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MAC Chicago 2018 Annual Meeting Recap

Midwest Archives Conference

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MAC Chicago 2018 Annual Meeting Recap

By MAC 2018 Local Arrangements Committee

The MAC 2018 Annual Meeting could have been a bust. The planned hotel pulled out of its contract with MAC at the last minute, leaving the conference without a location just days before the program was supposed to go live. Dates for the conference were much earlier than usual in the interest of keeping hotel rates affordable in an expensive city, but that put the conference right at the tail end of snowy season. Meeting planners wondered, where are we going to host this thing? Will anyone show up? And what do we do if a blizzard shuts down the city?



The famous Cloud Gate sculpture (more popularly known as the Chicago Bean) was one of many attractions for Annual Meeting attendees!

In the end there was no need to worry. MAC leadership and AMC Source found a new hotel—the Sheraton Grand—that had beautiful views along the Chicago River *and* honored the previously negotiated rates. The weather cooperated with sunshine and relatively warm temperatures. And not only did people show up, but it was the best attended MAC Annual Meeting ever with a total of 483 attendees!

Attendees who arrived at the Sheraton Grand on Wednesday kicked off MAC 2018 with some informative workshops. Expert presenters provided wisdom

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and instruction on a wide array of topics. Nancy Melley, program officer of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), offered insight into how to best navigate the grant application process and how to strengthen applications. Folks who wanted advice and instruction on managing small archival programs heard from Corning Museum of Glass associate librarian Colleen McFarland Rademaker who provided an overview of strategic planning.

Through the Society of American Archivists, electronic records specialist Mark Myers reviewed the unique issues that arise when appraising digital records. Lara Friedman-Shedlow and Lisa Calahan of the University of Minnesota further explored electronic records, discussing practical options for ingesting and processing born-digital materials. Other forms of media got some attention too. Andy Urich from Indiana University Libraries Moving Image Archives and Amy Belotti of Conagra Brands advised attendees not to fear their film and videotape collections and provided the basics for identifying and handling a range of media formats.

Thursday morning, attendees got a chance to get out of the conference venue and explore the city. The Local Arrangements Committee organized behind-the-scenes tours of some fascinating and unique Chicago repositories. Some facilities were within walking distance (or a short public transit ride) from the Sheraton, including the **Pritzker Military Museum and Library**, which features military history that highlight the sacrifices made by men and women who have served. Midwest archivists got a look at the world-renowned independent research library, **The Newberry**, and tasted a bit of local history at the **Chicago History Museum**. On the North Side Tour, archivists ventured to the Rogers Park neighborhood where they saw the Midwest's largest LGBTQ circulating library at the **Gerber/Hart Library and Archives** and heard about leather, kink, and fetish lifestyles at the **Leather Archives and Museum**.

Buses took some of our archivists farther out of the Loop on the Evanston and South Side Tours. The South Side Tour highlighted the history of African Americans in Chicago by visiting two important archival repositories: the **Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection of Afro-American History and Literature** at Chicago Public Library's Carter G. Woodson Regional Library and the

DuSable Museum of African American History. In Chicago's beautiful and historic Evanston suburbs, MAC-ers learned about the more than 100-year history of global humanitarian service organization **Rotary International**, social reformer Frances Willard and women's history at the **Frances Willard House Museum**, and black history on the North Shore at the **Shorefront Legacy Center**.

Back at the Sheraton Grand, first-time attendees teamed up with experienced members in the MAC Pals Program. At the **MAC Pals reception**, coordinated by Alison Stankrauff, new members got advice and mentoring from veteran conference goers.

WBEZ Chicago Public Radio reporter Natalie Y. Moore was the plenary speaker. The lifelong Chicagoan discussed the city's entrenched segregation and excerpted her audio documentary, which explores the topic through her personal experiences. For her book, *The South Side*, Moore visited local repositories such as the Chicago History Museum, the Harold Washington Library Center, the Woodstock Institute, the Vivian G. Harsh Research Collection, and the National Archives at Chicago; Moore shared her experience researching at these facilities during the Q&A.

Moore's talk primed attendees to investigate MAC 2018's theme of "Blurring Boundaries and Crossing Lines." Panelists found creative and fascinating ways to consider this theme: through discussions of disciplinary and institutional boundaries, how archivists frequently have to cross the lines of their job descriptions, blurring the distinction between artist and archivist, decentering whiteness in archives, and bringing new voices to the forefront. These and other topics gave attendees insight, advice, and instruction on how they can think outside the box to make the most of their work and collections.



Annual Meeting attendees had the opportunity to enjoy a wide variety of sessions.

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Underscoring the panelists' observations were **Friday Forums**, which focused on strengthening archives through diversity and inclusion in the profession and strengthening individual archivists with advice on presenting at conferences and preparing for exams. The **Poster Session** gave participants, particularly students and newcomers, a chance to present their work to colleagues. Throughout the conference, archivists could check out goods and services to help make their jobs easier at the ongoing **Vendor Fair**.



Poster sessions were well attended and offered insights into many valuable and interesting projects.

During the **Members Meeting**, MAC president David McCartney delivered the annual State of MAC Address, welcomed new Council officers and committee chairs, and recognized outgoing leadership. MAC award committees announced their 2018 winners, and members discussed proposed changes to the dues structure. The meeting concluded with Local Arrangement Committee cochairs Hathaway Hester and Andy Steadham handing out prizes to several lucky attendees!



David McCartney, MAC president, delivered the annual State of MAC Address.

Thank you to our sponsors the Chicago Area Archivists, DePaul University Office of Mission and Ministry, Dominican University School of Information Studies, Northwestern University Libraries, Oak Park Public Library, and The Newberry Library and to plenary sponsors Black Metropolis Research Consortium and Chicago State



Council discussed many issues with members, such as a proposed dues increase.

University Library and Instruction Services Archives and Special Collections. We appreciate the contributions of the following institutions: Armstrong-Johnston, LLC; Center for Black Music Research at Columbia College Chicago; DePaul University Richardson Library; Illinois Wesleyan University Ames Library; Paul V. Galvin Library; Illinois Institute of Technology; Pritzker Military Museum and Library; Rosenthal Archives of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and the University of Illinois at Chicago University Library. Special thanks to the Museum of Contemporary Art which hosted our opening reception, giving us a chance to mingle among the art!



Our generous sponsors provided many valuable prizes for the annual raffle.

MAC 2018 was a success thanks to all of the instructors, tour guides, panelists, and presenters who shared their time and expertise. To revisit your favorite session or to catch up on one you missed, head to midwestarchives.org to download presentation slides and posters. We look forward to continuing the conversation next year in Detroit!