



# ACA News

The Newsletter of the Academy of Certified Archivists Issue 74 Summer 2011

## President's Message

Pam Hackbart-Dean, CA  
Morris Library  
Southern Illinois University Carbondale



As over 150 archivists prepare to take the ACA exam at 14 location sites around the country and we anticipate this summer's business meeting and reception in Chicago, I am happy to report that ACA membership and finances are in very good shape. Our organization continues to thrive due to the dedication, enthusiasm and commitment of our leaders and members.

A short list of initiatives and ongoing business will illustrate the point. As planned, the Certification Maintenance process was streamlined and the new electronic petition went live at the beginning of this year. We plan to do the same for those applying to take the exam (Examination Administration) very soon. More than 140 programs or events have been pre-approved for Archival Recertification credits.

ACA will be featured on a 75th Anniversary SAA trading card at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in August. A new brochure (under design) should be available later this year. In social media, we have gone beyond Facebook and are now LinkedIn and have a Twitter account. A Taskforce on State Archivists was created to identify CAs in state archives and plan outreach to them. A survey was created and information gathered. The taskforce will continue exploring ways to promote certification within state archives. Other initiatives

*(continued on following page)*

## In this Issue

President's Message .....	1
More than a Credential .....	3
Officers and Board News ....	4
Academy Profile .....	7
2011 Election Results .....	9
Editor's Endpaper .....	9

*ACA News* is published four times a year by the  
Academy of Certified Archivists  
1450 Western Avenue, Suite 101  
Albany, NY 12203  
Phone: (518) 694-8471  
Fax: (518) 463-8656  
[www.certifiedarchivists.org](http://www.certifiedarchivists.org)

## President's Message

*(continued from previous page)*

and work done on behalf of the Academy are detailed elsewhere in this newsletter.

The Academy will hold its Annual Business meeting and reception on Thursday, August 24th (7:30 -8:30 p.m.), in conjunction with the SAA meeting in Chicago. Members and prospective members are invited. A Chicago-style pretzel and dessert reception will follow, to allow members a chance to mingle. I look forward to seeing you in the Windy City!

If you plan to attend the Chicago meeting, we will again offer the Item Writing Workshop—I encourage newly minted ACA members to participate in this workshop to gain a better understanding of the work required to develop questions for the exam. If you would like to participate, please contact the Regent for Examination Development, Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, CA.

I have enjoyed representing ACA and look forward to my next role as Regent of Nominations. This coming year the ballot will include Vice-President/President-Elect, Treasurer, Regent for Outreach and Regent for Exam Development. To nominate someone or if you wish to serve, please contact me, Tara Laver, CA or Mat Darby, CA.

Lastly, I want to thank all ACA members for their commitment to the Academy and to the archival profession. Special thanks go to all members of the Board of Regents (the archival dream team), the Exam Development Committee members, the Certification Maintenance Review Teams, the Nominating Committee, the exam proctors, the volunteers manning the ACA table at various conferences, the President's Advisory

Council (AKA President's Kitchen Cabinet) and members of various task forces for your dedication to ACA and for the many hours you have volunteered on behalf of the organization. Also a heartfelt thanks to Steve Grandin for all his work for the Academy.

When the Academy asks for assistance from our members, we never fail to get a positive response. I consider this nothing short of amazing, and believe me, the Officers and Board of Regents appreciate this more than we can ever possibly convey. Our Academy is one of the most vibrant organizations for archivists because our members believe in what the Academy stands for and because certification is a personal decision and personal commitment.

Thank you again for your support of the Academy and allowing me the privilege of representing and serving the Academy.

