

Slide 1



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*My normal approach
is useless here.*

A love
worth fighting for:
SNAP, new archivists,
and the archival
profession

Rebecca Goldman
ArchivesNOW
April 27, 2018

"How do I love thee? Let me encode the ways" by Rebecca Goldman
<https://derangementanddescription.wordpress.com/2009/02/13/how-do-i-love-thee-let-me-encode-the-ways>

This talk is going to be hard for me. And maybe for you too. I promise you, if we make it through together, there will be cute animals at the end.

Slide 3



In the last few months, I've probably spent more time crying, like, Van Der Beek-level ugly crying, than I have working on this talk. Also, crying *while* working on this talk. I cannot promise that I will not cry *during* this talk. You have no idea how many times I wanted to email Angel and Courtney and bail on this talk.

I say this not to lower your expectations, because I still worked really hard on this talk, and it's probably going to be awesome. Or to discourage you from offering criticism when I'm all done, which you totally should do, I can take it.

I say this to let you know that showing up this morning, wearing my fancy keynote dress, showered, hair brushed, having eaten breakfast this morning--each of those things was a small victory for me. Maybe they were for you, too. Or maybe you feel like you're the only one struggling while the rest of us have our lives together. You aren't, and we don't.

Slide 4



How do you do, fellow new archivists? I need to acknowledge the awkwardness of being your token oldster in a room full of people just getting started in their archives careers. Seven years ago, I helped start SAA's Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable. In between the time that we started discussing a group for new archivists and the time that we actually got one, I left my paraprofessional archives job to run a digital services department in an academic library. No terrible, temporary archives jobs in the middle. So the first chair of SNAP--that's me!--was actually a mid-career librarian, who had enjoyed fairly secure employment throughout her career. And I never felt totally comfortable representing the interests of new archivists when I didn't even really feel like a new archivist. I'm excited to stand up here and embrace that awkwardness again.

Slide 5



I want to thank all of you in the audience, for showing up and paying attention and being an audience. And I want to take a moment to acknowledge all the people who aren't here today. This includes, of course, the people who are back at work keeping our reading rooms open and slaying our processing backlogs, the people who couldn't travel to LA, the people who have other things going on in their real lives or their archives lives.

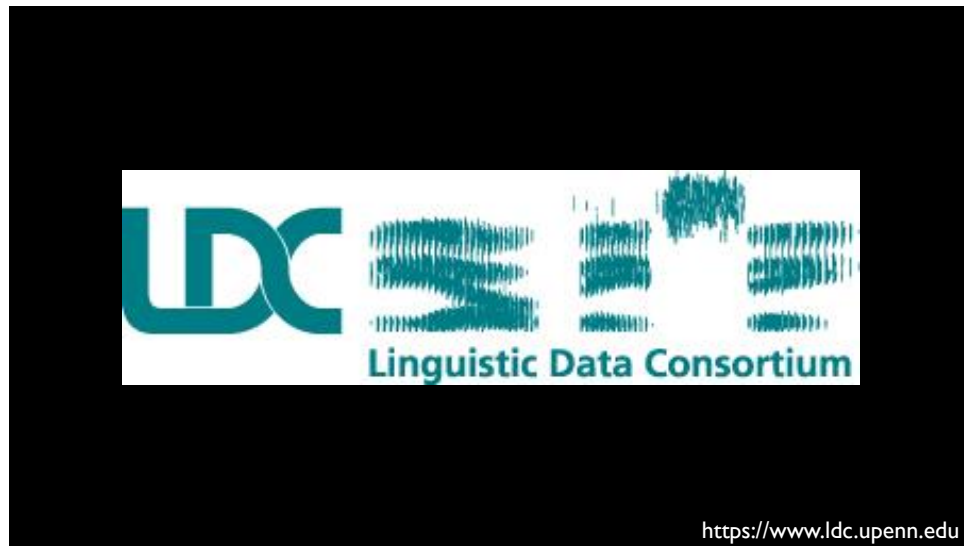
But I also want to acknowledge the new archivists we've lost over the years. The ones who left because they never found that first entry-level job. The ones who left for other fields that paid more, or offered more opportunities. The ones who experienced sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination, and left because they deserve better. (And if you think those things don't happen in archives, you have not talked to the new archivists I've talked to.) The ones who left because they wanted to, and the ones who left even though they didn't. The loss to our profession is unknowable. I grieve for the new archivists that I personally couldn't save.

Slide 6



I've spent a lot of time over the past year or so thinking back on my own life, and the path it's taken, and the choices I've made along the way. One of the great things about the archives profession is that there are so many different academic and career and life paths that lead us to this field. We have folks who know at age 22, right out of college that they want to be archivists, coming from a variety of academic backgrounds. We have folks who went to college later in life with the goal of entering the archival profession. And we have archivists of all ages coming into this field after working in other careers.

So I want to talk a little bit about where I came from, before archives, and how that affects the way I think about archives, and the world--and the new archivists who live in it.



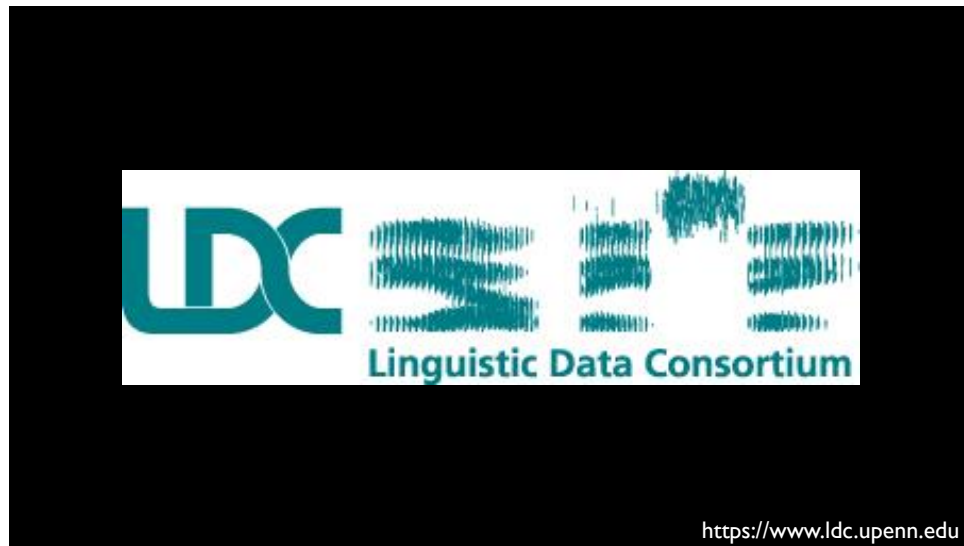
At the age of 18, I got a summer job working at the Linguistic Data Consortium, a center hosted by the University of Pennsylvania that creates and distributes language resources. I worked there a couple of summers in college, and then part-time for several months as a library school student before I found paying work in my field, and then on and off for several years after, archives salaries being what they are. As a native English speaker, I worked on several projects that involved annotating English texts, such as phone transcripts, TV broadcasts, news articles--even blog posts and chat transcripts. I got paid to read blog posts, y'all. I have many great stories about this work that I'm happy to share after my talk, but I mention the LDC to call them out as a pretty amazing place to be new to the working world. Many of us were only planning on working through the summer, and none of us had experience with the specific work we were being asked to do. But we received weeks of training and feedback on our annotation tasks, and helped build documentation for the workers who came after us. We had regular meetings to ensure consistency among annotators, and team leaders valued our judgements as native English speakers even when our interpretations differed from theirs.

