



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear ACWR members,



After celebrating National Archives Month with the theme of "Celebrating the American Record," I hope we will all continue to celebrate the records of our respective congregations.

Each day when I come to the FSPA Archives, I am grateful for my predecessors and for everyone who kept records so conscientiously. What a gift that is to all of us as well as to everyone who counts on our records for information.

Your ACWR board has many "irons in the fire." Not the least of which is the initial planning for our 2009 national conference. The dates are September 17-20 with a theme of "Trailblazers: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow." "Trailblazers" came from the ACWR prayer written by Sister Ann Courtney in 1997. The 2009 conference will be a special one because it will coincide with the 15th anniversary of ACWR. Our site will be the Clarion Hotel/Conference Center in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, which ought to be a central location for many of you. More information will be coming to you in subsequent newsletters and on the website re: the conference. For now, please mark your calendars!

Our new Executive Secretary, Jan Harvey, is headquartered at the Sisters of Charity Motherhouse in Cincinnati. She is rapidly getting acquainted with our procedures and our names through the mentoring of S. Judy Metz who completed her three-year term as an ACWR officer. We appreciate S. Judy's assistance during this transition.

The ACWR board is grateful to those of you who have renewed your ACWR membership. We look forward to having the rest of you do that soon.

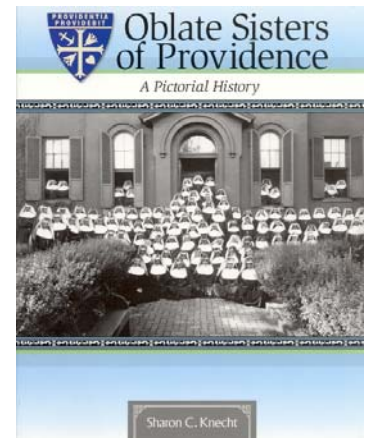
As we celebrate our congregations' records, I also encourage you to celebrate ACWR, to take advantage of all that ACWR offers and to send us suggestions that will create an even more effective organization. Thank you!

Mary Ann Gschwind, FSPA, ACWR President

ARCHIVIST AUTHORS NEW BOOK ON THE OBLATE SISTERS OF PROVIDENCE

Oblate Sisters of Providence: A Pictorial History, a new volume of local history in Maryland was published this summer by the Donning Company Publishers reports Sharon C. Knecht, the author and archivist for the Oblate Sisters. The book celebrates the history of this religious order, telling the remarkable story through hundreds of photographs collected and cherished by the Sisters.

"All the photos in the book are from the Historical Photograph collection in the OSP Archives. I did not have to leave the archives to do any research or find any photos," Sharon explained. All the photos were selected, scanned, burned on a CD and sent to the publisher. Research for the text was accomplished exclusively here in the archives. Donning did a wonderful job of designing the book and digitally touching up some photos that were in need of repair. All proceeds benefit the Oblate Sisters of Providence. According to Sharon, "Drs. Bill and Camille Cosby



generously financed the initial publishing cost. Mrs. Cosby was a student of the Oblates at St. Cyprian School in Washington DC in the 1950s. They continue to be generous benefactors of the Oblates.”

In 1828 four women began a religious order in Baltimore, Maryland. With God’s blessing, and the support of thousands through the years, the Oblate Sisters of Providence became the first sustained order of religious women of African descent in the world. The press release from the publishers describes the “beautiful 8.5” x 11” limited-edition volume (which) tells their story of purpose, community, joy, hardship, and most of all faith. High quality photographs and indepth information make this book a wonderful learning tool and lifelong reminder of the richly blessed Oblate Sisters of Providence.

Oblate Sisters of Providence: A Pictorial History is available for \$35.00 (hard cover) or \$30.00 (soft cover). Your book may be shipped directly to you at an additional cost of \$5.00 per book. For more information or to order your copy, please call (410) 242-1603 or email osparchives@oblatesisters.org.

The author, Sharon Knecht, began her association with the Oblate Sisters of Providence in 2001 as an intern of the OSP Archives. Since that time she has worked for the Oblates as project archivist, website designer, and archivist. She and her husband live in Catonsville, Maryland. This is her first published book.

