

NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND ARCHIVISTS



C O V E R — Hildene, the Lincoln Family Home, was constructed as a space for Robert Lincoln to spend time with his children and three grandchildren. When it was completed in 1905, Robert's youngest grandson, Robert "Bud" Lincoln Beckwith, was a toddler of one year old. In later years, Robert provided his grandchildren with many sources of entertainment including a reflective pool where they could float their toy boats, a tipi, a playhouse, and stables where they could love and care for a variety of animals. This picture shows Bud as a toddler giving some affection to his pet pony, Aricula. PH.1975.85.1 *Courtesy of Hildene, the Lincoln Family Home.*

I n s i d e — Dorothy Berry discusses self-care at work during COVID-19 (page 4); NEA President Linda Hocking writes about the spring meeting (page 7); Jessica Chapel, Emily Daus DiLeo, Erik Bauer, and Caroline J. White reflect on the benefits of being a second-career archivist (page 12); Diane Rielinger reviews the Biodiversity Heritage Library (page 14) while Amy Sloper takes a look at Otter.ai (page 16); the Inclusion and Diversity Committee shares research on contingent employment (page 18); Rosemary K. J. Davis and Meaghan O'Riordan write about their work around the accessioning process (page 20); as well as NEA Roundtable updates (page 22); News and Notes from around New England (page 8); and a spotlight on NEA member Kathy Berger (page 23).

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

N E A

New England Archivists

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

45 Skehan Street • Somerville, MA 02143

www.newenglandarchivists.org

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Membership in *New England Archivists, Inc.* is open to all.

Annual Dues are \$35 for individuals, \$17.50 for students and \$45 for institutions. Sign up online at <https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/renew>. Payment can be made via PayPal or by check made out to New England Archivists and mailed to Michael Dello Iacono, NEA Treasurer, 7 Central Street, Beverly, MA 01915.

The *NEA Newsletter* is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. The contents of the *Newsletter* may be reproduced in whole or in part provided that credit is given.

Articles and **News** of interest to archivists, historical society members, historians, and other NEA members should be sent for consideration to the attention of: Katy Sternberger at newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org.

Requests for changes or updates to website content should be sent to: webmaster@newenglandarchivists.org.

Deadlines for submitting materials are:

November 15 for January issue	February 10 for April issue
May 15 for July issue	August 15 for October issue

Advertising Policy:

There will be no fee to list position openings. Advertisements for archival products will be accepted as space permits. Advertising should be submitted to vendorcoordinator@newenglandarchivists.org.

Rates: Full page: \$175; half page: \$100; quarter page: \$50. Payment is requested at the time the ad is submitted. All checks should be made payable to *New England Archivists*.

Newsletter design and production by Culp Design www.culpdesign.com.



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From the Editors

- Vanessa Formato

April marks more than a year of a very different lifestyle at work and at home, two places that have become almost one and the same for many of us. In our feature article this month, Dorothy Berry writes of the urgent need to advocate for our own well-being as archivists during a pandemic, now grappling with both the longstanding challenges of our field and the new (page 4).

COVID-19 may have canceled NEA's Spring 2020 Meeting, but two of its sessions live on this month as mini-features. Rosemary K. J. Davis and Meaghan O'Riordan share their research on the importance of accessioning and what it really looks like in archives across the United States (page 20), and Erik Bauer, Jessica Chapel, Emily Daus DiLeo, and Caroline White reflect on how their previous careers have helped shape them as archivists (page 12).

For this issue's reviews, Amy Sloper takes a look at the online transcription software Otter.ai (page 16), while Diane Rielinger dives into the Biodiversity Heritage Li-

brary (page 14). Additionally, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee reports on their research into the impact of contingent employment on our field, including quotes from colleagues who have worked as project archivists and in other non-full-time positions (page 18). Meet member Kathy Berger in our spotlights section (page 23).

The *Newsletter* announces two opportunities: our Student Writing Prize (page 2) and openings on our editorial board (page 6). We can't wait to read your essays and applications!

We also bring you Linda Hocking's last column as NEA President (page 7) and News and Notes (page 8) from repositories around New England. We hope to hear from you with your own news and ideas for our next issue! ■

Due to an editing error, Jessica Tai and Stephanie Bredbenner's article "Remediating Euphemistic Language in Yale's Collections Documenting Japanese American Incarceration" in the January 2021 issue was published without two accompanying charts. We apologize for the mistake. The full version of the article was shared on the NEA listserv.

Student Writing Prize 2021

The New England Archivists Newsletter Committee seeks submissions from NEA student members to recognize their achievement in archival writing. The winning work will be featured in the October 2021 issue of the *NEA Newsletter*, and the author will receive a prize of \$150.

This award is open to NEA student members in good standing; the membership status of applicants will be verified by the Membership Secretary. Regular and institutional NEA members are not eligible to apply.

Applicants may submit one work for consideration. The length of the submission should be between 1,500 and 2,000 words.

Complete applications will include:

1. Cover sheet with
 - Date of application
 - Applicant's name, academic affiliation, mailing address, preferred email address, and phone number
2. One previously unpublished and original written work that advances scholarship in archives or records management (pieces originally submitted as part of coursework are accepted).



Send applications by Wednesday, June 30 to
newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org.

ARCHIVAL INSIGHT

Toppled Trucks and Acidic Folders: Taking Care of Yourself When Work Isn't Working

By Dorothy Berry

*In order to increase the diversity of voices in our pages, the NEA Newsletter editorial board, alongside the NEA Executive Board and Inclusion and Diversity Committee, has dedicated a new honorarium-bearing feature article to republish the work of archivists from communities traditionally underrepresented in the archival field. This article was originally a presentation given for the Women Archivists Section meeting held on August 10, 2020, during ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2020, the virtual joint annual meeting of the Council of State Archivists and the Society of American Archivists.*

I am back in the library Mondays and Tuesdays prepping materials for digitization and managing in-house scanning. I've been walking to work in the more-than-ninety-degree weather wearing one mask, changing into an approved work-supplied mask, following the approved path into my workspace, and instant messaging colleagues sitting at least six feet away. In the scheme of back-to-work plans, this is probably one of the least hazardous, but I'd be lying to you if I said I hadn't been sick with stress in the days leading up to my first shifts, that I'm not exhausted when my four-hour shift is over or that this is at all what I'd expected August 2020 would be like back in March 2020. I know I'm not alone. There is so much we felt sure of last March that feels unimaginable in retrospect.

Even those of us with the most presumably stable employment are feeling the pressure of precarity these days, but as we know, a large proportion of our field has always been on a tightwire from poverty wages, huge debt loads, and overly demanding contracted labor, tasked with core functionalities but without the respect of collegiality. Shameful as it can often feel, periods of widespread insecurity can open up privileged eyes and minds to the longtime suffering of others. Periods like this bring people together under a common cause of suffering, but the common cause of humanity is always shared survival and should always be a shared journey toward thriving. We have been pushed into new modalities that have shattered many of the boundaries in place for protection and care.

While there are those for whom home has never been a safe place, for many overworked and underappreciated archivists home was previously a respite from work's demands and from coworkers' negativity, from gaslighting and racism to simply clashing personalities. Now those

demands and those coworkers are everyone's roommates, taking up space in our homes and heads. With no physical break between work and home—and, for many of us, no break between work, home, partner's work, and children's schooling—taking care of ourselves when work isn't working has become something of a fantasy. Bad situations feel more like inevitabilities than possibilities, with the classic refrain of, "Just be happy you have a job in the glutted LIS market," droning loudly in the background as unemployment rates rise and colleagues are furloughed.

