

The LaSoMi Newsletter

Louisiana/Southern Mississippi Chapter

President's Message

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Greetings LaSoMi Members,

I hope you all had a relaxing holiday break. I'd like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy New Year. The coming of a new year means that the SLA Leadership Summit is just around the corner. This year's summit will take place in Tampa, Florida from January 26-29. I will be in attendance along with President-Elect Dr. Lisl Zach. The issues discussed at the Leadership Summit will be in the April edition of the LaSoMi newsletter.

Chapter News

On December 4th, the Fall LaSoMi meeting was held at the Times-Picayune in New Orleans. We had a nice turnout of members for this event. Brent Hightower took us on tour of the facility, and after the meeting we met for lunch at SunRay Grill. Bill Armstong wrote a summary of the event that is in this newsletter.



The Spring meeting will be planned after the Leadership Summit, and any meeting suggestions/locations are welcome. This as well as other feedback will be requested in the member survey that will be sent out in the next month.

SLA News

SLA now has the housing/registration information available online for the annual conference this summer in Toronto. I encourage all of you who are thinking of going to take a look at the web site. The early bird deadline for registration is May 1.

Best wishes for the New Year!

Kelly Blessinger

Welcome New Members

Our membership chairman, Ferol Foos, reports that we have several new members in the LaSoMi chapter this quarter:

Wendy McLain, La. Department of Environmental Quality, Baton Rouge

Joseph Greene, Student, EBR Parish Main Library, Circulation, Baton Rouge

Jason B. Ford, Student, LSU Middleton Library, ILL, Baton Rouge

Heather R. Monroe, Student, La. Department of Natural Resources, Baton Rouge

Gretchen Wroten, Student, Baton Rouge

LOUISiana Digital Library to participate in IMLS Grant award by Pat Vince

Original documents such as diaries, maps, photographs, speeches and memoirs are the raw materials of history. As part of the historical record, these clues provide physical links to the participants and witnesses of past events and enable educators, students, researchers and independent learners to view those events from multiple perspectives. By revealing the people and events in American history, primary sources humanize history and add dimension to the names and facts detailed in books. When introduced into the classroom setting, historical artifacts become powerful tools with which students can critically analyze events of the past and imagine the possibilities for their future.

Louisiana Gumbo: A Recipe for Empowerment project, funded by the Institute for Museum and Library Services, seeks to provide educators, students and independent learners across the nation with a taste of Louisiana's hidden treasures by digitizing vintage jazz radio broadcasts, interviews and performances; musical instruments; Acadian textiles, costumes, flags, parade bulletins and posters; historical paintings and maps; photographs; documents; and science and technology artifacts held by the participating partners: State Library of Louisiana, the Louisiana State Museum and the Historic New Orleans Collection. Digital resources will be accessible via the established LOUISiana Digital Library Web site <http://louisdl.louislibraries.org/>; accompanying standards-based instructional materials for K-12 teachers will be accessible via the Louisiana Department of Education Web site <http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/lcet/home.html>.

This proposal is unique in that it will explore the feasibility of digitizing artifacts that have been selected and requested by a network of K-12 educators in collaboration with library and museum staff. The project will host one-day workshops across the state for K-12 educators, public librarians and independent learners. Making these unique artifacts available to the public will allow educators across Louisiana and the nation to discover the ingredients with which to rejuvenate classroom instruction, motivate learning and empower students to succeed.

An Historic Cite: the Vieux Carré Survey Database

by Gerald F. Patout, Jr.

New Orleans's historic French Quarter, or *Vieux Carré*, has long been the subject of much attention and intense development pressure. As the chief attraction and center of the city's tourism industry, the Quarter is the destination for more than 18 million visitors each year and its importance in the economic mix has increased in inverse proportion to the gradual decay of the city's non-recreational economy over the past two decades.

