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Press Release

COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 3, 2009

Bob Banghart Named Chief Curator of Alaska State Museums

JUNEAU – Bob Banghart of Juneau has been named Chief Curator at the Alaska State Museums. Banghart replaces Bruce Kato, who retired in July.

The Alaska State Museums, which is part of the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, operates the Alaska State Museum in Juneau and the Sheldon Jackson Museum in Sitka. Additionally, the State Museums provides grants and technical assistance to local museums statewide, develops exhibitions that tour Alaska communities, offers virtual access to its collections and exhibitions, and provides educational resources to Alaska's schools and communities.

Banghart will supervise a permanent staff of 15, temporary summer staff, and an operating budget of approximately \$1.7 million.

"Bob's experience with Alaskan museums and cultural centers will help forward our division's goal of providing educational resources for students and researchers. I look forward to working with him," said Linda Thibodeau, Director of the Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums.

Banghart was Curator of Exhibition at the Alaska State Museums from 2007 to 2009 and the founder and principal of Banghart & Associates from 1976 to 2006. Banghart & Associates was a planning and design firm serving museums and cultural centers. The company specialized in building design and exhibit manufacture. He holds a bachelor of arts degree in art and design from the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

The Alaska Division of Libraries, Archives & Museums has received a \$7.5 million appropriation from the legislature to plan and design a modern, unified campus in Juneau for those institutions. A new, expanded division building in Juneau would allow the State Museums, State Archives and State Library to more fully serve statewide constituents and to offer Juneau residents and visitors more exhibition and research space, Banghart said.

EDUCATION
& EARLY DEVELOPMENT

Meanwhile, the State Museums has expanded its artistic and scientific reach by forming partnerships with institutions such as the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the University of Alaska, the Juneau School District, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and Prince William Sound communities.

The State Museums has installed a 6-foot-diameter sphere, donated by NOAA, that presents scientific information about the Earth and solar system. Science on a Sphere uses computers and video projectors to display planetary data about the atmosphere, climate and the oceans.

“The sphere gives us a new method for orientation, putting Alaska into a circumpolar perspective for visitors”, Banghart said. Additionally, the sphere can be used to explore the geologic conditions that made for the peopling of Alaska, tying into Alaska Native oral history.

The State Museums is partnering with DNR and Prince William Sound communities to develop a new model for collection facilities. The facility would display material culture from each community and provide storage and exhibition of remediated cultural materials, such as stone and wood implements, that were damaged in the Exxon Valdez oil spill, Banghart said. The efforts could become a model for other institutional development in rural areas of the state, he said.

The State Museums continues to explore ways to share its in-house exhibitions with Alaska’s schools and other public spaces, where local community members can add their artifacts, experiences and expertise. “Our goal is to get people engaged in dialogue, and that has not got a boundary,” Banghart said, “I view the museum as a platform for the delivery of information.”

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