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NEA

# NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND ARCHIVISTS



**C O V E R**—Andrew Shadbegian and his buddies show off their muscles at Nantasket Beach, Hull, Massachusetts, circa 1930s. Their human pyramid demonstrates not only the strength of their leg and shoulder muscles but their trust in each other and their collaborative spirit. *Courtesy of Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives, Inc.*

**I N S I D E**— NEA President Caitlin Birch writes her first column (page 6) and shares her hopes for NEA's future (page 12); Perkins School for the Blind gives tips for print, image, and social media accessibility (page 4); Brian Matzke of Central Connecticut State University describes efforts to improve access to the archives of Mike Alewitz (page 14); Juliana Kuipers receives the 2022 Distinguished Service Award (page 18); repositories around New England share their news (page 7); Inclusion and Diversity Committee (IDC) Chair, Jeanne Lowrey introduces herself (page 19); the IDC recommends antiracist and anti-oppressive readings and resources (page 16); and Vanessa Formato shares thoughts on community in From the Editors (page 3).

**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](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

- Vanessa Formato

In the Netflix comedy *BoJack Horseman*, the titular character writes an apology note. "In this terrifying world, all we have are the connections that we make." As archivists and as people, we cannot forget how our communities sustain us nor the duty of care that we owe those communities in return. In times where we may feel disempowered, we can reach for each other.

Our July 2022 issue focuses on the ways we care for our communities, including through times of change and unrest. In her presidential address (page 12) and her first Inside NEA column (page 6), Caitlin Birch reflects on how her NEA connections have shaped her as an archivist and how she plans to challenge convention and build a stronger organization during her term. Jen Hale, Susanna Coit, and Jennifer Arnott give practical advice on accessibility so that we can better support users who are blind (page 4), and Brian Matzke announces Central Connecticut State University's efforts to enhance access to the archives of longtime muralist and activist Mike Alewitz (page 14). On page 18,

Emily Atkins celebrates 2022 Distinguished Service Award recipient Juliana Kuipers' years of service to NEA.

In *From IDEAs to Action*, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee (IDC) shares its newly updated list of anti-racist and anti-oppressive readings and resources (page 16), and new IDC chair Jeanne Lowrey introduces herself in a Spotlight (page 19). And as always, catch up with our colleagues across New England in our News and Notes (page 7).

The *Newsletter* is made possible by all of you. Please reach out to us with your article pitches, news, photographs, and ideas at <newsletter@newenglandarchivists.org>. 📧

## It's Your Newsletter: Contribute!

The *NEA Newsletter* always needs news from your archives and other archives in New England, about NEA members, and about upcoming events. We also need people to write reviews, long articles, and session reports for NEA meetings. If you have any ideas for articles, etc., please contact an editor.

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# ARCHIVAL INSIGHT

## Accessibility 101: Print, Photo, and Social Media Tips

By Jennifer Arnott, Susanna Coit, and Jen Hale

As inclusion, diversity, and equity endeavors are being pushed to the forefront, accessibility must be part of these efforts. There exists a wide disparity in access to cultural heritage resources, particularly online, for users who are blind or visually impaired. The following best practices guide the Perkins School for the Blind Archives and Hayes Research Library staff as we work to provide more equitable access to our resources. Tips for accessible text, images, and social media are provided.

### TEXT

Text with simple formatting is often the most flexible accessibility option for many users. The first and best thing you can do to improve text accessibility is to provide key information about the text up front. This is often particularly relevant to email and handouts.

- Choose a meaningful title or subject line that accurately describes the topic.
- Identify who is providing the information up front, without making someone find a footer or signature.
- Briefly restate the topic or question early in the email, to make it easy for someone to understand the context of your answer.

If you are transcribing lengthy material or including extensive details, provide a summary first, then put the longer text at the end of the email or in an attached file. This allows a screen reader user to remind themselves of the basics without listening to the entire text.

### FORMATTING AND STYLES

Using styles in your document creates structure and navigation options that help a wide variety of readers. It's a much more accessible choice than changing the font, size, or paragraph spacing manually.

- Use headers to structure text and allow screen reader users to navigate from section to section.
- Create blank lines between paragraphs with styles (rather than hitting the enter or return key twice). This reduces audio clutter for screen reader users.
- Use at least two methods of identifying required information, such as both a color and a textual cue. (For example: "Required information is in red with an

asterisk.") Some users may change display colors or layout to make the text accessible for them.

- PDFs often require editing for reading sequence and adding alt text to images.

### DESCRIPTIVE LINK TEXT

Screen readers can navigate from link to link, but link text that says "click here" or "go to the page" is baffling out of context. Instead, use the link text to describe what someone will find at the link, such as "learn more about Laura Bridgman" or "Anne Sullivan's valedictory speech" as part of a sentence or longer description.

### TABLES AND FORMATTING

Tables present a particular challenge for screen readers, as well as those with dyslexia or some kinds of vision impairments that limit the range of vision.

- Use lists in preference to tables, if possible.
- If you must use a table, avoid merged or split cells.
- Use table tools to briefly describe the contents and add information about the table.

### MAKING IMAGES ACCESSIBLE

Describing images is fundamental to providing equitable access to visual content. Images published in digital collections, on websites, and embedded in documents should all be described. Doing so provides information presented visually to screen reader software that conveys this information to people who are blind or visually impaired. Without it, users with visual disabilities are needlessly excluded from these resources.

### WHERE TO START

Consider the purpose of the image and what the image is

about. An image used in a blog post versus a catalog entry for a digital collection will have a different purpose. Decide what the image is about. Is it a portrait, or is it documenting an activity? A portrait is about what someone looks like, where an activity will prioritize the actions documented. After these questions are answered, short descriptions, and, if appropriate, long descriptions should be created for the image.



Image courtesy of Perkins School for the Blind Archives.

### SHORT DESCRIPTIONS (ALT TEXT)

Alternative text, or “alt text,” is essential to making images online or embedded in documents accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired. Alt text is a means of describing or attributing meaning to non textual content. Without it, visual content is presented as “image” or “192f956a24\_o.jpg.”

