Navigating Challenging Times

The 2009 Conference Navigating Challenging Times met at Kilauea Military Camp on May 14-16. The camp is situated on the edge of Kilauea Crater, just a few miles from the latest eruption in the world's most active volcano. This situation caused some challenging times for conference goers when after the keynote speech by Ku Kahakalau of Kanu o ka ‘Aina charter school, the portable vogmeters carried by Park Service employees started sounding their warnings—the air was unsafe in the meeting room because of too much volcanic gas. No problem—the KMC staff was friendly and helpful throughout the conference and this time they just moved us all to a new meeting location, a room with air conditioning and filters to keep out the vog.

After that, there were no hitches, and the challenges were largely confined to the bowling alley, where among others, Board Secretary Stacy Hoshino showed surprisingly professional form, even if his scores did not adequately reflect his polished technique.

There were numerous highlights. A Friday panel called Stories from the Brink—Survival Strategies and Tactics had exceptional chemistry—after harrowing tales of difficult times from Inger Tully, continued on page 2

We collected many wonderful comments and helpful feedback from the conference through an on-line survey which will help guide the planning for the annual meeting in May, 2010. Here is one comment in its entirety which seemed to say just what those of us who helped organize the event hoped to hear:

“I actually went with preconceived ideas that some of the talks would not be valuable to me, but came away with a renewed appreciation of all the great work everyone is involved in. All the talks validated the passion behind the scenes, which will hopefully be enough to keep us moving forward.

Being at the volcano was also very special. Being there, given the sense of place, gave more meaning to preservation; historically, culturally, spiritually, scientifically, ethically, morally, etc.

Stories from the Brink were especially moving, given our financial distress. But perhaps through these tough times, we really understand the reason why we believe in our institutions... and instead of placing blame, can now keep our dreams alive by creating new opportunities.”

Peter Van Dyke
Board President

Images from the HMA Conference

Left: Ku Kahakalau, the keynote speaker, inspired us with the educational philosophy of Kanu o ka ‘Aina, the Hawaiian culture charter school where she is principal. Right: Donna Saiiki of the Pacific Tsunami Museum talks as part of the “What Works on Hawai‘i Island” panel. Other panel members, are Donna Starr of the Kona Historical Society, Ka‘ulani Kimura with the Imiloa Astronomy Center of Hawai‘i, and Dolly Strazaur with the Lyman Museum.
Local News

Board directors Celeste Ohta and Sharon Tasaka enjoy sightseeing at Jaggar Observatory in the park. Behind them billows the plume of volcanic gasses that has been erupting continuously from an opening in the floor of Halema'uma'u Crater since March 2008.

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Arts museums, living history museums, archives, botanical gardens, and others. We were varied in our capacities: directors, curators, fiscal officers, development staff, registrars, and interpreters. About 50 people altogether attended sessions, representing at least 20 organizations.

At the Annual Meeting on Thursday evening of the conference, we thanked departing directors (Matt Mattice, Martha McDaniel, Carol Lovell, and Michael Pili Pang) and welcomed new directors (Cynthia Low, Mary Requilman, David De la Torre, and Michael Weidenbach). Many thanks to all these helpful people and to all who worked to make the conference a success.

Suggestions on Navigating Challenging Times

On Friday, May 15, near the edge of the Kiluaea Caldera (a volcano that happened to be erupting while all this was going on), at the Hawai‘i Museums Association 2009 Conference during the Affinity Lunch, with each table filled with staff from museums and other cultural institutions representing the State of Hawai‘i, a piece of paper was placed on each table and those seated were asked to write down one challenge that faced their institutions.

The ‘Ohi'a Table identified their challenge as the “impact and fallout of staff reductions and loss of morale.” The adjacent table presented three options for a solution: meet outside of the work area (“break bread” together) to reconnect with co-workers – boost morale to tackle issues when all return to work; appoint a board member to be in charge of staff appreciation, this will also help relations with the board and staff; highlight your mission and what you’ve been able to accomplish for both departing employees and the staff left behind – to bring focus to why we are all here and away from the extra burdens.

The Koa Table identified a few challenges: “how to do more ‘with less’ (many museums face reductions and are forced to continue serving at a certain level); the ‘doom and gloom’ of how to deal with staff morale; and how to keep the physical/personal interest in a fast moving digital world.” The adjacent table suggested that the “Digital world should be recognized as a communication tool and not a replacement of the physical museum experience; consistent and constant presence within the digital atmosphere.”

The Lehua Table identified its challenge as pest eradication. The adjacent table suggested: terminate all pests, start a good pest management plan, and integrate a “green” solution.

The ‘Iliahi Table stated that its challenge is “Getting people to care, from government funders and the administration to visitors.” The adjacent table gave these following options for solutions. “Use interpretation about your resources that creates a personal connection between your resources and your funding audience. (It helps if you can touch their feelings and make them cry.) Use subliminal messages in your orientation video, commercials, and PR information.”

And that’s what we talked about at our second lunch together at the HMA Conference and Annual Meeting.

Keola Awong of Hawai‘i Volcanoes National Park (left) joins Chipper and Hau'oli Wichman from National Tropical Botanical Garden. Keola started the meeting with opening protocol and an introduction to the site. Chipper gave a presentation on his garden’s experience building a LEEDS certified library/herbarium/research center.
Museum Day 2009

Enjoy free general admission for you and a guest to hundreds of museums and cultural venues nationwide on Saturday, September 26, 2009 by presenting the Museum Day admission card at participating Museum Day locations. List of participating museums and downloadable admission card at http://microsite.smithsonianmag.com. Restrictions apply.

