

The Museum Studies Program (MUSE) at the University of Kansas produces well-rounded graduates who are prepared for challenging careers in museums, historical agencies, and similar institutions. Drawing on the expertise of outstanding faculty in participating departments (Anthropology, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Geology, and History), the skills of accomplished area museum professionals, and the rich resources of museums at KU and in nearby communities, the Museum Studies Program enables its students to develop advanced mastery of both an academic discipline and the issues and practices central to museums. With the rigorous interdisciplinary training provided by the Museum Studies Program, our graduates can flourish as life-long learners and leaders in the museum field.

KU MUSE Students Develop Exhibit

During the spring semester, three MUSE students got the opportunity to create an exhibit about the Underground Railroad in Douglas County, Kansas, in the Watkins Community Museum of History in downtown Lawrence. Terry Wickstrum, Rachel Harris, and Brittany Keegan, all first-year students, created the exhibit. The exhibit served as a final project for their History course on American slavery and their Museum Studies exhibits class. Financial support for this project was generously provided by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

As historians, the students faced a very challenging topic. On the one hand, the secretive participants in the Underground Railroad left behind few written accounts; on the other hand, the subject is part of the community's treasured historical tradition. Research trips to the state archives, interviews with local historians, and extensive reading in current scholarship provided the students with a good understanding of their topic. Professor Jennifer Weber in the History Department

provided invaluable guidance as the students conducted their research.

The secrecy of the Underground Railroad - and thus a lack of artifacts - also makes it a difficult topic to represent in a museum exhibit. Bruce Scherting, exhibits director at KU's Natural History Museum and instructor of the exhibits class, and Taylor Lenon, a graduate student who lent his time and knowledge to the students, made the exhibit design both manageable and professional. The Museum Studies Program also helped the students by sending them to the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio. The students were thus able to see for themselves what did and did not work in exhibitions about the Underground Railroad. According to Harris, "Going to the Underground Railroad Freedom Center was amazing and we definitely got some inspiring ideas from their exhib-

its. The whole experience was very immersive and we're hoping to apply some of those feelings to our exhibit interactives." Overall, the project gave the students a wonderful opportunity to develop their skills as scholars who share their knowledge in a museum setting.



Terry, Brittany, & Rachel discuss the fabrication of their exhibit.

Make sure you check out the exhibit, "Hidden Slaves, Hidden History: The Underground Railroad in Douglas County, Kansas," starting June at the Watkins Community Museum of History in Lawrence!

Message from the Director



Prof. Marjorie Swann, Director of the Museum Studies Program

Early in May, I headed to Philadelphia to participate in “The Museum Studies Experiment.” This was the title of the 2009 annual conference of the Association of College and University Museums and Galleries (ACUMG). Held in the wonderful museums at the University of Pennsylvania, the conference allowed participants to share their perspectives with museum studies faculty from across the US and Britain.

After talking with my colleagues, I came away from the conference convinced that Museum Studies Jayhawks are the envy of most

other museum studies programs in the country. Our long history of academic excellence, our high level of institutional support from all sectors of the University of Kansas, our strong ties to museums and museum professionals on campus and throughout the region, our outstanding placement record, our supportive alums: we already have firmly in place what most other programs are still struggling to achieve.

At KU, Museum Studies isn’t an “experiment” but an established, dynamic program with a proud past and a bright future. We aren’t

complacent, however: as you’ll see in this newsletter, the innovative students and graduates of KU’s Museum Studies Program are always striving for even greater successes. So my time in Philadelphia only reinforced my belief that for Museum Studies students at the University of Kansas, the sky’s the limit. Ad astra!

Marjorie Swann

Director,
Museum Studies Program
Associate Professor and
Conger-Gabel Teaching
Professor,
Department of English

“The innovative students and graduates of KU’s Museum Studies Program are always striving for even greater successes.”

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Program
Matthew Thompson - President, Museum Students
Organization

Museum Students Organization’s Activities

The Museum Students Organization (MSO) gives students in the Museum Studies Program an opportunity to socialize and network outside of the university. This March they hosted their first guest lecturer in the Spooner Hall Commons. Dr. Jay Price, Director of the Public History Program at Wichita State University, gave two presentations. The first was on how to publish a photo history using photograph archives, and the main presentation was a virtual road trip down Route 66, which provided an analysis of the landmarks and the evolution of the images related to the iconic highway.