- Provide meaningful text for all images by considering what the meaning or purpose of the image is. Some examples are provided below.
  - **Great:** Portrait of ten-year-old Helen Keller with her dog, circa 1890.
  - **Just OK:** Helen Keller with pet dog. (Because she had dogs most of her life, it is helpful to provide additional detail.)
  - **Avoid:** Image of 10-year-old Helen Keller with her dog, circa 1890. (“Image” is redundant in alt text. Use of formats is ok, such as “painting of.”)

### LONG DESCRIPTIONS

Long descriptions are used when alt text cannot provide enough detail. This could be a caption for a blog post or descriptions of digitized collections. Alt text must still be added to all images, even those with long descriptions. The Perkins Archives has recently updated our best practices

with the following considerations:

- Begin with one general informative sentence.
- The most important information should come first
- Describe general details and then provide specifics, selecting the most important content of the image and considering historical and cultural context.
- A long description of the Keller image:
  - Studio portrait of ten-year-old Helen Keller standing next to her dog. Keller, a white girl, is facing sideways next to a chair with a spaniel sitting on it, who is likely her dog Belle. She rests her left hand on the dog’s shoulder, her right hand is resting against the side of her dress in a fist, with one finger pointing downward. Keller wears a light-colored dress with a bow in the back and dark button-up boots.

The Keller photo example mentioned above can be accessed on the Perkins Archives Flickr Collection at <https://flic.kr/p/a89LtW>. ■



Jennifer Arnott is the research librarian at Perkins School for the Blind.



Susanna Coit is the archivist and research library assistant at Perkins School for the Blind.



Jen Hale is the lead archivist at Perkins School for the Blind.

# Inside NEA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Caitlin Birch



Not quite a decade ago, I was a second-year grad student nervously awaiting the start of my first NEA meeting. It was the fall of 2012, and NEA had, in a fortuitous move for me, chosen to meet at what was then Simmons College (now Simmons University). I had heard of NEA during my first year of study at Simmons, but it wasn't until the organization was at my doorstep that I decided to find out more. I was nervous enough heading into the meeting that I accidentally locked myself out of my apartment and showed up half-way through the morning's events, but by the end of the second day the nerves were gone, and I was caught up in the energy of NEA. Days later, I found myself planning with two other attendees what would soon become NEA's Roundtable for Early Professionals and Students, and I've been an NEA devotee ever since.



Students serving refreshments at an end-of-summer social event on campus, 1977. *Courtesy of University Archives and Special Collections, UMass Boston.*

As I've served over the years, I've received so much from each role I've held. I could write at length about skills built and knowledge gained, but what stands out most to me is the community I've found. With each role, I've met new colleagues, strengthened existing ties, and formed friendships. The community-building aspect of NEA came up repeatedly among attendees at several town hall discussions we held in May, and it's clear to me that as the organization moves into its next chapter, community must be at the center of what we do. I hope you've found community here, too, but if you're still seeking it or would like to be part of building it, take a first step: reach out to me at <president@newenglandarchivists.org>. You're part of the community I'm serving as I begin my presidency, the community I feel fortunate to know, and I'd love to explore how NEA can grow for and with you. ■



Saturday Evening Girls members pose with their club boat, circa 1899-1917. The Saturday Evening Girls was a club for young Italian and Jewish working-class immigrant women in Boston's North End at the beginning of the twentieth century. *Courtesy of University Archives and Special Collections, UMass Boston.*

# News and Notes

## CONNECTICUT

### Trinity College Launches Women and Gender Resource Action Center Records

On Tuesday, April 26, the Women and Gender Resource Action Center (WGRAC) and the Trinity College Archives celebrated the public opening of the WGRAC Records, now available at the Watkinson Library in Hartford, Connecticut. The event showcased the collection's contents—feminist publications, audio recordings of faculty lectures, and administrative files—and the forty-five years of WGRAC's activism on the formerly all-male campus of Trinity College. Long-time WGRAC director Laura Lockwood spoke about the continuing struggle for all women's rights.

Attracting more than thirty attendees, the event culminated a semester's worth of processing and cataloging. Newly-hired part-time processing archivist Amy FitzGerald worked to refolder and craft the finding aid in ArchivesSpace <<https://bit.ly/39EZbKm>>. Other staff and student workers appraised and cataloged more than 100 serial titles. To accession the collection, College Archivist Eric Stoykovich created a records transfer form, perhaps the first time that such a form has been utilized on Trinity's campus. More information about WGRAC <<https://www.trincoll.edu/wgrac>> and its archive <<https://bit.ly/3PvX503>> is available online or by contacting Eric Stoykovich at 860-297-2268 or <[eric.stoykovich@trincoll.edu](mailto:eric.stoykovich@trincoll.edu)>.



WGRAC Archives Opening (from above), Scheuch Atrium in Raether Library, Trinity College, April 26, 2022. Image courtesy of Angela Wolf, Director of Educational Media and Video Production (Trinity College).

## MAINE

### Maine Contemporary Archives Loans Technology Kits to Local Libraries

The Maine Contemporary Archives is piloting a program to lend technology kits to Maine libraries with van delivery. The Digitization Kit includes a ScanJig, Samsung Galaxy Tablet, and accessories. Libraries and archives can use these kits to digitize photos and documents or to create new audio-visual media. The Audio Recording Kit includes a Tascam D-40X Audio Recorder and accessories. The Audio Recording Kits can be used for recording interviews, soundscapes, and more. This is a great way for institutions to check out equipment before purchasing it to use in-house. Both kits include ideas and guidance for using the equipment to engage the community.

No institution is too small to participate in the Maine Contemporary Archives. We connect professionals across the state to technology, professional development opportunities, and a supportive network of other cultural heritage organizations! Find us at <<https://ourmainearchives.omeka.net>> or email us at <[maine-contemporary-archives@googlegroups.com](mailto:maine-contemporary-archives@googlegroups.com)>.

### NAHSL Conference *Turning the Tide* Scheduled for November 6-8, 2022

“Turning the tide” is a phrase that generally means a dramatic reversal is taking place. The ocean tide is a powerful force, often impossible to resist and beyond the strength of humans to turn back. That is why turning the tide is a metaphor for a complete reversal.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow described the turn of the tide as “the lowest ebb.” Many of us were at our lowest point in the last two years, feeling isolated, disconnected, and at times pessimistic. But with widespread vaccination stemming the onslaught of the COVID-19 virus, we feel as though life is turning around. We can gather again, visit loved ones and friends, and hold meetings in person. We are coming back winners, changing direction, and going forward. We have the opportunity to do this together as we gather in Portland, Maine, for this year's NAHSL (North Atlantic Health Sciences Libraries) Conference on November 6-8, 2022. Join us as we use our collective strength in *Turning the Tide*!

