



Sixty Years of Service:

A History of the Mountain Plains

Museums Association

HISTORY

*By Georgianna Contiguglia*

## PREFACE

The idea of creating a book about the history of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA) only came about because of a project to consolidate MPMA's records into one location and store them according to proper archival methods. Boxes of MPMA's history had been located for at least two decades at the Littleton Historical Society, under the watchful eye of Lorena Donahue, and another set was stored at the Colorado Historical Society, a few miles down the road in Denver. About seven years ago, Matt Wilson, a very active MPMA Board Member, initiated the idea of making the archives accessible. He spearheaded the big job of gathering the numerous resources into one location and reducing the unwieldy number of boxes (around 150) by weeding out extraneous information. He also secured a donation for archival supplies, boxes, and files so that the archives could be properly stored. If he had not initiated the consolidation project, the writing of this history would not have been possible. His foresight turned the MPMA archives from a batch of boxes located in and around Denver into something accessible (fewer boxes, similar items in one place, etc.). We cannot thank Matt enough for putting into place the structure that made the writing phase possible.

During this consolidation process, those of us who looked through the contents of these old boxes found it to be a fun trip back through time. What added to the fun were all the local MPMA alums that Matt pulled in to help: Jean and Anne Rodeck, daughters of one of MPMA's founders, Hugo Rodeck; Kittu Longstreth-Brown; Lorena Donohue; and Steve Friesen. MPMA Staffer Erin Barrette also pitched in on the project. When this phase was done, all of the volunteers came over to Monta Lee's house for a celebratory dinner. There was no doubt in our minds that the archives were a nice and important record for MPMA – after all, we are museum people and understand the value of our history. However, we had no idea how our archival boxes of “stuff” dating back to the beginning of the organization (1953 and perhaps earlier) was unique. That is, until Monta Lee and then MPMA president, Jay Smith, went to the 2010 annual meeting of the Council of Regional Associations in Washington, D.C. and mentioned the archives to the assembled group. The reaction was not what was expected: “What? MPMA has an archive? We don't have one.” The fact that of the six regional associations, one of the smaller ones did have an archives turned out to be a game changer. It was now imperative that MPMA would have to write our history no matter what.

We knew that the writing of this history would be a big project and a few years went by because there was no one to do it. These things don't happen overnight; you have to find the right person. MPMA was fortunate that the right person initiated the archives project, as Matt did, and now the right person was needed for writing the history. A few years ago, Monta Lee finally figured out who that person would be. As it happened, this choice turned out to be the only person who could have managed this challenge. Georgianna Contiguglia may have hesitated a few seconds, but she seemed to say "yes" almost as soon as she was asked. She had just retired as president / CEO of the Colorado Historical Society, had served on many association boards, and knew the history of the museum field better than most. Moreover, she had served on the MPMA Board for many years and had come to love the organization.

Georgi jumped in with both feet. She had many questions and rounded up a core group of folks to help her find answers to those questions. In her attempt to connect the dots with the story she found in the files, she had to track down dates, titles, and names that were not always in the files. Towards the end of her research, Monta Lee went with her to the storage unit that housed our archives and helped her locate some final details. They found a few more things about MPMA, uncovered a few more names from the past and together, enjoyed the process of bringing back into the light the people and events that had shaped MPMA over its 60 year history. "Joining Georgi in that dark and sterile storage unit showed me what a gift it was to be with Georgi as she did her final research into MPMA's archives. We laughed over old photographs, the Resolutions and the people who have given us so much joy over the years," recalled Monta Lee.

We are grateful to Georgi Contiguglia for writing the history of MPMA. She did this on her own time and without remuneration, all because she believed strongly in the mission of the project: "to put down on paper the history of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association." Thanks to Georgi, names from MPMA's past are now being brought back into the light so that all of us may see the big shoulders we stand upon today. Those shoulders are particularly important to know about in what is a significant year for this regional association. As MPMA celebrates the 60<sup>th</sup> year since its establishment, we all can understand what went into creating the organization and who the people were who kept it going and viable over six decades. And we can also see how the museum field

has changed in that time, since Georgi blends that narrative expertly throughout MPMA's history. It is a good story that she tells. However, it would still be locked away in the archival boxes had Georgi not been there to bring it to life. We owe her a sincere debt of gratitude and encourage all MPMA members past, present, and future to offer a hearty "thank you!"

*By Monta Lee Dakin, MPMA Executive Director, Littleton, CO; and Joseph B. Schenk, MPMA President and Director of the Art Museum of South Texas, Corpus Christi. TX.*

# **“Sixty Years of Service: A History of the Mountain- Plains Museums Association”**

***By Georgianna Contiguglia***

**Introduction and Thanks:** In 2011, the Executive Director of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA), Monta Lee Dakin, asked if I would write a short history of MPMA for the association’s 60th birthday. Being retired from museum work, and having enjoyed the educational and fellowship benefits of MPMA, I readily agreed, thinking, with the deadline two years off, “how hard could the project be?” MPMA’s members come from diverse museum backgrounds – art museums, nature centers, history museums, science museums, children’s museums and a variety of halls of fame. And one thing we know about museum people, they are dedicated to maintaining a record of their business. So it is that MPMA has accumulated a good-sized archive comprised of about 20 heavily laden file-sized boxes of archival materials. We owe this treasure in no small part to several editors of the association’s publication, *Proceedings*, the later conference programs, fondly called *Precedings*, and the historians of the association who consistently, but nicely, badgered board members and others to send their files to the MPMA historian. In no small measure this task fell over the decades to MPMA historians James Forrest, Judy Heberling, and Lorena Orvananos Donohue and Archivist Matthew Wilson.

Organizing our archives has been an important follow-up to the process of collecting our history. In recent years, Kittu Longstreth-Brown, Jan Postler, Jean Rodeck, Anne Rodeck Schaefer, Erin Barrette, Steve Friesen and Matthew Wilson industriously took on the task and made notable contributions. The result of their work is a manageable source of material that is a goldmine for the researcher. Monta Lee Dakin also has maintained electronic files that are more easily shared than the heavy archival boxes that I initially started with. I am grateful for their efforts, and those of others not known to me, who worked on our archives over many decades.

Every writer is indebted to individuals who read the manuscript and offer corrections and suggestions. In this arena I have been privileged to have the assistance of several people whose personal affiliation with MPMA spans decades. These friends have helped to set the record straight when sources conflict, have offered editorial comments, and have offered insight and their own interesting stories and perspectives on the information provided in this history. Thanks to Peter Tirrell and Monta Lee Dakin for taking on this task. My thanks also go to David Lintz, who edited the manuscript and helped answer many questions I had, and Susan Romeo, who prepared the manuscript for its publication on-line.

This history is written at an opportune time when it is possible to publish on-line without incurring the cost of printing hard copies of the history. This has the added advantage of enabling MPMA to update and edit the history as information is corrected or expanded. The history is organized by decades, and, for the sake of continuity, I have tried to follow important themes, issues, or ideas through the decades, placing them in context with national issues in the museum field. As a result, the history does not move along chronologically year-by-year. My review of the archives revealed that MPMA business organized itself into two categories: 1) the structure of the organization and 2) the programs and services MPMA offered its members. Thus, each decade is divided into these two categories, occasionally with sub-categories for the sake of clarity. Upon the advice of editor, Steve Grinstead, I have included reference information within the text of the document rather than as footnotes. While this is a less formal technique of citing documentation, in my opinion, it makes the document more readable. Most MPMA members are affiliated with several institutions over the course of their careers. Therefore, when an individual's name is mentioned in the text, I have chosen to include the institution the person was affiliated with in context of the time period under discussion.

Doing research for this project was a pleasure! The process enlightened me about the many people whose dedication and efforts fulfilled the mission and spirit of MPMA. While the text names many individuals who participated in the association, not everyone who contributed to the growth and well-being of the association is mentioned. Because there have been so many participants, it was not possible for all to be mentioned in the text, although their contributions were critical to the association's progress. MPMA is preparing an appendix containing lists of officers and other pertinent data to help fill this void. The project provided me with a trip down memory lane once I reached the decades of my own involvement with this association. The names, the issues, the topics and the fun were all revived for me. I guess this is why people write their memoirs. Please consider this a memoir of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association.

## Setting the Foundation – The 1950s

*Mountain – Plains, Mountain – Plains,  
From the Rocky Mountains to the grassy range,  
We sure get a whole lot done, and boy do we have fun!  
Runnin' museums out in the Mountain – Plains.*

From “Mountain – Plains Breakdown” by Jan Postler

**Overview of the Decade:** In the 1950s, a small group of energetic museum people from the Rocky Mountain West and the Great Plains decided to establish an association of museums modeled on others established under the aegis of the American Association of Museums (AAM, currently the American Alliance of Museums). They began with an informal meeting in 1953 and held their first professional conference in 1954. By the end of the decade, they had established the Mountain-Plains Museums Conference and a network for communication and education for museum professionals and volunteers throughout a ten-state region.

**Organizational Structure and Operations:** The lyrics to the *Mountain-Plains*

*Breakdown*, pretty well of the get a whole twenty-fifth G. Rodeck association, document. and minutes September



a crowd-pleasin', knee stompin' guitar riff sums up the overall philosophy of the people Mountain-Plains Museums Association. They lot done and always have fun doing it! At the anniversary of the association in 1977, Hugo prepared a summary of the founding of the which is reprinted as an appendix to this The story below is a summary of his remarks of the first organizational meeting held 17, 1953.

At the June 1953 annual conference of the American Association of Museums in Buffalo, New York, a group of enthusiastic members of AAM from the west-central part of the country discussed the founding of the “Prairie Museum Conference” to include Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota, Oklahoma, North Texas (while the minutes of the September 17, 1953 indicate that only North Texas was included, all later references indicate that the entire state of Texas was represented), and Wyoming, sixty-seven museums in all. W. E. Eigsti, of the Hastings Nebraska House of Yesterday, volunteered to chair the meeting. Dr. Eugene Kingman, Dr. Hugo G. Rodeck, Eugene McFanrand, Louis Powell, Maxine Begin, Marjorie Schanfeldt and C. Boone McClure comprised the remainder of the group. They decided that each

state would have a Vice President and that annual programs would be held and rotated through each member state. The group would appoint, for one year, a conference Program Chair who would assume Chairmanship of the Association the following year. At a follow-up meeting in September at Cheyenne (WY), W. E. Eigsti, was selected to be Chair\*, C. Boone McClure was Secretary, and Hugo G. Rodeck, Director of the University of Colorado Museum, was appointed Host-Chairman for the 1954 conference, with Dr. Joe Ben Wheat, also of the University of Colorado Museum, appointed Program Chair for the conference. In addition, the state of Minnesota chose to leave the group and become a member of the mid-west conference of museums.

*\*Over the years the officers of the association changed and the number expanded. MPMA records show a few disparities. The author decided to provide a list of annual officers as an appendix to this document. We welcome corrections and additions if sufficient documentation can be provided.*

As noted in “Mountain -- Plains Museums Conference, Cheyenne, Wyoming, September 17, 1953,” the group determined the purpose of the annual conferences would be to “discuss and exchange materials, display problems, new techniques, and curatorial activities.” The first conference would be “exploratory ... in so far as subject matter was concerned” with round-table discussions. Later in the meeting the group adopted the name “Mountain -- Plains Museums Conference” (MPMC). A report of the meeting was sent to AAM and published by the AAM in *Museum News* of October 15, 1953:

#### ***MOUNTAIN PLAINS MUSEUMS CONFERENCE FORMED***

*Representatives of museums in Colorado, Kansas, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North and South Dakota, Texas and Wyoming met at the Wyoming State Museum, Cheyenne, on September 17 to form a regional museums organization for these states. A new conference, the Mountain Plains Museums Conference, was created, and announcement was made that its first regional meeting will be held at the University of Colorado Museum, Boulder, on September 8 and 9, 1954. Hugo G. Rodeck, director of the museum, is chairman for the meeting. Joseph B. Wheat, curator of anthropology at the museum, is program chairman.*

The May 15, 1954 minutes of the MPMC meeting, held during the AAM annual conference, reflect the purpose of the association to be a regional extension of AAM and to provide information pertaining to collecting and preserving museum materials, preparing materials for exhibition and financing museums. MPMC also hoped to “stimulate those who do not belong to the national organization [AAM] to become members, either individual, institutional, or both.” Founders of the association determined that the structure of MPMC continue to have a “flexible



form until the need for a more formal organization was felt.” They also determined that the location of the annual conferences would rotate throughout the various states of the region.

The association held its first annual conference in 1954 in Boulder, Colorado. Dr. Ward Darley of the University of Colorado gave the welcoming address and Dr. Carl Guthe, Research Associate of the American Association of Museums (AAM), gave a history of AAM and other regional museum associations. Various individuals gave reports on the activities of museums in the region. Attendees stayed at the Boulder Travelodge.



When members accepted the invitation of the Fort Worth Children’s Museum for the location of the 1955 conference, members voted down a suggestion that MPMC “pass a resolution supporting desegregation in museums,” a suggestion initiated to express the association’s dissatisfaction with current segregation practices in the South. The topic was voiced again later in the conference, but no action was taken. While inaction reflected MPMC’s attitudes toward segregation in 1954, the fact that the resolution was proposed anticipated MPMC’s interest in diversity and inclusion that members espoused a decade later.

By 1956, minutes of the association reflect that MPMC declared itself a “popular movement” with no elected officers except a “permanent secretary” who maintained a record of the association’s proceedings and who served a three-year term. For a while, the State Representatives, Program Chair, and various volunteers were appointed to attend meetings and serve on committees.

Minutes of the 1957 MPMC Annual Conference reflect discussions of how better to organize MPMC business “to provide mailing lists, validate interim committee work, and authenticate discussions.” To this end, MPMC operating procedures were approved at the fifth annual conference in San Antonio, Texas, held in October 1958. Minutes of the conference indicate that the essential purposes of MPMC were an annual meeting “for the exchange of ideas and information and the opportunity to observe other museums at close range, and the support of the *Clearing House NEWSLETTER* as a recording and communication medium.”

Additionally, the minutes recorded that the Chairman of the upcoming conference should be an official representative of the institution hosting the conference. For purposes of leadership succession, it was determined that, at the end of the MPMC annual conference, the Conference Chair would become the Chair of MPMC for the upcoming year. The Chair could establish committees to assist in organizing the annual conference and had authority to appoint individuals to be in charge of those committees. The Secretary-Treasurer, who served a three-year term would maintain records, collect dues and subscriptions from members, and disburse funds for the conference.

Members also established a complicated schedule of membership dues: \$6 for institutional members, of which \$5 would go to the publication of the *Clearing House NEWSLETTER*; staff of institutional members would pay \$1, but would not receive a copy of *NEWSLETTER*, but could pay \$3 if they wished also to receive a copy of the publication; individual members who were not staff of a member institution would pay \$5, of which \$2 would pay for their subscription to *NEWSLETTER*. Members also determined that host institutions could set a nominal registration fee for the annual conference and that organizational vote would be by individual members present at the annual business meeting. These fees were recorded in the Conference Minutes, Fifth Annual Meeting of the Mountain-Plains Conference October 9-11, 1958, Witte Museum, San Antonio, Texas. Treasurer's reports are not available for much of the 1950s, but information that does exist indicates that the association's cash on hand did not exceed \$1,500.

**Conferences, Programs and Publications:** With certain exceptions noted below, the content of the annual conferences in the early years consisted of programs to enhance members' museology techniques. Topics on cataloguing, exhibit techniques, conservation, security, education and public relations appeared in the programs. Conferences included sessions on issues and operational problems of small museums that reflected the composition of museums in the region.

*Clearing House NEWSLETTER* included interesting papers presented at the MPMC annual conferences. Proceedings of the first conference, held in Boulder, Colorado, published in the *NEWSLETTER*; report that Dr. Carl E. Guthe, AAM Research Associate, presented his "Observations on Museums." An article in *Clearing House NEWSLETTER* 174 (this issue numbering system had been adopted by the Western Museums Conference back in the 1940s) noted that museum exhibits had changed from the display of many objects to "the use of objects to tell a story," with color, texture, lighting and labels working to enhance the story. The establishment of national standards "defining a true museum" was among the topics of discussion at the 1957 conference. A survey of MPMC members on this topic was sent to AAM.

The 1958 conference program included broader, more philosophical topics such as “Higher Standards for a New Museum Public” and “The Place of Science in our Museums.” Presentations were enthusiastically covered in the *San Antonio Light* (sic) newspaper during the days of the conference. In “U.S. Called Leader in Art,” published in the October 10, 1958 paper, William J. Lippincott compared US and European museums and spoke of “outdoor museums ... that recreate a historical period,” a technique made popular by living history museums and historical re-enactors in the MPMA region in the 1960s. Lippincott emphasized that museums in the US “make a much greater effort to tell a story to someone who is not an expert on the subject.”

“Museums Need Women,” published the same day, reported on the conference presentation of Alice Marriott, curator at Oklahoma’s Stovall Museum, entitled “Woman’s Place in the Museum.” The newspaper noted that her well-received remarks focused on the “basic housekeeping” of curatorial work and sorting “what is worth saving and keeping, if anything.” In keeping with the 1950s glorification of the American housewife, she advised women not to “panic at the thought of sending an old hat or last year’s suit to a rummage sale.” A photograph of museum women attending the conference published in the newspaper shows well-dressed women wearing hats and gloves – and not the kind of gloves curators are known to wear to protect fragile artifacts from soil.

On October 12, 1958, the paper reported that AAM’s Dr. Carl Guthe’s keynote speech, “The Role of Museums in our Changing World,” stressed that “Museums are temples where the visitor can find peace and study and contemplate at his own pace.”

Among the topics discussed at the 1959 conference were “The Museum and Your TV Program,” “Working with Teen-agers,” museums as centers of community, educational activities and simplicity in exhibitry with limited use of “gadgets, props, and visual aids.” Museum professionals were warned not to employ the techniques of commercial window displays in their museum displays.

From its inception, communication among the museums and museum professionals and volunteers of the Mountain -- Plains region was of paramount importance and a published newsletter was the vehicle instituted for this purpose. Various logistics were established to carry out this essential task.

In 1957, MPMC members agreed to participate in the monthly mimeographed publication *Clearing House NEWSLETTER*, the official publication of the

Southwestern and Western Museums Conferences, offering the publication as a benefit of membership. Soon MPMC voted to produce the publication as a quarterly “offset” document, in a now antiquated printing technique whereby a lithographic plate was transferred to a rubber cylinder, then inked for printing onto the paper. A committee was assigned to develop a “slant” for the publication and to suggest its general content, while the Western Museum Conference (WMC) requested and was granted a two-year trial period for publishing the quarterly *NEWSLETTER*. Costs of publication were covered by membership and subscription dues. In 1959, when the WMC defaulted on publishing the quarterly newsletter, the Museum of New Mexico agreed to assume responsibility for publication.

## The 1960s – Looking Inward, Looking Outward

*A Museum is a repository for objects that should be collected, retained and preserved.....the primary purpose of a museum is for research and its secondary (sic) function is that of display.*

From “What is a Museum”  
by Dr. Edwin H. Colbert,  
American Museum of Natural History,  
MPMC Seventh Annual Conference,  
Santa Fe, New Mexico, 1960

**Overview of the Decade:** During the 1960s, MPMC looked inward to develop the leadership and organizational structure needed to carry out its mission and looked outward to its members for recommendations on how better to serve their needs. MPMC represented the region’s museum community in matters of national legislation and proposed that the American Association of Museums take on certain activities such as museum accreditation and establishing a nation-wide data bank of collections information.

**Organizational Structure and Operations:** The need for a more formal organizational structure for the MPMC began to emerge in the 1960s to improve the 1950s loose organizational format that consisted of Conference Chair and self-appointed state representatives and volunteers. However, MPMC was determined to retain its “flexible form until the need for a more formal organization was felt.” The Minutes of the Mountain-Plains Museums Conference, Seventh Annual Conference, Santa Fe, New Mexico, September 15, 16, 17 [1960] recorded that Hugo G. Rodeck recommended establishing an MPMC Administrative Council to head up the annual conference, the Council to consist of the Conference Chair, the Secretary-Treasurer, and the four immediate past Conference Chairmen.

