



Archives in Context

Season 7 Episode 1: Archivists Connect at ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2022

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SPEAKERS

Anna Trammell, Chris Burns, Speakers 1-16

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TRANSCRIPT

Chris Burns 00:28

Welcome to this episode of the Archives In Context podcast. My name is Chris Burns, and I'm here with my co-host Anna Trammell.

Anna Trammell 00:35

This episode takes a look back at SAA's first ever hybrid conference, which took place in August 2022 in Boston, Massachusetts. Archives In Context asked attendees both in person and online about their pandemic experiences and what they were looking forward to as we adjust to a new normal. From embarking on a career, to building their very own greenhouse, attendees shared it all, except perhaps the actual number of naps they took while at home. Listen for pandemic silver linings, reflections on at-home versus in-person work, and favorite moments from the 2022 Annual Meeting.

Chris Burns 01:15

Our first question for conference attendees was: how does it feel being at SAA's Annual Meeting?

Speaker 1 01:21

I'm really happy about it. I didn't know how much I missed the in-person event until I got here, and it's-it's a little bit about the sessions, it's a little bit about the education, a little bit about that, but it really is truly bumping into people, people who I've known for a long time, and catching up with, and also people who I've never met before face to face. I remarked to somebody today that I didn't realize how much I recognize people based on their height until I bumped into somebody and couldn't recognize them with the mask or anything, and they were way taller than what I imagined based on the Zoom call. It's like, 'Oh, you are. Oh, I see. Yeah.' And I didn't

realize that it was height. It was like, oh, I figured this person was you know, 5'10" and they're 6'3". So um, yeah, it was- it's been fun to like, notice humanity in action here at SAA.

Speaker 2 02:17

It is really exciting and kind of surreal. I feel very lucky that it's in the city that I now live in. But it's been really awesome seeing colleagues from the Pacific Northwest, where I used to live and work, in person, people that I haven't seen in years. Yeah, it's exciting, and yeah, just still kind of like, Whoa!

Speaker 3 02:42

Really, really glad to be back in person. It's great to see both- see people I haven't seen long time and also have the opportunity to have more of a serendipitous experience with panels- of like going to ones that I wouldn't watch if they were on webinars and finding out that they're amazing, like the hip-hop panel, and the acquisitions one, just to shout out to.

Speaker 4 03:06

It's been really lovely. I just had a wonderful lunch with some old friends and some old colleagues which, even though we've been seeing each other on social media and virtually, I got to give them a hug today so.

Speaker 5 03:15

It's really wonderful to be back in person. I am all "Zoom"ed out. It was really great at the beginning to have some of these things available online but did a lot of Zoom over the last two-and-a-half years so, it's good to be back here.

Speaker 6 03:28

It's really great to be around other archivists who are passionate and excited to be in the field, and looking to the future of the profession.

Speaker 7 03:38

It's so wonderful to see friends and longtime friends and meet new people. It's been really great.

Speaker 8 03:46

Yeah it feels really great. I actually had a poster presentation, so it was really exciting for me to get to talk about my graduate capstone project. And I really missed meeting other people. I haven't really gotten to do that much in the past two or so years, however long it's been. So I really had some great conversations with people and I think that's my favorite part of this whole thing.

Speaker 9 04:04

Well, it's just great. I did it two years virtually, which to be candid I didn't care for, and I'm liking in-person. I've seen some people that haven't seen in a while, and I've gotten some swag. And yeah, it's just nice sort of being alive in a real space and looking at- looking at real people.

Speaker 10 04:31

It's really great being back in person. I feel like there's definitely some connections to be made and conversations to be had that is really difficult to do over Zoom. It's also just really nice to hear about you know talk about people's experiences in person and those connections you make just walking across the hallway, or like while you're waiting for the sessions to start.

Speaker 11 04:56

It feels like a return to a normalcy that I never experienced, because I started my archival education in fall of 2020 at the height of the pandemic, and I was virtual the previous year. So being here in person, it feels like an affirming experience that it feels- it feels like I'm finally a part of this field and that- and that my participation- my participation isn't on pause anymore due to circumstances that I can't control.

Speaker 12 05:25

It's great to be back here with all your friends. I mean, it's the first, no, second- second conference I've been to in person in three years, and it's a lot different than the virtual world, which I try hard to, as an older person, try hard to really get into the Zoom- Zoom world, but it's just hard to do.

