

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUM ASSOCIATION
REGIONAL REPORTS
(2007-2009)**

**CurCom Board Meeting
at the
American Association of Museums
Annual Conference
Philadelphia, PA
2009**

MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUM ASSOCIATION

DAVID KENNEDY · CURATOR, CODY FIREARMS MUSEUM, BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, WYOMING

ELISA PHELPS · CURATOR, COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DENVER, COLORADO

The Mountain-Plains Museum Association Curators' Committee met in October 2008 at the joint MPMA/AAM Annual Meeting in Kansas City, MO. The theme of the Conference was "*Meet in the Middle.*" With 8 in attendance, the CurCom meeting was chaired by David Kennedy, Buffalo Bill Historical Center (co-chair Elisa Phelps, Colorado Historical Society, was unable to attend).

Discussion centered on the status of museums in the region and the ability of Curators to work as part of museums when many of us did different jobs within the field. This led to a larger discussion concerning "What does a Curator do?"

The group discussed ideas and possibilities for future MPMA program sessions and topics for roundtable discussion at future CurCom meetings. Committee members indicated they would like to be electronically connected between annual meetings. Kennedy collected contact information with the goal of initiating periodic contact to share items of curatorial interest and news from the AAM Curators Committee.

The 2009 MPMA Conference, to be held in Cheyenne, WY, is titled "*New West Solutions in Old West Settings.*" There is an MPMA CurCom meeting scheduled for this conference. The discussion subject is moving – whether moving a collection into a new building or moving for employment.

Relevant to this last point, David Kennedy is moving to a new position. As of May 15, he will be the Curator of the Cherokee Strip Regional Heritage Center in Enid, Oklahoma. Until he arrives at his new job, he can be reached at his personal email (montanakennedy@msn.com).

**Regional Reports
CurCom Board Meeting
AAM Annual Conference
Denver Colorado
2008**

MOUNTAIN-PLAINS CURATORS COMMITTEE

DAVID KENNEDY CURATOR, CODY FIREARMS MUSEUM,
BUFFALO BILL HISTORICAL CENTER, CODY, WY

ELISA PHELPS DIRECTOR OF THE COLLECTIONS & LIBRARY DIVISION
COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY, DENVER

The Mountain-Plains Museum Association Curators Committee met on September 14, 2007 at the MPMA Annual Conference in Fargo, North Dakota. With 8 people in attendance, the CurCom breakfast meeting was co-chaired by David Kennedy of the Cody Firearms Museum at the Buffalo Bill Historical Center in Cody, Wyoming and Elisa Phelps of the Colorado Historical Society. Kennedy assumed the position of co-chair previously held by Ella Maria Ray.

The group's discussion focused on the current MPMA conference and what has been of particular interest to CurCom members. Folks agreed that the slant of sessions towards technology was really helpful and that it was particularly interesting to see how museums and staff from different generations have integrated technology into their institutions. Members also noted that it was valuable to hear from leaders in the field such as AAM Board Chair Irene Hirano, and AAM Executive Director Ford Bell.

It was noted that the CurCom sponsored program session "The Power of Objects" was especially good. It was well-attended, very dynamic and generated a lot of "hallway discussion". Those present felt the theoretical approach was novel and suggested that MPMA continue the discussion in another program session next year.

Further discussion followed on a variety of topics

- Blockbuster exhibits and their institutional role and effect
- What about exhibits that generate controversy?
- It's easy to get stuck in your collections "bubble" and forget how what you're doing affects other departments.
- How does development drive the exhibit schedule?

Elisa reminded folks that the 2008 MPMA Annual Meeting will be a joint meeting in Kansas City, October 21-24, 2008, with the Association of Midwest Museums (AMM). David suggested a joint breakfast with AMM curators and possibly having a speaker.

The breakfast meeting closed with a discussion of session ideas for 2008, including a session continuing the theoretical discussion about the power of objects. Program

planning for the 2008 MPMA-AMM joint annual meeting is still in progress but at least (1) workshop will be sponsored by the Curators Committee.

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MOUNTAIN-PLAINS REGION REPORT

ELISA PHELPS – COLORADO HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Mountain-Plains Museum Association Curators Committee met on September 6, 2006 at the MPMA Annual Meeting in Taos, NM. With 12 in attendance, the CurCom breakfast meeting was co-chaired by Ella Maria Ray of Metropolitan State College of Denver and Elisa Phelps of the Colorado Historical Society.

Discussion centered on the idea of “Spanning the Divid: The Art and Science of Talking Across Disciplines” with the goal of getting a better handle on the roles and responsibilities of our institution colleagues, how they intersect with curatorial practice, and how to insure curators remain a vital part of the institutional dialogues.

Discussion was wide ranging and addressed such topics as the role of connoisseurship, opportunistic collecting, interfacing with the community, and institutional communication.

The group discussed ideas and possibilities for future MPMA program sessions including something that will address the role of connoisseurship and how to meet the challenge of increased responsibilities and diminishing resources. Ella Mira and Elisa thanked the assembled group for their interest and participation and the meeting was adjourned.

The next breakfast meeting will be held in September 22, 2007 at the MPMA Annual Conference in Fargo, North Dakota.