

Archives Management Roundtable Annual Meeting

August 13, 2014, 5:15 pm

Preliminary to the program commencement, Mott Linn, Chair of the AMRT, introduced Pam Hackbart-Dean as our Council Liaison.

ADVOCACY FOR ARCHIVAL PROGRAMS - Approaches to Job Creation

Sasha Griffin, Interim College Archivist at Luther College, and coordinator for the Archives Leadership Institute.

Sasha related her own personal story about becoming an archivist, to give us some of the defining lessons that she has learned. In 2008, she began an unpaid internship at the state archives of Ohio, in local government records program. She saw a scholarship opportunity to go to State of Ohio Archivists 2009 spring meeting. She received the scholarship and financial assistance to attend the meeting, and there, she attended a session on digital projects at Ohio State University. She met Laura Kissel, the archival curator at the Byrd Polar Research Center, and the two discussed the possibility for a practicum project. Together they crafted a practicum project involving digitizing and describing artifacts, and the successful completion of the practicum led to the creation of a part-time, nine-month contract position there at Ohio State. During this time period, she was learning how to do her tasks, but as importantly, she was making a network of professional contacts connections and building relationships.

While at the Byrd archives, she applied for a project position at Luther College. Sasha had a colleague who said that she would put in a recommendation to Rachel Vagts at Luther, and Sasha later learned that several of her acquaintances had put in a good word for her, which helped her application rise to the top of the applicant pool. A telephone interview and second interview followed, and ultimately in December 2010, Sasha began as project archivist at Luther, building the catalog through Archon for an NHPRC grant-funded project. This was a 2-year contract position, not a permanent position.

About this time, Sasha approached Rachel with the idea that perhaps Luther College could be the host for ALI. They worked on a proposal which would benefit Luther, but could also provide additional grant money to fund Sasha's position. Their proposal was accepted, and when Sasha's first grant had ended, the second grant started. It only funded her position for 40% of the time, but the college was able to hire her to start a digital curation program for an additional 35% of the time, thus bringing her to 75% FTE. In order to fill her empty time, Sasha cultivated one of her professional relationships to bring in a small private foundation grant to hire her as a contractor at Vesterheim Archives to continue their cataloging. This grant brought her to full-time, 1.0 FTE, and it helped them to provide better records to increase accessibility and visibility of their archives.

Lessons learned:

- 1) Have a strong professional network of “archi-friends”; you never know who is going to send you that next job description or grant opportunity
- 2) Recognize opportunities as they come - don't think of challenges as roadblocks, but as potential sources of inspiration
- 3) Don't be afraid to think big; ask for a second grant or go for that big project. It won't be a waste of time, and the worst that can happen is that you have gained experience
- 4) Be a good mentor to others, no matter the longevity of their position. Sasha has found that in addition to advocating for her, her mentors taught her how to advocate for herself, and that's been invaluable. As a mentor, you can give someone else the tools to succeed.

Chrystal Carpenter – Practical Approaches to Job Creation: Building and Sustaining an Archive in a Non-Traditional Setting

Chrystal is Director of Library and Archives at the J. Craig Venter Institute on Genomic Research

JCVI is a not-for-profit research institution focused on cutting-edge genomic research. Their Special Collections consists of personal papers of outside entities moreso than records management and corporate archives. The Special Collections archives has several affinity groups but some that are lacking. The organization has an Education department, a Library (which had been under the education department), Records Management (which really didn't exist), and the Archives.

The Archives started in 2005 when JCVI purchased records from a Nobel Prize winning scientist who discovered the structure of DNA. These were originally put under the purview of the Library, but the people in charge soon retired, so restructuring put the archives organizationally under the Educational Department. The archives was not the primary responsibility of the Educational Department, so for about eight years, not much was done with the materials. Finally, in 2013, they hired Chrystal to run the Archives. Her priorities have been to establish the archival repository, standardizing procedures, doing the nitty-gritty work, and using outreach to entice people to use the collections. She also needed to determine where the Archives department fit into the organization as a whole.

Chrystal undertook these main proactive steps:

- 1) Immersion in/observation of the organization to learn as much about them as possible. This period enabled her to gain her footing and build her confidence so that when opportunities presented themselves, she was able to communicate in a manner that she knew would be receptive to whomever she was interacting with. Regarding the problems of landing grant opportunities for the archives and hitting roadblocks because no granting agency wants to cover high indirect overhead costs, something that the owner of the company said struck Chrystal

as a good mantra: ‘a half-empty glass of wine is still a glass of wine.’ She learned that in order to sustain her archive, she needed to not only look outside at the people which the archive serves, but also to look internally, to fill an institutional need.