Anna Trammell 05:42

What's been your favorite presentation from the conference? And are there ideas you want to bring back to your work?

Speaker 1 05:49

You know, it wasn't a presentation. My favorite thing so far is that I had a very in-depth conversation with a colleague who I've never met before, never talked to before, and we had this in-depth side conversation. It took about an hour and it was a presentation. What I learned was incredible, super useful; a lot about the operations of another institution that I've never worked in and learning about their operations, there were things that I could take with me, not only to my own workplace, but SAA too there's a lot that I picked up. And so it wasn't a formal presentation, I said it should be I said, this needs to be out there, I learned so much from this interaction. And that's, that is so far, my favorite thing. I really wish that it could have been a presentation because the information was incredible, and it was somebody who I probably should have talked to years ago, and I just never had the chance, and that serendipity yesterday was really a nice thing.

Speaker 2 06:46

Yeah, I really, really liked the Acquisitions in a New Age session that I went to yesterday, late afternoon, just thinking about being more thoughtful collectors, curators, ensuring that we can actually be good stewards of the materials that we have. And the institution I work for- our archives department is very new, and we are- there's a lot that we don't know about the collections that were brought in before our department was created. And so we've really got a good example of like what happens when you- when things aren't collected responsibly. And, so kind of putting things in place as we move forward that is truly being thoughtful and strategic, and also doing some reappraisal and decommissioning and not being scared of that as we kind of evaluate and assess the- the collections that we have.

Speaker 3 07:36

Well, I already mentioned two of the really good ones; acquisitions one, hip hop one. The hip hop one is not, sadly, relevant to my current work. The acquisition one was really good, even though I don't do a lot of acquisitions, because it just brought up a lot of issues about over-collecting and importance of reappraisal and the accessioning and stuff like that. So, like, every SAA, I feel like I'm kind of a little bit rejuvenated, of like new ideas and stuff. So yeah.

Speaker 4 08:02

I'm really excited to see what people have been doing for the last two years precisely because of the whole, you know, archivists only deal with boxes and have to count things and look at paper and make, you know, folders and such. I would love to see how the pandemic has influenced our work and how we have articulated our work and you know, it's gonna be really cool to hear other people complain about Zoom that way it won't make me think I'm just a lone whiner. Get it? Lone ranger, lone whiner. But yeah, I'm really excited for that. I'm also really excited to see more and more conversations about burnout, and agency, and power, and as a worker. So, bring it on, very excited for that.

Speaker 5 08:44

I've really enjoyed everything I've seen. I think Courtney Chartier's presidential address was really appropriate for the moment. Just her call for us to give ourselves some grace was really well received.

Speaker 6 08:59

I really enjoyed the community web archiving discussion.

Speaker 13 09:06

They all look very interesting, so I'm just hoping to sort of drift around and just catch all sorts of different stuff.

Speaker 8 09:12

I really enjoyed the keynote. I thought it was really important, especially for students and new professionals, because, you know, there's this sort of grind culture on right now, and we always feel the need to "do all the things" is the phrase that kept coming up, and I especially feel that way. So I think going back, I'll definitely have that in mind when I'm, you know, I see that I'm overworking myself, I'll try to remember everything that I learned today.

Speaker 9 09:35

The session on Japanese American incarceration records I thought was very interesting and very clearly presented. I think in general, it's just nice to hear sort of everyone's sort of sharing the same issues, and it's nice to hear people sort of vocalize that. But, it's also nice to hear kind of different ways that you can work collaboratively if you're at a bigger institution and draw on people who might have some more technical knowledge in terms of working with- with records and other ways.

Speaker 10 10:14

Oh my goodness there's been many. I will say the one about disaster recovery, although it was a session on Zoom, we also deal with some environmental hazards, and I thought it was very relevant to now since it dealt with climate change. So I definitely want to revisit my notes and think about ways we can improve our preparedness and at the medical center archives.