Self-care is not necessarily a concept I identify with beyond the fundamental idea that, yes, one needs to take care of oneself. I think of myself as someone who has been able to adjust to whatever circumstances life has thrown me, and that type of dramatic adjustment is generally more about surviving than stability and thriving. Reflecting on the topic of self-care, I immediately focus on care of self in dysfunctional workplaces, as I believe more personal self-care is too deeply tied to individual subjectivities and worldviews. One person's self-care is another person's idolatry. In this moment, though, almost everyone I know is struggling to balance the increasing demands of their workplaces with the stressful demands of the rest of their lives, with work winning out over self—or if self wins out, with huge accompanying guilt. It's a moment where we are asked to put ourselves on hold for the sake of patrons, of managers; to accept our raises and promotions being put on hold, to accept our jobs being put on hold for a future date when things are more clarified.

Like many archivists, I am dealing with some serious family medical situations that have completely upended my inner world. Part of my work has become entertaining my mom as a form of distraction from all the hospital

visits and prognosis questions. Recently, I decided to pep her up by reading from Ram Dass's famous *Be Here Now*. A true former bohemian, she giggled as I calmly reminded her that she is, in fact, a hollow stalk of bamboo.

Though I was poking fun, I came across a quote that has always resonated with me. In a passage about the importance of presence, Dass reflects on where we find beauty and how we can make it for ourselves by changing our own perspectives:

“Well, I can't Have it Beautiful Now, But LATER! When We Get The Food Home, It Will/Be Beautiful.”

Well, I can't have it beautiful now, but later, once I've figured out a way to provide the same service I had before without the same access or resources, it will be beautiful.

Well, I can't have it beautiful now, but later, once everyone appreciates that I've actually been working nine hours a day, six days a week, it will be beautiful.

This is a moment in which I am suggesting that self-care can come from detaching from assumptions about what is required of us as employees in crisis, detaching from the idea that to deserve our jobs we need to sacrifice ourselves. I am not entirely comfortable with self-care in its current usage because of the ways that I see it playing into an acceptance that oppressive systems are inescapable and that we must take care of ourselves as cogs plugged into the grinding gears of work and responsibility. On the other hand, of course, this is all linguistic argument and theory, as the reality for most of us, especially in America in 2020, is that keeping our employment is the thin line between our current state and utter destitution.

I think it's important to remember, however, that self-care as we often talk about it only exists because the world is not designed for our care. It is not designed for a life/work balance, for a mind/body connection, for deep relationship building and spiritual health. So often we say self-care when we mean distraction, distraction from things like our mounting emails and our Zoom-induced eye strain.

When I say, “Well, I can't have it beautiful now,” I'm really quoting myself. How often over the years have I imagined that next job, next step, where I'm paid appropriately, where I feel respected by my coworkers, where my input is

valued? I suppose any article on self-care in the workplace (at least by someone with my limited capacity for insight) will focus on the “self” of the speaker. People lately have commented on my perceived ambition, on how one day I'll certainly be running a special collections research center. This boggles my mind, as I feel neither a desire or ambition for that much responsibility. Focusing on work, however, has allowed me to avoid focusing on the care my self has needed. Avoiding the deep, introspective work of caring for the self in favor of answering a few more emails or buying a few more nail polishes is much more preferable than caring for my heart. As we are witness to the most dramatic and unpredictable period in recent US history, this type of avoidance feels more and more appealing while becoming more and more dangerous. Work, even work that feels like a sociohistorical net positive, is still work and will never be more important than you and your holistic survival.

This is a time to reestablish boundaries, to ask for modified scheduling, to release any guilt for needing to place your children over your job, to release any resentment for colleagues who are taking care of their children over their jobs, to ignore after-hours emails, to stop acting as though you will provide the same service as this time last year, to do the best you can in the now without comparison to the incomparable past.

James Baldwin once said, “Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.” I fully recognize that not all the things that should be done to make work workable will be done. There are managers and administrators who, due to their circumstances and personalities, are indifferent to the ways in which this period has fundamentally changed the lives of their employees. I ask, however, that you look back on those foolish imaginaries from last March and see how many of them are, in fact, still possible if we look past the fatigue of stagnation and exhaustion. Of course, those that thought we'd be having crowded pool parties in August will still be disappointed, but those that thought, “I'll try and plan out a weekly schedule” have a chance to try—and maybe fail!—again. We talk about being “in this for the long haul” in regard to changed family and workplace roles, but we are also in this for the long haul with ourselves. In talking to my mom about our family medical situation, she said, “I've realized I really have just one job: to take care of them,” but I quickly corrected, “You really have just two jobs: to take care of them and to take care of yourself.”

Caring for yourself when work isn't working means different things at different times, but a fundamental principle will always be putting yourself before your job. Your job takes up a large portion of your life and supports a lot of your life's functionality, but you are still and always will be in a transactional relationship with your employer that can be disengaged at any time. Your relationship with yourself is different. Self-care is not merely a transactional relationship of one bubble bath for every seven hours worked, but it is about making sure that the unique you that is your mind and heart and spirit are tended to with as much—if not more—care than your patrons and finding aids. 🖤



Dorothy Berry is the inaugural digital collections program manager at Houghton Library, Harvard University. She received her MLS and an MA in ethnomusicology from Indiana University. Her work has focused on African American special collections with specialties around reparative archival description and digital discovery.

Promote your photograph collections!

The *NEA Newsletter* is seeking submissions from repositories in New England for back cover pictorial features in This Season in New England History. Submissions should be in digital format at 300 dpi or better, along with a caption detailing the subject of the photograph. Please email submissions to newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org.

Editors Wanted

The Newsletter Committee seeks two new members to serve as News and Notes Editor (three-year term starting October 2021) and Reviews Editor (three-year term starting January 2022). Submit a résumé and a short writing sample. To apply or for more information, contact newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org.

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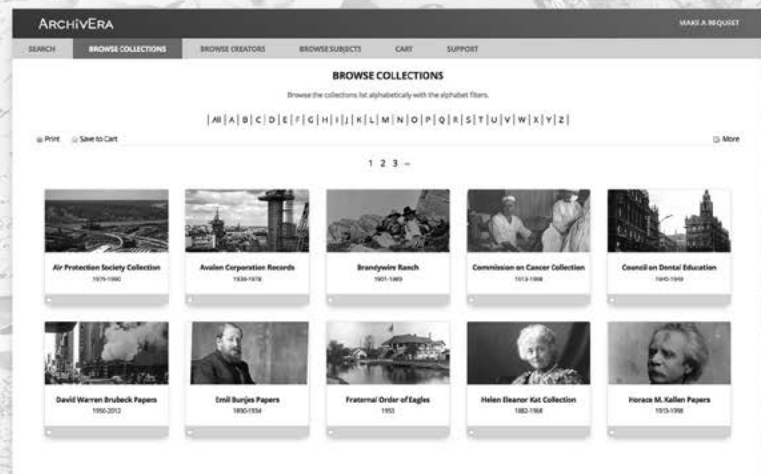
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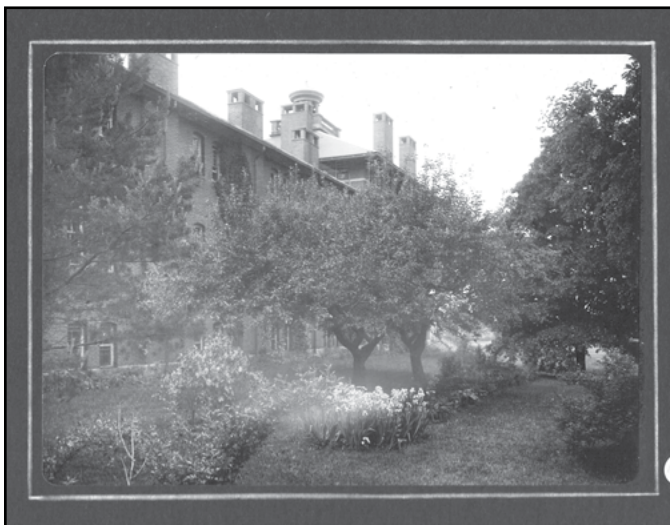
FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Linda Hocking



I must share my excitement about the program for the Spring 2021 Meeting, Archives for a Changing World, which was posted today, even though the event will have taken place by the time you read this. The Program Committee has done a remarkable job making the schedule look very normal in a very abnormal time. Among other things, it includes plenary speakers, session choices, workshops, social and networking time, and a virtual vendor showcase.