Pam Hackbart-Dean, CA  
President  
Academy of Certified Archivists

## Sister Emma Cecilia Busam Retires

Sister Emma Cecilia Busam, CA, retired in February from her position as archivist for the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. After



*Sister Emma Cecilia stands next to the display of the Owensboro Diocese's three bishops.*

Photograph courtesy of Sister Busam, CA

26 years of service in that position, Sister Busam says the archives will be in good hands. To read a more detailed account of her work, please visit:

[http://www.ursulinesmsj.org/Archive\\_Stories/sr\\_emma\\_cecilia.php](http://www.ursulinesmsj.org/Archive_Stories/sr_emma_cecilia.php)

## More than a Credential

***Cheryl Oestreicher, MLIS, PhD, CA, is Project Archivist, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History/Emory University***

***Wesley Chenault, MA, PhD, CA, is Library Research Associate, Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History***

When Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) President Pam Hackbart-Dean approached me to write an article about my experience taking the ACA exam, I responded by asking to co-author it with colleague Cheryl Oestreicher. I explained we chose to pursue certification together. With Pam's approval, we sat down to write about our preparations for and experiences with the exam, as well as results of certification.

At the time of the exam, Cheryl had nine years of experience working in libraries and archives, an MLIS, and was less than one year away from completing a PhD in Modern History and Literature. Wesley had fourteen years of experience in special collections and archives, an MA in Women's Studies, and a PhD in American Studies. For several months we had numerous conversations about whether or not to take the exam. Because our backgrounds, degrees, and professional positions were different, we had excellent discussions about the pros and cons of certification. Over the years, we both thought about it, but our collaboration was the impetus to actually taking the exam. Instead of viewing it as just getting a certification, we approached it as a learning exercise to deepen our knowledge of archival practices, standards, and the profession – an intensive

continuing education crash course for two professionals beginning mid-career stages.

After we received notification our applications were approved, planning began. About three months before the exam, we read through the ACA guidelines and outlined a strategy. To prepare, we tailored our approach to our professional and educational backgrounds. With 23 years of collective experience to draw upon, we knew neither of us would read the entire ACA bibliography. We took the reading list and compiled a document to track citations, find the sources (online, library, personal copy), and mark when read.

Utilizing the ACA handbook, defined role delineation statements, and domains, we then looked at the tasks and knowledge statements within each domain to assess our individual strengths and knowledge. Given the time limits on our personal and professional activities, we prioritized and chose readings based upon individual interest and necessity. We shared notes from different sources but both read the same texts when essential. However, there were select domains where we developed individual strategies to get through material. Cheryl chose to take the practice questions and identified areas of focus, such as selection and appraisal. Wesley instead concentrated on one domain a week and gave particular attention to law and ethics. We both studied the history and classics; read book reviews; and looked through journals for recent articles about technology, historiography, and emerging changes in the profession and best practices.

*(continued on page 5)*

## Officers and Board News

President (2010-11)	Pam Hackbart-Dean, CA Morris Library Southern Illinois University Carbondale, Illinois
Vice President/ President-Elect (2010-11)	Brenda Gunn, CA University of Texas at Austin , Briscoe Center for American History Austin, TX
Treasurer (2010-12)	Mott R. Linn, DA, CA Clark University Worcester, Massachusetts
Secretary (2009-11)	Shelly Henley Kelly, CA Neumann Library University of Houston- Clear Lake Clear Lake, Texas
Regent for Examination Administration (2009-11)	Daphne O. DeLeon, CA Nevada State Library & Archives Carson City, Nevada
Regent for Examination Development (2010-12)	Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, Ph.D., CA U.S. Air Force Academy Colorado Springs, Colorado
Regent for Certification Maintenance (2009-11)	Kristy Sorensen, CA Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary Austin, Texas
Regent for Outreach (2010-12)	Louis E. Jones, Ph.D., CA Wayne State University, Walter P. Reuther Library Detroit, Michigan
Immediate Past President & Regent for Nominations (2010-11)	Mike Bullington, CA McDonald's Golden Archives Elk Grove, Illinois
Chair, Nominating Committee (2010-11)	Richard Shrake, CA American Philosophical Society Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

