the National Zoo to determine potential toxicities of plastic lab equipment used at the zoo. These are just a few of the many projects the initiative is involved in.

In May of 2011, a program steering workshop was held to discuss issues specific to plastics and their degradation. Development of protocol for dealing with plastics technology, strategies to preserve plastic artifacts while considering the variables inherent to degrading plastic, and new methods of analyzing plastics with an eye towards portable technology were all discussed at the meeting. Madden described the outlook of the initiative as being focused on web-based infrastructure, public outreach, and funding.

“Monitoring Acid Vapor in Cellulose Acetate and Cellulose Nitrate with Color Indicators”

Jia-Sun Tsang, Senior Paintings Conservator, Museum Conservation Institute,

HaeMin Park, Paintings Conservation Intern, Museum Conservation Institute,

Beth Richwine, Senior Objects Conservator, National Museum of American History

Smithsonian Institution,

Ann Seeger, Deputy Chair and Curator, National Museum of American History Smithsonian Institution

Jia-Sun Tsang and her team members undertook a project in 2011 to ascertain and test the recommendations available in conservation literature on the care of cellulose-derived objects such as cellulose acetate and cellulose nitrate. The goal of the study was to find low cost, low maintenance, low tech, and practical methods and materials to monitor and absorb the acid vapor.

Studies were designed to answer questions such as: 1) Where and how should indicators be placed? 2) Which is the best absorber? 3) Is there a difference if the monitoring is carried out in an airtight or an open-air environment? 4) Does the volume of the container affect the indicators' responses? 5) Which is the most effective indicator? 6) Can one rely on color indicators to monitor the acid vapor? 7) Can one rely on color indicators to monitor the degradation of cellulose-derived objects?

Tsang found that acid vapor travels to the bottom of storage containers because the vapor is heavier than air. She stated that the correct way to place the indicator is at the bottom of the container, near the objects; however, the indicator should not touch the object. The indicator needs air circulation to function properly, and best results are achieved by suspending the indicators in the container with Teflon tape or inert strings. She also found that indicators in airtight and smaller volume containers have a faster response. A/D strips are most effective for cellulose acetate objects. Purafil SP blend, a one-to-one mixture of SP and Purakol, was found to be the best absorbent of acid vapor. Although color indicators may not be sensitive to all the varying degrees of degradation, they may be used to monitor the presence of acid vapor.

January reception



“Julia Child’s Kitchen: Plastics and Preservation”

Mary Coughlin, Assistant Professor and Administrator of the Distance Education Program, The George Washington University

In her presentation, Mary Coughlin described the assessment of the objects within Julia Child’s kitchen display in the National Museum of American History ten years after its opening. Working with students from a museum studies class at The George Washington University, the group assessed objects in the kitchen. They used a written checklist that had been developed to streamline the process, as there were over 900 objects that needed examination. Coughlin and the students regularly encountered issues specific to plastics degradation in the mid-twentieth-century kitchen, which was filled with plastic objects. Coughlin cited problems such as embrittlement, discoloring, and weeping. Recommendations were made on which objects should be retained and which removed; however, there was much concern over whether removal of objects changed the overall story of the kitchen. The environmental conditions in the display were also monitored closely during the assessment process. There was a dust issue since the kitchen has been on display for ten years, with air vents directly over some areas of the display. Coughlin noted the importance of public outreach to this project. As part of the project, the students were asked to create blogs documenting their experiences working with the objects in the kitchen. Additionally, because the students were working within the display, their work was constantly on view to patrons. Julia Child’s kitchen is currently off-display to prepare for renovations in the National Museum of American History. It is scheduled to reopen in late summer of 2012.

Andrea Hall
Conservation Technician
CPR Conservation, Inc.

RING 3

“Treating the Flag of the Formosa Republic: Taking a Tiger by the Tail”

Nancy Pollak, Conservator of Paintings and Painted Textiles, Art Care Associates

Nancy Pollak played a crucial role in conserving the Flag of the Formosa Republic; the flag’s design included a tremendous yellow tiger. Pollak explained that in 1895, when China turned Taiwan over to Japan, there was an uprising by the gentry. In the same year, the Taiwanese fabricated a large flag with a painted tiger as a symbol and statement for claiming their independence. Unfortunately, the Japanese procured the flag during lootings. In 1908, an indistinguishable copy of the flag was made for the National Taiwan Museum. The flag is oil on cotton and measures 8 ½ feet by 10 ½ feet. Before treatment, the flag was in poor condition, and Pollak described it as unstable, noting that it had been backed with paper in 1979. Conservation treatments appropriately commenced in 2010, the “Year of the Tiger.”