As a representative of a very small repository, I greatly appreciate that NEA meetings offer the opportunity to hear from voices representing institutions of every size and budget category. We can learn a lot from one another. Where larger organizations may contribute specialization to support innovative projects, small organizations share the resourcefulness that comes from necessity, and have the agility to make decisions quickly. When we combine our skills and experiences, we can share knowledge and form collaborations that draw from the strengths of all our organizations.



The Women's Hospital in spring with flowers and trees blooming at Tewksbury State Hospital, circa 1903. *Courtesy of the Public Health Museum in Massachusetts, Tewksbury, Massachusetts.*

Although many of us long for the day when we can safely hold large, in-person gatherings again, the pandemic has awakened us to new tools and methods for gathering with our members remotely, and there are benefits. The attendance fees for the spring meeting were less than the fees for in-person events, and we were able to have tours of repositories without having to navigate challenges of transportation and geography. And being in New England, it is worth noting that weather has less of an impact on virtual events!

I am sure that in the future, NEA will continue to use the tools at its disposal to present informative and helpful content that involves and speaks to the wide variety of repository types and sizes our membership encompasses, through education programs, publications, and events.

The past year contained a lot of uncertainty and unexpected events, and although some of the choices we had to make were difficult, I appreciate and thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as NEA president. I will continue to be active in NEA, and hope that if you are not already, you will be too. Your participation is welcome and encouraged! Answer a call to volunteer for a committee, run for a position on the board, or present at a future meeting. You will meet great people and learn a lot, and NEA will be stronger because of your involvement. ■

a timely tip from the "King of Beef"...

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An ad, from an unknown publication circa 1960 and 1962, that features Joseph Fernandes and his family. Mr. Fernandes took pride in his nickname, the "King of Beef", as it spoke to the high quality of beef products he sold in his grocery stores. Ferreira-Mendes Portuguese-American Archives, MC 99. *Courtesy of Archives & Special Collections, Claire T. Carney Library, UMass Dartmouth.*

News and Notes

CONNECTICUT

University of Hartford Joins the Connecticut Digital Archive

The University of Hartford Archives and Special Collections has joined the Connecticut Digital Archive (CTDA). The CTDA is a digital repository managed by the University of Connecticut and utilized by more than forty educational and cultural heritage institutions across the state. UHart joined the CTDA last spring and began to add digital items while the campus was closed. The archives is still adding materials, but as of February 2021, highlights include yearbooks, student newspapers, early university films, oral history recordings, as well as set and costume designs from the Elemer Nagy Collection. View the digital collections at <http://tinyurl.com/uhart-ctda>. For questions, contact archives@hartford.edu.



Costume design for *Armide* created by Elemer Nagy, circa 1956. Nagy was the opera director at the Hartt College of Music from 1942 to 1971 and was well known for his set and costume designs. A project to digitize these designs was interrupted in March 2020 when the campus closed due to the pandemic. The images currently available in the CTDA represent a small portion of the collection. To see more designs, visit <http://tinyurl.com/fvxxbmb>. Courtesy of University of Hartford Archives and Special Collections.

UConn Archives Online Exhibition: 25 for 25: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Collecting

The Archives & Special Collections of the University of Connecticut Library presents an online video exhibition, *25 for 25: Celebrating Twenty-Five Years of Collecting*. The exhibition celebrates the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the Thomas J. Dodd Research Center, the facility that houses the archives and special collections. In recognition of this occasion, archivists selected twenty-five objects that explore the power of collections to inspire, engage, and inform.

Videos cover objects such as the world's first telephone directory from the Southern New England Telephone Company Records, the film *Blues* from the Samuel and Ann Charters Archives of Blues and Vernacular African American Musical Culture, poetry broadsides from the Detroit-based Broadside Press, and a preliminary drawing for *A Hole Is to Dig* from the Maurice Sendak Collection.

25 for 25 invites engagement with and reflection on the meaning of historical objects as well as the activity of collecting over time. New videos are added each month through September. Explore the objects at <https://s.uconn.edu/25for25>.

MAINE

Maine Running History Periodicals Digitized and Available in Digital Maine Repository

Thomas C. Bennett, volunteer archivist for the Maine Running Hall of Fame (MRHOF), recently finished posting all 120 issues of *Maine Running* and *Maine Running and Outing Magazine* (1980–1990) on the Digital Maine Repository. Bennett previously posted the complete runs of *Maine Runner* (1978–1979) and *Pine Tree Running Journal* (1996–1997).

The last phase of this multiyear effort to post digitized issues of all known Maine running magazines will involve the monthlies *Mainely Running* (1991–1994) and *Maine Running & Fitness* (1994–1996). Bennett crowdsourced missing copies of the journals by posting appeals on the Maine Running History Facebook page. The journals are valuable assets when determining whether an individual should be in-

ducted into the MRHOF. The periodicals, as well as books on Maine running history by Rick Krause and Dick Goodie, can be downloaded at <https://digitalmaine.com/running>.

Katherine McBrien Sworn in as Maine State Archivist

At a confirmation hearing in February, the Maine Legislature's Committee on State and Local Government voted unanimously in support of Katherine McBrien for the position of Maine State Archivist. She was sworn in on March 8. McBrien, of Union, is the first woman to hold the position. She has served as acting archivist since last April after a delay in her confirmation due to the pandemic. Previously, she worked as chief curator at the Maine Historical Society and as curator of historic collections at the Maine State Museum.

The state archivist is appointed to a six-year term, per Maine law. Maine has had only three prior state archivists since the legislature created the archives in 1965. The Maine State Archives, a bureau within the Department of the Secretary of State, maintains approximately 100 million pages of official state records.

MASSACHUSETTS

New Parish Boundary Map Tool Available from the Archdiocese of Boston

In January, the Archdiocese of Boston announced a new Parish Boundary Map Tool. Created using ArcGIS, the map displays every parish church in the archdiocese with its geographic boundary circa 1955, the approximate height of the archdiocese in terms of the number of parishes. Users can enter an address, which will then be plotted on the map to reveal which parish someone living there would have attended.

Each parish is responsible for keeping its own set of baptismal, first communion, confirmation, and marriage registers, so determining which parish an individual attended is typically the first step in the research process. The tool will be particularly helpful to genealogists, who can enter an address found in census or vital records to determine where ancestors attended. It can be used in con-



A screenshot from the Archdiocese of Boston's new Parish Boundary Map Tool, showing parish boundaries, circa 1955. The tool was created using ArcGIS. *Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Boston.*

junction with the Boston Catholic Records, 1789–1920, collection available on <https://www.americanancestors.org/>.

Access the tool and find more information at <https://bostoncatholic.org/researcher-resources>.

New Content Added to Brandeis University's Black Space Portal

Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections at Brandeis University announced that new content is available in the Black Space Portal. Undergraduate student Ellie Tang Kleiman wrote an article and created an accompanying digital zine on the subject of the Pearlman Takeover of 1975. The takeover was a solidarity movement for racial justice on the Brandeis campus that sought financial commitments for minority students and the inclusion of Asian and Asian American students in that pool. View the digital zine at <http://tinyurl.com/yqzldfwd>.

The Black Space Portal, created by the Brandeis BLK Archives Collective, is a space for projects based on primary source research in the university archives that highlight the history and experiences of Brandeis people of color. For more information, contact archives@brandeis.edu.

