

Name and Address of Repository:

Mint Museum Archives
2730 Randolph Road
Charlotte, NC 28207

Telephone:

704-337-2092

Contact Person:

Kathryn Oosterhuis

1.) What is the mission of the archives? Is there a formal written mission statement?

This archives is first and foremost an institutional archives preserving the records of the institution. In a secondary capacity they seek to augment the art collection with supporting archival material and help establish the Mint Museum's place in Charlotte's artistic and cultural history. They do have a formal written mission statement (attached).

2.) How many hours are they open each week?

Monday thru Friday; 8 am to 5 pm – by appointment

3.) How many staff of all types (including volunteers and student assistants) do they have? How many of these are professionally trained archivists?

4 total – 1 paid professionally trained archivist, 3 volunteers (1 professionally trained)

4.) What are the three main categories of patrons? How many patrons did they have in each of the last three weeks? Registration or security procedures researchers go through when they come to use the collection.

The three primary categories of patrons are staff, affiliated groups that support the museum and the general public (researchers). Staff reference requests are the most time intensive. They receive visits from researchers about twice a month.

On average in each of the past 3 weeks the archives has had 5-6 patrons per week. A total of 18 patrons accessed the archives in the past 3 weeks remotely for reference requests.

Visitors to the archives must sign in and receive a visitor badge with security, be escorted to the archives area and the visit would be supervised. Gloves would be required only in select cases.

5.) What types of archival records they are most interested in acquiring. Do they collect institutional records and personal papers, manuscripts, etc.? Does the archives have a written collection policy?

Institutional records are of primary interest for the archives but they are also interested in acquiring artist's collections that support the development of the arts in the Charlotte area. Specifically, artists of interest would be those very involved in the museum and its development. They do have a formal collection policy (attached).

6.) How do they make decisions about whether or not records are accepted?

In making collections decisions they first look to the material's connection to the museum. Space is limited so it must enhance the story of the Mint Museum in some way. They are also looking at the research value of materials for staff and researcher.

7.) What different types of finding aids do they have for their collections?

Finding aids are pdf only. Their website is not capable of more at this time. They are updating the website and have hopes to make changes to the finding aids with that update.

8.) Ask about their physical facility. Is it adequate? What changes could they make if they had the opportunity to do so?

They have recently had an increase in available space onsite including a separate office for the archivist. This has been incredibly helpful but space is still tight. There is pressure to look into the possibility of offsite storage for items used less frequently but the archivist is not in favor of that change. She would like to retain the collection onsite if there is any way possible. In the future they would like more space and ideally a more environmentally controlled space for storage.

9.) What do they consider their three most difficult challenges? What they consider to be viable approaches to solving the problem.

The archivist notes the three main challenges as time, space and lack of personnel. This is an archival department of one but she is also filling the role of records manager and has some IT responsibilities. There are not enough supplies or money to buy them. There is also no budget for personnel or increasing storage space. They also face some organization limitations like the inability to charge for copies or scans. The Mint Museum also has a policy against institutional fund raising for library or archives. They do not want any of those fund raising activities to detract from the greater mission of the museum. However this does leave the archives in a position of being a department that spends institutional money but does not make any.

There are a couple of approaches the archivist is applying to these challenges. Better and better space planning is key to overcoming the storage situation. Advocating for the department both internal and externally are key to building the relationships and getting the attention needed to both grow and receive funding. She also notes just how important

it is to be flexible in solution options on both space and use of time for the good of the archives and the larger institution. The archivist is also applying for grants every year to help with funding.

10.) On a scale of 1-10 how important does their institution consider the archives to be? Why? Any specific examples?

7 - The archives was initially established through a grant that supplied funding for both archives set up and archivist salary for one year. That grant required a continued commitment from the institution to maintain the archives after the year of grant funding ended. There had to be a significant dedication to the long term success of the archives to both get the grant and make the transition post-grant.

