



Mid-Atlantic Regional Center for the Humanities

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In Pursuit of Freedom: A Developing Collaboration to Tell the History of the Underground Railroad and the Anti-Slavery Movement in Brooklyn

In Pursuit of Freedom is a multifaceted public history project tracing the history of abolitionism and the Underground Railroad in Brooklyn, New York, that aims to engage both metropolitan and national audiences and raise awareness of this critical chapter in the history of American freedom. Over the next several years it will develop new resources for understanding the history of race and freedom in Brooklyn, including exhibitions, a permanently marked walking tour and accompanying historic site markers, a content-rich, interactive Web site, a commissioned work of public art to be centrally located in a downtown Brooklyn park, educational curricula, an original theater production, and public programs.

The project has been shaped by three partnering organizations: the Brooklyn Historical Society, the primary repository for Brooklyn history since 1863, with extensive archival and library collections; Weeksville Heritage Center, steward of a group of historic homes that represent one of the nation's earliest free African American communities; and Irondale Ensemble Project, a theater company dedicated to engaging with contemporary issues and housed at Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, known from its founding as the "Temple of Abolition."

The three organizations initially came together prompted by a Request for Proposals from the City of New York calling for projects that would memorialize the Underground Railroad in Brooklyn. As the planning process evolved,

the partners developed a common vision of a sustained public history project that would be deeply rooted in our individual institutions and at the same time engage multiple audiences by metaphorically and actually blossoming onto the streets of Brooklyn. We have since raised significant funds from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U.S. Department of Education's Underground Railroad Educational and Cultural Program to support our work.

Our collaboration has moved forward because all three organizations share certain core values, recognizing that learning is an on-going, active process and that the role of cultural institutions is to encourage curiosity and critical engagement with the past. In addition, each of the partners is dedicated to serving local communities by addressing their needs and interests. From this commitment came a decision to work with local churches, many founded in the mid-nineteenth century and housing archival collections that document important parts of the story we are trying to tell. In Pursuit of Freedom has hired an archivist who will assist these churches with cataloguing and, if necessary, rehousing collections in need of preservation.

The struggle against American slavery has enduring historical meaning. Yet Brooklyn's role in the abolitionist movement has been largely overlooked. Thus our project will both introduce historic figures whose relationship to this important history has never been treated in depth and reintroduce individuals well known by historians but never particularly

associated with Brooklyn or the anti-slavery activists living and working there. For

In This Issue

In Pursuit of Freedom: A Developing Collaboration to Tell the History of the Underground Railroad and the Anti-Slavery Movement in Brooklyn

1

Exploring the Mid@lantic

2

Fredric M. Miller Memorial Lecture

3

MARCH Happenings

3

Projects to Watch

4

Going to the Well:
A Unique Partnership between the
Humanities and the Financial Sector

5

Featured Resource:
The Center for the Future of Museums

5

Regional Roundup

6

Famous Last Words: Derick Dreher

7



www.march.rutgers.edu

EXPLORING THE MID@LANTIC

Brooklyn Historical Society

<http://www.brooklynhistory.org>

Weeksville Heritage Center

<http://www.weeksvillesociety.org>

Irondale Ensemble Project

<http://irondale.org>

Web sites featuring the Underground Railroad (UGRR) and the anti-slavery movement abound. Within the mid-Atlantic region, one or more credible sites for each state and the District of Columbia are available, including several developed by government agencies.

Delaware

Delaware's Underground Railroad - includes a list of sites related to the UGRR and anti-slavery movement in Delaware and a biography of abolitionist Thomas Garrett.

<http://portal.delaware.gov/facts/history/undergrd/undergrd.htm>

Whispers of Angels - site accompanies the 2002 film of the same name, focusing on Garrett and fellow abolitionist William Still.

<http://www.whispersofangels.com/index.html>

District of Columbia

D.C. Emancipation Day - includes multiple print sources on enslavement and emancipation in the District.

<http://dc.gov/emancipationday>

Maryland

Beneath the Underground: The Flight to Freedom and Communities in Antebellum Maryland - a content-rich electronic publication of the Maryland State Archives.

