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OMAMAC 2017 Wrap-Up

Midwest Archives Conference

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Nebraska weather, noted for its determined and immediate changes, certainly gave us beautiful sunny days for OMAMAC 2017, the Annual Meeting held April 5–8 in Omaha, Nebraska. Blue skies covered the downtown Hilton, just a bit to the north of the Old Market, in an area of the city that increasingly offers new places to visit. Some of our MAC members even had a chance to be in two states at once if they visited the Bob Kerrey Pedestrian Bridge over the Missouri River!

And the programs shone too. Through the Society of American Archivists, MAC offered the “Cultural Diversity Competency” one-day workshop instructed by Helen Wong Smith. She focused on developing and engaging in learning experiences and opportunities to better understand individuals with diverse backgrounds, beliefs, behaviors, cultures, and values. MAC members attended the workshop free, as an opportunity to both learn and to assist in further development of this program. “Teaching with Primary Resources” provided information on how best to engage all levels of students and archival patrons with collections and repositories. Text mining and text-mining tools were the focus of “Getting Started with Text Mining Archival Collections,” along with how archivists and researchers can use them for collection access. Hands-on work made the “Exhibit Support Basics: Solutions for Small Institutions and Small Budgets” a very
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colorful workshop, showcasing tips, tools, and resources for creating exhibits.

Tours included a trip to the Joslyn Art Museum. The museum holds internationally known works of art relating to the American West, showcased in the exhibition *Wild Spaces Open Season*, as well as other genres exhibited in galleries of the museum’s European and American collections. We went behind the scenes to observe museum activities that make archives and museums similar and also slightly different as cultural heritage institutions. The tour to Boys Town included a visit to the Hall of History, which promotes and celebrates the legacy of Father Flanagan and the home he created, now open to all children, no matter their race, religion, or gender. The open house at the Reinert-Alumni Memorial Library’s Rare Book Room at Creighton University allowed us to browse through highlights of that collection. A walking tour through the Old Market Historic District, surrounded by industrial and warehouse buildings, revealed how the area has been made a showcase for downtown Omaha. An extra stop for ice cream sweetened the tour. The restaurant tours provided opportunities to see a bit more of downtown and to participate in the First Friday event that takes place every month to celebrate local creativity in Omaha’s historic neighborhood. We were also able to take in a Creighton University Bluejays baseball game and, of course, experience some of the best steaks Nebraska has to offer!

We were very happy to commemorate Nebraska’s sesquicentennial with a tasty birthday cake at the MAC opening reception on Thursday night. The event was held in the glass house at the KANEKO, a renowned gallery created by artists Jen and Ree Kaneko in 1998 and located in three refurbished warehouses in the Old Market. We celebrated surrounded by *Passion and Obsession: From the Collection*, an exhibit associated with the programming themes of the KANEKO: design, ideas, performance, and innovation. The KANEKO curators assisted greatly in the success of the reception by locating it in the heart of the artwork. If the wealth of conversations, smiles, and enthusiasm evident that evening was any indication, the venue was truly inspiring! We were treated to Reuben sandwiches made by a local restaurant, and we were able to taste locally brewed root beer and craft beer, as well as local wine.

The MAC Pals reception, coordinated by Natalie Morath, offered a chance for new MAC members to meet and talk with long-timers. The poster sessions, which were open to all archivists, allowed all MAC members to promote activities at their repositories. These specific sessions, along with Friday Forums, really enhanced one-on-one interaction between archivists.

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The MAC Members Meeting included a very special event this year following the “State of MAC” address given by outgoing MAC president Jennifer Johnson. Long-term MAC members Cheri Thies and Mark Greene received the MAC Emeritus Award. They both took the stage and generously shared memories of their experiences—educational, fun, and extraordinary!

As with every MAC event, we learned more about our colleagues, our work and its challenges, and how to navigate the inner workings of a meeting at a new location. Thanks are due to the Local Arrangements, Program, and Education Committees, who did their best to keep things running and facilitate a great meeting experience. Thanks also to our generous sponsors: Bellevue University Freeman/Lozier Library, Creighton University Libraries, Crowley Company, Great Plains Welsh Heritage Project, International Quilt Study Center and Museum, Museum of Nebraska Art, University Information Services, University of Nebraska–Lincoln Libraries, University of Nebraska at Omaha Libraries, and University of Nebraska Medical Center McGoogan Library.

If you missed out on a session, be sure to visit “MAC Forums” on MAC’s website to find presentations and resources from the meeting. Highlights of the meeting can also be found on Twitter and Facebook.