### From the Regent for Outreach

Louis Jones, Ph.D., CA

Wayne State University,  
Walter P. Reuther  
Library, Detroit, MI



The upcoming conference of the Society of American Archivists will offer an opportunity to enhance the profile of the Academy. How can you play a part in that process? An item that you can retrieve from the ACA table adjacent to the SAA registration table will help. It is an ACA sticker that you can affix to the SAA badge you'll be receiving at the conference. The sticker will distinguish you as having made a commitment to our profession. As an outreach tool, the sticker can also prompt prospective members of the Academy to more seriously consider pursuing membership. It is a small way of planting a seed or nurturing one that has been planted previously. If you have not already done so, please also consider signing up to staff the ACA table at the conference and share the benefits of certification with those who stop by and inquire about membership. To place yourself on the schedule, go to the following link and type in your name where appropriate:

[https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AgLPN0xpNMq2dGRETWhOSEpNZ0RWdVVwSIYzeG1BWXc&hl=en\\_US&authkey=CPw6ZwP](https://spreadsheets.google.com/spreadsheet/ccc?key=0AgLPN0xpNMq2dGRETWhOSEpNZ0RWdVVwSIYzeG1BWXc&hl=en_US&authkey=CPw6ZwP)

It will be to your benefit to schedule yourself sooner than later in order to staff the table at the time and day that is most convenient for you.

*(continued on following page)*

Contact information for the Officers and Regents is available on the ACA website:  
[www.certifiedarchivists.org/about-us/officers.html](http://www.certifiedarchivists.org/about-us/officers.html)

## From the Regent for Outreach

*(continued from previous page)*

How else can you provide additional exposure to the Academy? The next time you renew your membership to an archival organization, be sure to place the CA designation after your name on the renewal form if you haven't already done so. That way, when your name appears in the directory for that organization, the CA designation will appear as well. These are small but important steps you can take to perform outreach for our organization.

What other ways have you conceived to bring attention to the Academy and/or its benefits? Please submit your ideas to me at [louis.jones@wayne.edu](mailto:louis.jones@wayne.edu) and there is a chance they will be published in a subsequent issue of the ACA newsletter.

## More than a Credential

*(continued from page 3)*

As we read, we created flashcards of major points and pertinent information that were easily shared and exchanged regularly. As experienced graduate students, we utilized our skimming skills to extract main theories, key dates, important persons, and pivotal events in archival history. We had beneficial discussions once or twice a week where we shared thoughts and perspectives about the readings, what we learned, how they contributed to our jobs, and, most importantly, their importance to the archival profession. These conversations helped us think theoretically as well as practically about how these ideas do or do not apply to everyday archival tasks and environs.

We continued this strategy up until the day of the exam. The morning of, we again reviewed notes and flashcards and quizzed each other. Overall, the flashcards and discussions were indispensable to our preparation. What made taking the exam a

positive and effective experience was our collaboration. We used each other as sounding boards for studying but also to share related professional experiences and knowledge to enhance our learning. If we were to do one part differently, we would have kept better track of what we read in addition to the ACA bibliography.

Taking the test itself was simultaneously painless and a bit stressful. As a multiple choice question exam, it is reminiscent of any other multiple choice test taken. We both answered the easier questions first, left the ones we were less certain about, and eliminated answers to find the correct one. When completed, we reviewed all our answers and made a few changes. There was ample time allowed to finish the exam.

Afterwards, we met for lunch to compare our experiences. There were some questions that stumped us both and some we answered differently. Based upon our professional experiences, we had reservations about a few questions and answers. Also, we both counted how many questions we thought we had right to guess whether or not we passed. We discussed the challenge in utilizing a 100 multiple choice exam to assess archivists' skills and knowledge. With seven domains plus general knowledge statements, that leaves roughly 10-15 questions for each. Our profession consists of diverse positions at a wide variety of organizations. Policies, procedures, and standards vary from institution to institution, which is difficult to capture in exam questions. Overall, we found the questions to be fair and thorough.

Direct results from taking the exam are difficult to assess. Neither of us took it for the reasons some people do, such as to find a job or for a pay in-

## More than a Credential

*(continued from previous page)*

crease. However, what we continue to appreciate is the knowledge gained from studying. Reading gave us a better foundation of best practices and standards, a broader perspective of the field, an appreciation for current and past leaders and innovators, and stronger technical knowledge. Exam preparation provided a formal framework of our experiences and indicated objectives for professional development.

