Documenting Modern Living
Promoting one project, one collection on Tumblr.

Samantha Norling
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Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, August 21, 2015
The Miller House and Garden

Courtesy of David Lauer Photography
MHGC by the Numbers

20,000 paper documents

1,500 arch. drawings

900 photos

700 material samples
NEH Grant

- First NEH grant for the IMA since 1980s
- Awarded $190,000 on April 12, 2012
- Preservation and Access Program: Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Grant
- Narrative: [http://1.usa.gov/1bgASP3](http://1.usa.gov/1bgASP3)
- Funded equipment purchase; two full-time archives assistants to carry out digitization and metadata creation
- Deliverable: Digitization of majority of collection (approx 17,000 items) -- made available in Archon
A novel idea:
Write social media outreach into your grant narratives.
Making the case for social media outreach:

“Because we do not hold copyright to the materials in collection (which potentially has 100s of copyright holders), promoting the materials on a blog helps to establish our assertion of Fair Use. According to the Association of Research Libraries' Code of Best Practices and Fair Use, “The Fair Use case will be stronger when the availability of the material is appropriately publicized to scholars in the field and other persons likely to be especially interested.””
What is Tumblr?
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Best of Documenting Modern Living

#BESTofDML
What is Tumblr?
It’s very visual.

Why Tumblr?

"It’s very visual." by Tumblr, 2013

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Alexander Girard’s design plan for the Miller House, sneak peek pt. 2

Each day this week, we are revealing a section of Alexander Girard’s furniture and textile design plan for the Miller House, leading up to a final reveal of the entire board on Friday. A few weeks ago we photographed this item with the help of the IMA’s photography department, and we are very excited that it is finally ready to be Turing’d.

Girard created this design plan by hand sometime between 1954 and 1955. He attached textile and material samples to an overall floor plan of the Miller House, indicating with red lines where each fabric would be located. The rugs and floor coverings for each room are also identified on this board. Girard’s indexing system, which we featured before, is visibly in use in the design plan. Every sample is identified by the corresponding number in Girard’s complex numbering system, which indicates the space in the home and/or the piece of furniture that the fabric is for. This system is also visible on cardstock attached to larger textile samples seen in some of our other posts.
Variety of target audiences.

Why Tumblr?

#ARCHITECTURE  #ARCHIVES

#ART  #SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

#DESIGN  #LIBRARY

#LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE  #MUSEUM

#MID-CENTURY MODERN  #HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Tumblr supports GLAMs.

Why Tumblr?
Our avatar for "Documenting Modern Living" on Tumblr is a textile sample of Alexander H. Girard's Quatrefoil design for Herman Miller in 1954. The fabric is plain Fortisan, and the color is identified as #627. Girard selected this fabric for the curtains in a girl's bedroom (room #34).

Detail of textile sample (5 ½ x 5 ½ in.) of Quatrefoil by Alexander H. Girard for Herman Miller, 1954, 91/51, Miller House and Garden Collection, IMA Archives, Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indianapolis, Indiana. (MHG_11v_8091_0051_002)

First post!
In May 2012, the National Endowment for the Humanities awarded the Indianapolis Museum of Art a grant for the project “Documenting Modern Living: Digitizing the Miller House and Garden Collection.”

The Miller House and Garden Collection includes correspondence, drawings, blueprints, textile samples and photographs documenting the design, construction and maintenance of the Miller House and Garden located in Columbus, Indiana and designed by Eero Saarinen and Alexander Girard, with landscape design by Daniel Urban Kiley.

The Indianapolis Museum of Art Archives invites you to follow us as we digitize the Miller House and Garden Collection at our blog, where documents reveal the process of digitization and the most highly regarded examples of modern design.
Outreach to Professional Orgs

The usual suspects:

[Logos for MAC, SAA, ARLIS, VRA, VRA]

As well as:

[SOC, SAA, APLA, TLCF]
MHGC featured in...

dwell

At home in the modern world.
MHGC featured in...

“The Fox Is Black is an art and design blog that seeks to discover and share the most interesting and inspiring parts of contemporary life and culture.”
“Shopping with Sandro, and Other Tumblr Delights”
October 14, 2012

“I recently began following a number of new archival Tumblrs, and want to spread the word.

