

# **Look Back, Feel Forward: Archives and Affect**

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## **Abstract**

This talk highlights an upcoming book chapter on Affect for the forthcoming book *Keywords in (Critical) Library Information Science/Studies*. While Affect as a theoretical term has gained multiple layers of interpretation and applications, this piece looks to situate affect as emotions and feelings, experiences, or guiding thoughts within the archival profession as it relates to 1) archival relationships 2) archival labor, 3) and archival spaces.

This chapter introduces the theory of Affect, its application in the archival field, as well as notable barriers when applying Affective concepts in study and practice. As a flexible yet constantly evolving term, scholars at times struggle with utilizing affect as a theoretical lens given its muddy and conflicting definitions and applications. For simplicity, the chapter only situates affect as it relates to archival scholarship on why and how people interact with archival services, populations, practices, and places. Archival practices for example now consider the affective implications of working with living and deceased archival subjects. Or archivists now place higher value in their work, no longer willing to stand in as “handmaidens” or “neutral” parties. On the other hand, archival services may struggle to work with those beyond traditional academic researchers due to longstanding perceptions of exclusivity or exclusionary policies. The physical nature of archival spaces also highlights some notable affective critiques especially as these spaces compare to other cultural and information institutions. Additionally, concerns around Climate Change bring to the forefront affective responses that are currently driving many decisions and viewpoints.

## **About the authors:**

*Itza A. Carbajal* is a US settler born in New Orleans and raised in Texas currently pursuing a PhD in Information Science at the University of Washington Information School focusing on children and their records. Previously, she worked as the Latin American Metadata Librarian at UT-Austin LLILAS Benson focusing on Latin American post-custodial archival projects. Carbajal received her Master of Science in Information Studies at the University of Texas at Austin School of Information. Carbajal’s doctoral research analyzes how records embody childhood trauma as well as how archival records may provide release or relief from traumatic memories. By working with vulnerable populations such as foster care youth within the context of disasters, Carbajal’s dissertation hopes to better understand how, if, and when records assist youth in crisis. Carbajal also works at the intersection of youth archival education and environmental issues specifically through the use of memory, stories, and future making. Her philosophy as a researcher centers on facilitating self-determination through self-documentation and storytelling, records as materialized and collective memories, the use of archives and

metadata as centers of power, memory preservation and retrieval, and how digital archives as a response to the historic erasure of marginalized and neglected populations.