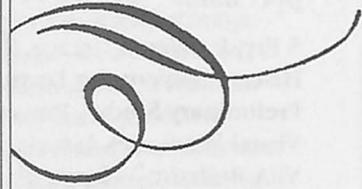


CHANGES AND TRANSITIONS IN A CULTURAL MUSEUM LIBRARY: MOVING FROM SUPPORTING MUSEUM STAFF TO PROVIDING SERVICES TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC

by Catharine Jansen



On June 10th 2005 the Stephen & Sharon Zimmerman Resource Center and the Watanabe Family Library opened their doors to the public, as part of the new Nina Mason Pulliam Education Center at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art. For the library, this event meant the end of a rather protracted journey and the beginning of a new adventure.

The Eiteljorg first opened its doors in June 1989, after the Native American and Western American art collections of Harrison Eiteljorg had merged with the Native American collection of the Museum of Indian Heritage, in December of 1988. That it took so long to create a fully functioning library was largely due to a continuing lack of funds, and subsequent lack of resources, set aside for this purpose.

As soon as the museum opened (and even before) several staff members, helped by supporters of the museum, had created vertical files and collections of books and audiovisual materials to be used for public programs or by staff and guides. The book collection from the Museum of Indian Heritage, approximately 2000 volumes, had found a home in the Board Room.

In March of 1990 two donations of \$50 were made to a library fund for library supplies such as a set of Library of Congress Subject Headings. In June of 1991 two volunteer librarians started cataloging the books in the Board Room and the makeshift "Guide Library", which at the time consisted of 182 books and nine videos. Several other volunteers and interns started creating a Paradox database of the videos and books of the Public Programs and Education Departments. By the time that the author of this article was asked by the Vice President and Chief Curatorial Officer, Arnold Jolles, to organize and maintain the growing book and video collections of the museum in September 1995, a card catalog had been created for the Guide Library, and approximately 10% of the collection in the Board Room had been cataloged. The Curator of Western Art, previously the Director of Education, had created an alphabetical list on title for the book collection in her office, alias the "Research Collection", which was

primarily used by the curators. She also circulated the ten periodicals that the museum had subscriptions to. When she left in the summer of 1995, materials were checked out on an honor system, by either writing names and check-out dates on library cards (for materials in the Guide Library) or on check-out lists (for materials in the Board Room and the Research Collection.)

The author, consulted with several librarians before tackling the task of organizing the resources in the museum and making them accessible. A new Library Committee consisting of the Vice President and Chief Curatorial Officer, a curator, the Director of Education, the Manager of Technology, two volunteer librarians, a volunteer computer programmer, and the author was also formed. One of the librarians had a background in library automation and recommended online cataloging through OCLC and to start working towards an automated library with an OPAC and an electronic circulation system. The committee met with the OCLC services representative from INCOLSA in November. A computer was received from a donor, and online cataloging began in the fall of 1996. A volunteer librarian committed to cataloging the materials in the Board Room and in the Research Collection. The Guide Library was maintained by different volunteers at the time. The volunteer computer programmer designed a program to convert the MARC records from OCLC into a Paradox database and to search that database of cataloged items. The author processed the books.

In January of 1998 Arnold Jolles, assisted by the Manager of Technology, the volunteer cataloger, and the author, started developing a vision for an "information center" or "teacher resource center" with "a book and audiovisual media library and teacher resources". He envisioned staffing this facility entirely with volunteers. Constituencies he hoped to serve by 2001 were staff and guides, and by appointment only or maybe during evenings and weekends: teachers, primarily elementary and secondary students, "peers, and motivated members of the public."

In December of 1999, the Manager of Technology became aware that the version of Paradox that the

museum was running was not Y2K compliant. At that time 1885 volumes of the collection located in the Board Room had been cataloged. The volunteer librarian then converted the existing database to an Access database. She set up a simple user interface, so users could still locate items in the museum collections. It was also decided that we needed to start searching for an affordable library software program with the possibilities of making the catalog accessible via the Internet to staff and guides, and adding an electronic circulation module. Cataloging was put on hold. In the meantime, the museum had started a capital campaign to raise funds for, among other things, a much needed expansion of the museum building. A library and a resource center, which would also be accessible to the general public, were included in the plans for the new museum wing.

In the spring of 2000, around the time that the decision was being made at the Eiteljorg on which library software was going to be purchased, the author began to hear about an initiative led by the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (I-MCPL) and the Indianapolis Foundation. In an effort to expand and enhance the library services for the residents of Marion County, the library collections of a number of private high schools were being incorporated into the automated library system of the Public Library, while the Indianapolis Foundation provided funds for the automation of the libraries, and the retrospective conversions of the library collections. The library of the Indianapolis Museum of Art was also one of the partners in this Shared Sources project.

The Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library was contacted, and the first meeting of representatives of the two institutions took place in April. Since a library and a resource center were now part of the plans for a new museum wing expected to open in September of 2003, and since the museum anticipated that making its library resources accessible in the OPAC of the Public Library would bring more patrons into the museum, the Eiteljorg decided to join the Shared Sources project. Another consideration was that the circulation of the library collections would get streamlined by becoming a part of the Public Library's electronic circulation system, while with the various check-out procedures currently in place materials were disappearing. In addition no time, and for the first three years also no money, needed to be spent on the maintenance of an OPAC.