For more information on the conference and hotel, please visit <<https://www.nahsl2022.com>> or <<https://bit.ly/3wx11aQ>>.

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Cape Ann Museum Acquires the Ralph Maud/Charles Olson Library

The Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester, Massachusetts, has announced the acquisition of the Ralph Maud/Charles Olson Library from the Gloucester Writers Center. The collection, containing over 4,000 volumes, documents the reading and knowledge-building practices of change to renowned Gloucester-based poet Charles Olson, as well as the scholarly method of book collecting and bibliography by scholar and book collector Ralph Maud. Outside this collection's strength in highlighting Olson's works and process, the Ralph Maud/Charles Olson Library tells us much about the literary history of Cape Ann. Researchers will also be drawn to rare magazines and periodicals pertaining to the counterculture of the 1960s and works by numerous authors who visited, spent time in, and were inspired by the region. The Maud/Olson Library will be housed in the Janet & William Ellery James Center at the Cape Ann Museum Green. For more details and further information, read the full release at <<https://wfly.co/Fi3a9>>.

### Expanding the Vision of Teacher Training at Harvard

Archivists at the Harvard University Archives were excited to discover a collection hidden in plain sight in the stacks: a series of records documenting a teacher-training course for working with students who are blind or have limited vision in the early twentieth century. Chiefly the office files of Lotta Stetson Rand, the executive secretary for the course and a noted advocate for the welfare of blind and limited-vision people, the records document the development and administration of the course, including the recruitment of lecturers, selection of course readings, and transcripts and drafts of lectures given as part of the course. An online finding aid is available through the Harvard Library's HOLLIS for Archival Discovery: <<https://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hua23022/catalog>>. Contact Jennifer Pelose <[jennifer\\_pelose@harvard.edu](mailto:jennifer_pelose@harvard.edu)> for more information.

### From Inquiry to Action: Harvard Business School & the Case Method Opens at Baker Library Special Collections

Baker Library Special Collections at the Harvard Business School (HBS) is pleased to announce the opening of *From Inquiry to Action: Harvard Business School & The Case Method* <<https://www.library.hbs.edu/case-method>>, an exhibition marking the 100th anniversary of the teaching practice. Since the 1920s, HBS has been an innovative leader in the development and refinement of teaching with the case method, helping to shape business education programs and business leaders around the world. Drawing from materials in the HBS Archives, *From Inquiry to Action* examines the development of the case method during the foundational decades of HBS and the school's early contributions that have led to the enduring influence of this participant-centered teaching practice.

The exhibit will be on display until November 2022 in the North Lobby of Baker Library/Bloomberg Center and is open to the public Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-7 p.m., excepting most holidays. If you'd like further information, please reach out to us at <[specialcollectionsref@hbs.edu](mailto:specialcollectionsref@hbs.edu)>.

### Handel and Haydn Society of Boston Announces 200 Years of Concert Program Books

The Handel and Haydn Society of Boston is proud to make available to the public its collection of concert

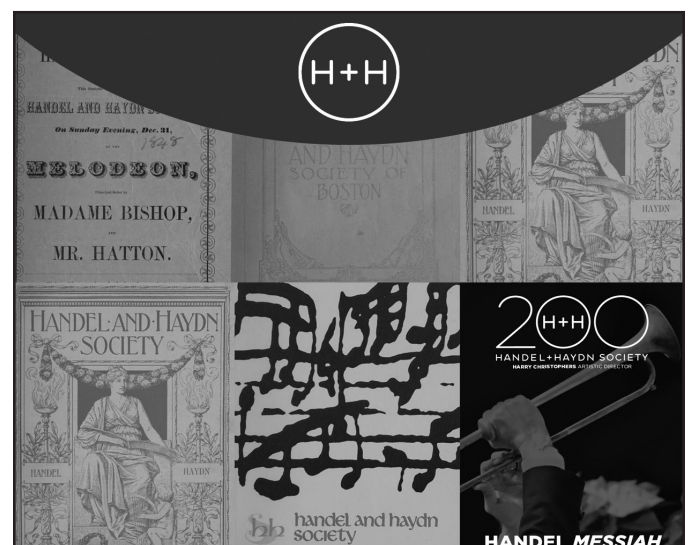


Photo collage of Handel and Haydn Society concert and program books. Courtesy of Handel and Haydn Society Archives.



program books going back more than 200 years. This archive, totaling 30,000 pages of historical material, is a treasure trove of both musical and social history in America, unmatched by any other arts organization in the country. Some of the biggest names in American music history appear on these pages, as well as important historic milestones. You can also see the programs from the American premieres of several major choral works, including Bach's *St Matthew Passion* and Verdi's *Requiem*.

Through our partnership with Digital Commonwealth at the Boston Public Library, the story this collection tells from 1815 through the summer of 2018 is available to browse at <<https://handelandhaydn.access.preservica.com>>. We are always adding more material and making improvements to the portal, so check back for updates! Contact <[archivist@handelandhaydn.org](mailto:archivist@handelandhaydn.org)> for more information.

## Harvard University Archives' Lammot du Pont Copeland Gallery Reopens with New Exhibit

The Harvard University Archives' (HUA) Lammot du Pont Copeland Gallery in Pusey Library has, after two years, reopened its doors to the public this spring with a new exhibition, *Still Singing: The Harvard Krokodiloes at 75*. This exhibition follows the "Kroks—Harvard's oldest a cappella chorus—through the past seventy-five years of singing and celebration of their continued dedication to performance. The exhibit is on view through Sunday, January 1, 2023, along with HUA's permanent exhibition, *Harvard Lives*, which showcases items from the HUA collections



Close up of Krokodiloes exhibit case. Photo credit: Emily Atkins, 2022. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