Slide 8

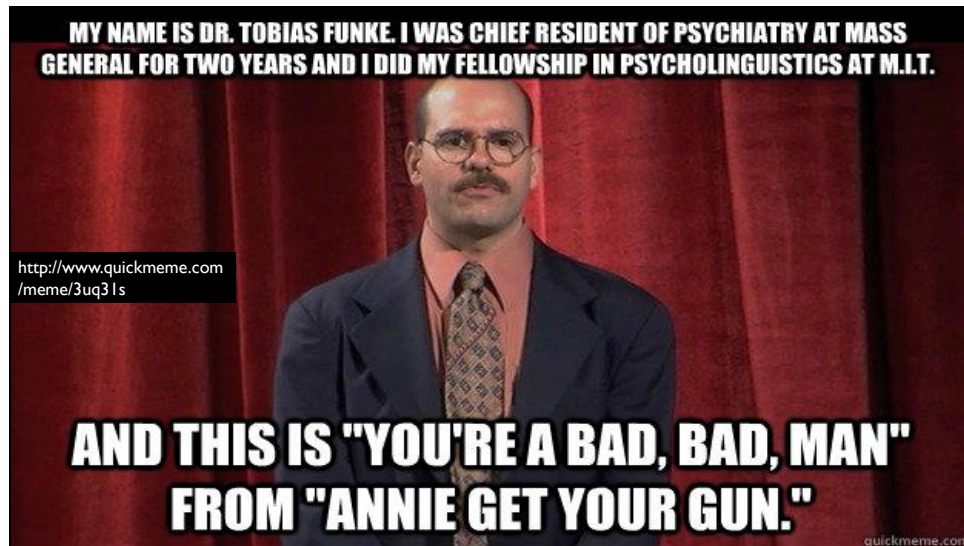


(I remember an hours-long debate over the phrase “Pittsburgh, a US Airways hub” and whether, in the context of a specific news article, Pittsburgh referred to the city or the airport. Fun times!).

Slide 9



When work was slow, we were encouraged to read programming books and build our digital skills. It paid better than many archives jobs I've seen posted over the years. And even though, my first summer, I had only one entry-level linguistics class under my belt, I decided that this kind of work was what I wanted to do with my life.



In college, I studied linguistics and psychology, intending to go on and study the intersection of the two, a field called psycholinguistics. Arrested Development fans may remember that this was also the field of study of Dr. Tobias Funke. I spent a summer as a research assistant and decided I was going to go on to get my PhD.

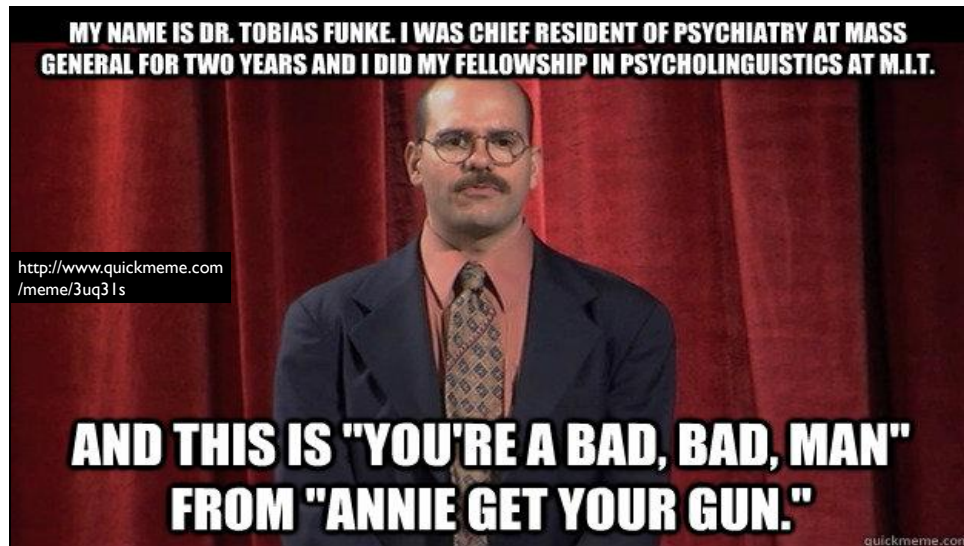
Slide 11



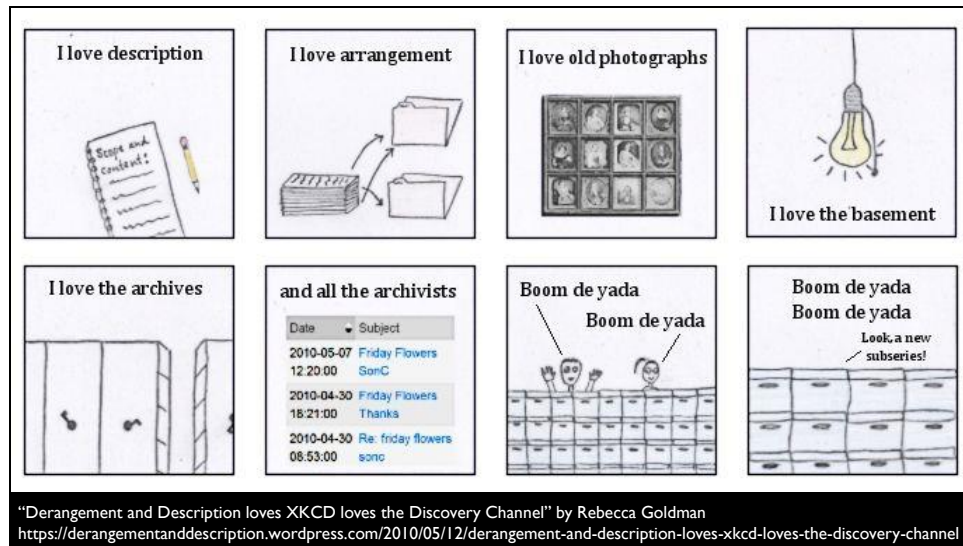
ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT NARRATOR:
SHE DIDN'T.

[Arrested Development narrator: She didn't.]

Slide 12

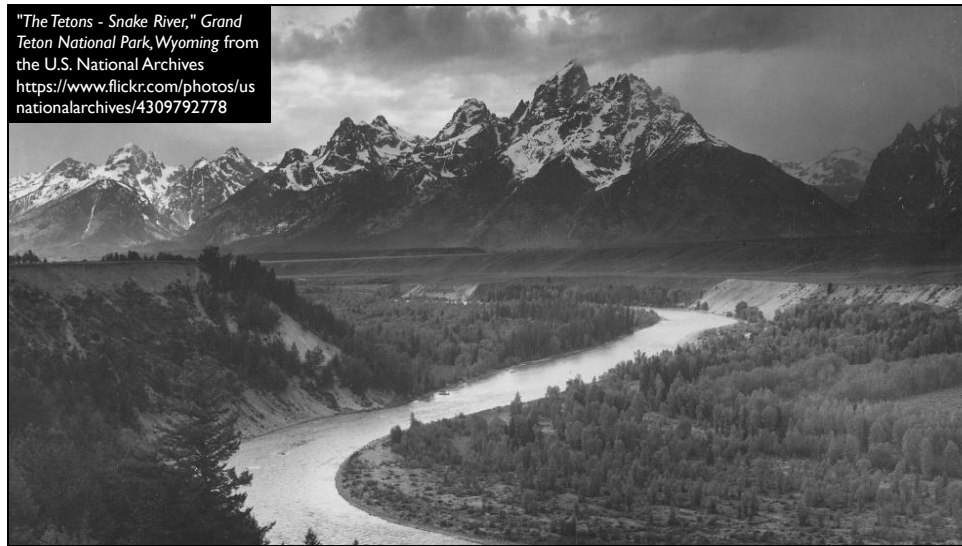


I worked for an amazing professor who found out just before summer research started that he wasn't getting tenure, and I began to rethink the whole academia thing. I also spent a lot of time that summer doing library research, and I thought that maybe working in libraries was something I could do for a career.

