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Records, 1967-1984, 1987

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	Records
Date:	1967-1984, 1987
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Creator::	Anacostia Museum. Exhibits Department
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Administrative Information

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Historical Note

The exhibits program of the museum began in December 1967 when the Director appointed Larry Erskine Thomas as Research and Design Coordinator. After the program was divided into the Exhibit Branch and the Anacostia Studies Branch in January 1969, the two branches together were designated the Research and Design Department, and Thomas became Supervisory Program Manager. In 1974 construction began on the Exhibits Design and Production Laboratory, also known as the Exhibits Center, and it was occupied by the Exhibit Branch in October of that year. At the same time, Charles W. Mickens took charge of the Exhibit Branch and the Laboratory as Exhibits Program Manager.

In 1975 the two branches of the Research and Design Department were administratively separated, and two new subdivisions of the Exhibit Branch were formed: Design and Installation, supervised by Larry Thomas, and Exhibit Production, managed by James E. Mayo. Mickens was made responsible to the Director for the entire branch, and under his supervision the Laboratory became fully operational in October 1975. By 1982, the branch was called the Exhibits Department. Mickens retired as Exhibits Program Manager in 1977, and the position was left vacant until the appointment of Victor Govier in 1979. After Govier's departure in May 1984, the position remained vacant through 1987.

An Exhibits Training Program was implemented with a group of eleven students in September 1976. The program was originally intended to play a central role in the function of the Laboratory, with the goal of increasing the representation of minorities in the museum professions. After the training of the first class of students was completed, however, the program was discontinued in May 1978.

Charles W. Mickens managed the Exhibits Training Program as part of his duties until Ronald Wildy was hired as Training Coordinator in November 1976. Wildy resigned in January 1977, and James Mayo supervised the program until John Bradshaw was hired as Training Officer in April of that year. Bradshaw remained in the position until the program was terminated.

Descriptive Entry

This record unit documents the administration of the Exhibits Design and Production Laboratory for approximately first ten years of operation, and describes the mission, philosophy, planning, and construction of the facility. The records contain planning materials for many of the museum's early exhibitions, which reflect the involvement of community organizations as well as museum professionals. The materials also document the Exhibits Training Program in some detail.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African American museums
- Historical museums

Names:

- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Anacostia Studies Branch
- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Exhibit Branch
- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Exhibits Department
- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Exhibits Design and Production Laboratory
- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Exhibits Training Program
- Anacostia Neighborhood Museum. Research and Design Department
- Bradshaw, John
- Govier, Victor
- Mayo, James E.
- Mickens, Charles W.
- Thomas, Larry Erskine
- Wildy, Ronald

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