

Volume 50, Number 3 • July 2023

**N E A**

# NEWSLETTER

NEW ENGLAND ARCHIVISTS



**C O V E R** — Four boys from Perkins School for the Blind are seated in a canoe during a camping trip in the summer of 1925. Two of the boys are paddling and two of the boys are seated on the floor of the boat between the two paddlers. There are trees on the shore in the background and the water is flat and glassy. Note on verso: “Bergeron - Noble - [Amiso] - Katurick 140 [stamped].” *Courtesy of Perkins Archives.*

**I N S I D E** — Mara Gregory and Zachary Bodnar reflect on archives internships (page 4); Caitlin Birch writes another Inside NEA column, focusing on NEA’s current leadership (page 6); Session Reports recap the Spring 2023 50th Anniversary Meeting (page 10); Bianca Pallo discusses The Global Curatorial Project for the Inclusion and Diversity Committee’s From IDEAs to Action column (page 20); News & Notes from New England repositories (page 7); an announcement of this year’s Distinguished Service Award (page 22); and throughout, summery photographs from your archival collections.

**TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE**



# New England Archivists

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

45 Skehan Street • Somerville, MA 02143

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

### NEA Executive Board

President:	Caitlin Birch
Immediate Past President:	Genna Duplisea
Secretary:	Michelle Farias
Treasurer:	Stephanie T. Gold
Treasurer-Elect:	Sean Parke
Representatives-at-Large:	Peter Carini Patrick Ford Abbey Malangone Brantley Palmer
Clerk of the Corporation:	Juliana Kuipers
Archivist:	Laura Smith
Vendor Coordinator:	Sarah Arriaga
Newsletter Editors:	Sally Blanchard-O'Brien Vanessa Formato Jenifer Ishee Charlotte Lellman
Listserv Moderator:	Irene Gates
Meeting Coordinator:	Karen Urbec
Records Manager:	Elizabeth Carron
Registrar:	Becky White

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

**Annual Dues** are \$35 for individuals, \$17.50 for students, and \$45 for institutions. Sign up online at <<https://www.newenglandarchivists.org/renew>>. Payment can be made via PayPal or by check made out to New England Archivists and mailed to Stephanie T. Gold, NEA Treasurer-Elect, 130 Collindale Drive, Meriden, CT 06450.

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)>.

Requests for changes or updates to website content should be sent to: <[webmaster@newenglandarchivists.org](mailto:webmaster@newenglandarchivists.org)>.

**Deadlines** for submitting materials are:  
November 15 for January issue      February 10 for April issue  
May 15 for July issue                      August 15 for October issue

**Advertising Policy:**  
There will be no fee to list position openings. Advertisements for archival products will be accepted as space permits. Advertising should be submitted to <[vendorcoordinator@newenglandarchivists.org](mailto:vendorcoordinator@newenglandarchivists.org)>.

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

Newsletter design and production by Culp Design <[www.culpdesign.com](http://www.culpdesign.com)>.



# Table of Contents

**From the Editors**..... 3

**Archival Insight**

The Next Generation: Perspectives  
on Interning and Managing Interns..... 4

**Inside NEA**

From the President..... 6

**News and Notes**

Connecticut..... 7

Maine..... 7

Massachusetts ..... 8

Rhode Island..... 9

**Spring 2023 Session Reports** ..... 10

**From IDEAs to Action**

The Global Curatorial Project:  
Unfinished Conversations ..... 20

**Announcement**..... 22

**This Season in New England History**..... 23

## From the Editors

- Charlotte Lellman

It was so wonderful to connect with so many of you in person at the NEA Spring 2023 50th Anniversary Meeting! This issue includes thirteen recaps of the wonderful panels and presentations that our colleagues shared at the meeting. Thank you to our volunteer Session Reporters who bring takeaways from each meeting session to those of you who weren't able to attend (and to those of us who were able to attend, but who could only be in one concurrent session at a time!). The Inclusion and Diversity Committee's column, "From IDEAs to Action," brings us more from the spring meeting: Bianca Pallo's article about The Global Curatorial Project at Brown University. Bianca presented her work as part of Session 3.1, "DEI in "Academic Archives: Description and Access."

This issue also features complementary articles by Mara Gregory and Zachary Bodnar, who reflect on archival

internships. Internships are very common in our field, so it is important to examine the ways in which they bring value to all participants, as well as ways in which they could be improved. Mara, a recent graduate of Simmons University School of Library and Information Science, writes about her experiences as an intern, while Zachary writes about supervising interns at the Congregational Library & Archives.

On behalf of the Newsletter Committee, I would like to thank those of you who took the NEA Newsletter Survey or shared feedback at one of our town hall sessions. The Newsletter Committee has synthesized the feedback and is preparing to explore new platforms that will better meet NEA members' needs. We are grateful for your patience and support: this process takes (volunteer) time. As Vanessa Formato and I end our terms, we pass the Newsletter Committee co-chair positions on to Jenifer Ishee and Sally Blanchard-O'Brien who will carry this work forward with new committee members Eve Fairbanks and Patrick Doyle. ■



**Aeon**  
Managing Archives and Special Collections

**ORGANIZE, ACCESS,  
MANAGE, AND TRACK YOUR  
VALUABLE RESOURCES**



**ArchivesSpace™**

The journey to organizing and increasing the visibility of your special collections and archives isn't a straight line. Wherever you are in the process, Atlas Systems can help move you forward.

With Atlas,  
it's as easy as  
one, two, three.

STEP 01
Identify where you are now

STEP 02
Target where you want to go

STEP 03
Work with Atlas toward your goals



With ArchivesSpace and Aeon, we can help you create your own continuum to reach your special collections and archives management goals.

**LET'S START THE CONVERSATION. SALES@ATLAS-SYS.COM**



**ATLAS SYSTEMS**

## ARCHIVAL INSIGHT

### The Next Generation: Perspectives on Interning and Managing Interns

*In the following two articles, an archival intern and an internship manager reflect on their experiences with internships.*

#### Gaining Confidence Through Virtual and In-Person Internships

- Mara Gregory

When I enrolled in library school in the fall of 2020, I had only a vague idea of what an archivist is or *does*. I had, however, previously fallen in love with archival research as an MA student in the history of medicine. Acting largely on a hunch, I decided to pursue an Archives Management concentration. Happily, through two very different internship experiences over the course of the program, I was able to explore various archival functions, connect theory to practice, and grow my professional network—ultimately gaining the experience and confidence to make a career switch into the archival profession.

I took my first archives class at Simmons' School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) in spring 2021. This introduction to theory and practice required a 60-hour field experience in addition to regular coursework. Logistically, an in-person internship was out of the question for me. Less than a year into the pandemic, I had temporarily relocated out of state to manage family care responsibilities but planned to move back to Boston mid-semester. In addition, I had a full-time job as a project manager at a nonprofit organization. So I selected the “practicum” option, a fully virtual and self-paced field experience, which offered enough flexibility to suit my situation.

At the beginning of the practicum, I received access to approximately 300 digitized items selected from a real collection. I was instructed to imagine that these items were physical materials (not digital surrogates), representing the entirety of a new acquisition. Working approximately seven hours a week on my own time, I completed a survey and developed a processing plan, supplies memo, intellectual arrangement, finding aid, and virtual exhibit. Throughout, I reported to my practicum supervisor, a

professional in the archives field, who provided guidance and feedback on my work. My professor, meanwhile, gave lectures and led online discussions on theoretical concepts related to the practicum assignments.

As my first experience with archival processing, the practicum gave me valuable insight into the ways that archivists care for and provide access to materials. I also developed products for my portfolio and gained two supportive mentors in my supervisor and professor. At the same time, the simulated nature of the practicum presented a conundrum when I eventually began to apply to archival jobs: did the practicum actually count as processing experience? For me, the practicum represented a significant amount of effort and learning, but I found the benefits difficult to translate into a resume or cover letter. The following year, as I approached my final semester of library school, I decided it was time to finally gain in-person experience in an archival setting.

By that time, I had learned enough about archives and archival work to feel confident in my career choice. I had also realized that, as an aspiring second-career archivist with no work experience in archives, I had limited job prospects even with my transferable skills. So, I made the difficult decision to negotiate a scaled-back work schedule as I prepared to graduate and seek other opportunities. With this new flexibility in my work week, I signed up for an advanced fieldwork course in fall 2022. This course entailed a 130-hour internship as well as light coursework related to topics such as job searching and networking. Given my background, I was particularly interested in medical archives, and the course instructor found a placement for me at the Abraham Pollen Archives of Massachusetts Eye and Ear (MEE) in Boston.

