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Vice President's Column: MAC Meetings and Symposia Update

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Vice President's Column: MAC Meetings and Symposia Update

By David McCartney, University of Iowa

Dexter Edson Smith (1839–1928) isn't exactly a household name, and there's no particular reason that it should be. But at my office, the name represents the roots of the institution I work for. Mr. Smith was our first alumnus, having received his bachelor of science degree in 1858. He was the sole member of his class, completing his studies three years after the State University of Iowa (as we were originally known) opened its doors.

For nearly a dozen years, from the time I began work in my present position until 2012, I regarded Mr. Smith as something of a mystery and arcane novelty. We knew little of him. No biographical essay was written about him during either our centennial or sesquicentennial celebrations, and we certainly didn't have any documents or letters by him. An unknown quantity, at least to us, Mr. Smith occupied an important place in our university's history but did so almost anonymously. He was elusive, that Mr. Smith.

Pulling back this shroud became something akin to the search for the Holy Grail. Over time, we located published sources and assorted newspaper clippings about our first graduate. We learned that he and his bride, Ellen Frances Hutchins, joined the Freedmen's Bureau in 1860 and worked in Virginia and North Carolina before settling in New York State, where they joined the Oneida Community, a utopian society. He became a professional photographer; today many of his images of nineteenth-century Oneida life are part of a collection housed at Syracuse University.

In 1881, the couple moved to Santa Ana, California, where he became a citrus farmer and civic activist in Orange County's earliest days. His interests were many and varied—philosophy, economics, agriculture—and the two continued to pursue their desire to build an intentional community, this time in Southern California.

As time passed, we in our department became better acquainted with this unusual, perhaps eccentric, individual. Our best evidence surfaced unexpectedly one day, about four years ago, when a member of our staff discovered a letter he had written to a professor in our college of education, Forest Ensign, whose papers were being processed. In 1913, Prof. Ensign sought letters from noted alumni for a commemoration, and there it was, in a folder marked—

what else?—"Miscellaneous." It was our first (and, to date, only) primary source documentation of Mr. Smith. He signed his letter, "Yours for eternal progress."

Many of us seek some kind of Holy Grail in the course of our work; discovering Mr. Smith's one-page letter, while brief and short on details, has helped us solve a long-time mystery.

Elsewhere in this MAC Newsletter are details about this year's Annual Meeting to be held in late April in Milwaukee. We hope to see you there! Looking ahead:

2016 Fall Symposium, "Archivists and Copyright," Ann Arbor, Michigan, October 7–8, 2016

Ann Arbor's Hilton Garden Inn will be the setting for a useful and informative Symposium on copyright law and its implications for archives and special collections. Melissa Levine, lead copyright officer at the University of Michigan, and Aprille McKay, lead archivist for the University of Michigan at the Bentley Historical Library, will lead the two-day program. Symposium Organizing Committee cochairs, Martha O'Hara Conway and Olga Virakhovskaya, are coordinating the event.

2017 Annual Meeting, Omaha, Nebraska, April 5–8, 2017

Next year, MAC goes to the "Big O"—Omaha, that is! Our Annual Meeting will be at the Hilton Omaha Downtown, close to the Old Market, the Missouri River Walk, and the Holland Performing Arts Center, and a short drive to the award-winning Henry Doorly Zoo. The Program Committee, cochaired by Erik Moore and Sasha Griffin, and the Local Arrangements Committee, cochaired by Amy Schindler and Mary Ellen Ducey, are planning what promises to be a great meeting in the western reaches of the MAC region. 2017 is also Nebraska's sesquicentennial—will a birthday celebration be in order?

2017 Fall Symposium, "Transitioning from Good to Great Exhibits," Columbus, Ohio, date TBA

Exhibits are a key component of any outreach program, whether we work with archival collections in a private business, a nonprofit organization, a college/university,

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or a governmental entity. This two-day workshop will be copresented by three experts from The Ohio State University: Tamar Chute, university archivist; Jenny Robb, curator of the Billy Ireland Cartoon Museum and Library; and Erin Fletcher, exhibitions coordinator of University Libraries.

2018 Annual Meeting, Chicago, Illinois, or nearby suburb, date TBA

MAC returns to Chicagoland in 2018! Stay tuned for details.

This is my last column as MAC vice president. It has been a pleasure working with President Jennifer Johnson, past president Amy Cooper Cary, members of Council, and all of you these past two years. MAC's amazing members make this a great organization; thank you for the opportunity to serve.

Between-Meeting Council Actions

On November 18, 2016, Council unanimously approved the following requests of the Education Committee. All members voted.

1. To approve the additions to the MAC Annual Meeting Manual and Timeline set forth by the Education Committee;
2. To approve the workshop registration and honoraria rates for the 2016 MAC Annual Meeting in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, as proposed by the Education Committee.

On January 25, 2016, Council unanimously accepted proposed revisions to the Teller Committee Guidelines. All members voted.



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