Sandra Vanderwarf
Independent Collections Specialist

Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar
National September 11 Memorial and Museum

ARCS 2017 Conference
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
Friday, November 3, 2017
Sandra Vanderwarf  
Independent Collections Specialist  
New York, NY

Inventory Background

• Calvin Klein Fashion Archive  
• Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum  
• Brooklyn Children’s Museum  
• National Museum of Mongolia

Bethany Romanowski, Head Registrar,  
National September 11 Memorial and Museum  
New York, NY

Inventory Background

• Cooper-Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum  
• South Street Seaport Museum  
• Currently overseeing 9/11 museum’s first wall-to-wall inventory
The Collection Inventory Handbook for Museums and Historical Societies

Presentation Outline

I. Backstory on the Book
II. Collections Inventory Survey
III. Inventory Case Studies
IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies
V. What’s Next?

Sandra Vanderwarf
Independent Collections Specialist
Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar
The Collection Inventory Handbook for Museums and Historical Societies

• Will be comprised of two parts
  ➢ Part 1: Theory
  ➢ Part 2: Case Studies

• Emphasis on incorporating current technologies into inventory processes

• Rowman & Littlefield, expected publication 2018
Survey Topics

- Planning the inventory
- Documenting the inventory
- Conducting inventories in the digital age

Question Format

- Respondents rated topics in each category by level of interest
- Space provided for questions and comments
II. Collections Inventory Survey

Collections Inventory Survey (2016)
Locations and Types of Institutional Affiliations Shared by 47 of 202 Respondents

Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar

Sandra Vanderwarf
Independent Collections Specialist
Survey Results
Topics In which the Most Respondents Were “Very Interested”

Planning the Inventory
Determining resources needed: 83%

Documenting the Inventory
Reconciling documentation discrepancies: 94%

Conducting Inventories in the Digital Age
Preparing your database to receive inventory data: 78%
The collection features about 50,000 objects dating from prehistory to the late 20th century.

III. Inventory Case Studies
CASE STUDY
National Museum of Mongolia

OBJECTIVE
Make Inventories Faster by Barcoding

These objects are among more than 1,000 that a curator stole and sold in the 2000s. This and other cases of unlawful possession and sale of Mongolian cultural heritage lent impetus to new laws requiring museums to inventory collections every two years.

Inventory took two years using a pencil-and-paper methodology.

III. Inventory Case Studies
First Wall-to-Wall Inventory

OBJECTIVES:
• Capture baseline inventory documentation
• Accurate location data for 100% of collection
### Survey Topic 1: Planning An Inventory

**Question:** Which aspects of inventory planning are you interested in boning up on?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>I'd skim through</th>
<th>Not that interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaining institutional support for an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing the scope of the inventory for example; whether it'll be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>partial or wall-to-wall, or whether projects such as imaging will be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achieved in tandem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determining resources needed, such as time, money, and equipment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securing funding for an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aligning inventory goals with your budget/resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing inventory procedures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiring and training inventory staff</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

83% of respondents indicated an interest in **Determining resources needed, such as time, money, and equipment**.

### IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

- Sandra Vanderwarf: Independent Collections Specialist
- Bethany Romanowski: Head Registrar
Case Study
Barcoding at National Museum of Mongolia

An up-to-date laptop (left) supported a faster work flow and higher morale. An older desk top computer (right) was also used, but slowed work.

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

Sandra Vanderwarf
Independent Collections Specialist

Money & Equipment
Knowing & Investing in Technology Needs

Mongolian Cyrillic must be encoded as a QR code, with Unicode text encoding. Scanners that support Unicode are scarce and cost nearly double the budget projection.

Time
Issues Working from an Arbitrary Timeline

Source: Amazon.com
Survey Topic 1: Planning
Determining Resources Needed, Such as Time, Money, and Equipment

- Estimating time through prototyping
- Creating a sound budget
- Equipment checklists and vendors
- Synthesize data from case studies of high and low budget inventory projects

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies
# Survey Topic 2: Documenting the Inventory

5. Which aspects of documenting an inventory would you like to see represented?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very interested</th>
<th>I'd skim through</th>
<th>Not that interested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What information to document during an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to record information during an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where to put the information you collect during an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Measuring inventory progress</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controlling the quality of information captured during an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reconciling documentation discrepancies encountered during an inventory</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using inventory documentation to strengthen other areas of collections practice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there an inventory documentation topic we missed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

94% of respondents indicated a high level of interest in documenting various aspects of an inventory.