The following year, minutes indicate that members agreed that the organization of the conference would be kept informal for two more years, but in 1964 the MPMC adopted staggered terms for its officers. In a letter published in the November, 1964 *NEWSLETTER*, President Rodeck announced that MPMC underwent a “slight reorganization and tightening of the administration,” and that MPMC hoped to “improve our services to you, the museums and museum people of our 10 state area.” He encouraged members to send ideas for improvement to the organization’s officers. Additionally, MPMC embarked on a schedule of setting the conference locations and dates two years in advance. In 1967, it was suggested that a line of succession be established with the Vice President succeeding the President. The Council discussed, but did not vote on, adjusting the dues structure with

individual membership at \$2, Institutional membership at \$5 and supporting membership at \$10. Treasurer's reports, while not following a consistent format, began to report revenue and expenditures, which remained at very modest levels.

In 1969, sixteen years after its founding, MPMC acknowledged that it had no Constitution, By-laws, or official internal structure. MPMC President C. Boone McClure, of the Panhandle – Plains Historical Museum in Texas, appointed a committee consisting of Franklin Smith, Stan Sohl, Kermit Edmonds, and Bob Gant, to draft a Constitution for presentation to the members prior to the 1970 annual conference. MPMC determined that State Representatives would be named to the MPMC temporarily until state organizations provided officially elected representatives. The association also decided to seek tax-exempt status.

**Conferences, Programs and Publications: The MPMC Newsletter:** In 1961 *Clearing House NEWSLETTER* was called *Clearing House for Southwestern Museums* and was transferred to the Western Museums League (formerly called Western Museums Conference) along with \$459, half the newsletter funds held by MPMC at that time. In 1961, the quarterly *Mountain-Plains Museums Conference News* replaced the *Clearing House* altogether and was published in collaboration with the Witte Museum in San Antonio, Texas. The legal-sized publication posted information about the upcoming annual conference, job openings and activities and profiles of museums in the region. A year later the *News* was reduced to a letter-size document as a cost-saving measure. The publication underwent a name change to the *Mountain-Plains Museum News* in 1966 and once again was published in legal-size, four-page format. Because of the rising costs of publication, MPMC announced that only paid members/subscribers would receive the publication.

Under provisions of the National Museum Act (NMA) signed into law by President Johnson in 1965, the Smithsonian granted AAM the sum of \$2,000 for each regional museum association to be used at the discretion of each region. MPMC chose to use its funds for publication of the newsletter. By 1969, with the newly adopted Mountain - Plains Museums Conference logo in its masthead, MPMC *News* published its first book review, written by Hugo Rodeck, on *Primer on Museum Security* authored by Caroline K. Keck, and Franklin Smith noted the publication of *The Vice President's Handbook for Local Officials*, which indexed federal programs of assistance to state and local groups. Later in 1969, the newsletter initiated a column entitled "Artifacts



Wanted – Artifacts Available,” which listed the availability of military items from the Wyoming State Museum and “herptiles” (sic) from the Strecker Museum in Texas.

**Conference topics:** Along with nuts and bolts conference topics, MPMC’s conferences reflected the region’s growing interest in broader issues and topics. The 1960 conference presentations included “The Museum Meets the Public,” “Museum Publications,” “The Museum of Tomorrow” and “Boards and Museums.” In following years there were sessions on museum accreditation, ethics, visitor motivation, environmental awareness, American Indian art and anthropology. Topics on technology included discussion of trailside interpretive devices, audio/visual techniques, freeze-drying of specimens and facsimile reproduction of documents and coins. Aspects of museum finances also found their way into the conference content, including availability of federal grant funds, operation of sales shops, museum membership and ways to attract museum members including corporate-business members. Topics about museum administration included trustee relations and development of collections policies. Conference content generally reflected MPMC members’ growing interest in national issues.

Museum standards and financial support were on the minds of museum people nationally and MPMC joined the national conversations about the definition of “museum.” At the 1960 annual conference held in Santa Fe, New Mexico, Dr. Edwin H. Colbert of the American Museum of Natural History in New York, in a presentation entitled “What is a Museum,” enumerated the functions of a museum: to be a repository of objects that should be collected, retained, and preserved, to accomplish research and to display objects. Saying that tax-supported museums should not be “political footballs,” he encouraged museums to provide adequate salaries for professional training and to provide professional staff with time for research.

In 1969 MPMC determined to use its NMA grant of \$2,000 to publish annual conference papers and to reproduce presenters’ visual materials to make them available to museums in the region. Two years earlier MPMC had begun taping select presentations so that they could be shared later with members who had been unable to attend the conference. Publishing the conference papers would allow for wider distribution of museum information, an important component of the association’s mission.

**National Museum Act:** At the Annual Business Meeting of MPMC held in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1965, members voted to send a telegram to members of Congress and a “recommended list” of individuals in Washington, DC, in support of the National Museum Act (NMA) that had recently been introduced in Congress. In the January

1966 *News*, MPMC advised its members of the introduction of the NMA, noting that the legislation provided that the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution would cooperate with museums in studying problems and opportunities, prepare training programs, prepare and distribute publications, perform research on and develop museum techniques, cooperate with other governmental agencies concerned with museum business and report annually to Congress on its activities with regard to its functions under the NMA.

In a later issue, MPMC informed its members that the 89<sup>th</sup> Congress passed, and President Lyndon Johnson signed, legislation providing for a four-year, million-dollar program to help improve museums and to encourage communities that did not have museums to establish them. The National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities would be funding museum projects. Modest museum aid would also to be granted under provisions of the NMA. MPMC's Secretary-Treasurer, Charles J. Long, of the Witte Museum in Texas, expressed concern that with the Smithsonian's acting as spokesperson for the program; the term "museum" would be very broadly defined. Long advocated for a "national authority" that would grade and annually inspect museums so that funds would be granted appropriately. In other word, Long was advocating for a national accreditation program and a strict definition of "museum." Also in 1966, AAM requested support of MPMC in their efforts to advocate for tax-exempt educational status for museums.

Because of the importance of the information about the availability of federal funds published in the March, 1967 edition of the *Mountain Plains Museum News*, MPMC sent the newsletter to an expanded mailing list. The newsletter announced that the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, under Titles I and III, made funding available for school-museum partnerships. Under Title IV, museums could independently apply for funds to develop educational methods in museums. The Smithsonian Institution also provided small grants to museums.

**Museum Accreditation:** The October, 1967 newsletter reported that AAM defined a museum as an institution that received public support, is governed by a representative public body, makes financial reports to the public, and opens its buildings to the public. The definition was of great import to the issue of museum accreditation that became a "hot topic" after passage of the NMA.

As early as 1962, the MPMC annual conference program in Topeka, Kansas had included a presentation on museum accreditation resulting in MPMC's endorsement of such an accreditation program. In 1969, at the request of AAM, MPMA conducted a lengthy open forum to discuss the museum accreditation program proposed by AAM and to ascertain members' opinions about the mechanics of implementing such as program and how accreditation would affect their museums.



During the discussions, Dr. Rodeck itemized the benefits of accreditations: to develop public confidence in museums accredited by AAM: strengthen professional respect and cooperation between museums, promote institutional pride and self-confidence and guide grants and donations of public and private entities. This last became a significant point in grant programs to be developed in the next decade by the Institute of Museum Services (IMS).

Discussion about the proposed AAM program included concerns about who the museum evaluators would be: a group of “big shots from Washington going to all parts of the United States to judge all museums,” museum professionals or people from outside the museum profession. Concerns were also voiced about the status and reputations of museums that did not meet accreditation standards and those museums that would likely never be able to afford to hire professional staff. This last issue directly relates to the definition of a “small museum,” of which there were many in the MPMC region, and the matter of availability of professional training for museum personnel, whether professionally trained museologists or untrained volunteers.

1969 Council Minutes indicate that the MPMC Council approved AAM’s accreditation program and “agreed to participate in its development in the Mountain-Plains region,” saying that such a program “is vitally needed by the profession and those outside the museum field to advance the standing of museums and their staffs and bring into focus the role that museums fulfill in Art, Science and History in preserving, display, interpretation and general education fields.”

Although general use of computer technology was in its infancy in the 1960s, MPMC was aware of the benefits of computerized databases. With the intent of facilitating the sharing of collections, MPMC passed a resolution in 1969 encouraging AAM to develop a nation-wide computerized data retrieval system of artifacts in museum collections, a program based on the system developed at Oklahoma’s Stovall Museum.

## The 1970s – A Maturing MPMC

*I see now, both in attitudes of those participating, as well as in the tone and subject matter of the meetings a matured professionalized attitude toward the annual meeting and toward museums and their operators.”*

Hugo G. Rodeck, January 1976  
*Mountain-Plains Museum Newsletter*

**Overview of the Decade:** Perhaps reflecting the national climate of activism of the 1970s, records from the 1970s provide a picture of MPMC as an association that is expanding its thinking in many areas and feeling more secure about its professional role and its relationship to AAM. Newsletters and council minutes are filled with opinion pieces on a variety of issues of national and regional interest. A review of MPMC’s extensive 1970s archives reveals an association that has become more self-aware, more inclusive, responsive to its members, better organized, more rigorous in its work products, and interested in the important issues of the day – issues such as environment, preservation, cultural patrimony, diversity, gender equality and community outreach.

**Organizational Structure and Operations: 501 (c) (3) incorporation:** At the September 1970 business meeting, MPMC members approved the association’s first official Constitution and By-Laws, which identified the composition of its governing Council. The name listed in the Constitution was “Mountain Plains Museum Conference of the American Association of Museums.” The document listed these purposes:

- a) to promote the welfare of museums as places of enjoyment for the public;
- b) to work towards the advancement of museums as cultural centers and educational institutions;
- c) to foster continued improvement and recognition of the museum profession as a discipline;
- d) to encourage cooperation among museums and organizations in and outside the museum fields;
- e) to support and encourage the activities of the American Association of Museums and State organizations of museums in Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

The Constitution further noted that MPMC would accomplish its purposes through an annual conference, publication of a newsletter, publication of annual proceedings of the annual conferences, development and observance of high standards, professional training programs, active participation in AAM and developing interaction among museums of various disciplines. Membership

categories included individual, institutional, associate (members outside the geographical region of MPMC), honorary and student members. The following year the Constitution Committee, under the leadership of Robert Gant, of Wyoming, presented some word-smithing changes to the members, which were approved.

MPMC was now an organizational member of AAM, and the President (also referred to as Chair in MPMC documents) was therefore obliged to submit reports of the association's annual and mid-winter meetings to AAM. The reports were subsequently published in the AAM's *Museum News*. However, MPMC was not incorporated as a 501 (c) (3), so the 1972 mid-winter meeting minutes reflect that Council passed a resolution to incorporate in the state of Colorado where the association was initially founded. In compliance with IRS regulations, a clause was added to the Constitution saying that, in the event that MPMC were to dissolve, its assets would go to AAM or another 501(c) (3) organization to be selected by the MPMC Executive Committee.

The Articles of Incorporation declaring MPMC a 501(c) (3) organization were notarized April 13, 1972 and published in the newsletter in May. The incorporators were Dr. T. Paul Maslin, Dr. Peter Robinson, and Mr. Lowell E. Swenson. The address of the association was the University of Colorado Museum in Boulder. The first members of the governing Council under the Constitution were Kristine Haglund, of the Buffalo Bill Museum in Colorado; Robert McQuarrie, Littleton Area Historical Museum, Colorado; Milton F. Perry, Harry S. Truman Library, Missouri; Franklin Smith, National Park Service, Texas; and Stanley D. Sohl, Kansas State Historical Society, Kansas.

The Constitution listed the elected officers as President, Executive Vice President, Secretary-Treasurer, Editor, Council Members-at-Large, and Representative to the American Association of Museums. Ex-officio officers included the Director of AAM, the immediate Past President, State Representatives, and the Program Coordinator. By 1978, the Editor's position had been divided into the *Proceedings* Editor and the *Newsletter* Editor. Following passage of the Constitution, Council meetings followed an agenda and minutes reflected the agenda items in a more structured manner.

The re-named *Mountain-Plains Museum Newsletter* of January, 1972, presented the following goals of the association: 1) to strengthen the state organizations; 2) to develop a philosophical basis for the levels of organizations and to define their interrelationships; 3) to support the AAM accreditation program; 4) to enhance membership; and 5) to support AAM programs. Later that year at a session of the Annual Conference, Robert McQuarie emphasized the need for open discussion and ongoing members' support of the association's goals.

**Special Interest Groups and Affiliate Groups formed:** Museum educators' and curators' groups came together in the early 1970s and their representatives began attending MPMC Council meetings as non-voting members by 1974. Special Interest Committees (SICs) and Affinity Groups had been established for "mutual advantage, exchange of ideas, and for mutual strength." A committee was convened to review the Constitution and By-laws and to recommend revision to the members for voting at the 1975 annual conference. The By-laws update included a provision for allowing Affinity and SICs to be admitted to the MPMC Council by majority vote of the Council members present at a duly convened business meeting. Such groups had to be recognized by

THE BALLAD OF THE ASPIRANT CURATOR  
(Written in the mode of, and with apologies to, the bards of yore)  
A youth has come from the North Countree,  
With a step both bold and free,  
And he seeketh the man called McLanathan,  
A curator for to be.

Refrain: With a hey nonny no whack-a-do whack-a-do,  
and the dust dost drift in the corners.

submitting a written statement of purpose compatible with those of MPMC, three years' existence with twenty-five or more members that had been voting members in good standing of MPMC. At the 1979 Mid-Winter Council meeting, MPMC recognized the region's Affinity Group, the Educator's Committee, later called EDCOM, the first to receive voting privileges on the Council. The Exhibitor's Committee was recognized and gained a vote on Council in 1982.

**Constitution and By-Laws Changes Reflect National Trends:** The revised Constitution, adopted by the members at the annual conference in 1975 listed the following purposes of the association:

- a) To work towards the improvement of museums as cultural centers and educational institutions;
- b) To foster and secure more adequate support of the museum profession as a discipline;
- c) To assist in the increase and dissemination of knowledge and professional standards in the museum field;
- d) To encourage and promote cooperation among museums and organizations in and outside the museum field;
- e) To recognize and establish museums as places of enjoyment for the public;
- f) To support and encourage the activities of the American Association of Museums and state organizations of museums in general and of the following states in

particular: Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming.

The revision also established the office of “Historian” with a three-year term, to maintain “all records, including membership and officer lists, letters, clippings, programs, papers, etc. of permanent value to the organization as regards to its own history.” Council resolved that each historian should write a short MPMC history of the three-year period of his/her term, a resolution that was never put into effect.

During 1973 and 1974, AAM was also undergoing institutional and constitutional changes that required adjustments in the MPMC Constitution and By-laws. MPMC and other regional associations would each elect three representatives to serve as AAM Council Members. AAM’s revised Constitution included a disclaimer that it would not be held liable for debts incurred by the regional organizations. In turn, MPMC add a disclaimer to its own legal documents indicating it was not liable for AAM’s debts.

MPMC By-laws revisions in 1978 set the terms of President and Vice President at one year, Secretary-Treasurer’s and Editors’ terms were set at two years, Members-at-Large to serve for three years, and the three Representatives to the AAM were to serve staggered three-year terms. By-laws provided for cyclical membership, and determined that the association’s fiscal year to be a calendar year in order to facilitate reconciling accounts after the fall annual conference. While the association’s officers changed at the annual conference’s business meeting in the fall, the Treasurer remained in office through January to reconcile accounts of the annual conference and to close out accounts at the end of the fiscal year. Conversations began that year regarding the hiring of a paid administrator and establishing a permanent office for the association. When MPMC later hired a part-time paid staff person, it was the last of the regional museum associations to do so.

**Name Change and Growth:** MPMC members adopted the name Mountain -- Plains Museums Association at the 1979 annual conference, requiring a change in its Articles of Incorporation, which occurred the following year. The change was made to prevent confusion between the annual conference and the organization itself, which had also referred to as the Conference, once a permanent home office was established. By the end of the decade, the MPMA annual cash flow, which included annual conference expenses, was in the vicinity of \$10,000, large enough that the



responsibilities of Secretary-Treasurer were split into two offices, that of a Secretary and that of a Treasurer. The Council voted to hire a paid secretarial service to manage the association's membership roster and the collection of dues.

With MPMC membership at the beginning of the decade holding flat at less than 350, the MPMC Membership Committee recommended that the association work to reach the objective of 400 members. To this end, in 1974, MPMC developed a membership brochure and assembled a membership kit that included a letter encouraging people and institutions to join MPMC, a roster of AAM members in the region, an MPMC roster, membership applications, and return envelopes. Membership dues for individuals were increased from \$5 to \$7.50 and for institutions from \$10 to \$15. Additional categories of membership included Contributory Institutional at \$20, Associate at \$5 and Student membership at \$2. Membership did not increase, and so, in 1977, another membership drive was inaugurated with MPMA Vice President in charge.

**Conferences, Programs and Publications:** The January 1976 *Newsletter* published an insightful opinion piece by Hugo G. Rodeck, which clearly expressed the direction of MPMC's professional concerns in the mid-1970s:

*"...it is most gratifying to see the changes in emphasis and the increase of what I think of as professionalism in the museum world. I am thinking of the unmistakable turn towards museum theory and philosophy as contrasted to the how-to-do-it, nuts-and-bolts attitude toward museum operations which so many of our colleagues in the early years expected and soon demanded. I see now, both in attitudes of those participating, as well as in the tone and subject matter of the meetings, a matured professionalized attitude toward the annual meeting and toward museums and their operators."*

MPMC published the 1969 Wage Survey undertaken by the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History to assist museums in their planning for professional development. In the early 1970s, with NMA funding through AAM, MPMC began publishing its *Proceedings*, a record of many annual meeting presentations.

In 1971, MPMC expanded its taping of annual conference presentations to facilitate the publication of the *Proceedings*. Initially, MPMC debated the merits of publishing complete content papers of a limited number of presentations or providing members with abstracts of a larger sampling of presentations. The complete text approach was adopted with the result that the *Proceedings* provide an outstanding record of the thinking of



museum professionals in the region, especially their interest in topics of broad museum import. MPMC implemented use of a new logo designed by Paul Huffer, of the Littleton Historical Museum.



MPMC Newsletter January 1974

Publication of the *Newsletter* and the *Proceedings* continued to be a topic of discussion. The *Newsletter*, most recently published bi-monthly, was recommended for quarterly publication in 1974 because of rising costs and because some organizational funds had been diverted to publication of the *Proceedings*. The Editor recommended that other sources of income be found for the *Newsletter*. Through AAM, NMA funds of \$1,000 were given to MPMC for its publications in 1974. MPMC thanked NMA and AAM and requested a \$2,000 grant for the following year, which was received. In addition to the \$2,000, MPMC allocated \$550 from the profits of the El Paso annual meeting, both sums to be used in publication of the *Proceedings*. Martha Hartmann, of the Denver Museum of Natural History, chaired the Editorial Committee of the *Proceedings*. Upon her cost-saving recommendation, MPMC adopted publication only of select papers from the annual conference with some papers published in the *Newsletter*.

MPMC membership benefits included a copy of the annual *Proceedings*. For the first time in January 1977, however, the Editor announced that additional copies of the 1976 publication could be purchased for \$3.50. A standard format for the publication was introduced in 1978 by Nancy Markham of the State Historical Society of Colorado and Jean Rodeck, of the National Park Service, Denver Service Center. Subsequently, MPMC established an Editorial Review Committee to evaluate the effectiveness of the association's publications.

The concept of identifying a unifying theme for the annual conference was introduced that winter and was well received by members. The April 1977 *Newsletter* published a "Special Feature" entitled "Origins of the Mountain-Plains Museum Conference" that included the minutes of the first meeting held in Boulder 6-8 October 1954.

**Relationship with AAM:** As an official regional organization of AAM, the association consistently encouraged its members to also become members of AAM. The association also provided AAM with regional input through our Representatives who also carried home the ideas that were brewing in other parts of the country. AAM reciprocated by provided the regional conferences with individuals who provided thought-provoking commentary on ideas and concerns being discussed at a national level, such as the AAM-supported federal Tax Reform Bill that maintained tax incentives for museum donors. AAM also encouraged museums to participate in

activities supporting the first annual environmental awareness week. The association urged legislators from our region to support reauthorization of the National Museum Act due to expire in June 1971. In 1971, MPMC passed a resolution asking AAM to undertake a study “of standards for curriculum for advanced study in the field of museology and museography” and publish a report on its findings that would contain suggestions for implementing such programs. AAM did undertake such a survey and made its finding available to members in a 1973 publication.

MPMC enthusiastically supported AAM’s accreditation program, and was the first to establish an Accreditation Committee with Kent Bush, of the Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico, as Chair to set accreditation goals for the region. The goals were so ambitious that Don J. Starkey, Kansas State Museum Consultant, in 1973 expressed concern that it would be impossible for all Kansas museums to attain AAM accreditation standards within the suggested two-year window. With MPMC as a model, AAM encouraged other regional museum associations to establish similar accreditation committees. In the September 1973 *Newsletter*, MPMC’s Accreditation Committee Chair expressed members’ concern that there was “lack of immediate and tangible benefit versus the relative high costs involved in accreditation and the apparent lack of a standard method of applying accreditation standards to the applicant museum .”

