

**Society of American Archivists Foundation  
Board of Directors Meeting  
November 11, 2020  
Virtual Meeting**

**Reports from 2020 Foundation Travel Award Recipients  
(Received as of November 3, 2020)  
(Prepared by Executive Director Nancy Beaumont)**

**BACKGROUND**

In June 2020 the SAA Foundation Board voted unanimously to transform the SAAF Travel Award to a [registration award program](#) that, with an allocation of \$6,000, would support up to 122 archivists' attendance at the 2020 Joint Annual Meeting at the \$49 registration rate. Travel awards could be applied only to conference registration fees, and only current SAA members were eligible for the award. The primary criterion for selection was financial need. Beaumont extended five award "slots" (as well as a one-year complimentary membership in SAA) to the Native American Archives Section as a courtesy to allow the Section to promote engagement among Tribal archivists. A total of 81 awards were applied for and granted, for a total expenditure of \$3,969.

Recipients were encouraged, but not required, to submit a brief essay about their experience at the conference and to recommend enhancements to the application process and the Annual Meeting. Reports received as of September 30 were reviewed by the Board at its October 5 meeting. **Reports received since October 1 are highlighted in grey below.** Reports were not edited, although suggestions for improvements are underlined to draw the reader's attention to them.

**Bodeene Amyat (Deschutes Historical Museum)**

I am immensely grateful for the opportunity to have attended the 2020 SAA conference. This year was an unusual one for my first SAA conference, but I enjoyed the format and the ability to listen and learn from folks doing some meaningful work. SAA did a fantastic job with the virtual format. I especially appreciated the Keynote from Tempestt Hazel, the "radically imagined futures" presented, and the call to stop the "perpetuation of distorted narratives." I learned a lot from sessions on oral histories, archival outreach, centering underrepresented communities, and many more. The *Diversity Forum: Black Lives and Archives Strategy Session* was wonderful to participate in. In spite of the large numbers of attendees, the moderators were able to successfully pull small breakout groups together. No small feat! I would have liked to have participated in more small groups such as this one. I love, love, love that I am able to continue viewing the sessions. I was unable to attend Dr. Meredith Evans's SAA Presidential Address, for instance, and appreciated being able to access it after the conference had ended. The theme of social justice threading through numerous sessions, keynotes, and addresses resonated and called to me on a deep level. The overall

conference experience was a tremendously positive one and I feel SAA did a wonderful job with coordinating a large virtual conference. I would love to see more sessions around ethical curation, particularly of Native American archival materials (case studies of the Protocols, for instance) in future conferences. Many, many thanks for the generous travel award and the ability to learn and listen at this year's SAA annual conference!

### **Mary Bakija (Student, Pratt)**

Thank you very much for your generosity in providing me with a 2020 SAA Foundation Travel Award. This is a challenging year in so many ways, which makes it complicated to judge the value of a virtual conference. On the one hand, I had access to presentations and panels that felt similar to how it would have been in-person; on the other hand, in-person networking is incredibly hard to replicate in a virtual space. As an early-career professional, making personal connections is as important to me as education.

To that end, the educational portion of the conference was useful. I appreciate having on-demand access to the conference (although in reality, it's hard to make time for as much as is there, which makes me worry that presenters may not have as much exposure through that as in person -- but maybe it's actually better for them?), particularly because it's a little exhausting to be engaged with virtual presentations for two full days back to back.

The two plenary sessions were such great examples of what works really well, and what works less well, in this medium. Tempestt Hazel's presentation was incredibly engaging, where the creativity of presentation enhanced, and did not distract from, the powerful message of the talk. At the other end of the spectrum, Hayden and Ferriero's conversation was flat, and could have used a moderator to press them on certain topics. Other things that worked better in the virtual space was the ability to use chat/Q&A features for attendees to ask questions of presenters, which led to quality questions (as opposed to, say, comments that aren't actually questions. The technology issues should have been addressed beforehand, and hopefully can be in the future -- for instance, so many panels I attended had presenters with slides that showed up as blurry and unviewable for attendees. Perhaps a central repository for publicly available slides could be useful.

One thing I'd been hoping for, that I was disappointed not to see, was a more diverse group of presenters. Here's hoping that the funding hurdles that may more severely impact POC from participating in conferences like this are better overcome in the future through virtual conferences. I'm hopeful that SAA can find additional ways to ensure these voices from the field are heard more often.

### **Cassandra Berman (Georgetown University Library)**

The SAA Foundation Travel Award allowed me to take full advantage of the Archives\*Records 2020 Annual Meeting, including my participation as a speaker. This was particularly valuable I am returning to the professional archival world after several years away to complete my PhD in history. As such, I was eager to participate in content-specific sessions as well as SAA's sections and professional development opportunities.

My involvement in the meeting began in July, when I recorded the session I organized, “Religious Controversies, Public Accountability, and Archival Access.” The papers presented, and the discussion among the panelists, was valuable as it enabled me to reflect on the work I am completing in a relatively new position, and to connect with other archivists working with a range of religious materials in a variety of capacities.

My conference participation continued with attendance at headlining sessions including the “Write Away” Forum on SAA Publishing Opportunities, the Annual Membership Business Meeting, and the Diversity Forum. I also participated in the meetings of the Manuscripts Section, the Women’s Collections Section, and the Women Archivists Section (the latter of which I recently became a Steering Committee member). I have viewed several of the on-demand sessions, and I plan to watch several more as time allows.

In 2020, I was planning to participate in at least two other meetings of professional organizations. The first was simply cancelled, and the second was mired in controversy due to its inclusion of a single (highly politicized) panel. SAA’s Annual Meeting, by contrast, was truly inclusive, helpful to my career, and helped make me feel connected to the broader profession despite both Covid closures and my relatively resent re-entry to archival work. For this, I thank SAA for conducting an extremely well-run virtual conference, with content that was current, wide-ranging, and reflective. I am also thankful for the Travel Award that made attendance more possible for me – during a time when professional development funds are almost nonexistent.

**Jennifer Brannock (Professor and Curator of Rare Books and Mississippiana, University of Southern Mississippi)**

Thank you so much for the Society of American Archivists Foundation Award to attend the 2020 SAA/COSA Annual Meeting from August 6-7. This funding greatly supported my goals to become more engaged in the organization.

When COVID hit, many of us were unaware of how it would impact our daily lives. The obvious actions like staying out of public and wearing masks made sense. What I didn’t anticipate was that the University of Southern Mississippi would freeze all travel and appeals for conference attendance (online or in-person) would have to be approved by the provost. Because of this, the university was not going to be able to support my attendance to the Annual Meeting, which would have halted my participation in this conference. Because of the conference award from the Foundation, I was able to attend the meeting.

The sessions, as always, were extremely relevant to my particular position and the profession as a whole. From sessions about hidden collections, archival outreach, and instruction, I was able to note what others are doing with the goal of implementing some of the activities into the way that I work with researchers and collections. An unintended benefit of the conference was that I realized that we aren’t doing too bad at Southern Miss. Being so isolated in Mississippi, where there are few archives, it’s hard to know whether we are keeping on track with the profession. By seeing that we have already implemented several of the activities that other institutions have employed makes me optimistic about what we are doing at my institution.

When applying for the award, I found the process undaunting, which was a relief since I wasn't aware of travel limitations at my university until a couple of days before the award deadline. The only suggestion that I have would be to set a date when people would be notified of acceptance by. In my case, this would have helped when blocking off my schedule for the conference.

Thank you so much for the Travel Award. This funding was instrumental in me attending the conference, and once again, becoming engaged in the organization.

### **Francesco Buccella (Simmons Univ School of Library and Information Science '21)**

As a current graduate student in a library and information science program (concentrating in archives management), the support from the Society of American Archivists Foundation allowed me to attend the informative and eye-opening 2020 annual meeting entitled "Creating Our Future." Tuition for graduate school, professional memberships, and conference fees can add up quickly during a student's academic career, so this award was a huge relief, especially in difficult economic times, as we are now experiencing. From getting an insider look into the workings of SAA by attending the annual business meeting to hearing about how current practitioners really feel about traditional finding aids, the annual meeting was clearly a welcome place for scholars and practitioners to express their beliefs in a safe space. I am truly looking forward to becoming a vocal part of this community. This time around, I was simply a spectator, but even that allowed me a sense of community among fellow archivists. The value of the scholarship is immense to me. Often for students, fees for conferences can be the difference between attending or not. The knowledge gained from hearing current scholars in the field discuss relevant topics is invaluable and cannot be gained from simply reading books and articles. Nothing can compare to hearing the immediacy of attending a scholarly conference, in my opinion, especially in the current quickly changing landscape of our field.

### **Selena Chau (Los Angeles Philharmonic Association)**

I always enjoy attending SAA sessions, and I typically sit in on some working group sessions if my schedule allows. Instead of having an in-person tour of the archives, Frank Villela of the Performing Arts Section gave us a show-and-tell through Zoom of some historic objects and stories from the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. I was able to have questions answered by presenters and stay updated on some topics that I was interested in. Some presenter groups worked well together, distributing the responsibilities of monitoring and reading comments in the chat.

There certainly were differences than what I would have experienced in person. I was able to see and listen to archivists from around our nation, but I did not have the opportunity to interact or network as naturally as I do in person. Alternatively, if participants typed their name and workplace in the chat, I could know more people in a session than I would have compared to sitting in a conference room. I also heard comments from the presenters that even though they submitted high-resolution slides, the live recording quality was too low for attendees to read slide details. The marketing template around the slides cut down the maximum size at which the slides could be seen in the recording. I don't know if presenters had the option of setting up surveys, but that could have been interesting and allowed active participation.

### **Caroline Clavell (Technical Services Librarian, Amon Carter Museum)**

Thank you for selecting me as a travel award recipient this year! Here is my report, as requested:

I am thankful to be able to participate in this year's sessions virtually, as I would have been unable to attend an in-person conference due to institutional budget limitations. I heard other participants in various sessions echo this thought. The frameworks we as a profession are setting up for virtual meetings and exchange of information will continue to be valuable as many institutions and individuals will be in a period of financial recovery in the coming years. I enjoyed the flexibility to listen in on several section meetings which sometimes overlap when held in-person and listened to pre-sessions and sessions I would normally skip in-person. The asynchronous format of the prerecorded sessions is another great benefit, though I have yet to make time to watch all the sessions I originally planned on attending. I did miss the opportunity to strike up conversations with colleagues in the hallways and during meals, so there was an important aspect missing from this format. I don't think a virtual meeting can truly replace an in-person meeting, but for lack of a better option this was a good compromise. Additionally, I would encourage increased virtual participation opportunities even when we do return to in-person conferences.

