The Problem

Many of our SAA UIUC Student Chapter members chose to attend the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign’s iSchool MSLIS program planning to undergo an educational “pathway” in Archives and Special Collections, as advertised by the iSchool.

However, the iSchool currently only offers three courses directly addressing archival practice, two of which are not offered regularly. There are few archives faculty actively teaching, and in Fall 2019, our core archives faculty member left the University. The iSchool has yet to fill their position or continue to offer the class they taught on community archives.

We have addressed our concerns with iSchool faculty and administration. In fear that this process will take years to see effective change, our SAA student organization has taken our archival education into our own hands. Through this student group, we are determined to get the most out of our graduate program.

Our Solutions

• **Filling in the gaps:** Hosting programs and workshops centered on contemporary archival challenges, directions, and ideas.
• **Reaching out:** Talking with a variety of archivists throughout the country via webinars, online lectures, and field trips.
• **Gathering resources:** In lieu of classroom access to resources, we’ve found external listservs, Google docs, and grassroots resources for professional development, job help, and staying engaged in contemporary archives trends.
• **Listening to our members:** Each year we ask our members what they are most interested in learning about. We plan our programs and workshops around shared interests.

2019-2020: Workshops

**Rare Book and Manuscript Library Visit**

SAA members took a behind-the-scenes tour of UIUC’s Rare Book and Manuscript Library and learned about proper care and handling of rare materials, while learning about collection highlights.

**Records Management Workshop**

Julie Wagner, Records and Information Services Coordinator at UIUC, led a two-hour workshop on records management. Since the iSchool doesn’t offer a records management course, members benefitted from asking Julie questions about the field and learning how to gain experience.

**Digital Exhibitions Workshop**

Spencer Keralis, Digital Humanities Librarian at UIUC, led an introductory workshop on Omeka specifically geared toward archives students. Members were guided through Omeka’s backend and created practice exhibit pages.

2019-2020: Tours and Talks

**Virtual Panel with National Archives Staff**

Hosted a virtual panel discussion and Q&A with four staff members of the National Archives and Records Administration. We learned about what it’s like to work for a federal agency and gained insight to their job application process.

**Champaign County Historical Archives Tour:**

Visited the archives for a behind-the-scenes tour and learned about volunteer and practicum opportunities focusing on topics such as processing, digital preservation, cataloging, and exhibit curation.

**Chicago Field Trip: Archives Crawl**

At this day-long event, members toured three Chicago repositories—the Chicago Public Library special collections, the Art Institute of Chicago archives, and the DePaul University archives. Members were able to talk with various archivists about their jobs and collections, as well as tour the repositories and see collection highlights.

Current Results:

• Administration is aware that students are disappointed with the Archives and Special Collections pathway, and they are convening a faculty committee to address this.
• There’s been an increase in archives-related courses offered to iSchool students through the Web-based Information Science (WISE) consortium online course sharing platform.
• Our chapter has strengthened ties to archives professionals and provided avenues for members to gain practical experience.

Next Steps:

• **Long-term:** Further vocal advocacy to iSchool administrators and faculty in order to create real change and push for a more developed archives program.
• **Short-term:** For the 2020-2021 school year, we anticipate hosting an email archiving workshop led by Christopher Prom (UIUC).

Tips for other SAA chapters:

• **Survey** members’ interests and consider gaps in curriculum. Plan programs around the gaps.
• **Reach out** to people you don’t know! Use SAA forums/listservs as possible avenues for finding guest speakers or workshops.
• **Virtual events** are always an option and open avenues of possibilities (especially during COVID-19).
• **Be vocal** about concerns with faculty/admin. Find faculty members willing to speak up for you.

Student Chapter Leadership

President: Allison Kilberg; Vice-President: Jessie Knoles; Treasurer: Randi Foeschold; Secretary: Taylor Henning; Publicity Officer: Cassie Ward

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