

Volume 49, Number 2 • April 2022

NEA

# NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND ARCHIVISTS



C O V E R — Filming of *Captains Courageous* off Eastern Point; *Imperator* in background, circa 1935. In the mid-1930s, Gloucester was one of the primary locations for the filming of *Captains Courageous*, a book by Rudyard Kipling (also set in Gloucester) turned movie. When the film was released in May 1937, John Mosher of *The New Yorker* called it “as rich a film as you will see this spring. . . The picture is magnificent as a sketch of storm and struggle on the ocean.” The photograph shows cameramen filming the vessel *Imperator*. Photograph by Adolph Kupsinel. Accession #2002.23. Courtesy of the Cape Ann Museum Library & Archives.

I N S I D E — Two archivists honor their institutions’ fiftieth anniversaries of coeducation (page 4); Jessica Levy brings attention to magic lantern slides (page 12); the Inclusion and Diversity Committee presents findings from the second Contingent Employment Study (page 16); repositories share News and Notes (page 8); a final Inside NEA column from Genna Duplisea (page 7); Spotlights on a new NEA member (page 19) and our incoming president (page 11); and a word from editor Charlotte Lellman (page 3).

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE



# New England Archivists

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

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[www.newenglandarchivists.org](http://www.newenglandarchivists.org)

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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 NEA members as well as other archivists and allied professionals should be sent for consideration to [newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org](mailto:newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org).

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# From the Editors

- Charlotte Lellman

I'd like to start off by thanking you for reading the *Newsletter*! I'm also appreciative of all those who contributed to this issue. It is thanks to them that we bring you the following content.

In our first feature article (page 4), Marieke Van Der Steenhoven of Bowdoin College and Michelle Chiles of Providence College engage in a dialogue about the ways in which they forged collaborations at their organizations to recognize the fiftieth anniversaries of coeducation. Our second feature (page 12) comes from Jessica Levy, a Simmons University student in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Jessica writes about what she learned during an independent study on the historical uses and renewed contemporary interest in magic lantern slides.

This issue marks the last Inside NEA column from President Genna Duplisea (page 7). Genna explores the topic of resilience.

On page 8, you'll find News and Notes from around New England, and the Teaching With Primary Sources Roundtable gives its latest update on page 18. We hope you'll share your own repository's updates in our next issue!

The Inclusion and Diversity Committee's From IDEAs to Action column (page 16) presents some summary findings from NEA's second Contingent Employment Study. I am sure many of you will read this article and feel validated, angry, or exhausted. But it is important for us to understand the challenges we face so that we can translate our reactions into individual and collective action.

On page 11's NEA Board Member Spotlight you'll meet NEA VP/President-Elect Caitlin Birch. In a New Member Spotlight (page 19) you'll get to know Amy M. Johnson, archivist and administrator at the Historical Society of Santuit & Cotuit on Cape Cod. Welcome to NEA, Amy! Other new members are warmly invited to reach out to <[newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org](mailto:newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org)> if they'd like to be featured in a future edition of the *Newsletter*. We'd also like to welcome new Newsletter Committee member Jenifer Ishee, who will be editing Reviews. ■

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## ARCHIVAL INSIGHT

## A Men's College with Women? Then, Now, Next in the Role of the Archive in College Anniversaries

By Marieke Van Der Steenhoven and Michelle Chiles

**I**n 1971, both Providence College (Providence, Rhode Island) and Bowdoin College (Brunswick, Maine) matriculated women students for the first time. On the occasion of these fiftieth anniversaries, what role do the college archives serve for the broader college community and the initiatives surrounding such a significant event? How do institutional commemorations present opportunities for archivists to collaborate, share expertise, and build a more inclusive future for the archive? Michelle and Marieke will share their experiences in curating anniversary exhibits, managing events, supporting other departments, and representing the archives on campus committees.

As the stewards of institutional records, academic archivists and librarians are integral to institutional anniversaries and other ritual events on campus. College anniversaries offer an important opportunity for the archivist to build relationships through collaboration and expertise-sharing. From the intentional effort towards inclusion and looking critically at history, the future of the archive is being shaped to represent our community values. Recently, Michelle Chiles and Marieke Van Der Steenhoven reflected on their concurrent roles and experiences during their institutions' fiftieth anniversaries of coeducation.

New England Archivists' Teaching with Primary Sources Roundtable brought Michelle and Marieke together, and through regular, ongoing conversations, the two exchanged ideas, reflected, and supported each other's work. Identifying the commonalities (and differences) between their experiences offered a way to move forward intentionally, to acknowledge visible and invisible labor, and to work collaboratively. In this conversation, Michelle and Marieke discuss facilitating access to archival records, interpreting the historical record, curation and digitization, collaborating across campus, and the varied ways the archivist role shapes up in these situations. While it can be easy to default to the simplistic celebratory exhibit or fall into the fact-checker role, anniversaries can be used to leverage broader archival initiatives.

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**Marieke Van Der Steenhoven:** Michelle, when you began thinking about and preparing for the *Then Now Next: 50 Years of Women at Providence College* anniversary, you were fairly new to Providence. How has this anniversary impacted your relationship to the archives?

**Michelle Chiles:** I was hired at Providence College in December of 2019, and the 2021 anniversary of coeducation was brought up as early as my interview! I decided to use this as a framework for how my first eighteen months would go, and in January I began my initial survey of the archival collections. Obviously, with the pandemic hitting in March 2020, this long-range plan was quickly derailed! Even with this massive limitation, I anticipated increased campus requests for information about coeducation and continued to prepare and explore the records with this topic at the forefront. I was formally asked to be a part of the anniversary committees in September 2020, and by that point felt more confident in my initial understanding of our records and history. This gave us a year before the official kickoff in September 2021 to meet the requests and ideas of all of those involved.

Marieke, I'm curious how you approached this, whether you were doing anything proactive before the requests started flowing? Have you been part of anything like this before at Bowdoin?

