

When is an archivist not an archivist? Exploring the impact of organizational factors on archivists' professional identity

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According to the American Psychological Association Dictionary of Psychology, a person's identity, or sense of self, is defined in part by their "affiliations and social roles." Someone's profession is often an important social role in their life and, in turn, professional identity can be a prominent element of identity. Although identity is a personal, internal construct, multiple external factors can impact professional identity, including organizational placement, administrative decisions, and colleagues' perception of a department or individual's role.

This platform presentation shares the findings of a study that explores U.S. archival practitioners' perceptions, experiences, and awareness of external factors impacting their personal professional identity. It will address topics including the relationship between job title and professional identity and/or job responsibilities, the impact of various types of institutional change on professional identity, emotions tied to these changes, and how these experiences vary across sectors.

A primary goal of the research is to look at the implications for how a trend of external influences on individual archivists' professional identity may impact the profession as a whole.

The presentation will also address next steps and future research relating to this topic.

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.