

IAWA Archivist's Report, 2007-2008
International Archives of Women in Architecture (IAWA)

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Director of Special Collections

Overview

My work as Director of Special Collections at Virginia Tech began in November 2007 and at the same time I assumed the role of Archivist for the IAWA. My chief responsibility as Archivist for the IAWA is building, maintaining, and promoting IAWA collections held by the University Library in the Special Collections department. With the help from other staff (most notably Amy Vilelle who resigned in the spring of 2008), I have learned a great deal about the IAWA collections under my supervision and been successful in attracting new donors and researchers.

Collection Highlights

- Special Collections received 20 IAWA collections during the past year, totaling about 60 cubic feet.
- Adding those totals to the overall holdings of Special Collections, there are now approximately 325 distinct IAWA collections totaling 1,320 cubic feet.
- The most substantial donation of the past year (47 cubic feet) was the Betty L. Moss Architectural Collection, 1950-2006. Ms2008-071. Moss was a New Orleans architect and advocate of architectural preservation and conservation. The collection includes architectural drawings, business correspondence/notes, and catalog pages illustrating fixtures. Notable projects include proposals for the adaptive re-use of the Rivergate in New Orleans and redevelopment after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It has been processed and the finding aid will be available this fall.
- Other smaller collections of note include the following:
 - Dorothy Alexander Papers, New York architect, 7 cubic feet.
 - First part of the Natalie de Blois Papers, Texas architect, 1 cubic feet.
 - Publications, posters, and ephemera from women architects working on projects in Bulgaria, Nigeria, and Denmark.
 - Added over three-dozen general books on architectural design, planning, and drawing to the University Library's holdings.

Selected Uses of IAWA Collections

- Scanned materials from several collections for architect Sally Levine's exhibit at the 2008 AIA Convention entitled "Palladio's Sister."
- A California researcher, representing the Girl Scouts of America requested copies from the Rebecca Wood Watkin Papers, to assess the design of two properties owned by their organization.
- Scanned material for Beverly Willis's work on a 15 minute film shown in conjunction with the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibit at the Guggenheim Museum.
- Several reference inquiries related to the Eleanor Petterson Collection.
- Reference inquiries on international architects, including a request for information on Belgian architect Jean Canneel-Claes.
- Staff replied to nearly 50 reference questions related to IAWA collections.

Biographical Databases

- Gail McMillan, the Director of the Digital Library and Archives, oversaw the expansion of the IAWA biographical database to include entries for over 1,000 individual architects.
- At the Society of American Archivist's 2008 annual meeting Aaron Purcell met with colleagues from the Frick Art Collection, the AIA, the North Carolina Biographical and Historical Information Online project, the Archives of American Art, and the UCLA Film and Television Archives, to discuss work on an online directory that will guide users to archival repositories with collections of primary source materials dealing with art collecting in America, from Colonial times to the present.

Mission and Vision

My goal for Special Collections is to build true research collections of manuscripts, books, and images for scholars, students, faculty, and any patron to use. In particular, I want to build the IAWA material at Virginia Tech into a research collection of original and printed material related to the history of women's involvement in and contributions to architecture. Selected areas of emphasis may include landscape architecture, design, architectural history and criticism, urban planning, and organizational records. We must then use the resulting collections for direct classroom instruction, while attracting outside scholars through promotion. These are difficult challenges, but as the department grows and we expand our partnerships and collaborations I expect we can reach these lofty aspirations.