Strengthen Your Museum

The Museum Assessment Program (MAP) is an affordable way to strengthen your museum and achieve excellence. Within a year your museum can conduct a self-study consult with a museum professional and gain the tools to become a stronger institution.

Apply for one of four MAP assessments:

- Institutional
- Collections Management
- Public Dimension
- Governance

Visit the MAP website at www.aam-us.org/map for application details. Museums will be accepted on a rolling basis through the postmark deadline of November 30, 2009. Space is limited, so please submit your application as early as possible. If you have any questions about the program, contact program staff by email at map@aam-us.org or by phone at (202) 289-9118.

The annual application is supported through a cooperative agreement between AAM and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), and the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

2010 Conservation Assessment Program

Applications Available

In 2010, Heritage Preservation will celebrate the Conservation Assessment Program's (CAP) 20th year of helping museums obtain general collections assessments. Visit our website, www.heritagepreservation.org to learn about CAP participants from the past twenty years and the improvements they made in collections care at their museums.

In 2005, Heritage Preservation, in partnership with IMLS, published the first comprehensive survey of the nation's museums, libraries, archives, and scientific research organizations - the Heritage Health Index. The survey found that 70% of collecting institutions had no current assessment of their collections. General assessments are a vital tool for all collecting institutions: they provide a summary of the state of collections and the conservation issues they face, they help institutions plan for collections improvements, and they are often a first step towards obtaining collections grants and accreditation.

CAP funds a professional collections assessment for small to mid-sized museums of all types, at a minimal cost. In addition, CAP funds historic buildings assessments for institutions with buildings that are 50 years or older. The assessment process helps museum professionals better understand and improve their institutions' policies and procedures, learn conservation and historic preservation best practices, and forge relationships with conservators and preservation architects. The resulting CAP report can help develop strategies for improved collections care, long-range planning, staff and board education, and fundraising.

In 2009, 100 museums in 39 states were selected to participate in CAP, including the Historic Costume Collection at the University of Hawai‘i, Mānoa.

The 2010 CAP applications will be mailed on Friday, September 4, 2009, to museums on the CAP mailing list and will also be available on Heritage Preservation's Web site at www.heritagepreservation.org. The postmark deadline for applications is December 1, 2009. The CAP program is now running on an expedited schedule, making it possible for museums to receive collections advice quickly. Site visits for participants can begin as early as January 1, 2010 and final reports must be submitted to Heritage Preservation by November 1, 2010. CAP is administered by Heritage Preservation and supported through a cooperative agreement with the Institute of Museum and Library Services.

To be added to the CAP application mailing list, or for more information, please contact CAP staff at cap@heritagepreservation.org or 202-233-0800.

Conferences & Forums

Western Museum Association (WMA)

Annual Conference:

A Rising Tide: Sustainable Practices, Green & Beyond


WMA CONTEST!
The annual meeting in Portland, 2010, will mark 75 years of WMA fostering rich social and educational growth among a committed and varied group of museum professionals. To get the celebration started, you can submit a session proposal for Portland, 2010; help us fill in the gaps; send us a program from 1940-1957 or 1978-1984; share a story from an annual meeting-gone-by; and/or bring us news of past members and leaders of WMA. Do any of the above and you will be entered in a drawing to win one of two Passports to Balboa Park - entry to 13 museums in the Park, valid for seven consecutive days; the perfect ticket for your upcoming trip to San Diego! Submit to valerie@westmuse.org.

AAM 2010 Annual Meeting & Museum Expo

Los Angeles May 23–26. 2010

AAM members can save 50 percent off the full-price rate by registering before Sept. 30. That's just $295 for over 150 thought-provoking sessions, great networking opportunities and special events brought to you by your L.A. colleagues. If you're not an AAM member, join now, and save. www.aam-us.org
Fall '09 Calendar

SEPTEMBER
15   Deadline: NEH Documenting Endangered Languages
26   Museum Day initiated by Smithsonian Magazine

OCTOBER
6    Deadline: NEH Digitizing Humanities Start-Up Grant
7    Deadline* NEH Picturing America School
     Collaboration Projects Applications
13-17 National Preservation Conference 2009, Nashville TN
24-29 WMA Annual Conference- A Rising Tide:
     Sustainability Practices, Green & Beyond, San Diego, CA.
29    Deadline: NEH Scholarly Editions & Translations Grant

NOVEMBER
3    Deadline: NEH National Digital Newspaper Program
14   Deadline: NEH Picturing America Application
30   Deadline: MAP Assessment Application

DECEMBER
1    Deadline: CAP Program Application

UPCOMING in 2010
www.speakupformuseum.org

The Hawai‘i Museums Association is a nonprofit corporation dedicated
to communication and cooperation among the staffs and supporters of
Hawai‘i’s museums. Membership, subject to approval by the HMA
Board, is open to all individuals, educational institutions, historical
organizations and museums interested in the growth and development
of the museum professionals and its activities in the State of Hawai‘i.
Individual memberships: Students $15, Out-of-State $20, Single $35
per year, Dual $65. For institutional rates and applications please refer
to the website at www.hawaiimuseums.org. Complete and mail with
payment to: Hawai‘i Museums Association, P.O. Box 4125, Honolulu,
Hawai‘i 96812-4125.

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which carries articles of professional interest to HMA members.
Submissions to Niihou are welcome, subject to editing, and should be
received c/o HMA at the above address by January 20, April 20, July
20, and October 20. Photos and artwork are welcome and encouraged.
HMA reserves the right to accept, reject and edit all submissions.