I had no difficulty with the technology used to access the conference sessions, but one issue I encountered involved the initial registration confirmation email. The email included a link from an unexpected source (mvp.markeys.onl) that I almost marked as suspicious at first glance, and I had to do research to verify it before clicking. I don't know if others had a similar concern, but a line indicating that the conference programming is being hosted by a 3rd party would have saved some time and worry. As far as I remember, the travel grant submission process was easy to complete, though the link to apply for this specific award was difficult to find. I was encouraged to apply for the travel award by a previous recipient, and I would definitely encourage others to do the same.

### **Tiffany Cole (Carrier Library, James Madison University)**

There were so many moments during SAA's 2020 virtual annual conference that I found renewed inspiration for my work as an archivist. In Session 1A: Looking Back To Move Forward: Evaluating the Hidden Collections Era in Archives and Special Collections, Tamar Evangelestia-Dougherty encouraged us instead of focusing on the collections we don't have, to spend that energy on being good stewards of the collections we do have that may be under-described, poorly processed, or under-utilized in outreach and instruction. This is particularly relevant now given that so many institutions, including my own, are undergoing cuts to collections and acquisitions budgets as a result of COVID-19. Now is really the time to nurture those collections and increase their discoverability through better description, baseline catalog records for unprocessed collections, and creative outreach efforts.

As I see it, applying ethical (re)description standards goes hand-in-hand with being good stewards of our collections. I was heartened to see that so many sessions either touched on this practice or devoted the entire session topic to archival silences and inclusive description (especially 3A, 5B, S01, S10, S24, S25). I was so inspired by this work that I incorporated adoption of ethical description practices into my professional development plan for 2020-2021. Many of the finding

aids at my institution reflect a white supremacist perspective and assume white is the default. I'll be working with catalogers and other Special Collections staff to implement inclusive description standards and subject heading analysis that will remediate outdated and harmful legacy archival description and update description standards moving forward.

Lastly, I would like to commend SAA on the virtual conference presentation. I appreciate the society's commitment to putting on a quality and accessible conference experience. I would also like to thank the SAA Foundation for affording me the opportunity to attend the conference as part of the Travel Award program. I look forward to incorporating what I learned into my professional goals this upcoming year.

### **Anne Cox (Columbia, Missouri)**

The value of my complimentary registration to ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020 is immense. For me, it was especially timely and helpful to be able to attend this year's conference. I was laid off from my job in mid-July and the conference was an excellent opportunity to engage with the field in the early stages of my job search.

The virtual format was particularly accommodating for me in several ways. First, it allowed me to decide to attend the conference at a rather late date. Second, I was able to attend while also caring for my two children, especially my two month old son. Finally, there was no need for travel and the associated costs.

I found the sessions to be engaging and informative. For planning purposes, it would have been helpful to have information earlier about the Q&A schedule for the pre-recorded sessions. I also would have preferred that the pre-recorded sessions be available earlier in the conference, or released on a weekday.

I took full advantage of the career center and participated in both a mock interview and a general career coaching appointment. The feedback I received was immediately useful, and I'm quite pleased with my newly revised resume and brushed up interview technique. Although I don't have past experience to compare to, I thought the virtual format worked especially well for this. I'd recommend that SAA consider scheduling additional career center-type opportunities at other times, perhaps quarterly. I'd also recommend investigating opportunities for additional networking events, although I'm not sure how that would work in a virtual environment.

I am deeply appreciative of the SAA Foundation's choice to support conference attendance through the Travel Award, especially in this tumultuous year. Please accept my gratitude.

### **Puamokihana Renti Cruz (Kane'ohē, Hawaii)**

After receiving my complimentary registration I was able to attend the annual SAA meeting which allowed me the opportunity to expand my knowledge on current archival practices being adhered to by archivist and Library and Information Science Professionals from highly regarded institutions: Universities, Public and Specialized repositories, etc. I could only dream of visiting. The various mindsets and insight which I was able to absorb made me reconsider and take into

account many of the practices currently being adhered to by my society; and how our archival practices could be enhanced to better serve our community. Many of the sessions brought up the role of various archival tools such as finding aids, online catalogs, research request forms, Accession/ Deaccession forms, to metadata standards, etc. These types of discussions were truly empowering, being able to receive answers to my queries, to learn about relevant examples of my own repository and ways which may enable my coworkers and I to be more efficient in our work. Not only have I been able to connect with other individuals who are like-minded, but I have new contacts with whom I am able to seek advice from; many of the sessions showcased the various projects or events which archives or libraries have done in their own community, how they were able to conduct these events while also dealing with issues such as COVID, community beliefs and customs were also relatable and have given me inspiration for putting on similar events in my community such as scan-a-thon events, or oral history recordings with elders. Furthermore this experience was truly educational, practical for enhancing my own skill sets, and provided me with so many projects to consider for my own repository. At the moment I have no suggestions for improving the registration process, I felt that it was adequate and easy to follow.

### **Amber Dowdy (Muskegon, Michigan)**

I wanted to thank you for extending a free registration to me for attendance to the SAA Conference this year. I enjoyed the virtual meetings that I attended as part of this conference, and am looking forward to enhancing my knowledge of the Archival Profession through the on-demand sessions that you have made available.

I found several sessions of this Conference to be eye opening for me and, as a Long Arranger, I am always looking for new opportunities for our small institution. One of my favorite presentations was by a Chicago group. They discussed ways that local artists could be utilized in conjunction with Archives, which is not something I have ever thought of before. I work for a military museum, so I am not sure how we could create something like that at our organization, but I am absolutely going to keep it in my mind, because I think that it would be valuable to use art as a medium for telling the stories of soldiers. I also enjoyed the Women in the Archives workshop, as well as the Military archives session that was run as a part of this conference.

In addition to the live conference sessions, I think that the on demand sessions will be very helpful to me as I begin to develop new archival policies in the coming year. Our organization currently does not have the ability to digitize any film sources, which is something that will be necessary for us to develop in the coming year. I am looking forward to utilize some of the advice given in *Audiovisual Online: A Discussion on Challenges to Access, Building International Partnerships for Digitization and Preservation*, as well as *Digital Access and Preservation in Artists' Archives: Challenges, Strategies, and Solutions*.

Again, thank you so much for allowing me the opportunity to attend this conference.

### **Allison Fischbach (Research and Archives Associate, Towson University)**

This was the first time I was able to attend a SAA/CoSA conference, and it would not have been possible without the travel grant support from SAA and the ability to attend virtually. While there

are obvious limitations to the virtual platform, I found that it greatly increased my ability to interact with the conference, attend sessions, and plan around other commitments.

The found that the sessions I attended were directly applicable to both my student and professional archival roles. I was especially impressed by the on-demand “Email Archiving” session and came away from it with a better understanding of what steps I could take to meet the challenges of email archiving and what tools were available to help. I have already applied the reference material to my current work in email archiving.

I was also inspired by the session “Reframing History: Opening up Archives to Artists.” It was especially interesting to hear from so many presenters outside the archival field – including artists, writers, and community leaders – and how they interact with archives in their work. What was the most illuminating was hearing how processes and procedures that are common in the field can stymie use of the collections, and ways in which professionals can better facilitate access by reevaluating standard practices. Seeing artists’ work with collection materials was the most exciting and inspiring in terms of engagement and I’d like to hear more from archives users in order to create a more robust dialogue around access and use.

I also attended the “Archivists with Disabilities” discussion. I have an invisible physical disability, and I was interested in hearing more from disabled archivists about how disability accommodations (or lack of) affected their work. I was glad the group covered a diverse range of disabilities, but I found the session leaned heavily towards mental health accommodation and so was less applicable to me personally. Although it was refreshing to hear more about the ways professional organizations are adopting to accommodate and lessen the stigma around mental health needs, I wondered if the conference could have benefited from more than one blanket session about all disabilities. There are very real and concrete differences in accommodations for different needs. Often disability talks are grouped together to include the entire spectrum of disability, which reinforces the dichotomy between abled and dis-abled. This leaves little room for the diverse and myriad ways bodies operate and their needs. Grouping so many needs under one umbrella leaves little room to talk about how different all our needs actually are. While it was a strong session from the presenters, I left wanting something more.

On a more technical note, I found that the conference schedule was very confusing. As an archival student without much experience in the operation of national conferences, I was not sure what the difference was between the governance activities in the days and weeks leading up to the conference, and sessions that took place during the conference. I wasn’t sure what these activities entailed or whether attending them would be beneficial. I was also confused by the presence of so many presentations listed as “TBD” and was glad to eventually realize these were on-demand events. However, it proved confusing while planning what events I wanted to attend.

To end on a positive note, I am glad the sessions I initially missed are still accessible online and I have been able to go back over the last few weeks and “attend” events that I was not able to during the live conference. I cannot underestimate the value of this ability. Thank you for allowing me to attend this year’s SAA/CoSA Joint Meeting and I look forward to attending SAA conferences and events in the future. It was truly an invaluable experience.



### **Cecil Greenstreet (Waltham, Massachusetts)**

Thanks to the SAAF Travel Award, I was able to attend my first conference as an archivist this year. This was also my first virtual conference, as I imagine it might have been for many. While the virtual aspect made it different in many ways, I thoroughly enjoyed the benefits it brought, beyond simply making it easier for me to attend from far away. It was also easier to choose between concurrent sessions, knowing I could access a recording of the one I missed later. I am looking forward to watching more of the pre-recorded talks and events I could not catch live, but in the meantime, I am excited by what I have learned so far.

I am a project archivist at the beginning of my career, and I came to the conference with many questions and uncertainties. It was so great to see the research being done, the discussions being had, and the possibilities I could hopefully pursue as I develop as an archivist. I particularly appreciated the information about publishing opportunities through SAA, and insight into virtual teaching with primary sources. Knowing more about the work being done in various archival areas right now gives me insight and inspiration as I consider where I would like to take my career. I have been working alone for many months now, but I feel like my world has opened up much more, thanks to this meeting. While I look forward to one day attending one in person, this was a valuable event for me as an early career archivist, and I am so grateful to have been able to experience it.

### **Whitney Hamm (University Archivist and Special Collections Librarian, Missouri Southern State University)**

With the Travel Grant Award I received from SAA, I was able to attend the Annual Meeting for the very first time. This allowed me the chance to hear from archivists all over the United States and learn current trends and innovations. This alone made the Travel Award worth it. I work as a lone arranger in a small institution. Any chance I get to understand more of what is happening in the archival world is worth it.

My attendance at the SAA 2020 Annual Meeting exposed me to many ideas. I attended several sessions on diversity in the workplace. One of these sessions focused on students and how important it is to provide student employees with agency in their work and with tangible outcomes to their work. Pairing this with another session I attended about creating interactive exhibits. I was able to create a learning objective for my student employee and my student intern to curate an exhibit at the end of the long project each are working on. Both were excited about the prospect and I am equally excited to see what they come up with. This addition to their regular work has honestly jump started their drive to explore the collections they are working on.

