

“No ideal place for [the archives]:” Administrative and user viewpoints on archives existing in libraries

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Abstract: Archives are educational, scholarly, and culturally-significant resources that afford researchers the opportunities to engage in informal learning, develop information literacy and critical thinking skills, encounter one-of-a-kind materials, and interact with history. However, research has shown that in the United States there is a lack of awareness for these resources compared to the information resources available in libraries, museums and other cultural heritage organizations. This low awareness may be due to the administrative, physical, and conceptual positioning of archives within libraries, placing these information organizations in a parent-child relationship despite holding unique professional identities, organizations, values, and curricula. Through three complementary investigations, this study examined the perspectives of corporate identity messaging crafted by libraries and archives units, library administrators along the chain between the head of the archives unit and the library dean, and archives users. This presentation will briefly present the distinctive findings of my recently defended dissertation as they relate to the internal effectiveness of the positioning of archives in a parent-child administrative structure, as well as its impact beyond the organizational chart on users' information seeking success.

About the Author:

Ashley Todd-Diaz recently completed her PhD at Emporia State University's School of Library and Information Management. Her research interests are libraries and archives as organizations, users and information seeking behavior, archival literacy, and incorporating emerging technologies, such as augmented reality, into the classroom. Her dissertation explored the physical and virtual power structures and dynamics surrounding archives and libraries that exist within a parent-child organizational relationship, and how those dynamics are communicated to and perceived by external stakeholders, namely researchers who expect the contents of the archives to address their information needs. 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. She is Assistant University Librarian for Special Collections and University Archives at Towson University in Maryland, and teaches as an adjunct professor in Emporia's Master of Library and Information Science and Archives Studies Certificate programs. Ashley is active within SAA as immediate past-chair of the Manuscripts Repository Section, a member of the Educators Section Steering Committee, the Mentoring Program Subcommittee of the Membership Committee, and the Graduate Archival Education Subcommittee of the Education Committee.