**MV:** College anniversary work has been different each time I've been involved. Sometimes we in special collections and archives take initiative to mark a significant date, or, in the case of the fiftieth anniversary of Africana Studies (2019), I was invited to be part of a college-wide planning committee and coordinated with lots of campus partners. For the commemoration of coeducation, my timeline looked similar to yours: conversations starting in January 2020—disrupted, for obvious and devastating reasons—and planning commencing earnestly, in September 2020, with an eye to a 2021 fall semester kickoff. Throughout the planning process, I met with a liaison from the college's

various anniversary committees. I was able to advocate for the committee to fund our summer curatorial internship, connect members interested in conducting an oral history project to our digital archivist, and connect with department heads about how the archives can support curricular development around women's education and leadership, grounded in the primary sources in our care.

**MC:** Considering the huge impact the pandemic had on our daily and working lives, were there things you were particularly attentive to during the planning stages? Did you make any concessions or backup plans, as it were?

**MV:** My colleagues and I engaged with our online image gallery, being mindful of keyword terms and how one might approach searching for early images of women on campus. We revisited our metadata to create a more representative experience for the researcher, with thoughtful consideration given to language. This was helpful preparation for working with our student curatorial intern, who delved into records and curated the library's exhibit, *A Men's College with Women? Over 50 Years of Women's Leadership and Education at Bowdoin College*. I also met with department chairs to share pedagogical opportunities in the collection. One example of how integrating materials to align with this anniversary took hold was in a theater course. From a curated selection of women-authored student publications, Acting I students visited the reading room, engaged with the archives, and selected a piece to use as a monologue—memorizing the words of Bowdoin women from the past and giving them voice. We also connected with an alumnae engagement committee early on in their planning process, sharing archiving strategies and recently developed strategies based on our pandemic experiences—projects they developed were built with the intention of ending up in the archives. For me, this summarizes what institutional anniversaries can offer: a look inward at collections, an updated interpretation of the historical record, development of relevant pedagogy, and cultivating archival awareness. However, there are also the limiting realities of time, labor, and capacity.

**MC:** I love that you took this as an opportunity to revisit your digital image descriptions to make them more inclusive. For us, we realized that women students were altogether absent from our digital collections. I collaborated with my colleagues in our digital projects depart-

ment to digitize images from the first five years of each women's sport; these are now part of our digital repository and will soon be available for anyone to use. This project helped connect the archives to our athletics department, something we had struggled to do in a meaningful way in the past. It also gave us a great conversation starter to talk about what was missing from our collections or whose story wasn't being told. I wonder if you were able to create new collaborations or initiatives out of this anniversary?

**MV:** A big takeaway from this particular anniversary is having deeper confidence in talking about what is represented in the archive and what is not. To really be able to articulate the parameters of absences, how there are structural erasures, and how the structure has changed over time, this positions us to build more representative collections moving forward. This invites students, faculty, and all other researchers to iteratively engage with materials—to find themselves in collections, to want to represent themselves in the archive, and to see themselves as an integral part of the story. Let us acknowledge this in our actions: embed recognition into exhibit labels, be critical and make changes to metadata, and begin classes with an invitation to the conversation, to hold our materials accountable to a changing approach of inquiry.

**MC:** Exactly! Looking at these absences or unrecognized parts of our campus histories, I thought you had a really good way to tie that into instruction and outreach responsibilities. During our first chat about this anniversary, you shared a statement about harmful language and collecting, and I loved it. I adopted a similar message for our exhibit and other projects, and I wondered if you can share how this came about and how you apply it to your daily work?

**MV:** After visiting a few powerful exhibits that included a similar acknowledgement, I started to include a note about sources in our exhibits. It's become an important part of our curatorial interns' experience to write their own statement for their exhibits, too. The note acknowledges where sources come from and how collections were historically built at Bowdoin—contextualizing the predominantly Western white men perspectives of our collections. The note also acknowledges our responsibility—as librarians, archivists, and scholars—to read the absences and build representative collections. I start-

ed sharing this language with classes that engaged with materials related to race, but, after some reflection, realized it's an important acknowledgement to share regardless of the content of the collection.

Michelle, based on your experience and the pivots you have had to make, how are you thinking about what comes next?

**MC:** Originally, I really wanted to design an oral history project to reflect on the experience of women on campus. I quickly shelved this idea because of the ongoing pandemic; all of the in-person events where I'd hoped to secure alumni and student participation were either canceled or greatly limited. I am still hopeful because I mentioned it to one of our marketing people who was very excited and thought it could work for this year's reunion events, almost as a capstone event for the anniversary. It may end up a different project than my original vision, but this is a lesson I need to remember. As a small shop, flexibility and a willingness to collaborate (and to let go) will often create new and interesting outcomes. I think you've developed a really good model for a way to incorporate varied teaching elements through the curatorial internship and reaching out to programs for class instructions; it seems like a viable way to keep the archives engaged in these campus commemorations in a more meaningful way. I am definitely going to try to incorporate the teaching side into these anniversaries more concretely; this seems like a no-brainer and a way to get the most of the archival labor as well!

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Explore *A Men's College with Women? Over 50 Years of Women in Leadership and Education at Bowdoin College* curated by Katie Reid '23, on view at the Hawthorne-Longfellow Library until June 2022 and online at <[sca.bowdoin.edu/women-at-bowdoin/](http://sca.bowdoin.edu/women-at-bowdoin/)>. The Providence College exhibition, *Then Now Next: 50 Years of Women at Providence College*, is on exhibit at the Phillips Memorial Library through June 2022, and the college's anniversary website is available at <<https://women-50.providence.edu>>.

The authors would like to thank their colleagues, including Liza Tietjen, Megan Lessard, Stephen Mattos, Robin Rancourt, and Rebecca Farias, all of Providence College's Phillips Memorial Library Archives & Special Collections and Digital Projects departments, and Meagan Doyle and

Caroline Moseley of Bowdoin College's Special Collections & Archives, with whom they work closely to make archival collections accessible. ■



Marieke Van Der Steenhoven (mah-REE-kah van-der-STAIN-ho-ven) is the special collections education and engagement librarian at the Bowdoin College Library's Department of Special Collections & Archives (SC&A) where she develops and delivers instructional, educational, and public programs (including exhibits) that engage students, faculty, staff, and the public.