The sessions mentioned above had immediate impact on my work, because they were something I could start rather quickly. Other sessions had a longer-term impact. To some extent I am lucky that my predecessor, who started this archive and worked in it for 50 years, believed the original order of collections was paramount and barely did any work organizing collections or describing them in detail (bear with me here). This leaves me with an enormous amount of work, however, I get to work on most collections basically from scratch. I attended a session about bringing minority and underrepresented voices in collections to the forefront. Since I am in the unique position of

basically looking at many collections for the very first time and being the first to describe them, I can look for these voices and highlight them.

I could write much more about the sessions I attended, but I would like to assess the conference as a whole first. I know the format for 2020 was only all online because of COVID-19, but it was so helpful. I love being able to re-watch sessions and I loved being able to view them from my own home. My home got vandalized early in the morning on the third day of the conference. I won't go into details, but I wasn't able to view any sessions from that day for a while. It was so good to be able to attend, even after the fact, since I had to deal with a crisis on the day the sessions were shown.

One thing I missed this conference were networking opportunities. For example, if I attended this conference in person, I would have liked to have the chance to meet other lone arrangers and discuss their work with them and how it compares with my work. Most of the section meetings had presentations and not group discussions, except for the Women in Archives section, but they didn't discuss their group topic. The presentations I attended in these sections were great (when they were on topic), but I would have liked to attend something more casual, like the meetings for alumni from specific universities.

All in all, I really enjoyed the SAA 2020 Conference. Thank you for allowing me the chance to attend!

### **Jameson Hastings (Archivist, The Broadmoor)**

Attending ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020, the Virtual Joint Annual Meeting of CoSA and SAA, was a beneficial experience. Through my attendance, I learned many archives are still battling hidden collections, while also working to digitize records and create EAD finding aids. I gained insights and had much to consider after sitting in on the Plenary 1 presentation by Sixty Inches from Center and the Diversity Forum discussion. The vendor presentations on Preservica and Lucidea gave me a lot to ponder in terms of digital record preservation and exhibition. I enjoyed hearing methods for educating students and the public about archives in Archival Outreach in the New Normal: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Sources session, and I relished in the delightful discussion between Librarian of Congress Carla Hayden and Archivist of the United States David Ferriero during Plenary 2. One of the most beneficial sessions for me was the Showing Up: Community Engagement Events Toward a Better Cultural Record session. I really enjoyed hearing about the creative ways in which archivists are engaging with communities to fill gaps in the historical record. This seems particularly valuable as our professional discussions continue to center around making sure all voices are represented in archives. Another memorable discussion, though admittedly very technical, was the Welcome to the Machine: AI in the Archives session. I found it fascinating to hear the methodology that goes into creating a software program to sort through email messages to determine if they are records, non-records, or private records. I enjoyed browsing the email records of the governor who was discussed in the presentation to see one way in which records such as this might be made available to the public. Finally, a wonderful networking session I attended was the A/V Archives Night. I loved the variety of historic and recent films presented.

Overall, I think it was a wonderful conference with a variety of relevant topics. I look forward to watching the recorded sessions over the coming weeks and have flagged many of interest. I suppose the only feedback I have is to note that I'd hoped for more networking sessions where I could actually chat with people on camera. I had the time wrong on the Hop into History networking session, and that probably would have been a good opportunity for this. The Drone Folder/Music for Archives session was an entertaining way to end my first SAA conference, though I definitely wish I'd known what it was before tuning in so as to attempt to add in some sort of instrumental contribution. I wasn't really seeing any other networking events that made sense for me to attend. I considered the business archivist event, but being displaced from my business archives, I felt a bit awkward showing up. Hopefully, there will be additional virtual networking opportunities in the near future. Although they are a bit intimidating, I think they could also be a lot of fun.

### **Andy Hayt (Simmons SLIS '20)**

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to attend this year's SAA conference. It was an invaluable experience, and I deeply enjoyed hearing from the wide variety of archival professionals included in the various sessions that I was able to sit in on. I found the sessions concerning digital preservation methodologies to be particularly relevant to the work that I am currently involved in at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where we are actively working to manage and preserve many born-digital objects.

The sessions offered on Saturday were particularly useful for me, as a new member of the field, as I felt they provided insight into a variety of archival functions that I was aware of but had limited experience with. Session 20 – “@GovernmentArchives: #Successes #Limitations” was one such presentation, highlighting the use of social media as a supplemental element to the functional aspects of government records in state archives. I recently had a job interview for a position in a government archive that involved, to a small degree, fluency and interest in social media within the archival environment, and I was able to cite that session as a recent engagement with the topic.

Thank you again for providing me with this opportunity, as it has already been valuable in my search for employment in the field. It is my hope that as a continuing member of SAA I will eventually be able to participate in and present at a conference in the future.

### **Louanne Heintz (Alpharette, Georgia)**

As someone who is still new to the archival profession, I appreciated the accessibility of the online, virtual format. I was specifically interested in certain topics, so the sessions I was more geared toward included digital collections and community engagement and outreach. The theme, Creating Our Future, although chosen before the pandemic, was quite apropos for what the country and Archives in general are going through right now.

“Keeping Archives Relevant in a Dizzying Digital World” was the first session I attended. It was interesting to hear about the similarities and differences of each institution regarding their digital collections and the processes that they have utilized. Providing context to the records and secure storage for disaster preparation were two aspects that were discussed. The speakers also discussed

the changes they have made to their work setup and format while having to work from home. It was helpful to hear the different tasks that can be handled through digital collections via remote access. I especially liked a slide from Ashton Wingate, which listed ways to stay relevant and prepare for the future both internally and externally within their organization and in connection with the larger community.

The second session I attended was part of the mini-theater options entitled, “Preview Launch of a New and Affordable Way to Preserve and Showcase Your Digital Collections.” Both sessions discussed the use of Preservica, but it definitely made sense to have the mini-theater as a shorter presentation.

“Archival Outreach in the New Normal: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Sources” and “Showing Up: Community Engagement Toward a Better Cultural Record” were two other sessions that I viewed. They thoroughly explained the importance and a variety of ways to assist with outreach, such as the best practices of marketing, working with varied sized groups, connecting via social media, and digital programming. I found it very beneficial to hear about the community engagement activities that were focused around historically underrepresented groups.

It was my first SAA conference, so I definitely appreciated the variety of options for sessions, mini-theaters, meetings, posters, etc. Having the conference recorded and available online is also very helpful because I was able to view all of the sessions instead of having to choose only one per time component, as well as having access to the slides via the recordings. The inclusion of sessions that were different lengths in time was also a good option for the attendees. Thank you for this opportunity and for the SAA Foundation Travel Award.

### **Margaret Hewitt, CA (Special Collections Librarian, Butler Area Public Library)**

Attending the annual meeting because of the SAA Travel Award brought such a sense of normalcy to an unpredictable and unusual year. I enjoyed attending the “Write Away” forum, which took some of the “intimidation factor” away from the idea of publishing with SAA. The discussion during Session 1A introduced some very interesting arguments that the Hidden Collections era has reduced processing to a grants-only activity instead of a normal daily activity. I appreciated session S45 on destigmatizing the backlog, and it paired well with the live session on Hidden Collections. Even though I’ve attended conference sessions in the past that address the “elephant” as session S45 did, I always come away with renewed motivation remembering that I’m not alone in having backlog issues. And the conversations in the on-demand sessions dealing with biases and silences in the archive were so relevant and so important to have right now. I hate to admit, but I was underwhelmed by the Plenary 2 session conversation between Hayden and Ferriero. This may be because I’ve reached COVID-discussion fatigue - it’s at the forefront of every committee meeting at work; every local, regional, and national email chain; and every listserv and facebook group.

There were some definite perks of the pre-recorded on-demand viewing. As a lone arranger working without volunteers or students because of COVID precautions, it was so nice to be able to sneak in a conference session whenever I could fit one in! On-demand viewing also got rid of the “decision crisis” that arises at a live event when two really appealing sessions are scheduled at the same time.

Digital conferences can never fully replicate the in-person conference experience. The biggest downside of a virtual conference is the lack of spontaneous conversation with people you meet walking around or while waiting for sessions to begin, or during networking events like the ACA Mixer. The room constraints of the Zoom format just aren't built for that but I genuinely don't know a better alternative. The conversations during live session Q&A also don't seem to flow as easily over Zoom. There is also something wonderfully tactile about browsing the book store and wandering the exhibit hall (and getting some swag) that I miss about live conference attendance. But overall, with better digital attendance options like this in the future, regular SAA Annual attendance can be a reality for archivists like me with limited professional development support.

**Meg Hixon (Processing Archivist, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan Library)**

I would like to submit the following report about my experience with the 2020 SAA Conference, and to again thank the Foundation for making it possible for myself, and many others, to attend.

I am very grateful to SAA for providing me with a complimentary registration for this year's event, which allowed me to connect with and learn from colleagues in what has otherwise been a very difficult, very disconnected time. As a processing archivist, I have found many of the sessions explicitly applicable to my everyday work, but just as valuable are the many opportunities I have had to think beyond my ordinary day-to-day routine and learn more about exciting projects from across the archival universe. I have found Tempestt Hazel's keynote address particularly valuable in this regard, and additionally appreciate her decision to film much of her address outside, giving the remote audience a small taste of our would-be host city. After attending the conference, I feel that I have a broader and more critical perspective on my work, which allows me to think deeply about ways in which I can leverage my experience, abilities, and knowledge to contribute to a more equitable and inclusive field and to incorporate more equitable and ethical descriptive practices into my daily work. I also feel more connected to fellow archivists, both those whom I have had the pleasure of meeting previously and those whom I first interacted with at this year's event. SAA's annual meetings have formed a cornerstone of my professional development, and I am happy to belong to a professional organization that was able to successfully organize and host an annual conference during a time of unprecedented challenges.

My primary suggestion for improving the award process is to provide more clarification about who is eligible to receive an award and what funds are still available at a given point. I initially hesitated to apply, despite losing the institutional funding I would otherwise rely on to attend the annual meeting, until encouraged to do so by my supervisor and other colleagues. I was worried about taking funding away from someone else, and while I do not have any concrete suggestions for ways in which the foundation can help alleviate this particular worry for other potential applicants, I would not be surprised to hear that others were dissuaded from, or at least hesitant about, applying for the same reason.

Thank you, again, for providing me with the opportunity to network with, and learn from, my colleagues at a time when connections can be difficult to maintain.

### **Laura Juliano (New York University Libraries)**

The Travel Award I received to virtually attend this year's conference ARCHIVES\* RECORDS 2020: Creating Our Future and it was a great way to stay in touch with the archival field during this difficult time. I was especially interested in the panel 'Archival Outreach in the New Normal: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Sources'. It was impressive to hear how the profession responded to the Covid-19 crises and what that means for the future of digital archives. I was also drawn to the AI in the Archives panel, as the idea of using algorithms and using new technology to automate some of the sorting work of the archives especially for born digital material, as they discussed email sorting, was really geared toward the future of the profession. I found the panels to be well run, well organized, and engaging as a whole.

