

Surveying the Impact of Archival Access Restrictions on Researchers

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Abstract

The research team, composed of current and past members of the SAA Privacy and Confidentiality Section, conducted a study aimed at gaining deeper insights into how access restrictions impact researchers of United States-based archival collections. Their goal is to explore potential communication and education strategies to help mitigate those impacts.

The first stage of the project involved surveying archival researchers, attempting to sample from a wide variety of disciplines, including academic and non-academic users. Survey questions sought to gain insight into whether access restrictions are perceived to be equitably applied to all researchers, how and when information about restrictions has been shared with researchers, and what communication and access approaches researchers thought could improve their experiences. Following the survey, qualitative interviews were conducted with a selection of participants.

During the Research Forum, the research team will present their findings, and discuss next steps for analysis and publication. This research will be of interest to any archival practitioners whose holdings include restricted materials, anyone looking to better understand the impact archival restrictions have on their researchers, and those seeking to create policies and procedures to address research impacts.

About the authors:

Ashlyn Velte is the Senior Processing Archivist and Assistant Professor at the University of Colorado Boulder Libraries Rare and Distinctive collections. There she is responsible for processing prioritization and collection management. She also sets local processing standards including restriction and access practices which is also an area of research interest for her. She has served on SAA's Privacy and Confidentiality section steering committee since 2021. She is a past President for the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (2021-2022). She was the Archivist at University of Idaho from 2016-2019 after graduating from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2016 with a Masters of Science in Library Science and Certificate in Digital Curation. She has published on social media activism, digital preservation, and processing practices.

DiAnna Hemsath is the Archivist at the University of Nebraska Medical Center's McGoogan Health Sciences Library. Before joining the library in 2018, she served as Curator and Collections Manager of the Kruger Collection at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and as a Technical Services Archivist at the University of Pennsylvania Archives and Records Center. As a Certified Archivist and Digital Archives Specialist, she is an active member of the Society of

American Archivists, the Academy of Certified Archivists, and the Midwest Archives Conference. Additionally, she holds an MA in Museum Studies. She has been involved in SAA as a presenter, a member of section committees and as the 2022-2023 chair of SAA's Privacy and Confidentiality Section.

Elizabeth Russell, MLIS, CA, DAS, is Senior Archivist for Providence Archives, in Seattle, Wash. serving the constituencies of the Sisters of Providence religious community and the Providence Health organization. As an archivist for a private archive, she is interested in policy-setting for private archives on access issues. Elizabeth earned her MLIS from the University of Washington iSchool. Previously Elizabeth worked as a consulting archivist for the Washington State Jewish Historical Society, as the founding archivist for Tacoma Community College (Tacoma, Wash.) and as a project archivist with the Visual Materials Section, University of Washington Libraries Special Collections. Currently Elizabeth serves on the Privacy & Confidentiality section steering committee (vice chair 2023-2024; chair 2024-2025) as well as the Technical Subcommittee on Reappraisal and Deaccessioning (vice chair 2023-2024; chair 2024-2025).

Katrina Windon, MSIS, CA, DAS, is the Collections Management and Processing Unit Head of the University of Arkansas Special Collections. Previously, Katrina worked as a project photograph archivist at the University of Nevada, Reno. She holds a Master of Science in Information Studies with a concentration in Archival Studies from the University of Texas at Austin. Currently Katrina serves on SAA's National Best Practices for Archival Accessioning Working Group and as Key Contact for Arkansas for the SAA Membership Committee. Katrina is a former Chair and Steering Committee member of the Society of American Archivists Privacy and Confidentiality Section.

Veronica L. Denison, MLIS, is the Digital Archivist and Special Collections Librarian at Rhode Island College. She received her degree in 2013 from Simmons College, and has worked as an archivist at the Alaska Pacific University/University of Alaska Anchorage Archives and Special Collections, and as the University Archivist at Kansas State University. Veronica currently serves as the Chair of the SAA Privacy and Confidentiality Section.