MPMC members formed an Accreditation Caucus that held discussions at the 1974 MPMC conference. The Caucus was outspoken on various issues and submitted to AAM eleven points to improve the accreditation program. Among the issues members discussed was the payment of honoraria to accreditation reviewers; some favored the honorarium as a way to professionalize the visits, others felt that reviewers should volunteer their time and expertise. MPMC encouraged AAM to provide training for accreditation reviewers so that uniform standards would be applied during visits. The Caucus members also urged AAM to establish training programs for individuals who wished to become members of visiting accreditation teams. With funding provided by the NMA, AAM conducted a training seminar for accreditation reviewers at the 1975 MPMC annual conference. Over 50 individuals attended the seminar.

**Defining “Small Museum”:** Throughout the 1970s, MPMC members voiced concern regarding AAM’s definition of “museum” and “small museum.” Initially, the AAM definition of a museum required that the institution have artifact collections. Later, AAM dropped that requirement in order to allow membership to planetariums, art centers and science museums that did not collect objects. MPMA members took exception to the inclusion of planetaria and art centers that did not own their



collections or exhibits. They suggested establishing a “second tier” of accreditation for institutions not owning collections. The definition of a “small museum” found its way into members’ awareness in both serious and humorous ways:

*Come all you dummy dusters,  
And list while I relate  
A Tale of shameless goings-on  
In the far-famed Lone Star State.*

*We gathered here from far and near  
In sober congregation,  
In the spirit of professionals,  
To improve our situation.*

*’Twas then that we defined what makes  
A small museum small;  
To qualify, the staff must be  
No more than three feet tall.  
Ron Soodalter, Mountain-Plains*

*Museum Newsletter, April 1977*

AAM defined a “small museum” as one with ten or fewer professional staff. By requiring that a museum employ at least one professional staff and be a non-profit institution, AAM effectively eliminated for possible accreditation many museums in the MPMA region, which were operated by volunteers, not professional staff. Concerns of small museums had been voiced earlier by members such as Mildred R. Bennett, President of the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial & Educational Foundation in Nebraska, who wrote in a letter, published in the MPMA *Newsletter* of May 1972, “that the main purpose of the large [museum] associations is to ignore us [small museums] and we’ll go away.” She asked that the museum community recognize the importance of small museums that document “life as it was lived fifty years ago.”

Margaret Lokey, Editor, Chickasaw Council House in Oklahoma, made the helpful suggestion that both MPMC and AAM offer conference programs of particular value and interest to small museums. She recommended organizing the conference program into sessions of interest to museums of comparable size and type. MPMC’s Representative to AAM, Franklin Smith, of the Chamizal National Memorial in Texas, responded, saying that the state organizations already actively addressed issues of small museums. He added however, that MPMC would include consideration of her remarks in their annual conference planning. The July 1973 *Newsletter* informed members that sessions pertaining to small museums were incorporated into the

upcoming annual conference to “1) Establish the validity of the small museum; 2) Explore the small museum’s potential; and 3) Suggest methods by which the potential might be exploited.”

Glenda Morgan, Curator of the Presidential Museum in Odessa, Texas, in the September 1973 *Newsletter*, invited people associated with small museums to attend the MPMC conference sessions. The “Opinion and Comments” section of the January 1974 *Newsletter* featured the small museum and summarized discussions from the 1973 annual conference session on the topic of how a small museum’s potential could be exploited. For purposes of that discussion a “small museum” was defined as a “public institution possessing collections which operates on an annual budget of \$7,000 or less.” Dr. Ron Stewart, Director of the Archaeological Research Center in New Mexico, “stressed the point that a museum’s potential lies in activities which can be developed to interpret the institution’s collections and purpose.” Linna Funk Place, of the National American Studies Faculty Community Museum Program in Missouri, observed that a museum can only survive “if it has claimed the support of the local population.” She went on to say that a museum must “address itself to the entire [diverse] population ... to provide people with an understanding of where they have come from and how they fit into the larger order of things,” a goal “achieved both through interpretation and programming.” In 1974, Jimmie Picquet, of the John E. Conner Museum in Texas, expressed concern that staff of small museums felt excluded from participation in the MPMC Council.

**Equal Opportunity:** At the September 1972 MPMC annual conference, Council passed a resolution “to create an atmosphere among museums and their staffs in which all phases of museum work and activities will provide equal opportunities for all.” An MPMC Council resolution requested that AAM inform members of the passage of the 1972 “Equal Opportunity Act” and encourage recruitment of diverse populations into the museum field. The resolution further urged AAM to “take positive measures to develop fair and equal opportunities in the museum field for people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and cultures, including dissemination of information regarding museum education and training programs to member individuals and institutions.” MPMC suggested that AAM solicit NMA funds to support recruitment programs to implement the Act.

In support of AAM’s “Women’s Caucus” (later called the President’s Committee of the Status of Women), MPMC’s January 1973 *Newsletter* encouraged regional museums to “provide equal opportunity in all phases of work and activity.” Ellen G. Oppenheim, Assistant Curator of the Kimball Art Museum in Texas, and editor of the *Newsletter* from 1973 to 1974, was the Mountain-Plains Chairman of the Steering Committee for the Women’s Caucus when the group met at the 1973 annual

conference of AAM in Milwaukee. At that meeting, the Caucus had drawn up a list of platform proposals that Oppenheim submitted for print in the September 1973 issue of the *Newsletter*. Oppenheim invited MPMC members “to write to give me ideas, suggestions, and criticisms of what you would like to see accomplished by these proposals. Among the platform proposals were the followings: asking AAM to recruit speakers to address women’s issues in the 1974 conference and to draw up an official caucus platform; drawing up guidelines for fair hiring practices, to be adopted by AAM; asking AAM to include male/female comparisons in their next salary survey; devoting an entire issue of AAM’s *Museum News* to women’s issues including discriminatory practices and legal recourse.

Oppenheim also chaired a session to introduce these proposals at MPMC’s 1973 conference in Albuquerque. Members suggested expanding a survey of hiring practices to include information about minorities as well as women. Members also suggested that the wording of any Caucus platform be couched in positive, not negative, phrasing. Members pointed out that the number of women currently employed by museums was likely larger than the number of men. They saw the greatest discrepancy to be on museum boards and encouraged the Caucus to examine the ratio of men/women on museum boards. Members suggested including articles on women’s matters in several issues of *Museum News*. Further discussion focused on the need for more male volunteers in museums and inclusion of minorities in aspects of museum work and volunteerism.

*The Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth Annual Conference, Mountain Plains Museums 1977*, includes a presentation “On Becoming Possible: View of the Future of the President’s Committee on the Status of Women” by Glenda G. Morgan, which suggested ways to enhance women’s participation in the museum field. The Committee recommended a managerial seminar to “teach females how to become proficient in administrative areas,” programs to encourage women to seek more education, vehicles for communication among fellow [women] professionals, and active participation of women on AAM committees.

**Special Interest Committees -- Education:** Museum educators were also becoming very active in the 1970s. At the 1973 AAM conference an ad hoc group (later to be known as the president’s committee) presented AAM with a resolution to include in their programs and publications specific sessions pertinent to museum education. Ann Walton, Curator of Education at the Denver Art Museum in Colorado, kept MPMC members apprised of the activities of the educators’ group.

The June 1974 *Newsletter* included a members’ survey asking a variety of questions about the educational focus of their institutions, programs, and exhibits. An essay

by Dr. John A. Diffily, of the Amon Carter Museum in Texas, entitled “How Can Museum Educators Achieve Increased Stature and Responsibility?” suggested that “stature and responsibility come after performance” and that educators must “produce democratic education for the total population; they must recognize the responsibilities of curators and directors and work with them, not against them.” The issue also contained an article on educational programs at small museums, science education programs using natural specimens, programs that promote visual awareness and inquiry techniques that teachers can use, and pre-visit materials for teachers.

MPMC published a *Handbook of Programs for Museum Educators* edited by Allan D. Griesemer, of the Nebraska State Museum, which was funded through the NMA. 1978 saw publication of *The Handbook of Outreach Programs for Museum Educators* by Ellen Rosenbush Methner, Assistant Curator of Education at the Philbrook Museum in Oklahoma. In 1979 MPMC published its *Survey of the Future of Museum Education Programs: Mountain Plains Region*, edited by Gordon A. Davis, Coordinator of the Office of Museum Programs, Wichita Public Schools. Based on responses of 80 museum educators in the region, the survey was developed to be a tool for museums’ long range planning.

**Special Interest – Technology:** Throughout the 1970s, MPMA members continued to show interest in electronic technology. Dr. Hubert F. Schiffer presented a paper, later published in the 1970 *Proceedings*, entitled “Museums and Computers: GIPSY’s Ethnological Data Base.” The paper described GIPSY (the General Information Processing System) that had “consolidated detailed descriptions of 37,000 ethnological objects in 41 museums in Oklahoma and Missouri.” The paper described the possible uses by museums in developing exhibits and locating artifacts for educational programs. Schiffer itemized detailed searchable categories and gave examples of research questions the database could respond to. The average cost of a database search was noted to be less than \$20; costs of setting up the program and entering data were not discussed. By 1978, Bryce Brown’s presentation “The Microcomputer: A New Tool for Museums” was published in the 1978 *Proceedings*. He emphasized the advantages of the simpler design, smaller size, portability, easier maintenance and more efficient staff learning curve of the microcomputer’s programs.

**Special Interest – Community Relevance and Inclusivity:** Franklin Smith’s paper “Chicken Little Revisited: The History Museum Today,” published in the *Proceedings* of the 1971 conference, brought home the point that history museums “may not have provided a perfect picture of the past, at least not everyone’s past. Nor have we developed the capabilities to avoid innocent offense to many of our potential

clients.” He urged members to “make our museums relevant” and “enjoy the process of growth.” He called “the inclusion of new thought patterns and backgrounds in your staff and board ... exciting and highly enjoyable.” His paper referenced AAM’s Committee on Urban Museums, created in 1969 to study, among other things, issues of minority inclusiveness in urban museums. MPMA’s own Helmuth J. Naumer, of the Fort Worth Museum of Science and History, was a member of that committee, and his recommendations, noted in Smith’s paper, included developing neighborhood histories, developing educational programs geared specifically to minority groups, displaying “Community Treasures,” and including minority groups as partners in the work, accomplishments and problems of museums. The 1972 *Proceedings* recounted the panel presentation on the “Implications of the Report from the Committee on Urban Museums” and further encouraged museums to broaden their audiences by providing outreach programs and establish neighborhood museums.

The 1975 annual MPMC conference in El Paso, Texas appears to be a watershed of ideas of regional and national import. Presentations at the 1975 annual conference addressed such issues as museums’ obligations to be responsive to minority audiences, to provide the visitor with greater involvement with the object through hands-on interpretation and the use of other senses besides sight, to promote cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, to provide programming for visitors with special needs, and to include minorities on museum staffs. Presenters noted museums’ responsibilities to interpret major ecological and social problems of the day and to present various points of view on these issues. The National Endowment for the Humanities called for history museums to recognize their role in the humanities “to bring meaningful interpretation, to help the public better understand the past, the history, culture, and art that has made up the human experience.” The importance of audience research and program evaluation became important topics of discussion and learning.

**Special Interest – Collections:** Reflecting a growing professionalism in the museum field, MPMC programs zeroed in on collections acquisition, care, and ethics. Dr. Joseph Chamberlain, Director of the Adler Planetarium in Illinois, gave the conference’s keynote address entitled “Stewardship in the Museum,” stating that as stewards of irreplaceable collections, our responsibility toward those items entrusted to our care is much greater than ever before.” In his talk he addressed issues of cultural patrimony and emerging prohibitions against items’ being removed from their country of origin. He noted museums’ responsibility to collect the material culture of minority groups and women and emphasized museum trustees’ legal obligations in caring for collections.

In another presentation, Hugo G. Rodeck expressed the opinion that museum collections must be kept in perpetuity and he acknowledged museums' obligation to review and revise their interpretation of objects based on new research and changing opinions. Rodeck is the first MPMC person to articulate museums' requirement to "educate and entertain" the general public. Harold L. Peterson, in "The Historical House, Room, Alcove, Exhibit, and Specimen," defined an object as "a tangible bridge to the past and an historical document waiting to be read and interpreted by museum curators [and visitors] with sufficient skill, imagination, and knowledge." He recommended that museums use reproductions, not original artifacts, for hands-on interpretation.

Craig C. Black, of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pennsylvania, recommended that science museums develop clearly defined collection acquisition and access policies, collaborate in a national plan for acquisition and sharing of collections, develop electronic databanks and management systems. In "Ethics of the Museum Profession," Paul N. Perrot, Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, noted AAM's current project of reviewing its 1925 Code of Ethics. He pointed out that some actions of the past might be considered reprehensible today. He noted that "The past has one great shortcoming: It was its own present and it is not our own!" The annual conference also acknowledged the existence of seventy-three university museums in the MPMC region, noting that they do not speak as a unit and that they need to organize and communicate with one another through a "committee of correspondence."

In 1976, MPMC, with endorsement of the State Historical Society of Colorado, applied for an NMA grant to fund a seminar/workshop on "Legal and Ethical Aspects of Museum Collections and Their Records," an idea that grew out of the Registrar's SIC at the annual conference. There is no record that MPMC received the grant. *Mountain -- Plains Proceedings 6-8 October 1976*, vol. 7, edited by Dennis Medina of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum in Kansas, focuses on staffs' relationships to their collections in terms of acquisition, care, interpretation, access, law, and context. AAM President Joseph Noble's presentation "The Ethics of Collecting" explored acquisition, de-accessioning, and the 1972 UNESCO Convention resolution that had been languishing in Congress. Ross Loomis's "The Visitor and the Collection: The Immediate Visual Experience of the Museum" was the first presentation to encourage museum staffs to enhance visitors' powers of observation in exhibitions. A series of presentations explored practical and philosophical aspects of the individual's relationship to the object through the perspective of the museum educator, the volunteer, and the curators of history, art, and natural history museums.

The April 1976 MPMC *Newsletter* endorsed development of a regional conservation laboratory to be housed in Denver. The publication also included an article by Lorenzo Young, from Texas, entitled “Viewpoints: Minorities and the Museum.” The article outlined the Texas Historical Commission’s offering of a one-year course in museum training for “non-whites” and women in an effort to be more inclusive in museum hiring practices and programming development. Cindy Sherrell, of the Texas Historical Commission, was then MPMC’s representative on the National Women’s Caucus. In an article entitled “It’s a Woman’s World – If We Handle It Right,” she voiced the opinion that the field should provide more intensive museum training for women to enable them to move up in the museum profession.

Although “A Tornado in My Museum” by Stanley D. Sohl, director of the Kansas State Historical Society and past MPMC President, was not published in the *Proceedings*, it is significant for being the first MPMC presentation to discuss disaster preparedness and response. Other broad museology topics were introduced throughout 1976 through the *Newsletter* and workshops: museum management techniques and operational measures, learning theory and program evaluation techniques, and collecting for the twenty-first century. The topics of ethics, historic preservation, museum security, and university museum education curricula, introduced in 1976 were followed by sessions and workshops in succeeding years.

**Special Interest – Environment:** In addition to ethical matters and interpretive techniques, environmental issues were also addressed in MPMC’s annual conference presentations. A paper entitled “Tomorrow’s Museum,” presented by architect Malcolm B. Wells at the 1970 MPMC conference, emphasized the “disastrous effect upon the land” of even the most beautifully designed buildings and emphasized environmental friendly design. He defined a prototype museum that used “underground parking, roof plantings, super insulation and solar energy,” and urged recycling of rain water and composting of waste products. Some of these features found their way into the designs of museums built in the 1970s. Energy use in the museum environment was introduced as a topic in 1977.

“Mountain Environments” was the first unifying theme for the 1978 annual conference. “Low Budget Alternatives for Environmental Control” provided a literal interpretation of “environment,” while the keynote speech by the Honorable Alan D. Ginsberg took a more philosophical approach in “Museums and the Legal Environment.” Sessions pertaining to historic preservation and interpretation of the built environment rounded out the program.

**“Issues” with AAM:** The 1972 Minutes of the MPMC mid-winter meeting included a resolution responding to AAM’s selection of Hawaii as the venue for the annual conference. MPMC voiced “grave concern” about AAM’s tendency to select expensive locals and “luxurious settings” for its conferences, saying that this was incompatible with the stated objectives of AAM. Another resolution suggested that AAM would be better served if the organization included greater participation from regional organizations in its committees. Our Representative to AAM countered that MPMC would be better represented in AAM business if its members would vote in AAM’s elections. Members’ concerns did not fall on deaf ears.

Perhaps in response to the growing number of voices pressuring for representation, AAM held an invitational meeting in Colorado, called the Aspen Conference, in 1973 with a follow-up meeting in 1974 at Woodstock, Illinois. Five MPMC members participated in AAM’s strategic planning at the Aspen Conference. MPMC’s 1974 *Proceedings* reprinted MPMC Council’s resolution pertaining to the Aspen Conference whose purpose was to discuss and lend clarity to the inter-relationships of the various “individual professionals, member museums, affinity groups, professional societies, and state, regional, and national organization.” In the resolution, MPMC recommended that AAM provide a “desk” position to deal with needs of affiliate groups, provide further analysis and additional models for a governance structure for AAM, and expressed “the need for development of in-depth museum expertise within the central staff of AAM.”

Perhaps the most insightful presentation, one that turned out to be most far-thinking, was that of Native American Rights Fund’s Bruce Davies “Museums and Native American Rights” published in MPMC’s 1978 *Proceedings*. Basing his remarks on the negotiations between the Denver Art Museum and the Zuni Tribe for return of a Zuni War God held by the museum, Davies outlined the legal precedents for return of the object. Additionally, he reported the generally adversarial tone of the negotiations and concluded that the alternative to conflict and confrontation “is discussion, compromise and mutual understanding by both parties.” He regarded the Art Museum’s decision to return the War God to the Zuni Tribe as “a courageous first step” to be “imitated on a broader scale.”

The theme for 1979, “The Future of American Museums,” looked forward to the coming decade of the 1980s and addressed issues of museum audiences, museums and the academic world, museum marketing, museums and endangered species, outreach and extension materials, museum finances, museums and Native Americans.



## The 1980s – Planning for the Future

*“YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!*

*The ‘80s promise to be a pivotal decade, a decade in which museums and museum professionals will need all the resources they can muster if they are to weather and adapt to the changes ahead. The MPMA can take its place among those resources, IF it defines its role in the profession and the region, and IF it adopts those programs and services best suited to fulfill that role.”*

From the Invitation to the 1981  
Dakota Conference

**Overview of the decade:** Many very significant issues took on life in the 1970s, but in the 1980s MPMC initiated a planning process that would serve the association well for the next generation and took a leap to professionalize management of the day-to-day operations with a paid coordinator.

**Organizational Structure and Operations:** In 1980 MPMC President Allan Griesemer of the University of Nebraska State Museum announced to members that a secretarial service was under contract to manage the membership roster and collection of dues. Additionally, the association had a permanent address, listed as P.O. Box 601, Broomfield, Colorado 80020, and an office location. The Articles of Incorporation were amended with the Colorado Secretary of State to reflect the name change to the Mountain-Plains Museums Association, which had been approved by the members at the 1979 annual business meeting. The Articles of Amendment indicated “This is a change in name only from Mountain-Plains Museums Conference to Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA). The change was made to better reflect the responsibilities of the group; the purpose, by-laws, and non-profit status remain the same.”

The MPMA Council recognized the importance of Long Range Planning, a theme that it selected for the 1981 annual conference. MPMA was determined to develop a Long Range Plan to strengthen the association’s ability to meet its stated purposes to foster professionalism, competence, cooperation and fellowship within the museum community. To accomplish this, Council sent a questionnaire to poll members’ “impressions of MPMA’s current status” and to assess their current needs. Subsequently, the Council organized a two-and-a-half-day facilitated retreat in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and invited participation of select members in the following invitation:

*“YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!”*

*The ‘80s promise to be a pivotal decade, a decade in which museums and museum professionals will need all the resources they can muster if they are to weather and adapt to the changes ahead. The MPMA can take its place among those resources, IF it defines its role in the profession and the region, and IF it adopts those programs and services best suited to fulfill that role.*

*The Dakota Conference will bring together, for two-and-a-half days of intensive analysis and “brainstorming,” MPMA members who have given careful thought to the association and its aims. The Conference will produce a report of its conclusions for consideration at the 1981 Annual Meeting. The quality of that report depends directly on you and your participation. “Your attendance is earnestly requested – you CAN make a difference.”*

The agenda included a review of the organization’s mission and an examination of the existing status of MPMA with regard to membership, publications and programs. Priorities were to be set taking into account a timetable, financial implications, personnel requirements, membership benefits and evaluation criteria.

