OHIO ARCHIVIST

Beth Kattelman, Editor
George Bain, Features Editor

ARCHIVES MONTH 2011
"BUCKEYES IN THE CIVIL WAR"

Inside this Issue:

The Society of Ohio Archivists is once again sponsoring Archives Month in Ohio. The theme for October 2011 is "Buckeyes in the Civil War." 2011 marks the sesquicentennial of the beginning of this bloody conflict (1861-1865), in which Ohio played a crucial role for the Union side.

The SOA Archives Month Committee selected this year's theme and a smaller sub-committee selected the images for the poster. The Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) has assisted with the cost of printing of the poster. OHRAB is sponsoring its annual Institutional Achievement Award competition, with the winner(s) to be announced toward the end of October. The Archives Month Committee hopes repositories will conduct events and programs, and post the information on the calendar on the SOA wiki's section for Archives Month.

For more information, visit the Archives Month page on SOA's wiki:
http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/soa/index.php?title=Archives_Month

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear SOA members,

October is Archives Month and the theme this year is "Buckeyes in the Civil War." There are easy ways that we all can participate whether by simply adding on to projects you've already started about the Civil War such as creating an online guide to your Civil War collections, an exhibit, lecture or other event that you can use to celebrate archives and your own Civil War holdings. Once you have an event lined up, let SOA know about it. Go to the Archives Month page on SOA's wiki (http://ohsweb.ohiohistory.org/soa/index.php?title=Archives_Month) to learn more about the ways that you can participate and commemorate Ohio's contribution to the Civil War. I'd like to thank our Archives Month Committee for their stellar work on this year's poster. Look for the poster in your mailbox in the upcoming weeks.

SOA has joined with LYRASIS for our fall workshop giving us a great opportunity to meet with allied colleagues to work on our mutual problems. Staying on TRAC: Digital Preservation Implications and Solutions for Cultural Heritage Institutions will be held on September 27 and 28 at the Ohio History Center in Columbus. This workshop will give you the tools to deal with your institutions digital issues and to create a preservation planning document.

I want to thank the SOA membership for entrusting me with the presidency of our organization. It's humbling to be selected by peers you hold in high esteem. The decade or so that I've spent working with and learning from SOA and its talented membership has been incredibly valuable to me professionally. With your help I hope to continue that tradition of meaningful labor. There are ample opportunities to get involved with SOA so please contact me, a Council member or a chair of a committee if you'd like to get involved.

Thank you,
Christine Schmid Engels
President
Society of Ohio Archivists

**Sara Harrington
Head of Arts & Archives
Ohio University Libraries**

Ohio University Libraries is pleased to announce that Sara Harrington has joined us in the position of Head of Arts & Archives. Dr. Harrington received her Ph.D. in Art History, her M.A. in Art History and her M.L.S.; all from Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and where she was most recently the Art Librarian at the New Brunswick Libraries. She received her B.A. in Art History and French from Boston College.

Dr. Harrington has extensive teaching experience, an established publication record and graduate assistant experience in special collections, and she is active in the American Library Association. In her new position, she will provide leadership and direction for the Mahn Center for Archives & Special Collections, the Harris Fine Arts Library and the Music/Dance Library. Her work will further enhance and integrate art and archival collections into the research and the curriculum at Ohio University.

CONGRATULATIONS TO THIS YEAR'S SOA SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS!

SOA scholarship winners (l-r. LaNesha DeBardelaben and Eden Orelove)

MAGIC AND MYTH OF ALCHEMY EXHIBIT

by Anna K. Heran

The Lloyd Library and Museum proudly announces a new online exhibit. The Magic and Myth of Alchemy (http://www.lloydlibrary.org/exhibits/alchemy/index.html) was created in honor of the International Year of Chemistry, an event celebrated by chemists and chemistry associations throughout 2011. While the Lloyd does not hold the most ancient treatises from Asia or the Middle East, the Lloyd holds a wealth of materials from the Early Modern and later periods, along with translations and later editions of some of the earlier volumes. A quick search in the Lloyd's online catalog yields approximately 140 titles pertaining to that topic in some fashion, dating from 1544 to 2010. The collection includes the works of Paracelsus, Maier, Glauber, Hermes Trismegistus, and that alchemist made even more famous through a mention in the Harry Potter ™ series, Nicholas Flamel.

