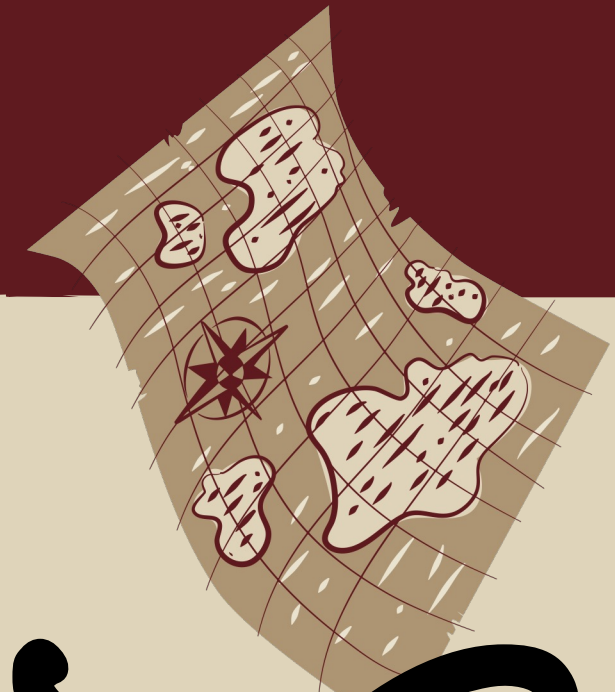# Advocating for Collections

Melissa Morgan   Crystal Diff   Heather Culligan
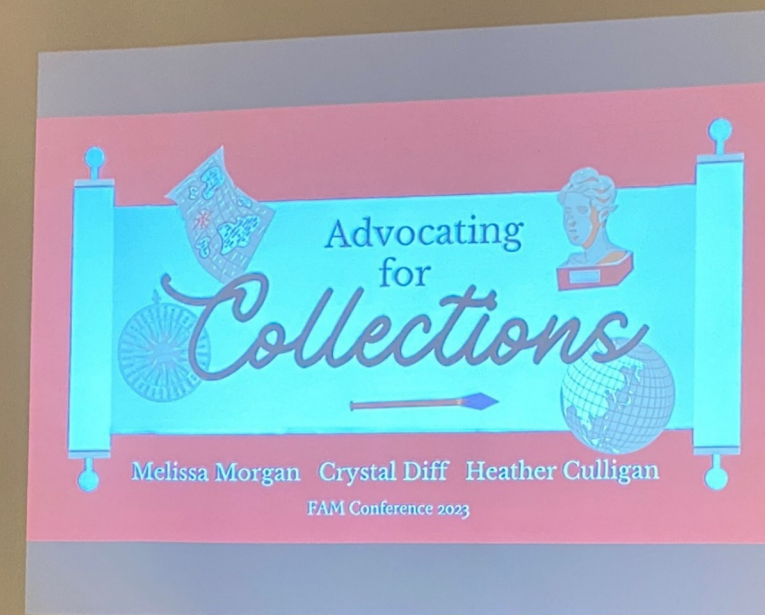
FAM Conference 2023

Introductions

Melissa Morgan, Curator
- Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Heather Culligan, Curator of Collections
- Tampa Bay History Center

Crystal Diff, Executive Director
- Boca Grande Historical Society

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Advocating for Space & Physical Resources

- Small museum with two full time staff
- Part of the Manatee County Clerk of the Circuit Court's Historical Resources Department
- Non-profit formed in 1989, Museum opened in 2002 with collections scattered throughout various storage facilities
- First Curator hired in 2014

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Advocating for Space & Physical Resources

- Challenges
  - No Collections Storage
  - Almost everything exhibited
- Resources Needed
  - Archival housing
  - Space to hold and process incoming collections

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Advocating for Space & Physical Resources

2014 - Free shelves & 2015 - additional rack shelf purchase and archival boxes

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Advocating for Space & Physical Resources

2018 - Utilized a consultant to improve storage layout with money for new shelving and archival boxes.

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Advocating for Space & Physical Resources

Takeaways

2023

- Evaluate - How can you utilize the resources you already have to improve?
- Prioritize - What do you need first to improve your Collections and what will be okay for now?
- Education - On best practices and standards for Collections for all Staff and Board Members

Manatee County Agricultural Museum

Discussion Questions

- How has your organization struggled with collection space?

- Have you successfully advocated for collection space at your institution? Were there any people or groups on your team that helped move your project forward?

Tampa Bay History Center
Advocating for Time

- Larger museum
- Five full time staff in Collections/Curatorial
- 90,000+ items in collection
- Two satellite campuses, with two more in the works

Tampa Bay History Center

Advocating for Time

- Chinsegut Hill Historic Site, Brooksville, FL
- Advocated for:
  - Supplies
  - Time
  - Change in priorities

Tampa Bay History Center
Advocating for Time

The Moseley Homestead
"The Nest"

- Moseley Homestead, Brandon, FL
- Advocated for:
  - Time (again) which led to...
  - Part-time staff person!
  - Supplies, office space, facilities

Tampa Bay History Center
Advocating for Time Takeaways

- Your time is valuable and quantifiable
- Spreading yourself too thin compromises your ability to do your primary responsibilities
- Come from a place of "YES," but don't be a doormat!
- Project is possible, but here's what I need to be successful

Tampa Bay History Center
Advocating for Time Questions

- Does anyone have an example of large projects at their institution that would require quantifying and advocating for time?