MSO members also engage in professional development activities, such as attending professional conferences and consulting with the Eudora Historical Society Museum. In addition, Bob Keckeisen, Director of the Kansas State Historical Society Museum and lecturer for the Museum Studies Program, conducted a workshop on resumes and professional interviews for MSO members last fall. Second-year MSO students also gather weekly in the spring for oral-exam study groups. There are frequently social events for members and fieldtrips to nearby museums, such as the National Pony Express Museum or Truman Library in St. Joseph, the zoo in Omaha, or various museums in Kansas City.

Ying-Chih Chang

is a first-year Museum Studies student on the Natural History track. She is originally from Taichung, Taiwan and received her B.A. in Journalism from the National Changchi University in Taipei.

Q: What do you think is the most important thing you've learned so far in this program?

Ying-Chih: I think that the most important thing I learned is to be very open-minded to accept everything, because in a museum anything can happen. Every visitor is different. Learning styles are different, backgrounds are different, cultures are different. So I think that I have learned to be very open-minded and try to assess things from different aspects.

Q: What has been your favorite class so far and why?

Y: I really liked the Management class because it's very general; it gave me a big picture of museum studies and what I will learn. And because of that I found that my interest is in education. And Bob [Keckeisen], he's a very interesting person.

Q: Have you done your internship yet?

Y: No, I will do that this sum-

mer in Taiwan at the National Museum of Natural Science, our biggest natural history museum. But before that, since last semester I worked in the [Natural History Museum at KU] as a volunteer in the education department. I assist with the programs and I also helped them with the Spring Break event.

Q: Do you know what you're going to be doing at the National Museum of Natural Science in Taiwan this summer?

Y: I will be working in the exhibits department.

Q: How do you think science museums bridge the gap between the public and more advanced knowledge?

Y: In museums we can arrange things and use objects so concepts are easier to understand than if you were just reading a textbook. Actually science is not too difficult to learn, but usually when people think about science they think, "Ugh, it's difficult!" But in a mu-

seum, it's an informal setting so people are more relaxed and happier to accept some new concepts. We can also use our advantages, use the models and all the educational tools to tell them that story so it's easier for them to understand. The good thing we can do is to get people interested, and when they are interested, they will want to learn more about it themselves.

Q: Do you think that your background in journalism helps you because you're used to writing for a public audience?

Y: I think so. When I was learning journalism our teacher always told us, "You need to use the vocabulary that a high school student can understand," so when I'm making labels for our exhibits class, I try to think about that. I think the journalism background has helped me a lot.

"The good thing we can do [in museums] is get people interested, and when they are interested, they will want to learn more."

Congrats, 2009

MUSE Graduates!

(* = with honors)

Megan Ampe
Elizabeth Arnold*
Cricket Brooks*
Debbie Entine
Rachel Frisby
Bertram Lyons*

Jennifer McCollough
Megan Richards
Lauren Takemoto
Matthew Thompson*
Roberta Woods*



Ying-Chih Chang & Bert Lyons teach visitors about taboos and traditions related to Chinese New Year at the Watkins Community Museum of History. Photo: KU University Relations.

MUSE NEWS Editor-In-Chief: Prof. Marjorie Swann
Writers: Ann Benning & Brittany Keegan

MUSE Public Ed Class Creates Program for Watkins Community Museum of History



Nai-Chieh Yeh & Beth Shirley teach two young visitors to make Chinese lanterns. Photo: KU University Relations.

Last November, the Introduction to Museum Public Education class met at the Watkins Community Museum of History to provide a public program. This program analyzed the traditions of

two different holidays, Chinese New Year and Day of the Dead, as well as the common characteristics of all holidays.

The activities for this program

grew from the students' study of learning theory. According to one member of the class, "We wanted to create different activities that would appeal to people who learn in different ways, so we tried to connect our program's activities to what we discussed in class about different learning styles." Activities created for this public program tried to utilize different methods to attempt to reach visitors of all types.

Visitors were asked to consider different aspects of holidays, such as colors, symbols, and decorations and determine what each of these aspects represents. Handmade dumplings and sugar skulls were served with refreshments, and visitors created Chinese lanterns and holiday cards. The Museum Public Education course was taught by Mary Madden, Director of Education and Outreach for the Kansas State Historical Society.

News Notes

Faculty News:

- Welcome back to **Bob Keckeisen**, Director of the Kansas State Historical Society (KSHS) Museum, and **Mary Madden**, Director of Education and Outreach for KSHS, who will both be returning this fall to teach Museum Management and Introduction to Museum Public Education, respectively.
- **Bruce Scherting**, Director of Exhibitions at the Museum of Natural History and instructor of Introduction to Museum Exhibits, collaborated with artist Marguerite Perret on a mixed-media installation entitled "Niche" that was displayed in Spooner Commons through February 2009.