The alchemical works have been used for a variety of reasons, from the inspiration for creating artwork to study by university students pursuing the topic academically. But, you might ask yourself, why would a primarily medicinal botany library have such a sizeable collection of alchemical volumes? First, the collection is not only eclectic, but also consists of many topics related to natural science and its history, including chemistry. Another reason for the alchemical resources relates directly back to the library's founders and their many interests. John Uri Lloyd, in particular, did a great deal of chemical research, taught chemistry, and invented his own cold still. His interest in chemistry and alchemy even extended to his fiction. The first novel John Uri Lloyd wrote, Etidorhpa, included references to alchemical themes; and, upon examining many of these resources, one can find notes written by him in the margins of several indicating his use of these books while writing that novel.

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To learn more about the Lloyd Library and Museum, please visit: http://www.lloydlibrary.org

This year, at the SOA annual meeting, three students shared their posters during a special session. Liz Haeuptle, graduate student with the Wright State Univ. Public History MA Program, presented "Capstone Project : Mound Science and Energy Museum." Liz was part of a group of graduate students who teamed up with the Mound Science and Energy Museum in Miamisburg, Ohio to relocate the collection and organize the Museum. Liz discussed the steps taken to affect the move, create a Collection Policy, and design a new floor plan as well as permanent exhibits. She also described efforts to establish an ongoing collaboration between the Museum and WSU's Public History program. Liz's enthusiasm to be involved in the preservation of a previously shrouded part of the nuclear age history was apparent.

Noel Rihm, graduate student with the Wright State Univ. Public History MA Program, presented on Wright State University's Public History Outreach Program "Teach to Outreach." Noel discussed the efforts to reach out to local schools and students. She explained how they

demonstrated to students the importance of primary sources, where and how to locate such sources, their proper care and management, and the significance of local historical collections. She also discussed the challenges of tailoring the program to different age groups. They visited a Middle School and an Elementary School. Noel ended by explaining how the focus of the program was sustainability – by advocating for primary

documents and making students aware of such resource early in life would hopefully in turn lead to sustainability of public history programs.

Eden Orelove, MLIS candidate with the University of Pittsburgh, presented "Improving the Preservation and Cataloging of the Artists' Book Collection at Carnegie Mellon University Special Collections." Eden explained her work with a collection of over 500 books. The collection represents a crossroads between art and books that provides a heightened sensory experience. She enthusiastically described her work with the books and their unique preservation challenges. She also explained how she worked with the existing staff to make sure she was creating a usable product. It was very important to her that the work continue, and to help ensure this she was looking into some grants to provide funding.

IMPROVING THE PRESERVATION OF ARTISTS' BOOKS: A SENSORY EXPERIENCE
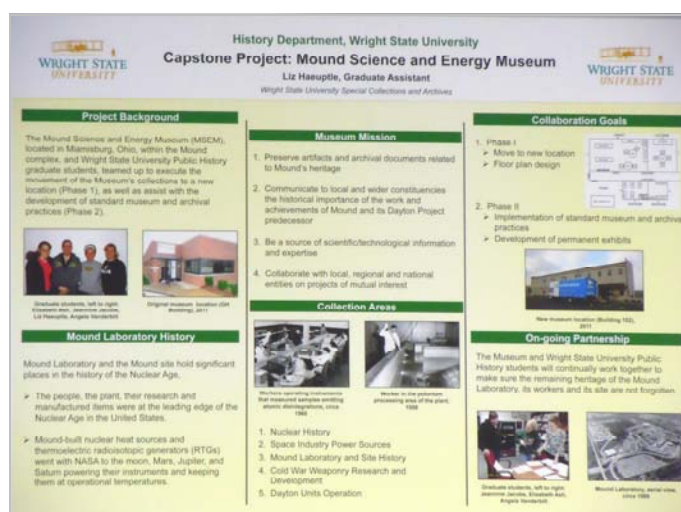
by Eden Orelove, 2011 SOA Student Scholarship Recipient

Unfortunately, many archivists and librarians are not familiar with artists' books. These books have extremely diverse content and styles and present a crossroads between art and books that provides a heightened sensory experience. You don't simply read the books; you interact with them to produce your own unique experience. The senses are awakened as you touch the variety of textures and envision the artwork.

Artists' books present a variety of preservation difficulties that will be discussed throughout this article. The goal of this piece is to provide you with a solid sense of the unique preservation issues related to artists' books.