As an archives intern assisting the lone arranger at MEE, I gained wide-ranging experience related to processing, preservation, reference, and outreach. For one and a half days each week, I updated finding aids, rehoused materials, conducted research, and collaborated

on virtual and physical exhibits. These projects provided numerous opportunities to apply knowledge from my classes and resulted in an ever-expanding set of skills to list on my resume. The concurrent coursework, which included keeping a journal, helped me to reflect on and track my work and accomplishments. Just as importantly, I counted new colleagues and mentors among the MEE team and, through our conversations, gained insights into advocacy, networking, and career trajectories. By the end of the semester, this experience had reinforced my intention to become an archivist, while also broadening my vision of what that future career might look like.

During my six semesters in library school, I gained a solid education in archival theory through courses on topics ranging from EAD to preservation to outreach. But I credit the practicum and advanced fieldwork with helping me to fully understand the interconnected, real-world applications of the subjects covered in class. These practical experiences also gave me a critical sense of *what I was getting into*: an awareness of the day-to-day demands and opportunities of life as an archivist. And, as I embarked on a career change after graduation, I had an existing network in the field and several outstanding mentors that I could turn to for advice and references. While there were certainly challenges involved in devoting time outside of coursework to these field experiences, some of the issues I faced could be addressed through flexible scheduling, virtual or hybrid environments, and compensation for fieldwork. I hope that graduate archival education programs and repositories continue to offer, and expand access to, such valuable experiences for new and aspiring members of our profession.



Mara Gregory has an MLIS from Simmons University and an MA in the history of medicine from the University of Warwick in Coventry, UK. She is currently the Charles J. Ogletree papers project assistant at the Harvard Law School Library and a remote

Teaching with Primary Sources intern at the Library of Congress. Mara previously worked for nine years in project management and program operations at an educational nonprofit organization.

## Reflections on Leading Student Interns

- Zachary Bodnar

As I reflect on the interns I have overseen at the Congregational Library & Archives (CLA) as part of the internship program at the School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) program at Simmons University, I have realized that one of my favorite archival activities to work through is our assessment and accessioning workflow. We are fortunate enough at the CLA to receive new collections of church records regularly, so I can usually guarantee that an intern will have the chance to see a brand new donation. The size, shape, and contents of these collections can vary widely, which makes them all the more exciting to share with the interns. On a practical level, working through assessment and accessioning workflows is an excellent teaching opportunity. Through these workflows, the intern and I can discuss concepts such as provenance and work plans, think through the earliest versions of arrangements, and showcase the importance of good internal record keeping. But what I most enjoy about these exercises with archivists-in-training is the shared wonder we have while looking at a collection at its rawest place, blemishes and all, as we think about how we might preserve and make accessible that collection.

Archival work, I truly believe, is not something that can be solely taught in the classroom. There has to be a practical component that supplements classroom lessons. A shared understanding of archival theory is an incredibly important building block for the profession, but reality and theory do not always parallel one another. Even after decades of important work to create archival standards, there are simply too many variables inherent in all levels of our work to ever have theoretical best practices converge fully with practical realities. A simple example from our own archives: if we were to adhere to the strictest reading of the DACS rules on the construction of collection titles, we would have dozens of collections that were simply called “First Congregational Church records.” As that would be an utter nightmare for anyone wanting to use our collections, my predecessors adopted the addition of a geographic prefix for the titles of our church records collections. Practical experience is necessary because it allows the student the opportunity to not only put into practice what they have learned in the classroom, but to also examine those concepts and practices to determine if they fit within the

# Inside NEA

## FROM THE PRESIDENT

- Caitlin Birch



On March 13, the NEA Executive Board notified members that we had a vacancy in the vice president/president elect position due to a resignation that occurred on March 6. Because of that resignation, the traditional transfer of the presidency at the close of

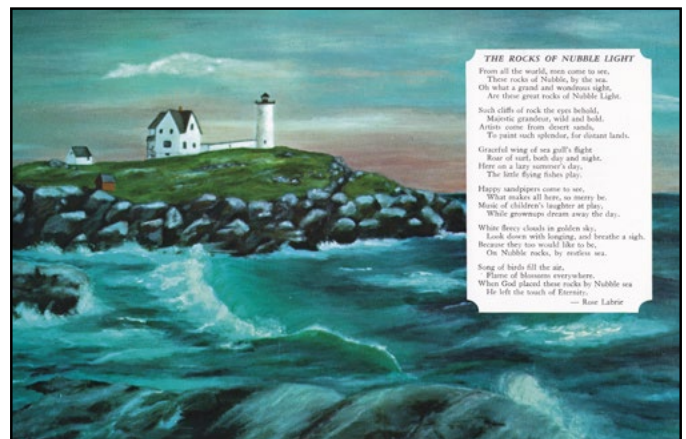
the Annual Business Meeting did not take place. Instead, the meeting concluded with Immediate Past President Genna Duplisea, standing in for me while I was at home with terribly timed COVID, sharing our plans for leadership continuity in NEA. Recognizing that not everyone (including me!) attended that meeting, I'm dedicating this president's column to a modified version of what Genna shared in April.

On March 30, the Executive Board met for its quarterly board meeting and discussed a path forward. The NEA By-laws state that "Any vacancy in the executive board shall be filled by the board until the next election when candidates shall be nominated to fill any unexpired term." This means that the board has a responsibility to identify an NEA member who can fulfill the responsibilities of the vacant office and appoint that person to serve in the position until the next regular election resolves the vacancy. For a vacancy in the role of vice president/president elect, we will appoint a member who will serve as president until the 2024 Business Meeting, and as Immediate Past President (IPP) until the 2025 Business Meeting. This will fulfill the remainder of the term that was vacated, since each vice president of NEA continues on to a year in the presidency followed by a year as IPP.

While the by-laws provide us with this clear path, it is no small matter to appoint a president. Our leadership structure ensures that each president has a year in the

VP role to prepare for their responsibilities, so to appoint someone without the benefit of this preparatory time, we are looking to past leaders with strong existing knowledge of NEA. We expect the process of identifying an appointee to take time, since it requires us to identify not only someone with the appropriate experience, but someone with the capacity and interest to serve for two years. While the process of filling the vacancy is ongoing, the board has voted unanimously to appoint myself and Genna to continue our current roles. At the close of the annual business meeting, I moved from president to interim president. Genna moved from IPP to interim IPP. We will hold our interim roles until a new president is appointed. Once an appointment is made, the usual leadership transition will take place: I'll be able to begin my role as IPP and Genna will be able to conclude her term on the board.

We will update all NEA members as this process progresses. The important thing to note for now is that NEA's operations have not been interrupted. I was delighted to welcome Jeanne Lowrey as our newly elected vice president this spring. As she assumed her position and as Genna and I became interim occupants of our roles, the Executive Board returned to a full roster of nine voting members. We are committed to a successful year ahead and we are grateful for your continued engagement in NEA. ■



Nubble Light, York, Maine. "Rose Labrie was born in 1916 to a mother from Nova Scotia and a father from Ireland. She grew up on a 240-acre Vermont farm. The vivid colorful landscape of pastures, mountains, and forests dotted with animals, she later wrote, 'had every influence on my becoming a primitive painter half a century later.' The deep white snow, brilliant blue sky, yellow pastures, and green trees became the vivid backdrop to her work. She filled the landscape of her 'memory paintings' with horse drawn sleighs, boxy two-dimensional houses, and doll-like figures." Text from J. Dennis Robinson, "Rose Labrie: The Making of a Folk Artist," [Portsmouth Herald](#), September 10, 2018. Postcard copyright of Rose Labrie, 1966. *Courtesy of the Diocese of Manchester Historical Archives.*

Visit NEA online at:  
[www.newenglandarchivists.org](http://www.newenglandarchivists.org)

# News and Notes

## CONNECTICUT

### The UCONN Archives & Special Collections Podcast

*d'Archive* released its 50th episode on April 24, 2023, on college radio [91.7fm WHUS](#) and wherever you get your podcasts. Beginning in August of 2017, the archives staff began expanding its outreach program to the airwaves by training on sound engineering and radio protocols in order to effectively bring its collections to new audiences. Since then, the radio program and podcast has featured weekly episodes drawing from countless collections held by the Archives & Special Collections and amplifying the expertise of over sixty collaborators ranging from past and present archives and library staff, artists, journalists, curators, faculty, graduate and undergraduate students, high school students, visiting fellows and international students, activists, alumni, collectors and donors, family, and friends.