Sharon Knecht, OSP Archivist
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INTRODUCTORY ARCHIVES WORKSHOP FOR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: A PARTICIPANT’S PERSEPECTIVE



S. Mary Palmer, CSJ

The Catholic Library Association and the Center for Study of Religious Life held their first biennial Introductory Archives Workshop for

Religious Communities at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, Belleville, IL from July 15-20, 2007. Jean R. Bostley, SSJ, Executive Director of CLA and chief planner, made all the preparations to include outstanding presenters and wonderful accommodations at Our Lady of the Snows. S. Jean was present for the workshop along with Malachy R. McCarthy, PhD, MLS and Ellen Pierce, MLS, CA, who directed the workshop. Both had many years of experience in religious archives.

The workshop was designed specifically for men and women who were new to the archival field or who wanted to update their knowledge of archival theory and practice in order to care for the archival records of their community.

The five-day program focused on a specific type of archives that had a unique body of records: materials reflecting the life and work of religious communities. These groups are committed to living a religious ideal that is expressed in their community-sponsored apostolates or individual ministries. These community records reveal not only a common understanding of mission but also an individual commitment to extend one’s charism within the larger community. Archival records for these communities consist of constitutions, directories, chronicles, serial publications, artifacts, audiovisual materials, and materials documenting the lives of the individual religious.

The workshop introduced me to archival theory and practice. Included in the cost for classes with room and board was the textbook (Greg Hunter’s *Developing and Maintaining Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual*, 2nd ed. 2003)

As a new person working in the archives, the biggest benefit for me was the opportunity to meet others who work specifically for religious communities. There were 30 people in attendance and I learned from them as they shared their work experiences. It has become a good network for me so I can email these people when I have questions.

I would highly recommend any workshop

offered by the CLA for archivists. Check out their website: www.cathla.org. This first year they had to offer two workshops because of the great demand. Both workshops were filled to capacity and people were placed on a waiting list for another opportunity to attend in the future.

Presenters: Malachy McCarthy, PhD, MLS, Province Archivist, Claretian Missionaries Archives in Chicago has been working in the field since 1977. He has served as the archivist for St. Anselm Abbey and College and taught an archives course at the college. He currently serves as a Member of the National Executive Board of CLA and is a member of numerous archival organizations.

Ellen Pierce, MLS, CA is the Director of Maryknoll Mission Archives since 1996. She serves on the board of the Society of American Archivists, Archivists of Religious Collections Section and Archives of Religious Institutions of NY and has presented papers to a variety of archival organizations.

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NEW ACWR OFFICERS INSTALLED AT ANNUAL MEETING IN CHICAGO



Mary Denis Maher, CSA; Louise Grundish, SC; Mary Ann Gschwind, FSPA

Mary Ann Gschwind, FSPA and Mary Louise Grundish, SC, were installed as the new President and Vice-President/President-elect, respectively, at the ACWR annual meeting at the SAA conference in Chicago in August. Mary Denis Maher, CSA, becomes Past-President. Judith Metz, SC, unable to be

present, was thanked for her service during the past three years.

Reports on membership, finance, website were also given to the 28 members present. The mentoring program, available to ACWR members [see www.archivistsacwr.org], was utilized by one member during the past year. An article in this issue gives details about the positive experience. S. Mary Ann gave an update on the 2009 Conference and encouraged suggestions from the group for topics and speakers.

S. Mary Denis gave an update on the LCWR Museum Exhibit project. Subsequently, an e-mail was sent to all ACWR members with a link to the new LCWR newsletter on the exhibit.



Gwyneth Stupar and Thereson Sheerin, CSJ, listen to practical tips at the annual meeting.

The highlight of the session was the exchange of printed practical ideas from the members.

Many did bring their multiple copies of ideas

which were distributed. Lively discussion from all present and many additional ideas were exchanged. Everything from how to use old copies of the National Catholic Directory to disposing of relics to a way to save time in transferring folders to a form for reporting on travels of sisters was shared. Some of these ideas will be posted on the ACWR website. Members are encouraged to send in practical tips for the newsletter and website. Sharing our questions and expertise with one another is one of the real advantages of ACWR membership.

Many of the ACWR members participated in other sessions and events of the SAA conference throughout the rest of the week.



Vickie Cravens, OSU and Mary Serbacki, OSF, share ideas at the annual ACWR meeting.