Alumni News:

- **Jamin (Dreasher) Landavazo** (2008) completed a post-graduate internship in the audio-visual department of the JFK Presidential Library and Museum last summer. She was recently hired as the Chief Curator for the Reno County Historical Society, serving both the Reno County Museum and the Kansas Underground Salt Museum in Hutchinson, KS.
- **Robert Elder** (2007) currently works as the Registrar of the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, TX. Part of his work includes helping to facilitate the major expansion his museum is undergoing.
- **Sofia Galarza Liu** (2006) is currently the Collections Manager at the Spencer Museum of Art. In October of 2008, she also chaired a presentation at the Mountain-Plains Museums Association about integrating the ethnographic collection in Spooner Hall with the general holdings of the Spencer.
- **Carol Gregory** (2007) is a Conservation Assistant in the Preservation Department at Yale University. As part of her position, she is helping Yale conduct scientific research and development of new conservation treatments.
- **John Miller** (2008) worked on a grant-funded project at the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum (NASM) with fellow MUSE graduate, Amanda Bailey (2008), reorganizing their collections storage areas. This past semester he has been at KU, working on his MA in Archaeology. However, he recently accepted another contract at NASM to conduct a conservation assessment of medium-size and high-priority collection items in preparation for their move to a new facility.
- **Tyson Robinson** (2007) has been working as the historical unit coordinator at the Mayo Clinic in Arizona since graduation. He has been working on an oral history project as part of the 20th anniversary celebration of his institution.
- **Stephanie Teasley** (2008) presented "A Tale of Two Collections" at the Mountain-Plains Museums Association Conference along with fellow MUSE graduates, Karen Butler-Clary (2008) and Sofia Galarza Liu (2006), as well as Angela Watts, assistant collections manager at the Spencer Museum of Art. She also accepted a contract position at the Yale Peabody Museum, moving a portion of their anthropology collection to an off-site storage facility.

Whitney Baker

has worked as the Conservator for KU Libraries since 2002 and has been teaching Conservation Principles and Practices for the Museum Studies Program since 2004. She is also a KU alumna, with a dual degree in Chemistry and Spanish. She attended both the University of Iowa Center for the Book and the University of Texas graduate program in Conservation for Library and Archival Materials.

Question: What drew you to conservation?

Whitney Baker: As an undergraduate, I majored in Chemistry and Spanish, and I came to KU assuming that I would find this perfect major for me. But by my junior year, I realized hadn't found that class that just changed my life and that made sense to me. So at the end of my junior year I went to talk with J. Michael Young, the director of the Honors Program. In the middle of the conversation he said, "I think you should repair old books." It seemed like a good way to use the chemistry; but it's also using chemistry and the humanities together, thinking about material science and the history of technology, and getting to do something with my hands during the day but also using my brain. It's sort of a mixture of a lot of skills – a strange combination, but it works really well for me.

Q: What do you like about working with the Museum Studies Program?

W: It's been a really wonderful experience. One thing I really like about teaching the class [Conservation Principles and Practices] is that it forces me to broaden my horizons and think more generally about my field and look at things from the museum perspective, which is not always the same [as the library perspective]. Some issues like NAGPRA or hazardous materials I had not thought about or knew much about before and didn't really affect my life as a book conservator, so it's been really wonderful.

Q: Describe your goals for the class you teach. What do you want students to take away from your class?

W: The first day of class, I always say that my assumptions are 1) that you are not a conservator and you won't be a conservator and 2) that you probably won't have a conservator on your staff unless you're in a very large museum. So what I hope students will learn is how to take care of their collections and how to feel empowered to take care of their collections without a conservator doing it for them. I want them to know a lot about the environment and how environment affects collections, so that's temperature, relative humidity, light, air pollution, pests, mold, that sort of thing; and then storage and how that can affect collections. I want students to look holistically and not just look at individual items, but at whole collections, and how we can affect the entire collection at one time with our actions.

Then I try to have an undercurrent of ethics throughout the class. These decisions can't be made in a vacuum, and they really are difficult decisions that have to be made sometimes. Then the big project is a management paper, because I want students to learn how to write such a project and to think about long-term planning and hopefully have some skills that will help them in their careers.

Q: When students intern with you here at the conservation lab, what kinds of projects could they work on?

