

The Archival Spirit

July, 2015

ARCS 

Archivists of Religious
Collections Section, of the
Society of American Archivists

From the Chair

I recently returned from a two week trip to Peru. On this trip, I hiked the Inca Trail, a grueling four day journey that was worth every step. I also witnessed a great mingling of various spiritual traditions—the indigenous population’s reverence for Pachamama and the mountains, Catholicism, and evangelical Christianity. In many cases Catholicism and the older traditions have merged. There has been an upswing in interest in the older traditions, both by many people living in the Andes and by New Age practitioners from the West. I mention these traditions as ARCS also is a merging of many archivists working for a variety of religious traditions—from Catholic dioceses to mainstream Protestant organizations. Some of us work for institutions that are not religious or are nominally religious, but have religious content in their collections.

What is our common bond? Depending on our traditions, we face different problems and serve contrasting populations. I do believe we all share the desire to serve our user populations and our religious traditions as best we can. Many of us are concerned about finances, digital preservation and other traditional archival concerns. As we strive to serve religious communities that may or may not put archives at the forefront, we perhaps find our reason for coming together every year at SAA for ARCS: we must respond to the unique needs of religious archives. We can do that by engaging in dialogue together. I look forward to seeing and talking with everyone at the Section Meeting 2015.

*Anne Thomason, Section Chair
Lake Forest College, Lake Forest, IL*

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SAA Cleveland – August 16th -22nd

Section Social Reception

Friday (21st), late afternoon

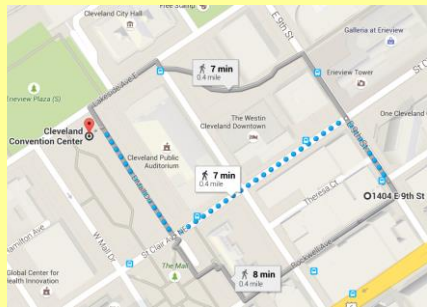
(exact time TBA soon!)

Beverages & light snacks provided

Phil Haas, Host

Catholic Diocese of Cleveland

1404 East 9th Street



{Six minute walk: NE on St. Clair Ave. from Convention Center; right on E 9th; one block down to Cathedral Square Plaza on right.}

SAA Service Projects

There are two opportunities this year to engage with the Cleveland community on a direct, personal level:

- “Shoes for Kids” Program
- Cleveland Animal Protection League

See:

<https://saa2015cle.wordpress.com/service-project/>

Sr. M. Claude Lane Award

Find out who this year’s Lane Award recipient is on

Friday (21st) 6:00-7:00_{pm}

Section Meeting – Friday, August 21st, 1:00 – 3:00_{pm}

1. Welcome and call to order – Anne Thomason
2. Approval of minutes from 2014 – Paul Daniels
3. SAA Council Liaison update – Lisa Mangiafico
4. Announcements – Anne Thomason
5. Election results and Introduction of new officers – Colleen McFarland-Rademaker
6. Vice Chair report – Wes Wilson
7. Chair report – Anne Thomason
8. **Section Program (50-60 minutes)**

“Data-driven Decision Making at L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Brigham Young University”

Ryan K. Lee, Presenter

Abstract

The concept of patron-driven digitization is not new to archives and special collections. However, strategies for making data-driven, objective decisions for digitization based on patron usage data have been slow to emerge from the archival profession. Precisely what data to collect and how to analyze it are questions the profession continues to battle with, and options for data sources are ever increasing. Some institutions focus primarily on circulation statistics, which may or may not accurately reflect similar use by an online audience, where the digitized content resides. Studies of web analytics, including Google Analytics, have emerged in recent literature (Prom, 2011; Szajewski, 2013; Custer, 2013), but have either focused on analysis of statistics to merely improve website inter-faces, or on using one or two data points to aid in determining potential candidates for digitization. Many suggest the importance of coupling web analytics with circulation statistics, but a study combining these divergent data sets, and systematically analyzing and packaging this data in a way that can be interpreted and used by curators, has yet to be published. BYU’s L. Tom Perry Special Collections has proposed just such a study to create a process of gathering, analyzing and packaging web analytical data from its finding aids website, coupled with circulation and reading room statistical reports, to aid curators in prioritizing and selecting collections to be digitized. This is just one step hopefully toward an applicable model for other institutions to follow in making objective, data-driven decisions for digitizing their collections. Possible questions for discussion include:

- How are collections selected for digitization at your repository?
- What data is collected by your archives?
- How could this data be used to make decisions about what to digitize?
- What role do researchers play in selecting collections for digitization?