All this thinking about planning had immediate results. In an effort to facilitate planning and implementation of the annual conference, MPMA’s Representative to AAM, Kris Haglund, had established “MPMA Annual Meeting Guidelines for Local Arrangements Committee (LAC)” and presented this document at the June 1980 Council meeting. Based on members’ input and discussions by those attending the retreat, the Dakota Conference Plan recommended establishing a procedure manual for all the organization’s committees, policies for its ongoing activities and developing job descriptions for the organization’s officers.

Additionally, MPMA would establish and evaluate short-term (annual) and long-term goals, with review of progress and possible revisions of the Dakota Conference Plan in 1983 and again ten years later in 1993. The Plan recommended that officers and committee chairs maintain informational notebooks that would be handed down to their successors for purposes of continuity. The Plan set out goals for the annual meeting, publishing, membership and communications. Of particular importance, the Plan recommended that MPMA retain a paid coordinator to assist with implementation of the goals.

The Council drew up an “Exhibitor Reservation Agreement,” “Information and Regulations: for the MPMA Exhibit Hall,” an “Order for Advertising” in the meeting program, and a “Guidelines and Rate Sheet.” A revived Publications Review Committee recommended eliminating publication of the *Proceedings* in favor of

publishing an abstract of each annual meeting presentation in the conference program. They also recommended a quarterly publication to include MPMA regional news, technical articles, features and selected papers from the annual meeting.

For the first time, in 1981, MPMA prepared an annual budget for the upcoming year against which the organization's annual revenues and expenditures could be tracked. The proposed 1982 budget was \$24,750 with more than half the funds allocated to implementing the Annual Meeting (formerly called the annual conference). The proposed 1983 budget was \$36,500, with the Annual Meeting again listed with a significant increase that reflected revenue and expenses incurred by a large attendance. MPMA's first financial audit letter and summary, prepared by Peterson, Peterson, & Goss, appears in the record. In an effort to serve meeting attendees and increase revenue, MPMA issued invitations to companies to exhibit at the conference. In October 1983, the Procedures and Guidelines Committee reported that a Procedures and Guidelines Manual, recommended in the Dakota Conference Plan, had been completed. MPMA archives record the existence of SICs and Affinity Groups for Education, Curators, Registrars, Women's Caucus and Small Museums, though not all had yet fulfilled the requirements for MPMA voting status on Council.

A second facilitated planning session was organized in October 1983 to assess MPMA's success in implementing the goals and objectives of the 1981 Dakota Conference Plan. In preparation for the 1983 review, Judy Heberling, MPMA President, sent a short questionnaire to all members asking input regarding MPMA's performance, members' needs, and requesting suggestions for improvements in operation and services. The 1983 planning session affirmed that MPMA was 1) offering a quality annual conference; 2) publishing an annual meeting program with abstracts of the sessions and a monthly publication that included news, articles and technical information; 3) providing fellowship; 4) providing strong support to the states; and 5) embracing more involvement of small museums. The Plan was modified slightly, more for ease of understanding than for content in 1983. Mid-Winter Council Minutes reflect that MPMA reviewed and revised the Plan again in 1986, but never approved those revisions. At about the same time the Policies and Procedures Manual was updated. In 1987, Council approved revisions to the Plan, but those revisions were never written into the Plan.

As if to underscore that MPMA was moving forward and to celebrate the Association's 30th Anniversary, MPMA's Historian, Lorena Orvananos Donohue, published a list of MPMA Presidents, Vice Presidents and annual meeting locations in the April, 1984 *Newsgram*, the membership Newsletter that had been renamed

*Newsgram* in 1981. Additionally, in the July issue, she prepared a summary of the Association's founding in 1954.

In accordance with Plan's 1981 recommendations, a job description for a paid coordinator was circulated and soon after Nancy Markham was hired and served into early 1982, to be followed by Claudia Johnson, who was hired at a salary of \$250 per month with responsibilities for the annual meeting, publication of the newsletter and maintenance of the membership roster. Johnson attended her first Council meeting in February 1982 at which time Council discussed the need to draw up a contract between MPMA and the coordinator and for the purchase of a computer or typewriter for the coordinator's use.

MPMA was the last of the regional associations to hire a coordinator, and having a paid staff person, albeit a part-time one had a positive impact on MPMA's business practices and ability to serve its members. Josie Kerstetter replaced Johnson in late 1984, and, in turn, Josie Kerstetter was replaced by Patricia Florence in 1987. Five years after the idea was first introduced, MPMA had not yet purchased a computer for use by the administrator. However, by the end of the decade, MPMA membership files and annual meeting registrations were handled in a computer database.

In late 1981, MPMA adopted a graduated scale of museum institution dues ranging from \$15 for institutional members with budgets under \$5,000 to \$150 for institutions with budgets of \$400,000 and up. With membership below 350, MPMA initiated a membership drive, which soon yielded results. By the start of 1982, membership gained 31 new institutional members and 91 new individual members, putting total membership over 400 for the first time. In another year membership topped 500 where it hovered until it reached 660 in 1984 and then dropped back to the earlier level of about 600 in 1985. Membership began to recover in 1986, reaching its previous high level by the end of the year and finally topping 725 members at the beginning of 1989.

Council established a Special Projects Committee, chaired by Kent Brown of the Longmont Museum in Colorado, "to develop programs and projects to benefit the general membership" such as outreach programs, workshops, symposia and the like. In 1988, acting on recommendations of the Special Projects Committee, MPMA announced a competitive Student Scholarship program for students attending the annual conference, which awarded travel funds and waived registration fees. Two scholarships were awarded for the fall conference: to Mark Richard Murphy of Texas Tech University and Stephanie Turnham of Baylor University. "Awards and Resolutions" became a standing committee with Sam Hoyle of the U.S. Army Air

Defense Museum in Texas as its first chair. The committee established the Hugo G. Rodeck Excellence Award “To recognize excellence in individual service to the museum field within the Mountain-Plains region,” with Rodeck, himself, the first recipient in 1989. (See a list of recipients of this award published as an Appendix to this history.) The organization surveyed its members on their membership in other museum associations.

SICs and Affinity Groups were forming nationally with groups also forming within the regions. An insert to the 1986 annual meeting *Preceding* invited MPMA members to join a regional branch of AAM’s Natural History Affinity Group that consisted of “professionals interested in the functions and philosophy of natural history museums and related institutions.” The invitation emphasized that “We are an informal group, still no dues!” Following the AAM model, this MPMA Affinity Group worked to sponsor MPMA annual meeting sessions of interest to their members. MPMA President Peter La Paglia of the Wichita Falls Museum and Art Center in Texas invited representatives of Affinity Groups and SICs seeking a vote on the MPMA Council to attend the 1988 mid-winter Council meeting, bringing with them their group’s Constitution, By-laws or governing documents, a list of member and officers, and written objectives or purpose of the group. The MPMA Credentials Committee Report, recorded in the minutes of the Council’s 1989 mid-winter Council meeting, clarified the requirements that Affinities and SICs must meet to request a vote on Council. In addition to those documents listed by La Paglia, the groups were required to submit evidence of regional membership of no fewer than twenty-five individuals during the previous three years.

Council noted at its 1987 Mid-Winter meeting that the association was responsible for the liabilities of its affinity groups, so the matter of Directors’ and Officers’ liability insurance (D & O insurance) for the organization and Council members was a topic of discussion. Some, but not all of the states in the region, had legislation that protected organizations such as MPMA. Colorado, the state in which MPMA was incorporated, did have such protective legislation.

MPMA Council voted in 1988 to give a \$1,000 grant to AAM as a match for the Bay Foundation grant award AAM had received. The following year MPMA awarded AAM a grant of \$1,000 (up from \$100) for its advocacy activities, an annual donation the organization continued until AAM initiated Museum Advocacy Day and those funds supported MPMA’s participation in that important annual event. However, MPMA expressed concern that the region was not represented in AAM’s candidates for any of the AAM Council positions.

At the 1987 Council meeting in El Paso, the issue of D & O and organizational liability insurance was raised again. Dennis Medina was asked to contact other regions regarding this matter and found that other regional associations were in the process of reviewing the issue as well. His research revealed that the Volunteer Protection Act had not been tested in court. The Act, while protecting individuals who acted in good faith from personal liability, did not protect organizations. Huntington T. Block offered D & O insurance with a \$1,000 deductible, for the annual fee of \$1,625. Council took no action on this matter at that time.

**Annual Meetings, Programs, and Publications:** MPMA's 1980 annual meeting program and accompanying *Proceedings* indicate members' continued interest in diversity, especially issues focusing on Native American storytelling, museum professional training for Native Americans, Tribal Museums, museum documentation of ethnic cultures, all topics that would also be explored in future conference programs. Disaster preparedness and planning, collections use and accessibility and codes of ethics were also on the program agenda. Representatives from the IMS and the National Endowment for the Arts sessions provided insight on the agencies' grant programs and review processes.

**Technology:** Additionally, the use of computers and the "Windows" platform was under discussion. Soon after, MPMA considered offering a workshop on uses of computer technology in museums and published an article by Gene Ball, of the Buffalo Bill Center in Wyoming, entitled "Unique Computer Adaptation for Museum Use," which explained the Center's use of a computer database to enable visitors to access information about the Winchester Museum's collection of firearms. The roles of computers in exhibitions and in museum management were examined in succeeding conference years.

**Ethics:** The 1981 annual conference theme was "Long Range Planning – Museums and the Future: Getting Your House in Order." Sessions included collections management, appraisals and insurance, long range planning for small museums and financial planning. Once again taking a long-range and national issues approach in 1982, MPMA's annual conference theme was "Museums in America – Looking Out," with a session devoted to the AAM report *Museums for a New Century*. Ethics, community dialogue and the use of consultants took their place alongside a session on the use of computers in exhibitions.

Accountability and ethics found their way into the conference programs toward the end of the decade. Alan D. Ullberg, of the Office of General Counsel of the Smithsonian Institution, and Patricia A. Ullberg, of the Institute of Museum Services, had become the gurus of museum ethics. They delivered the keynote addresses at

the 1986 annual meeting, entitled “Ethical Questions Facing Today’s Museums” and “Keeping Clean in Hard Times: Museums’ Responsibility, Accountability, Liability, and the Economic Bottom Line.” The topic was examined later in the program from the perspectives of exhibits, registrars, partnerships, educators, and museum boards of directors. “Planning for a Secure Future” was the theme of the 1988 annual conference, which focused on Long Range Planning, conservation planning, branding, and facility renovations, developing a secure membership base, collections inventory, computerization and planning for AAM accreditation. Issues of curating archaeological collections, team building, and conflict resolution were introduced in following conferences.

**Publications expand to serve members:** Issue 3 of the 1980 *Newsletter* carried a reprint from the *Collection*, the quarterly of AAM’s Curators Committee, “A Bibliography on Curators” compiled by Mary Elizabeth King, Keeper of Collections at the University of Arizona. Issue 4 carried a similar bibliography, “Exhibit Planning – Know Thyself,” compiled by MPMA’s Michael D. Carman of Network Curatorial Services in Colorado Springs.

Issue 3 also reported that, at the mid-winter meeting of the Council, President Allan Griesemer had appointed an *ad hoc* Publications Committee chaired by Michael Hager, of the Museum of the Rockies in Montana, to “investigate the role of publications in MPMC activities, and ... [to suggest] for discussion possible changes in the current publications.” *Newsletter* further reported that the committee recommended a quarterly publication to include news, technical articles, select papers from the annual meeting, features from other sources, and association news. In place of the *Proceedings*, the committee recommended publishing *Precedings* which was to be an annual meeting program with abstracts of upcoming annual meeting presentations, activities and registration information. *Precedings* would be “widely distributed” to “1. Promote meeting attendance 2. Enhance the quality of presentations 3. Provide a record of the meetings 4. Promote membership in MPMA.”

Two years later, in 1982, a Publications Task Force, headed by John Brumgardt of the Museum of Western Colorado, drafted policies for the *Newsletter*, which they presented at the 1983 mid-winter Council meeting. At that meeting Council decided that MPMA publications would be developed under the supervision of a standing Editorial

Committee. The Editor of the Newsletter would be appointed by the President rather than elected by MPMA members. Likewise the committee members would be appointed by the President and approved by Council.



Significantly, although MPMA had struggled for years to muster the funds for its publications, Council determined that no advertising would be included in the *Newsletter*. However, advertisements would be permitted in the *Proceedings* because, it was assumed, these would pertain to “products or services relevant to the museum profession.” Advertising fees would be set by the Council. The “Publication Policy” detailed the types of materials to be included in each publication. Because MPMA would no longer be publishing professional papers in *Proceedings*, the association asked AAM to consider “creation of a professional scholarly journal.” The content from such a journal could be solicited from among the best papers presented at the various regional associations’ annual meetings.

The monthly publication underwent another name change and, instead of *Mountain Plains Museums Association Newsletter*, it became the *Mountain Plains Museums Association Newsgram* in 1981. At the fall Council meeting, Editor Goeffrey Hunt, of the Siouxland Heritage Center in South Dakota, reported that ten issues of *Newsgram* had thus far been published in 1983, two of these double issues, at a cost of \$1714, 3.8% over budget. A new font and paper color had been employed, and all issues had been published “on a timely basis.” Again, in January 1985, the Publications Committee, then chaired by Steve Germann, of the Montana Historical Society, reported that *Newsgram* needed a “fresh design.” Goeff Wyatt was asked to create a new design template to include specific type face, a grid for paste-up, and, generally, to provide MPMA with a “polished and professional-looking publication.”

In the fall of 1984, MPMA assembled and published, as the *Newsgram*’s first technical insert “For Your Information No. 1” (FYI), a list of resource organizations and agencies in the MPMA region. The lengthy list included state associations, arts and humanities councils, state representatives, MPMA’s AAM representatives, historical organizations and more. “For Your Information No. 2” on the conservation of ferrous artifacts, written, by Sam Hoyle, followed the next winter. FYI No. 3, published in 1986, included a technical leaflet entitled “Museum Staff and Visitor Safety: A Select Bibliography” by Robert McGiffin and FYI No. 4, published later that year, was “Framing of Paper Artifacts” by Christine Young. Editor Steve Germann also appealed to the membership to send entries for the new “opinion/editorial page” that Council agreed to initiate. FYI No. 5 and No. 6 “Preservation Guidelines for Navajo Textiles” by Jeanne Brako and No. 7 “Polyester Encapsulation” by Christine Young were published later that year. FYI No. 8 and No. 9 featured “Leather Products in Museum Collections” by Kent Bush. The following year *Newsgram* published technical leaflets on “Book Supports” by Karen Jones and “Crating a Painting” by Carl Grimm.



**“Issues” with AAM and IMS/GOS:** MPMA members have long grappled with the awareness that there are more small museums with fewer resources in MPMA’s region than in any of the other five regions. This fact also seems to have eluded leadership in AAM, as well as at federal agencies. A good example of this issue is the change that AAM made with its accreditation program that caught the attention of MPMA in 1988. In a 1988 Op/Ed piece in *Newsgram*, Sam Hoyle, a past president of MPMA (1985) who had served on AAM’s accreditation committee, reported that accreditation maintenance fees had been increased retroactively, so that some smaller museums, that could not meet the new fee, would have to drop their accreditation standing. Although Hoyle understood AAM’s need to make each of its programs self-supporting, he also recognized that raising the cost of accreditation placed that program out of reach of many MPMA institutions. An informal poll of MPMA members suggested that AAM needed to revisit its fee increases.

MPMA’s need to support small museums surfaced once more in the face of the federally mandated Institute of Museum Services (IMS). IMS provided highly sought, competitive General Operating Fund (GOS) grants. Over the years maximum funds for which museums could apply had been increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000 to \$75,000 by the mid-1980s. Accordingly, application requirements had become more complex over time. Articles began to appear in the *Newsgram* voicing concerns about the IMS/GOS grants program. At first MPMA offered IMS assistance with reviewing grant proposals and encouraged MPMA members to become part of the pool of reviewers. Annually, MPMA began to publish the names of the region’s museums that received GOS grants. Initially, under the IMS program that provided operating grant up to \$35,000, the MPMA region “got its share,” 46 grants totaling over \$1,185,000. The application required museums to submit an audit report, the cost of which was prohibitive for many small museums. Given the limited personnel and financial resources of many museums in the region, MPMA took up the cause. In early 1984, MPMA President Judy Heberling contacted the presidents of other regional museum organizations urging the group to “act in concert” in matters pertaining to IMS.

At the 1984 mid-winter Council meeting, MPMA passed a resolution to be sent to IMS. Citing specific application requirements, MPMA requested that “consideration be given by the IMS Board to the simplification of the grant applications and procedures and that the Board of IMS respond to the Mountain -- Plains Region on their deliberations and any actions taken.” The office of Senator Nancy Kassebaum of Kansas was sent a copy of the letter. IMS responded in a letter dated March 22, 1984 that 30.4% of all GOS grant requests IMS received were funded and that 31.6% of those received from museums in the MPMA region had been funded, slightly greater than the national average. IMS further pointed out that “one out of every

two applications funded by IMS went to small institutions.” However, IMS promised to share MPMA’s concerns with their Board at their next meeting.

MPMA reported to members that, at the urging of Senator Kassebaum, the requirement for an audit report would be waived for small museums because most lacked resources for this expensive financial review. However, Susan Phillips, Director of IMS, took issue with MPMA’s report, saying IMS had begun earlier to examine alternative ways of certifying the financial standing of applicant museums. Furthermore, the waiving of the audit requirement was on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the IMS director. Ms. Phillips urged MPMA to inform its members that copies of successful applications were available from IMS for review by new applicants.

Basing his remarks on a survey conducted by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), Michael W. Brooslin of the Nebraska Museums Roundtable (NMR) determined that there was a trend of awarding fewer grants and fewer dollars to museums in the MPMA region than other regions. As the cap for IMS grants increased, small museums in the region were adversely affected. Brooslin’s article “Institute of Museum Services – Are Changes Needed?” was published as the *Newsgram*’s first Op/Ed column in January 1986. He pointed out that with grants based on budgets and excellence rather than means-testing (need); many of MPMA’s small museums did not qualify for grants. He further acknowledged that, with the increase in the maximum grant amount from \$50,000 to \$75,000, the total number of grants had decreased by 32% nationally. While total IMS funds available for grants had increased by 3%, funds coming to the MPMA region had decreased by 5%. The NMR recommended that IMS enhance the review process by assembling panels to review grant proposals in the manner used by the National Endowments for the Arts and the Humanities.



MPMA sent a resolution addressing this issue to IMS pointing out that raising maximum grant awards from \$50,000 to \$75,000 without raising the total available grant dollars, “led to a decrease in the number of museums funded.” The resolution added that MPMA “cannot accept the premise that far fewer museums today than in 1984 exhibit the degree of professional excellence upon which awarding of grants ... are (sic) based.” MPMA requested that IMS return to the \$50,000 maximum grant amount and that IMS work with the professional museum community such as AAM and regional associations “to eliminate inequities, real or perceived, in the program.” In partial response to its concerns about the IMS process, and in an attempt enhance the region’s chances for securing GOS grants, the MPMA 1986

Pre-Conference Workshop was entitled “So You Want to Write Grant?” (sic). Additionally, IMS was invited to conduct a grant-writing workshop at the El Paso meeting. Members were encouraged to become IMS/GOS application reviewers to become familiar with successful proposals.

Lois Burke Shepard, IMS Director, responded to MPMA’s President Michael B. Husband of Old Cowtown Museum in Kansas regarding the MPMA resolution. She pointed out that IMS consistently tried to retain competitiveness in the application process by awarding grants to approximately one-third of the applicants. Applicants were grouped by peers in categories of discipline and budget size. Overall, applicants in the MPMA region had scored comparatively low. She suggested offering workshops on grant writing in the region, which MPMA already had planned for the 1986 annual meeting. In September of 1989, Rick Stryker, Director of the Corpus Christi Museum, sent a letter to MPMA President Peter La Paglia, director of the Wichita Falls Museum and Art Center in Texas, expressing his concern that a “regional bias” had developed in the review of IMS/GOS grant applications. He urged MPMA to “take action” and contact the IMS Director, Daphne Wood Murray, regarding this issue.

