Meeting the Moment

Projects

Texas Domestic Slave Trade Project

In June, we began our partnership with the Texas Domestic Slave Trade Project (TxDST), a project driven by Rachel Winston, Black Diaspora Archivist at the Benin Collection, and historian Dr. Donna Ramsey Berry (UT Austin Dept. of History, African & African Diaspora Studies).

SAA-Ut chapter members participate as transcribers or transcription reviewers, working with objects from manuscript collections that document and contextualize the movement of enslaved people in Texas.

Zoom Presentation and Q&A session with Dr. Berry: What Is It Like to Use Archives as a Historian?

*Learn about their ongoing research at https://txdst.la.utexas.edu/

Alumni Interview Series

We conducted interviews with alumni from the School of Information in an effort to allow prospective students some of the institutions where graduates of UT Austin now work and to emphasize the importance of involvement with SAA to current School of Information students. Each interview includes insight from the individual regarding memorable courses or internships/experiences; reflections on how involvement with SAA has benefited them personally and professionally, and general advice for aspiring archivists. The interviews have been shared across our social media platforms and on our website.

Conference Scholarships

We held a bake sale in the spring to raise money to cover registration fees for the SAA conference ARCHIVES RECORDS 2020: Creating Our Future Jointly, a joint of the Council of State Archivists and the Society of American Archivists. We raised over $300 and were able to pay for conference registrations for 4 students.

Events

SAA-Ut / TLA Career Panel

SAA-Ut paired with the Texas Library Association UT branch to conduct a career panel for all TLA students regarding the archive and library fields. Panelists discussed their professions and gave advice to students on academic and professional inquiries through questions derived from an SAA-Ut officer acting as a mediator. Feedback for the event:

"Amazone Bogucka, Life Sciences Librarian, UT Libraries
Ashley Adair, Head of Preservation & Digital Stewardship, UT Libraries
Irena Luna, Processing Archivist, The Harry Ransom Center
Jen Grear, Senior Records Management Specialist, ERcot
Emma Whittington, Taxonomy Team Lead, Indeed

ACA Certification Process Presentation

We coordinated with the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) to have Kristy Sommer, Assistant Director of the Library and Head of Archives and Records Management at Austin Seminary, give a presentation to students regarding the benefits of certification, the process, and exam. One voucher was raffled to cover the cost of the examination this August.

Monthly Happy Hours

We host monthly chapter meetings as happy hours on the first Friday of each month. These meetings are used to discuss official business, but also allow members to connect on a social level.

Fall Welcome Potluck

Our faculty advisor, Dr. Ciaran Trace, hosted chapter members at her home for a fall potluck near the end of October to celebrate Archves Month. It was a great way to connect with chapter members and classmates outside of the classroom.

Navigating uncertain times...

Responding to COVID-19

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we could no longer meet in person and our planned service project had to be put on hold. Unfortunately, we were unable to start the projects we had listed for this spring and they have been delayed indefinitely due to COVID-19. However, we successfully pivoted our energies and attention toward virtual meetings and projects, thanks to the collaboration, creativity, and resourcefulness of our members and officers. We had to adapt to the current situation and look for other ways to fulfill the mission of our organization and support our members, including additional remote volunteer opportunities through the Smithsonian and holding virtual workshops. Members have also been collaborating with other student organizations on a Canvas page for incoming students.

This was a valuable lesson in and of itself, as working in the archival profession often calls for quick thinking due to budgetary restrictions, natural disasters, and other unforeseen circumstances that call for quick thinking when best practices aren’t possible.

Anti-Racist Scholarship at the IiSchool

SAA-Ut worked alongside fellow student organizations, ALA/TLA and SAsL, with valuable input from members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee, in crafting and disseminating the IiSchool Statement of Solidarity. In it, we expressed not only our deep sadness at the racially-motivated and anti-Black violence which plagues our country, but acknowledged the opportunity to improve our inclusivity practices within our student group, the IiSchool, and The University of Texas at large. We identified practices that we want to institute and encourage within SAA-Ut, which we can carry forward into our future information management careers. In the IiSchool Statement of Solidarity, SAA-Ut pledged to uphold the following values:

"SAA-Ut will work on projects that highlight and preserve Black history and the history of other communities of color as a corrective action against the historical marginalization or outright exclusion of these stories in the archive (beginning with transcription efforts to this effect this summer and hopefully in person this fall). We will highlight diversity in the archival profession through our interview series and create scholarship opportunities for people of color on our social media and beyond, as well as resources for anti-racist actions we can take in the archival field toward our shared goal of inclusivity. SAA-Ut will support and collaborate with other student organizations in their discussions and actions."

And we intend to honor these commitments to our fellow students. As student leaders, we met with Dean Meyer this July to request that a list of anti-racist actions be taken to improve the IiSchool, including surveys of syllabi to include more diverse voices and perspectives. SAA-Ut continues to collaborate with ALA/TLA and SAsL on town hall, surveys, and petitions as we work to “Meet the Moment.”