The podcast (discoverable on Apple podcasts, Spotify, [whus.org](#), player fm, and others) has integrated recorded studio interviews, field recordings of events and gatherings, oral histories, archival audio collections, and participant media. Bringing the archives to the airwaves has been a labor of love for its host and colleagues, graphic designers, [intro/outro musicians](#), WHUS station managers, and student talk department directors.

**Episode 50** features a new format for the program, integrating field recordings of research sessions within collections to develop critical thinking and information literacy around specific topics of interest. This episode titled 'Hippie Hobbits' investigates a research question that came out of a donation to the Alternative Press Button Collection in 2022, stemming from the [Atlas Obscura article](#) covering these UConn collections. The episode takes a deep dive to investigate the intersection of J.R.R. Tolkien fandom and the late 1960s and early 1970s counterculture. For more information, contact [Graham Stinett](#).

## MAINE

### NEA Awards Grant to Franco-American Collection

The National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) awarded \$350,000 to the University of Maine representing the Franco American Collections Consortium (FACC) for a project to digitize nearly 40,000 pages of French and English language family correspondence, scrapbooks, artworks, personal diaries, songbooks, and oral histories related to French-Canadian and Acadian heritage communities. These materials illuminate 150 years of struggles and triumphs of Franco Americans throughout New England. Once digitized, all of the items will be accessible through the [Franco American Digital Archives/Portail franco-américain](#), the bilingual discovery portal to Franco-American materials at institutions across North America.

FACC is a collaboration of the Franco American Programs at the University of Maine, the Acadian Archives at the University of Maine Fort Kent, the Franco-American Collections at the University of Southern Maine, the French Institute at Assumption University, and the Msgr. Paradis Archives and Special Collections at Saint Anselm College. For more information, contact [Anna Faherty](#).



Félix Gatineau and his grandson Robert Gatineau, 1923. Félix Gatineau Collection. *Courtesy of the French Institute, Assumption University.*

## MASSACHUSETTS

### Fruitlands Shaker Photographic Collection Processed

The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center is pleased to announce that the Fruitlands Shaker Photographic Collection, 1855-1984 (FM.PH.S.Coll.1) is processed and the [finding aid is published](#). The Shaker Photographic Collection is one of the major deliverables for the Institute of Museum and Library Services grant awarded to The Trustees, “Elevating Access to The Trustees’ Collections from 19th Century Shakers to 21st Century Artists MA-249607-OMS-21.”

The collection offers a unique perspective on 19th- and 20th-century Shakers, shedding light on life within their communities and lesser-known connections between the Shakers and their friendships in the outside world. It also depicts the history of the Shaker Office at [Fruitlands Museum](#) in Harvard, Massachusetts. The collection represents nine Shaker communities, with a focus on Harvard and Shirley, Massachusetts.



Harvard Shakers visit Fruitlands, circa 1915. Clara Endicott Sears, the founder of Fruitlands, hosted a group of Harvard Shaker members the year after the museum opened. At that point in time, Fruitlands was only the farmhouse (of Alcott family fame), and the Harvard Shaker Village was still active. Fruitlands Shaker Photographic Collection. *Courtesy of The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center.*

Project archivist Stephanie Rahmat did extensive research to arrange the collection by Shaker community. She worked with other museums, local historical societies, and independent Shaker scholars to confirm—or disprove—the existing image subject documentation. This process significantly increased the accuracy of image identification from an estimated 40% to over 95%.

Preserving the collection presented its own challenges due to various photographic formats spanning 130 years, including paper, glass, metal, and film-based materials. Stephanie worked with preservation specialists to ensure that the collection is stored safely while remaining open for use. Custom housing and a digital inventory were designed for the glass plate negatives, including two broken plates. Northeast Document Conservation Center will conserve a selection of plates.

Digitization of collection highlights and entry of collection information into The Trustees’ new Collection Management System, Qi, is in progress. Questions may be emailed to the [The Trustees of Reservations Archives & Research Center](#).

### MassArt at 150: Tradition and Innovation exhibit at the Massachusetts Historical Society

The Massachusetts College of Art and Design Archives is pleased to announce that a two-part exhibit cel-



Reassembly of the Shaker Office building at Fruitlands, [1920]-1922. The Harvard Shaker Village closed in 1918. In 1920, Clara Endicott Sears purchased the Old Shaker Office and moved it to the Fruitlands campus. The building had to be disassembled for transport, then reconstructed at its new site. The Shaker Office is now open to visitors at Fruitlands in Harvard, Massachusetts. Fruitlands Shaker Photographic Collection. *Courtesy of The Trustees of Reservations, Archives & Research Center.*



celebrating the college's 150th anniversary opened at the Massachusetts Historical Society in May. MassArt at 150: Tradition and Innovation celebrates the sesquicentennial of the only publicly-funded art and design college in the United States. Visitors can view a retrospective of student and alumni work created in response to a masterwork performed by the Handel + Haydn Society and explore a selection of items from the archive, including: clothing, equipment, advertising, everyday household items, and innovations designed by MassArt alumni. The exhibition will be open through September 15. For more information, contact [Danielle Sangalang](#).

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

### Steamship Historical Society of America Wraps Up First Year in Operation

This summer marks the end of the first year that the Steamship Historical Society of America (SSHSA) has operated with two part-time assistant archivists in addition to a full-time archivist. The SSHSA is located in Warwick, Rhode Island. The two new two-year positions were generously funded by the Posner Foundation.

Since its expansion, the Archives team has created and implemented new cataloging standards; streamlined the processing of archival material; improved location-mapping on site; created a digital preservation policy; migrated databases; cataloged seventy-three collections; converted many of our finding aids to EAD and published several through RIAMCO; created a new virtual exhibit on the Vincent M. Love Collection; recorded a podcast; and begun accepting new volunteers and interns to our premises. We hope to continue increasing access to our collections over the next year! If you're curious about what we've added to our collection, visit our [online catalog](#) or [email us](#). 📧

#### It's Your Newsletter: Contribute!

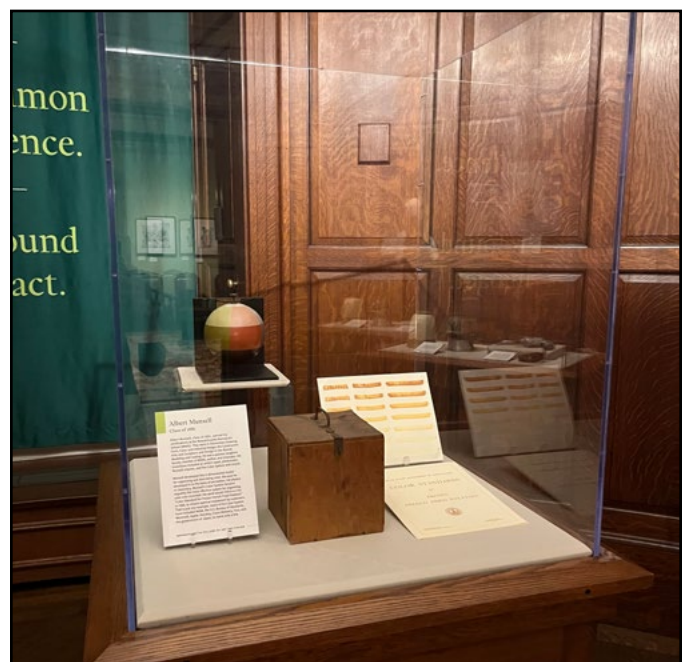
The *NEA Newsletter* always needs news from your archives and other archives in New England, about NEA members, and about upcoming events. We also need people to write reviews, long articles, and session reports for NEA meetings. If you have any ideas for articles, etc., please contact an editor.



*Courtesy of MassArt.*



*Courtesy of MassArt.*



*Courtesy of MassArt.*

# Spring 2023 Session Reports

## 1.1 New England State Historical Records Advisory Boards Summit

-Sally Blanchard-O'Brien

Speakers: Various representatives from SHRABs; moderated by Joan Ilacqua, The History Project

State Historical Records Advisory Boards, or SHRABs, plan for and advise on NHPRC-funded historical records projects within each state. This summit gathered our region's boards together to learn from one another and to discuss strategies for the future.