Michelle Chiles is the head of archives and special collections at Providence College Phillips Memorial Library. She manages the daily operations of the archives which includes college archives, special collections, and rare books. In addition to caring for collections, Michelle and her team also provide archival instruction, research services, and other outreach activities to support departments and programs on campus.

## 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](mailto:newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org)>.

Stay tuned for information about fall 2022 programming!

<[www.newenglandarchivists.org/Current-and-Upcoming-Meetings](http://www.newenglandarchivists.org/Current-and-Upcoming-Meetings)>

# Inside NEA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Genna Duplisea



The theme of my year as NEA president has been resilience as a cultivated community goal rather than an individual trait forced by circumstance. A recent *Wall Street Journal* piece introduced “resilience fatigue,” but focused on addressing it with individual solutions instead of sustainable collective ones.<sup>1</sup> Taking the opposite approach is Anne Helen Petersen’s “How to Build a Rugged, Resilient Society.”<sup>2</sup> She writes about the discontinuity between human experience of the past and human experience during climate change.

Archivists manage loss, positioning us well to think about discontinuity. Petersen argues for a ruggedization of society, which she defines as acting in the moment, identifying unavoidable loss and compensating for it, acknowledging the “new normal” as reality. She notes that “[y]ou can’t build a structure that stands unless you acknowledge the compo-

sition of the ground on which you’re building. That’s what ruggedization allows: a framework for action in face of constant upheaval and disruption.” We cannot build to accommodate a reality which does not exist. Archivists are adapting to changes in technology, austerity in staffing, increased environmental threats, and the need to shed old paradigms in order to document society more equitably. Ruggedization is not easy work, just as hope is not. We are responding to upheaval, rebuilding our profession on changed ground.

Petersen defines resilience as “figuring out a let’s-survive-this strategy for your community.” I am proud of the work we have done so far in strategizing together. Serving as NEA president during times that demand ruggedization has been challenging, inspiring, and invigorating, its work made possible by the community spirit of the board and the membership. Let’s keep acting, keep figuring it out. ■

1. Alex Janin, “Still Feeling Pandemic Miserable? There Are Ways to Dig Out,” *Wall Street Journal*. February 1, 2022. <<https://www.wsj.com/articles/still-feeling-pandemic-miserable-there-are-ways-to-dig-out-11643725802>>.
2. Anne Helen Petersen, “How to Build a Rugged, Resilient Society.” *Culture Study*. January 9, 2022. <<https://annehelen.substack.com/p/what-a-rugged-resilient-society-demands>>.



Students boil maple sap over an open fire in the Middlebury College sugarbush of the Battell Wilderness, adjacent to the Bread Loaf Inn in Ripton, Vermont, in 1932. An upturned bucket of packed snow is nearby, ready for the hot syrup to be turned into maple candy. The “sugar on snow party” was hosted annually by the Mountain Club, a student organization. *Courtesy of the Middlebury College Archives.*

# News and Notes

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Brandeis University Announces Processing Manual

Brandeis University is excited to announce the publication of their first processing manual <<https://www.brandeis.edu/library/archives/collections/processing-manual.pdf>> for archival collections at Brandeis University. The manual was written by Kate McNally, records and manuscript processor; Maggie McNeely, collections archivist; and Anne Woodrum, former special collections librarian. This manual includes a processing level matrix and covers accessioning, surveying, workflows for five levels of processing, preservation, restrictions, entering data into finding aids, and access determination. This manual solidifies new workflows which aim to balance the use of minimal and extensible archival practices with the need to address DEI concerns through transparency, care for content creators and subjects, and mitigation of harm. The manual will serve as a tool to standardize our practices internally and will be a teaching tool for interns and students.

For questions or to provide feedback on this manual please contact Maggie McNeely <[mmcneely@brandeis.edu](mailto:mmcneely@brandeis.edu)>.

### Forbes House Museum Launches New Exhibit: *Opium: The Business of Addiction*

The Forbes House Museum in Milton, Massachusetts, will open a new exhibit, *Opium: The Business of Addiction*, on April 27, 2022, in collaboration with the Milton Public Library and the Milton Coalition (formerly the Milton Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition). The exhibit will tell the story of the Forbes family in the opium trade, the trade's connection to the current opioid epidemic, and its impact on U.S.-Sino relations. It will feature three-dimensional objects such as an opium pipe, an opium scale, and paintings of the people and ports involved. Family letters, tea labels, and advertising cards for tonics laced with morphine and heroin will be displayed. The exhibit extends into the Historical Resource Room at the Milton Public Library, where the focus will be on current events and research into the opioid epidemic. The exhibit will run

through the end of February 2023. For more information, see <<https://www.forbeshousemuseum.org>>.

### Website Documents Chinese Students at Andover, 1878-2000

Phillips Academy (Andover) announces the launch of a website for the Chinese Students at Andover Project. The site <<https://chinesestudents.andover.edu>> documents the educational migration of Chinese students to Phillips Academy from the Chinese Educational Mission (1878-1882) through the Boxer Indemnity Scholarship Fund and Principal Stearns's guardianship (1906-1930) to the exchange program with the Harbin Institute of Technology (1980-2000). The site includes digitized and transcribed primary sources, historical context, lesson plans for teachers, work by Phillips Academy students in the course "Silences & Gaps: The Record of Chinese Students in the Phillips Academy Archives" in fall 2019 and fall 2020, data visualizations, profiles of Chinese students, and alumni voices.

The project director is Paige Roberts, director of archives and special collections, Phillips Academy, Andover, Massachusetts. The site was built by Xiao Li in 2021. Generous funding was provided by the Abbot Academy Fund and an anonymous donor. The project was inspired by work in 2016-2017 of MIT Professor Emma Teng: <<http://chinacomestomit.org>>. For more information, contact <[archives@andover.edu](mailto:archives@andover.edu)>.

