

The WLM Gallery Redesign

Mary Ellen Warner, M.D., President
Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology

One only has to step foot inside ASA headquarters in Park Ridge, Illinois to see that there are many changes occurring at the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology (WLM). What was once our showpiece gallery has been completely disassembled to help accommodate space needs at the building for our increasing and very capable ASA staff. Currently under way is a renovation of the gallery to allow expanded office space for our growing ASA personnel. Once this office remodel is completed, the WLM Museum will move into this renovated area with our gallery footprint approximating one-third its original size. Here we will display with pride some of our priceless treasures. With our gallery space reduction, ASA has allowed the WLM the opportunity to display the contents of 14 of our former gallery glass display cabinets throughout current ASA HQ space. We are grateful to ASA for allowing us this use of space as well as allowing us basement storage of some of our present gallery jewels. If you are in the Park Ridge area, we invite you to visit ASA HQ to see these invaluable gems, which detail the history of our great specialty while gracing the building's rooms and halls. These displays are vivid reminders of our heritage, chronicling our evolution from a trade into a proud profession and reminding everyone who views them why ASA exists.

Fortuitously, this downsizing of the museum matches well with the WLM's recent efforts to make its collections available electronically to a worldwide audience. We are embarking on a major digitization project of our museum, library and other holdings. Over a relatively short time period, we will digitize our museum pieces, rare book collections, living history videos and our archival collections. All ASA members, the medical community in general, and the public will have electronic access to many of our materials. In essence, we are developing a virtual museum and anesthesiology library with this digitization project.



Mary Ellen Warner, M.D., is Associate Professor of Anesthesiology, Mayo Clinic College of Medicine, Rochester, Minnesota.

We thank ASA for its support to accelerate the pace of this digitization project.

Specific areas and progress of this digitization project include:

Artifact Digitization Project

Over 100 items in the WLM gallery collections have undergone digital image capture over the last few months. Both virtual images (which require over 100 separate photos of each object) and two-dimensional images are being acquired for these artifacts. These images will form the basis of a digital exhibition. Plans are under way to link the digitized objects with other areas of the WLM collection, including our Living History interviews, archives and rare book collections, thus enhancing access by online pairing of artifacts with interpretive data. The WLM is extremely grateful to our Honorary Curator, George Bause, M.D., M.P.H., for spearheading this artifact digitization project. We are also very thankful to our WLM staff, Karen Bieterman, Judith Robins, Teresa Jimenez, Felicia Reilly and Margie Jenkins, who have helped immeasurably in this effort. Mr. Bill Lyle, our contracted expert for this image capture, has worked right alongside Dr. Bause and our WLM team in the gallery renovation.

Rare Book Collection

The WLM has the largest anesthesia rare book collection in the world. We have over 2,000 electronically catalogued books and papers in our collection. The collection includes an extensive selection related to the ether controversy, mesmerism and blood transfusion. Digitization of the rare book collection is progressing with over 250 books completed and available with "turn-the-page" capability online. Such digitization will ensure that this valuable collection will be available for all to use far into the future for scholarly and research activity. We will continue this process until the remaining books, not available electronically elsewhere, are digitized.

