

The 2nd Annual Graduate Symposium took place on Saturday, March 30, 2013, as the result of collaborative work of the diverse Simmons GSLIS student organizations including: SCoSAA, PLG, ASA-SC, Panopticon, LISSA, ASIS&T, UXPA@Simmons, SLA, and support from GSLIS. The Symposium provided an opportunity for students to present on their research interests, prepare for future professional conferences, network with their peers, and explore how related professions such as archives, libraries, history, and museums are converging. Please read the following panel reports to learn more about the papers presented at the Symposium.

PANEL ONE

TECHNOLOGY



Moderator: Heather Szafran

Speakers: Brian Shetler, James Gehrt, and Derek Jackson

- Arthur Liu

Brian Shetler began the session with his presentation, “The Merchant Printer.” Shetler introduced us to William Caxton, the successful merchant turned publisher who brought printing to England. Prior to his involvement in publishing, Caxton was an influential merchant who developed his career in Belgium and became the Governor of the English Nation in Bruges. Following his successes there, Caxton relocated to Cologne, then the center of printing in Germany, to learn the printing trade. Shetler explained that Caxton’s technical skills were initially crude, but within three years, he grew from a novice to an established figure in the field.

Caxton’s goal was to expand access to literary works, and he had several reasons to make this his mission. He was concerned with the stability of the English language and cared about producing works in a variety of underserved subjects. Yet Shetler explained that Caxton’s underlying motivation was financial: Caxton’s business sense detected the potential for

a new market. Caxton employed smart techniques to develop his market, including the then-innovative use of posted advertisements and the inclusion of dedications to well-known individuals in his works. Caxton's dual role as a merchant and a printer—a combination of business savvy and technical know-how—enabled him to have a lasting impact on 15th century English literary culture.

James Gehrt continued the session with his presentation, "Alternative Publishing," in which he discussed digitization techniques as applied to archival materials. In particular, Gehrt introduced us to print-on-demand technologies, which may be used to produce e-book versions of rare books. Digitizing rare books supports the preservation of the originals by decreasing the need to handle the originals, while simultaneously improving access to the content. The digitized versions may also be enriched with multimedia such as explanatory videos, presenting an exciting way for archivists to publicize their work. Repositories may also consider loading e-books on portable devices for patron use. The digital books may also represent a potential revenue source.

Gehrt described four steps to the digitization process. First, image capture of the original is performed and involves the use of various filters to optimize quality. Second, post-processing is performed on the images to make any necessary corrections. Third, the set of images is converted to a document. Fourth, the document is finalized into a

published form using software such as Adobe InDesign or Blurb. The digital publication can then be reproduced as a physical book with the use of print-on-demand technology. Gehrt explained that current technology is quite capable of reproducing details of an original, with the exception of texture and, in some cases, exact color. In choosing to produce digital or print reproductions, a repository should consider which collections see the greatest use and the inherent vulnerability of materials.

Derek Jackson concluded the session with his presentation, "Audio Cassette Digitization." Jackson introduced us to industry best practices standards for general digitization principles (IASA TC-03) and technical requirements (IASA TC-04). Jackson explained that these standards set the bar too high for most archives to be able to follow. At the same time, audio materials are ripe candidates to consider for archival best practices because it is a commonly held medium yet the materials are typically unique.

Jackson laid out three steps to embarking on an audio cassette digitization project. First, control and planning is performed to establish intellectual control over the target collection. A metadata standard, such as METS, must be selected. Second, a playback procedure must be defined. This involves numerous technical requirements, including sample rates, bit depth, file formats, and the selection of two critical pieces of equipment: a playback device and an analog-to-digital converter. Here, Jackson explained that while professional-grade audio equipment is a must, it need not

represent an insurmountable burden. In his case study, Jackson was able to spend a mere \$120 on a playback device. Third, a workflow must be defined for execution of the project. Ultimately, Jackson explained that audio digitization is not out of reach even for small archives, but a conversation is needed in the profession and the development of best practices guidelines would enable archivists to tackle this important work.

Together, Shetler, Gehrt, and Jackson reminded us that technology is intertwined with archival and library work. Technology provides the tools which, when combined with our professional practices, enable us to provide access to and preserve our collections.