### Mass Eye and Ear's Abraham Pollen Archives Awarded Second Round of Advancing Open Knowledge Grant Funding

In 2021, the Abraham Pollen Archives (APA) of Mass Eye and Ear (MEE) was awarded a place among the inaugural cohort of Advancing Open Knowledge Grant recipients with the project "Uncovering the Diverse History of Massachusetts Eye and Ear." The project, generously funded by Harvard Library, supported hundreds of hours of research in MEE's collections and beyond, resulting in short biographies of many pioneering women and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in medicine, dozens of newly digitized images, and critical outreach around diversity, from articles and social media posts to providing the Otolaryngology Department with material for a proposed conference room mural.





Left to right: Chentung Liang Cheng, Phillips Academy class of 1882 (later Chinese ambassador to the United States); Chinese students at Andover, 1907; Mary Sun, Abbot Academy class of 1926.

The APA is thrilled to announce that they have been awarded a second round of Advancing Open Knowledge grant funding. In this upcoming phase, the archivist will focus on creating records in ArchivesSpace, conducting oral histories with living pioneers, and building a CURIOSity site to give the project an online home.

For more information, please contact Archivist Vanessa Formato <[vanessa\\_formato@meei.harvard.edu](mailto:vanessa_formato@meei.harvard.edu)>.

### New Head of Archives and Special Collections at Mount Holyoke College

Deborah Richards was promoted to head of archives and special collections at Mount Holyoke College in early December 2021. She previously worked as the special collections archivist at Mount Holyoke College and the assistant archivist at Smith College.

### New Name for UMass Amherst Special Collections

In October 2021, University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy announced a new name for the Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA): the Robert S. Cox Special Collections and University Archives Research Center. Renaming the de-

partment for Rob Cox, SCUA's energetic and influential department head from 2004 until his death in May 2020, and positioning it as a UMass Amherst research center reflects and extends SCUA's mission to serve and support researchers, scholars, students, and more.

Under Cox's leadership, the department's collections increased fourfold, and its philosophy of collecting and access sharpened. SCUA focuses its collecting in four main areas: UMass, New England, innovation and entrepreneurship, and social change, the latter encompassing an ever-growing array of movements as well as the connections between and among movements and the flow of people, organizations, and ideas.



Chancellor Kumble R. Subbaswamy at the UMass Amherst Libraries fall reception, October 2021. Photo by Ben Barnhart.

For more about the name change, go to <<https://www.umass.edu/news/article/umass-amherst-libraries-unveil-new-name-and-fund-special-collections-and-university>>. Visit the department's website at <<http://scua.library.umass.edu>> or contact Caroline White at <[cjwhite@umass.edu](mailto:cjwhite@umass.edu)> for more information.

## NEW HAMPSHIRE

### Pease Public Library Receives NH State Library ARPA Grant Funding

The Pease Public Library in Plymouth, New Hampshire, is pleased to announce that it has been awarded \$11,800 in funding through the Institute for Museum and Library Services' "Grants to States" program. The grant program is part of the American Rescue Act Plan of 2021 and is being facilitated by the New Hampshire State Library.

The Pease Public Library will use this grant award to purchase a BookEye5 v3 Pro Color Scantastik Book Scanner with a book cradle and a touchscreen monitor. This will allow fragile monographs depicting local history and culture to be digitally preserved and more widely examined by scholars and genealogists.

The Pease Public Library's goal is to begin using the BookEye5 scanner to scan its most delicate materials in

February 2022. Visit the Pease Public Library's website at <<https://www.peasepubliclibrary.org>> or contact <[pease@peasepubliclibrary.org](mailto:pease@peasepubliclibrary.org)>.

## OTHER NEWS

### National Archives to Launch 1950 Census on April 1, 2022

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) recently announced that they will release records from the 1950 Census this spring. Due to a 72-year access restriction, the most recently available census to date is 1940. Beginning April 1, 2022, users will be able to access 1950 Census records through a free public website, a link to which will be posted at <<https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1950>>. Additionally, the records will be available via Amazon Web Services' (AWS) Registry of Open Data <<https://registry.opendata.aws>>. The digitized records will include 1950 Census population schedules for U.S. states and territories, enumeration district maps, and enumeration district descriptions. The records will be searchable by name and location, as well as by Indian Reservation for form P8 Indian Reservation Schedules. Users will be able to help improve the accuracy and accessibility of the digital census records by submitting name updates to the index using a transcription tool that will be available on the 1950 Census website. For more information, contact <[inquire@nara.gov](mailto:inquire@nara.gov)>. ■



Campus Duckboards. In these 1938 photographs by Adrian Bouchard, students use wooden "duckboards" to navigate the green during mud season. *Courtesy of Dartmouth College Library.*

## NEA Board Member Spotlight



**Name:**

Caitlin Birch

**Board member title:**

Vice president/president elect

**Affiliated Institution:**

Dartmouth College

**Job title:**

Assistant Archivist for Digital Collections

**How did you become interested in the archival field?**

I worked in print journalism during and after college, and although I loved a lot of things about the field, I knew after a few years that it wasn't going to be the right long-term career for me. In thinking about what I wanted to do next and reflecting on what I liked most about journalism—its role in forming the historical record, the centrality of storytelling, the opportunity to research and to make information widely available—I stumbled upon archives as a career. Soon I was leaving my newspaper job and off to grad school.

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

At Dartmouth I'm the assistant archivist for digital collections, so much of my focus is on how we acquire, process, preserve, discover, access, and use born-digital archives and manuscripts. Broadly speaking, though, I'm interested in archival ethics, labor issues, mentoring, community archives, and advocacy and public engagement as critical competencies in archives work.

**What is your role on the board and what are your responsibilities?**

I'm the vice president/president elect, though by the time you read this I may have moved into the presidency (as every VP does). My responsibilities while VP include assisting the president with leadership of

the board and laying the foundation for the Fall 2022 Symposium and Spring 2023 Meeting (NEA's fiftieth anniversary). I've also used my year as VP to lead the creation of a comprehensive guidebook for NEA leaders, which I hope will make it easier for new volunteers to serve in NEA and to confidently pursue initiatives that benefit NEA members.

**What do you enjoy about being on the board?**

I served as secretary on the board from 2016 to 2020, and while it was nice to take a year's break, coming back as VP has been a rewarding experience. The people who make up NEA's board and committees are smart, passionate, creative, and dedicated to making the field a better place for New England's archives workers. What I have always looked forward to during my time on the board and will continue to look forward to as I move into the presidency is collaborating with such a good crew.