Some of the New England boards are quite active, others have just reinvigorated, and one is trying to restart after a long period of dormancy. Most states have or want to start a traveling archivist program that provides support to historical records repositories. These archivists are sometimes full- or part-time employees hired specifically for that role, or they are part of a pool of professionals that can be tapped on a case-by-case basis. Several boards have surveyed their state's archival needs, and this data, along with the traveling field work, helps to inform statewide strategy. Some states have formal regranteeing programs to provide funding for these identified needs, while others use board member or staff expertise to provide hands-on assistance. Interest in digitization and diversity initiatives has risen, and activities in these areas have included digitization and reparative description workshops, a mobile digitization equipment service, surveying representation in collections, and DEI training for SHRAB members.

Knowing that SHRAB work is almost entirely reliant upon grant funding, members discussed how sustainability plans should be created to ensure the work can continue. Advocacy plays a role in this by demonstrating successes to key stakeholders, such as state legislatures and funding agencies. Collaboration amongst statewide partners, allied fields, and SHRABs was discussed as another option for sustainability. Some New England states have already developed partnerships to amplify this work, while other

states want to start investigating that potential. These partnerships have made large initiatives, especially those that involve technical infrastructure, possible through the sharing of resources. The conversation moved into the potential for our region's SHRABs to work together in a consortium model for training or digital projects.

The discussion also focused on raising the awareness of groups not being reached by current services, such as community archives, and the need to translate our professional terminology for those doing archival work without formal training. These points were connected back to DEI initiatives and a call to diversify representation on SHRABs. The summit ended with a call to stay in touch and to gather again in the near future.

## Session 1.2: From the Ground Up: Strategies for Building an Archival Program

-Lindy Noecker

Presenters: Katy Sternberger, Portsmouth Athenaeum; Eve Neiger, Boston Public Library; Thomas Lester, Archdiocese of Boston; Nadia Dixon, City of Somerville

This session began with each presenter sharing their stories of building or revitalizing the archives program at their organizations, followed by a question and answer section. The themes that emerged were to document what you do and how you do it; make connections with other departments in your organization to make the case for how you can help them; start by creating policies so you can be proactive rather than reactive; focus on incremental improvement, not perfection; and think long-term from the beginning. Each presenter drew out the ways those themes shaped their path to where they and their archives are today.

Each archivist had their own story about their archives and their professional path. Katy Sternberger placed her main focus on writing a mission statement, collections policies, records retention schedule, and other formal documents that had not been created since the Portsmouth Athenaeum's archives were established in 1985. Eve Neiger was hired a few years after some dramatic bad publicity for the Boston Public Library (BPL) in 2015 and 2016. Her primary goals have been to figure out where all the archival

collections are in the BPL's building; provide access to users; and to learn, listen, and engage in in-reach to create a place for the archives within the institution. Thomas Lester has focused on thinking long-term; improving things in pieces rather than aiming for perfection; and embracing opportunities to learn, discover new solutions, and reach out to his user community. As a municipal archivist, Nadia Dixson operates within the local government, prioritizing the constituent services the city is legally obligated to provide and solving the institution's problems to show the importance of the archives.

The Q&A session covered a variety of topics. One question was about using student labor and how it contributed to these programs. The panelists agreed that since student labor is more about providing valuable experience back to the student, it may be better to find different ways to bring in outside help. Another question was about what to do with people or other organizations that approach with offers of large donations of materials. The panelists each described how they state their limited space and time to find out what the potential donors want, and how they've learned to say no. A few other questions touched on programs such as ArchivesSpace or PastPerfect, the benefits and problems with each, and how best to manage entering data or handle legacy data transfers.

### **Session 1.3 – Curiosity, Content, and Materiality: Facilitating Classroom Interactions with Special Collections**

- *Stephanie Gold*

Presenters: Eric Stoykovich, Trinity College, Watkinson Library and College Archives; Peter Kyle, Trinity College, Department of Theater and Dance

In this session, the presenters described a collaboration between the Trinity College Archives and Trinity's Department of Theater & Dance's InterArts program (a course for first year students interested in the arts), which began with a few guiding questions that would shape the end product: a cabinet of curiosities.

Visit NEA By-Laws online at:

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

1. What is it to have wonder?
2. What drives curiosity?
3. What are the things we pay attention to, and what might be missing?
4. How do we ascribe value to things we hold dear?

Students first learned about the history of cabinets of curiosities through Samuel Van Quiccheberg's 1565 manual on museums, virtual visits to the Wadsworth Antheneum's cabinet of curiosities, and Trinity's own cabinet of curiosities. Other tours included Trinity's chapel.

The students were then challenged to identify items that were of value to them—whether from their personal belongings, found in the archives, or found elsewhere on campus—and create their own cabinet of curiosities, all while demonstrating some level of process while creating each of the required steps below.

1. "Something Found" (object): An object selected from the students' Wadsworth trip or the Watkinson Library that held meaning to them.
2. "The Gift" (object): Create something for another classmate. They could use whatever materials they wanted, and the item could be an object they saw somewhere that reminded them of the classmate. Each gift included a letter from the giver to the recipient that explained why it was chosen.
3. Create "Something Out of Nothing" (object): Could be fantastical, practical, whimsical. The students had to record their process while creating this object.
4. "Transformation": Select an object of interest from the Watkinson Library and then transform it to create their own iteration.

Watkinson's instructional technologist prepared the students in selecting and citing their objects in an

## 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).

informational session via Zoom. Using the platform Scalar to arrange and present their cabinets, the instructional librarian also assisted students with designing the graphics and layout. The students held a public presentation at the Trinity Chapel where each student presented one of their four objects.

The presenters noted that if they collaborated on the course again, they would incorporate more in-person engagement throughout the course, have students write captions for items placed within physical exhibits, and explore ways of activating the physical exhibits.

This session was attended by approximately fifty participants.

## 2.1 Instruction knowledge Sharing Across Boundaries through Communities of Practice

*-Robin Merrow*

Presenters: Molly Brown Northeastern University; Chloe Gerson, Brandeis University; Laura Hibbler, Brandeis University; Blake Spitz, University of Massachusetts Amherst; Anne Graham, University of Massachusetts Amherst

This discussion focused on cross-departmental communities of practice from the viewpoints of both archivists and librarians in academic settings. Panelists discussed strategies they used to support and learn from each other as fellow information workers, and each group presented background on the logistics of their groups, shared stories of their experiences, and their future plans for their groups.

Brandeis University's community of practice began as a discussion group to cultivate community and included representatives from their library's MakerLab. They designed their teams to meet monthly and discuss teaching challenges and successes, and share ideas and tools that make instruction easier. An initial challenge was lack of meeting space on campus, but since the pandemic they were able to use Zoom and breakout rooms to facilitate conversations on different topics.

Molly Brown explained that Northeastern University's instructional exchange is seen as a horizontal mentorship.

The exchange has removed the hierarchy around communications and become a place of support and collaboration. Molly noted that setting the mechanics for meetings is key. At Northeastern, their group meets at the same time each month, adjusting the topics and type of meeting facilitation according to busy academic calendars. This group has both formal and informal channels of assessment, takes note of feedback, and asks reflective questions after sessions.

Blake Spitz explained that the collaboration at University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass) was started by an administrative mandate, and, years later, their teaching support community is the one group that remains. They have a strict no-homework policy, and people can drop in or out as needed. Anne Graham outlined their co-leadership structure and their use of multiple communication channels, including Google Docs, email, Microsoft Teams, and internal staff platforms.

There were several lively stories shared of collaboration between archivists and liaison librarians, including pairing library databases with special collections to help students physically connect to historic items, formulate questions, and discover context in database exploration. Blake asked her cohort at UMass to comment on what they value most about their community of practice. Answers included the support in "the stuff of teaching," the tools and strategies to stay up-to-date and experiment with new technology, the conversational method of the group to act as sounding board where people are seen as experts, and the networking and professional opportunities they gained.

All of the groups envisioned their communities continuing with considerations for reboots to post-pandemic schedules, adjustments for growth, and continued feedback and engagement in order to sustain the community and welcome new colleagues.

## 2.2 Celebrations!

*-Anne Woodrum*

Presenters: Lucy Ross, Massachusetts General Hospital; Danielle Sangalang, Massachusetts College of Art and Design; Caroline Kenney, Belmont Hill School; Rachel Jirka, Amherst College

In this session, panelists shared their experiences, ideas, and lessons learned from supporting parent institutions in celebrating major anniversaries and milestones.

Lucy Ross described her work on Massachusetts General Hospital's bicentennial celebration in 2021. One early challenge was deciding how to celebrate with pandemic visitor restrictions still in place. The first patient admission—the theme of the bicentennial—was highlighted in a video series examining significant “firsts” in patient care. Another highlight was the unfurling of commemorative banners outside of the Bulfinch Building with hospital staff with Bulfinch family members present. Ross also conducted extensive research to create two print publications and [a virtual 3D tour about the building](#).