MIT Program in Art, Culture & Technology's Archives Digitizes Early Experimental Music

After receiving a Recordings at Risk grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), the MIT Program in Art, Culture & Technology's



Violist Marcus Thompson and software developer Barry Vercoe, both MIT professors, collaborate on "Synapse for Viola and Computer," circa 1973. *Courtesy of the MIT Program in Art, Culture & Technology Archives and Special Collections.*

Archives and Special Collections has digitized 158 reel-to-reel audio tapes of early experimental music created by the MIT Media Lab's Experimental Music Studio (EMS).

Founded in 1973, EMS was the first facility in the world to dedicate digital computers to the full-time research and composition of computer music. The studio was responsible for developing and improving technologies such as

real-time digital synthesis, graphical patching languages, and advanced music languages.

The digitized collection features some of the earliest recordings of computer music, including works by John Chowning, Judith Eissenberg, Paul Lansky, Mario Davydovsky, Jeanne Bamberger, and John Stautner. Recordings are dated 1973 to 1988 and include tapes of live performances by humans and computers. Excerpts from the collection can be accessed at <http://act.mit.edu/collections>.

New England Jewish History Collaborative Announces New Resources

The New England Jewish History Collaborative held an online event on January 24 that discussed the Jewish history of New England and introduced a resource guide. A recording of the event is available at <https://youtu.be/EiwtcymL9R4>.

The collaborative is a consortium of Jewish history and genealogy organizations from all six New England states, whose goal is to raise awareness of the history of Jew-

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ish New England and the resources available to study it. More information and the resource guide are available at <https://www.nejhc.org>.

The collaborative's focus is threefold:

1. To identify the unique history and characteristics of the New England Jewish experience;
2. To attract scholars and the public to discover and use the rich resources available about New England Jewish history; and
3. To discuss collaborative initiatives within the New England Jewish history community.

Going forward, the collaborative plans to stimulate partnerships and projects about Jewish history, promote new research and scholarship, and cosponsor events and conferences. For questions, contact NEJEconference@nehgs.org.

Worcester Historical Museum Launches COVID-19 Digital Collection

For 145 years Worcester Historical Museum has collected the city's past, and 2020 brought a significant historical event with the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, the museum, in collaboration with Digital Worcester and Worcester Polytechnic Institute, created the COVID-19 Chronicles, a community archive to collect personal stories, images, videos, social media screen grabs, and emails alongside official records and documents to broaden our understanding of how the pandemic has affected all segments of our community.



A photograph from the Worcester Historical Museum's COVID-19 Chronicles entitled, "Socially Distant Grandson." One-year-old Sheppard Johnson looks out a window at his grandfather, Paul McGrath. Image by Paul McGrath. *Courtesy of Worcester Historical Museum.*

The website is bilingual, and the digital collection is hosted on the Omeka web publishing platform with a Dublin Core schema. Contributions can be uploaded by anyone wishing to share—a photograph, a child's drawing, a touching letter, a foreboding warning, or anything related to their COVID-19 experience. The community can also explore the collection by searching or browsing.

To view the digital collection, visit <http://worcestercovid19.org>. For more information, contact worcestercovid19@worcesterhistory.net.

R H O D E I S L A N D

South County History Center Receives CARES Act Grant to Preserve Photographs

The South County History Center in Kingston, Rhode Island, was awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities CARES Act grant to preserve the Kenneth T. Mars Jr. Photograph Collection during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Kenneth T. Mars Jr. (1940–2011), an African American member of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, took thousands of photographs of everyday life spanning the 1960s through the 2000s and compiled them into albums. A significant portion of Mars's collection was lost after his death, and in 2018 the history center accepted the remaining collection, likely the largest vernacular photograph collection created by a person of color in the United States.

With NEH funding, 27,400 photographs were photo-documented, cleaned from mold and adhesives, and

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Left: Gathering of members of the Narragansett Indian Tribe, circa 1983. Right: Beach wall at Narragansett Pier Beach, date unknown. From the Kenneth T. Mars Jr. Photograph Collection. *Courtesy of the South County History Center.*

AROUND AND ABOUT

Second-Career Archivists: The Value(s) of Doing Something Else First

By Caroline J. White, Jessica Chapel, Emily Daus DiLeo, and Erik Bauer

As archivists, we bring who we are to work with us every day. For those who have worked extensively in other fields, this sense of self may have changed over the years, both professionally and personally. This article began as a session for the canceled Spring 2020 Meeting, and while it doesn't allow us space to share our relevant experiences in full, in it we reflect on ways our past careers inform how we adapt to change. Although our experiences vary and we are at different stages of our archives careers, flexibility—something you can really only learn from experience—is a theme across our stories.

Out of the Press Box, into the Pandemic Era

When I started library school in 2017, I thought I had a good handle on how my experience in digital media mapped onto the digital preservation and collections work I hoped to do in archives. I would be swapping content management systems for digital repositories, editorial strategy for curatorial strategy. Deadlines, I thought, might be months or even years away from a project launch, instead of a week or a month—or, for those times I used to work a live event, that very day. Then came the pandemic.

Pivoting to a fully online experience and supporting teaching and research remotely meant reappraising projects, timelines, and collections access. It meant re-prioritizing our digitization queue. Last March, after the students were sent home and told not to return following spring break, it meant spinning up a course reserves digitization program that had, at most, ten days to scan and deposit.

Suddenly the library felt a lot like the press box, with the same controlled urgency and the same race to respond to shifting circumstances against a definite deadline. Working as part of the small crew that was still in the building, wielding a box cutter against bindings, feeding pages through a high-speed scanner, and creating digital objects, I realized I knew how to handle this moment. It wasn't what I expected, but what I had learned working in digital media about focusing in the midst of uncertainty and keeping calm as deadlines approached was paying off as an archivist. -JC

Ethnographic Methodology: From the Field to the Library

In 2008 I finished a PhD in ethnomusicology. Like many graduate students, I spent half of my time in grad school wondering what I would do afterward. I went through the motions of applying for faculty positions. Knowing it was unlikely I'd find a faculty job right away, I decided to consider "plan B" jobs too. I spotted an hourly position at a music library nearby, and because I had always worked in libraries as a student, I applied.

Having a reasonable, seven-and-a-half-hour workday and paid time off was a revelation. Even better was access to free health care, a benefit achieved by the union of which I was now a member. I came to realize that my approach to library work was based on curiosity about library users. My experience with ethnographic fieldwork came in handy as I organized a small study of musicians who used the library.

In February of 2020, I started a new position halfway across the country. As things went virtual, I struggled to make sense of campus culture when I had spent little time on campus. I reached out to faculty and colleagues on Zoom, asked a lot of questions, and again relied on my background in ethnography to understand a new group of (now virtual) users. -ED

Retail Lessons: Collaboration and Customer Service

If someone had told me years ago that I would teach in the AmeriCorps in Ohio, then move to Los Angeles to work as an inventory control specialist (ICS) for Apple, and then quit my job to earn two master's degrees, I

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would not have believed them. In archival work, I often use the research skills I learned as an ICS, but the most important thing I learned at Apple was collaborating and working with others.

I spent much of my time working with the Genius team on inventory issues or with managers on resolving inventory shortages, overages, and location tracking. Although I rarely worked on the floor, everything we did was about the customer: what was best for them, how to serve their needs. In archives, even when I'm not directly interacting with researchers, when processing a collection I'm not only thinking about the original order and arrangement but also about the most beneficial access points for researchers.

Beyond engaging with the public and working with collections, collaborating with colleagues has always been a highlight. From providing materials for the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage to capturing COVID-19 stories, it is gratifying to work with other departments to help bring their programs—and history—to life for users, now and in the future.