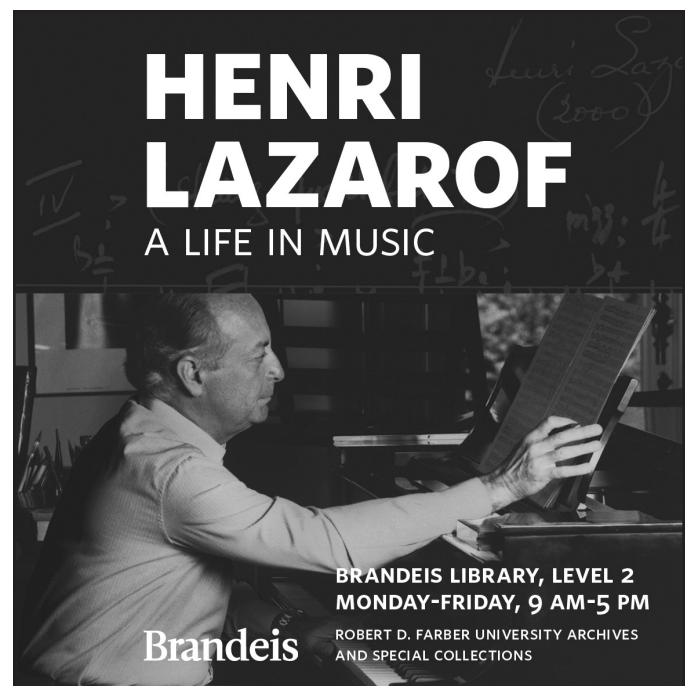


Photograph of the *Harvard Lives* exhibit gallery. Photo credit: Emily Atkins, 2020. Courtesy of the Harvard University Archives.

that represent aspects of the lives of some of the individuals who have shaped Harvard, and, in turn, been shaped by it. See the Harvard Library website <<https://library.harvard.edu/visitor-access>> for current access policies.

## Henri Lazarof Physical Exhibit Opens at Brandeis

In the fall, Brandeis University's Archives & Special Collections announced the launch of a new digital exhibit honoring the life of world-renowned composer, conduc-



Exhibition poster for *Henri Lazarof: A Life in Music*. Courtesy of the Robert D. Faber University Archives and Special Collections.

tor, musician, teacher, and Brandeis alumnus Henri Lazarof. We are so pleased to announce that the physical exhibit is now also open! It was always intended to be the other way around—can anyone guess what might have gotten in the way?

In this exhibit you will find photographs, posters, awards, programs, objects, documents, original manuscripts, and more, representing Lazarof's childhood; his musical education in Israel, Italy, and at Brandeis; and his career as a professor at UCLA and as an international composer.

The collection has been fully processed and is open to researchers. You can access full recordings and manuscript compositions on the Brandeis Distinctive Collections page <[tinyurl.com/k242x9ec](http://tinyurl.com/k242x9ec)>.

### Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives Launches New Programs

Since 1975, Project SAVE Armenian Photograph Archives has continued its mission to preserve and promote Armenian history through photographs. With new leadership and a dedicated team of photo archivists, Project SAVE is launching a number of ambitious programs to engage with different parts of the Armenian and non-Armenian communities. In March 2022, Project SAVE launched Conversations on Photography, a series of talks highlighting the power of photography. In 2023, Project SAVE will undertake an artist/scholarly residency program. We are also in the process of redesigning our website to be more interactive and offer more access to our collections to ensure such a vibrant heritage is seen and promoted.



Providence College graduate students with their exhibit *Redefining Reparations: The Struggle for Political, Economic and Social Equity for African Americans in Southern New England, 1960-1971*. Image courtesy of Megan Lessard, Media Support and Outreach Coordinator.

## R H O D E I S L A N D

### Providence College Welcomes New Archivist and Launches Student-Curated Exhibit

Providence College Archives and Special Collections (PC ASC) is pleased to welcome our new collections archivist, Hilary Gunnels. Hilary joined the staff at the Phillips Memorial Library in April, filling a newly-created role to coordinate collections management and support access to the archives.

The PC ASC is also excited to promote a student-curated exhibit, *Redefining Reparations: The Struggle for Political, Economic and Social Equity for African Americans in Southern New England, 1960-1971*, on display through summer 2022. Graduate students in HIS 770: Civil Rights & Black Power in America used collections including the records of the Urban League of Rhode Island and the Providence NAACP, and the papers of former Providence Mayor, Joseph A. Doorley, Jr., to create their exhibit. Students also documented their research process and findings during a weekly takeover of the library's social media (Instagram and Twitter, <[@library\\_pc](https://twitter.com/library_pc)>).

For more information, contact Michelle Chiles, head of archives and special collections at <[pcarchives@providence.edu](mailto:pcarchives@providence.edu)>.



Providence College Archives and Special Collections' new collections archivist, Hilary Gunnels.

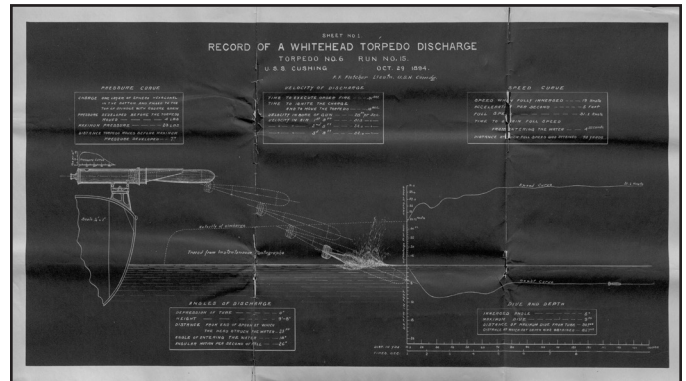
## Rhode Island Historical Society Digitizes the Revolutionary War Military Papers

The Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS), supported by a National Historical Records and Publication Commission (NHPRC) grant, is working on a digitization project entitled: “Brave, Enterprising Spirits”: Documenting Rhode Island Soldiers in the American Revolution. The project will create over 6,400 digital images and over 1,400 item-level catalog records of manuscripts in the Revolutionary War Military Records (MSS 673 SG2). The Revolutionary War Military Papers generally includes records of Rhode Island Continental regiments, county militia regiments, independent companies, and some Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New Hampshire regiments. It also includes naval records and Providence General Hospital records, all ranging from 1775 to 1783. The documents demonstrate the diversity present in Rhode Island’s rank and file. Muster rolls, pay rolls, weekly returns, certificates of enlistment, etc. reveal the participation of free and enslaved Africans, Native Americans, and women in the war. Contact 401-331-8575 or <[rvalentine@rihs.org](mailto:rvalentine@rihs.org)> for more information.

