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Book Review: Save the Last Dance for Me: A Love Story of the Shag and the Society of Stranders

Allison Faix

Coastal Carolina University, afaix@coastal.edu

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Ms. Hamill sets up several concrete examples to illustrate how these determinations are made, and more importantly, the necessary documentation for institutions to protect themselves as items go on display, or are reproduced.

Physical exhibitions of items with reference to display, lighting and security and the conditions of archival storage are each dealt with in turn. Also the conditions of loaning items and publicity for an upcoming exhibition are illustrated. This particular chapter resonated with this reader, as I recently viewed “The America I Am” exhibit touring Charlotte, and attended a talk given by the curator, John Fleming, who gave a post event appreciation for the protracted negotiations and preparation needed to make this event possible. Ms. Hamill focuses on the preparation for such displays in her signature methodical style.

The final chapters deal with the odd elements in any collection, those that often do not easily fit in the easily cataloged world of manuscripts and photographs. Movie film, for example, how should it be preserved? Textiles? Plaques and architectural objects? Items with three dimensions? And what of vinyl records? All of these items have their own specific preservation requirements that are detailed in this work and finally the most important items for last: who will do the work and what happens when disaster strikes? The use of volunteer labor is essential for smaller institutions attempting to collect, describe and preserve their cultural heritage but this can often be problematic, as the lack of expertise and the diminished commitment over time for those in unpaid positions becomes evident. This can often be seen in the faces of student volunteers when handing them a stack of photos to be digitized. Sadly, it is often true that prime real estate in any institution is not reserved for the archives. Basement storage with its lack of environmental controls and a myriad of drain pipes hanging overhead like a blade attached to a descending pendulum threaten the very items we wish to preserve.

So, I must give praise to Ms. Hamill for pulling together so much useful information in a single volume. Yes, in this age of electronic information so readily at one’s demand, it can be incredibly time consuming to visit first one site and then another, following the trail from the Getty to the VRA Core elements website looking for exactly the right information to make a credible, scholarly collection. If there was one ready reference work I would recommend to someone commencing an archival collection it would be the *Archives for the Lay Person*. Ms. Hamill has given us a roadmap, folded neatly. We need only drive.

Martin F. Olsen
Queens University of Charlotte



Sawyer, Phil and Tom Poland. *Save the Last Dance for Me: A Love Story of the Shag and the Society of Stranders*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2012. 192 p. ISBN 978-1-61117-087-0. \$39.95 (Hardcover). ISBN 978-1-61117-088-7. \$21.95 (paper).

To date, very few works have been published about the shag, the official state dance of both North and South Carolina. *Save the Last Dance* by Phil Sawyer and Tom Poland is the first to be published by a university press, and focuses on the history and cultural impact of the dance itself as well as the Society of Stranders, a group dedicated to the dance’s continuing legacy.

Author Dr. Phil Sawyer, a retired university professor, is president emeritus of the Society of Stranders and a recipient of the group’s Lifetime Achievement award in 2011. Author Tom Poland has written numerous books and articles on topics relating to South Carolina and Southern history.

The book tells the story of the shag dance from its beginnings, including both the documented history and the legends. Along the way it paints a lively and vivid picture of the lives of shag dance and beach music enthusiasts on the North and South Carolina coast during the 1940s, 1950s and beyond. Woven throughout each chapter are personal anecdotes from the people who were there, which illuminate the historical and cultural analysis and become part of the “love story” of the dance alluded to in the book’s well-chosen subtitle. *Save the Last Dance* also includes photographs of important places, people, and events relating to the history of the dance and the establishment of the Society of Stranders.

Other recent publications related to the shag focus on giving a pictorial history of the dance (*Shagging in the Carolinas*, Arcadia Press, 2005) and on profiling popular shag music and recording artists (*Carolina Beach Music*, History Press, 2011). Libraries which already own these two titles will want to purchase *Save the Last Dance* to add its historical and cultural overview to complement their collection. All libraries where there is strong interest in dance, music history and Southern culture should also consider adding this book.

Allison Faix
Coastal Carolina University