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Jeffery Hirschy, Ph.D.

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## Archives and Cemeteries

Editorial by Dr. Jeffery Hirschy

I like Halloween. It's my favorite holiday. I like to dress up, I like to read about it's history, and when it's the season, I like to integrate its story into my classes when I can. I've often found that the story of Halloween can be an important tool to teach students important aspects of history, anthropology, archival studies, and library studies. This can range from how Halloween first developed as a holiday, how different human societies celebrated the holiday, and then how it is remembered and preserved in archives and libraries when there is so many different ways to celebrate it in so many different cultures. In a way, and an often fun way, it shows students how they will have to preserve and describe materials in archives and libraries from multiple different angles and in multiple different ways to serve their institution's chosen communities.

Any discussion of Halloween will inevitable include something related to cemeteries. For example, in LIS 646: Introduction to Archival Theory this past semester, I, and my class, were discussing alternative definitions of archives one class. In general, archives are institutions that tell stories. I was trying to get my students to realize that archives are just not institutions with various human produced traditional historical items in them. Archives can be natural, like a swamp, and they can also be things that may not seem like archives at first glance, like cemeteries. Cemeteries tell stories. They are full of stories and information that tell the stories of the people interred within them.

Once cemeteries came into the conversation, one student, Mandy Hornsby, mentioned that her institution, the Biloxi Public Library, helps sponsors a cemetery tour at the Old Biloxi Cemetery in Biloxi, Mississippi. She also said that it was coming up and that anyone in the class who could make it was invited to make the trip. Connecting with students, and fostering a sense of community here at the School of Library and Information Science, is important, and cemeteries are cool, so I announced on the spot that I was going to attend the cemetery tour myself and any student who could make the trip was invited along on this impromptu "field trip."

My fiancée, Laura Hitchcock, and I met up with Mandy and several other students (Jessica Herr,

Kimberlee Reynolds, Maude Cusimano, and her husband) on October 19, 2021 to wander through the Old Biloxi Cemetery and talk with some of the residents there. Performers brought multiple residents to life from seafood workers like Ida Champeaux and Teresa Ewing to Leda Anglada, a woman who worked in downtown Biloxi for decades helping people plan their own weddings.

**Image 1.**  
*Mandy Hornsby explaining the history of the Old Biloxi Cemetery to one of her fellow classmates.*



Photo credit: Dr. Jeff Hirschy

In addition to the performers, one could walk through the cemetery and examine other cemetery markers and visit the graves of anyone in the cemetery. Going to the Old Biloxi Cemetery Tour showed my students, my fiancée, and myself that cemeteries are archives that tell the stories of the people who were here before us. All we have to do is go and listen.



**Image 2.** *An open above ground tomb at the Old Biloxi Cemetery.*

Photo credit: Dr. Jeff Hirschy