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IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

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Independent Collections Specialist

Bethany Romanowski  
Head Registrar
IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

“NN” record generated for “Question the 9/11 Investigation” flier found in storage

Most Common Documentation Discrepancies

- Objects with no documentation
- Objects from a known source, lacking database records
- Numbering problems linked to component documentation
Survey Topic 2: Documenting An Inventory

Reconciling Documentation Discrepancies

- Anticipating Discrepancies
- Resolving Discrepancies: How & When
- Legal Parameters Connected to Disposal, Missing Objects, & Other Inventory Issues
- Case Studies

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

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Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar
Survey Topic 3: Conducting Inventories In the Digital Age

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

6. Which topics related to collections inventories in the digital age would you like to read about?

- Inventoried digital objects: 78%
- Barcoding collections
- Inventorying a barcoded collection
- Preparing your collections database to receive inventory data
- Creating a database or using other information technology to streamline an inventory

Is there a topic about collections inventories in the digital age we missed?
# 9/11 Museum Inventory Record:

## Minimum Inventory Documentation
- Object Number
- Object Name
- Brief Description
- Current Location
- Date Inventory Information Recorded and Recorder’s Name

## Additional Inventory Documentation
- Object Type
- Medium
- Dimensions

### IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar
Challenge

Collective Access database not configured to:

- Record that an object was found during inventory, inventory recorder’s name, and date
- Track object components
- Record location history

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies
IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

Inventory Log Feature

Component tracking feature

Location tracking feature

Bethany Romanowski
Head Registrar
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object Identifier</th>
<th>Object Title</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Date Inventoryed</th>
<th>Entered By</th>
<th>Object Media Representation</th>
<th>Storage Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C.2011.976.4</td>
<td>Shorts</td>
<td>Well-worn denim cut-off shorts owned by Robert Francis Wallace</td>
<td>October 12, 2016</td>
<td>Valerio Mancilla</td>
<td>Picture of denim shorts</td>
<td>Site → Warehouse → 8th Floor → Unit 01 → Shelf I → TEX-158 (October 12, 2016, New Home Location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2011.976.5</td>
<td>T-Shirt</td>
<td>T-shirt belonging to Robert Francis Wallace, the front of the shirt has an image of a three leaf clover with the words “House of Pain” printed above it, and the words “Time Matt Lyric” written below it. The back of the shirt reads “Boom, Shakalak Boom”</td>
<td>October 12, 2016</td>
<td>Valerio Mancilla</td>
<td>Picture of T-shirt</td>
<td>Site → Warehouse → 8th Floor → Unit 01 → Shelf I → TEX-158 (October 12, 2016, New Home Location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2011.976.6</td>
<td>Whiteboard</td>
<td>Small rectangular dry erase whiteboard belonging to the family of Robert Francis Wallace, illustrating day to day life in the family</td>
<td>October 12, 2016</td>
<td>Valerio Mancilla</td>
<td>Picture of whiteboard</td>
<td>Site → Warehouse → 8th Floor → Unit 01 → Shelf I → TEX-158 (October 12, 2016, New Home Location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2011.976.7</td>
<td>Card</td>
<td>Mother’s day card framed in a silver double frame with a personal message from Robert Francis Wallace and his wife, Nancy (May 10, 1996)</td>
<td>October 12, 2016</td>
<td>Valerio Mancilla</td>
<td>Picture of card</td>
<td>Site → Warehouse → 8th Floor → Unit 03 → Shelf C → ART-101 (January 9, 2017, New Home Location)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.2011.976.8</td>
<td>Drawing</td>
<td>Framed colored tattoo drawing of the Twin Towers flanked by an American Flag with praying hands in front. “In Loving Memory of” is above the drawing “Bobby” is below. To the left of the drawing is a handwritten note “To my dearest friend I got this tattoo in memory of you till we meet again. I pray for you, I miss you. Love Mike 9/29/02.” The drawing is in a brown frame.</td>
<td>October 12, 2016</td>
<td>Valerio Mancilla</td>
<td>Picture of drawing</td>
<td>Site → Warehouse → 8th Floor → Unit 03 → Shelf C → ART-101 (January 9, 2017, New Home Location)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV. Connect Survey to Case Studies

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Head Registrar

National September 11 Memorial & Museum
Case Study
National Museum of Mongolia

The database location feature impedes staff from tracking objects to the desired standard. Nevertheless, scanning barcoded locations into the field was faster and more accurate than typing the data.

Agate snuff bottle with coral stopper. We were unable to record different locations for components of the same object, or that a component was not found during inventory.

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies

Sandra Vanderwarf
Independent Collections Specialist
Survey Topic 3: Inventories in the Digital Age

Preparing Your Collections Database To Receive Inventory Data

- Comparison of Inventory Features Across Databases
- Linking Database Fields to Drop Down Lists and Standard Nomenclatures
- Creating Inventory Data Short Cut Screens

IV. Connecting Survey to Case Studies
What’s Next?


- Share Your Inventory Story, Questions, or Feedback at:

  CollectionsInventoryProject@gmail.com