After a decade in New England, I moved to Washington state. My multiphase career has also taught me it really pays to be flexible. -EB

Publishing, Like Archives, Is About People

In 2006, I quit my job of nineteen years as a book editor and left New York for Massachusetts, hoping to find a new life with less stress. Library school and archives seemed a natural fit with my publishing background, which included some history titles and lots of Penguin Classics. I found, however, that central to both fields are relationships. Editors don't just sit in their offices reading. They work with authors of diverse personalities and backgrounds, sometimes important or famous, and these relationships demand sensitivity. What authors needed from me varied. I might praise, cajole, negotiate, soothe egos, or just hang out and talk. Working with library donors can be just as variable, and my experience with people—even making small talk—turns out to be one of the most valuable things I bring to my work as an archivist. Establishing rapport matters not only in donor relations but also on my reference shift, when I must adapt to a researcher's comfort level in the reading room, and in interactions with colleagues.

Bringing extensive relationship experience to my second career doesn't mean that part of the work is easy. But I have a certain level of self-confidence, and I try to focus on the practical. Some of that is age; I've survived change and uncertainty: bomb threats, 9/11, two corporate mergers, competitive colleagues. And I've learned the importance of staying alert and flexible, adaptable, open, communicative, and kind. -CJW ■



Jessica Chapel is the librarian/archivist for digital projects in the Harvard Law School Library, where she works to make collections more accessible. Before graduating from Simmons SLIS in 2019, Jessica worked as a writer, editor, and web producer covering the sport and business of Thoroughbred horse racing.



Emily Daus DiLeo is the reference archivist at the Music Library and Bill Schurk Sound Archives at Bowling Green State University. Before coming to Ohio, Emily worked at the Gilmore Music Library at Yale University for eleven years. Emily has a PhD in ethnomusicology from Wesleyan University.



Erik Bauer is an independent archivist in western Washington. He was previously the archivist at the Peabody Institute Library and archives manager at the Haverhill Public Library. He has two master's degrees, in humanities and in history, and is completing his MLIS from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Erik is the chair of the NEA Local History Roundtable.



Caroline J. White, who originally conceived this session, is archives and manuscript librarian in Special Collections and University Archives, UMass Amherst Libraries. She was a book editor at Viking Penguin for nineteen years, earned her MLS from Simmons in January 2010, and serves as copy editor for NEA's Communications Committee.

Reviews

Biodiversity Heritage Library

- Reviewed by Diane Rielinger, *Digital Projects Librarian, Harvard University Botany Libraries*

The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL)¹, founded in 2006, is the world's largest online open access biodiversity library. Content is contributed from many of the best natural history libraries and museums² around the world, encompassing resources on six continents. Members from the Northeast include the American Museum of Natural History Library, Cornell University Library, Harvard University's Botany Libraries and Museum of Comparative Zoology Ernst Mayr Library, the LuEsther T. Mertz Library at the New York Botanical Garden, and Yale University.

As the name implies, the content of BHL is focused on biodiversity, defined widely to include all levels of organismic organization from genes to ecosystems. As of January 2021, over 162,000 titles with over 264,000 volumes are available, yielding over 50 million pages of content. BHL contains not only out-of-copyright publications but also in-copyright materials where permissions have been secured, and a wealth of archival materials, including correspondence, unpublished manuscripts, field notes, specimen lists, maps, and more.

The home page of the BHL has a clean design with the search box predominant. Searches can be conducted on the metadata only or full text across the entire corpus. There is an advanced search option and multiple browsing categories, including curated collections such as Archives of the Boston Metropolitan Park Flora. Search results can be faceted on many different parameters, including by archival materials only. The BHL site is not optimized for mobile use, however, so viewing on cell phones is not ideal.

A number of tools are available to assist users beyond traditional searching. Name-finding algorithms on the site allow for searching by scientific name and the generation of an exportable bibliography of the results. Title metadata may include links to other information from the contributing library, such as links to archival finding aids.³ Developer and data tools are available, including APIs, that allow for the harvesting, reuse, and transformation of BHL content.

Science for hundreds of years has been published both in books and in journal articles. BHL materials are scanned at the physical item level ("cover to cover"), such as a book or journal volume. Recognizing that many users would want to search for articles, BHL developed tools to allow articles, chapters, and other "segments" to be identified in larger works. These segments are discoverable as any other BHL item and identified in volume tables of contents, making navigation to these parts easy.

Archival materials are also being identified using standard metadata and segments, in some cases down to the individual letter or note. With a large number of contributors, BHL provides a platform for related materials to be hosted together. For example, correspondence from George Engelmann to Asa Gray was digitized by the Harvard University Botany Libraries, while the Asa Gray letters to George Engelmann were scanned by the Peter H. Raven Library and Center for Biodiversity Informatics at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The correspondence between these two great men of botany can now be searched by individual letter and the conversations can be read in chronological order (see for example April 6, 1841, Engelmann to Gray letter⁴ and May 17, 1841, Gray to Engelmann letter⁵). No trip to Missouri or Massachusetts needed.

Content can be downloaded at the page, segment, or whole item level in PDF or JP2 formats. Full-size high resolution images are available for direct download, making it easy to obtain materials for reuse and publication. One minor inconvenience is that PDF downloads from BHL are not immediate. An email address must be provided so BHL can notify you when your PDF is ready, generally in just a minute or two. A link to the Internet Archive, which hosts the page images for BHL, allows for direct downloading of a full-volume PDF or individual page JP2 images.

BHL takes open access and transparency very seriously. Copyright and licensing information is available for each item in BHL. The help section is loaded with detailed instructions and videos to help users make the most out of the website. Harvard University hosts a LibGuide⁶ covering common BHL functions.

If you are searching for visual content, BHL maintains a Flickr⁷ site with over a quarter of a million images from the collection, including some images from unpublished archival materials. Search is more limited in Flickr

than in BHL. Flickr users are encouraged to add tags to the images, especially taxonomic identifications, to enhance discoverability. There are a number of curated collections⁸ by subject and contributor to help you find an appropriate image.

BHL does have limitations similar to other digital projects. Handwritten archival materials are challenging and cannot be transcribed automatically by optical character recognition (OCR). Even for typed works, OCR has limitations. Improved OCR was recently implemented for BHL texts as well as the ability to ingest transcriptions (for example view text in the Journals of William Brewster).⁹

BHL is an excellent resource for digital archival materials related to natural history. Dedicated member libraries will ensure that the website and contents continue to expand and improve.

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Notes

1. See <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>> for more information about BHL.
2. See <<https://about.biodiversitylibrary.org/about/bhl-consortium/>> for information about the consortium and its members.
3. See <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/128030#/summary>> to view a link to the Asa Gray correspondence finding aid under More Content.
4. See <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/53642627>> to view George Engelmann letter to Asa Gray.
5. See <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/page/42009037>> to view Gray letter to Engelmann.
6. See <<https://guides.library.harvard.edu/bhlguide>> to view Harvard Library BHL Libguide.
7. See <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodivlibrary/sets/>> to view BHL's Flickr site.
8. See <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/biodivlibrary/collections/>> to view BHL's curated collections.
9. See <<https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/160004>> to view William Brewster's journals with transcriptions available by selecting Show Text.

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Otter.ai, Online Transcription Software

- Reviewed by Amy Sloper, Collections Archivist,
Harvard Film Archive

I still have a hasty list titled “potential projects” on my desktop drafted on March 12, 2020, the day we were given the official notice that the Harvard Library would be transitioning to work-from-home for the “indefinite future.” One project from that list has grown into a robust and ongoing project called the HFA Visiting Artist Transcription Project. The project relies on Otter.ai <<https://otter.ai/>>, web-based software that produces computer-generated transcripts from live or recorded voice conversations.

