I attended the American Alliance of Museums meetings in Atlanta at the end of April, and was part of a panel where we considered what museums might look like in fifty years. In some ways, it seems that museums have a remarkable capacity for inertia. While preparing for the presentation, I looked back 45 years, to Alma Wittlin’s “Twelve Point Program for Museum Renewal,” published in 1970. Of her 12 Points, she calls on museums to develop programs “presented in a context of either current issues or of perennial human affairs”; to address “unmet needs of people”; to make use of technology to expand access to collections; to conduct evaluations of programs; and to make sure that museums are connected to their communities. In other words, Wittlin’s points are ones with which museums are still grappling, and they continue to have relevance.

I returned from AAM to a flurry of students defending their Final Products, and was gratified to encounter projects demonstrating that KU Museum Studies students are working hard to push our profession into the future. The students’ research spans a remarkable range. We have Alissa Meehan’s comprehensive survey of – and recommendations for – museum programs for students with learning disabilities; Erik Radowski undertook an examination of the difficult concept of resilience and its application in museums; Katie Manley converted a nearly forgotten archival collection of over 2,000 items into a web-based resource; Abby Ehling and Jilliene Jaeger created new programs that will extend and enhance the reach of the Watkins Museum here in Lawrence; and JoJo Palko interrogated the KU archives to reveal the gaps that are inherent in archival work. So, as this year wraps up, I am confident that we are sending a new batch of graduates into the museum field with an impressive combination of excellent experience, compelling questions, and strong skills. They are ready for the future; I hope that the future is ready for them!
Congratulations to Our Graduating Students
Class of 2015 Final Product Titles

Abby Ehling:
Introducing an Interactive Environment to a Victorian Playhouse

Jilliene Jaeger:
Life in Kansas during the Great Depression:
A Traveling Trunk for the Watkins Museum of History

Katie Manley:
The Harry L. George Collection: Accessibility, Preservation, and Presentation

Alissa Meehan:
Bridging the Invisible Gap: Implementing Learning Techniques to Address the Needs of Students with Learning Disabilities in Inclusion School Groups

JoJo Palko:
Archives, Appraisal, and Anniversaries: The Role of the University Archives in Forming Memory and Shaping History for the University of Kansas Sesquicentennial

Erik Radowski:
Museums Using Resilience to Impact Sustainability
Spring Break Trip to Minneapolis and St. Paul

By Jamie Rees, '16

One of my favorite parts of studying museums is having an extra excuse to travel to them. On the MSO Spring Break 2015 trip to Minneapolis, we visited five museums: the Minnesota History Center, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, the Swedish Institute, the Science Museum of Minnesota, and the Minneapolis Sculpture Garden of the Walker Art Museum. In these two days we spoke with staff members at three of these institutions. What I took away from these conversations was a better understanding of the ideals each institution aspires to, and after touring each museum, using a critical eye to judge the degree to which each institution was able to embody them. Plus, we got to see some of the innovative work being done at these museums. And to ride the roller coaster at the Mall of America.

By Alissa Meehan, '15

Seven students and Dr. Welsh made the trek up to beautiful Minneapolis, Minnesota for the annual Museum Studies spring break trip. Students had the pleasure of meeting with museum directors, educators, collections managers, and exhibit designers from five different museums, who each gave fantastic professional development advice for our budding MUSEs. The group also enjoyed exploring the museums, sampling fantastic food, and checking out Minneapolis sites. Minneapolis offered many great experiences and was well worth the visit!
MUSE 703: Intro to Museum Exhibits

By Rebecca Dickman, ‘16 and Megan Sims, ‘16

Museum studies students worked with students from other departments to create exhibits for the course. Once again, Bruce Scherting, Exhibits Director at the KU Natural History Museum, taught the class. This semester, groups worked on projects for three clients: the Spencer Research Library, Watkins Museum of History, and Perry Pride.