<http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/mdslavery/html/flight/sugrr.html>

Pathways to Freedom: Maryland and the Underground Railroad - an educational resource developed by Maryland Public Television.

http://pathways.thinkport.org/flash_home.cfm

The Underground Railroad: Maryland's Network to Freedom - a richly annotated map of UGRR routes through the state.

<http://stage.visitmaryland.org/BrochuresandMaps/UndergroundRailroad.pdf>

New Jersey

Steal Away, Steal Away: A Guide to the Underground Railroad in New Jersey - a comprehensive guide, including chronology, sites, and maps.

<http://www.njstatelib.org/digit/h673/h6732002.pdf>

continued on page 4

example, the dramatic sermons of Henry Ward Beecher, the prominent abolitionist minister, are well known, but few know that Beecher was only the most visible member of an extensive community of Brooklyn activists, black and white, who struggled to end slavery and realize the meaning of freedom. Rooted in neighborhoods from Brooklyn Heights to Weeksville, organizing in churches and schools, making speeches and publishing newspapers, this brave and sometimes contentious community battled against proslavery attitudes in Brooklyn and nationwide. They rescued fleeing fugitives from Southern slave catchers and ferried them to freedom. Their voices and passions enriched the national debate, even as those who were African American struggled for self-determination and dignity in their daily lives and those who were white risked the loss of friends, social position, and income. Examining this complex community prompts us to look more carefully at the nuanced debates, political disagreements, newspaper editorials, legal cases, and sermons that reveal a great deal about race relations and social activism both in Brooklyn and New York City at large in the long and ultimately successful national anti-slavery campaign.

Consider the relationship between the Reverend James W. C. Pennington and Lewis Tappan. Born into slavery in Maryland in 1807, Pennington fled to Brooklyn via the Underground Railroad in 1827. During his early years in Brooklyn he worked as a coachman and pursued an education. He became a minister (who married Frederick Douglass and Anna Murray) and taught at Brooklyn's African Free School. Joining the struggle for African American rights, in 1830 he was elected as a delegate to the first National Negro Convention, where blacks debated the best means of improving their condition. Pennington spoke internationally on the subject of slavery and was awarded an honorary doctorate from the University of Heidelberg.

Lewis Tappan, a successful white merchant, was born in New England but lived most of his life in Brooklyn Heights. His mercantile credit agency eventually became the well-known rating firm, Dun & Bradstreet. Beginning in the 1830s, Tappan devoted his fortune and time to fighting slavery, backing anti-slavery newspapers and the American



James Pennington (l) and Lewis Tappan, abolitionists whose lives entwined in Brooklyn

Anti-Slavery Society. In 1839, Tappan became an important party in the celebrated *Amistad* case, underwriting the defense of the Africans who had unsuccessfully attempted to seize control of the slave ship *Amistad* all the way to the United States Supreme Court.

Tappan and Pennington collaborated on the *Amistad* case, and in his memoir Pennington was proud to call Tappan a staunch "friend" whose anti-slavery labors had "secured" his confidence. Yet lines of race and class persisted. Tappan was reprimanded by white colleagues for his close friendship with Pennington. In fact, many white abolitionists did not shake the prejudices of their times and treated black allies with startling condescension. Some black abolitionists felt the need for independent action. In Pursuit of Freedom will highlight the complex and sometimes conflicted relationships that shaped this movement and the history of race relations for generations to come.

Indeed, one of the goals of the project is to look carefully at how the legacy of the anti-slavery movement has informed the evolution of American culture. Through live programs and new media, the project will create forums for discussion and commentary, encouraging participants to reflect upon the state of community activism and the politics of race in the twenty-first century. To do so within the framework of local history is potent and, from what we have heard from our broad constituency, eagerly embraced. Over the next three years, as In Pursuit of Freedom comes to fruition, the project team will have countless opportunities to analyze and act upon the educational and community impact of this ambitious public history project.

Deborah Schwartz is the President of the Brooklyn Historical Society and Project Director for In Pursuit of Freedom. Bret Eynon is Assistant Dean of Academic Affairs at LaGuardia Community College, City University of New York and Senior Historian for In Pursuit of Freedom. ❖

2010 FREDRIC M. MILLER MEMORIAL LECTURE *May 6, 2010*

Robert C. Vaughan, founding director and CEO of the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, will deliver the twelfth annual Fredric Miller Memorial Lecture on Thursday, May 6th at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1300 Locust Street, Philadelphia. A reception will begin at 5:30 p.m. Dr. Vaughan's lecture, titled "The Humanities Challenge: Building for the Future," will follow at 6:30 p.m.