11.) On a scale of 1-10 how concerned are they about security issues relating to their collections? Why? Any specific examples?

3 –There have been no significant security issues so far. They do have one small secured storage area for valuable collections. This includes HR records that are retained in the archives. Established protocols are in place for dropping off items and taking items out of the archives in order to maintain control.

12.) How large is their collection? How many photographs do they have? What do they consider to be their most unusual item of collection?

The collection is only 500-600 linear feet currently. It contains about 1000 photographs. But the most unusual item is VERY unusual. The collection contains the remains of the former curator, Ms. Delhome. Ms. Delhome passed away leaving no family or significant connections. Her remains were left in the custody of the museum she dedicated her life to. There are plans to have a formal ceremony and appropriately dispose of her ashes in the future.

13.) To what professional associations does the archivist belong? What professional journals and other literature do they read to keep up with developments in the archival field?

The archivist is a member of the following organizations:

SAA – Society of American Archivists

SNCA – Society of North Carolina Archivists

NCLA – North Carolina Library Association

AAM – American Alliance of Museums

SEMC – Southeastern Association of Museums

She keeps up with the SAA journal, SNCA journal and listservs as the literature she maintains. She specifically notes the SAA Lone Arrangers listserv as helpful for her.

14.) What was your overall impression of the archives and how it is operated? What surprised you about the archives?

I'll start by saying that I am so excited to have had the opportunity to visit the archives of the Mint Museum. My undergraduate degree in Arts Management gives me a particular interest in library and archival work in that environment. I was not disappointed in my time with Kat, Mint Museum archivist.

The Mint Museum instituted its archival program in 2012 with the help of a grant awarded specifically for the purpose of getting a new archives off the ground. The grant funded the salary and professional development of the archivist for one year as well as all the associated startup costs like shelving, boxes, folders, etc. It was a requirement of the grant that the institution was committing to the long term success of the archives. Kat Oosterhuis was hired in 2013 to be the first official archivist of the Mint Museum archives.

The first thing that struck me was just how confined a space Kat works in every day. Her tiny desk and two chairs sit in a room filled to immobility with shelves loaded with boxes. Her office is her archival storage space. It was really interesting to me to see what it really looks like to be "lone arranger". We have discussed that environment in class and it seems very intimidating. Seeing it in person made it seem lonely as well. I was also struck by the accomplishments of this "lone arranger". This is a small but growing archives. Kat has been on the ground level of setting policy and creating an archive from scratch. She has built something real and tangible out of disorganization and mess. What an amazing opportunity for a new archivist, maybe a little scary but amazing! She has great ideas for future outreach to local artists and affiliates of the museum to expand the collection. She has a long range vision for what this can be.

I gained a lot of insight into the many levels of relationship building that will make this growing archives successful. Just as we had discussed in our early classes she conducted a full survey of every department as step one. She took the time to get to know people in every area of the museum. I think, after my time with Kat, one of the most important things an archivist can be is adaptable. She has taken on the role of records manager and SharePoint administrator for the facility to help build key relationships and establish herself as a team player. She also works closely with donors, and as we discussed in class sometimes takes on things that aren't ideal in order to maintain a good donor relationship.

This meeting was also really beneficial to me on a more personal level. Like myself, Kat has approached her MLIS and Archives as a second or even third career. I appreciated her insights into the job market from that perspective. She emphasized the need to differentiate yourself and maybe even an extra sense of urgency that comes with being older and beginning a new career.

I took away from my visit a true respect for the "lone arranger" and her ability to remain positive, even optimistic, in the face of challenges. I also got a better sense of the

emotional intelligence that an archivist needs in order to be successful. You have to navigate a lot of challenging situations both internally and externally as you struggle over budgets, space, policy and purpose. The real world of the small archives is full of challenges but it was also very clear that it is exceptionally rewarding. It is so clear that Kat loves what she does and could not be happier with opportunities ahead of her.