

Museum Affinity Group Meeting (Session Summary)

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The session was structured as follows:

- **Introduction and overview**—Joan Bacharach, NPS Museum Management Program
- **Documenting collections.** Managing non-collection digital images—Phil Bedel, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area
- **Preserving and protecting collections.** Collections management issues—Giles Parker, Northeast Museum Services Center
- **Access to and use of collections.** Teaching with Museum Collections, or, “How do we work with interpreters and other park colleagues to get collections out in the open and on-line?”—Joan Bacharach, Museum Management Program
- **Staffing.** Out-sourcing museum operations—Bob Wilson, Southeast Archeological Center
- **Professionalism and training**—Kent Bush, Pacific West Region
- **“Significance of Collections” discussions**—Abby sue Fisher, Keweenaw National Historical Park
- **Questions from the Floor**—Blair Davenport, Death Valley National Park (discussant).

Managing non-collection digital images (*Phil Bedel, Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area*). Parks may receive and create digital images that are not appropriate for accession and therefore do not become part of the Automated National Catalog System (ANCS+) database. Yet these images, along with the information associated with them, may contain valuable historic information and should be managed with the same care as the park’s regular archives. What is the best way to store, manage, and retrieve this archival information that is inherently unstable? How do the National Park Service (NPS) guidelines for accessioning apply to digital media? What is an appropriate database for managing digital information that does not belong in ANCS+?

Collections Management Issues (*Giles Parker, Northeast Museum Services Center*). Parks in the Northeast Region confront challenges similar to most collecting institutions in the areas of documentation, records management, security, fire protection, storage, staffing, and programming. In the fifth year of a regional initiative to support cultural resource management during the general management plan process, the Northeast Museum Services Center (NMSC) identified common objectives and priorities in the stewardship of over one-third of the museum collections in NPS. The session will focus on the comparable issues and corresponding recommendations with a highlight on the processes and technology used by the NMSC to streamline collection management planning documentation.

Teaching with Museum Collections, or, “How do we work with interpreters and other park colleagues to get collections out in the open and on-line?” (*Joan Bacharach, Museum Management Program*). The Teaching with Museum Collections (TMC) initiative introduces collections-based, student-centered activities to enrich NPS education and interpretation programs. TMC will emphasize the links between the “real things”: cultural and natural collections, and the places where those collections were found, collected, or used. Park TMC activities will highlight park interpretive themes, link to national education standards, and be made available online. Collaboration between curators and interpreters and educators will also be discussed.

What is A76 out-sourcing of museum

operations? (*Bob Wilson, Southeast Archeological Center*). Wilson presented background on A76 out-sourcing and described web sites containing a new definition of “museum operations” and new amendments to regulations. He defined relevant terms, including “inherently governmental work,” “museum operations,” “performance work standards (PWS) service provider,” “residual efficient organization,” and “most efficient organization.” He then discussed various issues, including staff time, quality control, funding, the Volunteers in Parks (VIP) program, inventory, minor property, use of equipment, past contracting, and reductions in the number of contractors.

Professionalism and training (*Kent Bush, Pacific West Region*). Museum collections in NPS are being endangered at an increasing rate due to inactive management. Key curatorial positions at the park, regional, and national levels have been allowed to remain vacant for extended periods of time, or be filled by indi-

viduals without the necessary education and experience. Some key positions have been abolished. In addition, there is no established training program for individuals entering the curatorial professions, and no training program for the continuing education of curatorial workers currently in the NPS work force. These issues need to be recognized and addressed. [Ed. note: the full text of Bush’s presentation is presented elsewhere in this volume.]

“Significance of Collections” discussions (*Abby sue Fisher, Keweenaw National Historical Park*). At the GWS/CR2003 conference, Fisher will represent Laurel Racine, who was asked by to lead the Museum Collection Significance Criteria Committee. The update will include a brief history of significance criteria in the NPS, how the committee was assembled, committee tasks, and progress-to-date. She will also outline what the committee plans to accomplish at their meeting on Tuesday, April 15.