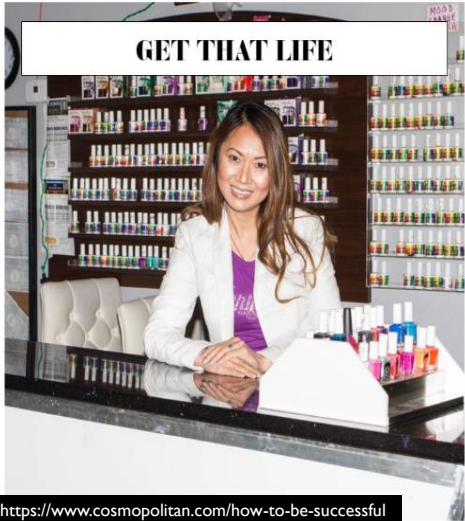


And then library school, a couple of internships, and then a full-time job opened up in the archives at one of the libraries where I was interning--I didn't even really want to do archives, wasn't entirely sure what it was. But I loved it, I knew this was what I was meant to be doing, and this is basically what I've been doing for the last ten years of my life.

Slide 14




I followed this zig-zagging path in the belief that if I figured out what I loved doing, everything would magically fall into place. And it did, kind of, but I'm not going to stand up here and offer my good fortune as some kind of career advice. "Be in the right place at the right time," that's not advice, it's an autobiography. But raise your hand if you've ever heard a professor or an experienced archivist tell a story like this in the context of offering you guidance on your own career.




GET THAT LIFE


<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/how-to-be-successful>



How I Started My Own Ultra-Successful Health Brand
Fitness star Massy Arias talks about why she quit bodybuilding, and ...

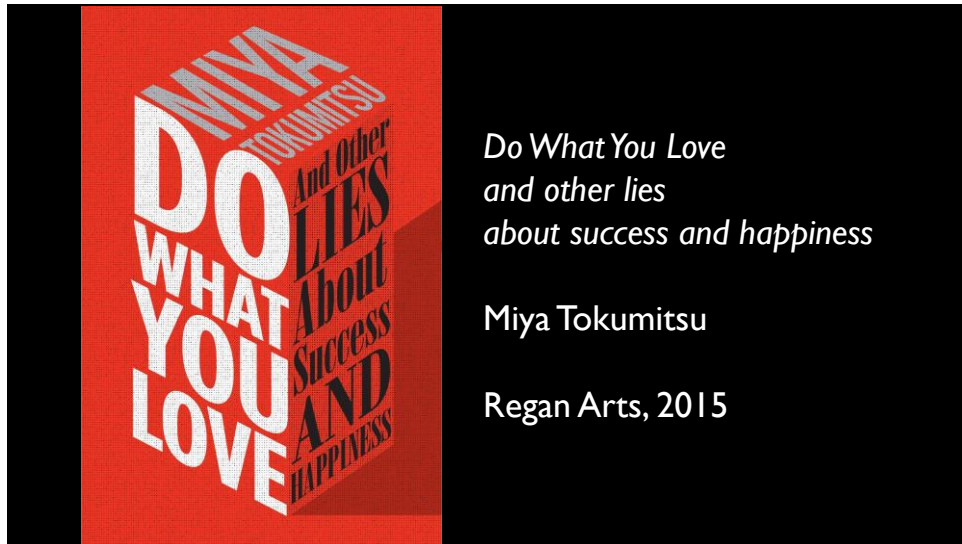


How I Became an Insta-Famous Clothing Designer
Danielle Guizio dropped out of college, but used her old MySpace fol...



How I Became a Political Comedian
Laura Grey and Niccole Thurman spend their nights spoofing conspirac...

You see this outside of the archives world, too. Cosmopolitan Magazine has a regular feature called Get That Life, where they interview awesome women with awesome jobs, generally achieved through a combination of hard work and being in the right place at the right time, under a headline that suggests a similar outcome is possible for you, the reader.



The “Get Your Life” series features in a book called *Do What You Love and other lies about success and happiness*. (I’ll leave this up on the screen for a sec in case anyone wants to take a photo or write it down.)

“...DWYL is an essentially narcissistic schema, facilitating willful ignorance of working conditions by others by encouraging continuous self-gratification.”

“...DWYL exposes its adherents to exploitation, justifying unpaid or underpaid work by throwing workers’ motivations back at them; when passion becomes the socially accepted motivation for working, talk of wages or reasonable scheduling becomes crass.”

Tokumitsu, pg. 7

Miya Tokumitsu writes about the dangerous idea that we should all love our jobs, what kinds of jobs are considered lovable, and the implications for our work and personal lives.

This focus on passion helps justify things like unpaid internships, temporary and other insecure work arrangements, and spending non-work time on career-related activities—all things that are very familiar to new archivists.

“Whether described as ‘paying one’s dues’ or ‘proving oneself,’ a significant time invested in undercompensated, bottom-tier hopeful work is now a prerequisite for full-time, salaried work in many sectors. Much of the labor force has so internalized this reality that those who bristle at the notion of bottom-tier purgatory and expect full-time jobs directly out of college or graduate programs are considered entitled. Hope is such a powerful ideological tool because, cultivated in specific ways, it facilitates identification with exploitative forces rather than the assertion of one’s own interests.”

Tokumitsu, pg. 91

Some parts of the book resonate really well with the experiences of the new archivists I’ve known and talked to over the years. Tokumitsu describes the idea of hope labor—work done on the cheap in the hope of being better compensated for the same work in the future. It’s such a perfect summary of the terrible entry-level archives jobs we see posted every day—and the responses of more experienced archivists who tell newer folks to just be grateful for the opportunity.

“For centuries, Western culture has glorified romantic notions of the artist, the activist, the caregiver, the scholar, who works not for wages primarily, but instead for service to others, for renown, for ‘the greater good,’ and for the inherent rewards of the work itself. These values...shape our sense of identity and the ways in which we perform our work. Although these various motivations are often noble in and of themselves, the less exalted reality is that work is overwhelmingly something individuals need to do in order to care for themselves and their families at the most basic levels.”

Tokumitsu, pg. 104-105

I’m just going to read this section out loud, from Tokumitsu’s discussion of why adjunct professors continue teaching, despite low pay and the unlikeliness of a tenure-track position. It really resonates with me. “For centuries, Western culture has glorified romantic notions of the artist, the activist, the caregiver, the scholar, who works not for wages primarily, but instead for service to others, for renown, for ‘the greater good,’ and for the inherent rewards of the work itself. These values...shape our sense of identity and the ways in which we perform our work. Although these various motivations are often noble in and of themselves, the less exalted reality is that work is overwhelmingly something individuals need to do in order to care for themselves and their families at the most basic levels.”

“‘Vocational awe’ refers to the set of ideas, values, and assumptions librarians have about themselves and the profession that result in beliefs that libraries as institutions are inherently good and sacred, and therefore beyond critique.”

Fobazi Ettarh, “Vocational Awe and Librarianship: The Lies We Tell Ourselves.”
In The Library With The Lead Pipe
<http://www.inthelibrarywiththeleadpipe.org/2018/vocational-awe>

Fobazi Ettarh’s (ee-tar) framework of vocational awe centers on a different kind of love—a passion for working for a greater good. Writing about the experiences of librarians, and especially public librarians, she explains that a belief in the sacredness of libraries, and the inherent goodness of their mission, protects them from criticism. It also makes it harder for staff working in libraries to advocate for better pay and better working conditions.