Speaker 11 10:41

Oh, there have been so many great presentations so far. I wish I could have- I could have done every panel at every time. One that I particularly liked was- it was the one that was earlier today on Friday, the second day of the conference, that was- that was all about the qualitative and quantitative research methods in archives, because I feel like that that touched a lot on... I feel like that panel discussion touched a lot- touched a lot on- on the different kinds of responsibilities that we as archivists have towards when it comes to collecting data; something that is becoming increasingly more important to, you know, to justify and expand upon our activities. But, it's something that we haven't traditionally done as archivists. And there's a lot of questions on how to navigate that. I've also been very interested in this with my own recent research. And so it was- it was interesting to be able to hear all these different presentations within that panel about: how do how do we assess and measure things in archives and get data to- to help us decide where to push things next? I think it's I think it's particularly useful for for user- focused programs as well.

Speaker 12 11:46

The plenary was really fantastic. I think Courtney's message to people working in a tough time, is- it's really universal. I mean, it's not just archivists, although it was delivered for archivists. I mean, this is a good message for anybody doing work or anybody that, you know, anybody doing work in groups or anybody doing work individually. This is a fantastic match for folks to to fix the way that they live in the world.

Chris Burns 12:08

We also received some responses via email and Twitter from conference participants, both remote and in person.

Anna Trammell 12:16

Katie Burns, an MLIS student at San Jose State University, shared "I attended SAA for the first time this year. It was very cool to connect with other archivists, and I was pleasantly surprised at how much I felt part of the conference even when calling in from home. Overall, I found the message of work-life balance to be very interesting and informative as someone hoping to enter the profession. I was surprised to hear about how some archivists were asked to do so much extra work that they couldn't fit into their work hours when they first entered the field during Session 201: Labor is Not Free: Examining Volunteer Labor, Equity, and Business Models of Professional Service. I hope that being knowledgeable about this trend will be helpful to set expectations up front with a future employer."

Chris Burns 13:06

Erin Castillo wrote in with her written impressions of attending SAA in person. "I enjoyed the entire format of the conference. It was most rewarding to have sessions presented as panels so that we could hear different

perspectives on the same topic. The host committee did a tremendous job providing tips and tricks about Boston beforehand, and the organization of the information was exemplary. I hope other associations learned from their work. By far my favorite aspect of the in-person component was having the chance to visit repositories. From a student's perspective, with little experience working in archives, the tours were invaluable to seeing how organizations like the Mass. Historical Society and Boston Public Library use and preserve their archival materials. Bravo to all."

Anna Trammell 13:55

And on Twitter, Puns & Archives Inc. noted, "Being laid off during the pandemic was ironically helpful. I was an online grad student halfway through my MLIS at the time. The extra time at home allowed me to take an extra class per semester and focus solely on completing coursework and reading material. The keynote address by Katrina Spencer and Jamillah Gabriel was inspiring, resourceful, and thought provoking. Took a lot of their thoughts back home."

Chris Burns 14:26

In addition to questions about the conference, we also asked some pandemic related questions such as: what pandemic hobbies did you dive into?

Speaker 1 14:35

You know, I started taking- I live in a rural area at Central Michigan University, and so I started taking advantage of the walks in the woods that were nearby me, and I learned way more about birds than I thought I would know. And it's not really a hobby as much as I think it's skills that every human should have to know like, the difference between a Cedar Waxwing and, you know, something else, and so I developed that knowledge. But, I just kept doing what I was doing and maybe with a little more, you know, the projects that never got fixed around the house now got fixed and- and the, yeah, things like that. So, no real hobbies, but maybe living a little bit more in the moment and taking care of what I had instead of saying, 'Well, now it's this weekend, I can go to Detroit, and this weekend I can go to Grand Rapids, and maybe in a month I go to Chicago,' it was, 'I can't go anywhere on the weekend. Well, let's fix that thing that's always been needed fixing. Let's make sure the garden actually has tomatoes that I can eat instead of plants that die.'

Speaker 2 15:36

I did, I actually got really into embroidery. Right before the pandemic hit in February of 2020, I took an intro to embroidery class and had no idea like how grateful I would be for having signed up for that, because I loved it, and I've made a lot of wall hangings. And now I'm starting to embroider clothes. And it's really like opened up a creative outlet for me that I didn't have before.

Speaker 3 16:03

I think I just spent more time on the same hobbies and- and also, like went to bed really early.

Speaker 4 16:14

So I tried to bake bread, but I set my apartment on fire. So instead, I enrolled in an MBA program and I've been learning about accounting.

Speaker 5 16:22

I do have a sourdough starter that I got from my brother in the first week of the pandemic that is still alive, so I'm pretty proud of that. And I don't bake so much in the summer, but in the winter it comes out once a week.