W: We've had students doing a variety of things. Carol Gregory, who was here a few years ago, did a re-housing project for a collection of Soviet-focused ephemera from the Kansas Collection, called the Josephson Collection. She also began a survey of the Centron Film Collection, which we are still working on. Rachel Frisby, who's here now working in the lab, spent her internship working with the Audio House Collection, which is an LP record collection, cleaning mold off materials but also then recording information about materials in the database and then photographing them. We've had Roberta Woods, who was a three-year intern, who came from the Museum Studies program as well. She's a supervisor and has learned more than the average student would. Sometimes we have particular projects, sometimes students work in a more general sense, learning the skills for book conservation, if that's what they want to do. Other students are more generally interested in collections care and sometimes we can tailor internships.

"I want students to look holistically and not just look at individual items, but at whole collections, and how we can affect the entire collection at one time with our actions."



Whitney Baker, KU Libraries Conservator, working with a map of Lawrence, KS.

Fall Student Orientation

This past August, new Museum Studies students got the opportunity to wade into the graduate school waters with the help of staff and veteran students at the New Student Orientation. The new students spent an afternoon in the Kenneth Spencer Research Library getting acquainted with one another, graduate school life, and the program.

To begin the event, Marjorie Swann, director of the program, offered the students advice for a successful graduate experience at KU. Following Dr. Swann's introductory remarks, the Museum Studies Organization (MSO) President Matt Thompson spoke about the biweekly meetings, study sessions, and social gatherings that create a tight community among students. Thompson also pointed out that the organization makes trips to professional conferences. These trips enable students to make valuable contacts within the museum community.

Our keynote speaker was Jennie Chinn, Executive Director of the Kansas State Historical Society. Jennie gave a terrific, helpful talk entitled "The Top Ten Things You Need to Know to Get a Job in a Museum." Students ended the orientation by attending a small gathering hosted by Dr. Swann in her home. There students mingled with each other as well as their future professors. The gathering, like the entire orientation, provided students with the connections within KU they could rely upon.



William Tsutsui, Julie Mulvihill, & Kathy Porsch discuss the finer points of grant-writing with MUSE students.

This past semester Ann Benning and Brittany Keegan, MUSE Graduate Research Assistants, developed and produced a workshop on grant-writing for their fellow students. The workshop was held in the Kansas Union on the evening of April 16.

The workshop featured three speakers, each with extensive background and success in grant writing.

Kathy Porsch, Grant De-

MUSE Students Organize Grant-Writing Workshop

velopment Officer for the Hall Center for the Humanities, discussed ways to find grants and potential grant agencies in contexts ranging from national to local communities.

Julie Mulvihill, Executive Director for the Kansas Humanities Council (and Museum Studies alumna), spoke about what agencies look for in proposals. Ms. Mulvihill encouraged students to strictly follow grant agency guidelines for their proposals. And sending a thank-you note when you win a grant can make the difference in winning repeat funding.

William Tsutsui, KU history professor and associate dean of

international studies, livened up the evening as he spoke about his experience both writing and reviewing grants. He had many practical tips for writing the proposal itself, commenting that being on a review board is an invaluable experience for any professional.

MUSE students found the workshop a very positive experience that added another dimension to the skills they gained at KU. MUSE student Sarah Sparks commented that "It's things like this [workshop] that really help round out the education – things we wouldn't learn in class but still need to know!"

Bert Lyons

is originally from Memphis, Tennessee and he received his B.A. in English Literature from Earlham College. He is graduating from the Museum Studies Program with honors this year.

Q: You've been working at the Spencer Museum of Art. What have you been doing there?

B: I've been the director's intern for two years now, and that is an internship with Saralyn Reece Hardy. It is a very dynamic internship where you can work within the administrative roles of the museum and get a sense for what the director does, what the administrative offices do. But also because the director at the Spencer has a history as a curator, you work with the curatorial department as well and get some actual work experience with delivering content to the public and doing research. And part of the deal with being the director's intern is you have to develop your own projects. So I've had a couple different projects throughout my time there, and two of them were focused on installations, on exhibitions, and now I'm getting to work on archives, which is very exciting.

Q: Do you have any tips on how to secure an on-campus internship, since you managed successfully to get one?