While the panels and the discussions were interesting and engaging, I found the networking events to be a little intimidating online; there is an unease in a virtual setting to a networking based event. I'm not sure how this can be improved (and hopefully we never have to do an all virtual conference again) but these were the least enticing of the events offered. I also found the exhibit hall and vendor connection to not be geared toward students, but was nonetheless interesting to get a feel for what people use.

The website and registration as a whole was easy to use and easy to set-up; the way the forums were laid out was a bit unintuitive at first, but I was able to get the hang of it pretty quickly. I had wished for a full schedule layout, so I could better manage my time, but overall this is just being picky. The number of panels and the amount of content was great and I enjoyed the experience. I felt like I learned about a lot of new innovations in the field, and was able to get a better understanding of the profession as a whole based on the discussions being held. Thank you for this opportunity and hopefully I'll be able to attend in person next year.

### **Eirini Melena Karoutsos (Student, East Moriches, New York)**

The value of the scholarship that I received to attend the Archives 2020 conference will have rippling effects in my academic career. Currently, as president of the student chapter of SAA, I have opened myself up to helping other students apply for travel scholarships and answering questions about how to apply. Additionally, I particularly enjoyed attending the mentorship program and talking with Tamar Zeffren was enlightening and also made me more hopeful about the current job market as she experienced starting her archive career during the 2008 recession.

I had some issues with communication during the conference. For example, I was never completely clear on where I was supposed to send this essay. I understand this conference was a first-try of a completely digital SAA conference, and the scale alone would be difficult to manage. However, even a page dedicated to students and scholarship winners would be helpful in the future. At one point during the conference, I ended up signing in an hour early because I had two separate times sent to me (I think this was caused by my Google calendar confusing CMT and EST).

I cannot express how grateful I am to be able to attend professional conferences during COVID-19 and any comment or criticism I write is meant to be constructive. This scholarship was

immensely helpful and I am currently considering trying to set up some kind of fund with my own chapter of SAA that could perhaps help Pratt Archive students attend conferences.

### **Allison Kilberg (Student, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)**

The complimentary registration for the Virtual Joint Annual CoSA and SAA meeting that I received through the SAA Foundational Travel award was greatly appreciated and helped relieve the financial burden of participating in the conference. As a recent graduate of a MLIS program who is currently employed in a part-time, temporary capacity, I was worried about having to pay the registration fee for the annual meeting, in addition to taking time off work to attend the conference (which meant losing some of my hourly wages). I'm grateful that the travel award committee promoted awareness of the award in several forums and listservs, encouraging individuals to apply. Hearing that there were more awards available for the virtual conference this year made me more optimistic about applying.

The conference itself provided a good opportunity for me to hear from my colleagues about what they have been working on and learn about new ideas to consider putting into practice in my professional environment. While I'm sure it required an immense amount of time and effort for SAA and CoSA to shift the annual meeting to a virtual format, from an attendee standpoint everything appeared to work relatively seamlessly. The on-demand sessions actually worked in my favor, since I could fit them into gaps in my work schedule and view them when they were convenient, instead of having to take time off from work. However, it would be nice to have a simpler way to access the session recordings after the conclusion of the conference; every time I want to watch one I have to go back through my email to remind myself how to find them.

I did miss the networking aspect of the annual meeting, which is one of my favorite parts about attending each year. While I know there were some interactive, networking-focused sessions in the schedule, I had trouble participating, simply because it got exhausting being on Zoom for so long. I'm not sure there would have been a good solution for this, as I know a lot of organizations and individuals are struggling with "Zoom fatigue."

Overall, my virtual attendance at the annual meeting was enjoyable and I look forward to putting new ideas learned in conference sessions into practice in my own work. I am confident that I will continue to benefit from the travel award over the next few months as I watch more of the on-demand sessions and recordings.

### **Louis Knecht (MLIS 2018, San Francisco, California)**

The Archives \* Records 2020: Creating Our Future virtual conference served as an invaluable instance of archival professional development opportunities, connectivity of the profession, and a guideline to what has been a complete pivoting of the archival field from the COVID 19 pandemic. This being my first Society of American Archivists Conference attendance, made possible by the SAA Travel Award, I outlined my intentions of conference panel attendance centering around diversity in the field relating to employment, content preserved in the archives, and partnership with BIPOC artists to publicise and engage in collaborative exhibition work. Beyond this was an interest in trends with teaching with primary sources, as my title as a University Archivist and

Instruction Librarian has been centered around this pedagogical role. To continue the interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion in the realm of archival collection work I was very interested in outreach initiatives with community organizations representing and advocating for marginalized identities. With these intended learning outcomes in mind I made my schedule centered around part personal interest and part professional learning moment.

I benefited from attendance at the following panels:

- Beyond Diversity Initiatives: Nontraditional and Student-centered Approaches to Recruiting BIPOC into Archives and Special Collections Librarianship
- Archival Outreach in the New Normal: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Sources
- Showing Up: Community Engagement Events Toward a Better Cultural Record
- American Indian Center of Chicago and Center for Native American and Indigenous Research and Northwestern U
- Reframing History: Opening Up Archives to Artists
- Archivists with Disabilities

I was privileged to be able to attend these sessions and gleaned countless new practices, case studies, field best practices, community engagement tools, etc. from the panel speakers. With a central theme of diversifying student internship and employment in university special collections and archives, the “Beyond Diversity Initiatives” gave me the insight on a program already established that my own university’s repository is trying to implement. From discipline diversity to ethnic diversity, the Cal State Los Angeles Special Collections internship program served as a way to exemplify the diversity and racial social justice work done in archives by BIPOC students. Touching upon mentorship and racially equitable early career development opportunities for BIPOC students in a archival field laden in whiteness as dominance of practice and of the labor force was essential to this panel’s message.

Much more essential work and advocacy being done throughout the archives field was on display throughout these presentations. Before getting carried away with the long list of great content these panels provided, I would like to comment on the nature of the virtual conference/annual meeting. The regional conference for the Society of California Archivists had been canceled due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the inability to pivot to a virtual conference format for various reasons. Having a virtual conference shows a depth of digital literacy for the purposes of communication, networking, professional development, and human interaction critical to the archival profession where individual archives so often fall into monolithic states of being. A major thanks to the Society of American Archivists and the Council of State Archivists for facilitating and hosting this online annual meeting opportunity.

### **JoAnna Lincoln (Student, University of Michigan)**

The travel award I received to attend the ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020 conference this year was a great help to me as a young professional new to the field. Without the funding from the award I



would not have been able to attend the conference this year. I was impressed with how conference leaders transitioned to make everything virtual in light of the global pandemic. Having access to the recorded sessions has allowed me to revisit events I wanted to take a closer look at, watch recordings of events I was not able to attend, and overall has provided an invaluable resource to me.

I think my biggest take-away from this experience is how connected and eager to share knowledge everyone in SAA is. My favorite sessions were the ones that engaged the audience and encouraged people watching to participate. I especially enjoyed the session on how to get published within SAA. It was immensely helpful to receive pointers from the people who review submissions for "Archival Outlook" and the *American Archivist*.

Additionally, I signed up to be a mentee with the Navigator program. This allowed me to connect one-on-one with an archivist in the field. We have spoken several times since the conference and I feel that I have made a lasting network connection. This was only possible for me with the travel award.

To summarize, the travel award opened the doors to new information, allowed me to network and connect with others on a one-on-one basis, and ultimately helped me feel more at home in SAA. I want to extend my thanks to the conference organizers for an amazing conference in these trying times. My thanks also to the Travel Award Foundation for the wonderful opportunity.

**Brett Lougheed (University Archivist/Digital Curator, Director, Oral History Centre, University of Winnipeg)**

I am thankful to the SAA Foundation for awarding me a 2020 Travel Award. This award would have provided me with financial assistance to attend the in-person conference in Chicago. Although I was disappointed when COVID-19 interfered and I was unable to visit Chicago and attend the SAA Conference in-person for what would have been, in both cases, my first time, I was pleased that the Travel Award could be used to cover my registration for the conference. I appreciate the Foundation's generosity.

I apologize for the lateness of this report but I did not want to send it until I had the opportunity to feel as though I took advantage of all that I wanted to get out of the SAA Conference. Since the sessions were recorded, I had the luxury of being able to watch a session here and there over the past couple months. It wasn't until early-October that I felt as though I had fully "attended" the conference. I am thankful that the SAA recorded the vast majority of sessions to allow for greater flexibility in attending sessions.

I had the opportunity to check out a few poster sessions, one of the special interest group sessions, as well as about a dozen sessions and plenaries. My selections ranged from topics of general interest to those of importance and relevance to my position as a University Archivist and as Director of my university's Oral History Centre. I was actually pleasantly surprised by the number of sessions pertaining to oral history and its integration with archival practice as this is not always the case at Canadian archives conferences of which I am more familiar. I appreciated the broad depth of session topics and the expertise of the speakers from all over the US, many of whom I

was hearing from for the first time as a Canadian. I also appreciate the emphasis organizers seemed to place on Black speakers, people of colour, and the Black Lives Matter movement and other social justice issues.

Most of the recorded sessions that I watched seemed to be without many technical difficulties. The recordings of live sessions with live Q&As did suffer from being recorded as the interactivity of these sessions is lost in the recording. I also had the opportunity to chair and present a session. I would make one suggestion regarding the recording of sessions and that is, based on my experience, I believe there needed to be better communication between conference organizers and the recording team as I found that the recording team was not aware of the suggested length of our session. I was informed by conference organizers that we should try to limit our session to 60 minutes but that we would have no more than 75 minutes. When the recording began, the technician made it seem as though we would have no more than 60 minutes in our session. As a result, our final two speakers raced through their presentations in order to meet the time requirements. It was only during the recording, when not everyone was able to see the chat, that the technician informed us that they would not stop the recording until we were finished speaking. If there was better communication between technicians and conference organizers, I feel as though this situation might have been avoided.

Other than that, I commend the conference organizers for their efforts in transitioning a very large, complex conference to a successful remote learning opportunity. I enjoyed my initial SAA Conference and look forward to more in the future – hopefully under more amenable conditions. Thanks again.

### **Erin Louthen (University Archivist, Santa Clara University)**

I most definitely had a positive experience at *ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020*, the Virtual Joint Annual Meeting of CoSA and SAA, August 6-7! I was able to attend several sessions of the conference, all of which were informative and useful.

Specifically, I found the session, *Looking Back to Move Forward: Evaluating the Hidden Collections Era in Archives and Special Collections*, very compelling. One of the main questions posed was: is there such a thing as sustainability in the archives after the grant is concluded? As one speaker noted, the collections get processed, but archives and institutions are still dealing with temporary hires, grant-funded projects, a lack of funding, and a backlog that doesn't diminish. Another speaker noted that many institutions still only have 20-25% of their collections accessible and/or discoverable via finding aids, which was disappointing indeed. (However, I wonder what his source was for that information?). Other observations from the session included the statement that sustainability needs to happen in metadata and digital files as well as (re)processing old (75-100 yrs old) paper and manuscript collections into acid-free folders, containers, etc. And, that grant funders need to provide new money for: A/V materials; hybrid paper and A/V materials; and other formats like artifacts, film, and so forth.