“As part of vocational awe in libraries, awe manifests in response to the library as both a place and an institution. Because the sacred duties of freedom, information, and service are so momentous, the library worker is easily paralyzed. In the face of grand missions of literacy and freedom, advocating for your full lunch break feels petty. And tasked with the responsibility of sustaining democracy and intellectual freedom, taking a mental health day feels shameful. Awe is easily weaponized against the worker, allowing anyone to deploy a vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint.”

Ettarh, “Vocational Awe”

“As part of vocational awe in libraries, awe manifests in response to the library as both a place and an institution. Because the sacred duties of freedom, information, and service are so momentous, the library worker is easily paralyzed. In the face of grand missions of literacy and freedom, advocating for your full lunch break feels petty. And tasked with the responsibility of sustaining democracy and intellectual freedom, taking a mental health day feels shameful. Awe is easily weaponized against the worker, allowing anyone to deploy a vocational purity test in which the worker can be accused of not being devout or passionate enough to serve without complaint.”

“Invisible workers tend to fall into two often-overlapping categories: workers whose labor either falls outside the work ethic or embodies the work ethic’s broken promises.”

Tokumitsu, 28

“...Librarians are often expected to place the profession and their job duties before their personal interests. And with such expectations, job creep can become a common phenomenon.”

Ettarh, “Vocational Awe”

Both Tokumitsu and Ettarh describe the role of invisible labor in supporting these frameworks. Tokumitsu reminds us that lovable jobs depend on invisible labor, on people in jobs that are not rewarding for their own sake, or who do not get financial stability from their work. Ettarh warns of the dangers of job creep—librarians taking on more and more work outside of their defined jobs, which may go uncompensated or unrecognized.

“As a researcher, it’s easy to take all of those things for granted—that you would visit a research room, tell someone behind a desk what you want, and be given a sweet little acid-free gray box with all of the information you are looking for, perfectly organized by date, format, or subject. But how would we expect people to know? Archivists do a terrible job of advocating and informing people about our labor and the overall contributions of our labor to society. We seldom speak in terms of concrete concepts like time or money and speak instead of abstract notions like love and passion.”

Stacie Williams, “Implications of Archival Labor”

<https://medium.com/on-archivy/implications-of-archival-labor-b606d8d02014>

And, as many, many archivists before me have pointed out, archival labor as a whole is often invisible. I’ll share just one example here, from archivist Stacie Williams.

“...There is a cultural expectation that archivists will work without complaint, for very little and if we are lacking resources, we will hire volunteers or unpaid interns to do the work.”

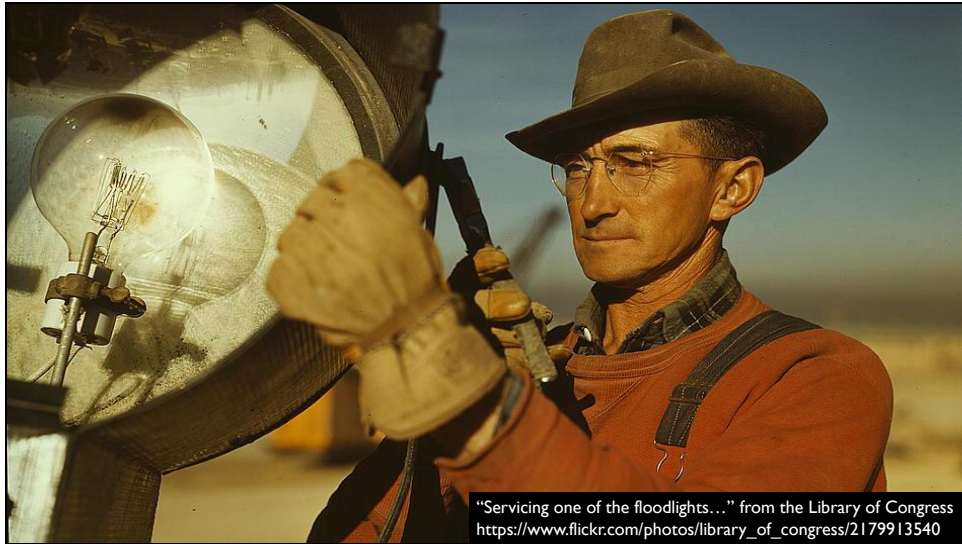
“At my university, we employ graduate students to process collections. They are paid only around the national average minimum wage in a city that lacks affordable housing and is relatively expensive. The people with the archivist or staff titles, including myself, largely supervise that work and create scholarly work based on it that lends personal or institutional prestige.”

Williams, “Implications of Archival Labor”

In the same article, Williams shares examples of how some kinds of archival labor are more invisible than others, whether that’s using unpaid labor when there aren’t enough paid employees, or having students and temporary staff perform processing and digitization work for the benefit of supervisors in permanent positions.

New archivists
must struggle for visibility
within a larger profession
that is struggling for visibility.

This is the fundamental challenge facing new archivists—struggling for visibility within a larger profession that is, itself, struggling for visibility.

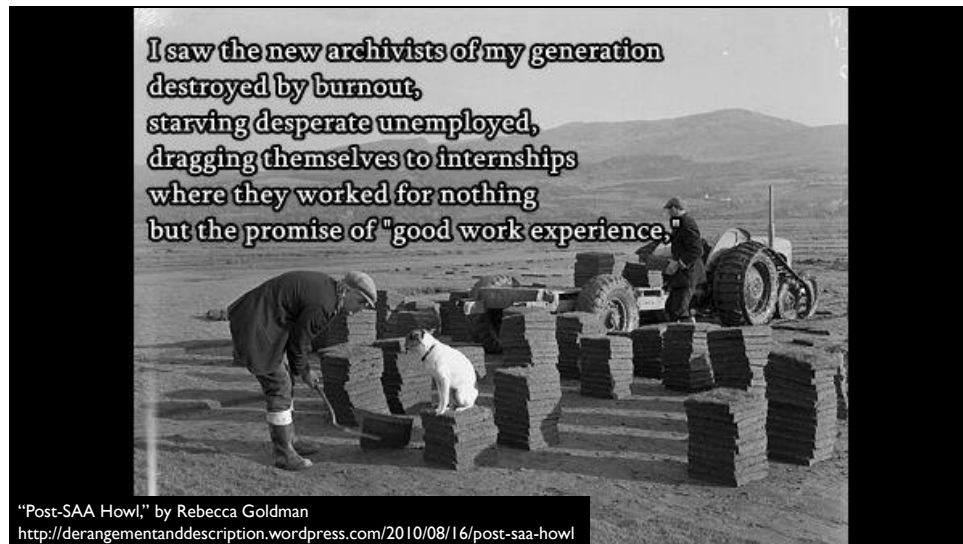


This morning I want to talk a little bit about how we founded the SNAP Roundtable around the idea of bringing visibility to new archivists, and promoting the idea that students, recent grads, and other new professionals have their own unique needs, within our professional associations and within the profession. And I want to discuss some of the outstanding issues around new archivists and visibility, which I hope will make for really good discussion after my talk and throughout the conference.

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  Now, this is a story all about how
My life got flip-turned upside down
And I'd like to take a minute
Just sit right there
I'll tell you how I became the prince
of a town called Bel Air.
</p>
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"Now this is a story all about how/Archives got flip-turned upside down," by Rebecca Goldman <https://derangementanddescription.wordpress.com/2009/11/23/now-this-is-a-story-all-about-howarchives-got-flip-turned-upside-down>

Back when I was a new archivist, I spent a lot of time making these ridiculous comics about archives. This one is the Fresh Prince of Bel-Air theme song, encoded in EAD. The entire theme song, it's too long to fit on a slide, you'll have to go online to see all of it. Enough people read my stuff that I could go to conferences and say "Hi, I'm Rebecca, I make the archives comic," and people knew who I was! Which was pretty cool for a new archivist!