## U.S. Naval War College Archives Launches Naval Torpedo Station Records Processing Project

In September 2021, the U.S. Naval War College (NWC) Archives began processing the records of the Naval Torpedo Station (NTS). Established in 1869 by the U.S. Navy on Goat Island in Newport, Rhode Island, the NTS was responsible for the research, development, and testing of torpedoes and other forms of ordnance. NTS reached its peak influence during World War II when more than eighty percent of torpedoes used by the U.S. during the war were manufactured there.

The records, dating from 1883 to 1957 and consisting of over 500 linear feet, have been in off site storage since coming to NWC more than thirty years ago. This processing project is expected to take three years to complete and



Blueprint traced from “instantaneous photographs” of a Whitehead torpedo discharged from the *USS Cushing*, October 29, 1894. *Courtesy of the Naval Historical Collection, U.S. Naval War College.*

will give researchers access to the entire collection for the first time. Learn more and see some of the newly uncovered documents at <<https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/exhibit/nts-progress>>.

## V E R M O N T

### Paul Carnahan Retires as Librarian of the Vermont Historical Society

Paul Carnahan retired on June 30 after thirty-two years as librarian of the Vermont Historical Society (VHS). He oversaw all aspects of the printed, manuscript, and graphics collections for his employer. Since the library staff comprises just two full-time librarians, Carnahan performed many tasks but paid special attention to a coterie of volunteers who helped process manuscript collections, which tripled in size during his tenure.

When Carnahan began his position in July 1990, the VHS library was temporarily in the basement of the Pavilion Building in Montpelier. He moved it upstairs several months later and then moved the entire collection to a newly renovated historic building in Barre in 2002. He also oversaw various stages of automation in the library and at the VHS.

Marjorie Strong will continue at the VHS as assistant librarian. Kate Phillips will assume the position of librarian. Carnahan was president of NEA from 2005 to 2006. ■

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

## OPEN FORUM

## Presidential Address

By Caitlin Birch

**W**hat appears below is a lightly edited version of the address given by incoming NEA President Caitlin Birch during the Spring 2022 Annual Business Meeting.

Thank you, Genna [Duplisea], and thanks to all of you for attending today. I want to take this opportunity to acknowledge my predecessors—Genna as president and Linda Hocking as immediate past president — who have both had the impossibly difficult task of leading an all-volunteer organization through a global pandemic and all that entails. They, along with a small but formidable force of fellow leaders, have done more than keep NEA afloat in a time of crisis; they've also managed to move it forward.

It would be easy to look at the last two years and find what they've lacked. No social events to unwind and greet NEA colleagues after a long day at work. No grabbing a seat next to an archivist friend as you settle in for the next session on your conference program. No wandering the stacks of an unfamiliar library while touring someone else's collections. No catered snacks and small talk during breaks in a workshop. The things that sustained many of us in our professional lives before the pandemic have morphed into forbidden risks during it. But when I look at NEA's recent past, I don't see what's missing. I see what's been built against the odds. Our educational offerings, now entirely virtual, are experiencing record-high participation while engaging important, relevant subjects. Our commitment to inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility is growing stronger through initiatives like the Contingent Employment Study and the newly launched Racial Justice Honorary Fund. Our *Newsletter* is available in an increasingly accessible digital format and continues to evolve to deliver content of greatest interest to NEA members. Our listserv survived the Yahoo! shutdown and is thriving on its new platform. Our roundtables continue to provide opportunities for members with shared interests to connect. We've adopted new workflows for delivering important communications to NEA members and added new roles to our volunteer force to improve our operations. We're protecting our financial future with the creation of a new committee

focused on NEA's finances. And in the most challenging climate for volunteer organizations to date, we assembled an impressive slate of candidates for elected office and welcomed five newly elected leaders to the board. We've done all of this while meaningfully confronting this truth: Those things I mentioned earlier—the socials, the conferences, the in-person programming of all kinds—they may have sustained some of us, but they didn't sustain all of us. Contingently-employed colleagues, colleagues with disabilities, and colleagues who have felt unwelcome in our spaces for any number of reasons found our events inaccessible long before a pandemic made them so for everyone. And in that way, it's even more important to look forward to what we're building in our years of virtual operation, not backward at the NEA of before.

As I prepare to step into the presidency, I'm inspired by what our leaders have accomplished. I'm inspired by what I've heard from attendees at our Unconference this week (and I can't mention our Unconference without shouting out Emily Atkins, meeting coordinator extraordinaire, who planned it). Members and nonmembers alike have shared their ideas for NEA's future over a series of conversations, and there's so much potential in what you all have contributed. The paths before NEA are exciting and impactful and beckoning us to walk them together. So let me dwell for a minute on that word, together.

I've mentioned already that NEA is an all-volunteer organization. It has zero paid staff, and everything that NEA offers us as members, it offers through the time and labor of its volunteers. Much of that labor is invisible, and so it may be helpful for us to think of it like this: there are more than 100 volunteer positions in NEA in a normal year. They range from members of standing committees to committee chairs, appointed members of the board, and elected officers. One hundred plus volunteers. NEA is an organization

with roughly 600 members in a normal year. That means that in any given calendar year, one-sixth of NEA members will be serving the organization in some capacity. Put another way, in an ideal world we would each volunteer for an open service role with NEA every six years or so.

There are many reasons why an ideal world is not the world we have. Some of us are serving in other professional organizations and don't have additional bandwidth for NEA service. Some of us work for organizations that do not support or do not allow professional service. Some of us have responsibilities in our personal lives—to our families, our friends, our communities, ourselves—that take precedence. Some of us are plain tired. All of us are navigating crisis upon crisis. Believe me when I say that I know volunteering is difficult. At one point or another I've been in every category I just named, and I respect all the reasons that NEA members may have when they don't or can't volunteer.

So why am I discussing our volunteer numbers? There are problems in our profession that have put down deep roots in New England, and after nearly a decade of serving this organization I believe NEA has a critical role to play in solving them. Compensation is low, job scopes are sprawling, permanent employment is becoming scarce, degree programs are arguably overpopulated, credentialing is due for reconsideration, and as long as these problems persist we are a profession that cannot grow into the truly diverse and inclusive community we aspire to be. The challenges before us are worth confronting—absolutely, unequivocally—but I cannot see NEA playing the major advocacy and innovation role that it ought to play while critically understaffed.