Speaker 14 16:33

This kind of is my pandemic hobby because I realized while- during the pandemic that my current job- I was- I used to be a journalist, and then I realized that that really wasn't for me, and I started looking into other areas that I could pursue other avenues, and then I came up with the idea of 'oh, I might want to be an archivist.' So, it was really during the pandemic that my studies started. So I'm like a Master of Library Information Sciences student with an archival specialization, but that whole idea came about during the pandemic. So I guess this is kind of classified as my pandemic hobbies. Aside from that, from the more academic I like, probably like video gaming and stuff like that, yeah.

Speaker 7 17:19

I extended my crochet habit. So I've crocheted things for like the NDRFA Silent Auction, so there's a piece over there, and I'm contributing two crocheted items to the MARAC 50th Anniversary Silent Auction, so that there was more time to do that.

Speaker 8 17:41

Yeah, I started crocheting, and then I got really busy and abandoned it. But hopefully I will go back to it one day, we'll see.

Anna Trammell 17:48

Are you going to crochet at the annual meeting? I see a lot of people knitting.

Speaker 8 17:51

I did see that. I didn't bring my yarn or my hooks, but I should have. That would have been a good idea.

Speaker 9 17:55

I tried doing the sourdough thing for a little while, and I gave up on that. It didn't really last. Yeah, I would say otherwise my hobby was just sort of stressing out and reading the news.

Speaker 10 18:08

I started beading and making beaded jewelry. Definitely tried my hand in baking. Some more successful than others. A lot of cooking as well.

Speaker 11 18:20

Um, it was more like trying to not-not- trying to keep that work-life balance and trying and trying and trying to keep exploring the hobbies I already had and not and to keep up with those for my mental health as a musician. I kept using music as a crutch to remind me who I was at a time when the pandemic gave us all a bit of an identity crisis.

Anna Trammell 18:42

So no new basket weaving skills?

Speaker 11 18:44

Nothing of that sort, but I did- but I will say- I will say that I kind of I did graduate I did graduate college and decided decided to become an archivist during the pandemic. So that's something.

Speaker 12 18:57

I just expanded on hobbies I already have. I can a lot. I have ten bees. I have a huge garden in the yard. I did build a greenhouse. I built a greenhouse early in the pandemic from one of the online kits and that was really helpful for my gardening stuff. But yeah, mostly just have more time to do stuff that you could anyway.

Anna Trammell 19:17

Who became your new office best friend while working from home?

Speaker 1 19:22

So my office best friend during the pandemic was my regular old best friend because I was at home with my wife. And so, that was my new office best friend. But where I was at, because we had a real low-density population and a minimal risk compared to so many other places, a lot of us got back in the office really early and, we could, you know, they wanted de-densifying but for digital archives, a lot of my work- if I had to run it through the VPN through my house, it really slowed me down and bogged me down. So, I was better off going into work. So, my office best friend on many days was myself because nobody was in the office with me in June of 2020, or August of 2020. I had Fridays all to myself, and I loved it. I got so much done.

Speaker 3 20:16

I certainly like- I knew a lot- I learned a lot about actually the people who are time working for me, because we just like had a had like a social hour in order to sort of stay sane, and stuff- questions I would certainly as their boss not have asked them, but they wanted to talk about just their personal lives. Sort of interesting,

Speaker 6 20:36

The plants that my husband started to collect.

Speaker 2 20:40

Oh well my dog I adopted a couple of years prior to the pandemic, but it was really, really nice, just being able to like, be in a meeting, but also have my dog on my lap, or like give a conference presentation and my dog's there with me. And so, that's been a silver lining too for sure.

Speaker 4 21:00

Yes. Well, my niece, who's seven and has been living with me for about two-and-a-half years with her mother. And also my cat Pedro, who is named Pedro Martinez, well Meow-tinez if you know your Red Sox, and he does not do Zoom well.

Speaker 5 21:17

During the pandemic, I have two little kids, and so they would occasionally walk across the background, and also two cats, and they would occasionally come in and walk in the foreground, and just kind of plop down and say hi to everybody; inevitably, when there was a lot of people on the Zoom.

