*Vice President/President-Elect Candidate*

**Name:** Caitlin Birch

**Education:** MSLIS in Archives Management, Simmons College [now Simmons University]; MA in History, Simmons College; BA in English and Journalism, University of Delaware

**Employment (Relevant to Archives):** Digital Collections and Oral History Archivist, Rauner Special Collections Library, Dartmouth College (Hanover, NH), June 2014 - Present; FRONTLINE Records Manager, WGBH Educational Foundation (Boston, MA), January 2014 - May 2014; Archives Assistant, Northeastern University Libraries (Boston, MA), February 2013 - February 2014

**Service to New England Archivists:** Secretary, Executive Board, April 2016 – April 2020; Member, Task Force for Documentation Practices, April 2018 – October 2019; Co-chair, Strategic Plan Task Force, November 2014 – March 2016; Co-chair, Mentoring Task Force, November 2014 – December 2015; Co-founder, NEA Mentoring Program; Co-founder and Co-chair, Roundtable for Early Professionals and Students (REPS), January 2013 – March 2014

**Service to Archives Profession:** Member, Mentoring Program Subcommittee of the Membership Committee, Society of American Archivists, September 2020 – Present; Grant Proposal Reviewer, National Historical Publications and Records Commission, 2015

**Candidate Question: What do you consider to be one of the greatest challenges archivists in New England are facing at present, and what are potential paths NEA can take to address this issue?**

Many challenges face archivists in New England today and most nest within one of our greatest challenges: we increasingly need to do more with less. We need to wear more hats, develop more expertise, respond with more urgency — and we need to do this while addressing systemic problems that are long overdue for solutions. To take these briefly point by point:

*More hats*: Our jobs are getting bigger. The archivist may now be “archivist/records manager.” The staff of three may have dwindled to lone arranger and volunteers. The student intern may be asked to do the work of a professional. Sustained shrinking of institutional budgets leads to the absorption of greater levels of responsibility. *More expertise:* The knowledge and skills required of archivists is increasing. Traditional work like acquisitions, appraisal, processing, and reference is now supplemented by the need for expertise in areas like digital forensics, web archiving, and social media marketing. *More urgency*: Managing repositories and fulfilling collecting mandates have both become urgent business. Today’s archives are threatened by the extreme weather events and rising sea levels of climate change, while today’s collecting is defined by the ephemerality of the internet. Archivists must be prepared to respond rapidly to both crises affecting their collections and crises that belong in their collections. *Systemic problems:* Issues like racism, sexism, and colonialism are not new, but we as a profession are in some ways newly addressing them. There’s much to be done — in our collections, in our places of work and study, and in the communities we serve.

It’s easy to become overwhelmed by the sprawling scope of the archivist’s role, but I take comfort in the fact that it is for exactly this reason that NEA exists. The challenges before today’s archivists cannot be met by individuals; they require a community of practice. So how does NEA meet the moment?

*Through advocacy:* NEA can develop standards for the New England region in areas like ethical internships, appropriate staffing levels, and fair compensation, then advocate for their application. *Through learning:* NEA has a longstanding commitment to continuing education that will only grow stronger through flexible, member-driven initiatives. Reading groups, hackathons, and learning communities built around shared interests can arise as members identify needs for them. NEA can support organic initiatives alongside formal educational offerings. *Through communication:* NEA can foster dynamic spaces for member conversation outside the official listserv and conferences. Many workplaces have been learning the power of technologies like Slack and Airtable to keep us connected and collaborative during the pandemic; NEA can harness these too. *Through capacity:* As we strengthen the community of NEA, we reduce the demands on individual archivists and increase their capacity to collaborate on the critical work of addressing our most systemic problems.

NEA service has been a fundamental part of my archives career and it would be an honor to work alongside you as your Vice President/President-Elect. Thanks very much for your consideration.