- 2) Advocate internally as often as possible by building relationships within the institution. Schedule and/or attend regular meetings and use the opportunity to talk about your needs. Also, use spontaneous interactions to promote reciprocal relationships.
- 3) Cultivate synergies and affinities within the organization. With relationships, you create synergies whereby you assist the organization and it benefits your repository as well. If possible, incorporate others’ ideas into your projects, and let them know that they’ve helped you as much as you have helped the institution. Your relationships become inclusive rather than exclusive, supporting the institutional goal and your archive at the same time.

Chrystal told a bit about her job, concentrating on Records Management and the Library. When she was hired in 2013, she found that there was no systematic approach to Records Management, with only spotty participation based on legal necessity. So records management was one area where she saw some ability to sustain the archive, and also the Library. It was about aligning her knowledge and experience with cost savings for the institution, and the synergy that would come from doing that.

Her approach was to create a strategic plan to advocate for her archive, making sure to use language that would resonate with the institution, giving goals that they would like to see. She distributed it for comment, which was actually a good way to help get Development on board. With a records management program in place, Development could use the resulting current information to help support its mission with facts and figures to show the institution’s impact. It was also the strategy that Chrystal used to bring in Library resources and to create another soldier in her “advocacy army.” Library and archives are a logical fit.

Moving forward, she is going to try to look at challenges as opportunities, and to be optimistic about what can be done. A “half-empty glass of wine is still a glass of wine”.

BUSINESS MEETING 5:45pm

Mott introduced Lynn Eaton, who is not just a member of AMRT’s steering committee, but also co-chair of the Program Committee for Cleveland 2015 – “Cleveland Rocks”. The program committee is very excited about the upcoming meeting. The regular proposal deadline is Oct. 8th. There is no theme, so any topic is fair game.

Kathleen Rowe, incoming president for SAA, has a platform for “Advocacy and Awareness of Archives”; proposals dealing with this topic will get special consideration,

but all topics, as well as presentation formats, will be considered. The time frames are 60 and 75 minute sessions; they have discontinued the 90-minute sessions.

There are no group endorsements from RTs or sections anymore, per SAA Council. Instead, creators of proposals that are not accepted for Cleveland programming will be encouraged to contact roundtables and sections which might provide an appropriate audience for their program.

One new feature for Cleveland: Pop-ups. The logistics haven't yet been worked out, but the idea is that time will be set aside on Thurs and Fri. at the end of the day to handle topics that come up between October and August, after the program has been set. This is an attempt to be responsive to membership, and to address issues that may crop up after the proposal deadline. Most likely, the procedure would be to contact the Programming Committee directly with a request to address these late-blooming ideas in a Pop-up session. Additionally, rooms will be available for scheduling spur-of-the-moment sessions that may arise out of a roundtable or session meeting, so that an idea may continue to be discussed after the close of the meeting in which it originated. This is in direct response to what the membership has requested in surveys, and is an attempt to be reflective and responsive to members' needs.

Lynn directed further questions to SAA or to herself and Carl Van Ness (the other committee co-chair).

Mott observed that the AMRT had actually gotten its programming for the past several years by contacting the organizers of non-selected program proposals, and inviting them to speak at our roundtable's annual meeting, so it is interesting to see that this will be the approach that SAA is taking, since they are no longer taking endorsements from roundtables and sections.

Mott introduced the new officers of the AMRT:

Leadership:

Sheryl Williams, Chair

Linda A. Whitaker, C.A., Vice-Chair

Ann E. Smith Case, C.A., Secretary

Daria D'Arienzo, C.A. and Susan Malbin, Steering Committee Members (three year terms)

Caryn Radick, Steering Committee Member (filling the last two years of a three year term)

Mott Linn, immediate Past-Chair

Mott announced that in the past few days, Council has approved new Standards and Best Practices for Internships. Our roundtable had approved the proposed standards and best practices.

AMRT then had a discussion to generate proposal ideas for next year. Mott reminded the group that both of the proposals that we had endorsed this past year had been accepted and were scheduled for this meeting. The first is on Thursday at 10am: "Leadership Lessons: Tools to Guide You and Words to Inspire You," and Friday at 2:45pm: "Taken for Granted: How Term Positions affect New Professionals and Repositories That Employ Them." He also pointed out that there are a number of management-related sessions being given this year, and he would love to generate some ideas for management-related session proposals in today's discussion.

One member reported that the Latin American/Caribbean Archives roundtable chair wants to collaborate with us or to have a joint session with us because they're international and perhaps underserved.

Another suggestion was to have a joint RT meeting with SNAP. Mott said that we discussed that last year and have tried to get together with them, but leadership changes led to the suggestion falling through the cracks. We have had a joint meeting before, with Lone Arrangers. Another member said that if we knew better what SNAP was thinking about, it would facilitate our collaborating with SNAP. Mott said that one of our members was currently sitting in on the SNAP roundtable meeting (which was running concurrently with ours) so she should return with a 'scouting report' which will aid us in determining areas best suited for collaboration. Sherry Williams said that at last year's meeting, we discussed internships and SNAP, so there is a lot of interest in working with them. Running a joint roundtable meeting is a fair bit of work, but it can be done.