Regional museum associations usually marketed their programs at exhibit booths, identified by the name of the association, in the AAM annual conference exhibition hall. Quite by accident (we hope), the MPMA booth sign was printed “MOUNTAIN PAINS” the year that we were lobbying heavily about being at the bottom of the heap when IMS/GOS grants were awarded.

MPMA consistently worked to provide its members with opportunities for professional development. Within that context, they established a Professional Standards Committee in an “effort to cope with rapidly changing conditions in the profession and related disciplines” and promised to help members “enhance their professional competencies through annual meeting programs and continuing education workshops and seminars.”



In response to the sign, an “L” was inserted and MPMA printed a limited edition of “MOUNTAIN PAINS T-shirts. The following year we handed out candy pills at the booth, marketed “For Fast Relief of Mountain Pains.”



Although the association dealt with serious matters in the 1980s, MPMA's sense of fellowship and camaraderie held firm. Even when some arrangements at annual conferences did not run smoothly, members accepted the glitches with patience and humor. It had become a tradition over the years to create a Resolution of thanks to the host city and program committee at the end of each meeting. At first these were quite perfunctory, but over the years, they began to take on a decidedly humorous tone. The 1980 Resolution read:

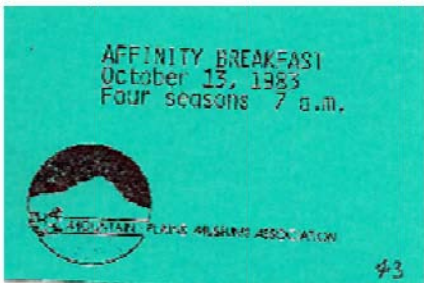
"Whereas, the historical city of Lincoln [Nebraska], was probably named to honor Denny Lincoln, whose family established a roast beef sandwich franchise in the shadow of Chimney Rock to serve the west-bound trains, had made available its commodious hotel accommodations in its picturesque warehouse district ..."

In 1981 Albert Heine of the Corpus Christi Museum wrote:

"Whereas, the deeply ingrained feelings of self-preservation (sic) of the pilots of airlines such as "Frontier," combined with the skills and acrobatics which were obviously acquired at the Dukes of Hazard (sic) School of Flying," and which they so ably demonstrated, got all of us safely together again, and only Heaven knows how; ..."

The 1988 Resolution prepared by Kent Brown, Ann Bond, Steve Germann, Goeff Hunt, and Brian Moroney "reflect the activities and unique events/happenings" at the meeting in El Paso and Juarez:

"Whereas, the clear air and thundering aircraft have truly made this the Mounting Planes Museum Meeting" and ..."



"Whereas, believing in full and accurate labels, the Officers' Club billed us as the "Mountain Planes Museum Ass." using only the first three letters of the last word..."

And in 1989 MPMA thanked Oklahoma City:

"And wherefore we were transported for endless hours on circuitous routes by "busses from hell" that one group defined as experimental mobile funigation (sic) chambers ..."

## The 1990s – Raising Our Voices, but not Singin’ the Blues

*I got the IMS blues (yeah, baby ...)  
You know, them IMS blues,  
I been workin’ an’ a-slavin’,  
A-rantin’ an’ a-ravin’  
‘bout them IMS-GOS blues, baby, blues.*

Refrain from the *IMS-GOS Blues* by Peter Tirrell and Georgi Contiguglia  
First performed at the “No Talent Show,” Albuquerque, NM, 1991

**Overview of the Decade:** MPMA adopted important non-profit business practices for its operations in the 1990s, tightened up its financial management practices, and became more entrepreneurial. Always having strong opinions, the association’s Advocacy Committee and task forces provided the field with important insights regarding repatriation, national museum funding programs, diversity, multiculturalism and museum ethics.

**Organizational Structure and Operations: Long-range Planning:** Early in the decade, MPMA membership increased to the mid-800s in part because of the attention given by Membership Committee and its Chair, Kit Neumann, of the Texas Historical Commission, who consistently worked with state representatives and other Council members to encourage membership. In addition, Pat Florence Hildebrand, MPMA Coordinator, sent timely membership renewal notices. In 1994, the annual conference was held in Corpus Christi, Texas, and attracted attendance by many members of the region’s largest state organization, the Texas Association of Museums (TAM). As a result, many TAM members joined MPMA and the membership roster temporarily topped 930, but slipped back to about 650 by the end of the decade. MPMA’s policy was, and still is, to rotate annual conferences throughout its states, so costs of transportation and MPMA membership in the host state were determining factors in conference attendance and resulted in the frequent swelling and shrinking of the membership roster over the years.



1995 Dennis Medina, Lorena Orvanano Donohue, and Cindy Sherrill-Leo

In 1990, President Dennis Medina, of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Museum in Kansas, undertook further revisions of the Dakota Conference Plan. In preparation, the Dakota Conference Plan and its history were reviewed, and the membership was polled regarding a SWAT analysis and its vision of MPMA's future. MPMA introduced a "town hall" meeting at the annual conference in 1991, enabling members to share their views and opinions in a public forum. During Medina's term, all Council positions' and committees' job descriptions were updated in compliance with the Plan, MPMA developed policies regarding speakers' honoraria and waiving of registration fees for speakers and volunteers. To enhance vendor participation in the annual conference, MPMA developed policies regarding vendors and their participation in the conference program.

President Peter Tirrell, of the Oklahoma Museum of Natural History, took up the planning process in 1992. Responding to MPMA's Long Range Planning initiative, Tirrell's article in the January 1993 issue of *Newsgram* addressed the upcoming theme of the annual conference: "Who Are We Now?" He asked, "Can museums be all things to all people?" and "What is the museum's greatest potential for public service?" He replied that museums "help us learn what we were and where we came from, who we are ... and what we might become...." He pointed out that museums allow us to "extend our view into the future by better understanding the relationships of species ... with the environment. Our own perception of our place in the course of human history is largely based on the evidence we saved from previous cultures, and we will be judged by what we leave for our offspring."

In light of members' concerns that the MPMA region was geographically too large and members' benefits too few, Council undertook to review and revise the organization's mission statement, adopting: The Mountain-Plains Museums Association, a regional unit of the American Association of Museums, is a 501 (c) (3) educational organization whose purpose is to serve the individuals and organizations of the museum community in the states of Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, and Wyoming by advocating on behalf of the museum community, and by fostering professionalism, ethical standards, cooperation, and fellowship.

Several important attitudes are reflected in this draft. First, MPMA had finally been incorporated in Colorado as a 501(c) (3) educational organization in Colorado a few years earlier; second, MPMA had established an Advocacy Committee; and third, AAM and its constituents were very involved in rewriting the AAM Ethics Code (AAM's accreditation process required all applicants to have an institution-specific code of ethics), and MPMA affirmed the alliance of the 10-state geographical region.

The MPMA Council approved the organization's Long Range Plan (LRP) in the fall of 1993, "as a working document to serve as a guideline to be reviewed annually for planning MPMA's programs and activities." The LRP's primary goals were developing and serving a diverse membership, providing a sound financial base for the organization, and improving communication with its members by using MPMA State Representatives and Standing Professional Committees (SPCs, formerly called Special Interest Committees – SICs) and Affinity Groups more effectively. Of particular emphasis, however, was the association's goal of fostering professional and ethical standards through the annual meeting, workshops and national professional development opportunities. Additionally, MPMA planned to keep members "apprised of critical issues in the field," especially the introduction of federal or state legislation that could impact the museum community.

In the LRP, MPMA also promised to "strive to give voice to the full range of concerns of the diverse geographical areas, disciplines, cultural, ethnic, racial groups, and genders represented in the region." With diversity in mind, and in order to provide input on certain issues of national importance, MPMA established a Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Task Force and an IMS Task Force. The NAGPRA legislation had been passed earlier in 1990 by the federal government, and the details of implementation were in the process of being worked out. Part of the NAGPRA law dealt with repatriation of Native American objects from museum collections. With so many museums in the region holding American Indian artifacts in their collections, the NAGPRA legislation and accompanying regulations were of great interest.

MPMA also promised to have its Advocacy Committee establish a network "to assist in informing MPMA members ... of legislative developments and in communicating to legislators the position of the museum community on those issues." For several years, AAM's Museum Advocacy Team (MAT) had assisted and advised regional associations about congressional issues and concerns. At the urging of MPMA member Margaret Blagg of the Old Jail Arts Center in Texas, in 1992 MPMA established its own Advocacy Committee "to support the AAM legislative program by responding directly to members of Congress regarding proposed legislation." State representatives were "deputized" to initiate five-member advocacy teams in each MPMA state. Items of interest included tax on gifts of appreciated property, repatriation of cultural artifacts, corporate sponsorship of museum programs, and postal subsidies for non-profit groups. Informed by AAM, Blagg diligently kept the advocacy teams and MPMA members apprised of pending legislation in these areas. The advocacy network began tracking the provisions of the newly passed Archaeological Resources Protection Act (ARPA), which was of great interest in light of the number of historic and prehistoric archaeological sites in the region. The

advocacy network also asked members to write to South Dakota legislators in support of SD state-funded museums, which were “threatened with negative funding action by the state legislature.”

The 1993, LRP indicated that MPMA Council would establish annual work plans, but the archives indicate that only state representatives and certain SPCs did this until 1996 when the first organization-wide annual plan was developed. The LRP itself had been annually monitored with progress reported to the Council by the LRP Committee. In 1995, MPMA again queried members through an on-line and mailed survey. The MPMA 1997 Annual Work Plan Report identified areas of concern: maintenance of continuity in the organization’s financial accounting procedures, inadequate diversity in the organization to represent the region’s museum community, and minimal exploration of income-generating special projects. The report further noted that MPMA was “maintaining itself by sharpening its existing programs, but the organization appears static and does not exhibit growth in its activities, services, and constituency.”

Nevertheless, by 1993 MPMA accounts indicate a fairly large cash flow. Revenues were over \$55,000 and annual conference expenses were over \$41,000, and cash reserves stood at about \$15,000. Tirrell appointed an *ad hoc* Financial Advisory Committee in 1992 to work with the Treasurer and coordinator on financial matters. Council reiterated having the term of any newly elected Treasurer begin in January at the beginning of the organization’s fiscal year so that the seated Treasurer could compile final reports after closing accounts for the annual conference and the fiscal year. Council discussed having another financial audit performed, and MPMA filed its first IRS 990 report that year. Later in the decade, MPMA was fined for filing the annual 990 late, but negotiations with the IRS resulted in return of the those fines. For the first time, organization files include ledger records for the coordinator’s budget and for the cash flow of the organization as a whole. At the 1994 fall meeting, Council adopted “Financial Investment Account Philosophy and Guidelines” proposed by the Financial Advisory Committee and the Treasurer, Lisa Hendry, of the Rosemount Museum in Colorado. The Guidelines stressed that the principal of the investment account should only be used for “catastrophic expenses,” but the interest could be used for “special projects.” The Board planned to invest the funds “conservatively” to earn an annual net return of 7.5% - 8%.

The cost of doing business, such as the long-awaited purchase of a computer and printer for the coordinator in 1992, required additional revenue. Dues were again increased and the sliding scale included higher categories that could be selected by individuals and institutions. The organization also established a Marketing and Fund Raising Committee that christened itself the “MO Money Committee” and went by



the acronym MOMOCO. Examining other revenue-generating projects, MPMA invested \$8,000 in a partnership with TAM to publish a book *Museum Forms*. This book was of great benefit to the region's members and also proved to be a good investment yielding MPMA a profit of about 7.5%.



1997 White Elephant Auction with auctioneers Matt Wilson (L), Henry Crawford (C), and Gene Ball (R)

The MOMOCO initiated a “White Elephant Auction” at the annual conference, which earned over \$900 in its inaugural year and several thousand dollars in later years. SPCs required membership dues and so had some disposable funds.

The Registrars Committee chose to provide a travel scholarship to the annual meeting with funds they had accumulated. By the end of the decade the MPMA Council voted to allow advertisements in *Newsgram*. The association's

entrepreneurial focus resulted in a treasury balance. The organization adopted a policy of retaining a balance of \$60,000 in the Treasury with interest from the investment of those funds to be used for “member services, teleconferencing workshops, and a proactive website.” Treasurer Vivian Coates, of the Colorado Historical Society, made several recommendations to Council for consolidating accounts, providing continuity regarding filing of the annual IRS 990 report and preparing an annual audit. She further recommended several procedures to tighten checks-and-balances regarding deposits and expenditures.

**More about AAM:** During the period when MPMA was reviewing the Dakota Conference Plan and developing its new LRP, AAM was undergoing a detailed review of its governance structure. AAM Board meetings had become unwieldy with attendance of a large number of voting members of the Board and representation of non-voting affiliates and special interest groups. Under its proposed governance structure, AAM eliminated Regional Representatives from its Board. When AAM invited input from the field, MPMA responded with a resolution, passed in the fall of 1993, objecting to the elimination of Regional Representatives. MPMA stated that “the strength of the American museum community ... lies in its diversity and multiple perspectives.” MPMA strongly urged the continuation of regional representation and submitted an amendment to include at least one Representative from each regional, with credentials to be agreed upon by AAM and the regions,

each to be voted into office by individuals who were members of both AAM and the appropriate region. However, the AAM Board defeated the amendment. It was the opinion of MPMA Representatives that, within the AAM Board meetings, discussion of alternative structures and diversity of opinions were stifled. Official AAM reports to members stressed only the outcome of reorganization without noting any divergent points of view. In a February 1994 letter to AAM, MPMA expressed that “Currently there exist no other outlets within the AAM structure for opposing opinions on this issue [AAM governance] to be heard. No Town Meeting appears in the annual meeting program, nor are there op-ed pages in [AAM publications] *AVISO* or *Museum News*. So it is all the more important that communications to the field accurately reflect the structure and substance of issue-related debates and conversations.” MPMA urged that majority and minority views on issues should be communicated to members.

In response, AAM established a Regional Presidents Council with no vote on the AAM Board, and MPMA President Lorena Orvananos Donohue was selected as its first Chair. Additionally three individuals from the MPMA region were elected to sit on the AAM Board: Art Wolf, Jane Jerry and Judy Diamond. AAM members overwhelmingly approved the new AAM governance structure with eighteen at-large elected Board members and three elected Officers, and because of the regional council, MPMA was satisfied that, for the time being, it had a voice in AAM affairs.

In 1995, President Kathy Dickson of the Oklahoma Historical Society expressed the concern of the Council of Regional Associations that AAM Board members seem unwilling to attend its annual session held as part of part of AAM’s annual meeting. She emphasized the importance of maintaining direct contact between the regional associations’ Council and AAM Board members, so that dialogue would be unfiltered by AAM staff. She wrote to AAM Board member Art Wolf, also an MPMA member, “As you, of course, know, there is a general feeling of disenfranchisement within MPMA under the new [AAM] structure. The presence of a Board liaison at the Council of Regional Associations is an important statement that our views are still important to the organization, and the [AAM] Board recognizes the importance of the Council’s existence.”

In a proactive gesture in 1996, MPMA proposed to the AAM Nominating Committee the name of Dennis Medina, who was subsequently elected Board Member At-Large. Throughout this period, AAM had continued to include MPMA region members in its projects and business. Peter Tirrell was asked to chair AAM’s 1992 Board Nominating Committee and John Wells from the Denver Museum of Natural History was asked to join AAM’s Ethics Committee.

Under the leadership of Vice President David Lintz of the Strecker Museum in Texas, MPMA revised its Constitution and By-laws to allow the organization to remain in compliance with changes at AAM. The Constitution noted that MPMA “is a recognized unit of the American Association of Museums” and clarified that MPMA “shall not be responsible for the liabilities of the American Association of Museums, any other region within the designated regional units of the American Association of Museums, and of the state organization comprising the Association, or of any Standing Professional Committee or other committees not appointed by the Governing Board of the Association.” Additionally the revisions reflected elimination of the elected AAM/MPMA representatives. The term “Council” was changed to “Board” in 1998. By-laws at the end of the decade had assigned At-Large Board members with oversight of publications, advocacy, and review/revisions to the Constitution and By-laws.

In 1996, Coordinator Pat Florence Hildebrand resigned and the Oklahoma Museums Association proposed taking over coordination of



MPMA Coordinator  
Jan Postler

the MPMA office duties. However, the Board declined the proposal and, in December, selected Jan Postler to replace Hildebrand.



MPMA Coordinator Patricia  
Florence Hildebrand

Once again the issue of D & O liability insurance was raised in the President’s report. In 1997, President Kathy Dickson of the Oklahoma Historical Society further explored D & O insurance, but this time convention cancellation coverage, employee dishonesty, and hired auto liabilities were included in the conversation. She strongly recommended that MPMA invest in annual coverage. Finally, D & O insurance was listed as a line item in the 1998 budget.

The accounting letter from Haley, Breed & Crom, LLP, noted that the firm had received the association’s procedures for posting receipts and disbursements and had found the procedures generally in good order. AASLH and the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums (CWAM) issued an invitation to MPMA to partner with them for the 1997 annual conference in Denver. Because AASLH had recently experienced some financial difficulties, the MPMA Board was reluctant to enter into a contract with that organization and so declined the invitation, choosing instead to

hold its meeting in Missoula, Montana in competition with the AASLH/CWAM meeting in Denver.

MPMA was not an early adapter of technology, but nevertheless continued to increase efficiencies by setting up a membership database and established the ability to accept credit card payments for conference registration fees. Michael Bell of the Oklahoma Historical Society, volunteered to design an MPMA web site. In 1998, the newly minted "President's Award" recognized David Lintz for his sustained efforts over many years in reviewing and recommending revisions to the Association's Constitution and By-laws and Carol Fenner Huls, Curator of Collections Management at the State Historical Society of North Dakota, for her work in setting up the new membership database. By the end of the decade SPCs of museum educators (EDCOM), museum exhibitions staff (NAME) and registrars (RC-MPMA) all had achieved the requisite membership to obtaining voting rights on the MPMA Board and non-voting Affinity Groups had been formed for university professional training programs (COMPT) and small museums (SMAC). Because various iterations of the organization's name had appeared over the years in its records and publications, MPMA affirmed its name as the Mountain-Plains Museums Association the following year.



In keeping with the Dakota Plan, Board members continued to submit helpful information regarding planning for the annual conference. Here is some of Sam Hoyle's advice to his successor in 1993: *"Notes on Putting the Program Together for a Mountain-Plains Meeting: Forget the deadline. 50% of all proposals will arrive after it has passed. Pick a fallback position and try to get them to respond by that date. Most of the proposal ideas come at the time that the membership receives the program."*

**Annual Meetings, Programs and Publications: IMS/GOS:** The matter of IMS grant review equitability, meanwhile, had not dropped from the MPMA agenda in the 1990s. For the three years in a row MPMA ranked sixth out of the six regions in the number of applications funded. AAM convened a grants writing seminar in Chicago prior to their annual meeting in the spring. In June 1990, when the GOS grants were announced, the MPMA region had received 47 grants while New York State alone received 59 grants. *Newsgram* published the grant statistics and asked "What is wrong with this picture?" During the summer, MPMA announced that it would hold a workshop for IMS/GOS reviewers at the fall annual conference. In 1991 MPMA formed an IMS Task Force and solicited institutional members' opinions on the equitability of the application review process and input on proposed changes to

IMS. Results indicated a fairly even split between those who thought the process fair and not. MPMA took no action at that time although federal grant funding in general was examined in the *Newsgram* with the inquiry: Friend of Foe?

The following year IMS changed the grant period to two years with funding of \$112,500 or less based on 15% of the museum's annual budget for the year prior to the application. The purposes of the changes were to increase the number of museums receiving grants, improve financial management of the funds, and save time for grantees. IMS convened a group of GOS reviewers in Denver to review proposals from this region and also assembled a group in Washington, DC to review natural history museum GOS proposals in an effort to ensure application of "appropriate standards" for review of proposals from this region. IMS initiated Technical Assistance Grants (TAG) that were anticipated to be of interest primarily to small, emerging, minority and rural museums, by providing staff training and application of skills learned to improve museum operations. With this in mind, Rebecca W. Danvers, IMS Program Director, solicited input from MPMA during 1993 with regard to the new TAG program. Unfortunately, funds for the TAG program ultimately were to come from a reduction in available GOS funds. As a service to the field, MPMA joined TAM as a cosponsor of the Texas Historical Commission's Winedale Seminars in a \$50,000 grant proposal to IMS for that professional development program. Despite the service provided by the program, IMS failed to fund the proposal.