The collaborative project brought together staff from the National Taiwan Museum in Taipei and conservators from the Graduate Institute of Conservation of Culture Relics at the Tainan National University of the Arts. Nancy Pollak was invited to be a consultant, along with Frances Lennard, Senior Lecturer in Textile Conservation at Glasgow University. Graduates of the paper and painting conservation program in Tainan performed the bulk of the treatment. Pollak explained that the artifact, rich with cultural significance, also posed thought-provoking questions for the team. For instance, the flag depicts a yellow tiger on a brown background, but the original flag had a yellow tiger on a blue background. Had it once been blue but faded to brown? A blue material is present in the upper right corner. Had damage been treated or was it inherent, faithfully copying a repair existing on the original flag? Laborious conservation treatments involved removing thick layers of paper backing, stabilization,

and grime removal. Treatments requiring moisture proved to be challenging because the ground layers for the painting were water-soluble. Other necessary considerations for the flag included providing an adequate support for travel, creating a storage container that would keep it both protected and accessible, and making recommendations for display. With everyone's fortitude, in a global effort, you could say this tiger has been tamed.

“Scraps of Evidence: Conservation of the Terezin Scrapbook”

Emily Olhoeft Helwig, Paper and Photographic Conservator, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

Emily Olhoeft Helwig, a paper and photographic conservator at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, has been carrying out complex conservation treatments on a scrapbook made by Margaret Gruenbaum, who lived and survived with her children Michael and Marietta in the Nazi concentration camp, Terezin. At an earlier time, the Gestapo had murdered her husband, Karel. Helwig explained that soon after being liberated in 1945, Margaret gathered and assembled “scraps of evidence” that documented her family's day-to-day life as camp prisoners. The small but significant items included bank notes, letters, postcards, receipts, Star of David emblems, deportation orders, and even jewelry made at Terezin.

The covers of the scrapbook were fabricated out of corrugated cardboard, covered in burlap. On the front cover, Margaret adhered black letters spelling “Terezin” and a yellow Star of David emblem. Helwig noted that the covers, which have not yet been treated, are in a deteriorated state. A variety of artifacts, which ranged in material and condition, had been adhered using photo corners, tapes, or adhesives to both sides of heavy-weight, dark blue paper sheet supports, of which there were twenty-nine. The majority of paper was low quality and, therefore, fragile. Conservation treatments involved surface cleaning, washing, mending tears, lining, as well as tape and adhesive removal. Unidentified blue and red tapes were the most damaging, explained Helwig, as they left significant stains on the paper supports. Helwig devoted much of her time performing solvent tests on an assortment of media, including printing inks, typewriter inks, and writing inks.

Difficult questions were raised, stated Helwig, and treatment methodologies needed to be established. For example, should the scrapbook be disbound? Some of the attachments, such as metal buttons, were damaging to other artifacts and paper supports. Should these types of attachments be removed from the scrapbook because they jeopardized the condition of the whole? With curatorial input, the decision was made to disbind the scrapbook, as it would be safer to photo-document and treat individual pages; in addition, separate pages could be exhibited and rotated. Only objects that could cause more damage to the page were removed and housed separately. Object and textile conservators treated the three-dimensional objects and textiles, respectively. Helwig presented a series of before and after images that exemplified the great care and sensitive attention to preserving and maintaining the integrity of Margaret's valuable and important memories that document horrendous truths evidenced by her Terezin scrapbook.

