

Taking Care of What Matters: Training the Next Generation of Archivists through Experiential Learning

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Abstract:

Mississippi State University is a public land-grant university that boasts over 175 undergraduate and graduate programs. Its primary mission is to “take care of what matters,” or promote faculty, student, and community excellence through teaching, research, and service. MSU Libraries’ Division of Archives & Special Collections (ASC) supports this mission through the stewardship of archival collections, instructional support, and targeted outreach. Through this work, MSU Libraries’ ASC has worked with hundreds of students from diverse academic backgrounds, including Art, English, History, Foreign Languages, and more. One thing that many of these students have in common is an interest in pursuing work in the archival field. However, MSU does not offer any educational programs to support this goal. After being approached by dozens of students looking for volunteer or experiential learning opportunities, the author worked with MSU Libraries’ leadership and graduate assistants to establish an on-the-job training program using SAA’s *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archival Studies*.

In this poster, the presenter describes her approach to this program and how it differs from others, especially since there is no library school or similar program to support the teaching of archival theory and practice. She outlines the types of tasks students are given as well as the additional training they receive to support their projects as well as give them the knowledge they need to be successful in this field. The goal for the program has always been to create a mutually beneficial opportunity for these students and the repository, especially since there is no formal avenue for students to explore library or archival studies on MSU’s campus. The presenter hopes that, through her successes and considerations, she may help other institutions realize the importance of creating similar opportunities even when no library school exists.

About the author:

Carrie P. Mastley (she/her) serves as Assistant Professor and Curator of Material Culture at Mississippi State University Libraries. She has previously worked as the Collection Processor for the Frank and Virginia Williams Collection of Lincolniana. Her research interests include archival instruction, archival literacy skills, DEI practices in academic libraries and archives, and the intersection of archival research and literary studies. She holds a MLIS and Graduate Certificate in Archives & Special Collections from the University of Southern Mississippi and a MA in English Literature from Mississippi State University.