

Collaborative Creativity: The Radcliffe Workshop on Technology and Archival Processing

MARY O. MURPHY AND ANNE SAUER

Abstract: Most, if not all, archival repositories are faced with significant backlogs of unprocessed materials that are inaccessible to researchers. In attempting to address the barrier to access these backlogs represent, archivists have attempted to streamline processing using a variety of approaches, including "More Product, Less Process." While these techniques have had an impact, there is still much to be done. On May 16-17, 2011, the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study hosted a Workshop on Technology and Archival Processing. The event brought together a carefully chosen, cross-disciplinary group of archivists and technology leaders to examine new ways to leverage technology to improve access to information in archives. Attendees were asked to consider a set of use cases that illustrated archivists' current workflows and the pressures of significant backlogs in all formats, including non-digital material. The technologists were challenged to think about how recent advances in automation and visualization could assist in the descriptive process, while archivists were challenged to re-envision our own practices. Each use case was grounded in real-world scenarios of access and use. This platform presentation will present a description and outcomes of the workshop with a discussion of the implications and potential impact of opportunities that emerged from the event.

About the authors:

Mary O. Murphy is a Manuscripts Cataloguer at the Schlesinger library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, and served as project manager for the Radcliffe Workshop on Technology and Archival Processing. As an archivist and manuscripts processor, Murphy works with organizational records and personal papers relating to the history of women in America. Prior to joining the Schlesinger Library in 2008, Murphy served as Archivist and records manager at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, where she confronted challenges associated with the management and preservation of backlog and electronic records. Murphy holds a Master of Science degree in Library and information science from Simmons College (2006), a Master of Fine Arts degree in historic preservation from the Savannah College of Art & Design (2003), and a Bachelor of Arts degree in history from Beloit College (2001).

Anne Sauer is Director of Digital Collections and Archives and University Archivist at Tufts University. Sauer was a member of the Working Group that planned the Radcliffe Workshop as well as a participant. At Tufts, Sauer oversees Tufts' archival and manuscript collections, digital repository, and records management program as well as serving on university-wide committees on scholarly communication and faculty development. Prior to assuming the director's role, Sauer was Assistant Archivist at Tufts, overseeing processing and reference services, as well as working on a number of digital projects. Sauer is a frequent speaker on digital project development and

management for archives and museums, and holds a MSLIS from Simmons College and a MA in History from Tufts University.