“A Technical Study of the Works by Richard Caton Woodville”

Gwen Manthey, Wyeth Foundation Post-Graduate Fellow, Paintings Conservation, The Walters Art Museum

Gwen Manthey opened her presentation by exclaiming that Richard Caton Woodville is “the greatest nineteenth-century American artist you've never heard about.” His most well-known paintings, among American art history scholars, are *War News from Mexico* (1848) and *Old '76 and Young '48* (1849). There is little biographical information about the artist, but Gwen gave a brief outline of Woodville's short yet colorful life, which began in Baltimore and included being trained at the Düsseldorf Academy, his painting career in Paris and London, and his unfortunate death in 1855 from an overdose of morphine. Woodville's body of work is fairly small, but with eight

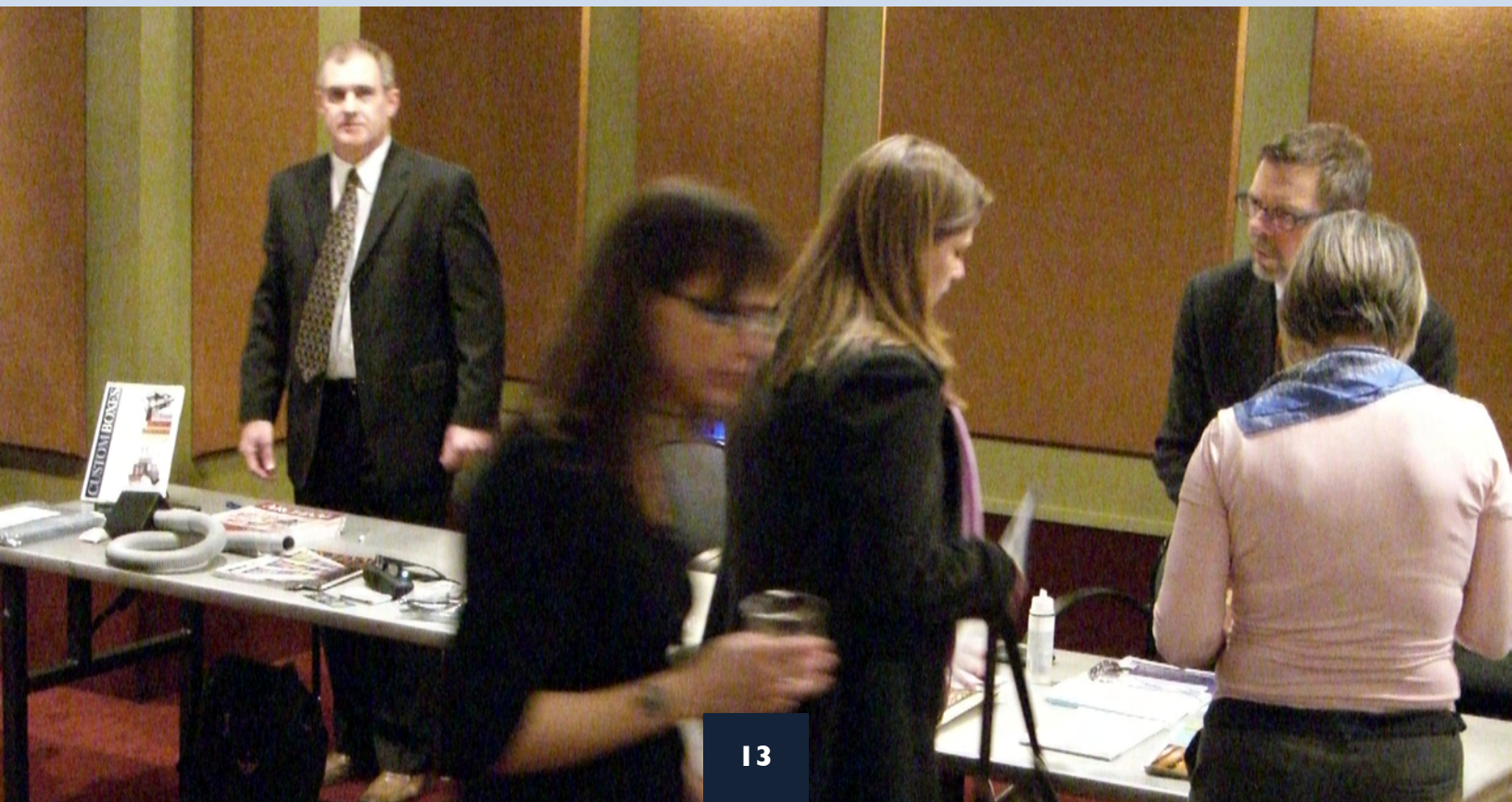
paintings owned by The Walters Art Museum, it was ripe for a research project, which Manthey took on, first as an intern, and then as a Wyeth Fellow at The Walters Art Museum. Most of Woodville's other paintings also became part of Manthey's comprehensive study and are located in the DC/New York area, as well as in private collections around Baltimore.