So I got to meet way more people than the average new archivist when I attended my first SAA conference in 2010. I wasn't planning to go, but another archivist I knew was supposed to present that year and ended up leaving the field after their financial situation changed and they had to take a job that paid better. So I took their place on the panel and got funding to go. I was still very much in a "I love archives and everything is wonderful!" frame of mind and talking to all the new archivists really ruined my good vibes. I was doing what I loved and everyone else was doing what they had to do to get by. I returned home with lots of thoughts about the place of new archivists within SAA and within the archival profession. I made this comic, Post-SAA Howl—also too long to show here in its entirety—and it was my most-commented comic ever. Way more than the Fresh Prince EAD comic.

Welcome to the Section for New Professionals.

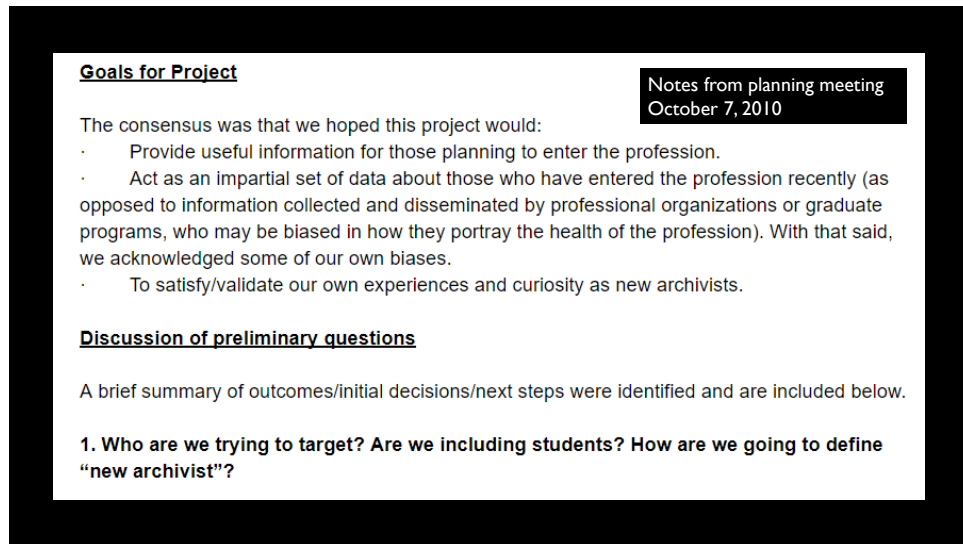
The Section for New Professionals exists to support those in the first five years of a career in the record keeping professions. This includes trainees, interns, recently qualified professionals and those embarking on the registration scheme within the first five years of employment. Helping to bridge the gap between new professionals and the wider archive community through the provision of training events and networking sessions.

<http://www.archives.org.uk/about/sections-interest-groups/new-professionals.html>

The Section for New Professionals aims to

- Encourage involvement between individuals and the ARA from an early stage in their careers by promoting and providing ARA supported activities relevant to new professionals
- Promote appropriate training and development opportunities in the UK and Ireland for new professionals; including training events, networking events and social meetings
- Raise awareness of the issues facing new professionals, provide a forum for new professionals to discuss these issues and ensure that all members are represented within the Archive and Records Association
- Create cross sector links between new professionals, course providers and employers

After I posted the comic, some things happened very quickly! In the UK, archivists created the Section for New Professionals in October 2010, part of the Archives and Records Association—the UK + Ireland equivalent of SAA.



Goals for Project

Notes from planning meeting
October 7, 2010

The consensus was that we hoped this project would:

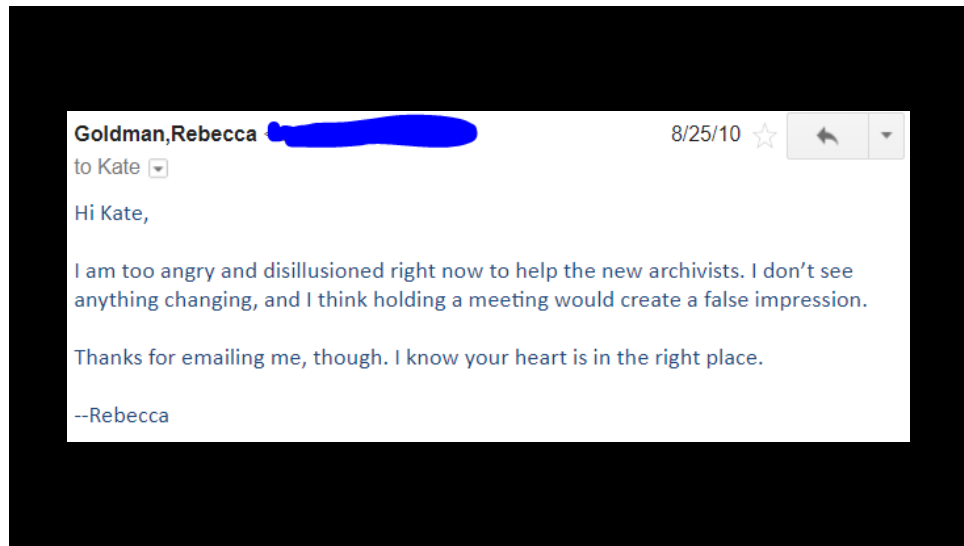
- Provide useful information for those planning to enter the profession.
- Act as an impartial set of data about those who have entered the profession recently (as opposed to information collected and disseminated by professional organizations or graduate programs, who may be biased in how they portray the health of the profession). With that said, we acknowledged some of our own biases.
- To satisfy/validate our own experiences and curiosity as new archivists.

Discussion of preliminary questions

A brief summary of outcomes/initial decisions/next steps were identified and are included below.

1. Who are we trying to target? Are we including students? How are we going to define "new archivist"?

But, back in the US, not a lot happened, for almost a year. Just a couple of weeks after the comic came out, another archivist started a Google Group called the New Archivists Project, with the goal of collecting data on new archivists to supplement the A*Census, a comprehensive survey of the archives profession done in 2004. We had a conference call and everything! But it never really went anywhere. We were new archivists, we got busy, and life intervened.



Kate Theimer, who, in addition to writing her ArchivesNext blog, was serving on SAA Council at this time, reached out to me offered to help organize an informal meeting at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference in October. Look what I wrote! “Hi Kate, I am too angry and disillusioned right now to help the new archivists. I don’t see anything changing, and I think holding a meeting would create a false impression. Thanks for emailing me, though. I know your heart is in the right place.” The work needed to be done, but clearly, at least at that point in time, I was not the one to do it.



Then, in May 2011, I learned that the American Library Association had a group specifically for young professionals. So I tweeted: Why can't SAA have that? Kate got back to me and suggested forming a new roundtable within SAA.

Why a roundtable for new archivists?

JULY 25, 2011 38 COMMENTS

Other professional organizations have established groups to meet the needs of new professionals. ALA has a [Young Professionals Working Group](#). The Society of Archivists has a [Section for New Professionals](#). We think the Society of American Archivists needs a similar group for new archivists.