Additionally, I found the session, *Showing Up: Community Engagement Events Toward a Better Cultural Record*, to be particularly enlightening. The presentation about the Islamic Center of Greater Toledo was a good example of community partnership-building, and the presentation about the American Indian Center of Chicago with Northwestern University's Center for Native

American and Indigenous Research project offered several intriguing ideas, such as: an Archivists Day of Service; the notion that archives are places AND sets of knowledge; and that archives are all about relationships when establishing community partnerships.

Finally, I appreciated the on-demand sessions, as well, especially because I could watch them when it was best for me and fit my schedule.

Honestly, in some ways I enjoyed the virtual conference more than the in-person conference -- although nothing replaces meeting up with colleagues and traveling to a new city!

### **Kristy Martin (Student, Emporia University)**

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to attend the 2020 SAA conference with a Travel Award. As a new professional this experience was especially helpful in expanding my knowledge of current trends and issues in archives. I am a recent graduate and brand new provisional Certified Archivist. My first paid job offer was rescinded due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in the meantime, I'm volunteering and completing an unpaid internship to stay relevant and ready for when I find paid employment. In short, the conference couldn't have come at a better time, being able to virtually attend workshops with a wide range of archival professionals was very fulfilling.

A few of the workshops stood out, including the "Emerging Voices in Archives" session which brought to light new ideas and experiences that represent an important part of our archival future. I also enjoyed the "Corporate Archives: Fact or Fiction?" session, I would love to see more content in this area. "Waking Up: Disaster Planning and Response in Archives" was another great session, the information shared will be helpful to anyone experiencing a disaster. A session that was very enlightening and enjoyable to watch was "Love Can't Turn Around" from the Blackivists, this was brand new material to me, and I would love to hear similar content at upcoming conferences. A highlight of the conference was the "Plenary 2" discussion between David Ferriero and Carla Hayden. They were able to give insight into their perspectives on this challenging time as well as bring some much-needed lightheartedness. While I have no illusions of reaching their level of success, it was inspiring as someone who is coming into archives as a second career. There are many opportunities to be had and important work yet to be completed.

If the conference is virtual in the future, it would be helpful to have more time to view the sessions. With limited availability, I was not able to attend or view many sessions because of this limitation. I understand this is the reality for an in-person conference, but with digital content we have the freedom to think larger and open up access. This was the main drawback for me, not having the time to see everything. I appreciate the sessions being available afterward, it would have been helpful to have them available even sooner. This was a new experience for everyone, and it seems to have been a resounding success. In the future when we can meet in real life, it would be helpful to offer digital attendance as well so more archivists could participate. Thank you for this opportunity, learning from other archivists is very fulfilling and makes me excited and proud to join their ranks.

### **Grace Munoz (Student, UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center)**

The ability to receive complimentary registration to the SAA 2020 conference motivated me to become a member of SAA. As a first-time member of SAA and first-time conference goer, I signed up for a virtual SAA navigator. I was lucky to be matched with Gerriane Schaad who has attended various SAA conferences for more than twenty years. I first virtually met Gerri the day before the conference began and she explained how the conference would normally be conducted and events I should look out for in this new virtual platform. We had a mid-conference check in to see how everything was going and later had a final meetup after the conference ended to go over our conference experience. Despite being based in Florida, I discovered that Gerri is well-acquainted with my supervisor at the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center and my future visiting professor from UT Austin, Rebecca Elder. These were all valuable connections she had made attending SAA conferences throughout the years!

Out of the various conference sessions I attended, the two most valuable ones for me were: “Implementing Inclusive (Re)Description at Predominantly White Institutions” and “A Treasure Map or a Hedge Maze? An Honest Discussion of the Traditional Finding Aid.” These two sessions were particularly useful for me because I recently applied, and will be interviewed, for a student position at the UCLA Center for Primary Research and Training that involves helping to implement an anti-racist redescription project, specifically focusing on the finding aids used in their Special Collections department. Hopefully the knowledge I gained from these sessions can help me obtain the position.

One of my favorite parts of the conference was participating in a mock interview session with Audra Eagle Yun from UC Irvine. I doubted my interview skills before the session, but by the time it was finished, Audra helped me to improve my skills and confidence. Ever since the conference, we have been having monthly check-ins and I consider to be a close mentor.

Overall, I found the 2020 SAA to be incredibly informative for newcomers such as myself, and I hope to attend the next conference which I am excited to hear will be held locally (Anaheim, CA).

### **Michelle Novak (MI Student, Rutgers University)**

**Conference Value:** I was only able to attend one other SAA conference, Austin 2019 (which was awesome, BTW) and was not planning on attending Chicago, even before COVID, due to cost concerns. Some of the highlights for the 2020 conference for me were:

- Council Sessions—I was able to attend many of the council sessions—far more than I would be able to in person—in the online format and I found many of them very interesting. I did not think the online format slowed down these meetings at all and may have in fact increased attendance and engagement. (And when I found I was in the “wrong room” it was easier to sneak out. J)
- Live Sessions—I appreciated that some sessions were live as it helped me focus my experience and add set dates into my calendar to watch. (Instead of “I’ll watch that someday” and never do.) It also helped me feel more connection to the community and overall experience.
- Recorded Sessions—I attended some of the main sessions, but shortly after those were launched, I had a family medical emergency which sapped my time and attention. So, I am glad they were all recorded so I can go back and explore the sessions in detail and at my own

pace. I still need to explore in detail how they are organized and prioritize which ones to watch first.

- Value—The highest value I get out of conferences is the first-hand experience of the speakers. So much of what I am learning in MI school is textbook theory, and I learn much more hearing about specific challenges and how the eventual solution came about.

**Suggestions:** A lot of the thoughts below were covered in my survey form. I should also add that in my current career I work on many conferences, online and off, so I have working knowledge of how to schedule them and communicate how they work (so that people aren't confused about where to go when). I would be happy to talk through any of them with the organizers to explain myself better than I can in this summary.

- Schedule—I was very confused about the overall conference schedule, as the sessions (Council and Q&A) went far beyond the advertised dates of the conference. Having worked on conferences, I understand why the central sessions are usually advertised as “the” conference, but I would rethink this. As a professional organization, you want to encourage your members to be active in every part of the conference. In talking to a colleague, I described SAA's schedule like a zombie-schedule. It was advertised as a few days but went on and on for nearly six weeks. This needs more focus and better language to describe the parts of the conference experience.
- Q&A Sessions—I only attended one or two of the Q&A sessions mainly because 1) I did not know they were happening and 2) listening to the session and then remembering to go back weeks later to hear the Q&A was just way too much acrobatics for my busy schedule. I would have rather seen the session recorded and presented and then immediately afterwards a live Q&A. This would have ensured that connection, timing, and technical problems during the presentation would have been kept under control while allowing for more immediate feedback with the presenters. It also would have simplified the “register for Zoom” and non-registration session instructions which were confusing. Lastly, the Q&A would have been part of the recording then for later playback.
- **Website Presentation:** This is a big issue for me as I get such “text overload” and I have not fully explored the conference site due to this. I'm sorry, I just can't mentally process that much text. I was disappointed to also see the playback site primarily organized by schedule and not topic. There are so many ways you could slice-and-dice this schedule, by topic, rating, number of views. While rating and number of views might be controversial, it also might help people to see presentations they normally wouldn't self-select.

Please feel free to reach out to me on any of the above. I am very much a “conference person” as learning by example makes much more impact on me. I also realize that everyone is faced with new realities during this time and we're all building the car while driving it.

### **Selena Ortega-Chiolero (Museum Specialist, Chickaloon Village Traditional Council)**

First, I would like to say *tsin'aen* (many thanks) to the SAA Foundation and NAAS Steering Committee for their support and providing me with complimentary registration to the Archives\*Records 2020 Virtual Joint Annual Meeting of CoSA and SAA, and membership to SAA. Having never attended an SAA conference or ever being a member of SAA, the award has

been invaluable to me and my work. My conference participation allowed me to gain a stronger insight into how archives are dealing with current issues arising from COVID as well as learn more about some of the resources and digital projects that archives are engaged in - topics that our Tribe's Cultural Resources Program has been focused on. I think much of this information can be transferable to my own work in our Tribal archives and I look forward to seeing how we can continue to learn and collaborate with groups outside of our state.

I think the greatest reward from this opportunity has come from my membership in SAA. I have already taken advantage of the SAA online bookstore and have attended a few of the webinars which have been engaging and informative. My involvement has been such a positive experience that I even ran for the NAAS Steering Committee, which I was selected for by my peers, and am excited to be more involved with throughout the next year.

In regards to suggestions on how to improve the Travel Award application process, I would recommend better communication with your awardees. Although I did receive an e-mail about being a recipient and how to register for the conference, I was never notified about my responsibilities as a recipient and having to submit a report nor was I given any instructions on how to take advantage of my membership. Both things I would have appreciated some guidance on. Despite this, I was still able to figure things out and am still grateful for the opportunity SAA and NAAS have afforded me.

Once again, *tsin'aen* for your support and inclusivity. Your generous award has allowed me to take advantage of the resources that SAA has to offer but has also allowed me to share this experience and information with my Tribal colleagues from other archives who will indirectly get to benefit as well.

**Robert Perret (Special Collections and Archives, Reference, University of Idaho Library)**

The Travel Reward was an amazing boon for me as I have transitioned into an Archives and Special Collection role during the pandemic. I am at a smaller university in a situation where there has not been a Head of Special Collections for many years. While we have an excellent staff who are very adept at the day-to-day activities of Special Collections, I am having to develop myself in the higher-level functions of a Special Collections Librarian/Archivist. The immersion in Archives provided by this conference was transformative for me. I appreciated being able to learn from leaders in the field at institutions both large and small. Topics like digital access and preservation, metrics in archives, practical backlog management, and archival scholarship were all very interesting to me. Perhaps most important was the session on Inclusive (Re)description. We are a very white rural institution in a very white state, and yet we are very beholden to the tribal lands we occupy, and our past description work has been less than ideal. We are actively trying to rectify this and what I learned at the conference is immensely helpful. I will say that there was not an obvious avenue for new/first-time attendees. (Or if there was, I missed it.) It was great to be "in the room" and listening to all of these experts, but I didn't find many opportunities to engage personally. That is really nitpicking what was an excellent conference.

**Amy Poe (Lorton, Virginia)**

Attending the 2020 SAA Annual Meeting, Archives\*Records, was a critical event in my professional development this summer, particularly as a recent MLIS graduate. The meeting highlighted the breadth of opportunities available to archival professionals and helped me assess where I am headed as an aspiring archivist.