Vaughan was the founding director of the South Atlantic Humanities Center; a former chairman of the Federation of State Humanities Councils; and most recently, president of the National Humanities Alliance. He currently serves as chair of the Lincoln Bicentennial Committee for Virginia and as chair of the Center for Nonprofit Excellence in Charlottesville, Virginia. Under his direction, the Virginia Foundation for

the Humanities is launching an electronic encyclopedia of Virginia as a means of capturing the state's rich cultural resources.

A member of the faculty of the University of Virginia's Darden School, where he teaches in the MBA and Executive Education programs, Vaughan is the author, among other publications, of *The Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom* and *A New Perspective: Southern Women's Cultural History*.

The annual lecture honors Fredric Miller, the curator of the Urban Archives Center at Temple University from 1973 until 1989 and a program officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities until his death in 1998. His leadership as author, historian, and archivist made him an acknowledged leader in Philadelphia's library and archives community and a friend to humanists throughout the region. ❖



Robert C. Vaughan

Courtesy: Virginia Foundation for the Humanities; photograph by Tom Cogill

MARCH HAPPENINGS

MARCH launched a collaborative project in December to create a performance piece inspired by Walt Whitman's residence in Camden, New Jersey.

Sebastienne Mundheim, a distinguished Philadelphia-based interdisciplinary artist and educator, leads planning for this effort. Known for her original performances based on the lives of historical figures, including James Joyce and Benjamin Franklin, Mundheim brought together collaborators in the arts, photography, theatre, and filmmaking in a series of seminars with MARCH personnel **Howard Gillette** and **Tyler Hoffman**.

Participants aim to create a performance that will premier at the opening of a new visitor center at the Whitman House in Camden in the next year and to extend the project into Camden schools over the following year. The **Walt Whitman Association** provided seed money for the effort.

More than thirty students have enrolled in MARCH's fourth Clemente course in the Humanities, launched in November. The course, offered as part of a national program based at Bard College and with the support of the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, offers six hours of humanities credit to low-income Camden-area residents who have not had the chance to attend college. Those who successfully complete the twenty-eight-week program will receive six hours of college credit from Bard. **Diane Turner**, curator of the Charles Blockson Afro-American Collection at Temple University, directs the program.

As one of twenty-six civic partners developing the Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia (see Summer 2009 issue of *Cross Ties*), MARCH is supporting a collaborative process to generate topics and put them on line for public review and

comment. During the first part of 2010 the project has hosted information sessions in selected branches of the Philadelphia Free Library and organized a series of workshops with the support of the Pennsylvania Humanities Council (schedule posted at www.philadelphiaencyclopedia.org). In tandem, the editors have formed a digital task force charged with establishing the best means of consolidating electronically different forms of community-based information. A funding request to bring the task force together with leaders in the digital humanities field, including the managing editors of emergent electronic encyclopedia projects in Virginia and Connecticut, is pending. MARCH director **Howard Gillette** serves as co-editor of the project, with **Charlene Mires** of Villanova University and **Randall Miller** of St. Joseph's University. ❖

PROJECTS TO WATCH

Having weathered one devastating financial storm before the onset of the current recession, the **Maryland Historical Society** has once again narrowly averted disaster. Facing a \$670,000 shortfall, the society escaped the prospect of shutting its doors entirely last December when its trustees agreed to double their current contributions. Nonetheless, the society laid off seven staff and cut back its hours drastically to two days per week. Also departing at the end of the year was **Rob Rogers**, who had returned to assume the directorship of the society in 2007 after being laid off in 2006 during the previous crisis. He has since been replaced by **Burt Kummerow**, a former head of the St. Mary's City Commission in Maryland and in recent years a historical consultant. Kummerow speaks optimistically about managing the challenges of the current fiscal year, but staff has shrunk from sixty-nine to seventeen in the past decade. The society has since extended hours one additional day, and Kummerow expects to capitalize on upcoming commemorative events to rebuild audience and revenue. Most immediately, society staff has arranged to display iconic Charles Willson Peale portraits on loan from the Maryland State House during its restoration, along with many of the society's own treasures dating from the American Revolution.