The rest of the year was spent on working out the technical aspects of the museum's joining of the Public Library's Horizon system and on deciding when the retrospective conversion should actually get started, since the grant money would be available for three years once the project started, and the museum wanted to be able to buy the computers in the new library and resource center plus electronic circulation equipment with part of that grant money.

The online cataloging through OCLC was resumed, and it was decided that, since all the printed and audiovisual resources at the museum were going to be brought together in the new library, the video collection of the Education and the Public Programs Department also needed to be cataloged in addition to the materials in the Board Room and the Research Collection. That collection was thought to consist of 390 items, many of them made in-house. The Guide collection of approximately 1100 volumes would need to be re-cataloged using the Dewey Decimal system, as it was cataloged using a local system similar to one used in church libraries. The retrospective conversion began in April of 2002, when the I-MCPL obtained access to the electronic file of our MARC records from OCLC. The official kick-off of the electronic circulation system took place the beginning of September. It was now also possible for museum staff and guides to search the OPAC of the I-MCPL for our library resources.

That the retrospective conversion did not start until the spring of 2002 turned out not to be such a bad thing, since the ground breaking for the new museum wing eventually had to be postponed because fundraising for the construction slowed down after 9/11. In the transitional period between the start of the retrospective conversion and the opening of the new library and resource center, the author gradually took over the cataloging from the volunteer librarian since she was working towards an MLS degree herself, and since the I-MCPL had taken over the processing of the materials and the creation of the item records for the OPAC. During this time the orders of new materials was also increasingly taken over by the author, to prevent that duplicate materials would be bought by staff, and shortly before she was hired as the part-time librarian in March of 2004 she also took over the circulation of the periodicals. In anticipation of a Community Scholar Partnership between IUPUI and the museum, some museum staff, including the librarian, acquired the privilege of having access to most of the databases on the web site of the IUPUI Main Library from their desktops around this time, too.

As soon as there was a part-time, soon to be full-time, librarian regularly available sited right next to the Research Collection, staff started asking assistance with finding information and materials. Unfortunately, though, many people kept helping themselves to the materials, which were still dispersed over the building. A month before the opening of the new museum wing, a volunteer started working on the creation of vertical artists' files, which after the moving of the library collections into their new space were placed in drawers in the adjacent Resource Center, together with the Native American and American Western subject files that had been developed over the years by the Director of Education, who is in charge of the training of the

guides. The work on the artists' files still continues, and a new volunteer librarian has started cataloging the subject files.

The beginning of June 2005 a Resource Center Coordinator was hired who started developing "Inquiry Boxes" and drop-in art activities. The Inquiry Boxes are designed for home-schoolers and other families or groups with children for use in the Resource Center, and contain children's books geared towards different age levels, hands-on activities, written instructions, and other informative materials. They cover subjects such as the buffalo, weaving, art styles, and landscape painting. The drop-in art activities, which are set up in the adjacent hallway, are self-guided. They support the museum's mission, are offered daily, and subjects run for a whole month. The Inquiry Boxes also have the potential for being tied into the Second Saturday Studio Programs, developed by the Education Center Manager: Every month, a more focused, guided hands-on family activity is offered several times during the day in the studio adjacent to the Resource Center. These programs often have a gallery component.

The Resource Center and the Library, which are also physically closely tied together, are working in tandem to serve the old and new constituencies. Children's books and games are on display and can be used in the Resource Center. These materials, and also some materials for adult audiences, are exchanged regularly, tying in with the changing and permanent exhibits in the galleries, and with museum programs such as Black History Month and Day of the Dead. The reference collection and the most recent issues of the periodicals that the library subscribes to are also located here, and so are three computer workstations, where the I-MCPL OPAC can be searched, the library's digital resources used, and other research performed. A study table and a color photocopier/ printer/ scanner are also available here.

The often unique, in-house produced, audio-visual resources that are kept in the Library can be viewed in the Resource Center also, by guides in the adjacent guide study where some additional materials, especially useful for guides, are kept. Interested staff gets notified

by e-mail when new periodical issues arrive. Because of its limited size, the library space essentially serves as closed stacks and as the librarian's office, while the desk of the Resource Center Coordinator serves as reference and circulation desk.

Since the Resource Center and Library opened, use of the library resources by staff and guides seem to have increased dramatically. The number of items that were checked out during the first month following the opening was seven-and-a-half times the number that were checked out during the month directly following the official kick-off of the electronic circulation system. The number of library cards held by staff and guides almost doubled, a strong incentive being that once the library collections moved to their new location, it became impossible to help one self to the materials. Use by the general public has also been considerable. Possibly interest is generated by signage and the location at the bottom of the staircase, built around the totem pole, but definitely because staff at the museum's admissions desk and security personnel is pro-active in informing visitors about everything the Education Center has to offer.

Since the opening, up to February 28 2006, 4566 people, including families with children, visited the Resource Center and Library. Twelve hundred and thirteen of them made use of the reference services. Staff made use of those services -provided in person, by phone, or by e-mail- 327 times, guides 237 times. Members of the general public made sixty-five reference calls. Of the almost 46,000 people who visited the museum during this period, 2093 signed or were signed in on the sheets provided at the art activities tables in the hallway outside the Resource Center. After this first phase of starting to provide basic services to the general public, the staff's next priority will be improving the services to educators, by first making the audiovisual collection and then also the Inquiry Boxes available for checkout.

Looking back at this point in time the journey has been an exciting one, and the outcome very rewarding. More exciting developments lay in the future.