First, I would like to introduce artists' books to readers who are not familiar with them. Artists' books are difficult to define because of their sheer variety. In researching a definition of artists' books, I came across two that I think best describe them. The first, written by Stephen Bury reads:

 "Artists' books are books or book-like objects, over the final appearance of which an artist has had a high degree of control; where the book is intended as a work of art in itself." [1]

This succinct definition clearly points to one of the most important aspects of artists' books – they are works of art. Artists' books are created by artists and are primarily artworks. These pieces can solely have images or include poetry or non-fiction or fiction writings.

Another definition of artists' books, by Dick Higgins is a little more elaborate:

…*"a book done for its own sake and not for the information it contains. That is: it doesn't contain a lot of works, like a book of poems. It is a work. Its design and format reflect its content – they intermerge, interpenetrate. It might be any art: an artist's book could be music, photography, graphics, intermedial literature. The experience of reading it, viewing it, framing it – that is what the artist stresses in making it."* [2]

Higgins emphasizes that the experience an artists' book provides is its most important element.

Now that you are acquainted with artists' books, I will discuss the preservation issues specifically associated with them. For one, many are composed of mixed media elements. For example, materials such as beads or ribbons may be attached to them which make impressions in adjacent books and cause significant damage. I have seen artists' books that are composed of handmade paper, metal and even coffee filters! Imagine a book with a cardboard cover that has beads hanging from it and includes handmade paper pages with pressed flowers inside. This presents a preservation nightmare! The materials de-compose at different rates and have different preservation needs. Of course, these books should not be dismantled; archivists and librarians need to work to provide the most suitable environment possible.

Complex book structures

present another dilemma. Accordion, flip, Jacob's ladder, tunnel, miniature and pop-up books, sound works and book sculptures are examples of complicated constructions. Because of these complex structures, it can be difficult to create proper housing. These books ideally should have individually crafted boxes. Of course, this requires a lot of time, resources and skill.

Another difficulty is presented by the variety of sizes and shapes of these books. They range from tiny matchbook sized books to hefty book sculptures. To accommodate these sizes, it is useful to arrange artists' books by size, for example miniature, stacks and oversized. This layout assures that the books will be located near similarly sized books, and smaller books will not be crushed by larger ones.

Additionally, artists' books collections often have to withstand the pressure of extremely high usage. Librarians tend to instruct and create exhibits with the books. The books can provide a unique
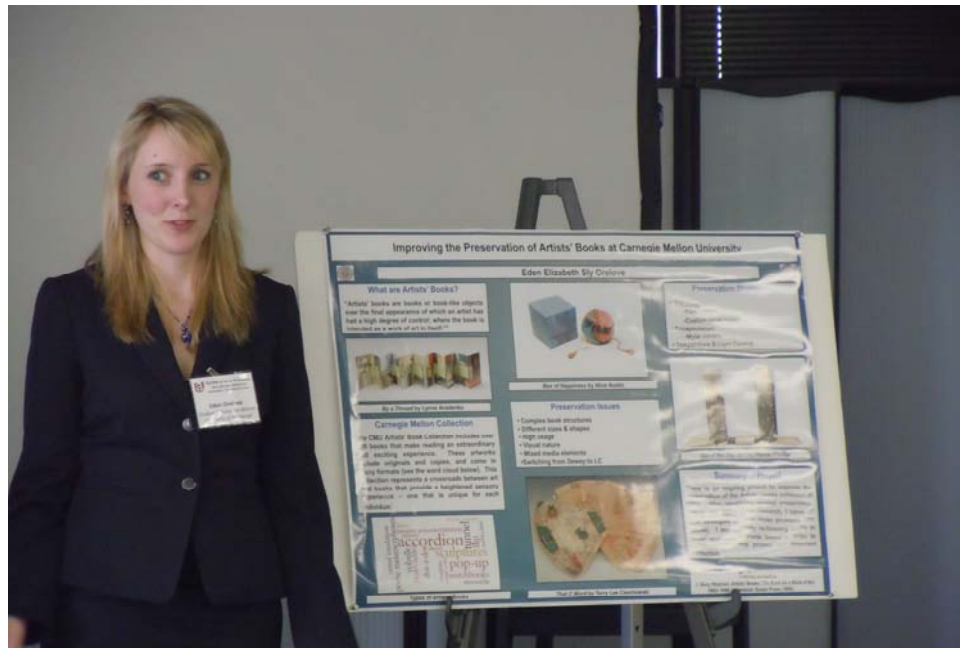
hands-on experience that improve literacy and provide exposure to art. Unfortunately high usage creates wear and tear on the books, making preservation an even more crucial need for these collections.