Also in Maryland, the cultural conservation program at **Maryland Historical Trust** has been eliminated, the victim of state budget cuts. Among those to lose their positions was cofounder and codirector of Maryland Traditions, **Elaine Eff**. This past fall, Eff was honored with the American Folklore Society's Botkin Prize for lifetime achievement in public service. Named for New Deal folklorist Benjamin A. Botkin, the Botkin Prize is the society's highest recognition for folklorists who work in the public sector.

The Number 8 Hammer Shop, an original Bessemer converter building dating to the 1870s and located on the historic portion of the Bethlehem Steel site in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, was razed on January 22,



Interior of Number 8 Hammer Shop

Courtesy: Preservation Pennsylvania
photograph by David Kimmery

2010, to make way for construction of a 65,000-square-foot, \$26 million cultural center, **SteelStacks**. The owner of the property, ArtsQuest, argued that adaptive reuse of the building was not feasible. Despite some criticism from preservationists, the demolition sparked surprisingly little public comment or opposition, given the bad precedent it sets in a historic area that is anticipated to host a National Museum of Industrial History as well as other attractions through preservation of the site. The new facility, modern in appearance as well as construction, is expected to open in May 2011.



Courtesy: Philadelphia History Museum

Known since its founding in 1938 as the **Atwater Kent Museum**, Philadelphia's history museum has changed its name to

better convey its identity and purpose. When the museum reopens in 2010 after completion of extensive renovations, it will operate as the Philadelphia History Museum at the Atwater Kent, with a new logo inspired by the city's street grid. The \$5.6 million renovation includes modern climate controls, an off-site storage facility, updated mechanical work, and repairs and restoration of the 1826 John Haviland-designed building. The project has been funded by some \$3 million in city and state funds and private gifts, with additional funds from the sale from its collections of several large advertising trade figures and a Raphael Peale oil still life for \$700,000. ❖

Exploring the Mid@lantic, continued from page 2

New York

The Underground Railroad in New York State - routes, people, places and more, developed by New York History Net.
<http://www.nyhistory.com/ugrr/>

Pennsylvania

Fugitive Slaves and the Underground Railroad in Pennsylvania: Primary Sources - many items suitable for classroom use.

<http://www.hsp.org/default.aspx?id=854>

The Underground Railroad on ExplorePAHistory.com - a project of PBS station WITF in Harrisburg and the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission; linked to the state's historical marker program.

<http://explorepahistory.com/story.php?storyid=8>

For a broader, national approach to the Underground Railroad, the following sites provide a start:

The Underground Railroad - interactive site aimed at educators and younger students, developed by the National Geographic Society.

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/railroad/>

The Underground Railroad - content-rich resource for teachers and students.

http://teacher.scholastic.com/activities/bhistory/underground_railroad/index.htm

National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom - Web site of the National Park Service's initiative to coordinate educational and preservation activities related to UGRR nationwide; includes listings of both NPS and local sites associated with UGRR.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/ugrr/>

Aboard the Underground Railroad: A National Register Travel Itinerary - descriptions of the sixty-four sites associated with the UGRR currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, with maps and contextual information.

<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/underground/>

Library of Congress American Memory - an "Underground Railroad" search at this highly regarded site turns up 151 primary sources, many of them one of a kind.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html>

❖

GOING TO THE WELL *Lydia Woods*

A Unique Partnership between the Humanities and the Financial Sector

During 2008 -- 2009, the Maryland Humanities Council (MHC) implemented a one-year grant program made possible by joining forces with the PNC Foundation (PNCF), the nonprofit arm of PNC Financial Services Group, Inc. As part of the PNC Legacy Project, nonprofit organizations throughout Maryland were invited to apply for a PNCF/MHC Special Grant Opportunity to support the development of public programs that honored and preserved the history of their local communities. Applicants were encouraged to use the humanities to examine local social or economic history and/or the intersection of the two in particular communities.

