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*Society of Mississippi Archivists*

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SOCIETY OF MISSISSIPPI ARCHIVISTS  
**THE PRIMARY SOURCE**

## LESSON V.

e f l

sēe  
lōg  
īt  
hōp



frōg  
sēes  
ōn  
hōps

**Ann sees a frog.**

**It is on a log.**

**Hop, frog! See! it hops**

OTHER WORDS: he fop lad fat feel lap tree

*frog* *log*

(McGUFFEY'S READING CHARTS)

Image courtesy of McCain Library & Archives, The University of Southern Mississippi

## **“The Inaugural Austin Archives Bazaar: Cross-Repository Outreach in Central Texas”**

Susan Floyd, MA  
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The University of Texas at Austin

### **Abstract**

Inspired by the successful [Annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar](#) (now in its ninth year), and born out of the brainstorming of the [Archivists of Central Texas](#), the [Austin Archives Bazaar](#) took place on Sunday, October 19, 2014. This public outreach event featured 22 Central Texas archives showing off highlights of their collections. It also included archival film (with footage of Austin dating back to the 1910s), an oral history booth, a historical reenactment photography studio, a hands-on preservation station, and lightning talks by professional archivists, as well as food and drinks.

The Austin Archives Bazaar represents a new way of marketing archives to the general public in Central Texas. The organizing committee has not only secured the participation of 22 area archives, ranging from the giant Texas A&M University Libraries to the crowd-sourced Austin Fanzine Project, but they also created a coherent brand identity and marketing plan, including extensive use of online channels, including social media. Thus this event is not only an important addition to Austin’s already-robust “festival scene,” but also represents an unprecedented cooperative effort at increasing visibility across are repositories.

This article will provide an overview of the germination of the Bazaar; its early planning stages; how organizers secured funding and created their marketing plan; and an interview with Austin Archives Bazaar Chair, Jennifer Hecker, Digital Archives Access Strategist at the University of Texas Libraries.

### **Article**

Inspired by the successful [Annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar](#) (now in its ninth year) and the [Oregon Archives Crawl](#) in Portland, the [Austin Archives Bazaar](#) is the brainchild of Jennifer Hecker, Digital Archives Access Strategist at University of Texas Libraries. This game-changing event for Central Texas archives took place on Sunday, October 19, 2014. The all-ages, public outreach day featured 21 repositories showing off highlights of their collections to 400 attendees. It also included archival film (with footage of Austin dating back to the 1910s), an oral history booth, a historical reenactment photography studio, screen printing, a hands-on preservation station, and lightning talks by professionals and scholars, as well as music, food, and drinks. Speaking on her initial motivation to mount such an

ambitious archival event for the first time in Central Texas, Hecker said, "In a tight budgetary climate, outreach is of the first things to go. If we can do some of the heavy lifting of making this event happen, the repositories have a smaller job. Part of my goal was to provide a venue for outreach to happen." She continued, "This is not just about archives and repositories—it is also about archivists and the work they do. I want people to meet the people who do the work."

Born out of the work of the Archivists of Central Texas, the Austin Archives Bazaar represents a new way of marketing archives to the general public in Central Texas. The steering committee, led by Hecker, is comprised of seven professional archivists: logistics co-chairs Daniel Alonzo, Digital Archivist, Texas General Land Office, and Molly Hults, Archivist, Austin History Center; program co-chairs Lauren Kata, Archivist for Digital Access and Holdings Management, Archives of the Episcopal Church, and Carol Mead, Archivist, Archives of American Mathematics, the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History; publicity chair Madeline Moya, Curator at Texas Archive of the Moving Image; and sponsorship chair Kristy Sorensen, Associate Director of the Library and Head of Archives and Records Management, Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary, who has also acted as general secretary and uncredited steering committee co-chair. The Bazaar also benefitted from 28 volunteer workers, who helped with everything from social media to crowd control.