All Creeping Things: A History of Herpetological Illustration

Museum studies students Megan Sims and Ryan Ridder and design student Sydney Goldstein created an exhibit for the Kenneth Spencer Research Library called “All Creeping Things: A History of Herpetological Illustration.” The exhibit features illustrations of reptiles and amphibians from volumes in the Spencer Research Library’s collection. It was created in anticipation of the 2015 meeting of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles being held at the University of Kansas in July. The exhibit opens on May 14, 2015, and will remain at the library until August 2015.

Progress Report: Education in Lawrence

Abby Ehling, Sydney Pursel, and Beth Post created the exhibit for the Watkins Museum of History. Highlighting the perspectives of students and teachers, the exhibit explores public schools in Lawrence and changes to education systems that began in the early 1900s. The exhibit opening will be during Lawrence’s Final Friday event, on May 29, 2015.

The Evolution of Team Sports Along the Kaw: Together we are Stronger

Rebecca Dickman, Katie Manley, Erik Radowski, and interaction design grad student Callie Miller planned the exhibit for community group Perry Pride in Perry, KS. It will be a companion exhibit to the Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibition “Hometown Teams: How Sports Shape America” coming to the historic Perry Rural H.S. gymnasium from August 15- September 27, 2015.
Trip to St. Joseph Museums

By Kayle Rieger, ’16

Several Museum Studies students started off the semester with a day spent at the St. Joseph Museums. After an introduction to the history of the unique combination of museum collections, director Sara Wilson showed the group around the several floors of psychiatric exhibits. After a quick break for lunch together, where Sara shared more about herself and how she came to her position at the St. Joseph Museums, we headed back for even more! We walked through the upstairs rooms which include the doll, ethnographic, and Black archives collections and stopped to see the project Katie Manley has been doing this year with some of the collection’s ledger books. We finished our tour of the main building by exploring the extensive collections storage and ended with a tour of the nearby Wyeth Tootle mansion which currently houses natural history exhibits.

There were many surprises along the way, including going into a tunnel connecting the museum and the nearby prison! While the tunnel has been bricked shut, the walls on the “museum side” are covered in wonderful murals. Overall, the trip to the St. Joseph Museums was a unique experience that brought up a lot of interest and questions for all who attended.

Director Sara Wilson welcoming Katie Manley, Erik Radowski, Kayle Rieger, and Megan Sims

Eudora Community Museum Packing Day

By Rebecca Dickman, ’16

On Saturday, January 24, Museum Studies students helped the Eudora Community Museum, located in the former Nottingham Elementary School in nearby Eudora, KS, pack up their collections. Museum Studies alum Ben Terwilliger serves as the Executive Director of the museum. In only a few short hours the students and community volunteers had everything packed and organized. The following week the museum moved to 720 Main Street in downtown Eudora. The museum had a Grand Opening in their new location on April 4.

Students helping included Ryan Ridder, Erik Radowski, Katie Manley, Kayle Rieger, Jamie Rees, Rebecca Dickman, Alissa Meehan, Jilliene Jaeger, Brecken Liebl, and Megan Sims
Audience Development Course with Steve Nowak
By Jilliene Jaeger, ‘15

Over the course of the semester Alissa Meehan and I worked with Steve Nowak, director of the Watkins Museum of History, to look at how museums develop audiences. Using the Watkins as our focus, we explored what audiences the museum serves currently and determined what audiences we thought we needed to reach out to. Every month we had the opportunity to test our ideas through Final Friday, implementing new marketing and programming strategies based on our research and observations. Our final project was to develop a communication outline to lay out how the museum should go about developing its audiences, including categories, messages, and long and short term strategies. Steve plans on sharing our outline with the museum’s board so it can start working on some of our suggestions.

Chance and Predictability in Evolution: A Brown Bag Lunch with Bruce Lieberman
By Ryan Ridder, ‘16

On April 10, Bruce Lieberman, Ecology & Evolutionary Biology Professor and Senior Curator in the Division of Invertebrate Paleontology, Natural History Museum and Biodiversity Research Center, spoke to museum studies students about chance and predictability in evolution. How much can we predict about the course of evolution? One thing we can count on is that 99.9% of all species at any given time will go extinct, probably within a million years after they appear. Can we predict which ones? Not exactly, but groups that divide themselves into lots of species tend to do a lot more going extinct. You might think the exact opposite were true, but think about what happens when living things form a bunch of species. Earth can usually only support so many of whatever, so when a population speciates it divides itself up into smaller populations, all of which become more vulnerable to environmental fluctuations and chance misfortunes, all at the same time.

