

ROBERT C. WILLIAMS AMERICAN MUSEUM OF PAPERMAKING

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IPST COLLECTION OFFERS INSIGHTS ON HISTORY AND USES OF PAPER

THE STATELY ROBERT C. WILLIAMS AMERICAN MUSEUM of Papermaking is a hive of activity for the preservation and teaching of papermaking history. The museum is housed at the Paper Tricentennial

Building of the Institute of Paper Science and Technology (IPST) in Atlanta, GA.

Behind the scenes are Cindy Bowden and Melanie Lynch. Bowden, the director, came with extensive curatorial experience in small museums. "I like working in small museums because of the ability to do a lot of things," says Bowden. "Paper is unique because it combines all fields into one."

Lynch, a graduate of the Atlanta College of Art, majored in printmaking. After interning for a year and half, she is now in charge of the permanent collection and acquisitions. "You are not just looking at the artifacts," says Lynch, "You are dealing with stories and footprints."

The 60-year-old museum maintains a multitude of projects. Acquisitions such as B.C. 4000 cuniformal nails, papermaking treasures from Dard Hunter's trips around the world, 20,000 watermarks, and several prominent collections are constantly rotated for public viewing. All items are acquired by donation.

Museum tours are given to diverse groups of visitors. Most are middle-school students learning about environ-

mental issues and papermaking. Virtual tours via the Internet are now available at <http://www.ipst.edu/amp/>. Since the web site opened last year, the museum page has registered over 18,000 hits. "Eventually the web site will

carry links to all different types of pulp and paper-related organizations on the Internet," says Bowden.

The museum also plans to add a gift shop to the site. The real-time gift shop will contain a variety of creative items including home kits for hand papermaking, Twinrocker handmade papers, pulp-based ornaments, origami earrings, and pounded bark envelopes.

Sometimes individuals or organizations come to the museum in search of

rare books or photographs. Valuable resources such as limited editions of Dard Hunter's papermaking travels are stored in the archives. More current titles written by historians and practitioners of hand papermaking can also be accessed. The museum retains an extensive collection of prints, slides, and videos of ancient and modern papermaking processes around the world. "User requests come from all spheres such as National Geographic, paper companies in search of interior decor, or teachers in need of materials for the classroom," says Bowden.

The museum also works in conjunction with other organizations. "The museum and the Smithsonian are creating a publication on how to teach papermaking to



sixth graders through simple experiments," says Bowden. This project is funded by the National Science Research Center.

In addition, the museum is cooperating in a restoration project with the U.S. Forest Service, the University of Georgia, and Georgia Institute of Technology. The plans are to restore Georgia's first paper mill as a living historical site. The mill was built in 1804 on the American Indian land of Skoal Shoals near the Oconee River. The mill shut down when the town died out. After the restoration visitors will be able to walk around inside the mill and see how paper was once made in the colonial period.

Further more, the museum is recognized internationally. Hansol Paper Co. in Korea is establishing a paper museum. They have been consulting with the museum on how to start, who to contact in the United States, and where to find other artifacts. "I'm all for having more paper museums," says Bowden, "it spreads the word."

Special events showcasing different aspects of papermaking are held each year. Several paper artists have already been scheduled for 1997. "People should be exposed to lots of different uses of paper," says Bowden. An exhibit on the history of the Institute of Paper Chemistry/IPST in Appleton, WI, is planned.

In April, the museum will host a main event for the annual meeting of the American Association of Museums. "Museum directors and curators from all over the U.S. will participate in a movable feast while making and printing a book from scratch," says Bowden. Other organizations that will be involved include the Rolling Stone Press, the Atlanta International Museum of Art and Design, and the University of Alabama Book Arts Department.

Bowden and Lynch even find the time to bring the Museum exhibits to other U.S. cities. The travelling exhibits are shown at museums which have at least 100,000 visitors per year. "A Child's View of Papermaking" and "Recycling Lost and Found" are currently on display at the Pacific Science Center in Seattle, WA.

Bowden and Lynch are always enthusiastic about sharing their knowledge and welcoming visitors to the museum. For more information, the museum can be contacted at 500 10th St. NW, Atlanta, GA 30318, telephone: +1 404 894-7840, and by e-mail: cindy.bowden@ipst.edu or melanie.lynch@ipst.edu. **TJ**

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