Twenty-one Central Texas archives sent professional archivists to the Bazaar, including: the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin; Archives of the Episcopal Church; Austin History Center; Austin Fanzine Project; Special Collections, Southwestern University; Catholic Archives of Texas; Lyndon Baines Johnson Presidential Library; Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary; H.J. Lutcher Stark Center at the University of Texas; Harry Ransom Center; University of Texas San Antonio Libraries Special Collections; Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University; Alexander Architectural Archives, University of Texas at Austin; Teresa Lozano Long Institute for Latin American Studies (LLILAS) Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin; Travis County Archives; University of Texas Human Rights Documentation Initiative; Texas State Library and Archives Commission; Texas Archive of the Moving Image; Texas General Land Office; the Witliff Collections, Texas State University; and the Portal to Texas History, University of North Texas Libraries.

Speakers included Professor Janine Barchas of the University of Texas at Austin Department of English; Harrison Eppright, Manager of Visitor Services at Austin Convention and Visitors Bureau and docent for Austin's African American Culture Heritage District; independent filmmaker and director at Alpheus Media, Mat Hames; Professor Andrés Tijerina, Austin Community

College Department of History, and Co-Director of the Handbook of Tejano History Project; Professor Daina Ramey Berry, University of Texas Department of History and African and African Diaspora Studies and the George W. Littlefield Fellow in American History; and genealogist and historical researcher Teri Flack Genealogy, who works with the Austin Genealogical Society. "These speakers reveal how people use archives," says Hecker, "Not just for writing a book or a lawsuit, but as a documentary filmmaker and a genealogist."

Organizers not only recruited an impressive array of repositories and speakers, but also secured sponsorships from area repositories, archival vendors, and professional associations, together totaling \$5,000. This initial funding allowed the committee to book the Spiderhouse Ballroom, a hip event location in the heart of Austin; enlist a professional graphic designer; and purchase oral history booth equipment, now owned by the Archivists of Central Texas. This marks an important development, too, as the group can now repurpose this equipment for future Bazaars and related events. As an independent professional organization not tied to any institution, the Archivists of Central Texas are poised to use this event as a springboard for further organizing and outreach. This sponsorship tally doesn't include the many hundreds hours of time donated by local archivists who are committed to making Hecker's original idea a fully-developed reality. Thanks to their dedication, the Austin Archives Bazaar will likely continue on a biannual basis, as well as provide an example of how to build cross-repository outreach momentum that may prove instructional to other local and regional archivists' groups.

The Bazaar, despite its recent gestation, also already has a coherent brand identity and marketing plan. This includes extensive use of online channels, including social media. Thus this event is not only an important addition to Austin's already-robust festival scene, but also represents an cooperative effort unprecedented in Texas with the aim of increasing visibility across area repositories. The decision to hire a graphic designer to create branding for social media, posters, postcards, buttons, and pens, has proven successful, with more than 200 people engaging with the event's [Facebook page](#) and reporting that they planned to attend, representing a 20% positive response rate on that platform. Through the Austin Archives Bazaar [Twitter account](#), organizers cross-promoted the holdings of participating repositories along with other relevant entities such as the Society of American Archivists and Society of Southwest Archivists (both sponsors) and Texas graduate programs in Information Science (the University of Texas School of Information is also a sponsor).



Hecker and the steering committee are optimistic about the potential for other events modeled on the Austin Archives Bazaar. Sacramento is already doing an [Archives Crawl](#) on the Portland model, and it seems likely that other cities will follow. The Austin committee decided on a bazaar rather than a crawl—wherein attendees go from repository to repository for open houses—because they liked the idea of people literally walking through the doors into an archives. “That can be a speed bump for a lot of people,” Hecker explained. “It’s intimidating for the public.”

Bringing 21 archives under one roof, with a casual, friendly atmosphere and fun activities for everyone from children to seniors may go a long way toward demystifying archives for the community of potential patrons beyond scholarly researchers and other conventional audiences. Attendees completed exit surveys and provided constructive feedback. “I didn’t realize how many archival repositories we have in Central Texas,” said one participant. Another reported, “When my husband and I walked in, we looked at each other and chuckled and didn't even have to say why. Only in Austin could this type of event take place with such unique style: fun, informative, lively, fun, beer, great mix of people, unique venue, fun.” One attendee responded, “[The Austin Archives Bazaar made me feel] connected to the history/archives community in a fun, engaging way.”

