

Community Conversation: Team Archives and Histories

At the Midwest Morris Ale, 29 May 2021

Carol Mohr (Ann Arbor) described the boxes full of photos inherited from former squire Peggy who passed away. Denise Kania (Bells of the North) shared that the Bells likewise have several boxes worth of photos and memorabilia collected in boxes in her basement.

Gary Schulte (MTM) – Arthur Knowles wrote up team history. Almost 50 years. Interested in personal experiences of team members. Description of an incident where there was a crash between 2 drivers who were watching the team dance. “I don’t know who I’d be if I hadn’t been connected to morris.” Arthur was the former MTM archivist collected artifacts and photos. Groups.io is where they have stuff stored now (private group)

Andy Bullen (Pullman) – Recommends we adopt the free, open-source MediaWiki platform. Can support narratives, photos, videos. Everything can be cross-linked, indexed, and searchable. It has a template add-on that we could use to easily upload stuff. He feels that having a common format is the key to making this doable.

Susie Lorand (Ann Arbor) – Keep in mind there could be a difference between a team’s private archives and public files. Some things are maybe not suitable for sharing with the world, or maybe shouldn’t be without permission of the people involved.

Someone asks (somewhat rhetorically) “Who is going to do all this work?” Andy feels that having a common format and procedures in place would help a little

John M suggests a software tool called PastPerfect (Andy says it’s a good tool but costs money & not the best fit for our needs).

Sam Kleinman (Brain Trust) feels that many people who are young now don’t care or want to be bothered about the history and feel it’s irrelevant to doing and enjoying Morris in the present. He enjoys Gary’s stories because it’s Gary telling them and he cares about Gary.

Participants generally agreed that there is value in just telling good stories. Oral histories can be compelling and accessible for many people.

Carol M wants to talk more about not just preserving archives, but presenting them in such a way as to tell a good story and make it interesting to an audience that may not have been there and may not have even ever seen Morris dancing.

Jonathan Whitall (Pullman) – Good philosophy: Start with a seed and grow it into something fun

Spider Vetter (Brain Trust) – The artifact means little without the story attached to it. Corey O seconds this with anecdotes from her days working at a historical museum. They would get a lot of similar items donated with no attached information, and end up keeping one or two of the best specimens and giving away the rest.

Kay Schoenwetter (Bells of the North) - A collection policy can be really helpful for communicating to potential donors of items. Outlining how decisions like this might be made.

CDSS has said that if at some point we have a need for funding for these efforts, they may be able to provide some.

The North American Morris Dance Organization is also very interested in recording and preserving history in various forms, is likewise just getting started, and looks forward to sharing and collaborating. Alex Naar, current president, joined this session and traded contact info.

Jonathan W. collected email addresses from everyone present who provided them, and made a Google group for us to stay in touch. To be added, contact jonathan.whitall@midwestmorrisale.org.

Next steps?

Doodle poll – Meg will send out to set up meeting of archive committee

Setting up mediawiki – Andy will work on this

Team template – Andy will work on this

Carol will write up notes and start publishing links/resources. Send em to me if you got em!