

9-1-2012

## News from the Swenson Center

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### Recommended Citation

Huntsha, Lisa (2012) "News from the Swenson Center," *Swedish American Genealogist*: Vol. 32 : No. 3 , Article 5.  
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/swensonsag/vol32/iss3/5>

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# News from the Swenson Center

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## An Introduction from the New Archivist at the Swenson Center

By LISA HUNTSHA

People always reacted in the same way when I told them of my college major, Scandinavian Studies: “What are you going to do with that?!” To be honest, I did not have a good answer to give them when I declared my major during my sophomore year of college, but I knew I wanted to follow my interests. To me, college is about honing your passions and discovering yourself through challenging educational pursuits. Scandinavian Studies allowed me to do this, with the challenge of learning a completely new language and culture, and studying abroad in Grebbestad, Sweden. And, in true liberal arts fashion, I also studied anthropology and art to further pursue a well-rounded education.

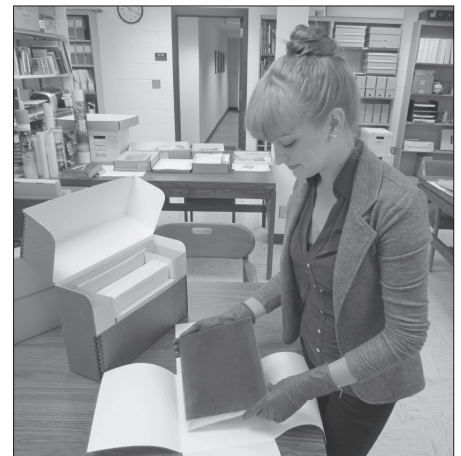
As graduation approached, I faced the anxieties that many soon-to-be graduates face: what do I do when I enter the “real world?” By this point, I had been a student worker in the Swenson Center for four years, working in a chilly basement digitizing and transcribing letters, entering photograph records into the Past-Perfect database, and taking inventory and rehousing collection materials. I eventually realized that I loved working with material culture. Collecting, preserving, and making available these resources to researchers for many years to come is a pursuit I strongly believe in. This realization was helped not in small part through my other studies, particularly anthropology, where I actively used the resources of archives, libraries, and museums. I

could readily see the value in this profession.

Thus, I decided to pursue a master’s degree in museum studies at Syracuse University in upstate New York. Here, I studied everything from exhibition preparation to community outreach. I found that, while loving all aspects of this work, collection management encompassed my interests best. While in New York, I worked at many cultural organizations, attended professional conferences, and took a week-long course in New York City visiting with leaders in this field. I interned in the education and outreach department at the Everson Museum of Art in Syracuse where I was able to put my art skills to work designing gallery guides and educational resources for an upcoming exhibition. I also spent three months interning at the Sitka Historical Society in Sitka, Alaska. Here I again found myself working closely with manuscript and photograph collections, taking inventory, updating catalog records, and digitizing collections. I also spent my time responding to research requests and helping redesign the community exhibit space. These experiences, again, helped round out my education.

This time, again approaching graduation, I faced new anxieties about the job market, student loans, and finding a position that was a good fit for my skills and interests. Naturally, I looked to cultural organizations that dealt with Scandinavian history, culture, and language. I

was fortunate enough to be considered for the position as archivist/librarian here at the Swenson Center, and I could hardly control my excitement. This was my perfect position given my combination of education, skills, and interests. Now that I am here, I can see that this position is an even better fit than I first realized. Here I am able to engage in outreach efforts to the campus and greater community, work with students (including Scandinavian Studies students!), respond to research requests, design new collection displays, along with working to develop, maintain, and preserve collection materials. I am very fortunate to have found a position and profession that I care deeply about. I am very happy to be back working at the Swenson Center. Coming back to the collections is almost like revisiting old friends; familiar faces unchanged thanks to the diligent work of the archivists before me.



*Lisa Huntsha in the Swenson Center reading room.*