Manthey's research goals were to examine and scientifically analyze paintings by Woodville in an effort to learn more about the artist's materials and working methods, which would ultimately inform conservators, art historians, and scholars. Manthey examined the paintings with magnification, cross-sections, X-radiography, and UV irradiation. In addition, IR reflectography was performed on fifteen paintings with equipment brought in and used by John Delaney, Senior Imaging Scientist at the National Gallery of Art. Using wavelengths in the 2100 – 2500 nm region, underdrawings were discovered including grids that suggested design transfers. Some of the canvases also showed considerable reworking of compositions by the artist. Material identification was carried out by the following scientific analyses: fiber analysis, FTIR, Raman, GC-MS, XRF, and SEM. Among the artist's materials, some notable findings were: lead sulfate, which could have been used as a drier, interlayer varnishes, and an early use of cadmium-based pigments. Manthey credits the following conservation scientists who cooperated in this project: Glenn Gates at The Walters Art Museum, as well as Jennifer Mass and Catherine Matsen at Winterthur's Scientific Research and Analytical Laboratory.

At the outcome of this significant research, a 2013 exhibition, curated by director of development Joy Heyrman, is being prepared at The Walters Art Museum. With Manthey's pursuits, we will surely hear more often about this important nineteenth-century American artist named Richard Caton Woodville.

Christine McIntyre
Paintings Conservation Intern
The Walters Art Museum

Vendor tables



February Meeting

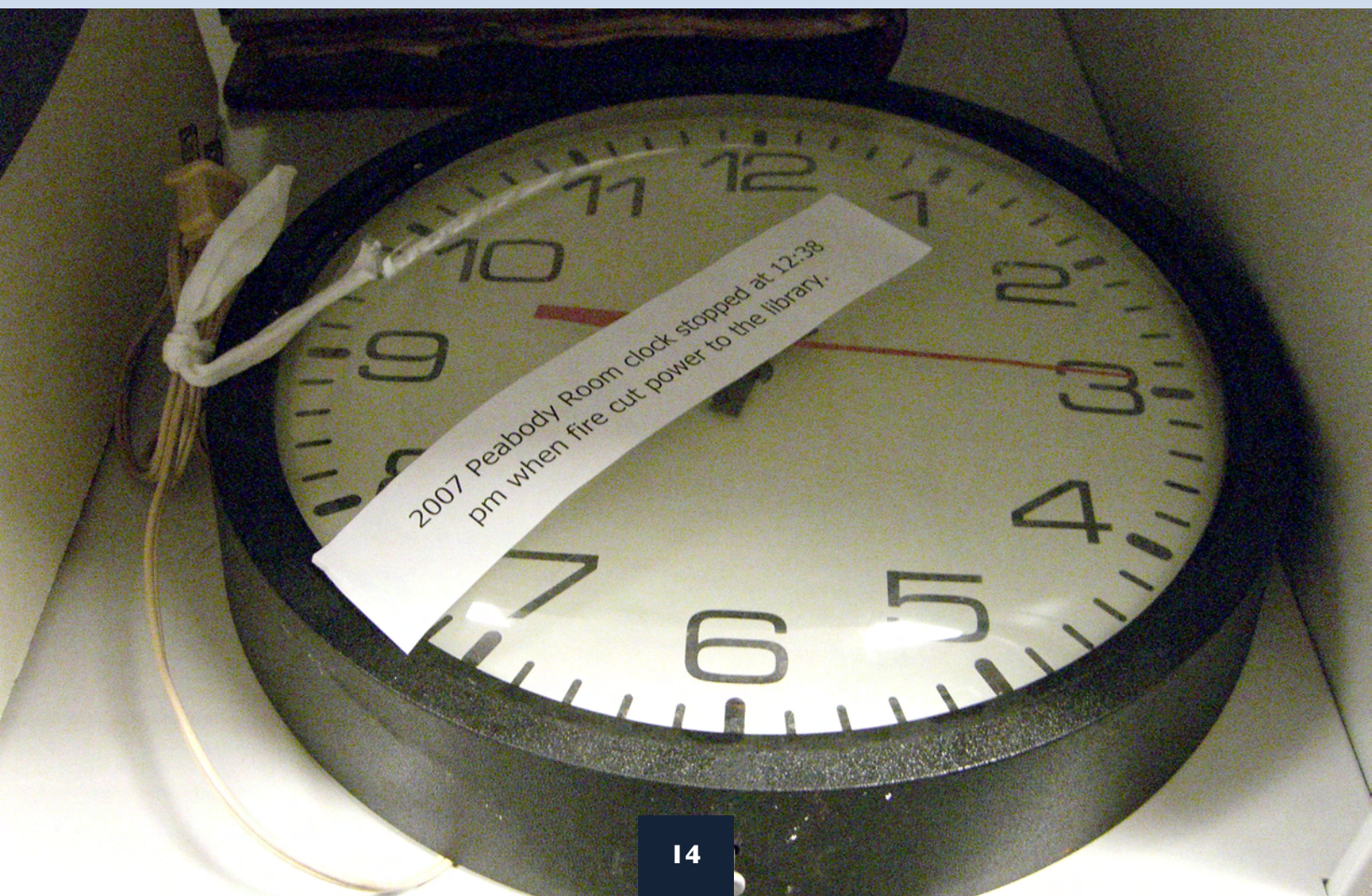
“Disaster Recovery of the Peabody Room at the Georgetown Branch of the District of Columbia Public Library”