Because over half of the Harvard Film Archive’s (HFA) small staff usually focuses on public programming in our Cinematheque, rather than on our collection of over 40,000 audiovisual items, manuscript collections, photographs, and poster collection, I chose to concentrate our initial collective efforts on a set of nearly 1,000 digital audio files recorded in our cinema called the Harvard Film Archive Visiting Artists Collection <<https://tinyurl.com/e1r0y53n>>. These recordings, made from 2008 to the present, consist of film intros and lively post-screening discussions between our curators, audiences, and the filmmakers who visit the

HFA Cinematheque from around the world. The collection has high research value and represents a large part of our digital backlog, so getting the files in order would be a big accomplishment. A vital step to making the audio publicly available is creating a transcript for each file.

Set up of the initial project moved quickly. The HFA had done a fair amount of transcription to create closed captioning for video files. We had worked with 3Play Media at a cost of \$1.80 per minute, a cost which was not an option for a collection of this size. What we lacked in funding we made up for with an abundance of people power. I settled quickly on using Otter.ai to create our initial computer-generated transcription files from the audio recordings, knowing that each transcript would need a fairly extensive amount of manual cleanup. After initial tests with the free personal plan, which allowed for 600 minutes of audio transcription per month, I upgraded to the \$9.99 per month Professional plan, allowing 6,000 minutes of audio transcription per month.

The process with Otter.ai is simple and worked easily with a large collection workflow. After identifying and documenting filename and location into a master Google tracking sheet, I started systematically uploading audio from the collection to Otter.ai for transcription. The system’s built-in personal vocabulary option, in which you enter names and “other vocabulary” for the software to recognize, created more accurate transcripts. Once files are uploaded, it takes about twenty minutes for the transcription file to appear in your account, and an email alert can be set up to let you know when it is ready. Transcripts can be edited directly in the Otter.ai software, which has a number of useful features, including a running sync of the audio to the cursor in the transcript, eight possible playback speeds from 0.5x to 3x speed, and buttons for rewinding and fast-forwarding five seconds.

To give transcript editors access to the files, I created a public Google sheet called the Project Sheet where staff could mark their interest by placing their name and email next to a visiting artist event to work on. I opted to export transcripts from Otter.ai so users would not need to create personal accounts in the system, which became important once the project was eventually opened to library staff outside of the HFA. Export options include copying text to the clipboard, or saving a txt, docx, pdf, or srt file. I exported text using the copy to clipboard option and pasted directly



A screenshot of the text editing interface in Otter.ai showing sample text of the unedited audio transcript from Pam Grier’s 10/7/2016 visit to the Harvard Film Archive.

into an individual Google Doc for each transcript, allowing staff to use their Harvard Google accounts to edit the files while listening to the audio from the HFA's website. Links to the transcripts were provided on the Project Sheet, where staff could also indicate whether they were in process or ready for review.

A few months into the initial phase of the project, participation was opened up to the larger library staff. It quickly became apparent what the software could help us with and what it could not. Assumptions that cleaning up the transcripts would be a simple process were proven wrong as soon as questions started rolling in. In response, I created a simple style sheet <<https://tinyurl.com/3rwmfxyd>> to guide transcript editors through the basics, such as formatting rules, the use of flags to indicate issues with the original audio, and the inclusion of enhanced audio descriptors. In addition, editors were given a link to the event program page on the HFA website, which could assist with the spelling of names and film titles. We assumed that editors would also perform additional research when necessary and volunteers reported that research made the work enjoyable and enriching for them. The amount of research involved varied based on the specific event making it difficult to quantify the amount of time necessary to clean up each Otter.ai-created transcript, but it is safe to assume that cleanup would take at least twice the audio runtime.

Recognizing the complexity of the work and the inaccuracy of the initial transcript from Otter.ai, we decided that a second pass on each transcript would be done by an HFA staff member to double check for accuracy and consistency to the style guide. The second pass also includes an editorial approach, specifically looking for content that filmmakers or curators might not want publicly available online. Since this is a subjective process, we limit this work to a subset of HFA staff with deep knowledge of the collection content and culture of the HFA.

Once transcripts are complete, they are uploaded to the HFA website alongside the audio files and deposited into Harvard's digital repository as PDF/A files. The entire workflow is now streamlined and documented, though remains fairly complex and is considered a work in progress that we recognize will need to be updated in the post-pandemic future. We are now working on setting up an online portal to make the files and transcripts searchable in a single place.

For the HFA, Otter.ai represents an economical and easy-to-use option for audio transcription that along with other transcription tools, such as 3PlayMedia and TEMI <<https://www.temi.com/>>, currently being tested by Harvard's Media Preservation Services, will greatly increase our ability to make our digital audiovisual content accessible to all users online. Otter.ai cannot currently handle audio with multiple languages, and I would not use it for audio with private, sensitive, or copyrighted content without carefully reviewing the terms of service, but it has proven to be a great fit for the HFA Visiting Artists Collection workflow. ■

From Page 11

rehoused. A finding aid was created, and a plan was developed to identify photograph subjects, pending further funding. For more information, contact collections manager Hilary Gunnels at <hilary@southcountyhistorycenter.org> or project archivist Rachel Strashnick at <rachel@southcountyhistorycenter.org>.

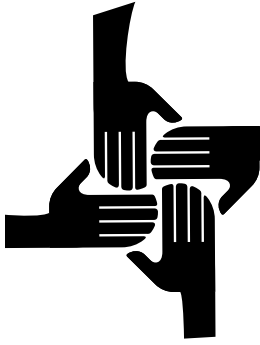
V E R M O N T

New Online Exhibit, *Pride 1983*, Explores Vermont's First LGBTQ+ Pride March

On June 25, 1983, a small group of organizers held a gay and lesbian pride march in Burlington, Vermont—the first such event in the state. In partnership with the Pride Center of Vermont; Out in the Open, based in Brattleboro; and photographer M. Sharkey, the Vermont Folklife Center commemorates this groundbreaking day with an online exhibit, *Pride 1983*.

Curated by Meg Tamulonis, the exhibit draws on the Vermont Queer Archives of the Pride Center of Vermont, the Andrews Inn Oral History Project of Out in the Open, oral history interviews by the Vermont Folklife Center, and portrait photographs by M. Sharkey. *Pride 1983* explores aspects of LGBTQ+ life in Vermont in the years following the Stonewall uprising as well as the planning and execution of the state's first Pride march.

View the online exhibit at <<https://vtfolklife.org/pride-1983>>. For more information, contact Andy Kolovos, <akolovos@vermontfolklifecenter.org>. ■



WHO'S MISSING FROM THIS TABLE?

About the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion, social justice, and diversity within the archives profession and NEA.

Contingent Employment:
In Our Own Words

By the Inclusion and Diversity Committee

For the past several years, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee has made it a priority to raise awareness of the impact of contingent employment in our field. In 2016, we conducted a Contingent Employment Study, which captured the experiences of seventy archival workers who had been contingently employed from 2005–2016. Study participants described experiences that are all too familiar to many of us: financial precarity, inability to plan for the future, and working multiple jobs to make ends meet.

Five years later, contingent employment is more prevalent than ever, so the IDC has decided to conduct a second study. Contingent Employment Study Task Force members Kimberly Barzola, Stephanie Bredbenner, Alison Fulmer, Rose Oliveira, and Meghan Rinn have been working hard to develop the survey and interview questions. Longitudinal data from both studies will give us a clearer picture of contingent employment over the past fifteen years. What has changed since the 2016 study? What has stayed the same? How can NEA and other professional organizations support contingently employed archival workers?

The survey went live on March 22, 2021, and will remain open until June 30, 2021. The survey is open to any archival worker or former archival worker who:

- has been contingently employed in New England in the past ten years OR
- has been contingently employed anywhere in the United States in the last ten years and is currently living or working in New England.

For the purposes of the study, contingent employment includes temporary and term positions, grant-funded positions, part-time positions, positions without timely or reliable renewal of contract, and any employment without benefits colleagues at the same institution enjoy (e.g., vacation time, health insurance, retirement contributions).