There are a couple of things that can decimate groups—let’s say we’re dealing with trilobites (extinct marine arthropods)—with lots of small populations. One is that something bad happens that kills them off in a violent way—maybe volcanic eruptions and global warming acidify the ocean. The other is that they can’t make new species to stay ahead of the turnover anymore. You need barriers of some sort to produce new species—the new population has to stop breeding with the old. Trilobites lived in shallow seas. Their barriers were usually sand bars and other things separating small seas and lagoons. Let’s say the sea level rises, and suddenly their barriers are gone. They can’t make new species, and so chance misfortune will gradually kill the existing ones off. Horseshoe crabs live the same kind of lifestyle trilobites lived, yet they’re still around today. Why? Because horseshoe crabs speciated far less often but each species maintained larger populations. Thank you for the talk, Bruce!
Bookbinding with Whitney Baker

By Erik Radowski, ’15

The MSO bookbinding workshop with KU Libraries Head Conservator and Museum Studies Lecturer, Whitney Baker, was a refreshing way to spend a late-in-the-semester Saturday morning. Whitney teaches Introduction to Conservation, which is an excellent class that teaches a lot of basic and necessary skills for future museum professionals. I took her class in my first year in the program, so it was great to catch up with her in the conservation lab and learn four basic bookbinding techniques. We started with an accordion style book and then moved on to a Venetian blind structure that featured an image of James Naismith. The final two were folded pamphlets with paste paper covers: one with a staple binding provides tips for caring for books and another with sewn binding shows historic Jayhawk images. Throughout the workshop, Whitney joked with us and explained the history of bookbinding and these techniques. The bookbinding workshop was a fun, educational, and crafty event enjoyed by all the students! Thanks again, Whitney!

Participants: Rebecca Dickman, Kayle Rieger, Brecken Liebl, Erik Radowski, and Alissa Meehan

Our First Year Students’ Summer Plans

Suzi Decker: Education Intern at the Watkins Museum of History in Lawrence, KS

Rebecca Dickman: Intern at the Mid-America Arts Alliance in Kansas City, MO

Brecken Liebl: Intern at the University of Kansas Libraries Stannard Conservation Laboratory in Lawrence, KS

Brittney Oleniacz: Invertebrate Paleontology Intern at the American Museum of Natural History in New York, NY

Jamie Rees: Community Engagement Intern for the Center for Community/Affiliate Initiatives & Engagement in the Research & Learning Division of the University of Kansas Libraries in Lawrence, KS

Kayle Rieger: Working at the Schingoethe Museum in Aurora, IL

Ryan Ridder: Intern at the Museum of the Earth in Ithaca, NY

Megan Sims: Education Intern at the Denver Museum of Nature and Science in Denver, CO
To all of the incoming first-year MUSE students, welcome to Lawrence! In the coming years you’re sure to spend a lot of time on KU’s beautiful campus, but be sure to get out and explore all of what Lawrence has to offer. The recently renovated Lawrence Public Library is certainly a must-see downtown fixture. For those looking to log some study hours off-campus, the library’s abundant natural light, local artwork, and coffee bar offer a fresh alternative to the campus libraries.

At the end of every month, Final Fridays transform the shops downtown into art galleries and performance venues and the streets fill with music and dancing. Though it’s technically outside of city limits, Clinton State Park serves as Lawrence’s nature retreat. The park offers camping, hiking, fishing, and biking opportunities for anyone looking for an escape from the city. These are just a few of the exciting opportunities Lawrence has to offer so make the most of your time here and explore them all.

**Dates to Remember**
First Day of Fall Semester: August 24
MPMA/KMA Conference: September 27- October 1 in Wichita