**What do you hope to accomplish while on the board?**

I hope to continue efforts that are already underway to increase NEA's organizational sustainability and resilience. We're living and working through very challenging times, and that requires creativity and adaptation from organizations like NEA that are entirely volunteer-run. A healthy organization is a precursor to everything else, and there's a lot I hope to accomplish in good health. Most significantly, I hope to champion NEA's advocacy role. As individual archives workers it's tough to move the needle on any of the issues that affect us, but as a collective we have power. When the board discusses a problem, when panelists at a symposium or meeting highlight a challenge, when members raise a concern, I want the first question to be "How can the collective power in NEA change this?" and for the answer to become action.

**What do you see as the most pressing challenge to archives? Also for NEA?**

The most pressing challenges to archives and to NEA are one and the same for me: labor issues. Shrinking staffs, reliance on term and temporary positions, unpaid internships, low salaries combined with high cost of education—all of these take a toll on archives workers, archives organizations, and archives themselves. Labor issues create a field where it can be difficult to

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## ARCHIVAL INSIGHT

## A Glimpse Into the Past: How Magic Lantern Slides Helped Shape Society

By Jessica Levy

**M**agic lantern slides (MLS), those small plates of glass depicting diverse scenes from bygone times, are again gaining interest in the modern era. MLS were, and continue to be, a medium for carrying embedded information that sheds light on social issues, cultural heritage, optics, illusions, education, and entertainment. Acting as billboards of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, businesses often projected advertisements onto exterior building walls with the aid of a lantern as a means to advertise to the public at large. MLS also played an integral role in academia, performance practice, religious and political propaganda, and social reform.

Today, academic disciplines such as film and media studies, art history, and the study of optics are incorporating MLS into their research.<sup>1</sup> An intern at the Yosemite National Park Service opined that glass lantern images are more interesting than standard photographs, since glass lantern slides essentially revolutionized photography by providing the ability for groups of people to come together and view images projected onto a large screen or wall. This was quite groundbreaking, since it enabled people to share images in large groups, rather than having to view them individually or in a small group.<sup>2</sup>

An informational and inspirational guide to the MLS is *A Million Pictures: Magic Lantern Slides in the History of Learning*, which is essentially a how-to guide for aspiring historians and information professionals on how to view, read, analyze, digitize, preserve, and ultimately share these historical gems with the public. It is a call-to-action of sorts, in that it inspires its readers to get involved with MLS, whether it's at the academic, scientific, theatrical, technological and/or cultural heritage level. Sarah Dellmann, author and co-editor of *A Million Pictures*, suggests that MLS can be used "as a cultural heritage approach to invite fundamental research and deductive research methods."<sup>3</sup> However, in order to implement an organized, easily accessible, and user-friendly method for discovering and utilizing this historic medium, one must first examine the actual and potential hurdles that this work entails.

MLS are often referred to as "pre-cinema," which is a label that often has negative connotations tied to it. To simply refer to MLS as "pre-cinema" is to ignore and take for granted the importance of the ingenuity, innovation, and usefulness of the medium. Though MLS are containers em-

bedded with information, often they are not recognized as their own media format.

*And yet there is still magic in the physical slide, in the one-on-one contact with the object out of context that sparks those deeply personal and delightfully enchanting experiences.*<sup>4</sup>

A poor understanding of the historical objects, coupled with a lack of access to relevant source material, creates the potential risk for MLS and their apparatuses to become obsolete and eventually forgotten. Dellmann, a film and media historian whose interests include the magic lantern, early cinema, and documentation of cultural heritage and research methodologies, emphasizes the importance of academic research as a means to promote awareness of and access to MLS.<sup>5</sup> Further, Dellmann asserts that "[i]f researchers, artists and interested people cannot access the material (or are unaware of its existence), demand for knowledge about the objects will not increase. And if demand and knowledge stay limited, the documentation of the objects will not advance, which in turn will not improve conditions of access. These entangled problems [. . .] can only be overcome when academic researchers and archival practitioners join forces [. . .]."<sup>6</sup>

Similarly, Frank Kessler, professor of media history at Utrecht University and director of the Research Institute of Cultural Inquiry (ICON), explained that "[t]he exploration of this field, which is still at its beginnings, can yield many insights relevant to different disciplines and cultural institutions. The present volume [*A Million Pictures*] can hopefully contribute to this and stimulate further research."<sup>7</sup> Additionally, Kessler noted that "[i]t is fundamental for any

field of historical studies to have primary source material available, and secondary sources that have started to assess, analyse and interpret primary sources, thereby constituting a scholarly discourse on which others can build their own work.”<sup>8</sup> Kessler adds that there is a lack of “specialized public institutions dedicated exclusively or primarily to the magic lantern, as there are for cinema.”<sup>9</sup> Therefore, given the current interest in reading, digitizing and preserving MLS, the possibility exists for increased awareness of, and scholarly research into, this innovative and versatile medium.

### Controversial, Scholarly, and Pragmatic: Content Analysis of MLS

According to authors Francisco Javier Frutos-Esteban and Carmen Lopez-San Segundo, content analysis is essentially a method that is used to organize and classify content that is based on reading messages as a tool to gather information.<sup>10</sup> The authors set forth seven steps to achieving content analysis, which include: formulating objectives; formulating a hypothesis; determining which variables are relevant and/or critical; making relevant variables operative; devising a codebook and the coding form; selecting a sample group of MLS to encode; and checking the reliability of the coding procedure.<sup>11</sup>

Juliette Wood acknowledges that MLS can be controversial as well as pragmatic. She explains how the slides were used as a “. . . technique favoured by religious and temperance movements in the latter part of the nineteenth century.”<sup>12</sup> Wood also touches on an interesting aspect of MLS: they were often used to educate adults for the purpose of

