

“Old stuff, old stuff, really old stuff”: University Students’ Perceptions of Academic Archives and Their Relevance to Student Experience

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University archives seek to work with and represent all members of their community equitably. But research has shown that many students are not familiar with archives and/or do not think they are relevant to them. Low levels of awareness and engagement are critical problems that archivists and librarians need to address. This is the premise for an ongoing research project at Towson University that aims to gauge undergraduate and graduate student awareness of archives and determine how students want to be centered in outreach efforts. This data will be used to reimagine existing approaches to outreach in ways that will encourage more collaborative and meaningful partnerships between students, archivists, and librarians.

This session will share the initial findings from a survey of students addressing topics of student awareness and perceptions of archives, interest in contributing to a collective history, and how archivists and librarians can empower students to see themselves as important stakeholders in shaping and preserving history. We will also share our goals for future research, including our plans for directly involving students and institutional partners across the country to collaboratively develop and pilot innovative outreach approaches that center students.

About the authors:

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