Michigan Museums Association Annual Meeting Recap

On October 17-19, 2017 hundreds of Michigan museum professionals gathered in Lansing for the annual meeting. Among them were a large number of students and recent graduates, ten of whom were supported by scholarship funding from the College of Arts and Letters. In addition, two MSU students were among the four who spoke in the Student Session on Wednesday morning. After their session, each met with an assigned mentor at the annual lunch.

In "Collecting Marching Band Uniforms as Historical Objects," Jacob McCormick reflected upon his experience interning with the Michigan State University Museum history collections. His paper addressed the evolution of MSU Spartan Marching Band uniforms and their connection to greater historical events such as MSU’s entry into the Big Ten Conference and the enactment of Title IX. He emphasized the importance of collecting marching band uniforms because they are so often orphaned in museum collections and for their ability to tell such specific stories in a broader historical context. He said that “The MMA conference was a valuable experience because it allowed me to discuss my internship experience with individuals who are leaders and actively involved in museums and cultural institutions throughout the state. Receiving feedback and questions from conference-goers, ... was very beneficial. ... Having an assigned mentor [Suzanne Fischer, Director of the Michigan History Museum] to discuss graduate school and career prospects was also quite useful. I think all students who are serious about museum-related careers should experience such a conference during their schooling for an introduction to the profound professional community that surrounds the museum field.”

Jasmine Smith, a 2017 graduate who is now pursuing her Master’s Degree in Library and Information Science at the University of Michigan, spoke about “Interning at a Developing Museum: The Battle Creek Regional History Center,” a very small, fledgling museum devoted to local history. Jasmine said “I definitely think it was worthwhile to attend the conference! This was my first time at a conference specifically for museums, and it was great to see representation from museums all over the state. ... My mentor at lunch, Julie Cook, is a collections coordinator at the Historic Ford Estates. I am extremely interested in working with collections in the future, so the opportunity to sit down with someone who is doing what I hope to do one day was awesome. ... Overall, my experience at the MMA conference was great! Whether it was touring the Capitol Building, or learning about what other museums are doing, or just the opportunity to meet new people who share my interests.”

MSU Museum Studies faculty and affiliates were well represented at the conference. Max Evjen gave a hands-on workshop titled “No Experience Necessary: How to Bring Change through Strategy Development,” in which he provided helpful hints and tools to consider a digital engagement framework. Mary Worrall and Shirley Wajda’s session on “Curating Craftivism” concerned quilts related to civil and human rights, collecting Women’s March materials, and museum-sanctioned fieldwork. Susan J. Bandes and Ranti Junius were on the program committee and the former chaired the student session and developed a “student track”
handout that was available at the conference. In addition the Broad Art Museum and MSU Museum welcomed conference attendees at evening receptions. All in all, the conference was a great success with a lot of local representation and participation.