They Don't Teach Project Management in Grad School: How Archives Can Combine Ethical Practices with Modern Agile Project Management Methods

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Despite the prevalence of grant or otherwise specially funded term projects in the archival field, archivists have been slow to take advantage of Agile project methodologies, which have spread remarkably quickly in countless other fields over the past two decades. Based on the lessons from an innovative 2018-2021 Smith College Special Collections project to maximize access to its holdings and modernize its backend systems and processes, this session provides guidance on how archives can combine Agile with strong ethical practices around the employment of early-to-mid career library professionals in term positions. The success of the project despite the disruptions caused by the global pandemic highlight the value of the project's emphasis on flexibility in goals and methods, in addition to strong support for employees. In this session, we will share lessons learned over 69 two-week cycles of iteration, which can be applied to projects both large and small. Attendees can expect to hear specific recommendations about topics including project structure and flexibility, team and organizational dynamics, the nature of term positions, and the powers of prioritization and automation.

About the author:

Dan Michelson is the Collections Archivist for Smith College Special Collections and is responsible for archival collection management, processing, stacks management, digitization of audiovisual materials, and a number of other functions. From 2018 to 2021, he was the Project Manager Archivist leading the Access to Collections (A2C) project to improve and standardize access to the extensive holdings of Smith College Special Collections. Prior to joining Smith College, Dan held positions at Union College, the Hagley Museum & Library, Michigan Tech, and New York University. He has previously chaired the Technical Subcommittee for *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (TS-DACS) and the ArchivesSpace User Advisory Council (UAC) and has a B.A in history and education from Hampshire College and an M.A. in archives and public history from New York University.