Ultimately, the struggle to guide growth and economic tourism rationally in the Vieux Carré depends on scholarship, sound reasoning and information. For nearly forty years, a primary tool in the effort to preserve the French Quarter has been the Vieux Carré Survey, housed in the library collection of the Williams Research Center (WRC) of The Historic New Orleans Collection (THNOC), where it has become the most intensively used resources serviced by the library staff. This massive compendium of citations, images, maps and other data pertaining to every property in the Quarter is an invaluable source of information for preservationists and developers alike. Much of this is due to its geographic organization, in which the data is filed by square, then street, followed by block. Yet, because it is an entirely paper-based entity, the Survey can be used only at the WRC, and searching is limited to its current organizational arrangement. Moreover, the inherent fragility of this unique resource leaves it vulnerable to progressive and irreversible deterioration caused by constant use.

With funding from the Collins C. Diboll Foundation, the Vieux Carré Survey Database Project has begun to convert the current paper-based Vieux Carré Survey into an electronic format, allowing it to be simultaneously accessed by multiple users via the Internet and at workstations located in the WRC reading room. More importantly, the conversion will make the survey data independent of its current organizational arrangement, thereby making it possible to present the data in ways that allow other intellectual approaches. While the existing arrangement of data by square within the survey provides the most commonly needed access mode, conversion to electronic format would allow searching and grouping of information by variables such as property owner, value and time-period. Finally, by putting the Survey into a database format, The Historic New Orleans Collection will gain a data structure that will allow other holdings to be accessed in the same, highly useful, geographic format as the Survey.



New Member Biography

Joseph Greene, SLIS student, Baton Rouge

Joseph joined SLA in September, 2004. He works at in circulation at the East Baton Rouge Parish Library, Main Branch. Since this summer, he has been fortunate enough to work as a solo librarian for an independent study at the LSU Women's Center. In November he was elected Webmaster of the student chapter of SLA at LSU, and he is looking forward to a fulfilling final semester this coming spring.

thanks to Ferol Foos for membership information

An Historic Cite: the Vieux Carré Survey Database (continued from page 3)

The Vieux Carré Survey was originally the result of a collaborative effort between the Tulane University School of Architecture, a group of New Orleans architects, historians, members of the Louisiana Landmarks Society and other dedicated amateur scholars. Building on the work produced by the WPA and HABS in the 1930's, the Vieux Carré Survey began, in the mid-1960's, to create an extensive pictorial and textual index of materials pertaining to the French Quarter. Two copies of the survey were made. One copy was deposited with the Tulane School of Architecture. Its current disposition is unknown. The other was housed in the Vieux Carré in a facility that would eventually become The Historic New Orleans Collection. This copy of the Survey, now contained in **136** three-inch ring-binders at the Williams Research Center, was largely created during two separate periods. The first of these occurred from 1961 to 1966 with funding from the Schlieder Foundation, supplemented with space, supplies and some addition to the salaries by General L. Kemper Williams. This was followed by a second period of activity from 1977 through 1979, funded by Collins Diboll and The Historic New Orleans Collection. In addition to these periods of relatively intense activity, minor updates to the Survey were conducted almost continuously for a period of nearly 20 years from the late 1960s through the late 1980s. The Survey now documents every square of the district with citations to Notarial Archives documents, chains of title, photographs, maps and journalism. From its inception, the survey has provided an indispensable service to hundreds of patrons each year at the WRC. At the same time, its size, fragility and difficulty of use make it one of the most difficult resources to service. In addition, as a paper document without external indices, much of its information is difficult to access or analyze in any order but that in which it was originally arranged. For many years the reference staff at The Collection has asked that the Survey be converted to digital form in the hopes that such a conversion would make it easier for researchers to extract more and different kinds of information.

An Historic Cite: the Vieux Carré Survey Database (continued from page 4)

The Historic New Orleans Collection intends to create a comprehensive electronic index to geographically-oriented materials that are both held by The Historic New Orleans Collection or cited in the Vieux Carré survey. This effort involves four major phases: (1) conversion of the Vieux Carré Survey to electronic format; (2) integration of data from other materials held at the collection into the database; (3) incorporation of “extra-collection” data into the database; and (4) the exporting or integration of this material into a Geographic Information System (GIS).