Finally, an interesting issue peculiar to the artists' book format arises because people commonly remember the physical attributes of the book, and seek to locate the books by those features. While working as an Information Assistant I often got requests like, "I saw an artists' book last week that was red and had beads on it. Do you know which one I mean?" And, it is not just students who

identify the books in this way – archivists and librarians often recognize artists' books by their visual features. Constructing individual boxes for these books creates a problem because they hide the visual identifiers. To solve this dilemma I suggest placing a picture of the artists' book on the outside of every box to help identify their physical attributes without removing the book from the box.

I found useful information about preservation of artists' books on the Book Arts Web and from my introductory MLIS class on Preservation. It is also helpful to read the websites of universities

and museums that hold significant artists' books collections, including the Museum of Women in the Arts, the School of the Art Institute of Chicago and Carnegie Mellon University. The most useful preservation strategy I found is to create enclosures for some of the more highly used and delicate books.

Constructing custom-made boxes and re-housing appropriate books in pam binders is another helpful, but resource-consuming task. Phase boxes can provide a basic level of support for the books, but it is preferable to create clamshell boxes, or other more permanent and supportive boxes. An inexpensive option is to place suitable artists' books in mylar covers. This preservation strategy is particularly useful for artists' books because mylar is translucent and so does not obstruct the visual appearance of the books. Another crucial consideration in preservation is always the effectiveness of the

temperature and light control. Proper shelving should also be installed because it provides better display space as well as much needed support for the bigger books.

Another step worthy of consideration is writing a grant to help procure funding for salaries and materials. Grant funds can enable institutions that lack the knowledge or resources to make boxes to hire professionals with a greater knowledge of conservation techniques. I recommend having the conservator/preservation consultant train the staff to make these much-needed constructions. This way the boxes can be created in-house, which cuts down on costs. Additionally, the box-making craft can be passed on to future generations of workers.

Finally, advocating for artists' books collections is imperative. Writing articles, such as this one, presenting at conferences, exhibiting these collections or even just teaching patrons,

other information professionals and the public about artists' books will make a difference. As mentioned at the beginning of this article, many archivists and librarians are not familiar with this fascinating book format. I have found that artists' books peak people's interests and inevitably lead to a lengthy conversation about the importance of book arts.

We all know that in these economically difficult times preservation often gets put at the bottom of our to-do lists. My hope is that you will now give preservation a higher priority. If you muster the resources to do even a small amount of preservation work, this can make a significant difference.

Notes:

1. Stephen Bury, Artists' Books: Artists' Books: The Book as a Work of Art, 1963-1995 (Aldershot: Scholar Press, 1995), 1.

2. Dick Higgins, "A Preface," in Artists' Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook, ed. Joan Lyons (Rochester: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1985), 11.

Eden Orelove recently earned her MLIS, with a specialization in Archives, Preservation and Records Management from the University of Pittsburgh. While attending graduate school she worked with the artists' books collection at Carnegie Mellon University. She presented on preservation strategies of artists' books at the 2011 Annual Society of Ohio Archivists Meeting.

TURNING PROBLEMS INTO OPPORTUNITIES: THE LICKING COUNTY RECORDS AND ARCHIVES PROGRAM

by Katy Klettlinger

The Ohio Public Records Law, better known as the "Sunshine" Laws, was revamped in 2007 with statutes detailing new procedures for local governments to provide public records access. As a result, many local governments across the state took a more active role in practicing effective records management in an effort to embrace open government. This prompted Licking County Government to take a significant risk. They hired a county records manager during an economic recession and entrusted one person to build a program from scratch with minimal funding.

Records located in the attic before salvage efforts began in 2009.

Before being hired in 2008, the county had no records management or archival practices in place. Departments were out of space to store records, no central location was available for customer research, and historical records were piled in vacant buildings, attics, and basements.

When listing priorities for where to begin, it was imperative to balance immediate records needs with what county residents considered was important. Since the program was under the authority of the Board of County Commissioners, who are a body of three elected officials, pleasing the public is a top priority. Promoting our elected officials in a positive light was identified as a strategy to gain additional funding and support for future records initiatives.

For many years, local residents had been advocating for historical records to be safely removed from the county's courthouse attic. Thousands of cubic feet of records stored in the area for over a hundred years were deteriorating from drastic changes in temperature and relative humidity, mold, dust, and remnants of insects and vermin. This was identified as the top archival priority and was used as the trigger to build the records program.