I had the good fortune to be invited to be a meeting presenter in a pre-recorded session on *Veterans in the Archives*. As an Army veteran, I shared my journey from soldier to student in the archives and learned a great deal about the overlap in skills employed by veterans and archivists. Not only was this my first conference presentation, it was my first virtual presentation which familiarized me with the technology for pre-recorded sessions, and how the recordings are moderated and managed. It was a first-rate opportunity to collaborate with and network with other archival professionals.

The session on SAA Publishing opened my eyes to the publication process and the differences between *Archival Outlook* and *American Archivist* in content and purpose. The session also put faces to the names in the publishing group thereby making it less intimidating to consider becoming a contributor, even as a new archival professional.

In, *Who Are We? Hidden Collections Era*, this talk truly brought to life some of the challenges I read about in my graduate coursework. I was encouraged to hear that institutions are reducing backlogs because of time freed up by the pandemic but simultaneously struck by the enormity of the task of continuing to making collections accessible into the future. This was a great session for bringing classroom learning to life.

*Welcome to the Machine: AI in the Archives* was a fascinating look at how AI can help to reduce workload and even improve precision in identifying PII and in effectively categorizing documents as being archival worthy. The example of the use of AI to archive the Virginia governor's email records was and the statistics to demonstrate its effectiveness were impressive.

I undertook (and passed!) the Certified Archivist Exam on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August so I enjoyed participating in the ACA Mixer, meeting other test takers and current CAs. Dara Baker did a great job making the mixer interactive, even on Zoom.

With my job search is ongoing, I also had the good fortune to participate in a mock interview through the SAA Career Development Center. I was paired with Rebecca Goldman—Archivist at Wellesley College. Since I have a relatively extensive career history outside of Archives, she offered to spend time answering questions about her own career path, sharing details about her day to day responsibilities and affirming that my skills and interests are indeed aligned with the work of the Archives. Rebecca was also generous enough to refer me to a senior level colleague working in the National Archives and Records Administration so I could obtain yet a different perspective on the work of Archivists within the federal government. I appreciated this chance to network with someone in the Washington, DC area and learned more about Records Management, previously less familiar to me.

Through participation in the meeting, I was also able to reconnect with a fellow presenter and former Digital Humanities professor from my graduate program at UNT. Finally, I took advantage of the discounted books on offer from the SAA Bookstore and purchased *A Different Kind of Web* and *All Shook Up, The Archival Legacy of Terry Cook* to continue my post conference development. I am truly grateful to SAA for the Travel Award which helped offset my expenses while unemployed.

**Ashlynn Prasad (MAS/MLIS University of British Columbia 2020, 2017-2019  
ARL/SAA Mosaic Fellow)**

This year, I was lucky to receive the SAA Travel Award to be able to attend the conference virtually. It was my fourth consecutive year being able to attend SAA and it has consistently been an extremely valuable experience for me as an early-career archivist. This year, I was very excited to attend, but I was a little concerned about how it would be to attend it virtually, since one of my favourite things about attending the conference each year has been interacting with my colleagues from around the country in person and establishing connections that can then be renewed the following year. I am happy to report that the virtual, remote nature of the conference this year had almost no impact on how much I felt we were all able to connect, network, and learn from the conference.

My second favourite thing about the SAA conference is that I find sessions often focus on social justice issues and marginalized communities more than any other mainstream archival or library conference that I'm aware of. As a young woman of colour just starting out in the field, this is a hugely important factor for me. Part of the value of attending a conference with people who espouse these values is that there are often sessions which make the most of audience participation, so that we can all benefit from a wide array of experiences and thoughts. I had thought that this would be one of the things that a virtual conference would suffer from the most, but I was really pleased to find that panelists and session moderators had put in their due diligence and had found effective ways of using Zoom (particularly break-out sessions and the chat feature) to ensure that any member who wished to be heard could do so. They also managed to strike the balance of not requiring people to speak if they did not wish to do so, which is also something I've noted and appreciated about in-person SAA conferences.

I feel really lucky and grateful to have received this award, and I don't think I can overstate the positive impact that being able to attend SAA this year has had on me. (I'm currently unemployed due to COVID-19, which means not only that I wouldn't have been able to afford to attend without the award, but also that my current contact with other professionals in my field has been severely limited, so being able to attend the conference and interact with like-minded folks who inspire me and remind me why our career matters has had a great impact on me.) I sincerely hope that everything is normal enough again by next summer that we can all attend the conference in-person once again, but even if we can't, I'm now very optimistic about the fact that we can all make another virtual conference work for all of us again going forward.

**Christen Robichaud (Densho, the Japanese American Legacy Project)**



Thank you so much for the opportunity to attend the SAA's conference virtually this year. I was able to attend many events live and then went back to watch earlier events as well. As an employee of small, non-profit, there wasn't funding to send a part-time employee like me to a conference so this was an excellent opportunity to participate. This was my first SAA conference, so I'm unsure if this is routinely available, but I would encourage the conference committee to continue hosting many if not all sessions virtually as well. I think virtual sessions are especially beneficial to part-time employees, recent graduates, students, and the under-employed. I would love to see a scholarship fund set up for this purpose every year.

The sessions I attended were great and will color how I move forward in my career. "From the Margins to the Center" and "Reframing History" reaffirmed the work I am currently doing at Densho and helped me to realize how unique my institution is. I think the most impactful session I attended was "Archivists with Disabilities." I saw myself reflected in Ann Abney, Chris Tanguay, and Veronica Denison's stories and I found a community. I also enrolled in the SAA mentorship program and have already been speaking with my new mentor. Everything is remote due to the pandemic, but the SAA has done a great job helping a new member feel connected to the community.

Thank you again for this opportunity. I am excited to attend an in-person conference in the future.

### **Anthony Rodgers (Kansas City, Missouri)**

Through the support of the SAA Foundation Travel Award, I was able to attend the 2020 Virtual Joint Annual Meeting without having to worry as much about my personal finances. I am a graduate student completing my MLIS with an emphasis in archives and records management, and was excited to attend my first national archives-themed conference, especially considering the virtual nature of the event. Due to the current pandemic, my income was significantly affected, and yet I made sacrifices to ensure my participation with the conference, even though the student rate is much lower than other registration levels. With the travel award, I was able to breathe a little easier about money and enjoy the conference without having to think about whether my financial choices were the best. The application process was simple and did not take a lot of time, which I appreciated. I am sincerely grateful that the SAA Foundation decided to continue offering the travel award to cover registration fees for the conference this year. Being granted these funds was a valuable gift to me and helped to affirm the Association as a welcoming organization to those beginning to enter the profession.

### **Anthony Santiago (Student, Oak Park, California)**

I was very fortunate to be able to attend this year's Archives and Records SAA convention, even in a virtual fashion. It was my first attendance ever at an SAA conference or SAA related event. I mainly participated in this event with the goal of networking as I just graduated from UCLA with an MLIS a couple months previously. One of opportunities I got to enjoy was being able to live chat and video chat with many of the exhibitors at the conference. However, it occurred to me that the conference in totality didn't really seem to be a networking source for recently graduated archivists or archivists that aren't firmly planted in the profession yet. Most of the exhibitors

seemed to be in attendance because they were selling their organization's services to libraries or archives, or to promote a book of some sort. There were a few that were exceptions.

As far as suggestions go, I think that seeing social events more open archivists in general besides alumni of a certain college or things like that would be great. I felt a bit alienated with the schedule because many of those in attendance have already been working with libraries or archives usually in the same site for a few years. Therefore, the conference seemed more like an exchange of ideas between professionals that more or less are already firmly planted in the archival world. I would like to end though that I am still extremely grateful for the waiving of the fee and access to Archives and Records 2020 though again by next summer that we can all attend the conference in-person once again, but even if we can't, I'm now very optimistic about the fact that we can all make another virtual conference work for all of us again going forward.

### **Sara Schmidt (Ozuna Library and Learning Center, Palo Alto College)**

Thank you for allowing me to attend this conference remotely by covering the cost of attendance. I was able to attend a number of sessions.

“Teaching Outside the Box” (4A) offered a number of interdisciplinary approaches to teaching primary sources in the classroom. The focus on technology in these presentations as a method of instruction was particularly helpful during the present in-person restrictions to many institutions’ collections. After watching the presentations, I am determined to go back and re-watch it for more detail and mine it for ideas to use in the classroom. “Archivists with Disabilities” (5A) provided a number of strategies to accommodate disabilities and talked a great deal about advocating. The honest reflections of the presenters helped me understand beyond what I had previously, thinking about how management plays a crucial role in fostering and supporting an inclusive environment. Also, I appreciated the strategies to change workflows and professional focus as the result of a disability, from making customizable workspaces and removing explanations for paid time-off.

The Plenary featuring both the Librarian of the US and the Archivist of the US was so fun. It was a light-hearted and natural conversation that helped me see what it was like to advocate without effort. The presentation talked a great deal about the current challenges in both professions and workplaces. The cooking competition was also just fun – it’s really nice to have a plenary that felt true and honest and not staged but also staying on topic in regards to the information professions.

I look forward to watching more sessions on my own time using the Zoom recordings. The one benefit of the current crisis are these presentations that are so well-done and recorded. I appreciate all the resources SAA implemented to pull-off a successful Zoom conference.

### **Tomoka Shida (Archivist and Teacher-Librarian, Tokyo, Japan)**

As I mentioned in my application for the SAA Foundation Travel Award, as someone who just completed a degree in archival sciences in Canada where discussions about race within the archival profession are still only just beginning to come out into the open, I look to what is happening in the United States and the American professional associations as being an important part of my

learning to help me push the discussion forward in Canada. It was wonderful to see past and present ARL/SAA Mosaic fellows speak in Session 02 “A Profession for Us: Creating and Sustaining an Equitable, Inclusive, and Diverse Archives” and Session 21 “Hiring for the Future: Reflections on the ARL/SAA Mosaic” and it gave me ideas for what kind of initiatives I’d like to help create eventually in Canada.

Another really valuable thing about this complimentary registration to the conference is that I continue to have access to the conference sessions I was not able to attend live. In fact, I was in Japan at the time of the conference in a completely different timezone, so I missed a number of the sessions. However, because most of the sessions were recorded, I have been able to watch the ones that I missed that I had wanted to see. As I have started working in my first professional archives job, when I am unsure about something, I have actually found myself looking through the recorded session for this 2020 Conference as well as the 2019 Conference sessions, and have used them to help me solve some workplace conundrums.

I am not sure if I can suggest anything to improve the process, other than it was unclear to me when and how to submit the post-conference report, until I received the reminder email to submit the report! It is likely that it was written somewhere and I just missed it, but perhaps it might be helpful if there was a clear deadline and explanation about where/how exactly to submit the post-conference report in the initial email that is sent when recipients are notified that they received the award? Or a week after the conference?

