

Empowered to Collaborate, or Challenged by Imbalanced Power: The Impact of Archives Existing in Libraries

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Abstract: Traditionally, libraries and archives have existed as separate, though related, information organizations placing a focus on access to and preservation of information. However, over time libraries and archives have developed unique professional identities, organizations, values, and curricula. Despite these differences, the vast majority of academic institutions in the U.S. have chosen to locate their archives units within the organizational structure, and sometimes physical structure, of the often more established library. When considered from an organizational perspective, archives units existing within libraries share a parent-child relationship with the library. Considering this arrangement, there is a potential for greater collaboration and partnership, but also for an imbalance of power and advantage. The power differential between the library and archives unit can impact important decisions including the distribution of resources, development of corporate identity, and ultimately how that identity is communicated to and perceived by users.

This research explores the physical and virtual dynamics between archives units in academic libraries through the lens of organizational behavior theory and stakeholder theory. This platform presentation will share initial findings from my dissertation study, which is a collective case study that includes three investigations: interviews with library and archives administration, intercept surveys with archives researchers, and a document analysis of corporate identity documents. It will offer insight into how the internal negotiations between libraries and archives units impact the way these units are presented to and in turn perceived by users, which is particularly pertinent as our society moves further into the digital realm where library and archival collections are converging more rapidly.

About the Author:

Ashley Todd-Diaz is the Head of Special Collections and University Archives at Towson University, and a member of the National Faculty within Emporia State University's Master of Library and Information Science and Archives Studies Certificate programs. She is also a doctoral candidate within Emporia State University's School of Library and Information Management. Her dissertation research explores the physical and virtual dynamics surrounding archives and libraries that exist within a parent-child organizational relationship, and how those dynamics are communicated to and perceived by researchers. Her research interests include libraries and archives as organizations, users and information seeking behavior, archival literacy, and incorporating emerging technologies, such as augmented reality, into the classroom. She holds a BA from Sarah Lawrence College, 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. Ashley is active within the Society of American Archivists as chair of the Manuscripts Repository Section, a member of the Teaching with Primary Sources committee of the Reference, Access, and Outreach Section, and is in the running for a spot on the Archival Educators Section steering committee.