SAVE THESE DATES

6th Triennial ACWR Conference
“Trailblazers:
Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow”

SEPTEMBER 17-20, 2009

National ACWR Conference
Clarion Hotel and Conference Center
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

OSF ARCHIVIST AIDS IN LOCAL HISTORY PROJECT ABOUT POWS IN STELLA NIAGARA, NEW YORK

For me, one of the most fascinating things about history is the fact that it is often literally “just around the corner,” said Mary Serbacki, OSF, province archivist for the Sisters of St. Francis of Penance and Christian Charity. As an archivist I am, perhaps, able to indulge my fascination to a greater degree than others. This past year it was one of those “just around the corner” items that drew me into an extremely interesting oral history project.

Our motherhouse, Stella Niagara, is located on the banks of the Niagara River in the western-most reaches of Niagara County, NY. In general the area has a very storied past, with important events having transpired from the times of the first contact with the Native Americans on up to the present. Few locals, though, are aware that in the waning years of WWII Axis POWs were housed at Ft. Niagara—an active military post at the time. Certainly very few of our sisters were aware of the connection between Stella Niagara and those prisoners at the fort.

By the late spring of 1944 a severe manpower crisis threatened especially the agricultural and food processing industries of Western New York. Many of the over 4000

prisoners interned at Ft. Niagara and its thirteen branch camps were committed to employment on area farms, packing plants, other industries, and roads.

According to our chronicles, our chaplain, Father William Heim, was appointed to take care of the spiritual needs of the prisoners at the fort. Father Heim became the link between Stella Niagara and the POW camp. Students engaged in projects providing pamphlets and “worthwhile literature” for the soldiers and the POWs at the fort. When our own men were unable to keep up with the necessary work on the grounds “we applied to the officials at the Fort and bands of the prisoners of war were brought to Stella with their guards, and under their expert hands order was restored . . .”

Because of this connection, when representatives of area historical societies gathered in May 2006 to brainstorm ideas about how to gather and disseminate information about this little known chapter of local history, I was invited to join the group. Between that initial meeting and a full-scale conference held May 5, 2007, the Axis POW Coalition worked to gather information and stories, and to develop ways of furthering understanding of the social historical impact of the 1944-45 POW camp at Ft. Niagara. My personal involvement was as a member of the oral history team which sought out local residents who had had personal contact with or knowledge of various facets of the story.

Between November 2006 and April 2007 the three members of the team interviewed some 18 men and women who had been children or young adults during the period in question. Using digital equipment we both videotaped and audio taped each interview, winding up with over twenty hours of material. We contracted with Dr. Michael Frisch of SUNY University at Buffalo and his company, The Randforce Associates, located at UB’s Technology Incubator. With Randforce’s very capable assistance we were introduced to the use of tools for annotating, indexing, and cross-referencing the audio interviews themselves. In this way the audio and video

resources remained the primary documents for research and use; transcribing was not necessary. Using "Interclipper" software, the interviews became readily accessible and passages of interest on specific topics could be easily located. Although the learning curve for all of us was steep, we were able (with much assistance from the folks at Randforce) to take the hours of recordings and distill them down to a one-hour presentation, complete with video clips and still shots of artifacts, locations, and people. The material was all loaded into PowerPoint and we were able to contribute a very interesting and informative presentation at the May 5 conference. We did back to back sessions for a total of close to 100 people.

While certainly not ready to take over from Ken Burns, we were extremely happy with what we were able to accomplish in a fairly short time. The feedback from those attending the conference was extremely positive and we feel we've made a good start at showing what can be done with the raw materials at hand. All the tapes of the original interviews as well as copies of the resulting oral history presentation, and the printed documentation will be turned over to the archives at Ft. Niagara—no longer a military installation but a privately incorporated history site within the larger state park.