On October 16, Austin City Council Member Kathie Tovo officially proclaimed October 19-25, 2014, as “Austin Archives Week.” Making remarks before the Council and to the public at the proclamation, Hecker argued again for the primacy of archives, saying, “We want to make sure everyone in the community is aware of our collections and how they may be of use. We want to dispel the idea that archives are dark buildings filled with moldy rooms of old papers and mean people who make you feel like you’re doing everything wrong. Archives are the foundation of democracy, and archivists work to preserve our shared cultural heritage. We’re here to work for *you*.”

*If you’d like to check out some pictures and videos from the event, visit the Austin Archives Bazaar photoset on [Flickr](#).*

## **“Digi Days: Using the Rey Papers to Teach Digitization to Library Science and Archival Students”**

Emilie Aplin, MLIS Candidate  
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Matthew Griffis, Assistant Professor  
The University of Southern Mississippi

### **Abstract**

Last summer, the University of Southern Mississippi’s Digital Collections, with support from the school’s Library and Information Science Student Association (LISSA), embarked on a new initiative. Called “Digi Day”, the workshop offered current LIS graduate students the opportunity to receive hands-on training and experience in digitization using The Rey Papers, one of the de Grummond Children’s Literature Collection’s most prized collections.

The first “Digi Day” workshop, which took place in June, is just the beginning of what will become a series of similar workshops tentatively planned for Spring and Summer 2015. Digi Day workshops last one full day and involve basic training in digitization techniques, from handling items and running scanners to introductory description and metadata skills. Guest speakers from the local archival community also participate by discussing current projects and emphasizing the importance of gaining digitization experience as early as possible.

Choosing an appropriate collection for Digi Day workshops is no small feat. Organizers must take into account the experience level of volunteers as well as the subject matter and physical condition of the collections. An ideal choice for Digi Day use is a collection that is engaging to digitize and describe, as well as one that is physically appropriate for handling by volunteers with little or no archival experience. This article will report the success of the first “Digi Day” and will cover the selection of materials as well as workshop structure, recruitment, basic training topics and techniques, and volunteer recognition.

## Introduction

Last summer, the University of Southern Mississippi's Digital Collections, with support from the school's Library and Information Science Student Association (LISSA), embarked on a new initiative. Called Digi Day, the workshop offered current LIS graduate students the opportunity to receive hands-on training and experience in digitization using The Rey Papers, one of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection's most prized collections. The workshop was held at the McCain Library and Archives' Digital Lab. Elizabeth La Beaud, the library's Digital Lab Manager and MLIS Candidate, and Emilie Aplin, a



*Student participants learn to complete an image production record during Digi Day orientation at McCain Library and Archives on June 21<sup>st</sup> 2014.*

circulation supervisor at Cook Library, MLIS Candidate, and 2013-2014 LISSA President, were the workshop's two coordinators. Workshop participants received basic training in digitization techniques and metadata creation and gained hands-on experience scanning documents and creating image production records. During a Lunch and Learn session, guest speakers from Mississippi Digital Library and the Aquila Digital

Community addressed volunteers and stressed the importance of digitization work and the skills necessary to work in the field.

Due to the success of the pilot workshop, Digi Day is projected to become an ongoing opportunity for LIS students at the University of Southern Mississippi. This article will report the success of the first Digi Day workshop and will cover selection of materials, workshop structure, recruitment, training topics and techniques, volunteer recognition, and plans for similar, future workshops.

## Background

Archives, primary source materials, and education have had a long relationship. Some archives routinely integrate archival instruction and the use of primary sources into undergraduate curricula, particularly in the humanities fields.<sup>1</sup> Common to all archival education programs is a solid

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<sup>1</sup> Magia G. Krause, "Undergraduates in the Archives: Using an Assessment Rubric to Measure Learning," *American Archivist* 73, no. 2 (2010): 507-534.



grounding in theoretical principles, and many programs also include service-based learning, usually as a practicum or internship, as a requirement for graduation.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) advocates the linking of theory and practice aspects of archival education, especially when learning the core principles of arrangement and description.<sup>2</sup> The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL), with its own standards for special collections professionals at academic libraries, advises that professionals understand not just the relationship between theory and practice but also “the significance of original artifacts and the nature and value of primary materials for learning” as well as “the use of digital asset management systems and metadata for providing access to digitized primary source materials”.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the union of theory and practice during archival training is essential.