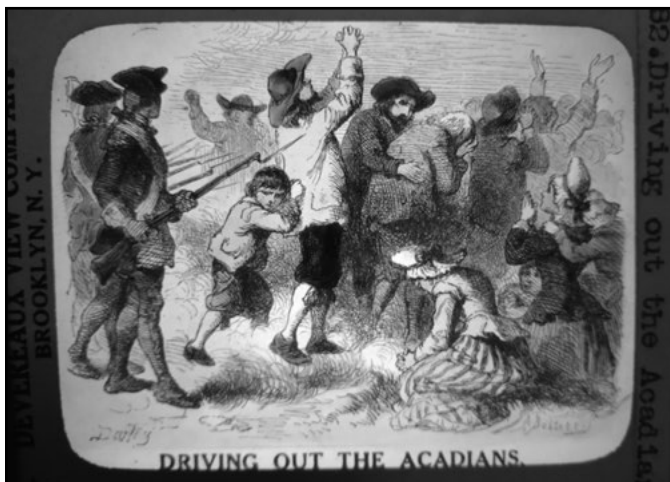
“improving both the middle and lowers [sic] classes of Victorian society.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, MLS were used as public service announcements in that they were used to illustrate “cautionary maxims aimed at inducing good behaviour, not unlike modern adverts against drunk-driving and smoking.”<sup>14</sup>

### MLS and Social Reform

For some, MLS played an important role in promoting the need for social reform. Jacob A. Riis, an immigrant who knew too well the horrors of living in squalor with cramped living quarters that often had little light or ventilation, tried to get his social reform message out. However, many newspapers were not interested in publishing his photographs—and the general population was not interested in viewing them. Tenacious as he was, Riis found a way to get his message out to the public: he turned to the magic lantern. He projected his images onto a wall while providing a charismatic narrative documenting the social issues of the day and stressing the need for action. Riis was essentially the founder of the documentary film, and although heartbreaking, his images created awareness about the poverty and inhumane living conditions many immigrants were forced to endure. Eventually, however, Riis’s work paid off when it led to the passing of the New York State Tenement House Act, which was written in 1867 and enforced in 1901.<sup>15</sup>

### MLS and Mental Illness

MLS were also used as medical tools. In her article “Picture Me Sane: Photography and the Magic Lantern in



Driving Out the Acadians. This magic lantern slide was created by the Devereaux View Company, Brooklyn, New York. *Courtesy of the personal collection of Jessica Levy.*



Penn Series: Penn seeks to liberate other friends imprisoned. This magic lantern slide was made from a mural by Violet Oakley. It depicts William Penn with imprisoned Quakers. *Courtesy of the personal collection of Jessica Levy.*

a Nineteenth-Century Asylum,” Emily Godbey refers to Thomas Storey Kirkbride, a physician and the founder of the Pennsylvania Hospital for the Insane (PHI).<sup>16</sup> Kirkbride believed that showing picture lantern slides to patients would cure their mental illness. He projected slides of landscapes and architecture from near and far as a means to relax the patients’ minds and lessen the symptoms of obsessive thoughts. Notably, the PHI was for wealthy folks, and patients enjoyed such freedoms as wearing their own clothes, rather than uniforms, and sitting together with the staff during MLS shows.

### MLS and Racism

MLS projected images that illuminated existing social and cultural biases and prejudices. For example, in an effort to save “vanishing cultures,” Frank Speck, professor of anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, studied the cultures of America’s Indigenous peoples. He soon realized that Indigenous people and their cultures were not vanishing, per se, but rather they were *restructuring* how

they defined “Indianness.”<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, many of the lantern slides in Speck’s collection have little, if any, identifying information. This makes it difficult to accurately depict the lives of Indigenous peoples and, as a result, leads to “flawed and fragmentary assumptions about Indigenous people and communities.”<sup>18</sup>

Similarly, Cheryl Thompson and Emilie Jabouin discuss the history of blackface in Canada, as they set forth to create a process of “unpacking” rather than “reacting” to what they refer to as “difficult imagery.”<sup>19</sup> The authors explain that when reading and unpacking images depicting blackface, it is essential to “engage with secondary sources . . . to understand the sociocultural context of their production,” and to ask questions concerning the details of each image.

### Appraising MLS

Attempting to determine the historic and monetary value of MLS appears to be a bit of a mystery. While objects such as postcards, sports memorabilia, and antiques often have books and articles dedicated to valuation, no such resource currently exists for MLS. As a result, other methods need to be utilized in order to properly value this unique medium.

In “The Archival Appraisal of Slide Collections at Cornell University,”<sup>20</sup> Liz Muller and Marsha Taichman provide a useful, easy-to-follow framework for appraising MLS. First, it is necessary to determine the provenance of the object. Second, the uniqueness of the object impacts



Benjamin Franklin at the court of Louis XVI. This lithograph by Elmer Boyd Smith was made into a magic lantern slide by the Devereaux View Company, Brooklyn, New York. *Courtesy of the personal collection of Jessica Levy.*



Skating Scene with Numerous Figures on the Ice and an Island Fort. This magic lantern slide, made by Allison Spence, Northampton, Massachusetts, depicts part of *Skating Scene*, by Antoni Van Stralen (circa 1594–1641). *Courtesy of the personal collection of Jessica Levy.*

the value of a slide. For instance, a mass-produced MLS would have a lower value than one that has a single copy or few copies. Next, the significance of a depicted scene or its creator may also have an impact on the lantern slide's value. Naturally, the condition of the object is important to determining value, and finally, whether there is a need for the particular slide. For example, an appraiser might want to know whether the slide has any educational importance or relevance to particular cultural heritage groups or communities.

Fortunately, the study of MLS is experiencing a heightened level of interest. Although in its infancy, the encouraging trend indicates that further study of these slides may lead to a resurgence of the "magic" that once emanated from this innovative technology. Today, projects like *A Million Pictures* are inspiring others to find, research, discuss, write about, reuse, and share MLS. The possibility exists for these historic gems to make a comeback, where they may finally obtain the respect and historical accolades they deserve.