Mary Serbacki, OSF, CA
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BVMS LAUNCH 175TH ANNIVERSARY

With the theme "Crossing the Waters: Currents of Hope," the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary (BVMs) inaugurated their 175th anniversary on Nov. 1, 2007. Mary Lauranne Lifka, BVM archivist, explained that the theme represents the original five members traveling from Dublin, Ireland to New York, on to Philadelphia and then to Dubuque, Iowa and across the nation as they spread their ministry of education. Culminating on Nov. 1, 2008, the celebration includes a 14-month calendar with photographs, quotes,



and a timeline, composition of original music, regional and local celebrations sponsored by lay and religious, resources for prayer, and a variety of information on the community's website. Another major component of the celebration is *Charting BVM History*, a 28 page publication covering 1984-2008, with an introduction, an essay on each of three congregational administrations, photographs and three parallel timelines: BVM congregation, Church and US/world history. A national observance with prayer, discussion, and celebration for members, Associates, and former members will be held at the Grand River Center, Dubuque, June 22, 2008. Contact S. Lauranne at MLIFKA@bvmcong.org for additional information on the multitude of activities being planned.

A MEETING OF THE MINDS

"On being asked to offer my services as a mentor for archives, I received a big surprise," said S. Rosemary Meiman, OSU . archivist for the Midwest Ursuline Sisters in St. Louis. "The role of mentoring can be observed as a 'two-way street' during which time both parties benefit. Although I did not consider myself an expert on archival matters, I found that just sharing with another archivist brought many rewards to each of us," S. Rosemary explained. She had volunteered to mentor an archivist through a new Consulting/Mentoring Program established by ACWR. Jeanne Guilfoyle, archivist for the Wheaton Illinois Franciscan Sisters took advantage of the opportunity "to have a new set of professional

eyes evaluate the current state of the Archives and make suggestions."

Our June 22 session "was jam-packed with wonderful learnings and sharing! It was a pleasure to 'talk shop' with someone who deals with similar issues and joys on a daily basis," said Jeanne. Some of the topics discussed during our day long meeting at the motherhouse in Wheaton included: where to find certain materials in catalogs, how to preserve and file photographs, what and how to preserve materials that need to be saved, how and where to display items of interest from the archives, etc. Many things were discussed with input from each of us, and we realized that the issues facing archivists today are similar to everyone in our field reported S. Rosemary.

Jeanne found S. Rosemary's ideas very useful from simple things like using a Ph balance test to suggesting ARCAT, a comprehensive software system for religious communities created by S. Marcia Kimball, OSU. "We have a comprehensive list of our holdings at the folder level. While our list of holdings is complete, the document in Microsoft Word does not allow for a search method to locate specific items, so we needed something else," said Jeanne. In addition, S. Rosemary gave me ideas for raising awareness of our history and celebrating the achievements of our community.

"As I left Wheaton I felt that I had gained just as much from Jeanne as she had received from me, concluded S. Rosemary. With sharing ideas and information such as we did, we gained a better grasp of our archival role and we began a friendship based on our common ground as archivists. For anyone considering mentoring in the future, it is a great opportunity to share with others as well as to receive from them. I recommend it!"

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Ed. Note: if you would like further information on the mentoring service, contact the ACWR office ACWR@juno.com



In January of this year the ACWR National Office moved its location from Washington DC to Cincinnati, Ohio. We are now located in the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Charity of Cincinnati at:
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www.archivistsacwr.org

BUFFALO, NY, MERCIES PLAN 150TH ANNIVERSARY

The Buffalo Regional Community of the Sisters of Mercy began its 150th anniversary celebration on Feb. 11, 2007 with Solemn Vespers and a reflection by Nancy Hoff, RSM, president. Margaret Mary Hughes, RSM, archivist, reports that the Archives has been busy locating records, photos, etc. for the year's events. Among other events this year have been a Community OPEN House; a gathering at our first convent—St. Brigits. A deceased Sisters' Mass is planned for this November. A Mass and Dinner on the anniversary date-February 11, 2008, will culminate the year's activities.

Margaret Mary Hughes, RSM
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CONSECRATED WOMEN: TOWARDS A HISTORY OF WOMEN RELIGIOUS OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND --- A CONFERENCE REPORT

The History of Women Religious of Britain and Ireland (H-WRBI) research network held their sixth annual conference on 31st August, satisfying a continuing need for a forum for what continues to be an area of research neglected by mainstream historiography, but one of great intrinsic value and considerable import for our broader understanding of the religious, social and cultural history of Britain and Ireland and the history of the women of those shores. Held at the Institute of Historical Research, London, the one-day event organized by Carmen Mangion (Birkbeck College, University of London), Caroline Bowden (Royal Holloway, University of London) and Susan O'Brien (Margaret Beaufort Institute of Theology, Cambridge) was dedicated to the memory of Sister Gregory Kirkus, CJ, who died aged ninety six on 30th August. Archivist and librarian at the Bar Convent, York for over twenty-five years, she was affectionately regarded by those working in the field of the history of female religious, her own work in this area being highly valued.

