

First Report from the New Chair of the Collections Committee

The 2009 collections mission statement for the Society reads: “The BFS collects, preserves, and provides access to documents and artifacts relating to Beatrix Farrand’s personal and professional life and work, as well as to artistic and environmental materials she considered important to her cultural and aesthetic development. Materials are also collected from other landscape architects, especially those influenced by Farrand’s work in Maine and elsewhere.” It seems to me that the BFS has built a good foundation for working toward that mission.

However, it is also my understanding that nearly everyone thinks the library’s collection needs to be weeded. The bookshelves are nearly full, while periodicals issues fill closets and cabinets. On a practical level, more shelf space will be needed for future acquisitions. On a philosophical level, I read the mission statement as defining a library intended more for research than for browsing. With judicious pruning, the library can be less focused on general gardening and more on the life, work, and influence of Beatrix Farrand.

I hope to begin weeding after the “Open Days” have ended, in consultation with Tom Hayward and perhaps others. The task will be done slowly and thoughtfully, and the entire process may take a while. In the meantime, some decisions will need to be made on the appropriate disposition of weeded materials. I will make some suggestions at a later date.

Providing access to the library collection is at least as important as refining its development. To that end, I have begun creating a library catalog. The PastPerfect museum software that the Society owns has a library component, and I have already added a few bibliographic records to it. I have started with the “Morning Room” and Special Collections books, since they are probably the most important.

For now, the library catalog will be available only in-house. When the catalog contains enough records to make it useful and valuable, the Board can consider purchasing the online module of PastPerfect. With that version, the BFS library catalog would be linked to the web site and available to anyone with internet access.

Concurrent with cataloging and weeding, some practical and ongoing matters will need to be addressed, such as accepting new donations, reshelving books, and handling the BFS institutional archives. I will identify and tackle those tasks as I go along. Over time, I hope to build on Marti Harmon’s good work and oversee a research library that both preserves Beatrix Farrand’s legacy and continues her educational outreach.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Knickerbocker

August 1, 2015