After the creation of a comprehensive salvage plan to identify records of historical value and employees from the County Recorder and Clerk of Courts Offices were trained on salvage procedures and safety guidelines, the local newspaper, *The Newark Advocate*, covered the attic salvage as its feature article on Saturday, December 13, 2008. When advocating for our program, we have learned that highlighting the problems we plan to fix brings the media to our door. The first lines of the article read:

It could be mistaken for the scene of a bad Halloween movie. Creaky doors leading to empty rooms with plastic covering a floor that might or might not exist, bats, a couch where someone long ago was murdered, mice, lonely exposed light bulbs dimly lit and an elevator that moans upward when the ground button is pushed.

The comments on the newspaper's online edition were abundant and brought the program's importance to the attention of the voters.

This and other news articles covering records salvage efforts have brought forth local residents, who have shown interest in the project allowing for us to create a volunteer program. Today, volunteers perform basic preservation, indexing, and other tasks as needed. They also advocate on our behalf. Volunteers have shared their experiences with us at community meetings, given presentations to the public about our holdings, and contacted our County Commissioners praising our efforts. Working with volunteers has been mutually beneficial. They have gained a unique experience in helping to preserve our county's past, while we have received man-hours to complete archival projects.

By spring 2009, seven hundred cubic feet of records from the attic were identified as historical and efforts were begun to create a facility with environmental controls for them to be housed. It was decided to create a three thousand cubic foot facility to only house salvaged records instead of constructing a building to house all department records. This decision was primarily made due to budget constraints. Despite this, the need for additional staffing was evident and two employees were transferred from the County Recorder's Office. This provided the opportunity for our program to fully implement records management practices for all county departments. On May 13, 2009, staff members moved into the transitional archival facility as a county department.

With a staff of three, efforts were discussed to identify records management needs and create solutions to address them. To accomplish this, interviews were conducted with county employees who maintain records of their respective offices. It was discovered that the employees, known here as records keepers, had no venues for

Clerk of Courts staff members during the project's first day.

consultation or training for how to perform daily records management tasks. Also, the volume of active paper records in offices had maximized available space and most departments, particularly those of elected officials, wanted to implement technology for improved public access to records.

The interviews were used as a tool for creating goals to form centralized services and become indispensable to the county, but also to teach records keepers how to maintain their records. To aid county offices directly, Records Keepers' Roundtable (RKR) was created for county records keepers to gain training, share ideas, and express their needs in January 2010. The

County Archivists and Records Managers Association (CARMA) who have held bi-annual meetings using informal, informative organizational structure since 2001 inspired this concept. RKR meets twice per year with thirty-five members representing seventeen different departments. Past trainings have covered implementing records management into offices and how to properly respond to public records requests. RKR has increased records retention submissions by 416% in one year and twelve offices have implemented records management practices to improve their services and efficiency, saving money in staff time, equipment, and supplies.

Since it's first meeting, RKR has advocated for a countywide records disposal program by assisting our department in efforts to collect funding for an industrial shredder. To cut down costs workers, under the direction of the municipal court's adult probation program, shred records to fulfill service hours. The cost to run the program is less than outsourcing to a vendor, and it

is projected the program's savings will pay for the industrial shredder by mid-2012. Today, our department provides this service free of charge, which not only ensures records are legally destroyed, but has been used as a bargaining tool to convince department's to practice records management in their offices.

The department's current transitional facility.

Another goal to secure the program's presence with county officials and employees was the creation of an imaging and microfilming program. Many business models propose that to become sustainable an institution should choose one service to perform best and use it to advertise other services. Our department wanted to show the county that records manage-

ment is not only about pulling records out of dusty attics, but that integrating paper records with technology would increase access, save money, and improve public services. Also, as a new department we knew it was imperative to embrace technology to survive.

One of the department's staff members had a background in records scanning and spearheaded the program. Training was received from consultant, David Cooney, who recently retired from the Imaging Program at the Montgomery County Records and Archives. David had experience starting an imaging program using hybrid microfilm practices and equipment. Training started in late 2009 and the program officially started in May 2010. During the training phase, a large project of historical records from the county's Water and Wastewater Department was used to exhibit the quality of work the program could create, which led to commitments from many departments who offered to pay for our services. A pay scale is used that allows us

to charge less than outsourcing to departments whose budget is not within our fund. This has secured our importance during budget reductions because a department that brings money back to the county is considered valuable. Also, putting money back into the county hands that departments would normally charge for with a vendor makes more sense. To date, it has secured the program's survival and allows for us to place records on microfilm as a safeguard against records that could potentially be lost during a disaster.