Danielle Sangalang of MassArt discovered a way to use ArchivesSpace to capture graduation statistics after realizing this data would be essential to the school's 150th anniversary celebration. Frequent requests for trivia prompted her to create a spreadsheet containing fifty questions and answers enabling her to respond efficiently. Sangalang used Instagram, created two exhibits, and developed a campus walking tour to generate student interest in the anniversary. In addition, she revived Smock Day, a tradition at MassArt where seniors give their painting smocks to first years. Sangalang is also working on a long-term exhibit at the Massachusetts Historical Society focusing on the contributions of MassArt alumni.

For Caroline Kenney, the Belmont Hill School's centennial provided an opportunity to advocate for implementing both ArchivesSpace and Preservica in the archives. In addition, Kenney developed print publications, specifically a centennial book featuring current and past student life and a series of themed booklets focused on different aspects of the school's history, such as arts, athletics, and academics. She contributed content for the school's centennial website, including digital exhibits and a timeline of the school's history and created swag, namely a popular 1923 baseball cap.

Rachel Jirka spoke of the large digitization project undertaken by the Archives and Special Collections department at Amherst College as part of the college's bicentennial celebration. Early challenges included managing expectations about the department's role in the celebration and that Jirka and the digital initiatives librarian

were new staff members. The department successfully advocated for hiring a project archivist and identified heavily used collections to digitize. The project spanned multiple departments, so developing workflows was important. In addition to supporting reference work, the success of the project has enabled the department to advocate for additional digitization and a new digital collections platform.

The panelists then collectively addressed in a Q&A format a wide range of topics related to supporting celebrations—from fostering relationships, setting expectations, and performing self-care to connecting with audiences, developing workflows, and documenting work. The panelists closed by reflecting on the importance of starting early, communicating, and using celebrations to bring awareness to issues (e.g., leaks in the building) and to advocate for what you need.

### 2.3 Airtable for Archives and Special Collections

- Julie Annette Rosier

Presenters: Jordan Jancosek, Hilary Wang, Janaya Kizzie, John Hay Library, Brown University

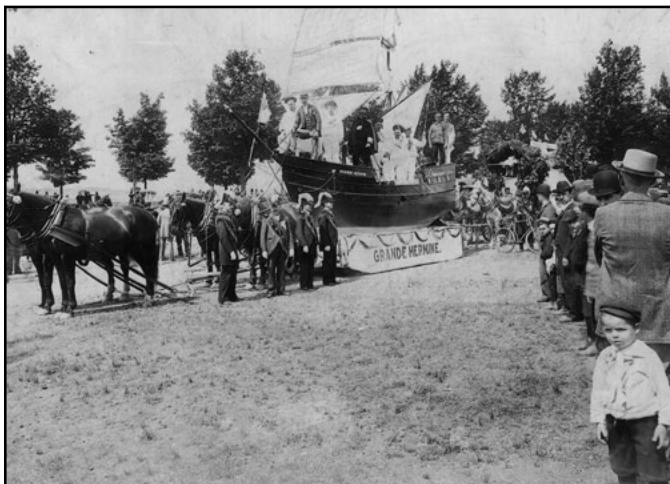
In their session, Jordan Jancosek, Janaya Kizzie, and Hilary Wang of Brown University's John Hay Library demonstrated their success with using [Airtable](#) to manage pre-custodial/collection management and archival processing workflows. They explained that Airtable, an easy-to-use online platform for creating and sharing relational databases, addressed several data management and collaboration pain points which had previously been festering due to unwieldy acquisitions, extensive cataloging and processing backlog, and a proliferation of decentralized spreadsheets.

Kizzie led off the discussion by translating some of Airtable's jargon (i.e., “base” means database, and “table” in “grid view” looks like a typical spreadsheet) and showing how components of the tool map onto and improve upon similar functions in Google Sheets or Forms. Jancosek then talked about how she had experienced an excessive amount of emails clogging her inbox before implementing Airtable, but Airtable reduced the need for so much email. Instead, she developed donor inquiry, gift, and purchasing

questionnaires to gather data directly at various pre-custodial milestones early in the process, and those records entered the database through these forms they could move seamlessly into upcoming processing workflows.

Next, Kizzie introduced the archival processing base, which combines data for both analog and digital processing workflows. They described how the team discovered, while implementing Airtable, that the physical and digital processing was happening on the “same assembly line” and therefore could be combined into a “beautiful 100-field” processing table, where each field represents an aspect of processing workflow, or a column in the grid view. Some fields in this base relate to the processing of physical materials, while others relate to digital objects. Meanwhile, each collection has its record which lives in a discrete “collections table” and can then be linked to the processing records. And while various users can create separate views to see the fields that are most relevant to them, all of the data lives in a centralized place.

Wang discussed how she leverages Airtable to track the born-digital lifecycle from acquisition through processing, and expressed the importance of embedding the digital archivist acquisition conversations relating to hybrid collections as early as possible. She showed how she utilized simple Airtable automations to email herself a notification every time a box, indicating that a collection has digital material, was checked in the donor’s gift and purchase form.



This float, a replica of the ship *La Grande Hermine*, could be seen at the 1897 St. Jean-Baptiste Day parade in Lewiston. *La Grande Hermine* was the name of the ship used to explore North America by French explorer Jacques Cartier. *Courtesy of the University of Southern Maine.*

Through this session, the Brown archival processing team provided a very compelling case for how Airtable can improve collaboration, automate certain rote tasks, and create a customizable experience in archives and special collections contexts.

### 3.1 DEI in Academic Archives: Description and Access

- *Betts Coup*

Presenters: Bianca Pallo, Brown University; Valen R. Werner and Caro Langenbucher, Dartmouth College

Session 3.1 started with Bianca Pallo’s presentation about The Global Curatorial Project, a program organized by Brown University and the National Museum of African American History, but with international partners’ involvement. The program allows the descendants of enslaved people to respond to that history and remark on its continuing impact. Pallo arranges and describes oral histories being gathered by teams working globally in preparation for a 2024 exhibition and with long-term stewardship in mind. She included that the oral histories belong to the contributors and can be removed at any time at their request, making description and arrangement all the more important.

Caro Langenbucher described the challenges of carrying out reparative archival descriptive work at Rauner Special Collections Library at Dartmouth and the work of the Contextualization and Repair Group. They have focused their efforts on harm reduction and have been developing processes for mitigating harmful description and documenting the process. Langenbucher also discussed ArchivesSpace plug-ins developed by Joshua Shaw at Dartmouth. One would both add harmful content warnings and allow users to share materials that should have these warnings to their description broadly, and the other allows for standard remediation notes rather than the out-of-the-box revision history note. These will be implemented soon. They also mentioned box labels including derogatory imagery of Indigenous people on Dartmouth’s seal and their efforts to add descriptive labels, balancing the need to reduce harm and avoid white-washing institutional history.

Val Werner spoke about the Dartmouth Historical

Accountability Student Research Program (HASRP), which allows students to explore issues of equity and inclusion in Dartmouth's history through the archives. In its fifth year, the program allows students to take part in fellowships, internships, and externships. Werner was a participant in the program in 2020 as a student and now oversees HASRP and its students. The HASRP allows students to do research into topics that interest them and, depending on which track they choose, develop various products to display their research, from digital exhibits, websites, podcasts, bibliographies, and more. All materials put on the [program's Omeka S site](#) are OCR'd for access and have descriptive metadata. The program's intent is to support research, both by the students but also by encouraging others to do further work on these topics through the shared products and bibliographies.

### 3.2 Collecting Records From Closed Institutions.

*-Stephanie Gold*

Presenters: Violet Hurst, Thomas Lester, Archdiocese of Boston

This session covered the processes and lessons learned by the archives staff of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston who handled the transfer of records from eleven catholic schools that closed during the earliest months of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Prior to May 2020, the way records were transferred from closed Catholic schools was not ideal. Sometimes records were sent to the merging school rather than the archives, inventories or documentation were not always kept, or not all permanent records (such as yearbooks, class photographs, films of school plays) were transferred. Furthermore, it was difficult for alumni or former employees to find necessary records. Staff turnover increased the loss of institutional knowledge. The archives staff revamped their records retention policy and created a best practices for school closures guide for school staff to use as a checklist to determine what was on-site.

Removing records from the schools posed many challenges. First was the emotional challenge that faced the community, alumni, current students, faculty, and staff. During the pandemic, closures were announced via Zoom.