A recent study by Donghee Sinn explored the benefits and drawbacks of hands-on training opportunities in archival education programs.<sup>4</sup> Sinn, who polled both students and archivists experienced in such training opportunities, found that students valued not only the chance to link theory to practice but also to network and “test the waters”<sup>5</sup> before actually entering the archival profession. The study also found that professional archivists value their involvement in such programs since they benefited from similar opportunities when they were beginning in the field. They also view these hands-on training opportunities as effective recruitment strategies for future employment.<sup>6</sup> Both students and archivists agreed, however, that the biggest challenge of such programs is the increased time demand and workload for both groups.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Society of American Archivists, “Arrangement and Description,” *Guidelines for a Graduate Program in Archives*, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www2.archivists.org/gpas/curriculum/arrangement-description>.

<sup>3</sup> Association of College and Research Libraries, “Competencies for Special Collections Professionals,” *Guidelines and Standards*, accessed September 29, 2014, <http://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/comp4specollect>.

<sup>4</sup> Donghee Sinn, “Collaborative Education Between Classroom and Workplace for Archival Arrangement and Description: Aiming for Sustainable Professional Education,” *American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (2013): 237-262.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 247.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

Nevertheless, opportunities to meld the theoretical with the practical at the earliest of stages of training is, arguably, of great benefit to archival students, since learning both skill sets at the same time emphasizes not just their interrelatedness but that both are of equal importance for practice.

### **Planning for Digi Day**

Fundamental to the success of any hands-on training experience, whether short- or longer-term, is planning, and Digi Day was no exception. Having never conducted an archival workshop before, the workshop's coordinators started from scratch to create an experience that would be both educational and enjoyable for participants. Primary planning considerations included materials selection, instructional strategies, the structure and mechanics of the workshop itself, workshop advertisement, and recruitment of students.

Since the workshop focused on digitizing collections, selecting appropriate primary materials was the first priority. Coordinators determined that the ideal collection should be in good physical condition and of a subject matter that would be considered widely appealing. At its core, Digi Day is an opportunity for students with little or no archival experience to work with primary documents, thus the coordinators wanted to choose documents that could withstand handling by novices without undue risk of damage. Finding a collection that is both structurally sound and which contains content that appeals to a general audience can be a difficult task. The Rey Papers emerged as the primary candidate, since the collection is in good condition, and the content, which includes handwritten correspondence and illustrations, is a joy for students to explore. After settling on The Rey Papers, the coordinators contacted the curator of the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection, Ellen Ruffin, to obtain proper permission.

After providing full details of the workshop, the coordinators received permission and progressed to the next phase of planning: formalizing the structure of the workshop. Since it was expected that participants would have limited familiarity with the digitization equipment and software, pre-recorded actions were programmed for use during the workshop. Coordinators also created a bound, 29-page handbook for students that contained basic information about metadata best practices and recommended digitization standards, as well as instructions for completing image production records, scanning items, editing digitized images, and creating both master and access copies of final images.

Due to available space and lab equipment, the workshop's coordinators hosted two, five-hour sessions, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with an hour overlap for lunch. Collection boxes were pulled and vetted ahead of time, and each scanning station was assigned one box of items plus a supply of

production records (containing a predetermined filename, but otherwise blank). At the end of each session participants completed a voluntary feedback survey. Coordinators distributed directions to the McCain Library and Archives in advance of each session so that students would report to their assigned session promptly. Speakers from Mississippi Digital Library and the Aquila Digital Community were secured for the Lunch and Learn session; they also contributed promotional items from their respective organizations for the student participants' "goody bags".

The call for Digi Day student volunteers went out in several forms. Coordinators used existing channels, namely the university's School of Library and Information Science (SLIS) listserv and the LISSA (the LIS student group's) Facebook page. SLIS professors were asked to promote the workshop in their classes several weeks before the event, encouraging interested students to contact Digi Day's coordinators for further details.

Of less interest from an archival perspective, but of no less importance, was planning the Lunch and Learn session. Hungry volunteers are not happy volunteers, so coordinators wanted to ensure an adequate lunch complete with input from the student participants. Participants were contacted prior to the event for lunch and dietary preferences and coordinators ordered the food ahead of time. The School of Library and Information Science's LISSA group agreed to sponsor the lunch by covering the food costs.