There are options before us, some of which the Board has been discussing during this period of hardship, and some of which you've brought to us this week during our town hall discussions. Could volunteering replace dues in our organization and become something we all do in rotation? Should we keep our current volunteer model but shrink NEA's programming and therefore staff? Are there mutually beneficial partnerships we could forge with other cultural heritage regionals in New England? Is it time to consider paid staff to handle portions of NEA's administrative labor?

We are at a crossroads, and I don't have the answers.

But I intend to spend my presidency seeking them, so what I am asking over the next year is for your trust and engagement. In many ways NEA has raised me as an archivist. I was a third-semester grad student when I cofounded the Roundtable for Early Professionals and Students in NEA, and I had absolutely no idea then what professional participation was all about. But from that point right up until today, there have been more NEA members than I can count—many of you who are reading now—educating me, encouraging me, mentoring me, and forming my professional community. A decade of service with this organization has felt like a privilege, not a burden. So I am asking for your trust that as president I will invest in NEA the way it has invested in me. And I am asking for your engagement, because my investment is not enough. I'm fortunate to have a dedicated group of leaders serving with me, but we need your presence, ideas, and commitment to NEA's future. As we work together over the next year to find sustainable solutions and carry NEA to the forefront of some of the profession's most pressing challenges, please join us. If you can, volunteer. If you can't, we still need you. Attend programs, contribute to discussions, share ideas, offer feedback, be part of this community. NEA in its fiftieth year will be exactly what we make it. Let's make it something good. ■



Caitlin Birch (MA, MSLIS) is the assistant archivist for digital collections at Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College, where she manages born-digital archives and manuscripts as well as programs for oral history and web archiving. Caitlin has volunteered with NEA since 2013 and currently serves as the 2022-2023 president.

## 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)>.

## AROUND AND ABOUT

### Preserving a Unique Part of the History of Mural Painting: The Mike Alewitz Archives at CCSU

By Brian Matzke

Central Connecticut State University is home to a massive and unique collection of student murals. The mural painting program, initiated by the CCSU Art Department in 2000, was prescient of the rebirth of mural painting, street art, and socially engaged art as cultural expression in the United States and internationally. Now the contributions of these young muralists will be revealed with a permanent online home in the Connecticut Digital Archive, a statewide digital repository at the University of Connecticut and a partner of the Digital Public Library of America.

The collection is part of Professor Emeritus Mike Alewitz's archive, gathered over the sixteen years he directed the program. Alewitz is renowned as an activist and agitprop artist. Having begun his artistic career as a sign painter, he became a leading antiwar activist at Kent State University and an eyewitness to the massacre of May 1970. He was one of the organizers of the national student strike that followed and has remained a lifelong labor and social justice activist.

In his decades-long career, he has painted murals in Nicaragua, Israel/Palestine, Northern Ireland, Chernobyl, Baghdad and many other locations in the United States and internationally, bringing attention and support to some of the central political movements and conflicts of the past fifty years. His work has often courted controversy, and he has described himself as "the most censored artist in the world."

In the foreword to the book *Insurgent Images: The Agitprop Murals of Mike Alewitz*, actor and activist Martin Sheen wrote, "Mike Alewitz's art has given eloquent voice to the aspirations of working people throughout the world. His heroic figures and vibrant colors are powerful weapons in the hands of the oppressed." In 1999, Alewitz was named a Millennium Artist by the White House Millennium Council, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Mid-Atlantic Arts Foundation.

Alewitz joined the faculty at CCSU in 2000 and began what may have been the first mural painting program of its kind in any college or university. Alewitz's students greatly expanded the boundaries of mural painting, both in terms of style and content. The campus collection is a cornucopia of different approaches to the medium, including social-realist and abstract, non objective and

hyper realist, humorous and historical, personal and political. Students grappled with issues in science, education, substance abuse, sexual assault, war, racism, climate change, 9/11, homelessness, censorship, popular culture, and many other topics. The collection demonstrates a genuine diversity of students' perspectives, artistic styles, and political viewpoints informed by their unique backgrounds and experiences.

Students produced over 100 murals on the CCSU campus, numerous murals in downtown New Britain, and several throughout the world as part of the program's international mural slams, as well as hundreds of smaller art pieces. These works include twin murals about immigration in Siracusa, Italy and New Britain, and public projects at New Britain City Hall, the YWCA and the New Britain Public Library. The paintings produced on campus included murals about education, Islamophobia, the Vietnam antiwar movement, the life of social activist Elihu Burritt, and the shared intellectual roots of the Americas; trompe l'oeil



"Bread, Roses, Handala," an agitprop mural painted by Mike Alewitz, 2003. Courtesy of Central Connecticut State.

exercises; exhibits and visiting international artists; collaborative scenic art projects with the Theater Department; and banners and street art protesting racism, opposing tuition hikes, and supporting access to education. Faculty at CCSU believe that this may be the largest collection of student murals on any college campus.

Much like Alewitz's own work, his students' work often generated controversy and faced challenges. Over the years, many of these works have been lost, either as a result of backlash or as a consequence of buildings having been renovated or demolished. By digitizing the photographs of these murals, the library is preserving these students' work and making it available to all who may be interested in this unique piece of art history.

The bulk of Alewitz's archives related to his career and activism have been acquired by the Tamiment Library at New York University, one of the world's leading repositories of labor and left history. However, by mutual



Mike Alewitz poses in front of his mural, "The City at the Crossroads of History," which depicts numerous labor leaders and political activists. The piece was painted in 2014 and was commissioned by the Puffin Foundation for the City Museum of New York, which subsequently declined to display it. Alewitz describes himself as "the most censored artist in the world." *Courtesy of Central Connecticut State.*

agreement, Alewitz has retained his CCSU materials for use by the university. These materials include Alewitz's syllabi and other teaching materials, letters and news clippings related to murals and events, artist's statements and other writings from many of the program's students, and thousands of photographs of murals, both completed and in progress.

Since January, CCSU's Digital Humanities Librarian Brian Matzke and public history graduate student Daniel MacNeil have been working to turn these materials into a digital archive. The collection includes a mix of both digital files and hard copies that will be scanned and preserved digitally. All materials will be organized, cataloged, and uploaded to the Connecticut Digital Archive.