Nine nonprofit organizations were selected from a pool of seventy-two applicants to receive grant awards ranging from \$3,000 to \$9,600. The total amount awarded was \$60,000. These projects used computer networking, film, Web sites, and other

technologies along with more traditional formats such as lectures and group discussions to produce programs that reflect the geographic and ethnic diversity of our state. For example, the B&O Railroad Museum in Ellicott City developed living history presentations, an exhibition, and public programs to examine the role of Howard County and the railroad during the Civil War.

The PNC Financial Services Group, Inc., which merged with Mercantile Bankshares Corporation in September 2007, developed the PNC Legacy Project to honor the history of Mercantile affiliated banks, their employees, and officers who guided them through the years. While much of the Legacy Project focused on displays and oral histories specific to local banks, PNCF approached the MHC to develop this special grants program in an effort to build relationships and become better acquainted with the histories of the communities PNC serves.

The collaboration between MHC and the PNC corporate entity has allowed each



Living history presenter Adele Air depicts life during the Civil War from a woman's perspective at Ellicott City Station.

Courtesy: B & O Railroad Museum, Ellicott City Station; photograph by Robert Miller

organization to leverage its individual strengths to extend the reach of organizational goals. MHC's experience with soliciting and administering heritage grant proposals and conducting a rigorous grant selection process enabled the PNC Foundation to identify quality projects that fit the Legacy Project goals. Working with the Legacy Project allowed MHC to provide an extended level of support at a time when its grant budget was declining.

Phoebe Stein Davis, executive director at MHC, explains, "Creative alliances like this one, with similar corporate-based groups, could provide an additional model for serving the broader non-profit community through grant funding."

Lydia Woods is Coordinator of Grants and Community Outreach at the Maryland Humanities Council. ✕

FEATURED RESOURCE *The Center for the Future of Museums*

The Center for the Future of Museums (CFM), a project of the American Association of Museums (AAM), works with museum professionals to understand developing cultural, political, and economic trends and challenges; explore their impact on museums and their communities; and devise creative ways of responding to them. Among its governing assumptions is the belief that museums are vital community resources that can be essential partners in meeting challenges and creating a healthy, stable society in which every person has the leisure and ability to enjoy what museums have to offer.

CFM's seminal document is a specially commissioned twenty-page report, *Museums & Society 2034: Trends and Potential Futures*, published in late 2008. The report identifies four major trends shaping the

United States in the next quarter-century, including demographic shifts, unceasing economic globalization, the ongoing revolution in communications technology, and a creative renaissance spawned by new technologies. It goes on to assess the social significance of these trends and imagines scenarios whereby museums engage them in creative ways.

Building on key ideas in this report, CFM supports a number of ongoing activities, several of them involving creative use of new technologies. It has engaged museum practitioners in Superstruct, an online forecasting game created by the Institute for the Future, from which is developing *Museums and Society 2019*, a fictional report summarizing participants' predictions for museums ten years hence.

It sponsors an annual lecture; a series of U-Tube "Voices of the Future," in which innovative thinkers share their visions of change; and interactive sessions at AAM's annual meetings. CFM is also developing a network of "museum futurists" who commit to using their professional involvements and networks to advance the center's work. Its content-rich Web site includes a regular blog, a bibliography and list of Web links, and a regularly updated "research roundup," gathering together articles, essays, blogspots, and other materials that focus on trends, tools for change, and assorted items of interest. ✕

The Center for the Future of Museums is online at www.futureofmuseums.org.

Museums & Society 2034 can be accessed and downloaded from this site.

REGIONAL ROUNDUP



Courtesy National Constitution Center; photograph by Carol Fedley

David Eisner

David Eisner has joined the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia as its new chief operating officer, following seven years as director of the

Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that runs AmeriCorps among other programs. With prior experience in business, at AOL, as well as politics, in positions on Capitol Hill, Eisner brings a range of skills to his new position.

Donald T. Ritchie has been named historian of the U.S. Senate, succeeding **Richard A. Baker**, who has retired. Known for his many publications in both oral and public history, Ritchie joined the Senate Historical Office in 1976, rising to the position of associate historian before his recent promotion. He is a past president of both Oral History in the Mid-Atlantic Region and the national Oral History Association.



