

RBMS Exhibition Awards Committee
Business Meeting, ALA Midwinter Meeting, Saturday, 17 January 2010
Boston, MA: Hyatt Regency, Plymouth Rm.

Members Present: Richard Noble (Brown University), Chair; James Ascher (University of Colorado, Boulder); Tom Bolze (Yale University) (recording); Jessica Lacher-Feldman (University of Alabama); Caryn Lazzuri (Folger Shakespeare Library); Ed Oetting (Arizona State University); Cynthia Requardt (Johns Hopkins University); Molly Schwartzburg (Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin); Michael Taylor (Louisiana State University); Cherry Williams (Lilly Library, Indiana University).

Guests: Katie Carr (University of Missouri); Jason Kovari (University of Mississippi); Jeffrey Makala (University of South Carolina and RBMS Member-at-Large)

Call to Order: 8:00 a.m.

1. Designation of recorder

Tom Bolze was designated recorder.

2. Welcome, Introductions, Announcements

Molly announced that EAC's proposed 2010 Preconference seminar was accepted. Tentatively titled "Collaborative Exhibitions," it will be moderated by Richard and will include presentations by Molly, Lynne Farrington (Univ. of Pennsylvania), and Declan Kiely (Morgan Library).

3. Review and Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the July 11, 2009 EAC meeting at ALA Annual were unanimously approved.

4. Update on Committee Membership

Richard reviewed the terms of current EAC members. At the end of ALA Annual in June 2010:

- Tom and Richard will rotate off EAC.
- Cynthia and Ed will complete the first year of their second and final 2-year term.
- James and Molly will complete their first 2-year term and be eligible for re-appointment.
- Jessica, Caryn, Michael, and Cherry will complete the first year of their first 2-year term.

Upon the completion of 2010 Annual, there will be two committee slots to fill; in addition, a new Chair will need to be appointed.

5. Financial: Update on Leab Account, Current Year Expenditures, Etc.

The account's current status is as follows:

Principal balance as of 11/30/09:	\$28,380.03
Earned interest income, 9/1/09-11/30/09	\$ 220.98

Bank charges, 9/1/09-11/30/09	\$	62.64
Balance available in spending account, 11/30/09:	\$	158.34

Richard remarked that after peaking at about \$32,000 prior to the recent financial downturn, the Leab Account had dropped to about \$25,000 but is now rising again. Any EAC member requesting reimbursements from the spending account (i.e. the “earned interest income”) should submit original receipts to Richard as soon as possible. As a point of information, Richard noted that EAC may only spend interest and dividend income, and any amount remaining in this spending account as of September 1 rolls over into the principal and is no longer available.

6. Follow-Up to Action Items in 2009 ALA Annual Minutes

2009 Annual Action Item 1: At ALA Midwinter 2010 meeting, further discuss possible item-level cataloging for Leab submissions.

This will be covered later in the meeting, when discussing the Exhibition Award winners database. [NB: Time constraints prevented this from being discussed further.]

2009 Annual Action Item 2: Richard will create a formal report on the status of Leab archival holdings, to be posted on the EAC’s web page. All EAC members should feel free to send relevant documents to Richard.

No action has yet been taken. Richard may continue as an EAC “volunteer” and catalog the Grolier Club’s Leab Award holdings, at which time such a report would be more feasible.

2009 Annual Action Item 3: Richard will send a follow-up thank you to each 2009 nominee, in which he will also ask nominees to comment on how they heard about the award and suggest venues for publicizing the award that might not be immediately obvious to the committee.

This has been done.

2009 Annual Action Item 4: Richard will draft an article for Manuscript Society News.

Not yet completed; Richard is working on it.

2009 Annual Action Item 5: Riva [Feshbach] will review the listservs of various ALA divisions to see if there are any (besides RBMS) to which EAC should send Leab Award announcements.