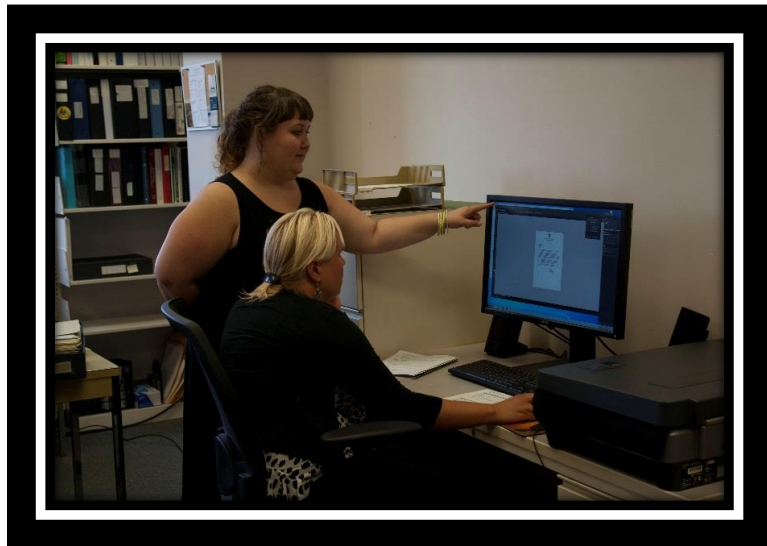
### **Workshop Implementation**

Both the morning and afternoon sessions began with an orientation consisting of background information about H. A. and Margret Rey, as well as basic information about the University of Southern Mississippi's Digital Collections and the de Grummond Children's Literature Collection. Coordinators introduced the workshop handbook, explained Dublin Core metadata standards, and answered questions from students. Participants learned proper techniques for handling archival items, filling out production records, scanning, editing, and saving images.

Following orientation, the student participants used individual scanning stations to put their new knowledge to work. Participants utilized Epson Expression 10000XL and 11000XL scanners and Adobe Photoshop to capture and edit images. Master images were scanned at 600 dpi and saved as TIFF files using the file name pre-assigned to each production record. Student volunteers were responsible for recording all other production record information. Information required on the image production records included collection name and number; box, folder, and item numbers; the date of origin for the original item; and title and description information for each item. Students were also responsible for noting the scanner model, image resolution, and size of the original for each item they digitized, as well as any relevant notes or special comments about an item. After creating the master image for each item, participants generated a 200 dpi access image in JPEG format. Throughout the workshop students asked many questions about digitization and archival practices, and seemed to enjoy learning new skills in a hands-on, applied manner.

Student participants were recognized with a printed Certificate of Participation signed by the Interim Dean of University Libraries, the Assistant to the Dean for Finance and Technology, and the Digital Lab Manager. They also received a goody bag

that included a Curious George t-shirt (featuring an image from The Rey Papers on the front), as well as promotional materials from Mississippi Digital Library and the Aquila Digital Community. Coordinators offered to take a picture of each participant receiving his or her certificate; these images were later emailed to the individual participants for their professional portfolios.



*A Digitization Specialist at the University of Southern Mississippi mentors a Digi Day student participant.*

At the end of each session, participants completed a survey offering feedback about the workshop. Coordinators asked the student volunteers to indicate how much they felt they learned, the effectiveness of instructions, how they heard about Digi Day, whether they would be interested in participating in future events, and effectiveness of the Lunch and Learn presentations. The survey also included a section for volunteers to indicate ideas for

improvements to future Digi Day workshops and asked them to comment on the use of The Rey Papers and whether they felt the collection was engaging to work with.

### **Looking to the Future**

Courses that teach foundational principles, even if they discuss how such principles are applied in the field, are only a beginning for novice archives professionals. Students need opportunities to apply these principles in real-world situations with more senior colleagues supervising their progress, advising the students and providing feedback as needed. Although most archival education programs require the completion of a practicum to graduate, workshops like Digi Day can complement such service-based learning components by offering additional training in specialized competencies. They can also attract new people to the field if workshop organizers are willing to accept participants from non-LIS programs.