Keep an eye on your inbox for the survey link! We look forward to sharing the results with you.

To promote the Contingent Employment Study, the IDC asked archivists who have been contingently employed to share their experiences with us for our spring column. Below you will find their stories in their own words. Some chose to include their names, while others wished to remain anonymous. We hope that by amplifying the voices of contingently employed archivists, we can shine a light on the ways in which contingent labor impacts archivists, our institutions, and our field as a whole.

What was the most challenging aspect of your project position?

“Not knowing whether I would have a job at the end of my project.” -Tamara Gaydos

“The frequency with which colleagues insisted I’d find a permanent position at the institution was upsetting. I had no desire to repeatedly be given false hope. I knew what I had signed up for.” -Anonymous

“Feeling isolated and unappreciated, especially if the pay is mediocre and you don’t get to be involved in daily departmental workings like other staff.” -Anonymous

What was the most rewarding aspect of your project position?

“My institution provided extensive support for educational and training opportunities despite knowing this information would leave with me.” -Anonymous

“Solid work product for future reference, e.g., an extensive finding aid, a curated exhibition, writing about my work (blogs, press announcements, conference presentations).” -Tamara Gaydos

“Making connections with colleagues who took an active interest in my growth and development and went out of their way to ensure I was provided with opportunities to succeed during the course of my project position.”

-Anonymous

If you could change anything about your project position, what would you change?

“My position was one that should have been a full-time position, but the institution at large did not want to provide a full salary to another archives worker. The department suffered as a result. I wish I could have done more to help before I left.” -Anonymous

“I would recommend that my supervisor had spent more time thinking about the structure of my position and preparing more ways for me to make the most of my time at the library. I had to research and advocate to receive things like mentorship and assessment, which should be a pre-planned component of any project position.” -Anonymous

“I would have my project position be full time! It’s not as if there isn’t enough work to do. It’s an awful feeling to know that you’re only part time so they don’t have to pay you more or give you benefits, despite the fact that you have enough of a workload to be full time.” -Anonymous

What would you like a future project archivist to know?

“Continue to look for full-time work while you are working as a project archivist.” -Nadia Dixon

“It may feel more difficult to do so from a precarious position, but it’s important to always advocate for yourself as a project archivist. If there are opportunities that you are interested in, accommodations you need, or conflicts that arise, you have the same rights as permanent staff to have these issues addressed.” -Anonymous

“Be curious about the workings of the department you’re in. While you may be working on a specific project, take the time to learn about the department/institution you’re in. It’s all valuable knowledge and experience. Also don’t be afraid to ask questions!” -Anonymous

“Take time for yourself whenever possible! Be gentle with yourself and try not to feel guilty for not being ‘productive’ enough, either at work or in your free time....” -Anonymous

What advice or insight do you have for a manager who is supervising a project archivist?

“Treat the person as though they are a permanent staff member. At some point in the future, they become one.”

-Anonymous

“Managers shouldn’t feel the need to tiptoe around the situation. Project archivists understand they are temporary—I personally had no shame surrounding my position....” -Anonymous

“Ask them what support they need and listen to what they say. Be as flexible as possible. Understand the stress they are under. Be accommodating if they need to take time away from work to attend interviews and job seek. Be honest about the chances of the position being converted to a permanent position. Include them whenever possible in staff events, trainings, etc.”

-Anonymous ■



RTL Surveying. Robert Lincoln, the eldest son of President Lincoln, was a man of many hobbies. He enjoyed golfing at the Equinox Country Club, observing the stars through his custom-built observatory, and, as shown in this picture, surveying his 392-acre property in Manchester, Vermont. PH.1975.63.1 Courtesy of Hildene, the Lincoln Family Home.

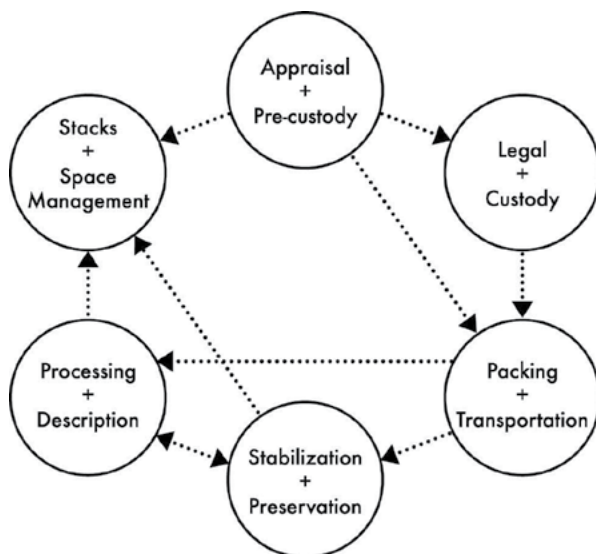
Open Forum

Accessioning: Illuminating a Critical Function in Archival Practice

- Rosemary K. J. Davis and Meaghan O’Riordan

Why accessioning? Why this project?

We met on an accessioning-focused panel at the 2018 Society of American Archivists (SAA) meeting, and that experience sparked many conversations about how our job descriptions deviated from our day-to-day realities, how we didn’t see our work reflected in archival scholarship, and how we felt adrift without a community who could support, empathize with, and understand what we were doing. In response, we decided to build a research project tailored to more accurately representing the reality of archival accessioning in today’s field. Ultimately, we hope to shift folks away from the narrow historical interpretation of this work—which primarily portrays accessioning as a singular workflow element—and move them toward a holistic understanding that reveals accessioning as an interconnected *cluster* of duties that rely upon each other.



Interdependent Labor Relationships in Archival Accessioning.
Source: Rosemary K. J. Davis and D. Edward Davis.

Building on our own research, as well as on the shoulders of recent scholarship <<https://doi.org/10.1080/15332748.2018.1517292>> and Audra Eagle Yun¹, we’re currently defining accessioning as:

a rich hybrid of pre- and postcustodial work that requires physical, intellectual, and emotional labor. Duties can include appraisal, packing and transportation, archival description, legal and financial documentation, donor relations, documentation of archival decisions, preservation measures, and space management. Effective accessioning practices are foundational to ethical, transparent collection stewardship and have an impact on every facet of the archival lifecycle.²

Using this ever-developing definition as a guide, we want to ensure that our research includes deep dives on the lived experience, relationships, and resources required to perform accessioning well.

What do you mean when you talk about relationships in terms of accessioning?

Coordinating physical transfer of materials, bonding with donors to keep them supported, obtaining descriptive data from sellers, liaising with development officers, and taking part in curatorial deliberations, all of this work involves dedicated connections to a wealth of internal and external entities. Accessioning is heavily reliant on these types of relationships, and any gaps make the work infinitely more challenging. It is important to note that these relationships can be very difficult to form and sustain. Moreover, as with so many elements of technical archival labor, it’s easy for these complex relationships to function as invisible architecture supporting the goals of acquisition, stabilization, administration, and user access while not being accounted for in concrete ways.

We hope to illuminate the ways people are developing and adapting their accessioning workflows to accommodate countless moving pieces, including budget, staffing, physical space, vendors, colleagues, creators, and so on.

How are you working to reveal these elements through your research?

Essentially by trying to center the voices of others. Two of the largest components of our project involve collecting information directly from people doing accessioning work every day.

1. **Site visits** – Before COVID-19 threw a wrench into our plans, we had twenty-two visits planned across the United States. We completed thirteen of those visits between

August 2019 and February 2020, and we have received funding from an SAA Strategic Growth grant to expand our geographic coverage of site visits when it's safe to do so. We want to hear from people working in institutions of all sizes and kinds, and with staffing configurations from lone individuals to big teams. Each visit involves touring spaces, seeing how work is completed, and most of all letting people share stories, technology, problems, and solutions.