Due to changes in her employment situation, Riva was unable to pursue this matter. General discussion of how EAC might broaden its reach, with a particular suggestion that the committee reach out to institutions not closely involved with RBMS (e.g. many public libraries). Ed suggested that we ask Leab winners to provide brief acceptance blurbs about the importance/significance of the award that we could use in EAC publicity.

2009 Annual Action Item 6: Richard will contact Megan Griffin about possibly publicizing the award in American Libraries.

Not yet done, but Richard will discuss it with Megan when he contacts her about current award winners. Cherry raised the question of how EAC publicizes the award to the museum community, since some museums exhibit print material, but Molly asked that we defer this until after a conversation about some problems with the division categories. [NB: Time constraints prevent a return to this discussion.] Jessica suggested possibly advertising the award in *Archival*

Outlook, the newsletter of the Society of American Archivists (SAA). Jeff noted that the ALA-SAA-AAM (American Association of Museums) liaison may be a good person to contact.
New Action Item 1: Jeff will email Richard contact info for the ALA-SAA-AAM liaison.

2009 Annual Action Item 7: James and Chris [Smith] will further investigate options for electronic submission of award nominations.

This has been done. We now have an interactive PDF submission form on the website, which Richard found worked very well during the current awards cycle.

2009 Annual Action Item 8: Richard will follow up with Molly about the creation of table labels [for Preconference display of submissions], particularly with regard to label design.

This has not yet been done; Richard and Molly will work on it.

2009 Annual Action Item 9: Richard will create a list of recurring EAC Chair “to do” items, which can then be passed on whenever a new Chair takes office.

Richard is currently working on this.

2009 Annual Action Item 10: Richard will talk to Will LaMoy about whether the Publications Committee might serve as repository for EAC document templates (eg. logos, award certificates, labels, etc.) and take responsibility for producing these documents as necessary.

Richard noted that Publications is already serving as repository for some EAC document templates, e.g. award certificates.

Richard mentioned that EAC members remain in conversation with RBMS webmasters regarding ongoing developments and additions to the EAC website.

7. Review of 2010 Award Cycle and Anticipation of 2011 Award Cycle

Richard noted that, as usual, the majority of submissions for 2010 were received after Oct. 1. There were considerably more electronic submissions this year, and a few more catalogs/brochures. The boxes apparently held up well during mailing, and the timing similarly worked well. Richard asked that committee members copy him on emails regarding mailing and receipt of boxes, so that he can track their progress. **In addition, members are reminded that winners must remain confidential until an official announcement is made.**

It was suggested that ALA Connect, a wiki on the ALA website, might be useful for EAC communications. We could possibly use Connect for document distribution (e.g. new member orientation document) and pre-polling of nominees to create “short lists” in advance of the Midwinter judging session. Such pre-polling is attractive both to increase judging time available for more competitive submissions and to lighten the catalog load that the Chair must bring to Midwinter. Although the prospect of using Connect for preliminary (pre-Midwinter) discussion of submissions was generally rejected, it was noted that Connect would be a useful tool for communicating any problems with submissions, such as technical difficulties in accessing electronic exhibitions. James volunteered to follow up with some of these matters.

New Action Item 2: James will send out a brief blurb to EAC regarding ALA Connect, how it works, and some of its uses. He will also investigate the “voting module” and report back to the

committee about whether this presents a viable (and secure) tool for pre-polling of submissions. (see also New Action Item 3, below)

Discussion about some general problems that were noticed with some of the electronic exhibition submissions. Cynthia suggested we consider expanding our submission guidelines to clarify some of the things we look for in electronic exhibitions, such as fully functional links.