In addition to charging for services, the program has received imaging equipment instead. In early 2011, the department acquired a book scanner to extend its services and is currently in discussion to have the entire program's equipment maintenance costs covered for the next three to four years by another department.

Today, scanned records have improved staff access, freed up paper records storage space,

and will be placed online for public view. The program is considered successful because it has attracted the support of many county offices allowing for the department to receive support for additional needs such as archival preservation.

While much has been accomplished over the past three years, some critical pieces are still needed to administer a true records and archives program for Licking County Government. Discussions have started to locate and renovate an existing county owned building for the departments to house records from all county departments. The department's transitional building is filled to capacity and housing all historical records in one location is needed to administer full-scale archival services. A potential site has been identified and is expected to be available sometime in 2012. Despite the clear need for this facility, 2012 is also an election year for a vast majority of our officials. It will be a challenge to keep discussions going forward during

Katy Klettlinger is the head of the Records and Archives Department for Licking County Government

this busy time.

The management of electronic records in the county is still in its infancy. While individual offices have created their own in-house strategies for managing electronic records, the county needs one universal electronic records content management system (ECM). This year, a county office purchased the base pieces to create an ECM program. Our department and the Information Technology Department are working together to try to bring departments on board.

Overall, the money we have saved by implementing effective records management practices has helped us gain support in preserving our archival materials. As much as we prefer the scholarly pursuits of our jobs as archivists, building our department with a business-oriented mindset by embracing records management has cemented our existence and future growth during an economic recession. We look forward to the challenging years ahead and will continue to advocate for the ultimate preservation of Licking County's historical records.

MAKING A BAD SITUATION BETTER: THE PRESERVATION PROGRAM OF THE MONTGOMERY COUNTY RECORDS CENTER & ARCHIVES

by Tina Ratcliffe

In 2006, the Montgomery County Records Center & Archives in Dayton, Ohio, faced a significant challenge. Because of neglect, the effects of past natural disasters and inappropriate storage conditions, the historical records of Montgomery County were falling apart. Overuse and misuse by the public had resulted in the spines of historic books cracking and their pages becoming loose or missing. Books that had survived the 1913 Flood of Dayton had never been cleaned or conserved and were now filled with black mold.

Far worse, mold had settled onto the cloth covers of a majority of the books in the Records Center. The mold had taken over not just a few books but thousands of ledger-sized books on three different floors. The mold had advanced so far as to form a green, slimy layer on some of the covers. One floor was off-limits to employees because of their allergic reactions to the mold. The situation was overwhelming.

The Records Center staff faced

a choice. They could ignore the situation--literally close the doors and walk away-- and allow it to become someone else's problem in the future, or they could face the problem and begin to find answers to a seemingly impossible situation. Because of the county's legal obligation to maintain its permanent records, including court records and property records dating back to 1803, it was decided that the Records Center must confront the problem. The records were important not only to the continuity of the county's operation but also to the history of Montgomery County. Members of the public still used the records daily to answer questions about their family history or to settle property issues. To allow these records to become inaccessible to the public would have violated one of the basic functions of government: free access to public
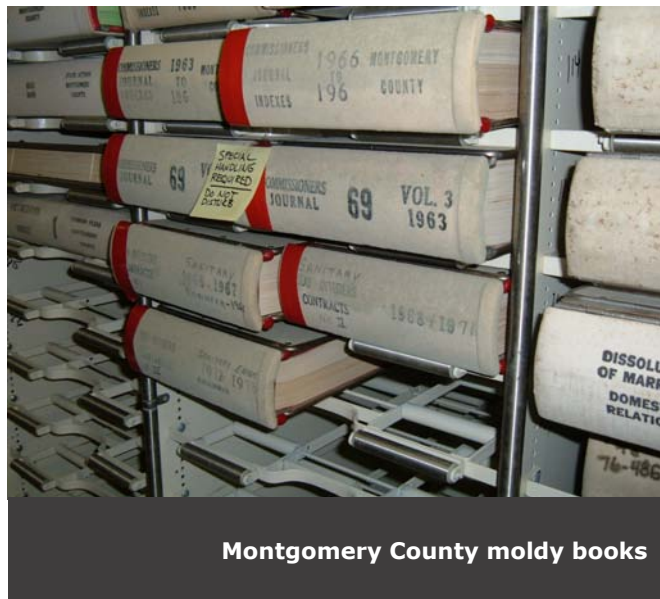
Montgomery County moldy books

records. The Records Center had to act.