Here are some things we think an SAA roundtable for new archivists could accomplish:

- Advocate for new archivists within SAA and within the archival profession
- Provide a space for discussion of issues affecting new archivists
- Allow new archivists to gain leadership experience through roundtable service

<http://newarchivistsroundtable.wordpress.com/2011/07/25/why-a-roundtable-for-new-archivists>

And why a roundtable, as opposed to some other type of group? Check out the [SAA Council Handbook section on roundtables](#). We think our goals fit the description of a roundtable pretty nicely.

What do you think? Does SAA need a roundtable just for new archivists? What might it accomplish? (And if you're wondering what makes someone a new archivist... don't worry, that's an upcoming post.)

I started a blog to share my thinking and generate interest, pointing out that other professional associations had similar groups, and offering a few goals for ours:

Advocate for new archivists within SAA and within the archival profession

Provide a space for discussion of issues affecting new archivists

Allow new archivists to gain leadership experience through roundtable service



One of the earliest obstacles SNAP faced in its founding was convincing SAA that it deserved to be founded. SAA already offered services and events for new members, and it took some time to explain to organization leaders that new SAA members and new archivists are actually distinct groups. SAA also already had lots of groups at this time—I believe it was over 30 sections and roundtables before SNAP was founded—so we also had to explain why yet another group was needed.

What about...

Experienced LIS professionals with new archives responsibilities?

Archivists who have spent more than 5 years in the field, but have less than 5 years FTE equivalent experience?

Long-time paraprofessional staff trying to secure a professional archives job?

People just starting to think about archives as a career path?

...and more!

We also wrestled with the issue of defining what, exactly, is a new archivist. From the beginning, I wanted this new group to be open to everyone, but thought that leadership positions should be reserved for new archivists. And that, of course, requires defining exactly what a new archivist is. SfNP, the UK + Ireland group, says their section is for “trainees, interns, recently qualified professionals and those embarking on the registration scheme within the first five years of employment.” US/UK differences aside, I don’t really think it’s that simple, and I offered a few examples on the roundtable planning blog of some more atypical new archivists. From the beginning, though, I was adamant that it should be a group for new archivists, not young archivists, because we welcome people of all ages into the profession.



We also needed a name for the group, because New Archivists Roundtable acronyms to NART, and, with apologies to the Norco Animal Rescue Team, who wants NART for an acronym?

Honorable mentions

- League of Extraordinary New Archivists (LENA)
- Society for Early Career Archival Professionals (SECAP)
- Future Archivists of America (FAA)
- Welcoming Early Archivists (WEA)

<https://newarchivistsroundtable.wordpress.com/2011/09/25/whats-in-a-name>

Students and New Archives Professionals, or SNAP, won out, of course—it encompasses both students and recent grads, and has a great acronym. Here are some others that we didn't choose, but that I think deserve an honorable mention.

League of Extraordinary New Archivists (LENA)

Society for Early Career Archival Professionals (SECAP)—the submitter said it reminded them of “sea captain”

Future Archivists of America (FAA)?

Welcoming Early Archivists—the submitter specified that it should be pronounced wheeeeeee!

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... new professionals, early-career project archivists, and archivists who
professional jobs. Provide a forum for new archivists to share their
other. Promote awareness of the needs of new archivists within SAA
raise the visibility of new archivists within SAA and the skills and
ession.

representing the needs of new archivists on issues that affect new
ases, participation in the Annual Meeting, policies on educational
opportunities and compensation.

icipation in SAA student chapters and participation in SAA. Help new
ship positions within SAA student chapters into leadership positions
dtables.

ote participation in the group through social media and other online
r other SAA sections and roundtables for successfully engaging
with the Annual Meeting Task Force when possible.

y begin their archival careers and as they move from entry-level
anagerial positions. This can be accomplished through mentoring,
aking recommendations to the Education Committee for relevant
oundtable will coordinate with SAA sections and roundtables, as well
upport new archivists and promote relevant services to its members.

Kate Theimer
4:03 PM Dec 13, 2011
I'd put this one towards the top. It seems kind of self-evident, but I think it's an important function.
[Show all 3 replies](#)

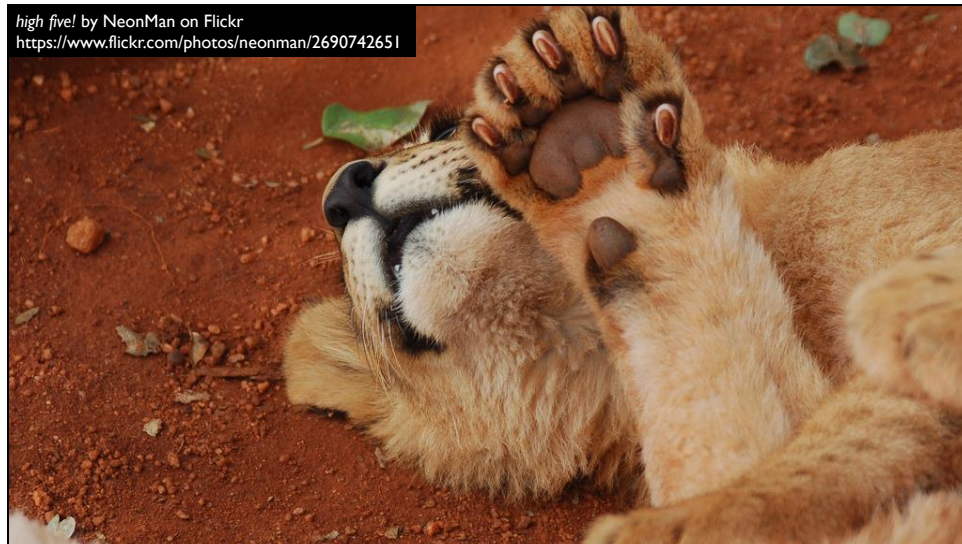
Valerie Enriquez
11:41 AM Dec 16, 2011
... fill potential gaps in knowledge that occur when new standards arise in the post-archival education years. or maybe: ... exchange knowledge gathered from a diverse array of experiences (what I mean by this is when archivists familiar with
[Show more](#)

Eira Tansey
11:44 AM Dec 20, 2011
I am really glad to see this. I was the chair for SJSU's SAA student

So, once we had a name and some idea of what our group would be about, we were ready to propose to SAA! Our petition started out as a Google Doc that anyone could comment on, to keep things transparent and collaborative.



And, we got our roundtable! This is the picture I posted on the planning blog to celebrate. It was 2012, the Internet was still really into talking cats with bad grammar. It was a different time.



Within my one and a half years as chair, SNAP accomplished a lot! High fives all around! We created a newsletter and a blog. We created a friendly and supportive listserv, which is way more difficult than it sounds. We wrote bylaws for the group. We created a Google spreadsheet to help new archivists find rides and roommates for the SAA annual meeting. We got SAA to change their rules for membership rates so more students qualified for student rates, and archivists experiencing multiple bouts of unemployment could take advantage of the reduced bridge rate multiple times.

But my greatest pride is that the group is thriving almost five years after I left. SNAP continues to do new and awesome things and continues to set an example for other groups. At some point or another, every section or roundtable or committee I've been involved with has said, "How does SNAP do this?" or "Why *can't* we do it like SNAP?"

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Of course, SNAP didn't fix all the challenges facing new archivists—otherwise, we wouldn't be here at this conference today. I want reflect a little more on the themes of visibility and identity, and how they play out for new archivists.

At what point
does claiming
the new archivist identity
hurt more than it helps?

At what point should new archivists stop identifying as new archivists? At what point is it no longer beneficial to your larger professional identity? Someone who was involved in SNAP leadership in the early years told me they were advised to stop listing their SNAP service on their resume, because they had been in the field too long to justify continued involvement. How do new archivists know when it's time to take the skills they've built through SNAP, and similar groups for new archivists, and share them with the wider archives community?