As part of the expansion of the Burritt Library's digital collections, this archive will support teaching and research in art and art history, both for CCSU students and for artists and scholars around the world. The materials will be uploaded over the course of the year, and the library plans to host an exhibit/symposium in early 2023 to honor Alewitz's work and that of his former students.

This project is made possible by a generous grant from CT Humanities. The CT Humanities Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) Capacity Grants were designed to assist humanities organizations and other cultural institutions respond to and recover from the coronavirus pandemic and improve their ability to thrive and serve their communities now and in the future.

Access the collection at <http://hdl.handle.net/11134/530002:alewitz>. For more information, Professor Alewitz may be contacted at [alewitz@gmail.com](mailto:alewitz@gmail.com) or at Red Square, New London, and Project Manager Brian Matzke may be contacted at [bmatzke@ccsu.edu](mailto:bmatzke@ccsu.edu). ■



Brian Matzke is digital humanities librarian at Central Connecticut State University where he teaches courses in digital humanities and manages digital archives. He received his PhD in English and his Master's in library science both from the University of Michigan.



# From IDEAs to Action

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

New Challenges, New Answers: Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Readings and Resources List for Archivists

*By Meg Rinn and Sarah Shepherd*

During the summer of 2020, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee (IDC) created the Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Readings and Resources List for Archivists. The creation of the list was prompted by the greater Black Lives Matter protests that swept the United States during the summer of that year. The IDC carefully curated the list based on their own knowledge of available and emerging resources. The committee responded to the fact that both archivists and non archivists would need resources to educate themselves regarding both the Black Lives Matter movement and greater discussions around racial justice and how they intersect with archives as institutions and as a part of archival work. Members of the community were also encouraged to submit resources to the IDC.

Ensuring that the list is accessible, organized, and easy to update remains a part of the resource list's mission, and it continues to be a living document. The IDC has spent the last several months reviewing the material there to make sure that the list is updated and user-friendly. This review included reorganizing the list and adding new sections on archival and LIS projects, as well as personal and community perspectives, in order to better describe the individual resources and increase readability.

The Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Readings and Resources List for Archivists can be found at <[https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/Resources\\_IDC](https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/Resources_IDC)>.

## Digital Transgender Archive Style Guide

Created by the Digital Transgender Archive, the DTA Style Guide is essential reading. The guide acknowledges the fact that language around gender and sex is in a constant state of flux and debate, especially when it comes to reclaiming pejoratives. While brief, it provides an excellent list of dos and don'ts when working with material related to gender, sexuality, or both. These guidelines are easily

adaptable into existing material, as processing guides for collections or instructional material for diversity and inclusion among staff.

## Native Lands Digital

Native Lands Digital is an Indigenous-led Canadian-based organization that creates and continuously updates a map that gives shape to Native lands and communities. Native Lands Digital continues to wrestle with difficult concepts questioning the term indigenous—especially throughout history—and the concept of mapping, as well as what constitutes sources and accuracy. Users can search an address on the map to find more information about the relevant territories. The organization also contains a resource guide for teachers as well as a guide on land acknowledgments. They first recommend that you contact the nations directly. The map is an imperfect document, but Native Lands Digital continues to improve it each year.

## Cooper Hewitt Guidelines for Image Description

Long, detailed, and wonderfully insightful, the Cooper Hewitt Guide for Image Description is a must-read for those working on digitizing images and online exhibitions. The guide deftly breaks down the nuances and uses of alt text, long descriptions, and captions before walking users through the best ways to construct useful descriptions for users who may have low vision, are blind, rely on screen readers, or otherwise just need to easily find images through various forms of description. They make a point to note that this approach to description can often help generate information for tours, exhibitions, audio guides, and much more.

In addition to providing excellent guidance on how to describe resources well without diving into jargon, Cooper Hewitt's guide helps to lay out nonethnic approaches to describing skin tone, gender, and ability, among other factors that can be key in description but can present a struggle in creating sensitive, respectful description.



### Saving Ukrainian Cultural Heritage Online (SUCHO)

This project seeks to save at-risk Ukrainian digital cultural heritage sites and content. Coordinated by Quinn Dombrowski, Anna E. Kijas, and Sebastian Majorovic, there are more than 1,300 cultural heritage professionals working together to save priceless digital cultural heritage. The project cannot take more volunteers, but you can join their standby list or contribute financially to the cause.

### Latin American Digital Initiatives Repository

Latin American Digital Initiatives (LADI) represents the ongoing collaborative work between LLILAS Benson Latin American Studies and Collections at The University of Texas at Austin, the University of Texas Libraries, and partners throughout Latin America, including Archivo General e Histórico del Poder Ejecutivo de Michoacán, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica, Proceso de Comunidades Negras, and others to provide a hub of digitized material. The collections place an emphasis on human rights issues and underrepresented communities with mate-

rials ranging from posters to photographs to newspapers and books. Titles, descriptions, provenance details, and other elements of description are in Spanish, with search terms and rights information in English. This allows for non-Spanish speakers to search the collections while LADI's browsing capabilities and images help cover language gaps.

### Anti-Oppression Principles from the Center for Story-Based Strategy

The Center for Story-Based Strategy is an organization that centers the importance of storytelling in enacting lasting social change. Their anti-oppressive principles challenge power structures and commit to building broad-based movements. The principles include holistic analysis, analyzing power, undoing racism, listening, appreciation and gratitude, acting, leadership, and networking. This resource was added after we read Stacie M. Williams and Jarrett M. Drake's article, titled "Power to the People: Documenting Police Violence in Cleveland." Williams, Drake, and others relied on the Anti-Oppression Principles to create A People's Archive of Police Violence in Cleveland.

All of these resources and more are available on the Anti-Racist and Anti-Oppressive Readings and Resources List for Archivists. The IDC hopes that this list will facilitate difficult conversations and inspire growth and reflection in the archival community and beyond. As archivists and cultural heritage professionals, we must continue to reckon with structural racism and inequity in our field. If the IDC has missed any resources that you think we should add, or if new ones have come out after the time of publication, please email us at <diversity@newenglandarchivists.org> with the subject line "Resource List". ■



Professor A. W. Mills, faculty advisor to the Yacht Club, sails during a Tufts Summer School session, 1949. *Courtesy of Digital Collections and Archives, Tufts University.*

### 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 social media, a blog, or an email list, or make recommendations to the NEA Executive Board based on the experience of roundtable members.