Description of the Program

In January 2007, the Montgomery County Records Commission, in response to these problems, created the Preservation Center within the Records Center & Archives and promoted a member of the Records Center staff to supervise the preservation program. The first objective of the program was to find a way to save the historic records of Montgomery County. The program needed to decide which records must be kept and what was needed to protect them. Also, the program need-

ed to identify the causes of the problem and prevent it from recurring in the future.

Just prior to the creation of the Preservation Center, the county had treated the mold problem as a disaster recovery effort. Under the direction of the Montgomery County Records Commission and the Public Works Department, the county had contracted with a local company to remove active mold from any books. A new monitoring system was installed on the HVAC system to moderate the environment of a building that was hot and humid in the summer. But while these efforts reduced the mold problems, they did nothing to
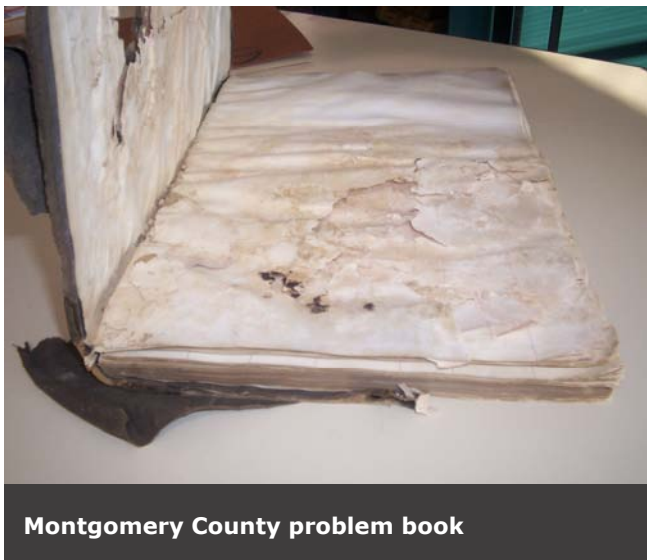
Montgomery County problem book

provide a solution. There were still thousands of books that showed the effects of mold. And the oldest records showed signs of neglect. Being in the Records Center was like standing in the middle of a town after a tornado had blown through. The immediate cause of the problem was gone, but the results remained.

After doing a broad survey of the condition of the books in the Records Center during the winter of 2007, the Preservation Supervisor decided she needed guidelines to give the program focus and direction. The resulting Preservation Policy emphasized controlling the environmental conditions in the Records Center, finding low-cost methods to preserve and protect historic records and, finally, identifying criteria to undertake the more expensive conservation of records.

As directed by the policy, the Preservation Center began daily monitoring of the environmental conditions within the building. The building that houses the Records Center, the Reibold Building, was first built in 1896. The Records Center occupies the 6th through 9th floors of the building. Despite adjustments made to the HVAC system in 2006, the building was still humid in the summer and dry in the winter. There was very little climate control. As a result, mold was still able to grow in the summer. The daily monitoring of the temperature and relative humidity in the building allowed the preservation staff to see when the heat and humidity changed over time and to predict where trouble could begin. In areas where excessive heat and humidity were found, fans and dehumidifiers were placed to deter the growth of mold.

In the course of the environmental monitoring, the Preservation Center uncovered a new problem: vinegar syndrome. A majority of the permanent records of the county had been

microfilmed. The master microfilm was kept in a room called the Vault. The environmental monitoring found that the Vault was much too warm and humid. As a result, not only was mold growing on the walls but some of the older film was beginning to degrade and liquefy. (This process is known as vinegar syndrome because of the vinegar smell it produces.) The preservation staff worked with the Public Works Department to adjust the temperature and relative humidity in the Vault to levels that would prevent vinegar syndrome and extend the life of the microfilm.

Concurrent with the environmental monitoring, the Preservation Center began a records survey to identify historic records. Each book was examined to determine whether or not a record was of permanent, historic value, whether it had been microfilmed and what condition the record was now in: excellent, good, fair or poor. Close

attention was paid to records of the most value to genealogists, house historians, property abstractors and county employees, the most frequent visitors to the Records Center.

Montgomery County mold treatment

Much to the surprise of the preservation staff, the records survey quickly uncovered a major cause of the mold problem: the lax destruction policy of the Records Center. Many of the records that were infected with mold were found to be non-historic, non-permanent records well past their retention. As a result, the county's Records Retention and Disposal Policy was aggressively implemented. Any book past its re-

tention was immediately destroyed. Any permanent record without historic value, such as accounting ledgers, were digitized and microfilmed in partnership with the county's Imaging Center. Once the digital images were transferred to microfilm, the records were destroyed.