*When we hold a magic lantern slide in our hand, then what we have is just one single piece of a multi-dimensional historical puzzle, which, as a whole, we will hardly ever be capable of piecing together. Yet, we may be able to map parts of it, to create pockets of knowledge, as it were, that can help us to get a better grasp of what at least some parts of the puzzle may have looked like.*<sup>21</sup> ■

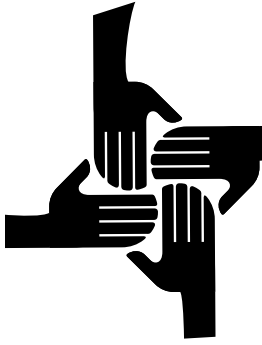


Jessica Levy is a graduate student at Simmons University, where she is working towards her degree in library and information science. Her interests include magic lantern slides, vintage postcards, and photographs from all eras. She is a graduate of Mount Holyoke College, where she earned a BA in history, and of Western New England College School of Law, where she earned her JD. She looks forward to her graduation from Simmons University, which is planned for December 2022.

*Editor's Note: Jessica Levy adapted this article from her independent study on magic lantern slides at Simmons University Graduate School of Library and Information Science. She thanks her supervisors, professors Peter Botticelli and Donia Conn.*

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# From IDEAs to Action

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

Data and Insights from the New England Archivists Contingent Employment Study

*By Stephanie Bredbenner*

In our spring 2021 *Newsletter* article, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee announced the second iteration of our Contingent Employment Study which, along with the data from the first study in 2016 <[tinyurl.com/contingent2016](http://tinyurl.com/contingent2016)>, collected and analyzed qualitative and quantitative data about the extent, qualities, and impact of contingent employment in the archival field in New England. For the purposes of the study, we defined contingent employment as “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, such as vacation time, health insurance, retirement contributions, etc.”

Contingent Employment Study Task Force members Alison Fulmer, Kimberly Barzola, Meghan Rinn, Rose Oliveira, and chair Stephanie Bredbenner created a survey which asked about term lengths, salaries, benefits, morale, the impact of contingent employment on workers’ personal and professional lives, the COVID-19 pandemic, and diversity, equity, and inclusion. The survey received eighty-three responses from current and former archival workers who had been contingently employed in the last ten years. We also conducted fifteen interviews and analyzed over 250 job postings for positions that were either in New England or remote.

We now have a detailed, nuanced picture of contingent employment in New England over the past fifteen years. In this article, we will provide a brief overview of the study’s results. (The full report, “Nothing About It Was Better Than a Permanent Job”: Report of the New England Archivists Contingent Employment Study Task Force, was shared

on the NEA listserv on March 3, 2022, and is available at <[tinyurl.com/contingent2022](http://tinyurl.com/contingent2022)>). We also hope to present our findings to the NEA membership at a future spring meeting or a separate, dedicated event. Finally, we plan to prepare a journal article for publication in order to share our work with the broader professional community.

A common narrative in our field is that new professionals must “pay their dues” or “get their foot in the door” by being contingently employed for a few years. However, the study found that for many archival workers, the path to stable employment is not short, simple, or linear. Long periods of contingent employment are the norm for many of our colleagues, not just new professionals. 18% of survey respondents said they had been contingently employed for five to seven years over the course of their career, and for nearly 17%, it was eight years or more. 71% had held multiple positions simultaneously since entering the field, and nearly 22% had three or more jobs simultaneously at some point in their career.

Many survey respondents struggled with unemployment and finding any job in the field, even contingent positions. 36% said they had a period of unemployment between jobs. More than 50% had held jobs outside the field since entering the profession. When asked why they took a job outside their field of choice, most said they needed the money or couldn’t find a position in the field. Moreover, finding a non-contingent position is no guarantee of permanent stability. Of respondents who had landed a permanent gig at some point in their career, nearly 40% still ended up contingently employed afterwards. One respondent wrote: “[Contingent employment] isn’t a mandatory stepping stone or a rite of passage. It is often the best option between employment and unemployment.”

Contingent employment negatively affects the lives and careers of archival workers in myriad ways, including financial precarity, lack of access to health insurance,

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low morale, burnout, and instability in their careers and personal lives. Of the 207 jobs reported in the survey, excluding student jobs and internships, 40% did not provide any benefits. When asked which aspects of contingent employment they disliked, nearly 87% said financial insecurity, and 84% said that contingent employment made it difficult for them to plan for their future professionally and personally. Nearly 63% said that their physical or mental health was negatively affected by contingent employment.

We discovered a significant difference in the experiences of new professionals compared to mid-career and late-career respondents. Of people who had been in the field for eleven years or more, 61% had one or two contingent positions over the course of their entire careers, and 38% had only one contingent position. However, of people who had been in the field for between four and six years, 50% had already had three or more contingent positions. Among new professionals who had been in the field for less than four years, around 20% had already had three or more contingent jobs.

These figures demonstrate a few things. Firstly, they suggest that contingent employment has become worse in our field over time, not better. Secondly, for many new archivists, the first few years of their careers are incredibly unstable. How can they be expected to develop as professionals when they have to juggle multiple part-time positions or go through the process of finding a new job every year or two? How are they receiving meaningful job experience, let alone mentorship? Some respondents also noted that they had to relocate multiple times in a short period of time, which adds an additional level of stress and financial strain.

It is possible that these statistics suffer from survivorship bias, as they may not reflect the experiences of mid-career and late-career workers who left the field due to the instability of protracted contingent employment. If that is the case, it only demonstrates the troubling consequences of the continual overreliance on contingent employment in our field. Contingent employment continues to threaten the sustainability of the archival profession. 37% had considered leaving the field because of contingent employment, and among people who had been in the field for less than four years, it was 40%. Meanwhile, only 16% of respondents who had been in the field for

more than seventeen years had considered leaving the field due to contingent employment.

The chronic overreliance on contingent employment in our field is a barrier to a more diverse profession. One respondent wrote: “My contingent employment experience ultimately made me decide that libraries and archives are really no place for me as a woman or queer identifying person of color. I know there are needs for representation, but asking people to be the first or the few, only to give them no real support and only offer contingent employment, is cruel and exploitative.” Low pay, poor benefits, and inadequate training and mentorship are frequent issues that do not foster a supportive, inclusive professional environment for people from diverse backgrounds. A few said their contingent status made them feel vulnerable to hostility at work, or that they feared their contracts would not be renewed if they spoke up about workplace issues. One wrote, “Being in a residency position as one of a few BIPOC employees at my org meant I felt I was in a ‘marked’ position on staff.”