Courtesy U.S. Senate Photographic Studio

Donald A. Ritchie

Reacting to reports in November 2009, that its venerable **Moorland-Spangarn Research Center** might close, officials at **Howard University** were quick to affirm its commitment to one of the world's leading repositories of material relating to the African Diaspora. Fears that the center might close were prompted by the accelerated departure of staff, including director **Thomas Battle**, who were taking advantage of a retirement incentive program. The center also suffered the loss of its longtime librarian of prints and photography, **Donna Marcia Wells**, who died suddenly in November. Overall, staff has fallen from fifty to only a dozen. Battle has returned as interim director to bridge this difficult period; a search for his replacement is underway. In January 2010 the university hosted a two-day symposium to further affirm the importance of the center.

Lauren Silberman, for the past seven years the program and education coordinator at the Jewish Museum of Maryland, has accepted the position of coordinator for the Museum Assessment Program at the American Association of Museums.

Bryan C. Saunders has been named the new executive director of the Wyckoff Farmhouse Museum in Brooklyn, New York. He brings extensive experience to the position, including former positions as the director of the Queens (New York) Historical Society and the Dekalb Council for the Arts in Georgia.

Digital Harlem Everyday Life, 1915-1930, at <http://acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/harlem/>, is the inaugural recipient of the Roy Rosenzweig Fellowship for Innovation in Digital History. The Digital Harlem Web site makes innovative use of Geographic Information Systems mapping technology to present information drawn from legal records, newspapers, and other archival and published sources about everyday life in New York City's Harlem neighborhood during the early twentieth century. It is a part of a larger collaborative research project on Harlem by historians **Shane White, Stephen Garton, Graham White, and Stephen Robertson**, of the University of Sydney, Australia. The Rosenzweig Fellowship, offered jointly by the American Historical Association and the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University, supports work on an innovative and freely available new media project that reflects thoughtful, critical, and rigorous engagement with technology and the practice of history. It honors the late Roy Rosenzweig, the Mark and Barbara Fried Professor of History and New Media at Mason, for his pioneering work in the field of digital history.

The Synagogue Speaks, a hands-on exhibit at the **Jewish Museum of Maryland's** restored Lloyd Street Synagogue, opens on March 21st. The 165-year-old



Baltimore Hebrew Congregation at Lloyd Street Synagogue, 1845

Courtesy Jewish Museum of Maryland; watercolor by Jonathan Scott Fiquera

synagogue has been home to three different immigrant congregations: two Jewish and one Lithuanian Catholic. The exhibit examines how the three groups used the building and how recent archaeological explorations have revealed the ways the site has changed over time. The Synagogue Speaks is one of several projects marking the Museum's fiftieth anniversary in 2010.



New Castle Court House, a National Historic Landmark listed in Delaware's CHRIS system

Courtesy Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs; photograph by Jim Hurasak

The **Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs** has recently made public the Cultural and Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS), a Web-based geographic information system on historic properties in Delaware. CHRIS allows users to explore and produce maps of any area of the state, pinpoint historic places on those maps, and access resource data and historical information about historic resources, including all Delaware properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Freely available to the public, CHRIS is at <http://chris.delaware.gov>. ❖

FAMOUS LAST WORDS *DERICK DREHER*



Courtesy Rosenbach Museum & Library

A Growing Consortium Considers Its Changing Role

In 1985, sixteen institutions in and around Philadelphia, each with significant but underused research collections, formed the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL) in order to accomplish together what they could not do individually. Their initial effort resulted in a 1988 exhibition, *Legacies of Genius*, which showcased their collections for broad publics for the first time. Simultaneously, PACSCL worked to facilitate important behind-the-scenes work, such as fostering professional development and cooperating on naming conventions for archival collections.

In the 1990s, funders awarded large grants to collaboratives capable of tackling larger projects individual institutions could not address. PACSCL benefited from several such grants, for example one that enabled the consolidation of tens of thousands of historical auction and booksellers catalogs and their placement on loan with member institutions. However, communal funding did not always lead to truly collaborative projects, as participating institutions sometimes developed their own approach to the work, engendering inconsistent if equally valid results. Still, collaborative projects gave PACSCL more visibility, helping it attract new members: a total of twenty-one institutions in 2002, twenty-seven by 2005; in 2008 PACSCL welcomed its thirty-third member. Collective holdings now include more than 4 million rare books, 260,000 linear feet of manuscripts and archival materials, and 10 million photographs, maps, architectural drawings, and works of art on paper.