Based on the positive feedback of the pilot workshop, the coordinators plan to offer more Digi Day workshops in the future. The goal is to continue the partnership between the University of Southern Mississippi's Digital Collections and LISSA by offering at least one Digi Day workshop each year. Ideally, there will be enough interest and time for coordinators to offer more than one workshop each year, perhaps one in the spring and one during the summer. The response to Digi Day was quite encouraging, and coordinators were excited to see students so interested in digitization and working with primary source materials. The overwhelming positive response illustrates the continued need for educational opportunities of this nature.

## **“Victims of Success: Managing the Consequences of Digital Outreach”**

Sean Benjamin

Tulane University, Louisiana Research Collection

### **Abstract**

For well over a decade, the archival profession has made increased discoverability via digitization and online finding aids one of its primary focuses. Like many other archival institutions, the Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University has worked in recent years to increase accessibility by digitizing its archival holdings and converting legacy paper finding aids into an online format. As part of an undergraduate-focused university, we have worked to make our holdings central to our students' education through an extensive undergraduate archival instruction program. We have also raised our profile through a sustained social media outreach campaign.

All of these efforts have been successful in raising LaRC's profile among diverse researcher groups. We have seen a dramatic increase in reference traffic over the past several years, attributed in large part to the increased discoverability of our collections. Email requests have increased by 70% in recent years, while both phone requests and requests to publish have doubled. These successes, however, bring costs. In an era of austerity in which archival institutions find themselves fighting to preserve what funding they have, a dramatic increase in reference traffic strains the workload of already understaffed departments. As archivists, increasing access to our collections is a laudable goal which is rightly central to our profession. However, we must find a way to handle this reference influx responsibly without reducing services or neglecting other core archival responsibilities. It is my hope that this article will serve as a beginning of a much-needed conversation about priorities among archivists.



## Introduction

For well over a decade, the archival profession has made increased discoverability via digitization and online finding aids a primary focus. Initial calls for online access were facilitated by the development of EAD in 1996<sup>1</sup> and the widespread availability of scanning technology.<sup>2</sup> These developments were followed by evaluations and usability studies that examined how researchers interacted with digital collections and online search tools.<sup>3</sup> Some have even raised the prospect of universal online access to information,<sup>4</sup> though this will likely remain impossible for many years to come. Our profession has also explored the impact of email and remote access on our reference activity,<sup>5</sup> but there has thus far been little written on the correlation between the push for online access and an increase in remote reference traffic.

## LaRC: a case study in online outreach and discoverability

With roots extending back to 1889 and almost four linear miles of holdings, the Louisiana Research Collection at Tulane University is one of the older, larger, and more comprehensive research centers documenting Louisiana history and culture. Like many other archival institutions, the Louisiana Research Collection has worked in recent years to increase

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<sup>1</sup> For early discussion on implementing online finding aids, see Jill Tatem, "EAD: Obstacles to Implementation, Opportunities for Understanding," *Archival Issues* 23 (1998): 155-69; and Elizabeth H. Dow, "EAD and the Small Repository," *American Archivist* 60 (Fall 1997): 446-55.

<sup>2</sup> An early digitization project is described in John H. Whaley, Jr. "Digitizing History," *American Archivist* 57 (Fall,1994): 660-672.

<sup>3</sup> For three early examples of online search tool evaluations, see Kathleen Feeney, "Retrieval of Archival Finding Aids Using World-Wide-Web Search Engines," *American Archivist* (Fall 1999): 206-228; Helen R. Tibbo, "Primarily History in America: How U.S. Historians Search for Primary Materials at the Dawn of the Digital Age," *American Archivist* 66 (Spring/Summer 2003): 9-50; Burt Allman and John Nemmers, "The Usability of Online Archival Resources: The Polaris Project Finding Aid," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001): 121-31.

<sup>4</sup> Brewster Kahle, "Universal Access to All Knowledge," *American Archivist* 70 (Spring-Summer, 2007): 23-31.

