

"The soul of the National Archives": Sara Dunlap Jackson, 1919-1991

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Abstract

In the twenty-first century, SAA has promoted diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).¹ But we still know little about how our professional past might enrich this urgent future-facing work. Sara Dunlap Jackson was the first Black woman professional archivist at the National Archives (1944-1990), as well as the second woman of color to join SAA. A reference archivist non-pareil, Jackson's labors underpinned dozens of monographs. Historian John Hope Franklin called her career "a dramatic example of the unsung heroine who has meant so much to so many scholars—the young as well as the old, the distinguished as well as the ordinary."² Another characterized Jackson as "a giant among us."³ Jackson's intellectual production included not only reference work, but also numerous scholarly book reviews and book introductions. This presentation, based on previously inaccessible archival materials, contributes to Black women's intellectual history as well as to archival history.

About the authors:

An Associate Professor at Drexel University's College of Computing and Informatics, *Alex H. Poole* studies history, archives and records management, information practices and information behavior, digital curation, digital humanities, and pedagogy. Poole has received the ALISE/Bohdan S. Wynar Research Paper Award, Donald G. Davis Article Award (American Library Association), the Justin Winsor Prize (ALA), the Jesse H. Shera Award for Distinguished Published Research (ALA), the Bob Williams Research Paper Award from the Association for Information Science and Technology (ASIS&T), the Arline Custer Memorial Award from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC), and the Theodore Calvin Pease Award from the Society of American Archivists (SAA). His work has also earned First Place, Best Long Research Paper, at the ASIS&T annual meeting, Third Place, Best Short Research Paper, at the ASIS&T annual meeting, and runner-up for Best Short Research Paper at the iConference. Poole was educated at Williams College (BA, Highest Honors in History), Brown University (MA), and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (MSLS, Beta Phi Mu), and PhD.

¹ Key SAA benchmarks include its Statement on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (2020), its Core Values of Archivists (2011), its Strategic Plan (2014-2018), its Statement Reaffirming Our Commitment to the Importance of Diversity and Inclusion (2016), the Revision to the Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics (2020), the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Work Plan (2020), and the Revamped Strategic Plan (2023-2025).

² John Hope Franklin to William E. Leckie, April 12, 1976, Sara Dunlap Jackson Papers, Moorland-Spangarn Research Center.

³ Ira Berlin, "Dedication: In Memory of Sara Dunlap Jackson, May 28, 1919-April 19, 1991," *Prologue* 29, no. 2 (summer 1997).