# Announcement

*What appears below is a lightly edited version of the remarks presented by Emily Atkins, NEA meeting coordinator and archivist/records manager at the Harvard University Archives during the 2022 Spring Unconference to honor Juliana Kuipers with the Distinguished Service Award.*

**M**y very first run-in with NEA was in spring 2013 at the 40th Anniversary Meeting. Since it was my first meeting, I didn't quite know what to do with myself, but I showed up, drank lots of coffee (as one does), and found some colleagues I recognized who I proceeded to stick to like glue. One of them happened to be Juliana Kuipers, who I learned, after she stood up during the Annual Business Meeting to applause, was about to start her first term as NEA Treasurer.

I specify her first term because Juliana went on to a second term, during which she negotiated the financial details of our joint meeting with MARAC, a feat on its own deserving of sainthood. Then after the maximum two consecutive terms allowed by our by-laws, she wrapped up her time as treasurer—or so she thought. She had implemented a number of massive upgrades to our accounting systems that made the life of everyone who followed in the role after her (including myself) much easier, she stepped into the role she now holds as clerk of the corporation. Not that this was going to be the easy job it seemed on paper, because since then she also stepped in on three separate occasions to serve as interim treasurer in addition to her responsibilities as clerk.

Juliana has also presented at meetings, chaired sessions and meetings, served on program committees, served on and then chaired the *NEA Newsletter*, piloted our very first online event registration as registrar, co-led a mentoring circle, and guest lectured in classes at the archives and public history program at University of Massachusetts Boston and served on numerous other committees and taskforces. She has written policy and procedure documentation for NEA and revised and enhanced pretty much all the roles in which she has served for the better. To be clear, this is only the work she has done for NEA. We'd be here far longer than the time I allotted for the awards ceremony if I listed everything that she has done with other professional organizations and in her day job, where she is currently interim-

ing as the associate university archivist for collection development and records management services at the Harvard University Archives.

But really all that's just a resume and not a person. Juliana is a fantastic friend, mentor, and colleague to myself and so many archivists in our community, in addition to being truly amazing with finances, as demonstrated at the 2022 Annual Business Meeting by giving her seventh report to the membership on the state of NEA's finances. I am so incredibly pleased that the awards committee has honored her with this year's Distinguished Service Award, because I cannot think of a person who has more consistently and selflessly demonstrated their dedication to this community and to our profession.

As my theater friends like to say, "huzzah!"

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## DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD

First awarded in 1990, the New England Archivists Distinguished Service Award is given annually to a nominee (an individual, institution, or group of individuals or institutions) dedicated to the promotion of New England Archivists' objectives and who has made significant contributions to the profession, their institution, New England Archivists, or the archival community in New England.

Nominations are reviewed and the recipient chosen by the Nominating Committee. More details on the nomination process and for a list of past awardees see our website <<https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/awards/service>>. ■



John Burton (Class of '69) of Dartmouth College's Ledyard Canoe Club in action at the World Championships in Czechoslovakia, 1967. *Courtesy of Digital by Dartmouth Library.*

## NEA Board Member Spotlight



**Name:**

Jeanne Lowrey

**Board member title:**

Chair, Inclusion and Diversity  
Committee (IDC) (2021–2022)

**Affiliated Institution:**

Yale University

**Job title:**

Associate University Archivist

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

While in high school, I volunteered at my town's local history room, which eventually led me to the archives at Smith College. I was lucky enough to work there for two years during undergrad, and the support of my mentors helped me realize that I wanted to—and could—make archives my career.

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

I've always been interested in collections documenting underrepresented groups or communities. My early career was spent in these types of collections, giving me a foundation which continues to shape how I approach my work. I'm also deeply passionate about efforts to make archives and libraries more equitable and accessible.

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

The IDC works on projects relating to diversity and equity, for example, maintaining the Program Accessibility Checklist and the Racial Justice Honoraria Fund. As chair, I serve as a liaison between the board and the committee, attending quarterly board meetings and providing feedback on equity and diversity topics that emerge in discussions at and between meetings.

**What have you accomplished during your term?**

My biggest accomplishment has been the creation of the new Racial Justice Honoraria Fund, which is designed to compensate people of color for their labor relating to equity work and archives. More information can be found at <https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/Racial-Justice-Honoraria-Fund>. We did a soft launch earlier this year, and as of this writing are working to get the fund fully up and running. It has been a massive undertaking to establish this project in a sustainable way, but it has been gratifying to be part of something that can make a tangible impact for years to come.

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

I struggled to answer this question because so many of the challenges which we as a profession and organization face are interconnected, and it's hard to pick just one. In a sense, the most pressing challenge is that we don't let the enormity of the work required to make archives more equitable stop us from doing the work. For NEA, that involves identifying how the organization can advocate effectively for archivists on topics such as contingent employment and addressing the continued harm to people of color caused by the racism and white supremacy in our institutions. On an individual level, it requires those who can safely do so to address inequities at a micro level. Systemic problems don't have easy solutions, but if we commit to the work together, we can make a good start.

**What would you do on your ideal day off?**

My ideal day off would involve lots of writing for fun and knitting, with no chores looming over my head and someone else cooking! Maybe also go for a nice long walk if the weather is nice. And definitely snuggle with my cat Sadie!

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

I hope that we don't go back to the status quo of pre-pandemic. We've learned new ways of doing things, and I hope we continue to think out of the box to help increase accessibility, welcome new people into the field, and support those of us already here. ■

**N E A**

**New England Archivists**

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

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### THIS SEASON IN NEW ENGLAND HISTORY



Camp Rest Group, Ocean Point, Maine. This photograph was taken by Hamilton Sutton Smith (1857–1924), who was born in Boston and, in 1879, became one of the first African American graduates of Boston University School of Law. In the 1890s, Smith developed an interest in photography. Smith's daughter, Julia Hamilton Smith, donated her father's glass plate negatives to the Museum of African American History in 1973, as they capture African American family and social life of African Americans during the period before photography became widely accessible and popular. Smith himself is pictured in this photograph, third from left, wearing a striped tie. *Courtesy of the Museum of African American History, Boston and Nantucket.*