"My employer does not have a job title for archivist:" A climate survey of professional identity, change, and perception within the archival field

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Abstract: Over the last few decades, cultural heritage organizations have become used to rapid changes due to progressing technology, new forms of information, and evolving user needs. Recent archival scholarship, conference programs, and anecdotal experience demonstrate that archives and archivists have experienced many types of changes, including changes to administrative structure, physical location, department name, and job titles and responsibilities. All of these changes have the potential to impact archivists' day-to-day operations, role, perception, and professional identity.

This presentation shares preliminary results from a study that serves as a climate survey focusing on practitioners with the United States to gauge archival practitioners' perceptions, experiences, and professional identities. The study explores examples archivists have observed or experienced regarding changes to department name, organizational placement, and/or individual position titles and their perceptions of the impact of changes they shared on archives' and archivists' role at their institution as well as on their personal professional identity.

About the authors:

Ashley Todd-Diaz is Assistant University Librarian for Special Collections and University Archives at Towson University. She also teaches as an adjunct professor in Emporia State University's Master of Library and Information Science and Archives Studies Certificate programs. Her interests include archives as organizations, perceptions of archives, and archival literacy. She holds a Ph.D. from Emporia State University's School of Library and Information Management, an MSIS with a concentration in Archives and Records Administration from SUNY at Albany, and an MA in English and American Literature from New York University.

Kari R. Smith is the Institute Archivist at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where she has worked as an archivist for the past 8 years. She joined MIT in 2011 to build the digital archives program and was the Institute's first digital archivist and worked in that capacity for 6 years. She has over 25 yrs experience with electronic records and digital cultural material in corporate, academic, government and third-sector organizations. She employs systems thinking and lifecycle approaches to her work as an archivist and information manager. In 1998 she earned her MSI in Archives Administration and Records Management from the University of Michigan School of Information. She has taught courses in the SAA DAS curriculum, for the University of TN, Knoxville School of Information Sciences, and is a senior Instructor for the Digital Preservation Management Workshops. Kari's professional and research interests include assessing tools and techniques for suitability in local contexts, embedded metadata standards, and techniques for supporting indigenous cultural heritage using digital technologies.

Nancy Y. McGovern is the Co-chair/founder of SAA's Research Forum, Director of Digital Preservation at MIT Libraries, and Director of the Digital Preservation Management (DPM) Workshops. She has been preserving digital content for more than 30 years. Her interests include sustainable digital preservation and radical collaboration for inclusive communities. She is a past president of the Society of American Archives (SAA) and has a PhD in digital preservation from UCL.