The archivists were the first to arrive and received the negative feedback. It was important for the archivists to be helpful but professional. Next, the schools were spread across the eastern third of Massachusetts, which posed the challenge of getting staff out to locations to pack. The archivists also faced environmental challenges such as dust, mold, and pests. Each location held massive amounts of records, so it was necessary to bring enough supplies, coordinate with moving companies, and find the room to sort and store. Finally, once the records were transferred, they needed to be processed at a baseline level as soon as possible to provide immediate and continued access to student, alumni, and former employee records.

The archivists shared lessons they learned, such as the importance of knowing what you are walking into before you get there. Know the mood, physical space, environment, and supplies needed. Get the word out to the community about where records will be located after the transfer. Be flexible, as no two situations are the same. Lastly, seek help! Work with legal counsel to improve retention schedules and best practices checklists; IT staff to maintain websites for the community to find where to access their records; and school staff, as they're the experts.

### 3.3 Virtually Helpful: Archives Volunteers and Digital Projects

*-Sally Blanchard-O'Brien*

Presenters: Christina M. Bleyer, Trinity College; Francesco Buccella, Sudbury Historical Society; Elisa Graydon, US Coast Guard Academy; Jen Hale, Perkins School for the Blind; Sarah Hayes and Stephanie Bennett Rahmat, Trustees of Reservations

These lightning presentations showcased how each represented organization has approached managing volunteers on digital projects. There are many ways to define "volunteer," but broadly it is considered a non-permanent, non-full-time worker. Because many of our organizations have a small professional staff, volunteers are essential to the work that we do. And for many volunteers, whose work is uncompensated, the work itself is the reward.

To ensure a good experience for all involved, project planning is crucial. The panelists discussed scoping projects by available volunteer hours, trying to anticipate

problems that may arise, having preliminary meetings about the expectations of the project as well as periodic check-ins, and developing manuals so that volunteers can work autonomously, something that is important for them to feel that their contributions are appreciated. They also discussed times where projects were not a good fit, and that having documented guidelines to point to and an attitude of “we’re trying to figure this out together” can help in providing feedback to volunteers. While planning is crucial, presenters stressed that expectations can be different from reality. It is important to stay flexible, and it is okay to move on from a problematic project.

The projects discussed in this session used common office software that many are familiar with, such as Zoom, Google, or Microsoft. They also used Flickr for image storage and Omeka for final exhibits. One project used the [Oral History Metadata Synchronizer](#) to index their oral histories.

Recruiting volunteers for projects can be difficult. Some of the organizations found that their typical volunteers’ interest waned once they realized the projects were digital. Digital work is invisible, as most people do not understand how it is done. The presenters stressed that the organization must advocate for the importance of digital work. Some strategies to entice volunteers discussed include planning projects around topics or materials that people would find interesting, or scoping a project that would be acceptable for Simmons University’s internship program. Digital projects can also be presented as a flexible option, adaptable to the life circumstances of both staff and volunteers.

#### **4.1 Creating Connections in Isolation: Three Archives’ Reference and Outreach Practices through the Pandemic**

*-Brittany Fox*

Presenters: Abbey Malangone, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum; Cristina Prochilo, Historic New England; Sam Valentine, The History Project  
Moderator: Joan Ilacqua, The History Project

The presenters started by offering background information on their institutions, both historically and

collection-wise, in order to ground their subsequent discussions about the challenges of performing reference and outreach activities during the pandemic. Presenting to a group of about twenty attendees, the panelists centered their questions and discussions around the challenges of the endeavor, how they navigated the situation with limited resources, and what long term impacts they are facing.

The first question asked was “What changed when the doors closed?” Answers showcased that while how archivists performed their reference work changed, what they did, did not. There was a learning curve to what can be answered virtually and how reproductions would be handled. While some of the institutions had their staff return within the year, others closed their doors for an extended period, and all had to decide how they would still engage with their patrons. The History Project created online programs and events to connect people weekly as well as crowdsourcing the project “Queer Archives at Home.” For the JFK Library, they were fortunate in that many of their collections have already been digitized, while Historic New England faced quick snapshot digitization, and even the use of FaceTime to give patrons fast access.

The second question asked how and when the institutions reopened and if there were major shifts in staffing and priorities. Cristina Prochilo explained that Historic New England is in a unique situation, as their facility is being renovated, but they have had a major influx (33% or more) of research requests, and the time at home has allowed them to focus on metadata and cleanup of their digital asset system. Similarly, Sam Valentine announced that The History Project has moved space, which delayed them. Abbey Malangone described how the JFK Library had multiple false starts to their re-opening, and they’ve faced a major organizational change that has left their department cut in half.

Joan Ilacqua concluded the pre-set questions by inquiring about what the future of their work looks like. Historic New England will more frequently use a remote research and reference framework, as it has proven to be a cheaper and more accessible option for patrons. The JFK Library has limited their hours and capacity for their reference work, but will offer Intro to Research classes online. The History Project is seeking to update and strengthen their digitization process so that it is a more



overarching and sustainable program with guidelines. It will be important to find a balance between hybrid and online events.

The quest and answer session was extremely fruitful, with an explanation of how digitization has proven to be a great equalizer and when there are fees involved, it is an excellent pay-it-forward opportunity. There were also theories about the increase in genealogy questions, student inquiries, and press requests. Improvements to keeping track of all of these virtual reference requests is ongoing for all three institutions. They concluded the session by reminding everyone that there is a front of the house and back of the house for servicing patrons, and it is important to divide space for who we are versus what we do.

## 4.2 Archiving the Archive

*-Anne Woodrum*

Presenters: Sarah Schelde, Mary Baker Eddy Library; Deborah Rich, Sandwich Public Library; Esme Rabin, Buckingham Browne & Nichols School; Mik Hamilton, Simmons University

In this session, panelists explored the challenges of understanding the decisions of previous staff within the archives and shared strategies for documenting their own work for future archivists.

Sarah Schelde explained that while the Mary Baker Eddy Library opened in 2002, historical work had been performed by various people throughout the church's history. Schelde described processing the Subject Files collection, a large body of materials that required review before opening for research. Parts of the collection had been reviewed by predecessors. However, documentation on this work was unclear, leaving questions about the status of files. Schelde developed and documented a formal review process and created a finding aid. In closing, Schelde noted that documentation not only helps our successors understand the "why" behind our decisions but also acknowledges that archives are not neutral.

At the Sandwich Public Library, Deborah Rich fulfills the role of archivist, reference librarian, and systems librarian. Rich's predecessors in the archives were two "legends:" a

town historian and a genealogist who collectively held the position of archivist for forty years. As the current archivist, Rich has prioritized digitization and, to date, has digitized yearbooks, historical newspapers, and a previous archivist's vast collection of family histories. Rich also digitized a prior archivist's extensive research files, which were often filed haphazardly among archival materials and frequently falling out as a result. Using "out" cards to indicate their original location, Rich removed and digitized the files, thereby preserving them and making them more accessible.

Esme Rabin noted that since opening in the 1980s, the archives at the Buckingham Browne & Nichols School has had eight different archivists, most of whom worked part-time. When Rabin joined in 2020, the department had some documentation, including an accession records spreadsheet (which Rabin has since ingested into ArchivesSpace), three finding aids, and a collection of digitized photographs. In addition to building on this existing documentation, Rabin has increased the archives' public facing presence, developed policies, and conducted a collections survey to identify gaps in holdings. Rabin has created a five-year plan documenting what the archives plans to do in addition to documenting the work done so far.

As part of her internship at the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI), Mik Hamilton described photograph collections and conducted reparative description work on legacy finding aids. The NMAI Culture Thesaurus was an important resource for these activities. Hamilton highlighted her experience processing the Walter Garbe photographs and how, after careful investigation, she was able to determine that photographs were taken in a different part of Brazil than what was recorded. In addition to replacing incorrect geographical information, Hamilton updated the cultural term with a more accurate one. She noted that legacy metadata is rarely sourced and asked if we are leaving future archivists and researchers with unnecessary detective work as a result. On a final note, Hamilton called attention to different practices for increasing transparency in processing choices, including the use of processing notes and maintaining old versions of description.

