

1-1-2013

Students in the Field at the University of Michigan

Erin Platte
University of Michigan

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Platte, Erin (2013) "Students in the Field at the University of Michigan," *MAC Newsletter*: Vol. 40 : No. 3 , Article 12.
Available at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/macnewsletter/vol40/iss3/12>

This Up-and-Comers is brought to you for free and open access by Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in MAC Newsletter by an authorized editor of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

Consider the following scenario: a potential donor is interested in donating a quite valuable collection of manuscripts and memorabilia, but later, upon viewing the collection in storage, adds the stipulation that every object in the collection be preserved in Mylar. The collection of over two thousand items has already been acquired, arranged, and described at the item level by the original archivist. The preservation of the collection, now *your* responsibility, requires a period of approximately one week of working hours, which can be extremely taxing on both material and human resources but is nonetheless necessary. Following this weeklong extravaganza, you, the up-and-coming archivist, begin dreaming at night of being lost in an endless and inescapable forest of Mylar! Although archival work of this sort can seem daunting, it is important to remember these are the “dues one must pay” to gain insight and perspective on matters not only of labor, but also the importance of public and professional relations.

Many up-and-comers choose archival studies in the hopes that they will be able to avoid social interaction, and instead process collections in solitude and haunt the stacks like ghosts. To be certain, this is a very romantic

and fundamentally misguided notion. Information science itself is created by and for the people, meaning that archivists must not only tailor their work to meet the needs of users, but must also cooperate with coworkers and the information science community at-large to determine and accomplish appropriate goals. Every master’s degree candidate in this field takes a management course, but no textbook can provide the practical experience of interpersonal communication. “People skills” are a must, and, as with the unexpected hiccups that occupy so much of the archival profession, they cannot necessarily be taught in a classroom, nor will personal interactions always unfold as planned.

Ultimately, it is how we choose to deal with these inherent uncertainties that characterizes the nature of our profession. Flexibility, adaptability, and a positive attitude are essential to keeping calm and expecting the unexpected when faced with the unusual challenges of archives and special collections.

Up-and-Comers News Bytes

Students in the Field at the University of Michigan

By Erin Platte, University of Michigan SAA Student Chapter

This year, the Student Chapter of the Society of American Archivists at the University of Michigan is focusing on building a stronger bridge among chapter members, the archival field, alumni, and the Ann Arbor community in general. Students are working to provide members with a variety of opportunities to become actively involved with their communities, and at the same time showcase their work. During the summer, the group created a blog series entitled *Students in the Field*, featuring the work of Chapter members. This series encourages readers to explore new aspects of the archival field previously considered to be beyond their reach. In addition, the Chapter implemented service projects that assisted both the campus radio station (WCBN) and the Matthaei Botanical Gardens in the digitization and preservation of their collections.

The Student Chapter is currently inviting speakers to present information on a variety of subjects, including

unexpected job opportunities in the archival field, born-digital materials, and certification. Shadrack Katuu of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) recently spoke about unique opportunities for archivists, while Mark Matienzo, a digital archivist at Yale University, introduced students to digital forensics using open source tools. In the coming year, the Chapter anticipates discussions between university alumni and current students through an event series entitled *Words of Wisdom*, and will be actively promoting collaboration with other student chapters. As the SAA Student Chapter at the University of Michigan moves into a new year, it looks forward to inviting additional archivists to speak to members, either in person or via video chat, on a range of issues including certification and advocacy.