



QUESTIONS

for Laura Hartz Stanton

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Please describe the many activities of the Preservation Services department.

There are three lines to what we do. First, we do consulting work, where we work with institutions one-on-one and make site visits to help with needs assessments, preservation planning, collections management policies, risk assessments, and disaster planning. The second part of what we do is education and training, which includes presenting professional development workshops and conferences for people in the museum/library/archives field. And finally, we answer reference questions that come to the Center.

How is preservation different from conservation?

Conservation is about physical treatment of an object—to stabilize it, repair it, or prepare it for exhibition—whereas preservation encompasses preventive activities for collections items. These are things like housing, providing a proper environment, and making sure the people handling collections are trained properly. It includes disaster planning and pest management, too.

How did you get into preservation?

My background is as a museum collections manager and curator. In past jobs, I've mounted exhibitions and worked with the public, but I've always liked the behind-the-scenes work of housing, cataloging, and organizing the collections—the preservation side of things.

What's the best part of being Director of Preservation Services?

One of the most interesting parts of my job is working with a variety of institutions and seeing a lot of different, really amazing collections. I like brainstorming with

the archivists, collections managers, and librarians I'm working with to come up with practical solutions to their issues—not just prescribing something, but coming up with an answer that will work for them. I learn something each time I go on-site to an institution. Most staff members have been working with their collections for years and have come up with their own interesting ideas for blocking out light or covering shelves, for example. Those are things that I can pick up and possibly transfer to the next institution.

The other great thing is planning the conferences and workshops and getting to work with experts in the field, seeing how they think and how they explain a topic to an audience. It's another opportunity to learn.

Of all the site visits you've conducted, which was your favorite place to visit?

I don't have one favorite, because I learn something from each place, but there are a few collections that have really spoken to me, and I enjoyed having the chance to see them behind-the-scenes. One was The Wolfsonian at Florida International University in Miami Beach. They have a collection of art that dates from the late 19th century to World War II, which is a period that I'm very interested in. I also visited the Drew University Library, which has a collection of Willa Cather manuscripts. She's one of my favorite authors, and getting to see the manuscripts for books that I started reading when I was 12 or 13 was thrilling.

Locally, the Glencairn Museum is a really amazing place with beautiful architecture and an incredible collection of religious art. And then the Historical Society of Frankford—they're in my neighborhood and I was compelled to volunteer! They have a little bit of everything; it's a mixed collection that has grown with

people in the neighborhood donating everything from documents signed by William Penn to children's dolls to wedding dresses.

Describe your first museum memory.

I'm a Navy brat, and when my dad was discharged from the Navy—I was around nine years old—my parents took me out of school and we back-packed around Europe. We went to the Louvre, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Anne Frank House, the Van Gogh Museum—there are so many places I remember from that trip. I remember waiting in line with my parents to see the *Mona Lisa* at the Louvre and being too short, so my dad, who's six foot six, picked me up so I could see. That was the trip of a lifetime.

Teddy, your one-and-a-half-year-old, is one of CCAHA's favorite visitors. What was the first museum he visited?

When Teddy was six months old, we took a vacation to Virginia, and I really wanted to see Monticello. My husband, Patrick, carried him through the tour in the BabyBjörn. Teddy made it about halfway through before having a crying fit, so they left the tour early. Apparently this happens quite a lot, and Monticello was ready with a separate tour guide to take Pat and Teddy through the house by themselves so they could see it without disturbing other visitors. It was a good visitor experience, and I'm sure Teddy soaked in some of the Jefferson architecture. Maybe he'll end up following in his Mama's footsteps.

—KATHERINE MAGAZINER