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ABSTRACT

Soda Pop Art:
Caring for the Artwork at the Dr Pepper Museum and Free Enterprise Institute

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I spent the summer of 2018 interning as a member of the collections management staff at the Dr Pepper Museum and Free Enterprise Institute in Waco, Texas. During the internship, I conducted an inventory of framed artwork housed at the museum, including artwork stored as part of a collection on repository. Much of the work involved in the inventory included cleaning artwork, developing a new storage arrangement for the artwork, updating condition reports and catalog records in Past Perfect, and reconciling unidentified objects to collections records. In addition to these responsibilities, I also completed other tasks related to various complications that arose during the inventory. This report explores the inventory work done, as well as other assignments completed during the internship.

I spent this summer as an intern in the collections area of the Interpretation Department at the Dr Pepper Museum and Free Enterprise Institute. While this internship reinforced what I learned in my coursework with the Museum Studies Department, it also taught me that there is much more to learn.

When I interviewed for the position I was told that regardless of which area I was placed in as an intern, I would be expected to do a little bit of everything. My experience this summer reinforced this statement. Though stationed in collections, I also helped with public programming by manning a gallery cart as part of the Eat Well, Play Well exhibit, currently on loan from the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry. I also worked during the Museum's First Friday events. During these events, which take place the first Friday of every month, the museum stays open two hours later and offers free admission. For the month of August, the museum also invited special population groups within Waco to attend. In order to prepare for this event, the museum conducted a training session led by another intern who organized the event. This training was to alert museum staff to the possible special populations they might encounter and how to conduct respectful interactions that allowed the visitor to gain the most from the museum.

The experiences above reinforced points from both my museum education class and my class on museum administration. In education, we learned how important it is for museums to be welcoming and inclusive spaces for all people, including those with disabilities. This class also taught me how important it is for the museum to be a part of its community and for the museum to recognize the needs of its community. It was good to see that the Dr Pepper Museum recognized the need to be more inclusive to special populations and to make a visible effort to become more inclusive. From an administrative standpoint, these experiences reinforced the idea of systemic thinking and communication so strongly enforced by Professor Charlie Walter, of the

Museum Studies Department at Baylor University. No matter what area someone worked in, everybody contributed to events and spent time in the galleries working with visitors. I was even trained to conduct tours, just in case a no one from public programming was available, but this situation never came up. Just the fact that I was trained to conduct tours shows the emphasis the museum places on created an interconnected team of professionals.

My work in the collections area focused more on conducting an inventory of the framed artwork held by the museum. Part of the inventory included creating updated condition reports for each item, creating a new method of organization on the shelves, creating a flow chart to quickly explain the organization, and to create new labeling for the artwork shelves. As of the end of my internship, I have only managed to complete 400 objects, about half of the total framed artwork in the collection.

The museum houses the collection of the Keurig Dr Pepper Group as a collection on repository; the artwork that belongs to Keurig Dr Pepper takes up 28 of the 32 artwork shelves in the museum's collections storage, the remaining four belong to the museum's artwork. Keurig Dr Pepper does not provide funds for the care and maintenance of its collection, which means that when I find an artwork with torn lining or dusted with frass, all I can do is dust off as much as possible, then put it back on the shelf. Keurig Dr Pepper also did not provide the museum with paper records for the collection, so when questions come up concerning conflicting object numbers, the best we can do is make a note of it and move on rather than resolve the issue.

As far as the museum's artwork collection, it contains many historical issues that I hope I have helped to rectify. A lack of training by earlier collections management means that records are sometimes incomplete, incorrect, or nonexistent. I found over 30 framed artwork on the shelves that were not marked with an object number and received no results when queried in Past

Perfect. I have marked them with Found in Collections numbers and created catalog entries for them in Past Perfect. I have also removed many items from the artwork shelves that should not have been placed there, including unframed mirrors, stained glass, and even a clock. Though these issues caused trouble throughout my internship, they also helped me learn a lot about collections management.

The collections management course I took within the Museum Studies Department, co-taught by Dr. Julie Holcomb and Rachael Nadeau Johnson, who was my supervisor while at the Dr Pepper Museum, revolves around best practices in the museum field. A large section of the class focuses on proper methods for documentation, which includes creating accession records, catalog records, marking objects, object locations, and much more. My work with the artwork reinforced the need for accurate record keeping, but also showed me that accurate records are not always the reality. Rachael recognized the need to correct these issues and assigned the task to me, via the inventory. On top of the original assignment mentioned above, I have also updated catalog records when necessary.

I have learned that finding errors and inconsistencies is not uncommon within any museum, due to the fact that best practices in collections management are a relatively new idea. This also shows the need the museum field has for programs like the one offered by the Museum Studies Department at Baylor. Though Rachael and Chelsea, the collections management professionals at the Dr Pepper Museum, have both gone through graduate programs in museum studies, they still recognize that there is more to learn. They frequently attend conferences, workshops, and webinars to continue their education and improve the methods and practices at the Dr Pepper Museum. I think the most important thing I have learned this summer is that there is always more to learn.