We remain invested in exploring the placement and relation of certification within the profession. As a diverse field, we need to understand how both SAA and the ACA define and develop the qualifications and duties of archivists. As we both are archival educators, taking the exam raised practical and ethical questions in how we provide instruction. How much archival history should students learn? How in depth should we go into each topic? What are our responsibilities to prepare students to possibly take this exam? How best can we provide theoretical and practical knowledge before they enter the workforce? Overall, how do we prepare them to be competitive in the job market?

As members of the Curriculum Development Team for the new Master of Archival Studies program at Clayton State University in Georgia, we explore these questions through the integration of select ACA tasks and knowledge statements as course outcomes. The team also looks to assessments and guidelines from SAA, ARMA, and DigCCurr. We see all of them as useful tools to create standards and consistency in educating and training future archivists.

In addition to archival education, we see the potential of our knowledge gained through studying

and certification for outreach and advocacy activities. With a deeper understanding about the profession's past and present, we will better be able to communicate to donors, researchers, resource allocators, and others both inside and outside the field.

For all these reasons, we value and found the exam and certification worthwhile. Beyond our full-time jobs, we both had responsibilities of teaching and/or scholarly writing. Our collaboration, much like the formation of exam study groups, alleviated studying and testing anxiety and allowed us to share the workload. It also helped us stay engaged and created more incentive to be responsible to each other. Collaboration moved us toward a shared goal.

Ours is a profession where we never stop learning. There will continue to be developments in technology and revisions in best practices and standards. Above and beyond the CA credential, we perceive the value of certification as an opportunity to become more effective educators and practitioners.



### ACA Seeks nominations

The Nominating Committee of the Academy of Certified Archivists requests that you suggest names for the leadership positions to be filled in the 2012 election. The Committee seeks names of knowledgeable, dynamic, and decisive leaders from the archives community who can provide crucial guidance to ACA and the archives profession. The 2012 election will select a Vice President/President-elect, Treasurer, Regent for Examination Development, Regent for Outreach and a member for the Nominating Committee.

*(continued on page 8)*

**Brian Robertson, CA; Stephanie Bayless, CA; Frances Morgan, CA; and Sara Thompson, CA**

**Butler Center for Arkansas Studies, Little Rock, Arkansas**

In 2010, a group of four archivists from the Butler Center for Arkansas Studies (BCAS) in Little Rock sat for ACA's certification exam. They all passed and the newly-minted certified archivists presented their experiences in a panel called "CA or Bust: How We Prepared for and Passed the Certified Archivists Exam" at the 2011 Society of Southwest Archivists (SSA) annual meeting.

The four archivists -- Brian Robertson, CA (Senior Archivist and Manager, Manuscripts Division), Stephanie Bayless, CA (Archivist and Assistant Manager, Manuscripts Division), Frances Morgan, CA (Bill Clinton State Government Project Coordinator), and Sara Thompson, CA (AV/AR Specialist) -- formed a study group in 2009 after that year's SSA meeting and were determined to join the growing number of CAs the following year. Each had his or her own reasons for pursuing the certification. Brian wanted to prove to himself that he could pass the exam and hoped, as he put it, to "take my career to a higher level." Stephanie, who began her career in museums, felt the credential would give her archival qualifications more weight and supplement her master's degree in public history. Sara, who is

in the early stage of her career, saw that certification is becoming more common and wanted to be prepared for the future. For her part, another strong incentive was her colleagues' resolve to take the exam. And Frances took the exam to increase Arkansas's representation in ACA, which she feels would benefit from the state's "terrific archival community." Apart from individual motivations, the group as a whole received the full support of their administration. According to Sara, "the head of the library system is a former archivist and the head of the Butler Center fully supported us in studying for and maintaining our certification."

When they began their work, the group consisted of twelve participants. They split the domains between them, assigned readings, and met every two to three weeks. Drawing from their research, everyone created outlines, which they shared with the group. By the end of the year, with only four members remaining, they had compiled a substantial binder of notes and outlines from which they created a succinct study guide.