How does the career path
of new archivists
affect archivist identity—
and vice versa?

How does the career path of new archivists affect archivist identity—and vice versa? How can you bring your archivist identity to whatever job you end up in after you graduate? Are new archivists missing out on jobs that could be a great fit for their skills because those jobs don't have the word archives or archivist in the title? If new archivists leave the archives field—by choice, or by necessity—how can they maintain their identity? How does being a new archivist affect other parts of your life?

Positive	Negative
Stable income contributed to decision to marry and purchase home .	Anxiety has affected my health.
I have made some really great friends as a result of this profession.	Because we relocated for my second job, I was the main bread-winner among my husband and I for some time, including the first year of our daughter's life. In a perfect world I would have preferred to work part time to stay with her longer .
Over all I am far more satisfied with what I am doing, so I'm happier over all .	Yes, I am now working full time and taking coursework in digital libraries to keep up with the field, which leaves little time for other, non-professional activities .
I have a more active social life with former classmates, faculty, and work colleagues than in my previous career.	I put my life on hold while I looked for a job because I didn't want to get involved in anything I'd have to abruptly leave.

Job search experiences and career satisfaction among recent archives program graduates, by Rebecca Goldman and Shannon Lausch <http://digitalcommons.lasalle.edu/libraryconf/4>

In 2012, I collaborated on a survey with Shannon Lausch, who's an archivist at the University of Arkansas-Little Rock. We sent out a survey to recent grads and asked a lot of questions about how satisfied archivists were with their lives and careers. This is a sample of responses to our question about the effects of career choices on life outside of work. Our survey was a good first step, but someone really needs to build on our work and do a more robust study.

How do we fight
unreasonable expectations
of new archivists,
especially young archivists?

How do we fight unreasonable expectations of new archivists, especially young archivists? We How does the career path of new archivists affect archivist identity—and vice versa? How can you bring your archivist identity to whatever job you end up in after you graduate? Are new archivists missing out on jobs that could be a great fit for their skills because those jobs don't have the word archives or archivist in the title? If new archivists leave the archives field—by choice, or by necessity—how can they maintain their identity? How does being a new archivist affect other parts of your life? We cannot expect our newest colleagues to fix our institutions', and our professions', most entrenched problems.

“The new hires will save us! Be they fresh MLSes, IT professionals, or rescued Ph.Ds and other alternative academics...they will be the salvation of our ailing academic libraries! As soon as we can hire, we're saved!”

“Change management is an *organizational issue*. Organizations cling to equilibrium; it is their nature. One pebble—even a few pebbles, and in these budgetary times the Loon can't imagine a library able to throw more than a few pebbles—won't disturb a lake much, no matter how hard they're thrown. Library leaders who want to change their libraries need to take responsibility for doing so, not palm it off on new hires.”

Library Loon, “New-Hire Messianism”
<https://gavialib.com/2011/05/new-hire-messianism>

The pseudonymous Library Loon, who blogs about the library world, especially academic libraries, identifies two kinds of organizational—dysfunctions, shall we say, that recent grads should beware. One is new hire messianism: hiring a new person to solve an organizational problem, whether that problem is providing a new service or bringing change to a change-resistant library. In the archives world, we see these kinds of jobs all the time. Think of all the job postings you've seen for a digital archivist, where an institution wants to hire one person to handle all that new digital stuff rather than making it a shared responsibility.

“...The word ‘Coordinator’ in a position title. Beware it, especially in combination with a new or non-traditional job niche. Research-data coordinator. Scholarly-communication coordinator. Assessment coordinator. Information-literacy coordinator. Digital initiatives coordinator. Run screaming from ‘institutional repository coordinator.’

“The problem with these jobs is that as often as not, there’s nothing actually to coordinate. No budget. No dedicated staff. No IT resources. No established service. “Coordinate” all too often means “try to establish a beachhead by begging your new colleagues to vouchsafe you a few minutes of their time now and then, knowing that their supervisors won’t tell them to and you have no authority whatever to demand anything of them.”

Library Loon, “The C-Word” <https://gavialib.com/2011/05/new-hire-messianism>

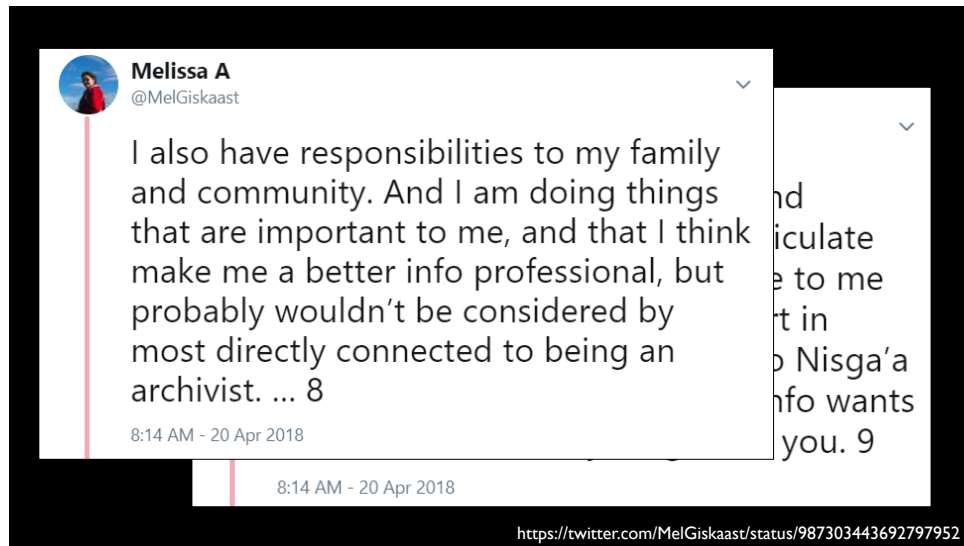
A related problem is coordinator syndrome: positions where new hires are expected to start and run new programs without funding, dedicated staff, or the support of colleagues. As I look at this list of sample job titles, I see quite a few that might seem appealing to someone just coming out of an archives program--research-data coordinator, scholarly-communication coordinator, digital initiatives coordinator, institutional repository coordinator. If you’re hired to start an archives for an organization that has never had one, you could also find yourself in this position, with a huge responsibility, without the staff and resources to match. If you’re a good advocate for your archives, or other area of responsibility, you might eventually be able to get the resources you need. But you might also burn out before you get to that point.

How do new archivists
build a professional identity
without sacrificing
all their other identities?

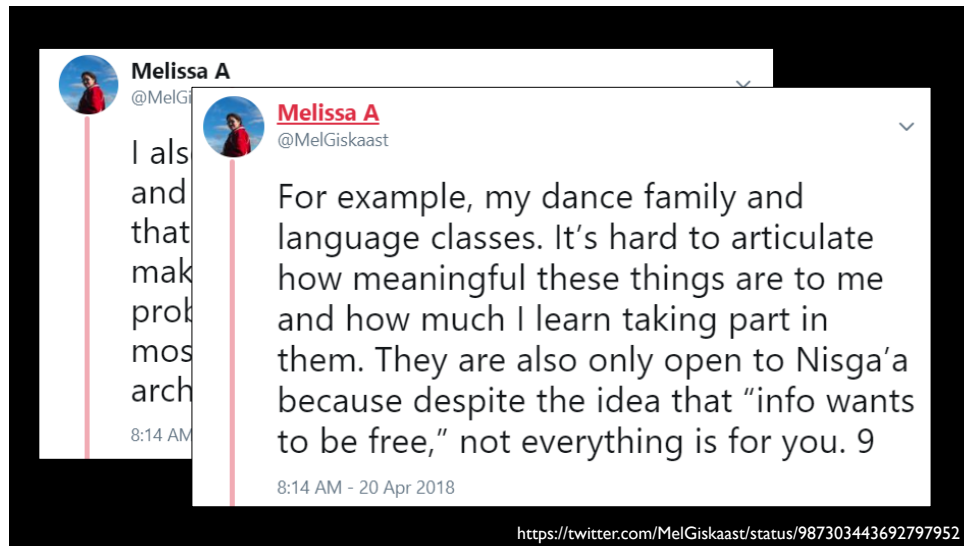
How do new archivists build a professional identity without sacrificing all their other identities? New archivists are expected to move around to advance in their careers, making it difficult to build a stable family life, or put down roots. They face pressure to conform to the organizational cultures they want to be hired into. They may feel they have to hide the most essential parts of themselves to avoid discrimination at the hiring stage and beyond. Between work and school and job searching and professional development, plus families and all those other outside-of-work responsibilities, it's tough to find time for all the other things that bring you fulfillment and joy.