Speaker 7 21:34

Oh, I- I met a lot of cats online part mostly because I teach a graduate course every fall, and we were "Zoom"ing and the cats would wander by, and some significant others, and but, yeah, nothing- no long term relationships.

Speaker 10 21:52

I guess my husband, he's the only person there. And, a lot of new acquisitions in terms of plants. Oh, I have a really cute money tree that we acquired recently.

Speaker 11 22:04

Well, I kind of bounced between a couple different workplaces. But as a new archival professional, I've been blessed to really have some fantastic supervisors who have been there for me over- the over the course of my education. Sheridan Sales at Seton Hall, Andrea Kutsenkow at AFS Intercultural Programs, William Clements at Princeton University rather recently. I did get- I did get coffee a lot with the records manager at Princeton, Chris Cole, so shout out to him.

Speaker 15 22:34

During the shutdown I ended up going back to my parents' house in New Hampshire, and their cat became my office best friend. She would get up with me early in the morning and sit with me while I read. And then throughout the day she would come in and like peek around my laptop to see if I was doing work, just making sure to keep me on task. So it was very nice to have a office work buddy.

Speaker 16 23:02

Over the pandemic I adopted two parakeets. Those have been my office friends. I have a small apartment, a cat needs a little bit more mischief room, but a bird just yells at you, which is great on Zoom calls. Highly recommend.

Anna Trammell 23:19

What are their names?

Speaker 16 23:21

Thelma and Louise.

Chris Burns 23:27

When you were working from home, did you miss the office?

Speaker 3 23:30

I totally did. I was- and I ended up being home a lot more because I didn't have a good reason to go in the office because I was, at the time, supervising people, and I could just tell them what to do from a distance. And so, it was really great to be back and actually see people again. So I very much enjoyed it. And also, I'm fortunate if I can walk to work. So like that's most of my exercise. So if I'm not walking to work, I'm not getting all that exercise.

Speaker 4 23:57

Yes and no. I like being at home because I played a lot of Animal Crossing and I had free range to my refrigerator. However, I'm a person with ADHD. I have no shame in admitting it. I'm a person who really requires a lot of structure in my workplace, so I was happy to be back at my work. That's me, personally. I appreciate the hybrid model that's really coming out. I think that would be amazing, especially since I live here in Boston and driving's terrible. But yeah, it's nice to be back in the office. I'm really happy for those of you who have hybrid solutions.

Speaker 5 24:32

I was happy to get back into the office. I didn't like having to ride the subway before vaccines, but we were open so we did. But I really I like- I like my place of work. I like seeing my colleagues in person, and I like working with the physical materials as well. So once we were open again, I was glad to be back.

Speaker 7 24:50

I did miss the office. I missed the people. I missed contact with the stuff. It was just also frustrating because I felt like I was much less efficient, even with a lot of tech, and I had adequate technology and connections and stuff. But yeah, I missed being there. Plus, we had just moved into a brand new building in August of 2019, and we're in it for seven months, and it's gorgeous. It has all this light and space. So it was really bizarre to- to have a new home and then be exiled from it.

Speaker 8 25:31

Um, yeah, I wasn't able to get in-person work for a really long time, so I really loved being in the archive and getting to handle materials, and all of that. So I definitely didn't miss, or I guess, I can't miss something I never had. I really enjoyed being in an archive, it was great. Being around real people, I guess, talking to people.

Speaker 9 25:51

Yeah, I did miss working in person. Yeah, I was sort of working by myself at this historical society for a little while. And then I started working on this big kind of collaborative project where there's a lot of people all crammed together in a space, which felt very strange after being very far away from everyone for a while, but it also felt very nice to be like, doing stuff with other people and having to like, move around them, actually.

Speaker 10 26:22

I did. I actually, like I don't know, if I'm the majority, but I like being on site. I actually go on site almost every day by choice. I do have the option to work from home like once or twice a week, but I really do being- like being on

site close to collection. And personally, I did have a hard time concentrating when I was working from home full time, so I think I got to know myself better that way too.