**Diversity:** Multiculturalism became the center of many conversations within the region in the nineties. As Ruth Selig of the Smithsonian Institution pointed out in her essay "Points of View: Multiculturalism and Museums" reprinted in the February, 1993 *Newsgram*, "What we teach, what we exhibit, what students read, who should be responsible for the teaching, the exhibiting and the writing – all has become, in the parlance of the day, 'contested'." She alerted readers to issues of gender, voice, multiple perspectives, hidden meanings of artifacts in exhibitions, and audience participation. The June 1994 issue of *Newsgram* included an article, "Curators: Changing Roles and Expanding Opportunities" by Georgianna Contiguglia of the Colorado Historical Society. She wrote of the curator's role in providing a variety of interpretive perspectives pertaining to an artifact and the responsibility of anticipating future courses of inquiry when building a museum's collection. Museum education was on the national agenda and MPMA supported the inclusion of multiculturalism in those conversations. In fact, MPMA had many opportunities to face issues of multiculturalism.

MPMA passed a resolution expressing the organization's support of NAGPRA and encouraging its members to develop positive relations and programs with Native

Americans through the sharing of resources and cooperative efforts. MPMA promised to assist in this effort “by providing communications, training, consultation and other encouragement.” AAM selected three individuals from the region to serve on AAM’s committee on Native American Collaboration; they were Richard Hill of the Institute of American Indian Art in New Mexico, Tom Livesay of the Museum of New Mexico, and Walter Echohawk of the Native American Rights Fund in Colorado. The region formed an *ad hoc* Task Force on Native American Repatriation and Native American Relationships and asked Tom Livesay to serve on the task force along with Chris Dill, Director of the North Dakota Heritage Center.

Repatriation and inclusion of diverse voices in museum interpretation and their impact on museum policy were key conference topics in 1991. Passage of NAGPRA in 1990 affected many of the region’s museums, and so did the so-called “Indian-Made” law specifying that to comply with the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990, museum stores could only claim that items were “Native-Made” if the artisans had official tribal affiliation.

MPMA wished to stay on the cutting edge of the learning curve regarding NAGPRA, and so their Pre-Conference Workshop held in Bozeman, Montana, in 1990 entitled “Ethics in Managing Native American Collections,” dealt with collaboration between tribes and museums, conservation of sacred artifacts, legal issues, and case studies. The 1991 annual conference in Albuquerque featured two sessions related to NAGPRA: “Interpretive Strategies: Multiple Voices in the Museum” and “Breaking Down the Wall: How Reburial and Repatriation Issues Have Impacted Museum Policy.” Organizer of the workshop was Ann Wainstein Bond of the Colorado Historical Society and speakers included Elder William Tall Bull, of the Northern Cheyenne Cultural Commission in Montana, Curly Bear Wagner, of the Blackfeet Cultural Program in Montana and Emil Her Many Horses, of the Beuchel Memorial Lakota Museum in South Dakota.

In preparation for the 1992 annual conference, President Peter Tirrell formed a Native American/Museums Collaborative Committee. The Collaborative Committee was charged with organizing conference sessions pertaining to Native American/Museum issues and developing other interactions such as storytelling. Betty White, Cultural Chair of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes, was invited to head up the committee. MPMA continued to emphasize collaboration between museums and the region’s Native American communities and nations with very positive results. The June 1996 issues of *Newsgram* reprinted an article by Oklahoma’s MPMA Board Representative, Glenda Galvan of the Chickasaw Nation, “The Value of Regional and State Museum Organizations to Tribal Museums and Cultural Centers” in which she outlined several areas of collaboration between tribal

museums and museum associations. While tribal museums learned about conservation and practical museum collections management at association meetings, they also made important contributions to the museum community by sharing with non-Indian professionals the cultural significance of many Indian artifacts.

The conference workshop, “Expectations and Challenges of the Americans With Disabilities Act,” provided practical guidance to museums grappling with this new initiative and the conference agenda in 1994 expanded on this topic. The 1993 annual conference was held in Colorado Springs, and its theme “Who Are We Now?” proved to be especially appropriate to the circumstances of the meeting. In the November 1992 election, Colorado voted for Constitutional Amendment 2, which repealed homosexual anti-discriminatory laws that had earlier been passed in Boulder, Denver, and Aspen, and prevented passage of such laws in the future. The amendment was seen as an attack on diversity and civil rights. The association considered removing the conference from Colorado Springs in protest to the amendment and MPMA was concerned that picketing of the conference by anti-homosexual factions in Colorado Springs. Members were polled regarding whether or not to move the meeting to another state, but opinion favored retaining the Colorado venue, with the primary concerns that the association and its members could not change venues easily and without considerable financial cost. The meeting went on without a hitch in Colorado Springs; attendance was good, and community picketing did not materialize.

The Oklahoma conference of 1996 took place in the aftermath of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

The program included sessions on the community’s response to the bombing, the documentation of the event by museums, and the curation of collections resulting from public’s response to the event. Lessons were learned that would inform Colorado museums after the shootings at Columbine High School.

Cheyenne Chief Lawrence H. Hart, of the Cheyenne Cultural Center in Oklahoma, presented the moving keynote address, “The Testimony of Sand Creek and Oklahoma City,” at the joint conference of MPMA and the Oklahoma Museums Association. In his emotional presentation, Hart drew parallels between the Massacre at Sand Creek, Colorado and the bombing of the Federal Building in Oklahoma City: “the destruction of peaceable people, the killing of innocent



Cheyenne Chief Lawrence Hart

children, and, finally, the sacredness of the ground where these tragedies occurred.” The Philbrook Museum’s session on the training of personnel for American Indian Museums was of great interest to conference attendees.

**Technical Leaflets reinstated:** After a long hiatus, in 1996 MPMA reinstituted the publishing of technical leaflets in the *Newsgram*. Technical Leaflet No.1: “Keep the Lid on!!” by Stevan P. Layne, Cultural Properties Protection Consultant, covered security issues pertaining to both facilities and personnel procedures. Matters of fire, theft, vandalism and random inventories were covered. No 2 “Designing Critical Habitat for Collections Use” by Jonathan Bayless appeared in May; July’s insert, No.3, “Hantavirus Disease Health and Safety Update” by Anthony M. Knapp, noted transmission vehicles and symptoms of the virus, actions and preventive precautions to be taken.

Throughout 1996, *Newsgram* published many significant articles as well as technical leaflets. The “President’s Message” column in March offered opinions on privatizing the Wyoming’s State Museum in a proposed merger with Cheyenne’s Old West Museum. Henry Crawford, of the Museum of Texas Tech University, offered insights in “Job Changing: Reflections of a Former Registrar.” He wrote that registrars must be “voices of calm the midst of chaos,” and noted that “It is unseemly for the registrar to panic, or at least show it.” Registrars must “be humble, and yet, somehow convince the institution that the simple routine acts which they accomplish every day are nothing less than true miracles.” The June *Newsgram* included an important article by Linda Galvan, cited above; July’s insert was the “Independent Contractor” by Kathy Dickson, followed by another Dickson article on “The Taxpayer Bill of Rights.” “Election Year Dos and Don’ts” by Andy Finch of AAM warned museum staff members that they may not endorse specific candidates, but can raise issues of concern to the electorate and urge people to vote.

*Newsgram* published “The testimony of Sand Creek and Oklahoma City,” the 1996 conference keynote speech by Lawrence H. Hart and a technical leaflet No. 1 by Alan Levitan, “Datalogger Applications in Monitoring the Museum Environment” that discussed a device whose electronic sensors can track and graph environmental conditions in exhibit galleries and storerooms. Looking forward to another collaboration, MPMA included in its August publication, a “Purchasing Cooperative Product Survey” sponsored by the Colorado-Wyoming Association of Museums, a program enabling member institutions to purchase certain storage and conservation materials at a reduced price. Throughout the remaining months of the decade *Newsgram* continued to publish technical leaflet inserts on such topics as artifact condition reports, collections storage and exhibit techniques.



**Responding to changing needs:** The 1997 conference in Missoula, Montana, introduced the terms “Baby Boomers’ and “Lifelong Learning” to members’ vocabularies. The theme “The Meaning of Museums” looked forward to changes that museums could anticipate at the Millennium and beyond. Practical matters focused on lessons learned from the recent disastrous flood and fire in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Emphasizing the collaborative nature of the museum community, MPMA’s registrars SPC established its Helping Hands Program, a daylong collections work project at a museum in the host community. Sessions explored the use of technology, high tech and low tech, in museum exhibits as well as the sharing of archaeological databases through web-based programs and exhibit interpretation. The use of technology in collections management and video conferencing to teach collections care found their way into the annual conference sessions as did the use of web-based technology to develop inexpensive interactive programs for exhibitions. Of course, Millennium panic had set in and so sessions on preparing for the Y2K bug were also introduced. The team approach to exhibit development, women as team players, museum purchasing cooperative, museum leadership, staff development, violence in the workplace, and salary surveys were topics that found their way onto the conference programs at the end of the decade.

**“Resolutions” and “Little Talent”:** The association continued the tradition of thanking host cities and host museums for their tireless efforts in organizing the annual conferences that had been established in earlier years. Those of the 1990s took on a distinctly stand-up-comedic flavor that accurately attests to the spirit of fellowship that had blossomed in the association. The 1996 Resolution, Mountain-Plains Meeting, Guthrie, Oklahoma, written by Sam Hoyle and published in the November *Newsgram* in a long page of “Whereass” and “Wherefores” included:

“Whereas the guests on the second floor of the [historic] Victor Hotel, who were not aware that the walls of their rooms were actually windows opening onto the main corridor, were presented with an unparalleled opportunity to engage in acts of exhibitionism ...and

Wherefore several legislators whose profuse endorsements of cultural institutions were videotaped to be used when next legislation on museums is affected ...

...we the members of the Mountain-Plains Museums Association are hereby resolved to express our sincere appreciation and underlying gratitude ... “

The 1998 “Resolution” “submitted in pale imitation of Sam Hoyle, by Georgi Contiguglia abetted by Peter Tirrell and Kittu Longstreth-Brown,” published in the November *Newsgram* relates some of the more memorable moments of the meeting in Lubbock, Texas:

“Whereas: ... Dan Flores ... asked about the frequency of Texas earthquakes as the meeting room trembled, mimicking our neighbors in the Western Museums Association with their 4.8 seismic annual meeting in Anchorage, Alaska last week, and Whereas: the annual business meeting proceeded at a fast pace, in part because the microphones were not working, so it didn’t matter what was said because we couldn’t hear the reports anyway ...

Therefore let it be resolved that MPMA brings to a close another great annual meeting and conference ... “

The new MPMA paid coordinator, Jan Postler, proposed the creative idea of organizing the “Little or No Talent Show” to follow the closing dinner-dance of the 1992 conference. So whatever talents MPMA members had in singing, guitar accompaniment, tap dancing, and storytelling were highlighted to the great delight and entertainment of the audience. The September 1993 *Newsgram* whetted the interest of prospective attendees of the October annual conference in Colorado Springs in this preview of “A Little Talent Show”:



Dueling Kazoos, 1996 No Talent Show,  
Sam Hoyle and Kit Neumann

Last year’s semi-spontaneous “No Talent Show” at the Annual Meeting in Lincoln was a great hit and left us with no way to go but up. Gene Ball is rehearsing in order to work his way up from the “No Talent” to the “Little Talent” category. After being kidnapped from a repatriation workshop in Livingston, Montana and taken to the Roadkill Café, Peter Tirrell isn’t sure he can handle David Lintz’s Readings from the Roadkill

Cookbook. Sally Shelton is practicing fiddle but hasn’t been sent the music to the MPMA Theme Song yet. Lorena Orvananos Donohue still has soap in her saxophone. So the rest of you Annual Meeting Attendees start figuring out what little talent you will share with all who stay over Saturday night in Colorado Springs.

In the spirit of long range planning, the effervescent Jan Postler reported in 1993:  
As instructed by Council, we have done absolutely no structuring of the happening  
that will occur in some form on Saturday night. But this seemed too simple a task for  
someone called 'The Entertainment Chair, so we've come up with this, a Long Range  
Retroactive Entertainment Plan:

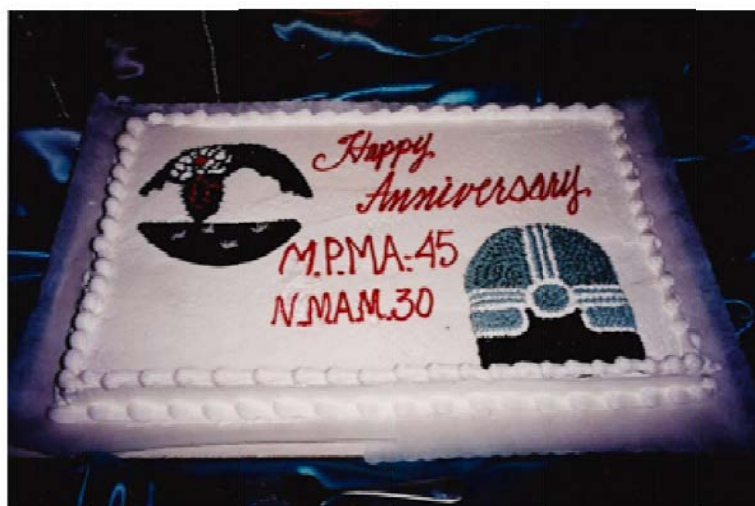
#### THE LITTLE-OR-NO TALENT SHOW

1991	Spontaneous Combustion
1992	No Talent Show
1993	A Little Talent Show (or a Little-Talent Show)
1994	Little Mo Talent Show
1995	A Lot Mo Talent Show

The No Talent Show was a popular attraction  
throughout the decade's annual conferences.



1996 No Talent Show, Georgi Contiguglia  
and Peter Tirrell



1999 MPMA's 45<sup>th</sup> Birthday Cake

## The 2000s – Finally -- the Electronic Age

*a forum for communication ... and shared creative learning opportunities .... MPMA is the voice of its members in ... state, regional and national arenas.*

MPMA Mission Statement 2001

**Overview of the Decade:** MPMA continued its cycles of organizational planning and evaluation as established in the original Dakota Conference Plan. Leadership and management of the organization continued to become ever more professional. Annual meeting programs addressed broad issues that were reflected in national conversations among cultural institutions. But it was the introduction of electronic programs and social media instruments that enabled the association to communicate with and serve its constituents more effectively in the twenty-first century. FaceBook, MySpace, E-blasts, E-alerts, and on-line conference registration allowed MPMA to expand its network and stay in budget. MPMA celebrated its first fifty years of service in 2003.



**Organizational Structure and Operations:** In preparation for organizational planning at the beginning of 2000, MPMA's Board distributed a "Mountain-Plains Museums Association Needs Assessment Survey" in 1999. Members identified the association's newsletter, annual meetings, and networking opportunities as the greatest benefits of MPMA membership. While members requested more workshops and an expanded website that would include job postings, the general tone of the survey responses was positive.

Fully embracing organizational planning, the Board organized a facilitated strategic planning retreat, The Rodeck Future Forum, made possible by a gift from Hugo G. Rodeck, held just prior to the 2001 mid-winter meeting. A new Strategic Plan emerged from the Forum with a revised MPMA mission statement:

"The Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA) is a regional organization of museums and museum professionals that advocates excellence in the field, provides a forum for communication between (sic) its members, and shared creative learning opportunities with the region's diverse audiences. MPMA is the voice of its members in appropriate state, regional and national arenas."

Note the absence of references to the AAM in the revised mission statement. The Forum identified immediate goals of hiring a full-time Executive Director, creating a

Technology Committee to improve the website, addressing annual meeting issues in preparation for the 2001 joint meeting planned with the Oklahoma Museum Association (OMA), implementing Board orientation materials, annual evaluation of Board performance and updating membership benefits, fees and materials.

Continuing its ongoing review of the association's performance and planning process, MPMA instituted a Strategic Plan 2004-2006 at the 2004 mid-winter meeting, which set the goals of increasing membership; being a dynamic organization providing leadership, networking, professional resources to members; and providing the organizational infrastructure and the financial stability to meet changing needs of the organization. Tracking reports indicate an enhanced business approach to meeting these goals by researching and adopting procedures that were successful in other regional and national associations, growing relationships with state associations, Affinity Groups and SPCs, and strategic use of cost/benefit analyses.

Another review and planning cycle took place in 2008 with Mary Kay Ingenthron facilitating a daylong planning session prior to the Kansas City meeting. The new Strategic Plan focused on organizational stability rather than initiating new programs for members. Its goals were to increase membership, particularly among universities with museology programs; to provide an interesting, well-organized and profitable annual meeting; to review the Board structure and update job descriptions and By-laws accordingly; to integrate SPCs and Affinity Group Representatives more effectively by developing job descriptions for each; and to develop financial resources and generate endowment funds. Ultimately the Board agreed to maintain the existing Board structure, but they worked to clarify the roles of at-large, state, SPC and Affinity Group members. Communication among Board members and committees was stressed.

Board meeting agendas included issues that had been brought to the attention of the Board in past years without resolution and some issues that had been resolved but needed to be institutionalized in the By-laws. These included items such as upgrading the design of a website, hiring an annual meeting coordinator, purchasing D & O insurance, clarifying the year-end responsibilities of an outgoing treasure and responsibilities of At-Large Board members, implementation of a Board ethics policy, and discussions about contested versus non-contested association elections. A Board Development Committee replaced the Nominating Committee, and Board orientation and Board notebooks were introduced. Board members signed a form indicating their responsibilities to attend meetings, raise funds, participate in committees, offer opinions and suggestions at meetings and promote MPMA. By 2005 the Board was teleconferencing meetings of the Executive Committee and the

members of the small MPMA staff were successfully collaborating on association work from remote locations such as their homes.

Coordinator Postler submitted her resignation effective June, 2001, but agreed to work on an hourly basis through the fall annual meeting. The coordinator's job description was updated with the position upgraded to full-time status and



*Monta Lee Dakin*  
*MPMA Executive Director*

responsibilities expanded to include fund raising, marketing, and budgeting; accordingly, the title was changed to Executive Director. Personnel policies regarding terms of employment were set in place, and Vice President Jennifer Cook, of the Foothills Art Center in Colorado, established a template for the coordinator's annual evaluation by the Board. The Board established a search committee and hired Monta Lee Dakin as the association's first full-time Executive Director and *Newsgram* Editor soon after. A bookkeeper was contracted to handle payroll and budget and a graphics designer was added to the contract staff.

The 2000 Board updated the By-laws to reflect the requirement and already existing procedures that an Outgoing Treasurer was responsible for presenting to the Board a balanced account of the Treasurer's last year in office and assisting in the transition to the Incoming Treasurer. By-laws also codified the responsibilities of At-Large members who chaired committees for Advocacy, Publications, and Constitution/By-laws review and revision. Haley, Breed & Crom, LLP, were contracted for audit services for 1999 financials. "Investment Policy Objectives and Guidelines" was revised and refined.

In 2005, the financial guidelines included an expanded Endowment Policy. Once again the issue of D & O insurance arose as a concern. President Michael Bruce of the Oklahoma Historical Society's Guthrie Museum, agreed to research costs of insurance coverage including a more affordable insurance plan that would cover D & O, the annual conference, and specific organizational risks. Annual meeting insurance appears as a budget line item in 2006.

At the beginning of the decade, membership hovered around 670 and MPMA set an objective of reaching 1,000 members. To accomplish this, MPMA made a series of strategic moves. The association raised membership dues and instituted the membership category of "business member" by 2002. In 2003, MPMA hired Erin Barrette as membership coordinator. To serve museum education, MPMA instituted membership to universities in 2005 to enable students enrolled in museology

programs to take advantage of MPMA programs at a reduced rate. MPMA initiated a membership campaign in 2005, focusing on institutional memberships. As a result of these initiatives, membership reached about 930 by mid-decade. However, the important question of ascertaining the specific cost of maintaining a member was raised but not answered. Typically, membership slipped again after an annual meeting was held in Fargo, North Dakota, in 2007 and a new membership drive was undertaken with the rallying cry of “750 is Nifty.” Nevertheless, the severe economic national downturn at the end of the decade took its toll, and MPMA totals again leveled out at about 530 members.

The association worked to balance its policy of rotating its annual meetings through every state in the region, even in more remote cities, against the realistic need to hold meetings in larger urban centers that would draw a larger number of attendees and have more affordable transportation costs. The 2008 annual meeting, “Meeting in the Middle,” held in Kansas City, Missouri in conjunction with the Association of Midwest Museums (AMM) was a resounding success with over 70 exhibitors and more than 600 attendees, and netted the largest profit margin MPMA had ever seen. MPMA and AMM split a profit of more than \$180,000.