Other than that, it was a wonderful gift, and I hope the SAA continues to provide awards to attend the conference virtually in the future.

### **Helen Wong Smith (Archivist for University Records, University of Hawai’i)**

Please accept my *mahalo* (thanks) and appreciation for the Foundation Travel Award supporting my registration for ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020. Dependent of the tourism industry which partially funds the University of Hawai’i, any support for professional development such as conference attendance was eliminated and the award allowed me to fully participate in the wide range of offerings, (despite early morning sessions due to the time zone differences)!

Attendance to the Research Forum provided knowledge of research topics and opportunities and I am working with two colleagues on an article as a result of this forum.

I attended as many sessions concerned with diversity and inclusion and am greatly encouraged to see the strategies applied and employed especially by the newer generations. I was asked to revise my Cultural Diversity Competency workshop and the following sessions provided excellent resources and examples: 5A - Archivists with Disabilities, S02 - A Profession for Us: Creating and Sustaining an Equitable, Inclusive, and Diverse Archives Field, S25 - Invisible Minorities and Oral Histories: Considerations on Ethical Access, and 5A - Archivists with Disabilities. The revised workshop will be presented to the Rocky Mountain Archivists on January 5, 6, 7, 2021 via Zoom.

In effort to go outside my comfort zone sessions I attended sessions such as 2B - Archival Outreach in the New Normal: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Sources and S16 - Draft Use Cases and Recommended Practices for Reuse Assessment.

A benefit of the platform allowed viewing conflicting sessions at a later time, i.e. 2A - Appetites and Thresholds: Innovative Use of Risk Management in Collecting Futures. The decision to leave the recordings up indefinitely is a significant advantage allowing registrants to benefit from more sessions and allows us to review those we want to delve further into. The opportunity for live chats for each session was an excellent method for discussion and I request time zones is considered when scheduling these in the future.

Likewise, attending the plenaries and business meeting provided a sense of community with the interaction between speakers i.e. Carla Hayden and David Ferriero and how can one not find Tempestt Hazel an inspiration?

When considering the limitations of a virtual conference the highest praise must be given to SAA (undoubtedly to Matt Black) for responsive and efficiently executed sessions. The number of registrants reflected it as a viable alternative allowing professional development and exchange of ideas to evolve the profession. As one who vacillated about attending, the award allowed me to realize these benefits.

### **Peter Sohmer (NYU Archives and Public History Program)**

The experience of attending the SAA Annual Meeting for the first time, made possible by the Report on attending the 2020 SAA Annual Meeting SAA Foundation Travel Award, was enormously enriching. I benefitted from attending the multiple sessions and hearing perspectives from leading archivists and those pushing the possibilities of archival work, as Tempestt Hazel is doing.

In the first few weeks of the new academic semester I have already been able to draw on ideas and projects discussed in sessions from the conference, particularly the timely discussions about representation in the archive and possibilities for archival work afforded by new technologies. The use of AI within archival workflows, for example, seemed like an approach with enormous potential to change processing work for large born-digital collections.

As someone at the beginning of a career in the archives, I was also interested to encounter so many new perspectives on the state of the professional. The first session I attended, on the Hidden Collections Era, placed much of what I knew about the state of grant funded archival work into a broader context.

Although the remote format of this year's conference made networking much more difficult, I was still glad to encounter the perspectives of so many archivists working across the country in a large variety of institutions. I have a better grounding and more insight on who to approach as I work on projects of my own this coming year.

Generally, the process of receiving this Travel Award has been straightforward, with the exception of completing this report. I was unclear whether and how to submit this, and would have appreciated additional clarification before attending the Annual Meeting.

**Dr. Lydia Tang, CA, DAS, DMA, MLIS (Stephen O. Murray and Keelung Hong  
Special Collections Archivist, Michigan State University Libraries)**

Thank you so much for selecting me as a Travel Award recipient. Due to COVID-19, my professional development funding was greatly impacted, and this grant allowed me to participate in SAA without financial worry.

Experiencing SAA online as opposed to in-person was... different, with benefits and trade-offs. I would've loved the opportunity to walk across a stage to accept the Mark A. Greene Award in person and cheer my colleagues on for the other awards, but we are in strange times, for sure! As a mother with two small children, it made attending sessions in-person beyond what I was actively leading challenging, but being able to access the recorded sessions later was quite beneficial. This travel award allowed me to contribute back to SAA in the following ways, I --

- Co-spearheaded planning and implementing the Navigator Program with Alison Clemens and Devhra BennettJones, and participated as a Navigator.
- Led the Accessibility & Disability Section's inaugural annual meeting, including delivering a one-year retrospective as outgoing chair
- Co-led the Privacy & Confidentiality Section's annual meeting as outgoing chair
- Facilitated a break-out room for the Black Lives and Archives Strategy session as a liaison to the Diversity Section
- Assisted with the Mentoring Program open house and facilitated a break-out room
- Participated on a panel discussion "A Treasure Map or a Hedge Maze?: An Honest Discussion of the Traditional Finding Aid"

Possibly as a result of the global online attendance, I have received hundreds of LinkedIn invitations from people around the world, which is puzzling and flattering. I think the actual impact of SAA as a virtual event is difficult to assess, there seem to be some surprisingly far-reaching ripple effects!

Thank you so much, again, for this support and solidarity for myself and other archivists during this challenging time.

**Zachary Tumlin (Smithsonian Institution)**

This was my first time attending a SAA annual meeting, although I was a presenter last year as a member of the Neurodiversity in Archives Working Group; I presented remotely because I was still unemployed after graduation and could not afford to register or physically attend, and that experience went poorly due to technical limitations and difficulties on SAA's end. This year, I attended sessions 1B, 2B, 3A, 4B, 5A, 6B, both plenaries, the Diversity Committee meeting, the Diversity Forum, the Accessibility and Disability Section meeting, and a University of Maryland alumni event. Many of the on-demand sessions looked interesting, but the number was overwhelming and I did not watch any of them after I moved on from the two days of live events.

First, I commend SAA for choosing someone like Tempestt Hazel as the keynote speaker; it was one of the highlights for me. I am a recent grad who can still remember Dr. Ricardo Punzalan assigning a SAA annual meeting keynote or two in my introduction to archives course. I can see him doing the same with this one and I hope that more professors do the same. Our membership and prospective members need to hear truth to power.

Second, as a steering committee member of the Accessibility and Disability Section, I was proud to see three of my fellow steering committee members during session 5A. As a disability self-advocate, I care deeply about the work we are doing. What I was not prepared for was the audience reaction, with many participants seeking advice or sharing unpleasant stories. There are SAA members who need us.

However, I am glad that I did not have to pay full price to attend the original in-person version of this event because there would not have been enough value for me to justify the expense. When I was a MLIS student at UMD, I could not even afford to attend a single day of the 2018 annual meeting in DC, even though I lived along a subway route! The event is far too expensive, especially for students and early career members (and that was before the pandemic). I think this \$50 online only option was fair considering the amount of content made available and that it should continue to be available in the future. I absolutely consider financial expense to be an accessibility concern, as it can function as a gate to keep people out, especially those from marginalized groups.

Beyond that, individual presenters and session chairs must innovate to maximize audience engagement in virtual settings. Reading word for word from a script with flat affect was bad enough in-person, but it is unsustainable online; participants watching from home have more distractions available to them. I would like to recognize sessions 2B and primarily 6B for discussing, showing, and implementing virtual audience engagement strategies and tools. They provided me food for thought as I plan for two panels of my own in the future.

### **Heather Walker (MI Candidate, University of Toronto)**

As a recipient of the SAA Foundation Travel Award for attendance at the ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020 conference, I had the opportunity to gain access to a range of plenaries, workshops, talks and ideas that otherwise would have been out of my financial grasp.

With the move to virtual conferencing this year, graduate students from all over the world are now able to connect with peers, mentors and scholars in a range of archival and record-keeping fields, which can only serve to strengthen ties between the United States and other epicenters of archival thought. Although based in Toronto, I am also a dual Irish-British citizen, with a keen interest in international efforts in community archiving and digital preservation. The chance to attend talks such as “Archival Outreach in the New Normal”, “From the Margins to the Centre”, and the Opening Plenary with Tempestt Hazel were immeasurably beneficial to my academic thinking and professional development, especially as an emerging archivist working with community oral history groups.

The session that has had the biggest practical impact on my work was “A Treasure Map or a Hedge Maze? An Honest Discussion of the Traditional Finding Aid”, where attendees were tasked with confronting the mounting accessibility problems inherent within the legacy finding aids in our institutions. This has inspired me to implement increased accessibility functions in the PDF finding aids I work with. In addition, I was grateful to connect on a more local level with fellow University of Toronto iSchool students and graduates at the iSchool mixer, and for the opportunity to put faces to familiar names during these difficult remote-working times.

As we move forward into an uncertain landscape, I hope to see more conferences offer hybrid in-person and virtual models for attendance, with reduced or waived rates for students and the precariously employed. With the devastating job losses and reduction in new hires in the industry, it is more vital than ever that archivists and record-keepers can maintain a sense of community globally, and stand united in our common ethics and goals.

I wish to thank the SAA Foundation for the financial and practical opportunity to virtually attend ARCHIVES\*RECORDS 2020, and I hope to attend as a graduate archivist in 2021.

### **Hilary Wang (Jersey City, New Jersey)**

This was my first time attending the Annual Meeting of CoSA and SAA as well as attending a conference completely virtually. While I cannot compare it to Annual Meetings in the past, I felt much less intimidated attending as a solo newcomer. There were a few sessions that shaped my experience and left me with much food for thought. I first attended the “Write Away” Forum, which was an incredibly informative session, and being new to the field felt very welcoming and encouraging to begin the process of connecting and getting involved with SAA publishing opportunities. One thing I would suggest is creating a mini session for current graduate students in LIS programs, I know many of my classmates are eager to gain experience in publishing but are unsure where to start.

The opportunity to attend sessions focused on born-digital records and collections was also valuable in expanding my understanding of real-world problems and individuals in our communities actively solving them. Being able to sit in on Section meetings was also informative both on understanding the structures within SAA as well as specific topics that I may not be able to take courses on in my graduate program. I will end on pointing to the important presence and attention given to talks that spoke to equity, diversity, and acknowledging systemic issues within the Archives field. Lyneise Williams’ presentation on VERA was one of my favorite moments during the conference. I hope to see more space and time given to these important topics at future SAA events.

### **Caitlin Wells (Collection Services Librarian, Special Collections Research Center, University of Michigan)**

I attended the 2020 SAA Annual Meeting, thanks to a generous travel grant from the SAA Foundation. I attended one of the section meetings (the Collection Management/Acquisitions and Appraisal section, which I co-hosted), the ArchivesSpace Members Forum, and many of the other live and recorded sections throughout the week.