Speaker 11 26:44

I wasn't really in the office to begin with, and the pandemic has been an odd time of development for myself, where I am in my life. In spring of 2020, when the pandemic started, I was still an undergraduate. I started at NYU in fall of 2020, and I'm still in the-and still in the program at this point. And so, my first- my- all my archival experience in the office, so to speak, has been during a pandemic. And so, I really have nothing else to compare it to. And honestly, the feeling in the office and being able to be in the office. so to speak, it feels like a bit of a privilege to me, having never- having never really been there to begin with. And that might- that might be a little bit different for that and some people who are really, who are talking more about, you know, having worked from home benefits and remote flexibility, but I personally just had nothing else to even compare it to. So I can't. So for me going into the office was- was starting a career. So I didn't mind it. So I probably minded it less than other other people in the field.

Speaker 12 27:44

I worked from day one in the office every day for the entire pandemic. And I didn't like it very much doing that either because I was in a large building. And with one employee that I saw regularly, my coworker, but we've worked in separate spaces, because you know, early in the pandemic, and maybe three or four other people in the whole building. And for an extroverted person, I think it's almost worse to do that. It's hard to do either way. I am totally would be a horrible working home person anyway, I would, you know, take naps and not get my work done and just you know, kind of 'I'll get it done in the last two hours of the day, and then just blow it off.' And I mean, I know that about myself, so I don't think that I would have been a good work at home person anyway. But I didn't, didn't like it, but I didn't expect it to be so lonely in the office as well. And once- once the second wave had passed, and people started to come back regularly to the office it's been better, you know, you see people on a regular basis and can interact and all that.

Anna Trammell 28:43

Now that you're working at the office again, do you miss working from home?

Speaker 6 28:48

Absolutely.

Anna Trammell 28:51

What do you miss about it?

Speaker 6 28:53

Not commuting. Being able to work in my pajamas. Not having to plan my lunches all the time. Not spending money on lunches all the time. And being with my partner more.

Speaker 2 29:07

It's interesting. So I was working at the University of Washington in Seattle at the time through the most of the pandemic, and the best thing was having an office. Well, my living room became my office and there were windows. So, many of us who work in archives work in windowless spaces, and that was a true luxury. I took tons of walks. I really got to know my neighborhood and my neighbors in ways that I hadn't before. And, you know, I liked working remotely a lot more than I ever thought that I would, although I wouldn't want to do it all the time. And I mean, with being a processing archivist, there's only so much that you can do remotely. But yeah, yeah, I'm glad BPL will be able to work from home once a week and it's nice and my dog is very happy about that.

Chris Burns 30:01

Be honest, how many naps did you take during the day when working from home?

Speaker 3 30:05

Some days I just went to bed so early that it was during the work day. You know, then I'd wake up early. Not really a napper. But yeah, it was definitely like 'ah 2 a.m. I'm gonna do two hours of work, and then I'm not going to do those after hours of work later.' I have no idea how many hours I was working during that time, probably too many.

Speaker 2 30:26

Oh, my God. Naps are like the two o'clock siesta. And like the friends do it. It's cultured but-

Speaker 4 30:33

I would say two per week.

Speaker 6 30:37

No, I did my best to try to not take more than like two naps a week. I noticed early on in the pandemic, I got really wild when we hadn't set up work from home yet, and I napped so much, and it just really messed me up. So I tried to keep it under control as best I could. Getting out in some sunlight every day helped.

Speaker 8 30:59

Probably a couple. I mean, I definitely experienced Zoom fatigue because there were so many webinars and online things I wanted to go to everything, but at some point, it just got exhausting.

Speaker 17 31:11

I'm not a napper.

Speaker 9 31:12

During the day while at home, I took a nap- so whenever I could, for my breaks. I mean, it was- I mean going into archives, or going into internships in grad school during the pandemic, it was a very kind of disorienting time and everything was kind of asynchronous. So it was kind of there was a lot of focus I think on being able to be responsible for managing your own time. And I mean taking appropriate naps as- as part of being able to work

efficiently and get the work done. So for me, it was more like just a lot of little breaks throughout the day were what made it work for me.

Anna Trammell 31:46

We all know the pandemic was really challenging, any glass half full lessons we can take away from it?