The MPMA website and computers successfully survived the Y2K perceived crisis, and, in 2000, MPMA conducted a website survey among its members. In response, the Board hired Douglas Patinka to update and reorganize the MPMA website to include general information about the organization, the annual conference and a web calendar of MPMA programs and meetings. Patinka suggested that MPMA include links to state associations and other helpful sites and put the publication of *Newsgram* on line. The Board discussed the option of hiring a paid website manager and interest was expressed to include advertising and sponsorship banners on the website. MPMA encouraged members to share their e-mail addresses in order to receive electronic announcements. The revised website included “Business Participation Guidelines” that listed ways vendors could contribute and participate in the annual conference. A technology report encouraged MPMA to purchase .com, .org, and other domains. In 2002, the Board passed a motion to send a full *Newsgram* to members every other month and to send a *Newsgram Brief* update each month in an electronic format, MPMA’s E-News Service.

By the end of the decade MPMA had moved into the twenty-first century technologically and had integrated the use of technology into virtually all its operations. With the help of technology gurus such as Jeremy Clark, who became the Technology Committee Chair in 2007, MPMA became the first regional association to join MySpace World. MPMA also piloted the use of FaceBook and other social media formats. A Job Bank was established and a Business Directory

was put on-line. A new web site was unveiled in 2008 and annual meeting registration was available on-line through Regonline; more than half of the delegates chose electronic registration.

The newsletter was administered by Constant Contact. This web-based company also administered the elections on-line beginning in 2008. In 2008, the Board conducted deliberations on replacing the bi-monthly print copy of *Newsgram* with an electronic copy to provide significant cost savings. However, the Board moved to mail quarterly newsletters and integrate that with eight electronic newsletters. The economic realities of the late 2000s forced MPMA to transition to an electronic only newsletter in 2010. E-blasts were sent out frequently and E-alerts sent out as needed.

In 2002, the Board voted unanimously to recognize the Tribal Museum Network as an Affiliate, stating that “With the strong presence of tribal museums throughout the region, we feel that this adds an important dimension to our organization ...” Members were sought for an Affinity Group of Volunteer Managers and Coordinators. By 2003, SPCs and Affiliate Groups included EDCOM, RC-MPMA, NAME, SMAC (Small Museum Administrators Council), and newer groups ACUMG (Association of College and University Museums and Galleries), CARE (Committee for Audience, Research and Evaluation), COMPT (Committee on Museum Professional Training), CURCOM (Curators Committee), as well as the Tribal Museums and Volunteer Coordinators, Emerging Leaders, Inclusive Practices groups. A Distance Managers Affinity Group and ArtsCom (Arts Committee) joined the ranks in 2006.

MPMA established a “Committee on Inclusive Practices” at the 2005 mid-winter meeting. While AAM in 2005 defined diversity primarily with respect to individuals’ national origin, gender, race, culture, economic status, religion, sexual orientation, physical or cognitive ability, age, and/or family structure, MPMA’s Committee of Inclusive Practices in 2005 expanded diversity to include museums with respect to disciplines, sizes, funding sources, and governing authorities.

The Ethics Policy was amended in 2002 to include a non-discrimination clause, an “Excellence in Publications Award” was introduced in 2003, and the MPMA Investment Policy was amended to include provision for endowment funds in 2005. A separate scholarship account was set up to establish a small reserve, fed mostly by proceeds of the annual meeting auction, for scholarship grants. In 2009 MPMA, through the support of The Mid-America Arts Alliance (MAAA), received a welcomed stimulus grant of \$24,500 to help meet administrative and program expenses.



**Annual Meeting, Programs and Publications:** Annual meeting programs addressed issues that were on the minds of museum practitioners in the region. These concerns and areas of interest included: diversity, university museology programs, technology, disaster planning and response, capital projects, historic preservation, financial sustainability, cultural tourism and museum education. The terms “succession planning” and “diverse learning styles” appear for the first time in the 2005 program and curators introduced the new topic of “collecting plans” in 2007. Museum “branding” appears on the program for the first time in 2008 and MPMA began to organize sessions into interest “tracks” that were coded on the programs: Administration, Advocacy, Conservation, Diversity/Access, Environment/Sustainability, Volunteers/Visitors Services and others.

The decade opened with the annual conference in Bismarck, North Dakota, with the theme “Surviving the Journey” which seemed to foreshadow the 9/11 terrorism attack that shook the entire country. Three weeks after the nation suffered the 9/11 attack, in spite of national grief, or perhaps because of it, MPMA decided to move forward with its 2001 annual meeting in Tulsa. The 2002 conference was the first to utilize a Development Committee, chaired by the Vice President, which had the responsibility of developing revenue-generating events at the annual meeting. By 2008, the Committee aimed to raise sponsorships totaling \$100,000 for the annual meeting in Kansas City in collaboration with the Association of Midwest Museums. The sponsorship goal for the Cheyenne meeting of 2009 was a more modest \$25,000, but only half of that was raised.

**Technology:** Museums’ use of technology blossomed in the 2000s expanding from electronic database tracking for collections to a variety of interpretation uses, to the use of databases to track donor giving, membership and volunteers. Museums were instructed on how they could build better websites, but, with costs of electronic programs still high, small museums struggled to establish web presence and



2004 Helping Hands at the Nicholayson Museum, Eric Quinn and Heather Mell

electronic gallery activities “on a shoestring.” The 2002 annual meeting program raised the topic of eBay and asked if such on-line sales sites where artifacts could be easily purchased were “Bane or Boon for Museum Collections.” Digitization of museum collections was seen as a great benefit to providing access to collections for schools, researchers and the general public, but it raised the issue of copyright and intellectual property rights. Creation and maintenance of interpretive programs housed in exhibition gallery kiosks were sessions of great interest. Exhibit planners

examined the use of “digital worlds” in the gallery. Curators discussed museums’ acquisition of electronic materials and their ongoing ability to access digital collections in a future that included fast-changing technology formats and hardware.

By the end of the decade, topics included social media, pod casting, the use of cell phone / mobile interpretation devices to enhance gallery interpretation and to expand access to cultural tourists on the highway. Conference sessions explored partnerships among museums and also private-public partnerships on creating digital access to collections. Session of interest to museum educators included the use of electronic devices, but also discussed the challenges of “No Child Left Behind” and the establishment of statewide discipline standards. Educators also learned from sessions dealing with the use of the museum theater, living history, folklore and oral histories.

**Diversity:** Interpretation of American Indian culture and history found an ever more active voice in this decade. Several American Indian cultural centers and tribal museums had been founded by this time and their experience and information provided a fertile cross-cultivation of ideas with others considering establishing similar institutions. Annual conference sessions, such as the 2002 “The Many Faces of Excellence: How to Expand and Improve the Process of Community Inclusion,” provided examples of community dialogue in developing exhibits and interpretive programs. Museums were encouraged to seek out previously “unheard voices” in their program planning. A session on the topic of inclusion of volunteers with disabilities encouraged museums to “Discover Opportunities Instead of Barriers.” Sessions devoted to cultural patrimony and the looting of cultural property in war times had strong participation by conference attendees. Museums were encouraged to look inside at workforce and board diversity issues and to encourage diversity of support through a capital campaign.

The national financial climate suffered ups and downs during this decade, and so did museums. Financial uncertainties caused the closure of some museums and required others to cut back staff who provided essential services and programs. Nevertheless, in many instances, funds for capital expansion and improvement could still be found. Annual conference sessions addressed these issues with verve. In 2000, “Creating Multidisciplinary Facilities,” encouraged museums to partner with organizations whose missions overlapped with their own.

**New Facilities:** 2001's "The Museum Design and Construction Process: The Voices of Politics, Design, and Cost" identified the complexity of major construction projects as did "So You Want a Museum Huh? – Building Consensus With Cohorts through the Pre-Design Process." Historic preservationists encouraged adaptive reuse of historic structures as a way for museums to expand their facilities. A 2005 conference workshop addressed "How Do I Determine My Needs for a New Museum?" The following year attendees learned from "Planning for Success: Preparing for Capital Projects." Among these conversations sessions, such as the 2008 presentation "How to Go Green – and Why" and the 2009 "Green is the New Black: Saving Money With a Sustainability Plan," the concept of the "green museum" was introduced as museum professionals and architects became more aware of environmental issues such as global warming and the cost / benefit of recycling renewable energy.



Kathy Dickson, Kathrine Schlageck, and Jenny Cook in Casper 2004

**Finances:** Annual conferences addressed museum finances in a variety of session topics such as the 2002 session "Money Is Tight! What to Say" discussing legislative lobbying. But the 2003 conference focused on the theme "Gold Fever" in Golden, Colorado, with sessions entitled "Taking the King's Shilling and Dancing the King's Tune: Perspectives on Public Funding in a Changing Economy" and "Five Easy Ways to Make the Most Out of Your Museum Store." Later conferences discussed museums and the IRS, Unrelated Business Income (UBIT), and renting museum spaces for private events. The results of studies on the economic impact of arts and culture were shared with conference attendees. MPMA even renamed its annual scholarship fundraiser the "Live Stimulus Plan Auction."

**Nurturing Leadership:** Throughout the annual program planning, efforts were made to provide a more welcoming environment for students, museum directors and trustees. A mentoring program for students and first year attendees, initiated in 2001, proved to be a successful way to introduce new members to the activities of the annual conferences. Under the guidance of Henry Crawford, of the Museum of Texas Tech University, and Kathrine Schlageck, of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum in Kansas, the mentoring program typically matched twenty-five students and first-time attendees with fifteen "experienced" MPMA mentors annually. Following the lead of AAM, MPMA instituted sessions on museum leadership and governance that were geared specifically to museum directors and trustees and initiated its first Directors and Trustees Day in 2003. The directors' and trustees' "track" included discourse on strategic planning, customer service, censorship,

friends' groups, a directors' forum and round table discussions. This "track" did not gain much traction and was abandoned after a couple of years. In 2002, A "Commercial Track" was established by the Board as a way to integrate vendors and private museum services into the program.

**Serving Small Museums:** AAM and the Institute of Library and Museum Services (IMLS as of 2001, formerly two institutions, the Institute of Museum Services and Library Services) were always on the minds of MPMA members. Because of the great swath of geography served by MPMA, the association applied for IMLS funds to initiate distance-learning programs in the region, but the proposal was denied. In 2005, MPMA and Oklahoma Historical Society unsuccessfully applied for funds "to create a seven-part CD series focusing on issues related to museum management and intended for small museums. MPMA's Small Museums Task Force continued to advocate on behalf of small museums, and conversations with AAM resulted in the formation of the National Small Museums Coalition, later morphed into the Affinity Groups called by the acronym SMAC (Small Museums Administrators Council). MPMA and AAM continued to exchange their views on the usefulness and feasibility of attaining museum accreditation.

**Museum Funding Coalitions:** At the urging of the MPMA Advocacy Committee, the association partnered with the American Association for State and Local History and other state and regional associations to become part of the Federal Formula Grant Coalition in support of legislating federal dollars for museums much as federal dollars were allocated to the states' libraries. The association also worked with IMLS to frame its language for a reauthorization request. The Advocacy Committee also encouraged MPMA to join the group advocating for federal funding for Indian museums.

**Communications:** In 2002 the *Newsgram* was bifurcated, with an expanded publication arriving to members every other month and a shorter publication with announcements and job postings arriving on alternating months. The expanded *Newsgram* revived the inclusion of technical inserts, and special features dealt with tax precedents and the impact of the national economic climate on museums in the region. A "Museum Issues" column included articles such as "Valuing Collections" by James B. Gardner (January 2004) and "Getting Grassroots Boards to 'Move and Shake'" by Linda Lysakowski (July 2004), "Board Diversity: A Bigger Issue Than You Think" by Hildy Gottlieb (January 2006), "Technology: The Future and What to Do About It"(Summer 2009) and "Querying the Environment: A Smart Model for Pull Content" by Tina Simon (Fall 2009), and "Current Regional Issues in Stereotyping" by Christy Sturm.

MPMA also provided electronic announcements, and, after hiring a designer to upgrade *Newsgram* and the website, President Jennifer Cook explained that MPMA was looking forward to providing members with a “comprehensive website that would be a source of information and camaraderie for museum professionals throughout the region and beyond.” By 2004, the website was up and running “looked professional” and was available for use by affiliate groups in the region. In 2008, the website was once again redesigned to make it easier for members to navigate and read it. MPMA initiated a MySpace Page and Flickr Page for members to share photos of pertinent events. The MPMA Scholarship was renamed the Emerging Leaders Scholarship and a regional publications recognition award was instituted in 2002.

**Expanding Services:** As an incentive to increase the number of institutional memberships, MPMA explored opportunities to expand its Purchasing Co-op by making a joint agreement with CWAM. By 2009, the cooperative included sixty-five institutions and an objective of one hundred participants was set for 2010. MPMA also explored the possibility of negotiating insurance fees for its institutional members. The association and its members stepped up to assist after environmental disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita. In 2005, MPMA established a Hurricane Katrina Relief Fund and organized regional members in two disaster efforts to assist the New Orleans Archdiocese with cleanup from catastrophic Gulf hurricanes.



Erin Quinn and Erin Barrette at the 2004 PJ party in Casper

**Improving Museum Visibility:** MPMA’s Advocacy Committee, under the leadership of Lorne Render, of the Marianna Kistler Beach Museum of Art in Kansas, collaborated with AAM on their 2006 Year of the Museum Resolution working to have legislative resolutions passed eventually in nine of the region’s ten states. MPMA’s Advocacy Committee remained strong, and under the leadership of Art Wolf, of Wolf Consulting, the organization enhanced its collaboration with AAM’s annual Advocacy Day in Washington, DC, and also worked with state-based teams to address legislative issues of state importance. At the annual Council of Regional Associations, discussions with AAM began regarding implementation of a nationwide museum salary survey. Although all agreed on the need for such a survey, how to meet the costs and use of regional membership lists were issues to be worked out.

**Fellowship:** Not to overlook the importance of organizational fellowship, MPMA held a “pajama party” on the last night of the 2002 Topeka, Kansas, meeting. Fellowship continued to be much in evidence with the “Late-Nite With Mark and Mike” session, featuring “Instigators and Moderators” Michael Bruce and Mark Ryan, which had serious topics assigned for conversation, but since these annual meeting events were held in the bar, conversations never got too serious. The 2005 “Late Nite” topic was “Does Your Museum Career Stink?” and the 2008 Kansas City “Late-Nite” was entitled “Take Me to Your Leader.” Dancing and costumes highlighted the growing popularity of the Closing Party. Western line dancing was a MPMA” song highlight in Golden, dancing was featured at a Halloween costume party with Monster Mash DJ Steve Friesen in Kansas City and in Fargo, the party became a showcase for stand-up comedy and musical talent. “Museum Idol” brought out many who vied to win the singing competition, and Jay Smith, Rick Young, and Erin Barrette served up the comedy part as they ruled the show as judges along with Jeremy Clark who served as the host of the talent show. MPMA’s Awards Banquet became another outlet for talent. At the 2004 conference, Jan Postler organized a group to sing about the conference.



David Lintz and Audrey Barnhart at the 2005 PJ party in Omaha

The tradition evolved that at each annual meeting there was an opportunity for a group representing the upcoming meeting’s host state to provide a bit of flavor to entice members to attend the next meeting. Meeting themes took their inspiration from the locations in which meetings were held: “GOLDen Fever” held in Golden, Colorado; “New West Solutions in Old West Settings” in Cheyenne, Wyoming; and “Monumental Visions: Carving the Future of Museums” in Rapid City, South Dakota.

“MPMA” sung to the tune of “YMCA” featuring (left to right) Jan Postler, Dave Ryan, Mark Gardner, Mike Bruce, and Dee Harris in Casper in 2004



## The 2010s – And Beyond

*Time present and time past  
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And time future contained in time past.*

From “Four Quartets” by Thomas Stearns Eliot

**Overview of the Decade:** It is too early to see what trends will emerge in this decade. As this history is being written, the national economy, while improving, is still not good, and public-funded institutions, including museums, are operating in a financial environment where tax dollars, grant funds, and donations are tight. While committee leadership turnover is a natural occurrence, several MPMA’s Board committees, SPCs and Affinity Groups have recently experienced leadership turnover as museums clip travel monies and older members retire from the field. Even in these challenging times, MPMA continues to hone and adapt its organizational structure and procedures while maintaining and expanding its memberships programs to provide value to the museum community of this vast region.

**Organizational Structure and Operations:** Through the economic recession, beginning in 2008, MPMA approved deficit budgets, expecting to back-fill shortages with the organization’s reserve investment accounts as needed. However, cash flow has enabled the organization to carry on without dipping into reserves. In 2010, the Board voted to institute its first year-end annual donation appeal, and, in the final analysis, 2010 revenues exceeded expectations and the deficit was smaller than had been anticipated.

The Strategic Plan’s committee structure experienced hiccups resulting from changes in committee leadership at NAME, SMAC, RC-MPMA, and Advocacy in 2011. Nevertheless, momentum was regained by the end of 2012 although some committee work momentarily stalled. Communications / Marketing Committee established a fan page on FaceBook and, by 2013, there were close to 900 MPMA Friends signed on. MPMA’s affinity group the Emerging Museum Professionals (EMP) also established a fan page. The Future Conference Committee reviewed annual meeting evaluations with an eye to improving attendees’ experience. The Awards Committee, under the leadership of Kathy Dickson breathed new life into the annual Leadership Award by expanding it to the Leadership and Innovation Award and the Online Presence Award. In 2012, MPMA handed out a total of thirteen awards, the highest number yet.



As MPMA completes its sixth decade as a regional association of museums, it is looking forward. A proposal to the Board recommends upgrading the twenty-year-old membership database program to “expand overall functionality to serve members in the most efficient and cost-effective way.” A new database would enable state membership team members to submit information and update the



Former Scholarship Chair Susan Baley with current Scholarship Chair Brian Whisenhunt.

central database in a timely manner.

Meanwhile an increase in the graduated institutional membership fees is also on the table to counteract, in part, falling membership revenue that, once again, leveled off at about 550 since 2008 as a fallout of the economic recession. While the annual meeting sponsorship revenue was budgeted at \$25,000, only half of that was raised in 2011, but the Development Committee met 92% of this goal in 2012.

2011 MPMA financial sustainability discussions focused on growing the year-end annual appeal,

which had proven somewhat successful, and the establishment of an MPMA endowment, based on the AASLH model. Opportunities for submission of grant proposals through IMLS continued to be limited.

The 2011 Mid-Winter Board meeting included discussion the appropriate venue and vehicle for the Board to discuss and respond to ideas and questions from members. The annual business luncheon seemed a cumbersome venue for such conversations because of having a guest speaker. The suggestion of “Breakfast with the Board” had merit.

**Annual Conferences, Programs and Publications:** MPMA examined options for improving services to members: expansion of the COOP purchasing services with CWAM, development of a traveling exhibit service, a professional development / training curriculum partnership, webinars, and conservation services. The Membership Committee was charged with exploring Groupon, on-line payment of MPMA and SPC dues simultaneously and inclusion of informational videos available to members on-line.

**Sustainability and Expanding Services:** In 2012, a Sustainability Task Force proposed that MPMA establish a standing committee called the Sustainability Committee to develop a “cushion” or “endowment” of funds that would enable MPMA to sustain its core programs such as scholarships, mentoring, annual meeting



and general operations for two to three years “in the unlikely event of a financial hardship that negatively impacts core staff, the annual conference, or its basic ability to operate for a period of time.” The funds could also enable MPMA to be more proactive in piloting new services and programs. The *ad hoc* Task Force recommended that MPMA establish a planned giving program and an Alumni registration price to encourage continued participation of members who retired.

The CO-OP Committee was charged with exploring expansion of cooperative purchasing agreements beyond the conservation materials that were the core of the partnership with CWAM. In 2012, MPMA unrolled cooperative programs that offered significant discounts to institutional members for museum insurance and a Museum Storage Equipment Discount Program. To participate in the program, vendors are required to submit proposals for MPMA review, and, if accepted, vendors are expected to contribute to MPMA a minimum of \$1,000 annually through business memberships, conference attendance, sponsorships and the like. The committee will next explore a software discount program for institutional members. Savings to museums in these areas can easily offset the cost of MPMA institutional membership.

MPMA moved forward with a regional Salary and Benefit Survey that was integrated with similar surveys from the other regions to become part of a national AAM museum survey. MPMA added website pages for the region’s SPCs (RC-MPMA and EDCOM). The organization’s award program saw increased interest with awards going to institutions in the areas of publication design and technology.