<sup>5</sup> Kristin E. Martin, "Analysis of Remote Reference Correspondence at a Large Academic Manuscripts Collection," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001): 17-42; Wendy M. Duff and Catherine A. Johnson, "A Virtual Expression of Need: An Analysis of Archival Reference Questions," *American Archivist* 64 (Spring/Summer 2001):43-60.

accessibility by digitizing its archival holdings and converting legacy paper finding aids into an online format.

In 2008, when LaRC decided to prioritize increased accessibility, its search tools were woefully out of date. The primary access point to its archival holdings was an incomplete name-and- subject paper card catalog in wooden drawers. This catalog referred in turn to a series of paper finding aids in binders - a hodge-podge of item-level calendars, box-level inventories, and partial guides compiled according to inconsistent descriptive standards that changed from decade to decade.

The website offered a dozen PDFs of paper finding aids, but no other online search tools aside from the OPAC for published items, and no digital collections in the modern sense of the term. Several online exhibits displayed selected items from LaRC's collections, but these were meant to entice researchers to visit rather than to substitute for in-person research. We had participated in several grant-funded consortial digital projects, but lacked the capacity to create digital collections in-house.

With the 2008 addition of a cataloging librarian to its staff, LaRC began creating collection level MARC records for its most heavily-used collections. Another processing staff member began to create online finding aids using the Archon archival description software. Since these early starts, LaRC's online presence has expanded exponentially. In 2011, LaRC received funding for a retrospective archival finding aid project to outsource the conversion of legacy paper finding aids into an online format.

As of 2014, over 850 of our archival collections – representing more than 80% of our holdings by volume – now have online Archon finding aids that are easily discoverable through Google searches, and archival processing staff continue to create new finding aids in-house. We also have collection-level MARC records, which are searchable through our parent library's OPAC, for over 620 of our most heavily used archival collections.

LaRC has also made great strides in creating online digital collections by digitizing and creating metadata for some of our most important and heavily-used archival collections. Early LaRC digitization projects were chosen on the basis of research value and donor relations: our first true digital collection, an extensive collection of Carnival float and costume designs, was digitized and placed online in 2010. More recent digitization projects have been selected based on frequency of use in order to reduce reference load. Major new topical collections combine entire archival series from a number of different collections, for example "French Colonial, Spanish Colonial, and Nineteenth-

Century Louisiana Documents," have opened our holdings to an entirely new user base that would be unable to visit our reading room to research in person.

A sustained social media outreach campaign consisting of a new, regularly updated blog, Facebook page, Twitter account, and e-mail newsletter have further raised our archive's public profile.

### **Quantifiable successes: Reference by the numbers**

All of these efforts have successfully raised LaRC's profile among diverse researcher groups. Our dramatically increased visibility has brought a huge influx of reference queries, many of them from new researchers who were unaware of LaRC or didn't previously have occasion or opportunity to use our collections. This increase in reference traffic can be attributed directly to the increased online discoverability of our collections. When a new finding aid or MARC record goes online, or when a new digital collection is unveiled, there is a direct increase in queries regarding that collection.

In the last four years, we've seen a 40% increase in overall LaRC reference transactions. This increase has not been evenly distributed among the various means of communication. The number of researchers physically visiting our reading room has increased by 19% between 2010 and 2014, which alone is significant growth, but the number of requests we respond to remotely via phone or email has exploded over the past four years. Email reference requests have increased by 69%; these interactions with remote researchers now constitute nearly half of LaRC's reference transactions. We've also had a 103% increase in phone reference and a 100% increase in requests to reproduce LaRC materials in publications and films. These permission requests indicate that much of our reference growth comes from serious researchers doing publication-quality work.

With this increase in numbers comes a qualitative shift in how researchers interact with archivists and archives. While some researchers still use footnotes, bibliographies, and other more traditional means of tracking down archival sources, most of our requests now come from researchers who have learned about our holdings through online searches. Many of these researchers have never been to an archive, do not understand what an archive is, and often do not fully grasp what they're looking at or who they're contacting. When a genealogist comes across their family's name in a finding aid during a Google search, much of the reference interaction is necessarily taken up with explaining the nature of archival work and what's possible without visiting to conduct research in person. There are common misconceptions: Are all of your documents available online? If not, can you

copy them for me, or do research for me? If not, why not? As reference archivists, we are now engaged in archival outreach, advocacy, and education with user groups we never would have interacted with in the pre-digital age.