PANEL TWO

ART



Moderator: Dallas Foster, Panopticon President

Speakers: Elizabeth McGorty and Jessica Bennett

- Jane Leuchter

Elizabeth McGorty explored the role of archives in the performing arts in her paper “Let More People In: Bridging the Gap Between Archives and the Performing Arts.” Drama is inherently participatory but is also ephemeral, and McGorty set out to explore whether the connection felt during a performance can somehow be retained, to make sure that the participatory nature of a performance can be extended beyond the final curtain. McGorty described the Howard Gotlieb Archival Research Center’s (HGARC) efforts to make themselves a presence in the community through collaborations with performing arts institutions such as the Opera Institute at Boston University and the Boston Ballet. By collaborating with these institutions, the HGARC was able to reach a wider audience beyond the borders of Boston University and present a more intimate view of a performance and its context by placing archival materials on display.

McGorty turned her discussion to focus on ways of bringing archives to performing arts institutions through her study of the Signature Theatre Company (STC), a small off-Broadway production company that devotes an entire season to one playwright. The STC uses education and outreach to promote themselves and has a dramaturg (a person who deals with the research and development of performances) but they lack a working archive, which could assist in both marketing and performance development. McGorty suggests a more embedded approach to archiving performances, with the suggestion that an archivist be more involved in the production of the play—but not so

involved that the performance is influenced in some way. McGorty ended her presentation by stressing the shared nature of the theatre and reiterating that a partnership between archivists and performing arts institutions is a mutually beneficial one.

Jessica Bennett, in “The Artful Display of History: Integrating Archives in Art Museums via Technology,” discussed the idea of integrating archival material into museums and cultural heritage institutions in a more interactive way using current trends in technology. While the information found on museum plaques provides context for the artwork, Bennett wants to dig deeper to uncover more information about a work of art—its provenance, its social context, and any cultural or legal disputes—by using technology to provide this deeper context while retaining the minimalist plaques for those patrons interested only in the aesthetics of the works.

Bennett focused her research on the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and limited herself to a patron-centered view of what contextual information could be found in the museum itself and on its website. She examines several ways of using technology to provide more contextual information, including QR codes, augmented reality, and several mobile apps that provide interactive tours in museums. However, some information that could contextualize works of art in museums is also limited due to privacy concerns, as well as understaffing, and enthusiastic researchers could simply research works of art outside of the museum.

PANEL THREE

THIRD SPACE



Moderator: Paige Neumann, LISSA Vice President of Events

Speakers: Astrid Drew and Kristen Schuster

- *Lorin Granger*

Astrid Drew began the session with her preliminary paper, "Investigation and Illumination: Oral Histories and Cultural Identity In Rhode Island's Swedish-American Community", based on oral histories she conducted on behalf of the Rhode Island Swedish Heritage Association (RISHA). Commissioned to research the history of the Swedish community in Rhode Island, Drew collected stories from the waning older population. Being proudly half-Swedish, Drew sought answers to why Swedish identity and community involvement among younger generations has been steadily weakening, especially in contrast to other ethnic communities.

In interviews with direct immigrants and first or second generation descendants,

eager assimilation into American culture was a common thread. Language was used to exclude rather than include younger generations and Swedish customs and traditions were eschewed for American. Homes might be decorated in Swedish vestiges, but descendants not instilled with Swedish identity at an early age are often indifferent despite being surrounded by reminders.

Drew championed the opportunities afforded by video oral histories to fill in the gaps left by traditional material records of history. Oral histories make the intangible tangible and allow levels of nuance and detail not possible in written texts. Digital audiovisual formats present new preservation and access challenges that RISHA will have to face in order for the project to continue.

She concluded that oral histories continue to illuminate the causes for the decline of Rhode Island's Swedish community and can be used to educate and enrich Swedes and non-Swedes alike. For the project to grow effectively, findings must continually be used to reevaluate and adjust the process of collecting and presenting stories.

The session continued with Kristen Schuster's presentation "Re-Imagining Information and Architecture: An Exploration of the Seattle Public Library's Book Spiral and Mixing Chamber". Schuster's ongoing research examines the relationship between librarianship and the architecture of libraries, focusing on how design influences issues of access, equality and the expectations of neutrality.

Schuster began by explaining that Andrew Carnegie began funding the construction of monumental library spaces when the American Library Association was created in the late 19th century. These early libraries emphasized form over function, placing them in awkward contrast to library needs and services. The contrast became sharper as librarians developed intellectual systems of organization and a code of ethics that emphasized neutrality and freedom of access to information. Problems of physical arrangement and access lead to increased reliance on the reference librarian to navigate awkward arrangement. Schuster notes that early reference desks tended to intimidate rather than encourage use, a problem that continues presently.