Possible topics for program ideas #1:

Jordan Steele suggested a session on managing staff with multiple generations of experience. Because archival practice and skill sets have changed, how do you manage people with different skill sets and different approaches to archiving?

Mott noted that in the mid-1970s, most working staff had very little actual education in working with archives – something like only half of the professional archivists had had any training in archival management. In the past 25 years, the profession has improved greatly concerning education and continuing education. Reorganization, especially in libraries, has contributed to people coming into archives without archival experience and training, so managing so many different backgrounds and levels of education and experience is a difficult task.

Perhaps we could organize a session highlighting a few managers of archivists whose staff have come from a library program without archival training, and how best to bring them up to speed, compared with managing newly trained professionals with cutting-edge archival training, and of others with varying levels of backgrounds and education. Ann Hodges volunteered Brenda McClurkin, who is now overseeing librarians and archivists. David Ramsey said that he is in the same situation, with staff of various

levels of archival experience. Stephen Logsdon added the perspective of using different staff with different skill sets, e.g. librarians to help with archival projects.

Possible topic #2:

Conflict Management: difference in communications styles and between generations. One problem is that human resource issues are sometimes hard to talk about, due to anonymity issues and people feeling constrained to talk freely. You can bring in people to talk about these matters, do role play. Maybe a session could have a couple of archivists discussing problems that they face, and then have a professional moderator who wraps things up at the end. Program organizers could contact a Cleveland HR person or someone from a university HR office to be the moderator. Sam Rushay from Truman Presidential Library will work on developing this idea.

Possible topic #3:

Generational issues in general: different perspectives between intergenerational relationships and how people interact as they age. Sherry would like to see a panel where people talk about what it's like to be a younger person or what it's like to be an older person in a workplace, and how those experiences play out. Another conversation might include people who become archivists as a career change – so it's an older person who is new to the profession – this demographic is often ignored. Another conflict may be where newer professionals have knowledge about newer practices and techniques (e.g., digitization, e-records management) that the older professionals might not, so the situation may be one in which the younger professional has to teach 'up' to the older generation, and the older generation may not be receptive to that. Sherry will work on organizing this topic.

Mott encouraged everyone to take these ideas to the listserv to generate other participants and perspectives.

Another suggestion was to offer a Lightning Round on 'Things We Weren't Taught'?

- New managers
- Salary negotiations
- Conflict management
- Interviewing skills for managers
- How to deal with HR issues

Sandra Varry might look into developing a session themed around the hiring process.

Of course, if any of these ideas do not make it onto the SAA program, we would be interested in hearing about them as our roundtable meeting's programming.

The general AMRT meeting ended at 6:51.

Respectfully submitted,

Ann E. Smith Case, Recording Secretary

Attended by:

Christina Bleyer, Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
Eric Bluhm, Crawford Media Services
Chrystal Carpenter, J. Craig Venter Institute
Ann Case, Tulane University
Jess Colati, Worcester Polytechnic
Donna Cooke, Colonial Williamsburg
Stephen Curley, University of Arizona Health Sciences Library
Beth Dodd, University of Texas – Austin
Liz Doubleday, Capital Group
John Gartrell, Duke University
Suzanne Gehring, Asbury University
Jon-Erik Gilot, DWC
Adam Gossman, Fuller Theological Seminary
Sasha Griffin, Luther College
E. Haven Hawley, University of Florida
Deborah Kloiber, St. Catherine University
Mott Linn, Clark University
Matt Logie, Colonial Williamsburg
Stephen Logsdon, Washington University St. Louis
Mary Ann Mattis, US Army Heritage Education Center
Donzella Maupin, Hampton University
Brenda McClurkin, UT Arlington
Katie McCormick, Florida State University
Christina Meninger, Pratt Institute
Lisa Mix, Weill Cornell Medical Center
Jenifer Monger, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Katie Nash, Elon University
Marilyn Rackley, Atlas Systems
Caryn Radick, Rutgers University
David Ranzan, Adelphi University
Karen Rice-Young, York College of Pennsylvania
Dennis Riley, Brooklyn Navy Yard
Robert Rubero, Florida State University
Sam Rushay, Harry S. Truman Library and Museum

Stephanie Sapienza, University of Maryland
Jamie Smith, Gallaudet University
David Stanhope, Jimmy Carter Library
Laura Sullivan, Iowa State University
Rachel Vagts, Berea College
Sandra Varry, Florida State University
Susan Watson, American Red Cross
Linda Whitaker, Arizona Historical Society
Sherry Williams, University of Kansas
Kathy Young, Loyola University - Chicago