

MAC midwest archives conference

April 2023

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Dear MAC Members,

I hope as you read this column you are enjoying the sunshine, rain, and promise that spring usually holds. For Ohio State, this time of year also means the spring football game, a chance for those of us without season tickets to watch a game and visit the stadium. Over the last several months, we have been celebrating the football stadium turning 100. At the archives, we had been planning an exhibit for about five years, knowing the big occasion was approaching. As with all good university anniversary celebrations, we were involved in a lot of programming and events that brought home once again the value of collaborating outside the unit. The most successful collaboration was the most unlikely.



When talking about the exhibit more than a year ago, our marketing director said to me, “What about borrowing the Lego stadium?” It turns out that a professor in the university’s heart hospital built an eight-by-ten-foot replica of the stadium using Lego bricks. Occasionally on display, once at the heart hospital and a few times at the city’s art museum, the Lego stadium usually lives in the professor’s basement. Now here was an idea I could get behind! Unsure of his willingness to lend his creation, I emailed the professor who enthusiastically said, “Yes of course!” He also suggested we do a version of the fund-raiser he did several years ago where people could purchase a “seat” and a Lego figure would be added in their honor. That kicked off a series of conversations with the libraries’ and the heart hospital’s development teams, who were happy to help.

Watching our exhibit staff transport the sections of the Lego stadium to the exhibit gallery is something I will never forget—the professor uses no glue which means pieces fall and parts have to be fixed—but it was worth it! The Lego stadium was a huge hit in the gallery. It drew Lego fans of all ages to the exhibit; gave me a great talking point with students, alumni, and donors; and even made local and national news. The fund-raiser also raised more than \$32,000 to be split between the heart hospital and the archives.

What seemed like an odd partnership has benefited both of us. While I am not sure we will ever have another opportunity to team up with the heart hospital, I would certainly love to do so. It also opened my eyes to other units that may not be the typical areas we have worked with previously. As you go about your own archives, I encourage you to think broadly about collaboration. What other gems are out there to explore?

If you would like to see a photo of the Lego stadium, I hope you catch me when we are all in Chicago. I am looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible! The Local Arrangements Committee and the Program Committee have been working hard to put together an incredible program, and I can’t wait to be there with you.

As always, if you have any ideas, questions, or concerns, please contact me. I would be happy to chat over Zoom or the phone or grab coffee while we are together.

I hope you have a wonderful spring—see you soon!

Tamar Chute
President, Midwest Archives Conference