- Can anyone share an example of taking on a project and NOT advocating for yourself and your time?
  - This can lead to feeling stressed and overwhelmed

Boca Grande Historical Society
Connecting to the Community

- Small museum with 2 FT staff (only one FT staff for 20 years)
- Established non-profit in 2005
- About 10,000 items, mostly in off-site storage and archival
- Remote location on Gasparilla Island

Boca Grande Historical Society

Connecting to the Community

Boca Grande Land Company "Magna Carta" Collection

Challenges:
- Cost to conserve (~$27,000 for 6 books)
- Environment/Housing needed
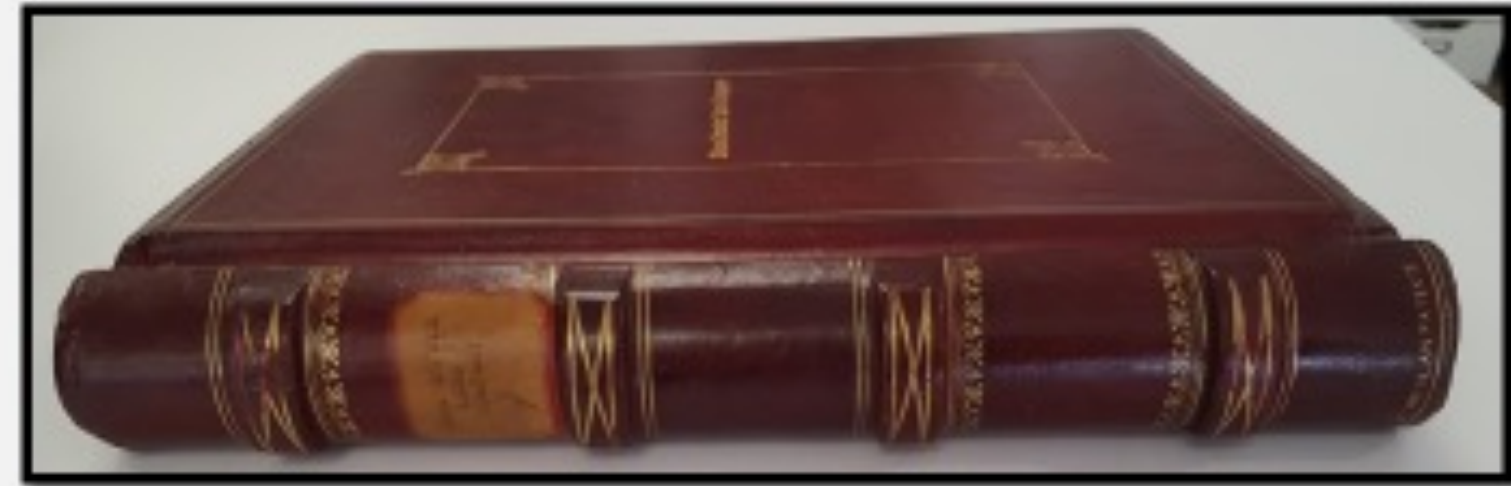- Found out of state in TN

Connections:
- Original documents of land development on the island
- Signatures of local icons like FL Governor Albert Gilchrist (Gilchrist Blvd.) and Peter Bradley, Pres. CH&N Railroad & AAC Co. (Phosphate)

Boca Grande Historical Society

Connecting to the Community

- Created awareness of the project in the community through press releases in local paper, videos, member emails, social media
- Acquired a local realty business to sponsor the project, and local grants from The Boca Grande Woman's Club and Gulf Coast Community Foundation
- Educated our sponsors and visitors about the connections and process from start to finish
- Continues to be a focal point in the museum and one of our most prized collections

Boca Grande Historical Society

Connecting to the Community

The Value of Connection

Showcasing your own collections enhances all aspects of your museum. It helps the community to see a part of the organization's efforts that are usually behind closed doors and brings in visitors, sponsors/ revenue, publicity, and increased local interest which elevates the entire organization.

Questions

- Have you attempted to conserve items in the past without buy-in from your team or community? What were the hurdles you faced?

- Do you have a success story to share on raising needed funds to conserve an artifact/collection?Would you do anything differently if done over again?

- Have a project but don't know where to start? Let's brainstorm some ideas to fit your needs.

Things to Ponder

- What connections can you make between individual collections and your community? (Ex. blueprints and local architect or developer sponsor)

- If you spend the time and funds conserving an item or collection, will it have proper housing once finished?

- Before spending your time and funds, are the items connected to your mission? Have you prioritized?

Resource
s

Conservation:

- The Northeast Document Conservation Center www.nedcc.org
- Mowery Conservation (Venice,FL) restorepaper.com & bookconserve.com
- American Institute for Conservation www.culturalheritage.org
- National Park Service Conserve-O-Grams www.nps.gov/museum/publications/conserveogram/cons_toc.html

Fundraising for Collections:

- Foundation for Advancement in Conservation connectingtocollections.org/fundraising-for-collections-care

Collections Development:

- FAM FL Connecting to Collections
  flamuseums.org/professional-development/professional-resources/florida-connecting-to-collections-program

Training:

- Webinar from C2C Advocating for Collections During Challenging Times & Resources
  connectingtocollections.org/advocating-for-collections-during-challenging-times
- Online Conference - Digital Directions from NEDCC www.nedcc.org/preservation-training/dd23
  Highly recommend attending the next one especially to get excellent language to help communicate with IT
  team about needed resources.

Thank You for listening!