Work on the informational side of the database was begun in April 2003. As of November 2004, 90 of the binders (out of 136) have been processed. This translates into 65 squares, 1,513 lots, that includes 28,771 names (with variants) and 36,616 property transactions. Support material has been included, i.e. newspaper clippings, assorted ephemera and Vieux Carré Commission architectural reviews. Once completed, it will be possible, for the first time, to search by surname. Other possible search groups include notary publics and free people of color by gender. Also, photographic images are in the process of being scanned. At a later date they will be "connected" to the photographic “negative” information that has already been entered into the database.

As the 1981 THNOC publication *The Vieux Carré Survey* states in the concluding paragraph referring to the “paper” copy of this important collection, “it is doubtful that the Louisiana Landmarks Society members could have envisioned, back in 1959, the collection of material that would grow out of their pioneering efforts; indeed, it is still growing, and will do so in perpetuity.” It is now fair to conclude the electronic copy of this monumental and valuable asset will bring a new and more useful dimension to this body of information and hopefully, more attention to one of the country’s most colorful historic neighborhoods.

THANK GOODNESS MODERN LIBRARIANS ARE LESS HARSH...

For him that stealeth a Book from this Library, let it change into a serpent in his hand and rend him. Let him be struck with Palsy, and all his Members blasted. Let him languish in Pain crying aloud for Mercy and let there be no surcease to his Agony till he sink in Dissolution. Let Bookworms gnaw his Entrails in token of the Worm that dieth not, and when at last he goeth to his final Punishment, let the flames of Hell consume him for ever and aye.

- *Curse Against Book Stealers*, Monastery of San Pedro, Barcelona
- [source: humor section, www.ifla.org]

The LaSoMi Fall 2004 Meeting By William Armstrong

On Saturday, December 4, LaSoMi members gathered at the Times-Picayune offices in New Orleans for a tour and brief business meeting. Our host and guide for the tour was Brent Hightower, a LaSoMi member and Library Archives Analyst II at the Times-Picayune, who obtained permission for us to tour the facilities.

Folks began gathering at about 10:45a.m. and, after checking in at the guard station according to a strict security protocol, were escorted upstairs to the offices by our host, who provided a most interesting tour of the establishment. The newspaper, of course, runs on a 24/7 schedule, but fortunately, the librarians don't, though they tend to be on call. LaSoMi members were guided through the offices where information for the various sections of the paper is gathered and assembled in the formats we are used to seeing.



Of particular interest was the library database called SCC, constructed by Software Construction Company. This system is used to store and provide access to the myriad stories and photos and graphics created or garnered by staff, photo assignments, graphic assignments, AP photos and graphics, as well as other useful categories of information. Hightower provided a demonstration of a web-based version of the graphic user interface used to access and manipulate the information contained within. It was quite impressive. A client-server interface also exists for use by staff. Both require authorization, of course, through logon accounts, but a logon account via the web interface can yield the same functionality as the client-server arrangement. (Other database and software vendors should take note of this!)

In addition, members were able to tour a small but interesting historical collection of newspapers and artifacts chronicling the Times through the years. Participants were also led through the archives of the Times-Picayune, a rather mind-boggling collection of all issues published.

During the business meeting, presided over by President Kelly Blessinger, the Treasurer provided a brief report of the state of LaSoMi's finances. Our financial health



is good, with a balance of \$3,372.12 in our account as of October 29, 2004. Bill Armstrong was awarded a certificate for his service as President of LaSoMi in 2003/2004. Also, Blessinger introduced the new President Elect, Lisl Zach. Zach is an Assistant Professor in the School of Library and Information Science at LSU.

Following the business meeting, participants dispersed temporarily, and regrouped at the Mid City SunRay Grill for a very nice lunch and a wonderful opportunity to socialize.