Speaker 1 31:52

I gained a lot of knowledge. I gained a lot of knowledge because I had the time to absorb knowledge, it wasn't just moving quick and going fast, I could actually maybe interact with it. So that bird thing I mentioned about, you know, that- that was personal knowledge that is good, but work knowledge to like, I gained newer work knowledge because I had to slow down and do it. Or working with remote research, I had to dig into the work for them, so I learned their topic, more than just facilitating their topic, and hearing from them what they were doing, I had to really dig in. So those were a couple of things. Another glass half full thing was my institution has a speaker series, and we took it online and virtual, and we made it accessible. And I could advocate for a couple of things that I want to change, like my university won't use YouTube, there's one official YouTube channel, and I could explain why the archives was being tagged on YouTube, because of various videos that feature us and how we needed a YouTube account so we could truly accept those tags. And then it allowed us to put our speaker series that was virtually recorded online, and now it persists. So even though our speaker series isn't being live streamed this coming fall, we're still going to record videos, and we're still gonna put them online so that they can get accessible. And when I show the people the stats, like oh, this has had several 1000 hits of people, and we don't advertise it, it just happens that people want this information, and we are responsible for it. And there's a nice tag at the beginning of it, a nice frame that mentions who we are and that we produce this. That has become a glass half full thing, that- that it's okay to do that type of advocacy. It's okay to maybe stretch beyond the bounds of what you can't because this isn't per channel to, 'oh, we see why this is a valuable channel.'

Speaker 2 33:42

Yeah, I think definitely the kind of learning, expanding our idea of what we can do remotely as- as archivists and kind of opening up that avenue to be able to do some- continue doing some of that work from home. There's more that we can do effectively than I think I could conceive of before the pandemic hit. And you know, I think in terms of like students, new professionals who who are trying to get exposure to the field, who maybe live in rural places where there aren't repositories close by, there could be some remote opportunities that these folks can get in on and be doing the work. So I think that there's a lot that- that we can take and continue into the future even as we come back in person and work with our collections and all of that.

Speaker 3 34:37

I think that people and places are a lot more resilient than they think, and the way in which people adapted and like, help each other and such, was in many ways really impressive. And particularly places where they've had really good sort of management leadership, the sort of like, accepting that, like, 'do what we can, that's all we're going to ask people to do' was really important.

Speaker 4 35:12

I think one of the things that was really cool, and what we were talking about at lunch, is that we were able to show that a lot of the work that we do doesn't involve us having to physically have our hands on a box; that a lot of the work we had to do really is about description and creating content. And we really show that we're, you know, conversing in production lexicon, and we were able to engage in value-added conversations. And for people who are typecast as old things that was really cool, so I have a lot of hope for the future.

Speaker 5 35:41

I really enjoy the conference being with the later start times. I think that's due to us being hybrid. And for our West Coast colleagues- but I really liked that the sessions are starting a little bit later, and we have some time in the mornings here on site.

Speaker 6 35:55

I would say it's not necessarily a glass half full thing, but it reiterated the importance of human connections and how much it does affect your mental and physical health to be part of a community and be able to see and interact with other people in which- who you connect with.

Speaker 7 36:17

Well, I think we've become much more flexible. And I know, it gave us real time to sort of step back and reconsider priorities. It also gave us time to really advance some projects that we hadn't necessarily been able to dedicate time to. So we really- we did a total overhaul of our Disaster Response Plan, for example, which was really good. And then we're also prepping a lot of our finding aids to go into ArchivesSpace, so we- that was a really good virtual project, so. And I think it made us more creative in how we do instruction around primary sources. So yeah, there are a lot of good things that came out of it.

Speaker 8 37:07

Yeah, for me specifically, as a new professional and student, I was able to get a lot of experience doing things that I don't think I would have gotten to otherwise. So my remote internship with the American Song Archives would probably not have happened for not the pandemic, and I was able to get a lot of experience with ArchivesSpace, and it's actually what I did my poster presentation on- my project there. So that's sort of my glass half full.

Speaker 9 37:33

I was gonna say everyone chilled out, but that's definitely not true. I think people sort of took a step back a little bit, but I don't know if that's gonna last. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know if there's that much that's really that great about it.

Anna Trammell 37:49

So that was more of a glass half empty answer?

Speaker 9 37:52

Yeah.

Speaker 10 37:54

Oh, good question. I think there is better work-life balance in a lot of cases and flexibility. I think, and not always, but some people, definitely there's more empathy and understanding of what people are going through- and also ability to better kind of divide your work ,so you kind of identify things you can work from home versus things that are urgent that are needed on site.

