



OHRAB 2024: Interim Report Arrangement of IWASM Institutional Records

Thanks to the grant awarded in the spring of 2024, the International Women's Air & Space Museum (IWASM) has begun organizing and assessing its institutional archive spanning the first 20 years (1976-1996). The organization's institutional history is under one roof for the first time since its move to Cleveland in 1998. Still, it remains inaccessible for research by the public, its staff, and the board of trustees through a searchable finding aid. IWASM believes this project will provide not only a history of the organization but also of local communities, their businesses, as well as the individuals who represented other organizations who partnered with the museum in its early years.

Between the grant application's submission and the award announcement, IWASM unearthed more institutional records than previously known to staff. As a result, and due to the variety of records (i.e., cassette tapes, 35 mil film, 45 vinyl records, albums, meeting minutes, personnel records, etc.), IWASM Executive Director Sara Fisher and Collections Manager Elizabeth Konopka visited the Shaker Historical Society in May 2024. Given the nature of their project completed in 2023, Fisher and Konopka believed they would be an appropriate sounding board, given their size, budget, and project scope. That meeting allowed IWASM to think about the approach for the project and how it might differ, given its circumstances. Fisher decided to begin culling through the records, organizing by series so that based on the information gathered for size and scope, the museum would be better informed to purchase the appropriate supplies needed if it differed slightly from what is outlined in the grant application. However, noticeable progress was not made until early July due to Konopka's departure for another employment opportunity. With the help of IWASM advisor Amy Rohmiller (M.A. Public History, MLIS), Fisher took over the project, defined the new series structure, and began separating the records accordingly.

To date, Fisher and Rohmiller determined that the records are 20% larger in scope than initially thought. The boxes containing the records for 1976-1996 were not in any original order by creator or other identifiable system. As a result, the current series includes Governance, financial, correspondence, activities/programs, images/media, publication, campaign/fundraising, and personnel. The records also reflect the organization's activities before incorporation, with the oldest date of 1968 reflected in a working group meeting report to the Ninety-Nines, which was used to support the formal creation of an ad hoc committee that became the Museum Trust. With this knowledge, the museum is beginning a campaign to raise additional funds to support the already awarded funding from OHRAB, with the first purchase of supplies occurring in September 2024. Since June 2024, the staff has matched 25 hours of the grant funds and will give at least 16 hours per week until the end of the grant period. This will ensure that the project can get back on target for creating and completing a preliminary Finding Aid by December 31, 2024.

IWASM has not sent an official press release about the grant funding. However, now that it has a sense for the scope, and materials, especially relating to the publications, images/media, and activities/programs series, there will be a series of social media posts beginning in September 2024 highlighting the work being done behind the scenes. Each post will acknowledge the support from OHRAB in making the project a reality.

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