## Academy Profile

This feature profiles members of the Academy of Certified Archivists. If you would like to suggest someone to be featured, or if you yourself would like to appear in the column, please contact:

Linda Hocking, CA

[archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org)

The quartet's labors attest to the volume of information and understanding of archival principles and practices that is required and expected of professional archivists. They researched over 50 books, articles, and websites so that each person would

have some knowledge of each domain statement. In her assessment of the volume of material they used to prepare for the test, Stephanie

*(continued on following page)*

## Academy Profile - *Butler Center*

*(continued from previous page)*

commented, "I like to think of it as the equivalent of three or four graduate classes." Even with several people tackling the research together, the task was daunting. Frances quipped, "We became a little bit loony toward the end. We needed Brian's Ghirardelli brownies to keep us going."

When asked how they felt about the process, the responses were unanimously positive, despite the amount of work. With the exception of Frances, who is nearing retirement, making her dedication to the exam all the more impressive, they all commented on how useful the research has been to their careers. Stephanie, for instance, was "surprised at how important the process was to my career... I learned more than 100 questions could ever successfully test." Sara speculated, "Who knows what the future holds, but I can only see certification helping me with my career."

They also agreed that they had learned an incredible amount over the year. Frances commented, "I feel as though I have another master's thesis -- and that's saying something." Brian, for his part, summarized the overall impressions of the group: "It was a lot of work, but what we gained from it has been tremendously helpful. I can honestly say that preparing for the exam, and ultimately taking it, has made us all better archivists."

Carol I. Mead, CA, is the Archivist for the Archives of American Mathematics at The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin .



From left, Frances Morgan, CA; Brian Robertson, CA; Stephanie Bayless, CA; and Sara Thompson, CA giving their presentation at SSA.

Photograph courtesy of Shelly Kelly, CA

## ACA Seeks nominations

*(continued from page 6)*

If you have names that you wish the Nominating Committee to consider for the 2012 election, please submit them with a brief statement of support, via email to Tara Laver, Nominating Committee Chair, [tzachar@lsu.edu](mailto:tzachar@lsu.edu). Nominations will be open until all candidate slots are filled, but for best consideration **please respond by September 1, 2011.**

**The current Nominating Committee is:**

Tara Laver, CA (Chair), [tzachar@lsu.edu](mailto:tzachar@lsu.edu)

Mat Darby, CA [msdarby@austin.utexas.edu](mailto:msdarby@austin.utexas.edu)

Pam Hackbart-Dean, CA [phdean@lib.siu.edu](mailto:phdean@lib.siu.edu)

We welcome your questions and your suggestions.



# Editor's Endpaper

## ACA 2011 Election Report

The Academy of Certified Archivists is pleased to announce the following results for its 2011 elections:

*Vice President/President-Elect*

**Laura Lyons McLemore, CA**

*Secretary*

**Shaun Boyd, CA**

*Regent for Certification Maintenance*

**Kristy K. Sorensen, CA**

*Regent for Examination Administration*

**Daphne DeLeon, CA**

*Nominating Committee*

**Matthew Darby, CA**

I am pleased to present you with the results of this year's election. We had some incredibly close races this year (one race came down to two votes!) and a fantastic turnout: 578 voters!

Congratulations to the winners, and thanks to everyone who was willing to run and make the offer of service to the Academy.

Sincerely,

Richard Shrake, CA  
Regent for Nominations

Please send any comments, ideas, or suggestions  
about *ACA News* to:

ACA News  
c/o Academy of Certified Archivists  
1450 Western Avenue, Suite 101  
Albany, NY 12203  
[aca@caphill.com](mailto:aca@caphill.com)

or contact the editor directly:

Linda Hocking, CA  
Curator of Library & Archives  
Litchfield Historical Society  
P.O. Box 385  
Litchfield, CT 06759  
[archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org](mailto:archivist@litchfieldhistoricalsociety.org)