Speaker 11 38:21

That's a great question, because- because there's this question about- about- about 'how do we create a better normal moving forward'? And it's a question that's been raised quite a bit at this conference even, as well as last year, when there's a lot of talk about resilience and what that means for archivists and how we conduct ourselves, As far as what we can take from this, I think- I think- I think we're paying a lot more attention to the invisible labor of archivists and- and the work that we put in and our own well being and expectations, and about managing those expectations within our institutions. I think- I think- I think it's awesome. It's also like, been forcing us to see these glaring issues and to enter in terms of our backlogs, because- as well, because it became much more difficult to provide access to archives when everything was based on the information you had digitally- digitally. So I think it's forced us to confront some long-standing problems, and hopefully, we'll be able to address those in more effectively having- having been forced to confront them.

Speaker 12 39:22

Well, I think the pandemic has provided a lot opportunities if we're willing to jump onto them, I think, especially around employment, you know, in the county. I think it's 35-40% of the work- workforce is fully at home and another 20% is doing some sort of hybrid situation; compressed work weeks. I think a lot of things around employment are going to be- are going to change quite a bit based on the pandemic, but I think there's other structural things that we have in our world that the pandemic showed the cracks and then we can continue to crack them and break them. And I think that there's there's possibilities for smashing up patriarchy a little bit, smashing up capitalism a little bit. I think these are things that the pandemic's opened up the door and we should just kick it down.

Chris Burns 40:07

Well, that's it for this special episode of Archives In Context. Thanks to our interviewers: Nicole Milano, Stephanie Luke and Rose Buchanan, and to our conference participants who responded via email and Twitter: Katie Burns, Erin Castillo and Puns & Archives, Inc., and to those of you who took the time to speak with us at SAA in Boston.

Speaker 1 40:28

Okay, my name is Bryan Whitledge. I'm at the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University.

Speaker 2 40:34

My name is Crystal Rogers. I am the one of several archivists at the Boston Public Library here at Boston, Mass.

Speaker 3 40:41

Dan Michelson. Smith College.

Speaker 4 40:43

My name is Elizabeth Carron. I am with Boston College at the Burns library as the Senior Accessioning Archivist.

Speaker 5 40:49

Hi, I'm Kevin Schlottmann. I'm the head of Archives Processing at the Columbia University Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

Speaker 6 40:55

Laura Juliano. Yale Medical Historical Library.

Anna Trammell 40:58

Erica, where do you work?

Speaker 14 41:01

I don't work anywhere right now. I'm a student. I go to Wayne State University, which is in Detroit, but I go online. But I live in Connecticut.

Speaker 16 41:11

My name is Cecilia Frank. I use they/them pronouns. And I work at Phillips Exeter Academy. This is my first time at SAA's annual meeting, and I'm really excited to be here.

Speaker 13 41:22

Hi I'm Evan and I'm a graduate student at the University of Massachusetts Boston in a history masters track and I'm really excited to get into archives and preservation.

Speaker 15 41:32

I'm Ashley and I work at Hagley Museum and Library.

Speaker 7 41:36

Margery Sly. Temple University Libraries Special Collections.

Speaker 8 41:40

Nicole Font. Center for Brooklyn History.

Speaker 9 41:42

I'm Peter Sohmer, and I'm working with The Winthrop Group.

Speaker 11 41:46

Quin DeLaRosa. New York University.

Speaker 10 41:49

Tali Han, and I work at the Medical Center Archives of New York Presbyterian Weill Cornell Medicine in New York City.

Speaker 12 41:55

Yeah. My name's Terry Baxter, and I'm an archivist with Multnomah County Archives in the Oregon Country Fair.

Anna Trammell 42:00

The best thing about SAA's first hybrid conference is that all education sessions, both plenaries and the open forums, were recorded and are available for on-demand viewing. Access content via the conference's Pathable website. And if you missed the ARCHIVES*RECORDS 2022 conference altogether, you can still register to experience it at www2.archivists.org/am2022.

Outro 42:28

You've just listened to an episode of the Archives In Context podcast, the official podcast of the Society of American Archivists. Members of the podcast team include; Rose Buchanan, Chris Burns, Mary Caldera, Abigail Christian, Stephanie Luke, Nicole Milano, Lolita Rowe, Camila Zorilla Tessler, and Anna Trammell. All opinions expressed in this podcast are our own and are not reflective of a particular institution. Be sure to subscribe and listen wherever you get your podcasts or at archivesincontext.archivists.org. And join us again next time.