Discussion turned to the issue of defining “brochures” and “catalogs” and the difficulties inherent in the Leab Award categories. Richard quickly reviewed the history of the Leab Award, noting that originally there was just one award for “exhibition catalog,” then gradually additional catalog categories were added to accommodate the growing variety of submissions (and create more fairness based on submitting institutions’ resources), and finally brochures and electronic exhibitions were added at about the same time. Brochures fall into a particularly gray area; originally they were conceived simply as single-sheet leaflets, but short codex-format pamphlets that were not substantive enough to compete as catalogs eventually came to be viewed as brochures as well. Electronic exhibitions were initially viewed simply as online catalogs of physical exhibitions, but soon it was realized that the online format allowed these entities to behave more as exhibitions in their own right than merely as electronic records of an exhibition.

General discussion of the nature of both electronic exhibitions and physical catalogs, with the following comments:

- For electronic exhibitions, perhaps add language in our submissions criteria noting that the exhibition should have some curatorial/interpretive content and not merely be an unmediated or almost-unmediated extension of the institution’s digital library.
- All physical catalogs and electronic exhibitions should represent exhibitions that had some “objective.” This objective need not be topically focused; for example, “high-spot” or donor-centered exhibitions would continue to qualify. This objective also need not be original, especially if it does something else well; for example, an exhibition in a well-trod topical area with a distinct pedagogical intent would also qualify.
- While the catalog and brochure categories acknowledge entities that are “accoutrements” to physical exhibits, the electronic exhibition category is a somewhat different beast, which makes for an odd disjunction; however, despite its catalog-centric origins, the Leab Award is the only RBMS venue for recognizing electronic exhibitions, and we believe it is important to continue that recognition.
- Although some submissions may not “qualify” as catalogs or, more likely, electronic exhibitions, it seems counter-productive to return such items to the submitters, as the award’s purpose is to reward positive work, not punish effort.

Richard noted that the Leabs’ original intent in creating the award was to acknowledge the difficulty of exhibiting library materials, especially text-heavy items without much intrinsic visual appeal. Since exhibition catalogs exist to preserve a record of these efforts, the Leab Award was created to recognize (and implicitly hold up as a model) successful strategies of making this material especially compelling to audiences.

Discussion moved to a focus specifically on electronic exhibitions and some of the definitional problems they pose. Although committee members were concerned by the seemingly

insubstantial format of some recent submissions, James commented that the web remains an evolving technology, and electronic exhibitions that seem thin may be early harbingers of new directions and should not be dismissed out of hand. Richard noted the shift from early online exhibitions, which were often a product of ad-hoc digitizing, to growing online content that pulls from an institution's digital library holdings. In its judging EAC may increasingly want to consider the degree to which an electronic exhibition "leverages" its institution's digital library contents. EAC should probably have an online discussion about how to refine and/or expand submission guidelines for electronic exhibitions; James will investigate.

New Action Item 3: As part of his review of the functions of ALA Connect, James will also investigate and report back to the committee about the mechanics of having a detailed online conversation regarding guidelines for electronic exhibitions. (see also New Action Item 2, above)

8. Online Exhibit of Exhibition Awards Winners, Beta Version

James and Katie (from the RBMS web team) presented the beta version of the online exhibit of Leab Award winners. Currently only the 2009 catalog and brochure winners have been entered. This exhibit has been created using Omeka open-source software; Katie has done much of the development. At this time electronic exhibitions are not included because permissions to use screen shots were never obtained; Richard will follow up.

New Action Item 4: Richard will contact previous electronic exhibition award winners to request permission to use screen captures of opening pages in the EAC online exhibit of winners.

Katie raised two specific issues that should be addressed as work proceeds:

- A preferred naming convention for the site needs to be approved by the committee.
- Although Katie entered data from the 2009 winners, someone else should be responsible for uploading data from previous winners.

The beta version met with general approval from the committee. Certain suggestions were made, such as adding links to submission guidelines; Katie indicated that the site would be fairly easy to edit and such links could readily be added. The committee approved continued work on the exhibit and thanked Katie and James for their efforts. James will serve as liaison between EAC and Katie, and EAC members are encouraged to send suggestions/input to James.

9. Other Business

Unfortunately, time ran out before new business could be addressed.

Adjourn: 10:05 a.m.