

Show Me Archives and the Community Engagement Legacy of Aurora Davis

SARAH BUCHANAN

Abstract:

The expansion of archival education has relied on the individual efforts of educators, first to create and then to refine curricula. In the 1970s, historian Aurora Elisa Davis (1947-1998) shifted her work to library science. She wrote a course paper, under Dean Edward P. Miller (1974-84), in which she laid out the potential of an archival curriculum. Davis subsequently taught the first archival courses offered at the University of Missouri, bringing to this task deep knowledge of government documents, aviation, copyright, and using archives for investigative reporting. Community engagement was her hallmark, and she masterfully navigated students through levels of local, state, regional, and federal archival resources, becoming known for her skilled reference service and active participation in SAA and in the then-SLA Newspaper Division. Davis' impact on the archival profession is in preparing cohorts of graduating students to consider and pursue careers as archivists.

Employing literature about professional learning communities and primary sources on educational history at the university, we examine the impact a teacher had on archival practice statewide and the concomitant reach of archival education nationwide. This presentation articulates early archive administration courses within three historical contexts: archival education guidelines and instructors of the 1970s-80s, the 1979 emergence of SAA's professional affinity groups and their member engagement role, and the work of integrating archival studies in a school of library and *informational* studies, established fifty years ago. Davis' community-university relationship-building resonates now in the form of the students she trained and the archival philosophy she founded.

About the author:

Sarah Buchanan is an Assistant Professor at the School of Information Science & Learning Technologies (SISLT) at the University of Missouri. She received a bachelor's degree from the University of Pennsylvania, a master's degree from the UCLA Department of Information Studies, and a PhD in information studies from The University of Texas at Austin. Her research and teaching examine provenance issues in archival studies, in the context of how we might organize, arrange, and describe data about heritage collections. Sarah is active in the Society of American Archivists and promotes an enthusiasm for community engagement as faculty advisor for Mizzou's new SAA student chapter.