**Jerry A. McCoy, Special Collections Librarian,
District of Columbia Public Library**

On April 30, 2007, a fire devastated the Georgetown Branch of the District of Columbia Public Library, damaging or destroying the general and special collection materials. This past February, Jerry A. McCoy spoke to the Washington Conservation Guild about the fire, disaster recovery, and the new Peabody Room, which houses the special collections of the Georgetown Branch. McCoy is a librarian at both the Peabody Room, the special collections of Georgetown neighborhood history, and at the Washingtoniana Division, the special collections of Washington, DC, history located at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Branch of the District of Columbia Public Library.



Water-damaged books from the fire (above)



Stopped clock from the day of the fire (below)

McCoy vividly recalled the day of the fire for WCG members, including the horror he felt considering the damage, in many cases irreparable, of the collection materials. Fortunately, McCoy had previously prioritized the most historically valuable objects in the special collections in preparation for a disaster. As a result, District of Columbia Fire Department firemen salvaged materials from the Peabody Room, including a nineteenth-century oil painting by James Alexander Simpson of Yarrow Mamout, a renowned Muslim African American Georgetown resident and manumitted slave, and a 1776 bound volume of the first newspaper in Maryland, the *Maryland Gazette*, which contains the text of the Declaration of Independence. Library administration urged firefighters to focus on saving the special collections, insisting all materials in the general collection could be replaced. Although the fire never reached the Peabody Room, many of the materials were damaged due to water used to suppress the fire.

WCG members, in coordination with local institutions and conservation organizations, immediately helped manage a response to the fire, as well as recover and organize some of the water-damaged materials to be freeze-dried by a contracted company in the days following the fire. To date, the majority of the funding necessary for the conservation of the water-damaged special collection materials, including paintings, photographs, newspapers, and manuscripts, has been raised, and many of the materials have been treated by private conservators.

The Georgetown Branch reopened October 18, 2010, and the new Peabody Room is now a space used for research. Two separate archival storage rooms located off the Peabody Room hold the majority of the special collections, a marked improvement over the previous space which had no dedicated area for storage besides the Peabody Room itself. One of the new storage rooms contains vertical files in drawers for the housing of scanned newspaper articles that have been printed on archival paper. Files are available for almost every property in Georgetown, as well as articles filed by subject and by persons associated with the neighborhood. The room also contains storage for larger two-dimensional objects, primarily maps, which



McCoy speaking in storage room (above)