B: Be proactive. I would say that, from my experience, the best way is to meet people at the places where you get internships. I got the internship at the Spencer because I talked to my advisor about setting up an opportunity to go meet people, so I had a meeting with Saralyn and a number of her staff, and we just brainstormed. There wasn't any opportunity for me at that time, but it was a way for me to let them know who I was, what I had done, what experiences I have, and to brainstorm ideas for the future. So that generated a volunteer internship, where I did an oral history of the widow of Albert Bloch, who was one of the artists I ended up working on later. Anyway, the advice I would give is to be proactive and to go out and meet people and tell them about who you are, what your

experiences are, and what your interests are, and just try to see what comes through. See where the fits are.

Q: What advice would you give to incoming students about how to succeed, either in this program in particular, or grad school in general?

B: As far as this program, I would say be open to explore things outside of your perspective, outside of your comfort zone, because there are so many options at the University of Kansas, because we have so many different types of museums, and we have archives, and we have a wonderful library. Be willing to explore the options that are available and that are interesting, even if they're not necessarily in your track. And then as far as graduate school, I would say be ready to give up your weekends and your nights for the two years that you're here. Put your heart into it. Get used to reading and learn to enjoy it. Don't count on your teachers and the university to make opportunities for you. If you're going to go to graduate school, take responsibility for making the best out of it, making the most out of it. This means look at what people at other graduate schools are doing, look in the professional field at what's happening, and make connections on your own.

Q: You also presented at the AAM (American Association of Museums) conference. What did you present on?

B: I presented on the changing nature of care given to audio-visual recordings in museum collections.

Q: Do you have any advice for first-time presenters?

B: I would say that my advice is that you have nothing to lose. It is scary, but take every opportunity to get up and present your research or your ideas because it's always a learning

experience. I felt like it's a good opportunity because you realize the dynamic aspect of any kind of presenting and you realize that there are so many more people engaging in what you're interested in and that, no matter how much you read, there is always more engagement out in the real world and more perspective on it.

Q: Do you have plans for after graduation?

B: I don't know. If I was going to stay in Lawrence for a little bit longer, I would love to be able to finish a project integrating the archives and the collections at the Spencer, integrating the idea of objects versus documents. In a larger dream, I would like to be working with that idea of integrating documentation and material culture somewhere. I'm very interested in doing that work in a socially positive way.

"Be willing to explore the options that are available and that are interesting... If you're going to go to graduate school, take responsibility for making the best out of it."



Bert presenting at the AAM conference in Denver.



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Please support the Museum Studies Program! We appreciate the tremendous amount of assistance you have given us in the past, but we still need your help!

By giving to Museum Studies, you will be contributing to the continued success of the program and assisting future graduates by providing them with opportunities to participate in activities that enrich their experience. You can send donations by going to our website:

<http://museumstudies.ku.edu/>

and clicking on the link, "Support Museum Studies at KU." Thank you!

Student News

Larry Brow presented "Five Tools for Museum Professionals" at the 2008 Kansas Museums Association conference in October.

Bert Lyons presented "Repatriating Digital Cultural Heritage" at a workshop in South Africa in December 2008. He also has an upcoming presentation in Jamaica on the same topic, and will be presenting on "Sharing Cultural Resources, Sharing Responsibility" this summer in both Austin, Texas, and Athens, Greece. Bert published articles in *Collections: A Journal for Museum and Archives Professionals* in Fall 2008 and in the *International Association of Sound and Audiovisual Archives Journal* in January of this year.

Summer Internships:

- Ann Benning and Brittany Keegan will be working at the Watkins Community Museum of History in Lawrence.
- Robin Bang will start as a Graduate Research Assistant for the Ethnographic Collection of the Spencer Museum of Art in August.
- Ying-Chih Chang will be returning to Taiwan this summer to intern at the National Museum of Natural Science.
- Rachel Harris will continue to work as an intern with the Ethnographic Collection of the Spencer Museum of Art.
- Soo Hyun Kim will be returning to Korea to work in the National Heritage Center of Korea.
- Sarah Sparks has accepted a collections management internship at the Red Cloud Heritage Center on a Lakota reservation in Pine Ridge, SD.
- John Wahlmeier will intern at the Stuhr Museum, a living history museum in Grand Island, NE.
- Terry Wickstrum will be continuing her work in the education department of the KU Museum of Natural History.

Kansas City Area Archivists

are holding their Annual Spring Meeting & Program at the University of Kansas on Wed., June 3. The event will begin with lunch at noon in the Malott Room of the Kansas Union and will be followed with a program & tour of the Spencer Research Library & the Stannard Conservation Lab.

To RSVP or for more info, please email Heidi Hornaday, hjh@ku.edu



Terry Wickstrum creates a display as an intern at the Museum of Natural History on campus. Photo: KU University Relations.