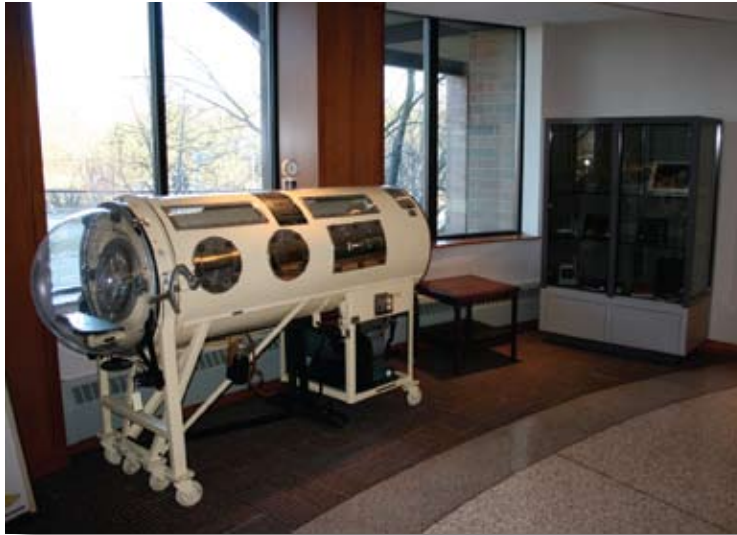
Living History Collection

Bradley Smith, M.D. continues to invite candidates for the John W. Pender Living History Collection. His committee has the ambitious goal of obtaining interviews with all past ASA Presidents, ASA Distinguished Service Awardees, and Past ASA Excellence in Research Awardees as well as adding other distinguished personalities important to the history of our specialty. Great progress has been made in this effort. It is our hope to place as many of these interviews online as appropriate.

Other parts of the WLM collections being included in our digitization efforts are our art collections, our photographs, our numerous archives and our bio files. Further updates on these efforts will be the subject of future WLM-related articles.

Website Redesign

Another very important “what’s new at the WLM” is our website redesign. This is a very important project for us as we embark on our major digitization efforts. This website revision will be the backbone that allows us to accommodate our digitization project and virtual museum. There are two stages for this very exciting project. The first provides the technology to utilize and display digitized artifacts in three dimensions as well as improve the online availability of our living history series, rare books and other items of our collections. The second stage builds on the technology with the construction of collages of information (e.g., photos, artifacts and rare books that are related to a single topic) as well as unique artwork to bring to life our collections. It is this integration of the WLM collections that will redefine and create the virtual museum of the future.



Thanks and Acknowledgements

The WLM is very grateful to James Eisenach, M.D. for his support of the WLM by allowing us to showcase bits of our history in *Anesthesiology* with “Anesthesiology Reflections.” Dr. Eisenach has recently offered the WLM the opportunity to link pertinent interviews from our Living History Collection to “Classic Papers Revisited” selections. We welcome this additional avenue to highlight our valuable collections.

I’d be remiss in highlighting “What’s New at the WLM” if I did not mention the death of Mr. Patrick Sim, M.L.S., our Distinguished Paul M. Wood Librarian, on October 14, 2010 (Please see the tribute to Patrick in this issue on page 46). Patrick had been our enthusiastic, longstanding champion of the WLM and the specialty of anesthesiology during his 39-plus years of service. It was fitting that his passing happened when so many of his friends were together in San Diego for the ASA Annual Meeting. This allowed us time to grieve,

reminisce, and share stories, tears and even a few laughs together. We will miss Patrick dearly, but his spirit lives in the work of the WLM we continue to pursue. One of his lifelong dreams was to bring to fruition the publication of a Heritage of Anesthesia Annotated Bibliography, detailing our rare book collection by categories relevant to the development of our specialty. Kathryn McGoldrick, M.D. and Donald Caton, M.D. are now leading this monumental editing task and hope to have this book completed by the end of 2011. Patrick was deeply moved by the resolution for his ASA Honorary Membership, which was approved by the House of Delegates on October 20, 2010. There was no greater career moment for Patrick than his walk to the podium in March 2010 at the ASA Board of Directors’ meeting to accept this honor and address the Board.

Finally, enthusiasm for the history of our specialty is alive and well. Three different middle school and junior high students presented anesthesia-related topics at the National History Day in June 2010

at the University of Maryland. The theme for this conference was “Innovation in History: Impact and Change.” These students placed first in their state, used our WLM resources for their projects, and consulted with anesthesiologists in developing their themes.

Summary

The WLM is excited to be embarking on our digitization efforts across all our collections. We are eagerly anticipating our move back to our gallery, albeit in a reduced footprint, and are grateful to be able to still display some of our treasures throughout existing ASA HQ space. We look forward to collaborating with ASA leadership regarding new space plans for ASA HQ and how the WLM will play a role in this new space. We are embarking on a major website revision so that our collections will be more accessible to our membership, the medical community and the public. We will continue to grow our collections as treasures unique to our specialty become available. We will preserve our collections in the most up-to-date format to ensure their posterity into the future. And last but not least, we will continue to support our membership through our library, education and research services.