### **Archives in the age of austerity**

Outreach to new user groups, improved discoverability of sources, greater online visibility: all of these developments are unquestionably successes. As archivists, increasing access to our collections is a laudable goal which is rightly central to our profession. These successes accomplish our institution's calling to preserve and make accessible Louisiana's archival cultural heritage, and they represent in many ways the fulfillment of the profession's core goals. These successes, however, bring costs.

At a time when archival institutions find themselves fighting to preserve what funding they have, a dramatic increase in reference traffic strains the workload of already understaffed departments. LaRC's parent institution is a major private university with substantial resources; nonetheless, our archive's staffing levels have been cut by half over the past ten years. With this staffing situation, one archivist in a small 4-person department spends nearly 80% of his time responding to reference queries. Responding to reference requests is a time-sensitive task that is difficult to predict and plan for. We must find a way to handle this reference influx responsibly without unduly reducing vital services or neglecting other archival responsibilities.

Other institutions have fared much worse than LaRC. No matter the fiscal situation of our parent institutions, an archive that can successfully make the case for additional resources or staff is a rare one indeed. Given this austerity, what can we do to reallocate resources and determine which core functions should receive priority? Surely we cannot and should not go back to the days of pre-digital access, when archives were relatively inaccessible and hidden; closed off to the wider world beyond regular archival researchers with the time, resources, and familiarity to visit the reading room and successfully navigate paper search tools. As archivists it is our ethical responsibility to provide equitable access to our collections to any and all researchers regardless of their location or affiliation. While we can't provide the same level of access to remote researchers as we do to reading room researchers, we nonetheless consider responding to reference requests from remote researchers professionally, promptly, and courteously to be a priority and a primary responsibility.

### **The search for a sustainable way forward**

Taking into account the dire staffing and funding levels common to so many institutions, this level of growth is unsustainable. LaRC has taken steps to decrease the amount of time we spend on reference questions in several ways. We have increased student worker involvement by training them to assist the reference archivist with reference requests by performing basic searches and assembling lists of potential sources in response to queries. We have worked to improve our website and our online search tools in order to make it easier for researchers to navigate our collections with less staff involvement. We have tried to reduce the types of searches we will conduct for long-distance researchers while still holding to the principle of maintaining open and equitable access. We have also been forced to impose a slight reduction in our reading room hours.

Our experiences in archival instruction may suggest one way forward. As part of an undergraduate-focused university, we have worked to make our holdings central to our students' education through an extensive undergraduate archival instruction program. Our early efforts were designed mainly as an outreach tool, focused on presenting LaRC as a welcoming environment for undergraduate research and as a repository with a wide array of fascinating archival sources. The instructional focus was on entertainment; therefore, much of each session was spent on archival show-and-tell with a lecture format, with lively explanations of archival documents displayed for students to examine as a single large group.

More recently, though, our approach to archival pedagogy has shifted. We have been bringing our instruction practice more closely in line with recent developments in the Reference, Access, and Outreach section of the SAA and have begun collaborating with other instruction librarians in our parent university library. We now work with faculty to make LaRC archival holdings a central component of the students' coursework, including as much consultation in syllabus and assignment design as is possible. In our instruction sessions, we have introduced ways for students to engage more closely with archival documents by designing small group discussions and in-class assignments which train students in evaluating archival sources. This has resulted in a significant improvement in the level of student interest and engagement with the documents and with the material covered in the sessions, as evidenced by a significant increase in the number of undergraduates who use LaRC in their research projects without a corresponding increase in the reference burden.

This successful instruction program has created a new, more skilled group of undergraduate users who are trained in doing archival research and thus more capable of self-directed research. Many of our other regular researchers are now familiar with how our online search tools work, and so also require less instruction and mediation by archival staff. For other user groups and for the general public, though, there has not yet been a similar shift from entertainment and enticement to more active education in archival research. Can we draw lessons from undergraduate instruction in educating the broader public?

There may be no easy answers, but in an age where our users expect universal online access to the world's information, we must help them towards a more realistic understanding of what is available online and what research services understaffed archival institutions can be expected to provide. The next step is determining how to do this, and it is my hope that this article might serve as a beginning to this necessary conversation among archivists.