I enjoyed the digital meeting a lot more than I had expected, especially after almost 7 years of attending the meeting in person. In-person meetings can get overwhelming, but having the ability to watch sessions from home went a long way toward mitigating the stress and exhaustion of participating in a full day of meetings. The technology seemed to work well for most of the live sessions I attended, including one with several hundred people and multiple breakout rooms. I did like that there were only two sessions at a time, which made it slightly easier to narrow down my schedule for the week. The Diversity Forum on Friday morning was highly relevant and helpful, as was a session I attended on archivists with disabilities. The program committee did an excellent job selecting a good mix of sessions that addressed technical aspects of archives work (like processing and AI) with timely topics related to equity and racial justice.

The main difficulty I had with the conference was the pre-recorded sessions and their separate Q&A sessions. It wasn't always obvious that a session was pre-recorded. For example, there were some technical difficulties in session 2A (Appetites and Thresholds: Innovative Use of Risk Management in Collecting Futures) that made it very difficult to hear one of the presenters, but since the session was pre-recorded, there was no way to correct this. Additionally, it was a little daunting to have 50+ pre-recorded sessions dropped on Saturday, instead of having them available throughout the week. It would have been nice to have a few more alternatives to tune in to when neither of the two "scheduled" sessions seemed relevant or interesting.

### **Ashley Williams (Project Archivist, Hagley Museum and Library)**

Thank you again for the SAA Foundation travel award to attend the SAA annual meeting virtually this year. I found attending to be valuable, but also overwhelming in a way different than attending a conference in-person. Additionally, I found myself attending several section meetings because they were spread out across multiple days. This was a benefit because normally section meetings are held largely at the same time and attendees must pick which one they attend. I found myself wanting to join new sections and become more involved.

The presentations I attended were largely informative, with a couple of exceptions. I understand some presenters had to shift their approach because of the conference going virtual, and in some cases I think this was a detriment. One example was the session "A treasure map or a hedge maze?: an honest discussion of the traditional finding aid." I was looking forward to this panel as it is a discussion I think the field needs to have – if the finding aids we are creating are not working for researchers, how can we adapt to be more useful? I think the panelists were hoping to have more of a discussion with attendees had the conference been held in-person; however, in the virtual setting it was challenging to keep up with the chat conversation and it felt like the panelists were not on the same page as to how they were going to adapt. That being said, the panel and discussion did raise some questions and issues that I think are important to consider and ones that I can bring back to my own repository for consideration.

I found the Diversity forum: Black lives and archives strategy session to be informative and a place to begin conversations that are long overdue not only in the archival field, but also the larger society. The session could have used another 30 minutes after the breakout groups to come back as a larger group and present highlights from the breakout groups. I would like to see SAA offer



more of these types of forums virtually and open to members at no additional cost. Related, I think it would be interesting to have some type of forum or presentation with presenters who have successfully implemented some of the strategies discussed.

One suggestion I would make for SAA to consider if organizing another virtual conference would be to spread it out over more days, perhaps a week. Zoom fatigue definitely set in on both days. It is challenging to sit in front of a computer screen for eight hours listening to presentations. I personally could have used a slightly longer break between sessions; maybe thirty minutes which would allow me to get up and stretch. I will also admit that I have not taken the time to watch all the on-demand presentations that sound interesting. Because I am back at work onsite most days and my project is coming to a rapid conclusion, watching the on-demand presentations has not been a priority. I am hoping they will still be accessible later this year after my project has been completed and I will have more time to watch them.

Overall, I found the application process to be easy and straightforward. I am incredibly grateful for being awarded the scholarship to attend the SAA conference and hope to be able to attend more in the future.

### **Brianne Wright (Kingsport Public Library and Archives)**

I am immensely grateful to have received the SAAF Travel Award to virtually attend this year's conference. I am a lone arranger in a small archive that does not have a travel budget so this was the first national conference I have been able to attend. Although it would be incredible to attend in person the virtual conference still had tremendous value and allowed me to feel integrated into the professional community. I thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and seeing what people in the field are currently doing. It was also interesting to see the diversity of projects and backgrounds of other professionals. It was beneficial to hear about current archival trends and practices and I came away with a lot of great ideas that I can hopefully incorporate into my institution. The creativity presented in some of the sessions was inspiring and was helpful in regaining my focus and has boosted my productivity. I've been working from home since March due to the pandemic and my morale has definitely been low. Attending the conference has been a morale booster! I feel refreshed with ideas and appreciation for my work.

I enjoyed attending live sessions but I particularly like the on-demand sessions. Having the flexibility to watch them on demand was extremely helpful. Plus, that flexibility allows me to watch so many sessions that otherwise I probably wouldn't be able to. It is such a valuable resource.

### **Challen Wright (MLIS Candidate, University of Washington)**

While attending the Virtual Joint Annual Meeting of CoSA and SAA, I was able to go to several of the live presentations and both of the plenary events. Overall, I found the experience to be very insightful in seeing what other archivists across the country were doing in both a pre and post-covid world. Since I am quite new to the field, I was glad to have the opportunity to hear what experienced archivists were doing. I specifically found the "Archival Outreach: Using Digital Platforms to Teach Primary Source" discussion especially valuable to my education. I thought that

the presentation did a great job and showing how digital learning can be impactful both as a tool for teaching during a pandemic as well as working with disadvantaged/underprivileged schools that do not have the ability to travel.

Coming into this event, I did find it hard to interact with people. I think that the online format (which was necessary during this pandemic) makes it difficult to reach out to colleagues and have one-on-one discussions. I couldn't find any spaces that were specifically intended for people to get together and discuss. Perhaps these spaces were there, but I didn't know where to look. I think that my biggest critique of the program was my difficulty in finding these different spaces outside of the main presentations.

I have really appreciated the asynchronous parts of this meeting a lot as well. I've been able to come back to the Joint Annual Meeting site numerous times after the live events to watch recordings of talks I missed and to look at the posters. I particularly enjoyed reading what other graduate students were doing in their research as I'm in a similar situation to them. The ability to access things post-conference has allowed me to take in so much information beyond what I'd be capable of doing if the meeting were only during the three day period.

Finally, I would like to thank you all again for presenting me with this SAA Foundation Travel Award and giving me the opportunity to attend this meeting. My time spent listening to and reading about other archivists' work has been incredibly impactful to my current graduate education. I have learned so much from this event and I've appreciated my time spent interacting with this community.

### **Samantha Wright (Student, Carol Stream, Illinois)**

I have great appreciation for being able to attend the Society of American Archivist Annual Meeting. There was so much to choose from as far as programming and I tried to attend it all. What an honor it was to have been able to attend such a wonderful conference. I was grateful that I could go back and listen to the sessions that had been recorded. To have 2,470 registrants and the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest attendance was an awesome accomplishment! Considering that this conference is usually in person the technology was without issue from the participant's point of view and all the sessions that I attended were extremely well planned.

Like everyone the SAA had to jump into the fire of the virtual world and as they stated ripe off the bandage for virtual programming. The benefit of having been selected to receive an *SAA Foundation Travel Award* to attend this ground-breaking conference was more than I could have expected. I liked the availability of the 11 online educational programs, and it was so exciting to see that 1427 archivists attended virtual programs.

The mention of the interactive platform for the SAA Journal sounds extremely promising. I learned of the many tools within the association including the dictionary which is a tool that any new archivist could benefit from. It was great to gain tips for writing peer reviewed articles and it appears that there is so much assistance available through the association to help new archivist. Teresa Brinati, the Director of Publishing, and the other presenters were very relaxed expressing the available opportunities to write.

The 2020 SAA Nominating Committees' search has focused on an all-inclusive approach to include diverse individuals that have been committed to serving underserved areas.

I attended the Diversity Session and it was great to hear about the history of the SAA and the updates on the *Rare Books and Manuscripts Sections' (RBMS) Diversity Action Plan* that had been created as a result of a 2003 survey that revealed the organization to be 87% white, 5% Latin X, 3% African American, 1% Native American and zero Asian/Pacific Islander. I believe the statement that was made during the meeting was that the organization decided that it would have to get used to "Being comfortable with being uncomfortable" and I love it. We were encouraged to look for internships in communities that would embrace non-institutional methods such as landscapes and murals. Outreach is my department in my current position, and I am now inspired to become creative in discovering a beginner program and maybe amplify an already established relationship or project.

It was nice to learn during the 2020 SAA Financial Presentation about the Creating Family Archives publication because it is the reason that I became interested in archives as a concentration. There were so many inspiring speakers and many programs that are great examples of how to make a difference in a community. Even the pop-up address by CEO Mike Quinn from Preservica was encouraging.

The Plenary 2 Session with Carla Hayden (Librarian of Congress at the Library of Congress) and David Ferriero (Archivist of the United States National Archives and Records Administration) was interesting because it provided insight into how the field is changing because of technology and now with the pandemic. Working out the logistics of becoming completely virtual and providing the same quality with services. The intake of requests and services and with the many years of paper records that have not be digitized yet was discussed. I learned of ArchivEra- A tool to convert records into digital records for large and small libraries. Mr. David Ferriero shared that he has been recording cooking videos of historical recipes. Including the Mac and Cheese recipe of Thomas Jefferson. They are looking for more collaborative activities and stories of the collections of the Smithsonian, and other exhibits that patrons can no longer visit.

A pilot program at Howard University to have students there work on papers of African Americans and institutions and the music collection at the library there. Making materials metadata available using the minds of the younger generations and their ability to identify people.

They also discussed the issue of pay scales of the field of library science and getting the younger generation excited about the field. It also appears that many of the senior librarians began their education as other majors and concentrations. David also discussed how his first memory of visiting a library was one that was a branch of his public library that was housed in a flower shop and being surrounded by buckets of flowers.

They discussed the Digital Divide which is very near and dear to my heart as an educator at heart and the many students stuck at home without internet connection and the inequities. The recent examples of history staring us in the face today such as Congressman Lewis and even Jason

Reynolds who is the National Ambassador for the youth and young adult authors. How could anyone not be paying attention?

The voting history will become relative and bring hope for archivists as well as the history of our country through the collections. Mrs. Hayden even shared her “Words of Wisdom”: We are empowering future generations to give people hope and that we can all make a difference by sharing the history and creating history by participation in the vote.

Tempestt Hazel Founder Sixty Inches From Center, Analú Lopez Ayer of the Indigenous Studies Librarian Newberry Library along with Ivan Lozano an artist shared during the Reframing History: Opening Up Archives to Artists session that looking at the materials found at the Newberry Library from the point of view of an artist and how those details could be used moving forward to contribute to other things in ways that may be missing as a service for diverse communities and groups such as transgender works etc.

To learn of the support that the organization provided for its members during the Covid19 pandemic seemed to be dynamic. Having ongoing programs that are still available is crucial during this time since it appears that the country will be in a state of crisis for much longer than at first guessed. There is even an emergency fund in place to assist families in need. Great job! The Society appears to be the very best part of what a 501(c)(3).