

Out of the Archives: Speculations on Surfacing Lesser-Known Women's Archives

AUDRA EAGLE YUN and ANTOINETTE LAFARGE

Abstract: How can archivists work with scholars, researchers, and community users to promote lesser-known personal histories of women (including women of color) held by archives, communities, and families? "Minor" archives can provide first-hand historical accounts in many forms including unpublished manuscripts, autobiographies, diaries and journals, and correspondence, bearing witness to history that is relatively inaccessible to the general public. What might it take for these personal narratives to become public history? Through a proof-of-concept grant funded by the University of California Humanities Research Institute, a group of feminist scholars, creative writers, artists, and archivists have explored transparency and new approaches to archival descriptive practice, access, and the construction of history through archives.

In this platform talk, the speakers will share a preliminary report from the research project and seek input from archivists at all levels who work with manuscripts in a variety of institutional contexts. Because the project is speculative, the speakers will share critique and exploration of future possibilities, including large-scale partnerships to facilitate access to family and community archives and under-exposed manuscripts in institutional archives across the US, imagining new approaches to archival description, forming communities of reciprocal practice, and supporting more networked archival information.

About the Author:

Audra Eagle Yun is the Head of Special Collections & Archives at the University, of California, Irvine. She is the principal investigator for "Transforming Knowledge/Transforming Libraries," a three-year IMLS Laura Bush 21st Century Librarian Program research grant project to explore the gap between ethnic studies theory and community archives practice. Audra is also the author of "Archival Accessioning," forthcoming from SAA in 2020. She is an elected member of SAA Council.

Antoinette LaFarge is an artist and writer whose beat is virtuality and its discontents. Her work takes form as computer-mediated performance, interactive installation, digital prints, and writing. Recent publications include "Pseudo Space: Experiments with Avatarism and Telematic Performance in Social Media" (MIT Press, 2016), "Social Proxies and Real-World Avatars: Impersonation as a Mode of Capitalist Production" (Art Journal, 2014), and "Imposture as Improvisation: Living Fiction" (Oxford University Press, 2013). Lately she has been active in research centered on minor archives, especially the histories of 19th century women artists, architects, and designers.