2. Profession-wide Survey – We circulated an extensive survey in autumn 2019. It included questions about who was doing accessioning, how labor was valued (in terms of professional status and in terms of recognition/support from colleagues), and a plethora of other data points. The survey was open for about two months, and we were frankly astounded by the response rate. We received 169 responses total, 118 of which were 100% complete and 141 of which were 50% or more complete. That's saying a lot, because did we mention it was a very long survey? We're still exploring responses and crunching numbers, but here are some highlights:

- Only six respondents (about 3%) had the word “accessioning” in their title and—spoiler alert—two of those respondents were the two of us.
- 132 respondents (87%) answered “yes” to the question about whether or not they had an accessioning backlog. Seeing a number like 87% will hopefully dilute the backlog shame anyone might be harboring.
- When asked, “Do you (or other individuals performing accessioning work at your organization/institution) ever take part in precustodial decisions or discussions?” 118 respondents (84%) said “yes,” which was such a pleasant surprise. Participation types included precustodial site visits, acquisitions/curatorial discussions, formats assessment, appraisal, operational impact reviews, retention guidelines, condition assessments, and cultivating donor relationships. The diversity of labor types here is so remarkable and really affirms that accessioning is much more than making a single accession record!

What's on the horizon for your project?

We have many miles to go before we publish. Given

pandemic restrictions on travel, some parts of our research are temporarily on hold, so we're forging ahead with something we feel passionately about: making community resources for folks doing accessioning work. During SAA 2020, we circulated a petition to create a new Accessioning Section, which received overwhelmingly positive responses. But SAA is currently reevaluating all component groups to maximize usefulness and because of this, forming new sections has been put on hold. Fortunately, we have another plan: formally adding accessioning to the realm of SAA's Acquisitions & Appraisal Section, which is a great fit and will finally provide a formal outlet for community building.

Even more excitingly, we've received approval from the SAA Standards Committee to create national best practices for archival accessioning. It's an immense opportunity, and our goal is to cultivate a truly collaborative development process including a diverse working group and multiple rounds of public feedback. We want to ensure that these best practices mirror the incredible work being done in the field, while also being iterative and adaptable so that *anyone* working at *any* institution can use them as a resource. As with the rest of our project, we want to foreground empathy, documentation, and labor visibility. It's our biggest hope that these best practices make space for the people *and* the work.

Additional Resources

- For more information and to stay updated on our project, <<https://accessioning.warmsilence.org/>>
- If you would like to join the Accessioning Collective Slack Channel, <https://join.slack.com/t/archival-accessioning/shared_invite/zt-ez13g8yu-WkCV2YYX77cvAOILhCnXvg> ■



Rosemary K. J. Davis is the accessioning archivist for the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University. She serves on the steering committee for SAA's Women Archivists Section, as chair of SAA's Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct, and as managing editor for the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*.

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NEA Roundtable Updates

Teaching with Primary Sources Roundtable Reports on Winter Activities

The Teaching with Primary Sources Roundtable has been busy as ever with weekly meetings (held Thursdays at 11 a.m.) and planning for the future of the roundtable. A call went out to roundtable membership for a co-chair to serve a two-year term (March 2021–March 2023, with the possibility for extension). Current chair Pam Hopkins will serve as co-chair for a one-year term.

Our Anti-Racism in Teaching Reading Group returned in March with a discussion of “It Starts at Home: Infusing Radical Empathy into Graduate Education,” a conversation with Nicole A. Cooke (University of South Carolina), Kellee E. Warren (University of Illinois, Chicago), Molly Brown (Northeastern University), and Athena N. Jackson (University of California, Los Angeles). The interview was published in the *Journal of Critical Library and Information Studies* and is available at <https://journals.litwinbooks.com/index.php/jclis/article/view/123>.

To join or learn more about the TPS Roundtable, contact Pam Hopkins psmhopkins@gmail.com. ■

NEA Invites You to Start a Roundtable!

NEA members are encouraged to start a Roundtable—a more informal way to get involved with NEA and the archival community, and to connect with others around your interests and needs as a professional. Roundtables organize workshops or events, develop conference sessions, and work with NEA committees on specific initiatives. Take your discussion online through Twitter, Facebook, a blog, or an email list, or make recommendations to the NEA board based on the experience of Roundtable members.

Visit NEA online at:

www.newenglandarchivists.org

From Page 21



Meaghan O’Riordan is the accessioning archivist for the Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives & Rare Book Library at Emory University. She serves on the steering committee for SAA’s Acquisitions & Appraisal Section, as treasurer for the SILS Alumni Association, UNC Chapel Hill, and as a peer reviewer for the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*.

Notes

1. Audra Eagle Yun, *Archival Accessioning* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021).
2. Rosemary K. J. Davis and Meaghan O’Riordan, “Accessioning,” in Patricia Franks (ed.), *The Handbook of Archival Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021).

The NEA Newsletter Needs Your Help!

Help us make a vibrant newsletter that serves you. Send your newsletter submissions and ideas to:

newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org

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NEA Member Spotlight

Name:

Kathy Berger

Affiliated institution:

DataBank

Career stage:

Mid-late career

How did you become interested in the archival field?

I was the family historian from age 12ish onward, interested in our genealogy (Daughters of the American Revolution on one side, fun Boston wharf English immigrants on the other). When my brother and I started a microfilm/document storage (future document scanning) company in the early 1990s, my attention became hyper-focused on archival digital document storage and retrieval.

Our diverse customers included colleges and universities (lots of great, old donor files, transcripts, and grade sheets); government work (love those birth, death, marriage certificates and old, bound town meeting books); hospitals; and a range of different business documentation. One thing in common: they all needed an archival solution that met their business needs and retention requirements.

What are some of your focuses and interests in the archival field

I enjoy solving bottlenecks for data and document automation with an eye on the archival obligations. The messier the better! Nothing makes me happier than a room or warehouse full of boxes that need to be manifested for business and disposition decisions. I never recommend digitizing everything unless there is significant historical value to that decision. I love the complexity of solving problems for digitization projects that contain a variety of media in different conditions.

My other interests in the archival field include local history and historical figures. I am always amazed and impressed to learn about “regular” people who experienced life challenges and became unsung heroes. It is fun for me to walk through a cemetery and think about all the families and people and wonder about their lives.

What piqued your interest about New England Archivists?

I like the local, niche, collaborative approach to groups like NEA. The listserv is excellent for keeping up to date on local and national collections, contacts, and information.

What are you looking forward to about your new membership?

Meeting local people who have similar interests in preservation and public outreach. I would like to help make history interesting and fun to stimulate interest for future generations.

What’s an interesting fact about you or an unexpected talent or interest?

I like a houseful of guests.

Alternatively, what would you do on your ideal day off?

My ideal day off starts with a run or walk and a big stack of books to read along with a fun breakfast or lunch date. Shopping anyone? Maybe I need a week off!

What are your hopes for the archival profession?

I hope we take advantage of technology to continue with digital capture and preservation of collections. Also, I hope we can keep the next generations engaged and interested in continuing with our professions.

What challenges have you observed so far in your career?

Always the same answer: funding. I also think there are ways for institutions to save money with digital capture. Some collections can be digitized in a production environment rather than “specialty capture,” saving significant money. It is amazingly tough to convince people the same care can be taken with paper and media capture in a production environment. ■

THIS SEASON IN NEW ENGLAND HISTORY



Children from the Most Holy Redeemer Parish, East Boston, Massachusetts, march in a May procession, circa 1920s. May processions were a common devotional practice in the Catholic Church. Beginning at their parish church, young children, dressed in white, would process alongside a large statue of the Blessed Virgin Mary through the streets of the parish. Returning to the church, a young girl would be selected to crown the statue with a chaplet of flowers while parishioners sang hymns. *Courtesy of the Archdiocese of Boston Archives.*