9. Adjournment

From the Members

New Sisters of St. Joseph (CSJ) Research Center

The Martha Smith, CSJ, Ph.D. Archives & Research Center at Avila University was officially named and opened to the public in August 2014, following a major renovation of the Hooley-Bundschu Library into a modern, state of the art learning commons. The space designed for the Archives includes a research/reading room, a processing workroom and ample onsite, climate controlled, closed stack storage for archival collections. Outside its entry is the CSJ Heritage Wall exhibit that illustrates the history of the Sisters of St. Joseph from their foundation in France in 1650 to their present-day worldwide presence. The Archives has three primary collecting areas:

Women Religious Special Collections

Begun in the fall of 1997, these collections are unique as the first college/university Special Collection focused entirely on the experience of Catholic sisters and nuns. Intended as a repository for out-of-print and contemporary books, pamphlets, photographs, ephemera and other materials by, for and about American sisters, the Women Religious Special Collections were created to provide researchers with access to these materials, which relate to the communities and activities of sisters and nuns in the United States.

CSJ Heritage Center Archives

Contains the records of the U.S. Federation of the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The Federation is an association of congregations of women religious who acknowledge Saint Joseph as their patron, Father Medaille as their founder, and share a common tradition and a unique spirit as their heritage. The Federation records describe the structure of the organization by giving details of its origin in 1966, as well as its administrative features, including the officers, official meetings and committee structures and activities.

Avila University Archives

Within this collection you will find a wide variety of primary source material that relates to all aspects of the history of Avila University, from its foundation in 1916 to the present day. These materials include official records, university publications, photographs, ephemera, memorabilia, as well as materials related to alumni, former faculty, staff and administrators.

For more information about the Martha Smith CSJ, Ph.D. Archives & Research Center, please visit our new website at

<https://www.avila.edu/archives/index.asp>

*Adonna Thompson, Archivist
Kansas City, MO*

Article on the Use of Archives by Catholic Historians

Jillian Slater and Colleen Hoelscher of the University of Dayton have released results of their 2013 study, *Use of Archives by Catholic Historians, 2010-2012: A Citation Study*.

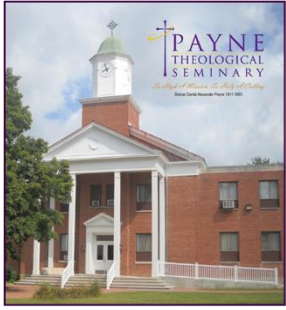
The findings shed light on the use of archival resources in recent Catholic history scholar-ship. Using data from 5,995 citations collected during the study, the authors discuss practical approaches to archival description, collection development, and partnerships among religious archives.

The article was published in the Winter 2014 volume of *Archival Issues* and can be downloaded at:

http://ecommons.udayton.edu/imri_faculty_publications/4/

*Jillian Slater
Dayton, OH*





As the oldest freestanding African-American seminary in the world, having been mandated in 1891 by its sponsor, the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AMEC), Payne Theological Seminary currently serves as one of the denomination's primary archival centers. Located in the heart of the historic Native-American Tawawa territory in Greene County, Ohio. Payne is neighbor to two historic African-American universities -- Wilberforce and Central State. The Wilberforce University Board of Trustees, at its June 1890 session, voted and approved the organization of a seminary to be named on behalf of Bishop Daniel Alexander

Payne, who had interested the AMEC in a program of higher learning. The seminary was incorporated in 1894 as an independent institution "for the purpose of promoting education, religion, and morality by the education of persons for the Christian ministry and missionaries for the redemption of Africa and other foreign lands."

Today, the archives at Payne's Bishop Reverdy C. Ransom Memorial Library hold more than 15,000 items of which 3,600 have been classified as rare, endangered, or fragile. The full collection of Ransom's papers and writings are held there. Ransom was a civil rights leader, editor and 48th bishop of the AMEC. Additionally, the Library hosts an extensive collection on Bishop Payne, including *The Pleasures and Miscellaneous Poems* (Baltimore: Sherwood and Co. 1850).

Most materials focus on African-American culture and religion and tell a great deal about the history of the AME denomination and its traditions. Lastly, Payne's holdings chronicle the leadership of the seminary, its founder and the 16 other deans and presidents that have guided the institution since 1894.

Users can utilize artifacts, letters, photographs, programs, newspaper clippings, books, manuscripts, and other ephemera- ranging from those that document the establishment of the Black Church in America to the physical changes and developments from other AME educational institutions. The collection captures the legacy of AMEC's historical leaders and the events they shepherded that continue to shape denominational polity and philosophy.

Princeton Theological Seminary is pleased and honored to collaborate with Payne to develop another distinctive collection within the Theological Commons: The Payne Theological Seminary and A.M.E. Church Archive. With funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundation, Payne is actively digitizing materials from its historical archives and contributing the digitized versions to the Commons.

This unique digital archive will become publicly accessible at <http://commons.ptsem.edu/payne> on May 21, and coincide with Payne's celebration of the tenure of Dr. Leah Gaskin Fitchue as the institution's 16th president.

This digitization project is the next step in the Library's larger strategic plan to improve and enhance intellectual access to holdings in the archive to those who are or expect to conduct research in African-American literature, culture, and religion. These unique records will have a broader interest among American-Christianity scholars, African-American historians, other Methodist traditions, overseas and local churches, and additional interested scholars of American History.

For more information on the Payne Theological Seminary and A.M.E. Church Digital Archive, contact: smurrain@payne.edu or 937-376-2946 ex 101

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