Visit NEA online at:  
[www.newenglandarchivists.org](http://www.newenglandarchivists.org)

### 4.3 Experiential Learning in the Archives

-Brigham Boice

Presenters: Kim Harris Thacker, The Ethel Walker School; Erica Donnis, Champlain College; Amy Howe, Champlain College; Brigham Boice, Champlain College; Veronica Hill, Champlain College

**K**im Harris Thacker, archivist at The Ethel Walker School in Simsbury, Connecticut, shared how she engages students in experiential learning. For her students, “the archives” are both “outside” with mudlarking expeditions and “inside” with the decisions of care and curation. Harris Thacker’s work centers on the uses of material artifacts, or “tangible things” (with credit to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich’s book, *Tangible Things*), along with archival documents and photos to help students engage with their shared school history. As a full-time teacher, Thacker and her students regularly create hands-on museum displays that pay careful attention to accessibility and diversity.

Erica Donnis, director of special collections; Amy Howe, assistant professor; Brigham Boice, second-year student; and Veronica Hill, second-year student at Champlain College in Burlington, Vermont, shared their experiences of bringing archives into the classroom in the development of student-created time capsules. Erica Donnis discussed the importance of integrating archival resources into classroom curricula, promoting student engagement, and enhancing learning outcomes. She highlighted the benefits of experiential learning and how it can help students develop critical thinking skills. Amy Howe shared her experiences in incorporating archives into the time capsule course. She discussed how she uses archival materials to create interactive activities and assignments that challenge students to think creatively and critically. During the presentation, two key texts were mentioned: *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History*, by Michel Rolph Trouillot (Penguin, 2015), which explores the power dynamics behind producing and disseminating historical narratives; and *Remembrance of Things Present: The Invention of the Time Capsule*, by Nick Yablon (The University of Chicago Press, 2019), which examines how material objects can evoke memories and shape our understanding of the past in the present. Brigham Boice and Veronica Hill shared their experiences developing and creating student-led time capsule projects that dealt with questions of curation, preservation, confidentiality, and research ethics as they worked with sixty of their peers in successfully

making time capsule deposits. They discussed the challenges and rewards of working with archival materials and how it helped them develop research, analysis, and presentation skills.

The presenters welcome NEA members to contact them with questions and for access to slides and relevant course materials.

### 5.2 Filling the Gap: Building Regional Communities of Practice

*Reprinted from the Spring 2023 50th Anniversary Meeting program.*

Presenters: Erica Donnis, Champlain College; Darlene Bialowski, Collections Care & Conservation Alliance; Kathy Craughwell-Varda, Connecticut Conservation ConneCTion; Rodney Obien, Keene State College; Rachel Onuf, Vermont Historical Records Program and VACDaR

**A**re you interested in joining a community of practice to meet colleagues, share ideas and resources, or take advantage of professional development opportunities? This session will feature representatives from programs that connect and support practitioners in the archives field and related disciplines in New England. Panelists representing the Collections Care & Conservation Alliance, Vermont Historical Records Program, Connecticut Conservation ConneCTion, and state-based Alliances for Response will share how they can support you directly or serve as a model. This session is open to all but may be of particular interest to independent practitioners, solo archivists, staff of small or under-resourced repositories, and emerging professionals. ■

#### 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.

Continued From Page 5

realities of individual archives. This later skill is incredibly important, and it's hard to make the lesson stick without seeing firsthand how professionals employ and interpret archival theory.

Archival work is also something that cannot be done in a complete vacuum. At every level of our careers, we need other professionals in our lives. These may be mentors, coworkers, professional friends, fellow committee members, and so on. We, as a profession, thrive when we are given the opportunities to work through problems and bounce ideas off one another. These professional support structures are critical for all of us, but they are especially for emerging professionals. Well-structured internships as part of an educational program help to provide student professionals access to that larger network, while also providing opportunities for mentorship and modeling of healthy professional dialogues.

As a Simmons University SLIS graduate myself, I have fond memories of my time interning at the MIT Institute Archives. That internship helped to solidify my interests in access and digital archiving, interests which continue to influence my career. Now, I am happy to be on the other side, and to leverage my own internship and paraprofessional experiences to make the CLA one of the many sites that provide SLIS students internship opportunities. Every internship at the CLA is going to be a little bit different; sometimes the student will work with a brand-new collection, sometimes they will work on a collection intended for digitization, or sometimes they will work on barely-processed legacy collections. Shared between all of our internships though, is the fact that the student will have the opportunity to fully process a church records collection. Of course, structure and opportunities for review are built into the internship, but I try to balance structured activities with the opportunity for students to apply, without too much managerial interference, personal knowledge and classroom experiences to their work. Afterwards, I discuss with the intern their decisions and thought process. I find this approach helps student interns find their own archival voice, and it is a great way for them to safely experiment with the tools and theories they have learned in the classroom.

Though the specifics of every internship will be different, I always strive to cover a similar set of workflows

and processes. Arrangement is maybe the one activity I spend the most time on with interns. The day we first discuss arrangement is maybe my second most favorite activity. I remember when, during my own internship, I learned that physical and intellectual arrangement were two different things, and that one did not have to reflect the other. It was a shocking moment for me, and a lesson that I took to heart. And now I get to do the same with my own interns; and I am glad I am not alone in my own initial discomfort. I also ensure that the use of ArchivesSpace and the editing of MARC records is a part of every internship, as familiarity with both are listed on nearly every archivist job posting.

I am so thankful that I've had the opportunity to host interns from the SLIS program at Simmons University. I genuinely enjoy working with student interns and providing a practical bedrock from which emerging voices can launch their professional careers. And for me too, it is an opportunity to give back to the community that helped launch my own career. I am so thankful for my own paraprofessional and SLIS internship experiences, and if I can provide even a fraction of what those experiences gave me to rising professionals, then I feel that I have succeeded.



Zachary Bodnar graduated with a Masters of Library and Information Science from Simmons University in 2018. He has worked in the Vassar College Special Collections, the Harvard Law School Library, and the Harvard Botany Libraries. He joined the Congregational Library & Archives in 2017. His professional interests include metadata collection and management, and digital archiving. ■

### 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.



# From IDEAs to Action

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

The Global Curatorial Project:  
Unfinished Conversations

*By Bianco Pallo*

The ongoing international project at Brown University, known as [The Global Curatorial Project](#) (GCP), was introduced to attendees of the NEA Spring 2023 50th Anniversary Meeting as part of the “DEI in Academic Archives: Description and Access” panel. The presentation outlined the project partners, the project timeline, and the archival workflows that are being implemented at Brown as a result of the varied needs of the oral history collection.

According to the project’s website, the GCP “is a network of scholars, curators, and community educators who are committed to creating [...] innovative forms of public history about historical experiences and the contemporary legacies of racial slavery and colonialism.” The GCP is defined by two closely connected projects: a traveling exhibition, “In Slavery’s Wake”; and a curatorial/archival collection and public engagement project, “Unfinished Conversations.” Together, these projects work to better understand how our lives and societies are continually shaped by the global wake of racial slavery and European colonialism. It is jointly led by the Ruth J. Simmons Center for the Study of Slavery (also known as the Simmons Center) at Brown University and the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC).

The Simmons Center (formerly the CSSJ) was established in 2012 as a direct result of the Brown University Steering Committee on Slavery and Justice report which was part of Brown’s reckoning with its involvement in and profiting off of racialized slavery. Over the last decade the Simmons Center has organized hundreds of public programs to understand how slavery’s legacy directly impacts all of our lives, yet is “hidden in plain sight” and the GCP is one of their latest collaborations to that end. After a series of workshops starting in 2014, on topics such as exhibitions on slavery and colonialism and what resources were missing, Professor Anthony Bogues (the Director of the Simmons Center) was motivated to make the GCP a reality. He

felt that the exhibitions were missing details and nuances that could only be provided by the oral histories from the descendants of those who were enslaved.

Though racial slavery and colonialism were systems that attempted to dehumanize enslaved people, both “In Slavery’s Wake” and “Unfinished Conversations” ensure that the ways in which enslaved and colonized people resisted these global forces through a myriad of practices of freedom-making in ways that have not been fully documented, are shared, appreciated, or valued as both a history and wellspring of hope and resistance. Both the traveling exhibition and the archival collection support and give context to one another. The exhibition will feature some of the interviews taken at each location and will open in 2024.

The “Unfinished Conversations” series is an archival collection of oral histories gathered from partners in multiple locations that were impacted by the Atlantic slave trade. These include: Dakar and Saint-Louis, Senegal; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Cape Town, South Africa; Liverpool, United Kingdom; Brussels, Belgium; Africatown, Mobile, Alabama, USA. Partner institutions in these locations coordinate oral history interviews with communities who can communicate what it means to live in the modern wake of slavery. The initial set of interviews have wrapped and are currently being processed at Brown. The next set of interviews will commence over the summer with a more targeted set of questions for a smaller pool of interviewees to help dig deeper into the nuances of these narratives.

