

The Scholar-Archivist and Scholar-Activist Approach Inside and Outside the Florida Archive

HAYLEY SERPA

Abstract

This presentation delves into the multifaceted role of the scholar-archivist, emphasizing the dynamic and adaptable nature required for implementing community-engaged research methodologies within the archival field. Drawing from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) sponsored project, 'Planning Collaborative Practices for Archiving Farmworker Communities' Histories,' this paper highlights how scholar-archivists in Florida navigate the intersections of activism and community-memory work. This approach underscores the importance of stepping beyond traditional archival confines to innovate and collaborate with local communities, especially in the face of state-sanctioned symbolic annihilation and minoritization. Within the archive, scholar-archivists play a crucial role in identifying and addressing gaps in archival collections, and in ensuring their accessibility and curation for future generations. By seeking out and incorporating diverse materials, scholar-archivists work to create a more inclusive historical narrative. Beyond the archive, scholar-archivists engage directly with communities, utilizing oral histories, participatory research, and collaborative projects to co-create new archival materials. These efforts not only enrich existing collections but also empower communities by validating their unique experiences and knowledge systems. Such engagements foster trust and mutual respect, essential for sustainable and meaningful collaboration. Specific examples from Florida will illustrate the practical application of these methodologies, highlighting our collaborations with local non-governmental organizations such as the Farmworkers Association of Florida (FWAF) and the Rural Women's Health Project (RWHP). This presentation ultimately advocates for a more inclusive approach to archiving, encouraging professionals and students in the field to take proactive steps in fostering community engagement in their own archival spaces.

About the author:

Hayley Maritza Serpa (she/her/ella) is Project Coordinator at the University of Miami Libraries (UML) for the 'Planning Collaborative Practices for Archiving Farmworker Communities Histories' project. This project is a joint effort between the UML and the University of Florida Libraries to document the life stories of farmworkers in Florida. It is generously sponsored by an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership grant. Before joining the project, Serpa graduated from the concurrent B.A./M.A. program in History at Florida International University. She will be pursuing her Ph.D. in the History of Science and Medicine at Yale University starting this Fall, where she also joins their Center for Race, Indigeneity, and Transnational Migration as a Graduate Fellow. She is broadly interested in histories of critical demography and indigenous epistemologies in the Peruvian Andes-Amazon.