PACSCL's rapid growth led its board to engage in a year-long series of strategic planning retreats in 2008 - 2009 to consider the consortium's future role and the most advantageous structure for it to achieve its goals. One outcome was the adoption of a new governance model. Another was the dissolution of the Professional Development and Outreach committees. It wasn't that these activities were no longer important—in fact, they were key aspects of nearly every project. That suggested, however, that a committee

focusing on these issues in isolation was not an efficient organizational approach. PACSCL decided instead that in most cases, it would convene working groups on an ad hoc basis to investigate issues of interest, recommend a course of action, and, where appropriate, manage the resulting project.

One such recently completed project continues to influence the organization's thinking, the "Consortial Survey Project" funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Undertaken from 2006 through 2008, the survey assessed 2,099 unprocessed or underprocessed archival collections, totaling more than 19,400 linear feet, held in its member institutions. Surveyors averaged twelve linear feet per hour, a pace designed only to provide the most basic overview.

The project represented a shift for PACSCL in that the same surveyors were sent to each of the twenty-two participating institutions, rather than each institution undertaking the work itself or retaining its own consultants. This approach ensured surveyors would apply consistent standards throughout the survey. To do so, they used protocols developed at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania that assess six characteristics of collections: condition of material, quality of housing, physical access (i.e. arrangement), intellectual access, interest, and documentation quality. This in turn yields a cumulative "research value rating" (RVR) that can be used to prioritize processing, conservation, and other archival practices. Twenty percent of the collections, totaling sixty-seven percent of the linear footage, received RVRs of seven or higher (with ten the highest score). While the majority of the material surveyed thus has substantial research potential, surveyors worked hard to avoid "grade inflation" in assessing individual collections, so institutions holding top-rated collections can know where to focus their efforts.

The results of the Mellon Survey led PACSCL to seek avenues for making these collections more broadly available. In late 2008, the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) awarded a major grant for this purpose. PACSCL

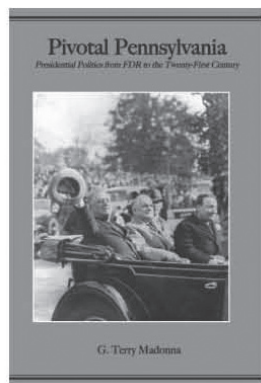
assembled a team of surveyors and began to process these "hidden collections" in July 2009. Their work builds seamlessly on the prior survey because processing will focus on the one hundred forty collections identified earlier as having the highest RVRs. Also as before, the same surveyors will travel to each institution and undertake the cataloging using a consistent set of standards. Early reports show the surveyors are averaging just under three hours per linear foot. While not the breakneck pace of the earlier survey, the CLIR Survey does aim to process and describe collections, not simply assess them, so this is really fast work.

Privileging quantity over quality is one of the main premises of the CLIR Survey - MPLP "more product, less process" in the lingo of archivists. This is a controversial premise, and some institutions opted not to participate. For those involved, however, entire collections are being described for the first time, and those descriptions are then uploaded to the Web. It may not be as "nutritious" a level of cataloging as would be desired, but if nothing else, these institutions are now in a position to place a "menu" in the hands of their constituents.

In a larger sense, the two surveys show how PACSCL's role has evolved during the twenty-five years since its founding. It still trumpets the bountiful special collections in the region and still fosters internal communication and professional development for members. But PACSCL now focuses increasingly on projects that are not simply available for a consortium to tackle, they can be tackled only by a consortium. A broad survey with common and objective standards cannot be carried out in a single collection. It requires a group of institutions to develop and implement standards, find the funding, and carry out the work, all alongside their normal operations. More information about PACSCL and the Mellon and CLIR surveys is at www.pacscl.org.

Derick Dreher writes in his capacity as chairman of PACSCL. He is the director of the Rosenbach Museum & Library in Philadelphia. ☒

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By G. Terry Madonna, Franklin & Marshall College

Cover photograph Pennsylvania State Archives

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