Smithsonian Institution Archives

Records, 1972-1989

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., *osiaref@si.edu*
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Administrative Information

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Historical Note

In October 1971 Mary Grace Potter became the first Director of the Smithsonian Associates' Reception Center, which was established to accommodate members of the National Associate constituency that was created with the publication of *Smithsonian* magazine. Initial duties of the Center included reception and orientation services for National Associate members visiting the Smithsonian Institution, response to telephone and mail inquiries from members, membership sales, and management of the reduced rate membership and gift fulfillment program for employees and volunteers.

It soon became apparent that the organization provided services that would be valuable to the public as well as to National Associates, and by June 1975 it was renamed the Visitor Information and Associates' Reception Center (VIARC). The Center operated originally under the auspices of the National Program of the Smithsonian Associates, but by 1977 it had emerged as a separate entity reporting directly to the Assistant Secretary for Public Service. By 1989 the functions of VIARC were divided among five separate units: the Information Resources Division; Public Inquiry Mail and Telephone Information Services unit; the Seven Day Information Service unit; the Staff, Volunteer, and Intern Services unit; and Support Services.

Descriptive Entry

These records document many aspects of the development and operation of VIARC, especially the administration of the Center's two volunteer corps. The bulk of the material consists of the administrative files of Mary Grace Potter from 1972 to 1987, including general correspondence, memoranda, and budget reports. Of particular note are early planning materials for the Smithsonian Information Center, which

opened in the Castle in November 1989. In addition, the records contain the files of the Seven Day Information Service and the Staff, Volunteer, and Intern Services units from 1980 to 1989. These materials include memoranda, correspondence, reports, and surveys generated and received by the units.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Museum visitors
Museums -- Public relations

Types of Materials:

Manuscripts

Names:

Potter, Mary Grace
Smithsonian Information Center
Smithsonian Institution -- Administration
Smithsonian Institution Building (Washington, D.C.)
Smithsonian Institution. Assistant Secretary for Public Service
Smithsonian Institution. Visitor Information and Associates' Reception Center. Seven Day Information Service
Smithsonian Institution. Visitor Information and Associates' Reception Center. Staff, Volunteer, and Intern Services
Smithsonian National Associates Program

Preferred Titles:

Smithsonian Magazine

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