



**FALL 2018 NEW ENGLAND ARCHIVISTS MEETING
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 26, 2018
JOHN F. KENNEDY PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY & MUSEUM, BOSTON, MA**

SESSION DESCRIPTIONS

Appraisal and Acquisition - 9:15am-10:15am

Ethics in Collecting, Donor Relations, and Born-Digital Surprises

Virginia Hunt, Harvard University Archives

Most archivists agree that we have a responsibility to inform donors about factors that could influence their decisions about donating a collection, including use of the collection once they have made the donation. Further, archivists routinely encounter sensitive materials and have access to restricted information and, according to SAA's Code of Ethics, they should carefully consider revealing sensitive or potentially embarrassing information if doing so conflicts with institutional policy or personal privacy protections. But what happens when an archivist comes across heretofore unknown and possibly distressing digital content in an unexpected place? What responsibility does the archivist have to a donor who has signed an agreement with the institution expecting the right to be able to examine all content deemed "inappropriate to preserve" as part of the collection? This session will discuss dealing with such a situation, and other ethical roadblocks that popped up along the way to making a collection accessible.

Obligations and Expectations: Pushing Collections to the Front of the Queue

Rosemary K.J. Davis, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

How do institutions navigate the ethics of collection availability and responsive stewardship? How do archivists work through the sometimes seemingly impossible task of balancing institutional expectations, emotional relationships with donors, and the urgent needs of researchers? Seen through the lens of archival accessioning, this case study examines how prioritizing access for new acquisitions can work in service of issues that go well beyond yearly statistics, but which also present an array of operational complications that can't be ignored.

Ethical Issues in Secondary Use of Oral Histories/Testimonies in Digital Humanities Projects

Christy Tomecek, Fortunoff Video Archive, Yale University

Oral histories and testimonies provide a rich body of information for researchers in many disciplines. This makes them excellent candidates as the foundation of digital humanities projects, which in turn provides greater access to these materials. However, some uses can cause ethical quandaries in honoring the informed consent of the interviewees as well as the context of the interviews. These issues are especially apparent if the oral histories or testimonies were taken years before the advent of the internet and/or digital humanities as a discipline. Focusing on the "Let Them Speak" project under development at the Fortunoff Video Archive and the Digital Humanities Lab at Yale, this presentation considers issues that may be raised by digital humanities projects, how to address them, and how a best practices framework for digital humanities projects can balance the wishes of the interviewees with innovative access to oral history/testimony collections.

Description - 10:45am-11:45am

Medical Information: Ethical Considerations for Processing and Description

Jessica Sedgwick, Center for the History of Medicine, Harvard Medical School

Archivists may encounter medical and health information in a variety of forms in manuscript and archival collections. While such materials can offer rich and valuable insights into individual human experiences as well as society at large, they also present particular legal and ethical challenges for responsible stewardship. This presentation will discuss ethical considerations for handling such material and offer practical guidance for processing, describing, and providing access to papers and records containing health information.

When Circus Isn't Enough: Subject Headings and Descriptions for 19th-Century Popular Entertainment

Betts Coup, Houghton Library, Harvard University

This presentation will focus on the description of two circus-related archival collections in the Harvard Theatre Collection at Houghton Library, and the decisions made regarding the vocabulary, subject headings, and titles of materials that depict individuals with disabilities in the context of circus and popular entertainment performances. Seeking a balance among the use of nineteenth-century titles, current terminology, and Library of Congress subject headings, the archivists wanted their descriptions to suit the broadest range of potential users into the future, while reflecting and respecting the individuals depicted.

Skeletons in Your Closet: Heavy Small Collections

Jennifer Bolmarcich, Archives & Special Collections, Amherst College

“Archival description expresses professional ethics and values” (DACS, Revised Principle 1). How do we right the wrongs that our institutions and communities have committed or permitted when our collections contain evidence of harm? Increasing transparency about our archival judgments includes sharing our descriptive work and discussing how our archival ethics and responsibilities—to our materials, our communities, our institutions, and ourselves—shape our description and writing.

Access - 1:15pm-2:30pm

Marjorie Lamb, *Communist Hunter, Patriot, Activist: The Observed and Observers in a Cold War Archive*

Simon Patrick Rogers, John M. Kelly Library, University of Toronto

This session will discuss the papers of an anti-Communist activist, Marjorie Lamb (1907-1989), based in Toronto in the late 1950s and 1960s. The arrangement and description of her papers are considered in the context of her documentation and investigation of the grassroots rise of organized anti-war, feminist, and union movements in Canada, as well as the development of a radical press and other fascinating gems of dissenting Canadian political discourse. Illustrating an archival approach to the preservation and presentation of the perspective of a politically contentious and divisive archival creator, the presentation will ask the critical question of what role, if any, the archivist should play in censoring or limiting access to sensitive information in a public archive.

Towards Institutional Access: Promoting Internal Conversations around the Stewardship of Digital Media

Jean Moylan, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Cristina Fontáñez Rodríguez, Maryland Institute College of Art

In the current digital media landscape, arts-based institutions are uniquely positioned to collect, preserve, and provide access to a diverse range of digital works. Yet the stewardship of these assets can prove challenging, especially for institutions navigating complex organizational structures, limited resources, and the interests of multiple stakeholders. This session will present parallel case studies of how two different institutions—a fine arts and design college and a museum—are using ethical practices to identify access needs and gather consensus on preservation-related policies, while also demonstrating the necessity of engaging in democratic conversations in order to preserve and provide access to their content in an ethical manner.

Deploying Review on Demand to Balance Privacy and Access

Christina Fitzpatrick, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum

How can archivists provide access to large quantities of records that contain private information about thousands of individual citizens? The Kennedy Library has instituted a "review on demand" workflow that seeks to maximize access to such records while also respecting personal privacy and statutory restrictions. Newly applied to bulk constituent case files in the Senate papers of John F. Kennedy and Edward M. Kennedy, the process enables researchers for the first time to identify and request access to specific files. Archivists then screen the materials prior to or during the researcher's visit, and open the files to the public. This process will be described, and the impact of this policy in terms of collection use and staff time will also be discussed.