Special collection storage room (below)

are housed in flat files draped in plastic to reduce the effect of water damage in the event of another disaster. The other storage room contains shelves with archival boxes housing photographs and manuscripts, as well as three-dimensional objects, many of which were rehoused as part of a WCG Angels project in October 2007. As the materials were inventoried and organized after the fire, finding aids and indices are in the process of being created to improve access. The Peabody Room and its associated archival storage rooms now have a separate HVAC system from the rest of the Georgetown Branch building, a quality unique in the District of Columbia Public Library system, and the environment is monitored continually through an off-site system and locally with hygrothermographs. In addition, the rooms are equipped with video cameras and motion detectors to aid in security. There is also space in the storage rooms for the acquisition of new donations related to the history and culture of Georgetown, as McCoy hopes to expand the collection as a result of the improved organization, environment, housing, and storage conditions of the special collection materials since the fire.

Gwenanne Edwards
Paper Conservation Fellow
Library of Congress

February reception



PEOPLE

Amber Kerr-Allison was elected to the IIC Council as the Council's first non-fellow. A new IIC initiative permits one non-fellow member to serve on the Council at a time.

Amber Kerr-Allison has also been selected to receive the College of Arts & Sciences Alumni Achievement Award from the University of Delaware. This award is given to graduates from the program in recognition of outstanding professional

and public service achievements as well as for commitment to their alma mater. The award will be presented on Wednesday, May 16, 2012, at the Roselle Center for the Arts at the University of Delaware.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORKSHOP

Hide Tanning Workshop at Ancestral Knowledge

The Hide Tanning Workshop walks you through all the steps it takes to turn animal skins into usable leather for clothing, bags, and footwear. Two styles of tanning are covered: the wet scrape and dry scrape methods. This workshop is a 100% hands-on experience that you will never forget. To ease the work load, participants will team up on a hide. In the end each will go home with a beautiful, all natural, tanned piece of buckskin. Topics that will be covered include: skinning, fleshing, dehairing, softening, and smoking of the hides.

Date: April 13, 2012

Times: 9:00am-4:00pm

Repeats: Daily until April 16, 2012

Ages: 18 and older (limit 8)

Location: Mount Rainier, MD

Registration Fee: \$200 (includes supplies and tools)

Instructor: Bill Kaczor

Website: https://www.ancestralknowledge.org/ai1ec_event/hide-tanning-workshop/?instance_id=

Upcoming WCG Meetings 2012

Monthly meetings for the 2011/2012 season begin in October 2011 and run through May 2012. The meetings are usually held on the first Thursday of each month. Most meetings begin at 5 p.m. with a reception, followed by the guest speaker's presentation. Please check individual meeting announcements for exact times and locations.

Thursday, March 8, 2012

Speaker: Alisha Chipman will speak on tintypes

Location:

The Phillips Collection
1600 21st St. NW
Washington, DC 20009
(Near 21st and Q)
Metro: Dupont Circle

Thursday, April 12, 2012

Intern talks.

Location to be announced

Thursday, May 3, 2012

Annual Business Meeting and raffle

Location:

IEBW (International Brotherhood of
Electrical Workers)
900 Seventh Street, NW (7th and Eye)
Washington, DC 20001

MEMBERSHIP

WCG dues are \$30 per year, \$20 for students and interns, payable to the Washington Conservation Guild or WCG.

The membership year runs from July 1 through June 30. Membership forms can be requested by mail from the Membership Secretary at PO Box 23364, Washington, DC 20026 or can be filled out and submitted on our website. Changes of address or telephone numbers, corrections to the directory, and dues payments should be sent to the Membership Secretary at the address listed above or to: wcg@washingtonconservationguild.org



The membership schedule is as follows:

- April: Membership renewal notice mailed
- July 1: Beginning of membership year
- September 15: Deadline for membership renewals

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2011/2012

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Newsletter Submissions

WCG Newsletter is printed quarterly (Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer). Items for inclusion in the WCG Newsletter should be directed to:

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8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740
Room 1901
Tel: 301-837-0507
Email: WCGnewsletter@gmail.com

Email submissions are preferred. Please note that articles should be sent at least two weeks before publication. The editor reserves the right to edit copy to fit available space.

Next issue: Summer 2012

Deadline for submissions: May 15, 2012