Top of my list at the moment is the Indianapolis Museum of Art's Tumblr following the process of digitizing the Miller House and Garden Collection, called Documenting Modern Living. Rather than waiting until every last piece was scanned, or saving the collection for scholars, the IMA (thanks to a $190,000 National Endowment for the Humanities grant), is putting the process and the archival treats out there, day by day.”
“Shopping with Sandro, and Other Tumblr Delights”
October 14, 2012

“I think it is a plus that this Tumblr is exclusive to the Miller House archive, and not for the museum in general. Single-serving Tumblrs often work best, allowing for an ongoing narrative and concordance between images. I find myself less interested in the whole collection of a museum than in individual exhibits, archives or -isms. These Tumblrs can also be time-sensitive. When the Miller House Collection is fully digitized, the Tumblr could be done (though surely there are years of interesting documents).”
Linked.

An Alexander Girard omnibus: Mark Lamster reports on the Braniff Hostess College in Dallas; Herman Miller and Maharam put on a show in New York (through May 28); Apartamento interviews the family; the Miller House archivists dig into his color-coding.

We even made it into some personal and organizational e-mail newsletters!
“Architects might also consider the archival angle. Graduate students start Tumblrs for their dissertation research, creating a daily log of their best discoveries. Museums and archives have launched Tumblrs to showcase their collections, or to do a deep dive into a particular archive that is in the process of being digitised. I'm fascinated by the Documenting Modern Living project at the Indianapolis Museum of Art, which shows the process of digitising the photographs, fabric samples, architectural drawings and order forms that went in to making Eero Saarinen and Alexander Girard’s Miller House, commissioned in 1953. Making such a house, and maintaining such a house, well documented. Designers of a certain age might think about doing something similar with their own files, again starting the wheels of interpretation and reflection.”
Tumblr Featured Blog!

digitizingmillerho...

Documenting Modern Living

Featured documents from the IMA Archives about the Miller House and Garden in Columbus, Indiana. More...
Tumblr Tip 1:

Identify influencers for your content early on, establish and keep contact via social media.
Twitter Promotion

Alexandra Lange, architecture & design critic – 13.6k

Herman Miller, Inc. – 377K followers

Kelsey Keith, Dwell editor – 3k
Tumblr Tip 2:

Insert Tumblr into existing workflows.
Digitization Workflow + Tumblr

- Measure and take notes
- Photograph flat or on blackboard
- Rename and convert CR2 files to TIFFs
- Append metadata and compress
- Upload TIFFs to Nuxeo
- Create JPEGs
- Create Archon records for individual or groups of items, filling all appropriate metadata fields

Large items, 3D objects

Small documents, photographs

Scan

Back up work
Tumblr Tip 3:

It’s all about the first five tags.
The Week of Window Treatments, part 3

Finding Tumblr's Featured Tags:
GIF. LOL. Art. Featured tags are among Tumblr’s most popular. Curated by Tumblr’s tag editors, these select posts appear with a blue tag on the Dashboard. When Tumblr dropped its “Explore” page in March 2014, the list of featured tag pages also disappeared.

So here are 45 featured tag pages:

Advertising · Animals · Architecture · Art · Artists on Tumblr · Basketball · Black and White · Cars · Celebs · Comics · Crafts · Design · DIY · Education · Fashion · Film · Food · Football · Gaming · GIF · History · Illustration · Interiors · Landscape · LGBTQ · Lit · LOL · Long Reads · Makeup · Menswear · Music · Nail Art · News · NFL · Poetry · Politics · Portrait · Prose · Science · Sports · Tattoos · Tech · Television · Typography · Vintage

These tags change, so I’m also maintaining a Featured Tags reference page to show current and retired featured tags.
Tumblr Tip 4:
Know when to post.
The Times of Tumblr

We analyzed 6 billion Tumblr activities from May and June. Here's what we found (all times Eastern).

POST ACTIVITY

S M T W Th F S

12a NOON 11pm

NOTE ACTIVITY

S M T W Th F S

©2013 Union Metrics
Tumblr Tips 5 and 6:

Don’t be afraid to try new things.

Make the work, skills, and knowledge of archivists visible.
Tumblr Expanded Scope, “pulling back the curtain”

- “Meet the team” series
- Why do we do what we do?
  – Archival concepts, “original order”
- Process-focused
  – Photography set-up and workflow
  – Scanning set-up and workflow
- Contextualizing, not just sharing
  – Avoid interpreting, but provide more context for items
Pulling back the curtain...
Pulling back the curtain...

Before

After

#ProcessingMakesPerfect
Our first GIF...
...which led to “Animating Modern Living”...
...and our influencers couldn’t get enough.
...and our influencers couldn’t get enough.
So what’s next for the IMA Archives on Tumblr?
Questions?

Contact

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Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this presentation do not necessarily reflect those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.