Schuster contrasted Carnegie's libraries with Rem Koolhaas's function based design for the central branch of the Seattle Public Library. Where earlier architecture necessitated conformity, Koolhaas worked with librarians to make space support function. This is illustrated by two prominent features: the mixing chamber and book spiral. The latter arranges all non-fiction materials in shelf rows that run the length of an uninterrupted four story spiral. The spiral was designed to accommodate new acquisitions for up to ten years. The mixing chamber is an open space that houses reference and technology services. Mediating between the stacks and other public spaces, the area is a noisy space that encourages collaboration and conversation and aims to make information seeking an inclusive and comfortable experience.

Schuster concluded that Koolhaas's eye toward functionality allowed librarians to reexamine the changing information needs of patrons as well as their relationships to patrons as providers of access.

PANEL FOUR

ETHICS



Moderator: Nicole Thomas, ALA-SC Chapter Coordinator

Speakers: Genna Duplisea, Renée Elizabeth Neely, and Eva Rios-Alvarado

- *Meridith Halsey*

Genna Duplisea began the session with a presentation of her paper entitled, "Overcoming 'Supposed Neutrality': The Role of Activism in Archival and Historical Work." Duplisea challenged the notion that archivists perform their

work with neutrality. She argues that adherence to the belief that archivists can be neutral may prevent individual archivists from recognizing the biases that are inherent in archival collections and embedded in acquisitions policies, which largely favor the white, the male, and the wealthy. An archivist's failure to recognize these biases and question his or her own role in shaping the historic narrative merely serves to reinforce the (inequitable) status quo.

Duplisea asserted that archival work is interpretive, and that the activities of selection and appraisal are, in fact, exercises of power over the historical record. The recognition of that power is the first step towards the responsible use of it, which includes the broadening of acquisitions policies, the promotion of self-awareness in arrangement and description, and the promotion of equitable access. Activist archivists aim to add new voices to the historical record, to add flexibility to their collecting policies (i.e. acceptance of "alternative documentation," e.g. Tweets, Instagram photos, etc.), and to educate community organizations on how to maintain a record of their own history. These actions will ultimately enrich the entire historical record.

Duplisea's presentation concluded with further thoughts on how archivists might pursue activist activities, including addressing the need to adapt description standards to diverse cultures and religions, addressing the growing digital divide affecting current and potential users of archives, and assisting

researchers to broaden and reframe subjects of study.

Next, Renée Elizabeth Neely and Eva Rios-Alvarado presented their research in progress, entitled, “The Post-Colonial Archive: Accountability, Memory, and Activism – The Knowledge Shift?” Their research examines how legacies of our colonial past have shaped our archival methodologies and institutions. They pointed out that in the United States, mainstream archival literature de-emphasizes its colonial history, which is not the case in Canada, South Africa, and New Zealand. Neely and Rios-Alvarado share Duplisea’s view that archivists have power over what is collectively remembered and forgotten, and further assert that failing to recognize that power is essentially an abdication of our professional responsibility to record silenced perspectives.

Neely and Rios-Alvarado then shared three examples of how archival power was misused to further marginalize already underrepresented groups. These examples are:

- Kven and Sámi Peoples (Norway National Archives): The records of these minority groups had not been processed because the materials were not in Norwegian languages. As a result, the records were de-valued and rendered anonymous.
- Absence of African American Church records in the Bentley Historical Library (University of Michigan): The library had not evaluated its acquisitions policies

in some time, resulting in a collection on religion that reflected only white Protestant denominations despite the robust presence of African American Churches in the state of Michigan.

- The State Archive Service’s (SAS) role in apartheid (South Africa): The SAS was an active participant in the apartheid government’s efforts to control social memory by exerting control over public records.

Although the situations in the above examples have been rectified, Neely and Rios-Alvarado challenged the archival profession, especially in the United States, to engage with these types of issues on a deeper level in order to move the profession forward. They suggested several paths forward, including taking substantive action to recruit and retain minorities in the archival profession, proactively preserving the history of marginalized and excluded groups, and developing policies that both preserve and respect the cultural heritage of the groups being documented.

Neely and Rios-Alvarado wrapped up the session by reminding us why activism in archives is a critical aspect of our professional responsibility: without archives, memory falters.