**Sharing More Than Space: The Outcomes of Merging Archives and Museum Practices at Seton Hall University**

Amanda Mita, Archives & Special Collections Technical Services Head | Seton Hall University Libraries

### Hybrid Repository

The Archives & Special Collections Center at Seton Hall University Libraries is the repository for both University Archives and the Walsh Gallery and houses:
- Rare books and manuscripts
- Historical objects and ephemera
- University Art Collection
- Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology Collection
- Archdiocese of Newark historical collections
- University Records Management files

### Problem

As a dual repository for the University Archives and the Walsh Gallery, staff from both departments regularly faced miscommunications about collections management, space management, environmental and security issues, and the interpretation of policies and procedures.

These miscommunications were a result of differences in professional training, education, and understanding of collections care and significantly hindered the progress of both units. Constant misunderstanding not only impeded progress in collections management, but also generated a great deal of relational strain among colleagues. For the sake of our collections and our sanity, we needed to make big changes. We realized that in order to share a space effectively, we needed to bridge the gap between our professional practices and standards.

### Actions Taken

#### Vault Task Force
- Committee formed to review and revise existing policies and to create new ones.
- New policies were implemented, consistent with both museum and archival standards and best practices.
- Review and approve all new major accessions and deaccessions.
- Jointly decide on matters of space, security, and access.
- Create an organizational chart with a focus on strategic collections management and identification on collections care matters.

#### Large-Scale Inventory
- Large-scale, top-level inventory was conducted by both Archives and Gallery over several years.
- Designed to gain a better understanding of the nature and specific preservation needs of our collections.
- Includes descriptions, condition reports, treatment recommendations, and staff assignments.

#### Project Development
- Project developed to gain control over extensive blueprint collection.
- As a result of the inventory, several immediate projects were created:
  - Accession Project - Reviewed all existing documentation for archival collections.
  - Audience Project - Surveyed Artic Collection and created new cataloging policies.
  - Meral Project - Reviewed University Art and archive print collections and made preservation recommendations.
  - Built-in system to gain control over extensive blueprint collection.

### Combined Collecting Policy

“Both units are committed to a responsible level of collecting by staying within the constraints of available storage space, ability to process material within a reasonable amount of time, and ability to provide for the care and preservation of, and access to, the materials.”

### Archives, Art, and Artifact Policy

“The Seton Hall University Museum and Art Collections and the Magi William Nest Field Archives and Special Collections Center work closely to preserve collections that may overlap in areas. This policy outlines those things that would clearly belong to the Museum and Art Collections [art, cultural artifact], those that would fall under the Archives [records, manuscript collections], and those that will be judged by representatives of both groups individually.”

### Vault/Restricted Work Areas Access Policy

“SPC and Walsh Gallery shared vault facilities are for the storage of its various collections. The restricted work areas beyond the reception desk are for activities related to the documentation, maintenance, and cataloguing (processing/accessioning) of collections materials. This policy balances the need for access to secured storage and restricted work areas, with collections care and security in mind. For the limitations of the collection, long-term preservation is the top priority.”

### Role Delineation and Collections Care

The Inventory Project was designed to expose the nature of our collections and the kind of care required to maintain them properly. In doing so, we were able to determine which unit should care for certain kinds of materials, regardless of whether those materials belonged to archival or museum collections. In our “Recommendations” column, we indicated whether materials should be transferred to the care of Gallery or Archives staff, among other options. In making these recommendations, we discovered how heavily we would rely on one another in the care of our collections moving forward.

### Environmental and Security Controls

- Security cameras and card swipe access installed in vault area
- Electronic guest sign-in for reading room and restricted areas
- Museum lighting installed in vault area
- Temperature and humidity monitoring system installed

### To share a space effectively, we needed to find ways to bridge the gap between our professional practices and standards.

- Enhanced Communication through daily SPALLERY email (Special Collections and Gallery Outlook Email Group) and weekly Vault Task Force Meeting
- Heightened security and environmental controls
- Joint policies and collaborative projects; cross-training in museum and archival practices resulting in better collections care
- Hiring a hybrid manager with both museum and archives experience

### Organizational Chart

While remaining separate units, the Archives and the Gallery now function as one Special Collections Center and will soon fall under the supervision of an Assistant Dean with both museum and archival experience.

### Lessons Learned

- Professional terminology proved to be a challenge in interpreting policies and understanding one another's progress. Terms such as accessioning and processing have different meanings in the museum and archival professions.
- Letting go of any territorialism regarding collections is key to success. A museum professional may be better suited to care for certain archival objects, just as an archival professional may be better suited to care for certain museum objects.
- While our units have established productive working relationships, it is essential to bring someone on board who can tie everything together from an administrative perspective.

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