The scholarship committee saw a surge in applications and provided funds for twenty-one applicants in 2012 by combining its own Student Scholarship Competition with that of the Texas Tropical Trails Region, the College of Contemporary Native Arts and MPMA’s own Tribal Museum Scholarship. Abigail Jones, Class of 2011, said, “As an emerging professional, there is not a greater training opportunity that attending and being able to present at an annual conference.” The Scholarship Committee expanded further with the establishment of the Carolyn Garrett Pool Award for Outstanding Museum Studies Student in memory of the many years Pool devoted as chair of COMPT and the Student Paper Competition that she inaugurated. The well-established RC-MPMA “Helping Hands” program assisted the Mai Wah Museum in Butte, Montana, and the Black Hills Mining Museum in Lead, South Dakota, in 2012.



Pat Roath, longtime RC MPMA member, arrives at the Helping Hands site.

**Fellowship:** Rapid City saw the Museum Marketing Madness dress up party at the Awards Banquet and a colorful display of do-rags, hats, scarves, and a bike for the “Sturgis Rally.” 2011 Helena, Montana organizers Bob Brown, Amanda Trum, and Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney set the tone at the Opening Reception by coming as the Three Stooges. The meeting also held another superlative costumed Halloween Party, this one featuring the Thriller Dancers, and the talk-show “Late Nite with Deborah Amend and Patti Finkle” that was so well attended that the show was moved to a larger venue. Annual Meeting attendees in Helena dodged beach balls (and splintered water glasses) at the luncheon at which the 2012 meeting “at the beach” in Corpus Christi was introduced. The Corpus team continued their raucous endeavors featuring surfboards, Izzy the Islander and Tarot Card Reader Lori Bryant at the closing party.



Conference Co-Chairs Bob Brown, Amanda Trum, and Jennifer Bottomly-O’looney as the Three Stooges.



South Dakotans stand quietly on stage to represent the Mount Rushmore heads.

A tradition that has continued on in this decade is the *Welcome* where a group from the host city of the next annual meeting provide a bit of flavor to entice members to attend. In 2009, a group from South Dakota stood silently on stage, each representing one of the stone heads on Mount Rushmore for the 2010 conference. In 2011, a group from Texas in beach attire took over the stage and threw beach balls into the crowd to advertise Corpus Christi as the location for the 2012 Conference.



2012 Rodeck Winner Art Wolf and 2012 President's Award Winner Rick Stryker.

**Beyond:** The Mountain-Plains Museums Association spirit today is as strong as, or stronger than, ever. A large group of dedicated volunteers lend important continuity to Mentoring, Awards, Advocacy, Auction, Helping Hands, Membership, Annual Meeting, and Coop programs, while the Board provides guidance and leadership through its rotating officers, SPC and Affinity

Groups, and State Association delegates. The small paid support staff of the Executive Director, Assistant Conference Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, and Website / On-line Manager, and Bookkeeper, taking their cue from the Board and Committees, work with great dedication, diligence, and enthusiasm.

Operations are managed efficiently, especially in times of economic challenge. Organizational planning and program evaluation continue with regularity, and MPMA works persistently to survey its members regarding their professional needs and dreams. Underlying this now sixty-year-old association is the bedrock of intelligence and creativity that provides thoughtful leadership, careful management, and good-natured fun. They all seem to “get a whole lot done” and “boy, do they have fun” runnin’ the museum organization we call the Mountain-Plains.



**“Sixty Years of Service: A History of the Mountain- Plains  
Museums Association”**

*By Georgianna Contiguglia*

# Appendices

- I. Rodeck Winners
- II. Past Presidents
- III. Themes
- IV. Staff

# **Appendices**

## **I. Rodeck Winners**

## **Past Recipients of the Hugo Rodeck Award for Excellence 1989 to 2012**

The Rodeck Award is MPMA's highest honor. It recognizes an individual member of MPMA who has contributed significant service to the museum field within the MPMA region and to MPMA. It is given infrequently and only in recognition of long and very distinguished service. Recipients are noted for their contributions to the field of state, provincial, and local history, art, anthropology or natural history, and are recognized nationally as leaders in the profession.

Past recipients of the Hugo Rodeck Award for Excellence are:

- 1989 Hugo Rodeck
- 1990 Cindy Sherrell-Leo
- 1993 Jo Steward Randal
- 1994 Aalbert Heine
- 1998 Sam Hoyle
- 1999 Dennis Medina
- 2002 Anne Bond
- 2003 Kittu Longstreth-Brown
- 2004 Kit Neuman
- 2004 Lorena Donahue
- 2007 Georgianna Contiguglia
- 2011 Peter Tirrell
- 2012 Arthur H. Wolf

# Appendices

## II. Past Presidents

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
**List of Presidents and Conference Locations**

<b><u>NUMBER</u></b>	<b><u>YEAR</u></b>	<b><u>PRESIDENT</u></b>	<b><u>LOCATION</u></b>
0	1953	W.E. Eigsti (Organizational)	Cheyenne, WY
1	1954	Hugo G. Rodeck	Boulder, CO
2	1955	William G. Hassler	Ft. Worth, TX
3	1956	Marvin Kivett	Lincoln, NE
4	1957	Stephan F. DeBorhegi	Norman, OK
5	1958	Ellen S. Quillen	San Antonio, TX
6	1959	W.E. Eigsti	Hastings, NE
7	1960	Wayne L. Mauzy	Santa Fe, NM
8	1961	Hugo G. Rodeck	Boulder, CO
9	1962	Stanley D. Sohl	Topeka, KS
10	1963	Aalbert Heine	Corpus Christi, TX
11	1964	Hugo G. Rodeck	Boulder, CO
12	1965	Hugo G. Rodeck	Boulder, CO
13	1966	C. Boone McClure	El Paso, TX
14	1967	W.E. Eigsti	Abiquiu, NM
15	1968	Stanley D. Sohl	Boulder, CO
16	1969	C. Boone McClure	El Paso, TX
17	1970	John Vincent	Ft. Worth, TX
18	1971	William K. Jones	Lincoln, NE
19	1972	Franklin G. Smith	El Paso, TX
20	1973	Robert J. McQuarie	Albuquerque, NM
21	1974	Les Drew	Abilene, KS
22	1975	Larry E. Brown	El Paso, TX
23	1976	Kent Bush	Grand Island, NE
24	1977	Barbara Butler	Denver, CO
25	1978	Don Otto	Oklahoma City, OK
26	1979	Leonard P. Sipiora	Jackson Hole, WY
27	1980	Allan G. Griesemer	Lincoln, NE
28	1981	Jim Forrest	Sioux Falls, SD
29	1982	Glenda Morgan	Ft. Worth, TX
30	1983	Judy Heberling	Colorado Springs, CO
31	1984	Judy Heberling	Santa Fe, NM
32	1985	Sam Hoyle	Salt Lake City, UT



33	1986	Michael Husband	Abilene, KS
34	1987	Michael Husband	El Paso, TX
35	1988	Peter LaPaglia	Kansas City, MO
36	1989	Peter LaPaglia	Oklahoma, OK
37	1990	Dennis Medina	Bozeman, MT
38	1991	Dennis Medina	Albuquerque, NM
39	1992	Peter Tirrell	Lincoln, NE
40	1993	Peter Tirrell	Colorado Springs, CO
41	1994	Lorena O. Donohue	Corpus Christi, TX
42	1995	Lorena O. Donohue	Cheyenne, WY
43	1996	Kathy Dickson	Guthrie, OK
43	1997	Kathy Dickson	Missoula, MT
44	1998	Pat Hildibrand	Lubbock, TX
45	1999	Pat Hildibrand	Santa Fe, NM
46	2000	Michael Bruce	Bismarck, ND
47	2001	Michael Bruce	Tulsa, OK
49	2002	Jennifer F. Cook	Topeka, KS
50	2003	Jennifer F. Cook	Golden, CO
51	2004	Lorne Render	Casper, WY
52	2005	Lorne Render	Omaha, NE
53	2006	Dee Harris	Taos, NM
54	2007	Dee Harris	Fargo/Moorehead, ND
55	2008	Rick Young	Kansas City, MO
56	2009	Rick Young	Cheyenne, WY
57	2010	Jay S. Smith	Rapid City, SD
58	2011	Jay S. Smith	Helena, MT
59	2012	Joe Schenk	Corpus Christi, TX
60	2013	Joe Schenk	Lincoln, NE
61	2014	Mike Smith	Aspen, CO

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
**Listing of Keynote Speakers & Meeting Themes**  
**1953 to 2013**

## Appendices

### III. Themes

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
**Listing of Keynote Speakers & Meeting Themes**  
**1953 to 2013**

**Note:** Keynote speakers are often listed as “Banquet/Luncheon Speaker, Guest Speaker or Special Guest at the early meetings. Meeting “Themes” generally were not used consistently until 1970. Whenever possible, we have listed the Keynoter(s) Speakers topic and title/institution when known.

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>THEME</u>	<u>KEYNOTER(S)</u>
1953	MPMC Organizational Meeting	No keynote speaker.
1954	“Theme” [?]	No keynote speaker
1955	“Museum-Board Relationships”	Evetts Haley, President Board of Trustees, Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, TX
1956	“Community Resources and Adult Education”	Dr. Donald G. Emery, Professor University of Omaha, Omaha, NE
1957	“Theme” [?]	Julius Carlebach & Jenkin Lloyd Jones, Editors, Tulsa Tribune, Tulsa, OK
1958	The Role of Museums in Our Changing Society”	Dr. Carl Guthe, Research Associate American Association of Museums, Washington, D.C.
1959	“Museums Abroad”	Joseph A. Patterson, Director American Association of Museums, Washington, D.C.
1960	“What is a Museum?”	Dr. E. H. Colbert, Curator American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY
1961	“Exhibits for Tourists, or Compromising our Compromises”	Edwin C. Alberts, Regional Naturalist, Region II, National Park Service, Denver, CO

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
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**1953 to 2013**

1962	Theme [?]	Philip C. Brooks, Director Harry S Truman Library Independence, MO
1963	Theme [?]	John L. Stoutenburgh, Director Historical Society Museum Wausau, WI
1964	"Plain Facts"	Roy E. Coy, Director St. Joseph Museum St. Joseph, MO
1965	Theme [?]	G. Ellis Burcaw, Curator Colorado State Museum, Denver, CO
1966	"Museum Philosophy"	Eugene Kingman, Director Joslyn Art Museum Omaha, NE
1967	"Los Alamos: Past, Present & Future"	Robert Y. Porton, Community Relations Officer, Los Alamos Scientific Lab, University of California, Los Alamos, NM
1968	Theme [?]	Dr. Albert E. Parr, Director Emeritus American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY (See also 1970.)
1969	"Forty-Seven Years of Collecting Historical Materials"	J. Evelts Haley, Collector Canyon, TX
1970	"Tomorrow's Museum"	Malcom Wells, Architect Cherry Hill, NJ
1971	"The Natural History of the Prairie"	Dr. Harvey L. Gunderson, Associate Director, University of Nebraska, State Museum, Lincoln, NE

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1972	Theme [?]	K. Ross Toole, Chairman Department of History University of Nebraska Lincoln, NE
1973	"Museums and the Bicentennial"	Charles Eamus, Architect & Designer
1974	"Philosophy of Design"	Eugene F. Behlen, Chief of Special Projects, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
1975	Theme [?]	Brigadier Gen. James L. Collins, Jr. Chief of Military History, Dept. of the Army, Washington, D.C.
1976	Missing Program	[?] – no data currently available.
1977	MPMC Theme [?]	Dr. Albert E. Parr, Director Emeritus American Museum of Natural History, New York, NY
1978	"Museum Environments and Preservation"  Draft Program Only	Honorable Paul N. Perrot, Assistant Secretary for Museum Programs, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
1979	"The Future of American Museums: Decade of the 1980s"	Dr. Craig C. Black, Director Carnegie Museum of Natural History Pittsburgh, PA
1980	"Changing Museum Perspectives"	Kenneth Starr, Director Milwaukee Public Museum Milwaukee, WI
1981	"Long-Range Planning: Museum And Money"	Raymond Pisney, Director Missouri Historical Society St. Louis, MO

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
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**1953 to 2013**

**The Dakota Conference: An Audit & Current Assessment of MPMA**

**James L. Brock, Coordinator/Facilitator**

**Assistant Professor of Marketing,**

**Montana State University, Bozeman, MT**

1982	"Projecting Your Image"	Joel N. Bloom, Director Missouri Historical Society St. Louis, MO
1983	"Teamwork: The Museum Approach"	Carolyn Powell Blackman, Chairman Department of Education, Field Museum of Natural History Chicago, IL  Dr. Ross J. Loomis, Professor of Psychology, Colorado State University, Ft. Collins, CO  Dr. Pamela S. Shockley, Assistant Professor of Communication, Colorado University, Colorado Springs, CO
1984	"The New Museum: Audience And Trends"	Kenneth Brecher, Associate Artistic Director, Mark Taper Form Los Angeles, CA
1985	"Connections"	Charles Longworth, President Colonial Williamsburg Foundation Williamsburg, VA
1986	"Ethical Questions Facing Today's Museums"	Alan D. & Patricia A. Ullberg, Associate General Counsel, Office of the General Counsel Smithsonian Institution & Museum Program Specialist, Institute of Museum Services Washington, D.C.
1987	"Doing More With Less"	Tom Livesay, Director Museum of New Mexico Santa Fe, NM

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
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**1953 to 2013**

1988	"Planning For a Secure Future"	Dr. Don Wilson, Archivist of the United States, National Archives & Records Administration Washington, D.C.
1989	"Sharing the Vision"	Robert H. McNulty, President Partners for Livable Places Washington, D.C.
1990	"Breaking New Trails"	Patricia Gordon Michaels, Director American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, TN
1991	"Off The Wall"	John Nichols, Author/Photographer Taos, NM
1992	"Great Expectations: The Challenge of Change"	<b>Note:</b> No designated keynoter.  Thomas Livesay, Director Museum of New Mexico, Santa Fe, NM AAM Status Report.
1993	"Who Are We Now?" Museum Staffs in the 1990's"	Dr. Rayna Green, Director American Indian Program, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.
1994	"Spanning the Gulf: New & Experienced Museum Professionals Sharing Knowledge"	Robert Welch, Author/Lecturer Lincoln, NE
1995	"Blazing New Frontiers"	Cindy Sherrell-Leo, Museum Consultant Austin, TX
1996	"Looking Beyond the Obvious: New Answers to Old Problems"	Lawrence H. Hart, Cheyenne Chief Clinton, OK
1997	"The Meaning of Museums: Will The Millennium Modify Our	Dan Kemmis, Director Center for the Rocky Mountain Definitions? West, Missoula, MT

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**1953 to 2013**

1998	"Endless Horizons – Boundless Opportunities"	Dr. Dan Flores, Professor of Western History, University of Montana, Missoula, MT
1999	"Virtual History: Keeping History Accessible & Accurate"	Patrick Nagatani, Professor, University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM  Rick Collignon, Author/Lecturer & Roofer, Raton, NM
2000	"Museums: The Core of Discovery"	Laurel Reuter, Director of North Dakota Museum, Bismarck, ND
2001	"Many Voices"	Christy S. Coleman, President & CEO, Charles H. Wright Museum of African-American History, Detroit, MI
2002	"The Search for Excellence"	William Least Heat-Moon, Author/Poet Columbia, Missouri  Ed H. Able, Jr., President & CEO, American Association of Museums (AAM), Washington D.C.
2003	"GOLDen Fever"	Margaret Engel, Managing Editor of the Newseum, Washington D.C.
2004	"Trails from the Past – Roads to the Future: Does your Museum have a Ghost of a Chance?"	William "Bill" Eiland, Director of Georgia Museum of Art, Athens, GA & Vice Chairman of AAM Board
2005	"Embracing the Many Faces of Our Museums"	Dr. Schuyler M. Jones, Archeologist Oxford University & Pitt River Museum, London, England, from Wichita



**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
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2006	"When Cultures Converge, Doors Open"	Dr. James F. Brooks, President & CEO, School of American Research, Santa Fe, NM; Stuart Ashman, Cabinet Secretary, NM's Depart. of Cultural Affairs
2007	"Charting the Course: Leadership, Technology and Preservation"	Merl Paavarud, Director, State Historical Society of North Dakota Bismark, ND; Don Morton, Site Leader, Microsoft, Fargo, ND; Irene Hirano, President/ CEO, Japanese American National Museum, Los Angeles, CA, and AAM Board Chair
2008	"Meeting in the Middle: Twice the Size! Twice the Fun!"	Jim Loewen, Professor of Sociology, University of Vermont and Tougaloo College, Mississippi, and author of <i>Lies Across America: What Our Historic Sites Get Wrong</i> , now residing in Washington D.C.  Marc F. Wilson, CEO, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, MO.
2009	"New West Solutions in Old West Settings "	Milward A. Simpson, Director of the Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources, Cheyenne, WY  Dr. Peter K. Simpson, Political Science Professor at the University of Wyoming and Allan K. Simpson, Former U.S. Senator (R-WY)
2010	"Monumental Visions: Carving the Future for Museums"	Senator George S. McGovern, South Dakota & Ford W. Bell, President of American Association of Museums; Kirk Johnson, VP, Denver Museum of Nature and Science

**MOUNTAIN-PLAINS MUSEUMS ASSOCIATION**  
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**1953 to 2013**

2011	"Currents of Convergence: Making Connections in Big Sky Country"	William Marcus, Host of Montana PBS television series: <i>Backroads of Montana</i> ; Stephenie Ambrose Tubbs, daughter of Steven Ambrose; Mandy Smoker Broaddus (Fort Peck Assiniboiné and Sioux), Director of Indian Education, Montana Office of Public Instruction; Henry Real Bird (Crow), Poet Laureate of Montana
2012	"Museums Navigating a Sea of Change"	Cheech Marin, Television & Film Actor and nationally recognized collector of Chicano art. & Steve DeSutter, President & CEO of Stripes LLC; Kent Ullberg, an American sculptor of Swedish origin.
2013	'Building the Museum Community: Outside, All Around the Town"	Randy Cohen, Vice President of Inside, Research/ Policy, Americans for the Arts. Washington, DC; Elizabeth Merritt, Founding Director, Center for the Future of Museums, American Alliance of Museums, Washington, D.C.; Jorge Daniel Veneciano, Ph.D., Director, Sheldon Museum of Art, Lincoln, NE

# Appendices

## IV. Staff

## MPMC & MPMA Employees 1981 to 2013

From documents found in the archives it appears that from its founding in 1953 until 1981, the organization was all-volunteer. After 1982, a series of part-time Coordinators were hired to deal with the day-to-day operation of the organization; act as editor for the newsletter, and maintain all required legal, annual meeting and membership records. In 2001, MPMA hired its first full-time employee. In 2003, MPMA began to hire part-time staff.

Past coordinators for the Mountain-Plains Museums Conference (MPMC) and Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA):

### Part-time employees:

- Nancy Markham, First MPMC Coordinator/Longmont Museum: December 1981 to January 1982. Office location: Longmont, CO
- Claudia J. Johnson, MPMC Coordinator/ Denver Museum of Natural History: February 1, 1982 – August 31, 1984, Office location: Broomfield, CO
- Josie D. Kersetter, MPMC Coordinator/Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center: September 1, 1984 – November, 1986, Office location: Manitou Springs, CO
- Patricia (Pat) Florence Hildebrand, MPMC/MPMA Coordinator/Pro-Rodeo Hall of Fame: December, 1986 – December 1996, Office location: Colorado Springs, CO

**Note:** *Pat was appointed by President Michael Hubbard to serve until mid-winter meeting, but later agreed to stay on as coordinator and served until replaced by Jan Postler.*

- Jan Postler, MPMA Coordinator/Animas Museum: January 1, 1996 - July 31, 2001. Office location: Durango, CO

**Full-time employees:**

**Note:** *MPMA's first full-time employee and the board changed title from Coordinator to Executive Director reflect the many expanded duties and responsibilities of this position.*

- Monta Lee Dakin, MPMA Executive Director & *NEWSGRAM* Editor: August 1, 2001 – Present Office location: Littleton, CO
- Stan Friesen, 2003 - 2005 – Bookkeeper, Littleton, CO
- Erin Barrette, Littleton, CO: 2003 to present: 2003 to 2007 – Membership Services Coordinator, Conference Registration Coordinator; 2007 to present – Assistant Conference Coordinator
- Sarah Johnson, Littleton, CO: 2005 – Assistant Membership Services Coordinator; 2007 – Membership Services Coordinator
- Sharon Cook, 2005 to present: 2005 – Bookkeeper
- Hillary English: 2007 to present: Membership Services Coordinator, Exhibit Hall Coordinator