“BUT WHY CAN’T I SEE THAT?”
EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF ACCESS RESTRICTIONS ON RESEARCHERS

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RESEARCH CONTEXT/PROBLEM STATEMENT

• Follow up from Windon and Tang article from 2019
  • Need to understand the impact of archival access restrictions on researchers in the United States
  • Fill in gap in literature
    • Case studies on access restrictions (nothing across multiple repositories)
    • User studies on finding aids
    • User studies on single user groups (historians)
• Research question:
  How are researchers impacted by access restrictions and what strategies can archives use to mitigate any negative impacts?
RESEARCH METHODS: SURVEY AND INTERVIEWS

SURVEY
Distribution
• Professional listservs and newsletters
• Personal networks (LinkedIn)
• Snowball method- encouraged anyone to share the survey
Survey Design
• Qualtrics
• Primarily optional questions
• 10-30 minutes
• 60 days total

INTERVIEWS
• Selection
• Interview design
  o Scripted, with room to improvise
  o Two-person interview teams
  o Not recorded
• Coding
• Anonymization
Survey
- 74 usable responses

Interviews
- 6 total
FINDINGS: SUMMARY

Approaches respondents would be interested in archival repositories implementing
**FINDINGS: THEMES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Consistency</th>
<th>Impacts on research</th>
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<tr>
<td>Archival description</td>
<td>Decisions that follow policies</td>
<td>Time conducting research</td>
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<tr>
<td>Archivist and institutional</td>
<td>Restriction exemptions applied equally</td>
<td>Changes in behavior based on experience</td>
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<td>communications</td>
<td>All staff members on the same page</td>
<td>Self-censorship</td>
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<td>Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finding information elsewhere</td>
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## CONCLUSION: ARCHIVIST ACTIONS

- Explain access restrictions in finding aids
- Explain access restriction procedures on website and in communication
- Where possible, apply restrictions consistently
- Pay attention to restrictions at other repositories
- Re-examine restrictions to apply current best practices and privacy law