I am slowly re-learning this lesson, shared by Scott Carlson a few weeks ago on Twitter. “Take tangible steps to firewall yourself from burnout by maintaining robust hobbies.”



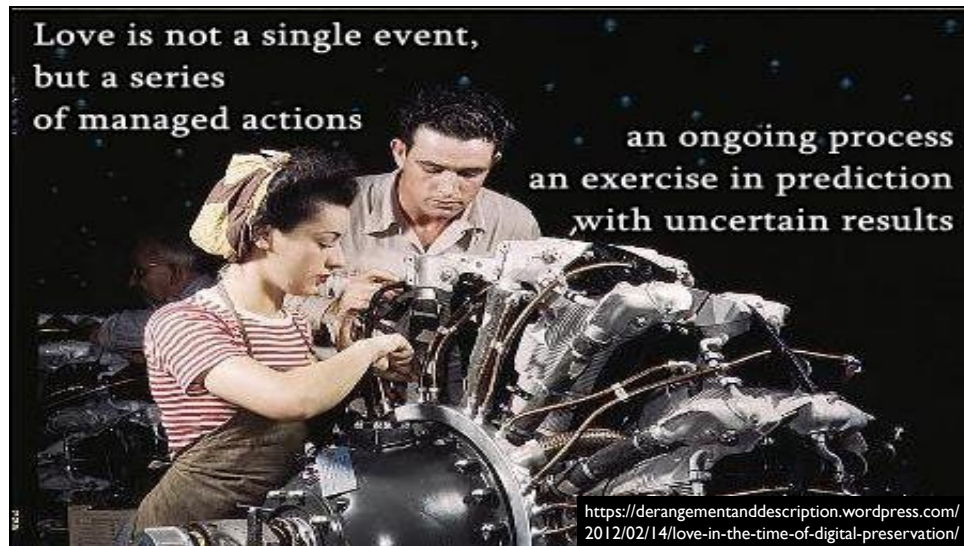
And for some new archivists, having a life outside of archives is about more than good self-care. Melissa A, an Indigenous archivist from Muqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh (tSLAY-wah-tooth) territory (near Vancouver, Canada), writes about how engagement with her community makes her a better archivist. You should read the whole thread, but I'll just share a couple of quotes here: "I also have responsibilities to my family and community. And I am doing things that are important to me, and that I think make me a better info professional, but probably wouldn't be considered by most directly connected to being an archivist."



“For example, my dance family and language classes. It’s hard to articulate how meaningful these things are to me and how much I learn taking part in them.”

Does social media
create an unrealistic image
of archives work
and archivists' lives?

Does social media create an unrealistic image of archives work and archivists' lives? I have been thinking about this a lot lately. New archivists are encouraged to build an online presence and to engage with the profession in online spaces. But we also teach them to not complain, and to not be perceived as negative, or difficult, in these online spaces. Archivists at all stages of their careers are surrounded by tweets and updates and images of people who are kicking more ass at their archives jobs than we are, who work with cooler collections, who present at fancier conferences and win awards we'll never be nominated for. And yet, beneath our carefully curated online presences, none of us is winning all the time. And we know that...but do we really know that, you know?

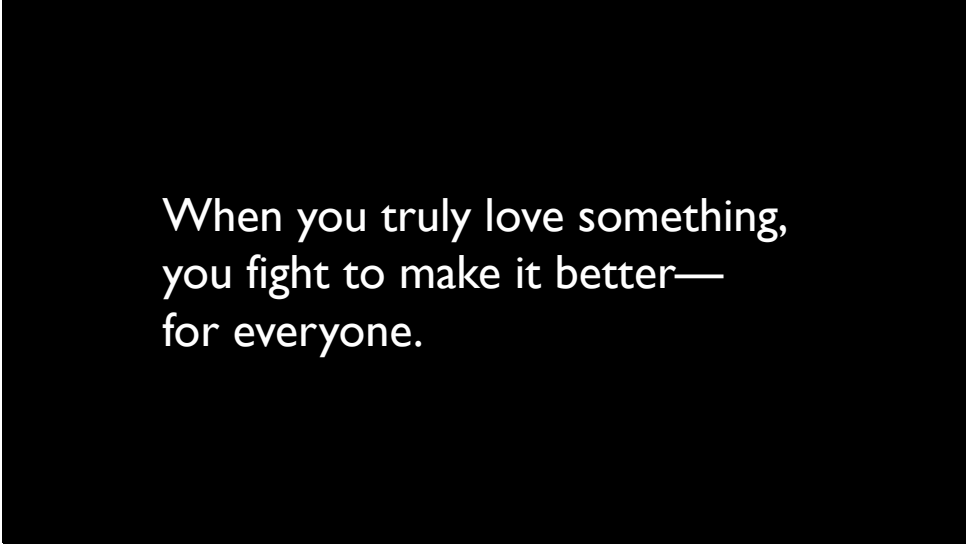


I am also the proprietor of one of those carefully curated online presences. It's not always super-professional—or super-serious—but I worked hard to hide the things I was struggling with. For a long time, I was ashamed to admit that I don't love archives the way I did when I was just starting out. I thought I couldn't be the kind of archivist I wanted to be if I didn't love my field as passionately and uncritically as I did in the beginning. As if the love we feel for anything in our lives is constant and unchanging. This is from a photocomic I wrote several years ago: love, like digital preservation, is not a single event, but a series of managed actions, an ongoing process, an exercise in prediction with uncertain results. Sometimes making comics is easier than having feelings.

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Lately, though, I've been feeling like I don't love anything the way I used to, and I've been slowly realizing that no, that's not normal. Our whole profession is built around the idea that we can't trust our own brains to remember everything, and yet...sometimes we forget that we can't trust our own brains, you know?



When you truly love something,
you fight to make it better—
for everyone.

I remember, right after posting that Post-SAA Howl photocomic, starting that conversation about new archivists, reading all the comics...I went into work and I cried and I told my boss that I broke the field. Me, little old me, with my uncanny ability to superimpose text on images, had destroyed a profession that dates back thousands of years. My own delusions of importance aside, I think new archivists demonstrate their love for the field by fighting to make it better. The work of new archivists has made our profession better for all of us. I hope you know how much we appreciate your time and energy in doing so.



You are worth fighting for.

You, the new archivists, are worth fighting for, and you—just you—are worth fighting for. I hope you know how many folks on the experienced side of the profession just can't wait to see what you do.

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Hey, cute animals! Oh my god, is this the last slide? Did I make it? Y'all, this is the hardest talk I have ever written and by far the hardest talk I have ever delivered. Thank you for sticking it out with me, and that's a wrap!