The conference delegates were of an extremely varied background and included academics and students from all over Europe and the U.S., archivists, seminary staff and several members of religious communities. This diversity made for highly engaging discussion sessions as well as stimulating conversations during coffee-breaks. A warm welcome was extended to newcomers to the research network and indeed the conference proved a supportive, open and productive forum for the discussion of research. During the early modern session there was a particularly constructive exchange of ideas about Catholic recusant Mary Ward, with no fewer than four papers being presented on her life and the history of her Institute of the

Blessed Virgin Mary. Indeed, several sisters of the Congregation of Jesus were present, as well as representatives of the Sisters of Loreto (thus covering both branches of the IBVM) and the sisters were able to offer privileged insights on their foundress. Together with scholars from the University of York, Queen Mary College, Royal Holloway and the Université d'Aix-Marseille, this surely unrivalled assembly of expertise on Mary Ward made for an excellent survey of current work in this apparently thriving area of research. Other themes covered, which emerged from papers looking at seemingly unconnected issues and disparate historical periods, included moves towards self-determination and self-governance by female religious, the working lives of both cloistered nuns and active sisters and the representation of women religious in artistic media.

The wide temporal scope of the papers, with contributions covering topics from the fourteenth century to the present day, allowed reflection on the wider issues facing this area of research, irrespective of historical period, and some key theoretical problems were considered. For example, the paper on Margaret of York by Anna Campbell (University of Reading) pushed us to reconsider what we mean by 'women religious' and to what extent ostensibly secular women have been able to share in this identity in the past. At the other end of the time scale, Louise O'Reilly (National University of Ireland, Maynooth) readdressed views of Vatican censure of Catholic sisters post Vatican II, taking the Presentation Sisters as a case study, and thus suggested a rethinking of attitudes about power relationships between women under vows and their churches. The range of approaches utilized was similarly broad and Moira Egan's (City University of New York) art-historical analysis of 'Florence Nightingale receiving the wounded at Scutari' was particularly notable, using the painting as evidence of the diverse varieties of religious women who worked as nurses during the Crimean War. Virginia Blanton (University of Missouri-Kansas City) and Veronica O'Mara's

(University of Hull) literary analysis of CUL Add.Ms. 2604, a fifteenth-century manuscript of saints' lives, coupled with their comments on the representation of female saints in late-medieval art made for an insightful and thorough account of this source.

At the close of the meeting there was discussion of the possibility of including contributions on women religious in the rest of Europe at next year's conference, but the consensus amongst the delegates was that the network should maintain its current geographical focus. It is clear that in making this decision the group maintains its power to encourage a parallel literature to the more substantial European scholarship, providing a body of work which can be used comparatively by researchers working in this context. The value of the conference in this respect was demonstrated by the presence of scholars of French, Belgian and Dutch religious history and indeed, it provided fresh inspiration for my own research on representations of French Carmelite Thérèse of Lisieux. The seventh annual conference promises to be a similarly profitable and enjoyable occasion for all working in the field of the history of women religious.

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PRACTICAL AND USEFUL TIPS

Google Alerts (Google.com/alerts) are e-mail updates of the latest relevant Google results based on your topic or query. For example, put in "nuns" and you will get everything from 3 elderly Italian nuns who got fighting with each other and were sent away (true story!) to information on communities engaged in social justice activities, selling large pieces of property, giving up schools, writing blogs, getting new members, etc. [You will also get the NUNS soccer team from NUNS Island]. The information is useful to get a broad perspective across the US as well as other countries. You will be able to indicate your topic or query, the source of information (web, news, blogs, etc.), and how often you wish to receive it. Of course, you could put in religious archives or any other topic. Try it!

Have a tip you would like to share?
Send to smdm@srssofcharity.org and it will be on the web or in the newsletter.

ACWR NEWSLETTER

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Send articles and pictures to
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