As the non-permanent records were being destroyed, preservation efforts were beginning on the historic records. Books were swept with HEPA vacuums to remove inactive mold, dust and red rot. Books that may have been harmful to the health of researchers were removed from the public area. Cloth covers created in the 1970s and 1980s were found to be particularly susceptible to mold and were removed and discarded to be replaced by acid-free protective enclosures. Books were re-arranged on shelving to create more space around the books and prevent too many books from being

Montgomery County Tina Ratcliffe and books in office

stacked on one another. These simple, low-cost solutions eliminated conditions mold thrived in and made the records more accessible.

Using the results of the records survey and information gathered during the preservation efforts, it was possible to determine which books and records were worthy of conservation. Records were selected for conservation if they met the following criteria: high genealogical value, high historical value, poor condition and overall value and usefulness to the citizens of Montgomery County. A contract was entered into with Charles Price Paper & Book

Conservation, Llc., in Cincinnati, Ohio, to clean, deacidify, encapsulate each individual page in Mylar and re-bind selected books. Once returned to the Records Center, the books were safe to be openly accessed by the public and the information on the pages was preserved for future generations.

In addition to finding ways to prevent mold, the Preservation Center also found ways to reduce the overuse of the records, which had resulted in pages of books having gone missing and the spines of the books being cracked. Name indexes were created for a series of birth records so that researchers would not have to go through each book page by page to find the person they were looking for. Also, a digitization project was started in cooperation with the Genealogical Society of Utah and Wright

State University to digitize Probate Court records from 1850 to 1900 and to make them available through the internet.

Because of the economic downturn and staff reductions, the Preservation Center was consolidated into the operations of the Records Center & Archives in the fall of 2009. The preservation program, however, continues.

Results of the Program

Since the inception of the preservation program, there has been no major outbreak of mold. While there has been active mold found on individual books since 2007, the preservation policy outlined procedures that quickly eliminated the problem. As a result, the environment for employees in the Records Center has dramatically improved. There are no areas of the Records Center that are off-limits. There are fewer missed work days due to allergic complaints. The environment is much better for visitors, as well. Except for a handful books that have not yet

been conserved, all historic books in the Records Center are accessible to the public.

The overall condition of the records has improved. Cleaning the books and their storage areas has stabilized their condition and prevented the need for costly conservation. Changes in the environmental conditions in the Reibold Building and the daily monitoring of those conditions have extended the life of the records.

The most important historic records of Montgomery County have been conserved. Fifty-six books have been conserved by Charles Price. These books include the "first records" of Montgomery County, those from 1803 to 1820. All the birth and death records have been conserved as well as the Board of County Commissioners journals through 1863. Prior to conservation, many of the records had old, moldy covers. Many of their pages were loose or missing. In extreme cases black mold had grown inside books that had

been soaked in flood water in 1913. Once, these records were hidden from the public; now they are openly accessible.

By discovering so many non-permanent, non-historic records that were eligible for destruction, the preservation program saved county resources that would have been spent on storage costs. Over 7,000 boxes of records and nearly 1,000 ledger books were destroyed. To store these records in the Records Center cost county offices over $100,000 per year. In the end, not only did the destruction of these records save the county storage costs, but it also freed up room in the Records Center to store other records that were occupying costly space in county office buildings.

But by far the greatest success of the preservation program was the discovery of low-cost methods of preservation that, if followed daily, eliminate the need for so much county resources to ever be expended on the safety of county records again. Main-

taining proper environmental conditions, cleaning and ensuring adequate air flow around records will eliminate the need in the future for the dramatic rescue attempts such as the one Montgomery County had to attempt through the preservation program. If the policies of the preservation program continued to be followed, the vital and historic records of Montgomery County will be efficiently protected for generations to come.

Epilogue

In 2010, the preservation program won an Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board Achievement Award. Besides being a wonderful reward for much hard work, the award was proof to the elected officials that their continued support of the Records Center was well deserved. The preservation program has restored the county's confidence in its entire records management program. And, in these tough economic times for local governments, that confidence has been priceless resource for the Records Center & Archives.

Tina Ratcliffe is the Montgomery County Records & Information Manager in Dayton, OH.

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Founded in 1968, the Society of Ohio Archivists' mission is to exchange information, coordinate activities, and improve professional competence in Ohio's archives and manuscript repositories. Membership in the society is open to the public, and we invite anyone with an interest in archives and manuscripts to join.

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