We hope that by collecting data and sharing our results, we can help our profession reckon with the fact that continual overreliance on contingent employment presents an existential threat to archival workers and the long-term sustainability of our profession. Our forthcoming report contains actionable items for NEA, as well as steps that individuals and employers can take to support our contingently employed colleagues. We believe that if we work together, we can effect change and make a better profession for those who will come after us. ■

## Racial Justice Honoraria Fund Now Accepting Submissions

NEA is now accepting applications for the Racial Justice Honoraria Fund! The fund supports people of color for their writing, research, and expertise about race, diversity, equity, marginalized communities, and other issues relating to racial justice and archives, broadly conceived. Possible projects include NEA *Newsletter* articles, research projects to be presented at an NEA meeting, workshops or other programming. For more information about how to apply or donate to fund, visit <<https://newenglandarchivists.org/Racial-Justice-Honoraria-Fund>>.

Questions? Email <[diversity@newenglandarchivists.org](mailto:diversity@newenglandarchivists.org)>.

# NEA Roundtable Updates

## Teaching with Primary Sources Roundtable Holds Weekly Chats

The TPS Roundtable continues to hold its weekly chats (Thursdays, 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.), which are a great opportunity to connect with colleagues across the region, whether you're a current practitioner of teaching with primary sources or just interested in learning more and connecting to this community of practice.

This winter we've welcomed new members to the group and new visitors from across the country to our weekly chats. Topics have included regular updates on COVID-19 planning and reading rooms, advancements in hybrid teaching and learning, and digital projects.

To join or learn more about the TPS Roundtable, contact co-chairs Pam Hopkins <[psmhopkins@gmail.com](mailto:psmhopkins@gmail.com)> and Heather Moran <[heather.moran@maine.gov](mailto:heather.moran@maine.gov)>. ■

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enter, difficult to progress, and difficult to stay over time; where workers have little bandwidth to serve in organizations like NEA; and where it is increasingly complicated to responsibly steward collections and meet the needs of user communities. I'm passionate about NEA service because I believe NEA has a big role to play in labor issues, so lest I sound defeated let me say clearly: we can make it better, together.

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

An unexpected talent: from age ten until my early 20s, I was in a performing handbell choir (google it!), and we were pretty good.

### What are your hopes for the archival profession?

I hope the archival profession makes significant progress on the labor front. I hope that our progress there leads to progress elsewhere: that we become a field that deeply values and depends upon the diverse identities, lived experiences, and expertise of our workers and users; and that we seek and find new avenues for engagement and relevance in the wider world. ■



Sir William Osler (second row, fourth from the left), famous as a founding professor at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and for establishing the idea of medical residency, visits the unfinished Peter Bent Brigham Hospital in Boston on April 30, 1913. An unofficial opening dedication of the hospital was put together in his honor. The Brigham's first Physician-in-Chief, Henry A. Christian (on Osler's right), and First Surgeon-in-Chief, Harvey Cushing (second on his left), trained at Johns Hopkins under Osler and carried his ideas and education standards to Harvard's new teaching hospital. Photographed on the front steps, this is the first ever photograph of a Peter Bent Brigham Hospital staff. From the hospital archives, the original print, 22" x 28", is treasured as a founding document of the Brigham and Women's Hospital. *Courtesy of the Brigham and Women's Hospital Archives, Center for the History of Medicine, Countway Library, Harvard Medical School.*

**Name:**

Amy M. Johnson

**Affiliated Institution:**

Historical Society of Santuit &amp; Cotuit

**Job title:**

Administrator &amp; Archivist

**Career stage:**

Early career

**How did you become interested in the archival field?**

I became interested and involved in the archival field by way of happenstance. I was furloughed from my previous position, and that sparked my thinking about a career change. I've always wanted to work at a museum, so I decided to apply to my current position, and as luck would have it, I got the job! My love for reading paired with my interest in history made me confident that I would like working in the archival field. I enjoy visiting museums and cultural institutions and taking part in local history events. Being able to plan and implement some of the activities and events I've enjoyed so much is a total dream come true. The archival field is a natural fit for me, and I feel like I am finally beginning to find myself professionally.

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

I'm interested in learning and exploring the world of digital preservation. It's definitely important to make content available in a variety of formats, including online, especially in the current technology-driven environment. Learning best practices for how to digitize both our current museum collection and native digital content is a goal of mine.

**What piqued your interest about New England Archivists?**

As someone fairly new to the archival field in general, I was searching for resources to further familiarize myself with industry trends and best practices. I was pleased to see so many professional development and networking opportunities through NEA.

**What are you looking forward to about your new membership?**

I can't wait to partake in some of the mentoring opportunities and roundtable groups. Interacting with other archive and museum professionals will be an invaluable opportunity for me considering I don't have a traditional background in the field.

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

During the first part of 2020, I was searching for safe activities to do and came across the Little Free Library map online. Hunting for Little Free Libraries quickly became an obsession. It's fun to see the reading interests of others, as well as searching for those diamond-in-the-rough books that are hidden amongst the shelves. I'm fairly certain I visited all the Little Free Libraries on Cape Cod. I even kayaked with my brother and dad out to Onset Island to visit one.

**What are your hopes for the archival profession?**

I realized that many people don't understand what I do at my job. I hope that more people, especially the younger generations, become aware of the importance of stewardship and preservation.

**What challenges have you observed so far in your career?**

Challenges I have observed so far in my career are working primarily alone and learning as I go. I came into my position after working for about eight years in arts administration with a large group of colleagues. While some of my skills are directly transferable between fields, I have many questions. Although I've done quite a bit of on-the-job and online learning to become a better asset to my organization, one of the greatest challenges is not always having face-to-face communication. This is why the opportunities available to me through NEA are extremely beneficial. ■

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**THIS SEASON IN NEW ENGLAND HISTORY**



Mount Holyoke College Calendar, 1899. April page featuring a view of Safford Hall from the northwest. *Courtesy of Mount Holyoke College Archives and Special Collections.*