



Revised Grand Canyon floorplan showing foyer, research room, and multi-use meeting room.

not be vital, but this decides where they will wait, even during short periods, and what kind of orientation they will receive. All too often, our visitors enter crowded and

narrow corridors without receiving any orientation as to the purpose or layout of the facility they've entered. Curators, often struggling with overcrowded storage spaces, may see entrance areas as the lowest priority for space, forgetting that a successful museum facility will be one that is more frequently visited. An entrance foyer with chairs, bulletin boards, signage for orientation, and a professional layout sets the tone for the facility's users and recognizes their importance. In addition, it contributes to the "zone" approach to security by providing the least secure area, which is open to everyone, as the outermost zone.

At Grand Canyon, a meeting room for 20 people was designed that doubles as a lunch room, emergency project room, and creates the ability to provide lectures, hold business meetings, and train staff. It also provides an orientation space for tour groups. Meeting rooms provide vital space for park managers to meet with their staffs and outside experts and planners, and a variety of park partners. Amazingly, many important discussions occur with limited- or non-participation by resource professionals because of the lack of simple meeting space in parks.

With the assistance of professional architects and engineers, the museum staff developed a completely new layout for the Grand Canyon museum facility. A large foyer, glass partitioned research room, and meeting room totaling 800-square-feet

have been incorporated. The rest room was expanded from the original design to provide for access for individuals with disabilities, an important component of access throughout any public facility. If additional space had been available, we would have added a "project room" that could have provided space for researchers working on major projects for months or even years. Of course, one must never forget that a general purpose room can serve many different purposes, whether as an office, a dry lab, or a research room. This knowledge can lead to an evolutionary understanding of building design, and how space can be adapted to new functions or needs over time. Thus, we should recognize a certain level of flexibility in our planning when we designate a room's uses.

Most parks will not be building a facility as large as that at Grand Canyon National Park, but the use criteria discussed here should still be relevant. Plan to dedicate at least 10% of the available space to visitor use. In a 250-square-foot building this may only amount to a 4'x5' work station by the door. But large or small, a museum facility without such space is creating a guaranteed conflict between preservation and use. As resource managers, we depend upon the backing of management and the support of an informed and concerned public. We know many of the physical needs of the critical habitat needed for the protection of our collections. The challenge is to provide for their use and enjoyment within this secure and controlled environment. Only careful design and planning, from the very beginning, can ensure that these potential conflicts are avoided and successful partnerships between protection and use are assured.

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Anna von Lunz

## High Technology in Civil War Era Storage Facility

The 1864 Civil War Powder Magazine at Fort McHenry National Monument and Historic Shrine in Baltimore, Maryland houses important collections of both the Fort and Hampton National Historic Site (Towson, Md). This impressive rectangular structure has high vaulted ceilings and 6'-thick exterior brick walls, surrounded by a 8'x147' exterior courtyard wall.

In the early 1970s the park made the decision to use the structure as a storage facility for museum services. Shelving, cabinets, heating, air conditioning, and alarm systems were installed. For over 20 years this facility has accommodated thousands of artifacts from both sites. For the most part the collections are stored on separate sides of the building or on different aisles. Hampton's artifacts include books, furniture, por-

traits, household items, and weapons. Fort McHenry's collections include weapons, flags, furniture, archives, rare books, photographs, uniforms, and a sizable archeology collection.

At the present time, there is one museum technician responsible for monitoring these collections, an estimated 30,000 items. To expedite and facilitate monitoring the relative humidity and temperature in the building, a computerized remote data logger system was installed recently using monies from the Museum Collection Preservation Program. With this new modem system, staff can dial the phone number in the Civil War Powder Magazine, access the remote data loggers and obtain temperature and relative humidity levels. The data is then communicated to the computer and charts can be printed from the museum technician's office at another location in the park. This technique avoids unnecessary traffic in the inner room, assuring a cleaner, more stable environment for the collections.

This unique structure, built primarily to protect valuable powder from the ravages of war, today has a more productive and creative function preserving irreplaceable museum collections from the ravages of time and an urban industrial environment.

It is fortunate that the park chose to convert a Civil War era structure to a bombproof, stable, secure storage facility with a "high tech" monitoring system to preserve and protect important collections of two national parks.

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*Behind the many uses to which we put collections are the curators who care for and research all of the materials. Who are the people who do the research that makes it possible to use the collections properly and wisely? The following article discusses the curator as an important resource.*

Doris D. Fanelli

## The Curator as Social Historian

*City Tavern, c. 1976. Eighteenth century dining and drinking customs, foodways, and social dancing were some of the research topics curators undertook to assemble an accurate reference guide to furnishing this working restaurant. Contemporary prints were a rich source of detail for the bar enclosure pictured here.*

As national parks face an era of dwindling financial support and shrinking staff, it is beneficial to regard present staffing in new ways. This article argues that curators of history collections in national parks are an overlooked resource of historical data and research. Examples given are based on the history of curation at Independence National Historical Park. The curators at Independence have strong interdisciplinary backgrounds which have included advanced study in historical methods. This training is evident in their vision of their collections as simultaneously objects deserving of the highest standards of care and a body of data that can yield historical information and inspire questions. This approach isn't new among the community of material culture scholars. As early as 1978, Thomas J. Schlereth discussed the interstices of social history and history curation in "Historic Houses as Learning Laboratories." However, within the National Park Service, the curator's identity as a social historian is sometimes overlooked. The history collection curator

must, per force, be a social historian in order to competently

execute her/his work. National Park Service curators and their research are a rich resource of social history studies and should be included in the current discourse among historians within and outside of the agency.<sup>1</sup>

Among the cultural resources that historical parks are charged to preserve are collections of material culture in the broadest sense: archeological remains, fine and decorative arts, architectural fragments, relics, curiosities, natural history specimens, and their attendant documentation. The very rationale for such holdings requires a curator to exercise the skills of a social historian in order to understand and optimally manage his charges. A curator must have an intimate knowledge of the context in which the collections were produced, used, and assembled in order to perform her job. The necessity of this knowledge is paramount for