This collection operates under the ethos of shared authority by the interviewees who participated in the project, while Brown operates as the institution of record. The hope is that each interviewee feels that their vulnerability in sharing these traumatic memories is respected and that they have full control over what happens to their materials in perpetuity.

It is an entirely digital collection and the scope of the materials varies by location as it meets the needs of the local institution and community. Some institutions are looking to expand upon these interviews for their own projects in the future, such as documentaries or other archival collections. The institutions of origin keep their files and send copies to Brown and NMAAHC via hard drives. The files on the hard drives include videos of oral history interviews from multiple angles, photographs of participants, audio files of the interviews, and transcripts. Essentially anything that could be generated in the course of trying to document the stories of the affected communities.

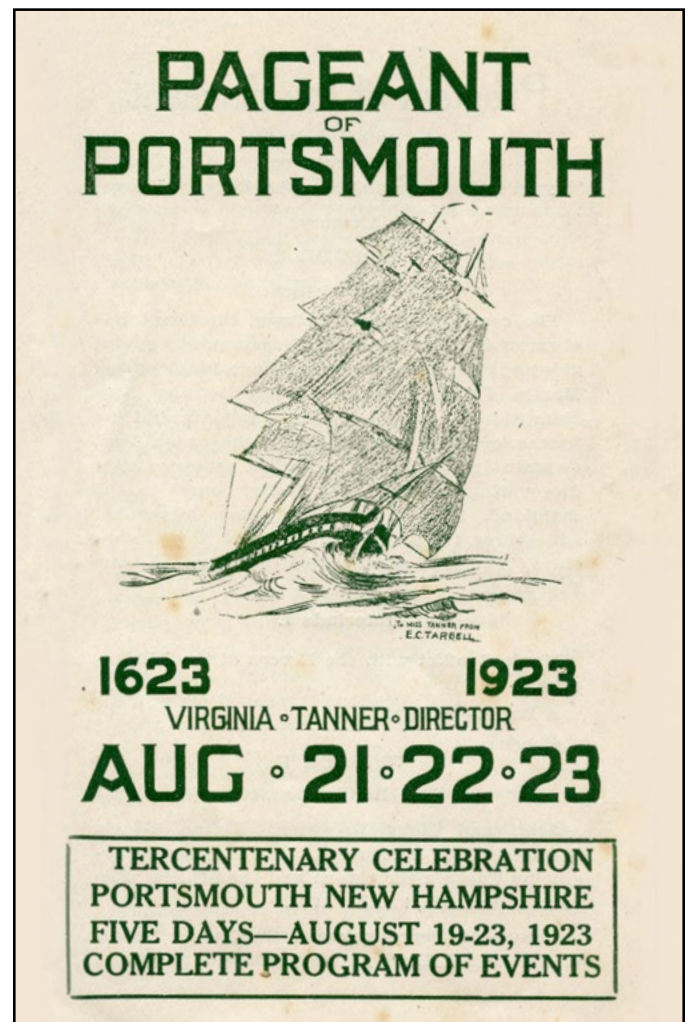
A key aspect of the archival work discussed during the session was the role metadata will play in providing user access and proper representation of the interviewees and their experiences. It is well documented that controlled vocabularies like the Library of Congress are problematic when attempting to use subject headings in reference to issues such as slavery and colonialism. As one of the ways to combat this, student researchers are being brought on board this summer to participate in identifying themes and creating summaries and local tags for each interview. This was initially carried out with the first set of interviews from Senegal and proved to be an effective tool for providing subject matter expertise and bringing varied perspectives to the tagging process. Other controlled vocabularies specifically curated with culturally sensitive and inclusive language will be consulted to further generate rich metadata for such a complex collection. Additionally, when the finding aid is nearing completion, each institution will be provided with a draft and consulted as to the appropriateness of the metadata before it is published. Since Brown University is only the institution of record, it is important to prioritize working closely with project partners to ensure culturally sensitive and competent language throughout the finding aid.

Finally, during the Q&A portion of the panel, a question was raised as to the sustainability of the practices being carried out by the project archivist considering the limitations of the project timeline. This was answered through the explanation of a style guide that is being created throughout the accessioning and processing of the materials. The purpose of the style guide is to assist other archivists at Brown or other institutions who might have

to deal with similar workflows for oral history projects consisting of large amounts of data and a variety of international partners.



Bianca Pallo currently serves as the Global Curatorial Project archivist at Brown University, where she oversees the accessioning and description of the project materials into special collections. She joined the Global Curatorial Project in August 2022. ■



Portsmouth, New Hampshire, is celebrating its 400th anniversary in 2023. One hundred years ago, during the city's tercentenary in August 1923, suffragist Virginia Tanner Green (1881–1950) of nearby New Castle served as writer and director of *The Pageant of Portsmouth*, a production that featured 1,000 performers reenacting 300 years of history in the Piscataqua region. With a nod to the area's maritime heritage, the program of events featured a drawing of a schooner by local Impressionist painter Edmund Charles Tarbell (1862–1938). *Courtesy of the Portsmouth Athenaeum.*

# Announcement

*What appears below, lightly edited, are the remarks presented by Immediate Past President Genna Duplisea during the Spring 2023 50th Anniversary Meeting to honor Anna Clutterbuck-Cook with the Distinguished Service Award.*

We lost an amazing spirit at the end of January. Anna Clutterbuck-Cook was a force of justice and joy. This collective “we” includes so many communities of people and lives Anna touched with her commitment to humanity. With her wife, Hanna, she was a celebrant of queer joy, of friendship, of radical compassion.

Anna was New England Archivists’s first Inclusion and Diversity Coordinator, and built the foundation for the IDC Committee and NEA’s efforts to make the organization accessible to more people. The pronoun buttons available at every conference were her idea. She showed how food is an inclusivity issue. She established our code of conduct and initiated the “Who’s Missing from this Table?” column in the *NEA Newsletter*.

Additionally, Anna was instrumental in NEA’s first Contingent Employment Survey and the Archival Workers Emergency Fund, and founding co-chair of the Society of American Archivists LGBTQ+ Roundtable and founding organizer of the Concerned Archivists Alliance. She served as an associate editor of the *Journal of Contemporary Archival Studies*, and she was also a reviewer for that journal, *Library Journal*, and *Publishers Weekly*. To see one person create so much change and demonstrate such commitment to her communities is a marvel. Constantly and completely Anna engaged with the world, writing and presenting on religious studies, LGBTQ history, primary source instruction, feminist history, and social justice in libraries and archives. Her work was not limited to archives; she was also the founder of the Persistent Stitches fundraiser, a judge for Massachusetts History Day, an accomplished fiber artist, and when I met her in person it was at the People’s Climate March.

When I heard of Anna’s passing, honoring her in this way emerged not just from me or the Nominating Committee but many individuals seeking solace in our grief. In their nomination, Jeanne Lowrey, Stephanie Bredbenner, Rose Oliveira, Rosemary K. J. Davis, and Meghan Rinn wrote, “The incredible breadth of Anna’s contributions is a

true testament to the commitment, creativity, and passion she brought to every endeavor. She is the definition of distinguished service, and her passing is an incalculable loss. However, NEA and the entire archives field will continue to be enriched by Anna’s work for many years to come.”

Activism saturated Anna’s life, her writing, her every-day interactions, even on Twitter. It is with great respect and great heartache I present on behalf of New England Archivists the Distinguished Service Award to Anna Clutterbuck-Cook.

Nominating Committee:

Genna Duplisea, Immediate Past President, chair  
Molly Brown  
Linda Hocking  
Hillary Kativa  
Joy Rodowicz

---

## 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. [For more details on the nomination process and for a list of past awardees see our website.](#) ■



Massachusetts Eye and Ear employees staff their table at the Charles Street Community Fair, 1976. *Courtesy of the Abraham Pollen Archives of Massachusetts Eye and Ear.*

**N E A**

**New England Archivists**

TAKING THE PAST INTO THE FUTURE

45 Skehan Street  
Somerville, MA 02143

### THIS SEASON IN NEW ENGLAND HISTORY



Sisters of St. Joseph of Springfield enjoying the planes during a visit to Mountain Park Amusement Park, Holyoke, Massachusetts, 1966, sponsored by State Representative Arthur McKenna. From left: Sr. Michael Veronica Dowd, Sr. Shawn Mary Broughan. Photo credit: *Springfield Sunday Republican* [1966-08-14 issue, page 12]. *Courtesy of the Diocese of Springfield.*