

**SOURCE: Student Organization for Unique and Rare Collections Everywhere**  
Society of American Archivists Student Chapter  
Agenda for February 11, 2025, 7 pm Meeting

Contacts: rutgers.source@gmail.com  
Hilde Creager, President  
Kelan Amme, Vice President  
Jillie Fisch, Webmaster  
Christian Ryder, Secretary

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**Attendees:**

Hilde Creager  
Kelan Amme  
Jillie Fisch  
Christian Ryder  
Marija Dalbello  
William Peniston  
Jared Ash  
Adrianna Bugliarello-Wondrich  
Maura Kelly  
Ashli Aaron  
Shayna Vozniak  
Tiff Fang  
Hannah Lee  
Kayla Ponturo  
Michael Tashbrook  
Mariam Ata  
Mitali Tase  
Natalie [surname not listed on Zoom]  
Layla Louque

**Research Libraries and Archives at the Visual Art Museum**

**William Peniston**

- Librarian and Archivist Emeritus at the museum, retired four years ago
- Undergraduate degree in history from Lewis & Clark, had a required course on historical materials, worked for the college library as an undergraduate
- Graduate degree from Maryland, joint program for MLIS and MA in History
- Worked at Bowie State College (historically Black college in Maryland) with special collections
  - Subject matter of the materials was largely different from what his studies had largely been focused on
- Background in French history, PhD at University of Rochester

- Dissertation was on 19<sup>th</sup> century gay subculture in Paris, later published as *Pederasts and Others*
- Chose to stick with librarianship rather than being a professor – anticipated being an academic librarian, instead ended up at the Newark Museum of Art
- Came up against a large backlog of materials when working at the museum
- Worked with the Newark Public Library to bring information online
- Did reference work with curators, educators, and outside researchers
  - Curators were doing more scholarly work and looking for detailed information, educators were looking for more straightforward material that was easier to explain, outside researchers tended to be more interested in the archives
- There was no formal archival program when he arrived
- Was able to secure a grant to hire an intern who had worked with them previously as a full-time archivist, who ended up staying with the museum for thirteen years
- Difficult to balance being a librarian and a scholar, librarian was a 9-5 job without much time off
  - Scholarship is focused on sexual history; most recently published work is *The Italian Invert: A Gay Man's Intimate Confessions to Émilie Zola*
    - *Queer Lives* was also published before this
- Not having a background in art history gave him an advantage working at the NMOA – he was not tempted to become a curator or interfere in the work of the curators/educators (having an academic background also helped with this)

### **Jared Ash**

- Mostly responsible for collection development at the Met's Thomas J. Watson Library
- Many aren't aware of the library at the Met – library is free to use, has recently been changed in 2008 to become more welcoming to potential users, easy to register online
- Three-quarters of users are external researchers rather than internal
- Founding charter in 1870 called for a museum and library, library is as old as the museum
- Many art museum libraries are limited and only have materials related to their own collections, the Met's library is much broader
- The library adds about 15,000 books a year, 1,000-3,000 rare titles per year
  - Many early 20<sup>th</sup>-century materials are being added, as the museum wasn't as interested in contemporary art at the time – showing the broadness of modern art
  - Zines have been recently added, library had previously been less interested in books as objects than they were books done by notable artists
- The library does a yearly acquisition highlights event, showing newly-added rare materials
- Previously worked at Newark Public Library

- Did an exhibition on contemporary artist books while working at the library
- Majored in Russian Studies and Anthropology as an undergraduate
  - Was interested in the Russian Avant-Garde, ended up working with translation and cataloging of these books, curated an exhibit that ended up at MoMA
  - Wanted to go further but needed to get an MLS/MLIS, ended up at Rutgers
- Newark Public Library as promoting art education
  - Very large art collection
  - Library had an Artist-in-residence
  - “The worth a book is in its use” – motto of the library
  - William Dane was a mentor, first met him through SOURCE
    - Used materials for education
- Carried this approach from Newark to the MET, making the library open to artists
- Financial difficulties and staff cuts caused him to leave the Newark library
  - Went from specialist to generalist back to specialist, was able to focus on Russian materials at the MET, became special collections librarian
- Started a project working with materials from Black artists
  - Went through 3,000 artists on WorldCat, tried to determine whether or not the library had enough materials on these artists and acquire materials if the library didn’t have them
  - Index of Black Artists of North America, promoting visibility
  - Used this as a pilot project to secure a grant from NEH, expanding this project to more groups and adding more staff
    - Went through over 5,000 artists over 12 months
    - Added more PDFs, made them available to other libraries along with a MARC record pack

**What are the challenges of preserving/archiving a temporary exhibition? How do you document these exhibits while they are happening?**

- **William:** Doesn’t really archive as the exhibit is happening, waits until afterwards to get materials from the curators, news, etc. Variety of materials has been a difficulty to work with.

**(Question for Jared) How did you find/acquire the books for the projects? What did working with PDFs entail?**

- MET has a large group of dedicated volunteers that were a great help
- Process itself can be tedious, every acquisition has to be
- Have been reaching out to galleries and asking them for their permission, library has identified major cities for acquisitions in the past
  - Asked libraries if they were willing to make their materials in PDF format publicly available, participating libraries send their materials digitally to the library
- Have been setting up Zoom sessions to help librarians learn about uploading and downloading materials

### **Career advice?**

- **Jared:** Was able to start at Newark by meeting William Dane and reaching out to the library to work with him. Career advice – be proactive
- **William:** Internships are important and a great way to enter the field. Had 38 interns in his 25 years at the museum in Newark, graduate students from Rutgers and Pratt went on to have great careers in the field, has hired former interns.
- **Jared:** The MET takes in interns for the spring and fall, many alumni of these programs work at the Watson Library

### **Spring Events**

- March 11 - Faculty and student presenters from Messiah University
- March 25 - Society of American Archivists Orientation with Lexy DeGraffenreid, co-chair of the SAA Membership Committee
- April 8 Research Libraries and Archives at the Art Museum Part 2 featuring Molly Dotson, Graphics Arts Librarian at Firestone Library, Department of Special Collections at Princeton University and Nilda Lopez, Head of Reader Services at the Morgan Library and Museum

### **Scholarship Reminders**

- Josephine Furman Scholarship - February 28:  
<https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-forman>
- F. Gerald Ham and Elsie Ham Scholarship - February 28:  
<https://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section12-ham>
- Beta Phi Mu Omicron Chapter MI Scholarship - February 28:  
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeRM34Irrhlf0gSrOI2UDiqdqYAqZHM0mlqrrMLptlrRKF17w/viewform>
- NJLA Scholarship - March 7: <https://www.njla.org/scholarships>