

# Introduction of SAA President Jackie Dooley

Merrilee Proffitt and Bill Landis

*MP:* Jackie Dooley's professional reach is both impressive and expansive, as is her, shall we say, personal style. We decided it would take two of us to introduce her, even though many of you know her well already. As just one example of the breadth of her professional impact, she and Bill Joyce are the only two people to have served as both SAA president and chair of ACRL's Rare Books and Manuscripts Section over the fifty-four years during which those two organizations have co-existed. Since her early career working in the Library of Congress's Prints and Photographs Division, to her days at the Getty and UC Irvine, Jackie has always been a self-professed cataloging geek, and being fluent in the *lingua franca* of MARC and descriptive standards, has successfully bridged the archival/book divide.

*BL:* If you don't know Jackie, you will quickly learn that she is a self-professed and unrepentant grammar pedant, who will compliment your outfit and correct your sentence construction in the same breath, or offer you a preferred word choice as reflexively as some of us blink our eyes or bite our nails. That's probably the most important reason why there are two of us managing this introduction.

*MP:* Right, because that way we can blame one another for any faults, oversights, or inaccuracies, although I can't imagine Jackie doing anything other than approving of us up here on the podium. Among her many wonderful traits, Jackie loves to promote her "kids" as she calls us, regardless of age. One of the things I've always admired about Jackie is her ability to

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make spot-on connections between people, to facilitate, to make things happen. For example, Jackie played an unheralded yet key role in the early days of the Berkeley Finding Aids Project. At a meeting of UC archivists and librarians, she heard a Berkeley authorities librarian named Daniel Pitti talking about some crazy notion of using Standard Generalized Markup Language to encode archival finding aids. Jackie suggested that he needed to engage with some archival description gurus who were friends of hers and the rest, as they say, is history.

BL: Yes, and she makes those connections and gets things done in such a Jackie kind of way. I remember in the early days of University of California-wide EAD work, when we desperately needed some common encoding guidelines and nothing existed. Jackie got a half-dozen or so special collections people together from different UC campuses and the Getty, including you and me; put us up on sleeping bags scattered around her house for two days; fed us; cajoled us; gave us coffee and boogie boards in the morning and sent us down to the San Clemente beach; and gestated the production of the first version of what eventually became the Online Archive of California EAD Best Practice Guidelines. Another good example of this cheerful can-do spirit is the work that Jackie has done during her presidential year in getting broad input and taking creative approaches to the work of the Annual Meeting Task Force and on SAA's strategic planning process. There's a real lesson in leadership, I think—a reminder that facilitating, making the connections, and stepping back to let things happen can often be a visionary action.

MP: Along with enthusiastically embracing people, Jackie has also enthusiastically embraced technology—although not always entirely successfully. However, her lack of aptitude has not deterred her in the slightest. At the 2008 RBMS preconference, Jackie discovered that I was Facebook friends with Terry Belanger, founder of the Rare Book School. This blew her mind, and she spent the rest of the evening quizzing me about Facebook. By the next day she had joined. If she is not Facebook friends with you, it's because you are abstaining or because she has not ferreted you out yet. Extending her social media reach, in her term as SAA president, Jackie inaugurated the *Off the Record* blog as a key communication device for SAA and has also become an enthusiastic voice on Twitter. As a decidedly nontechnical person, Jackie might not be an obvious candidate to lead the charge into the mysteries of "born digital." Deciding that she did not understand this critical area, and that time was a-wasting, she took it upon herself to school up on electronic records. When she joined OCLC Research, she took on tackling the born-digital challenge in a way that

would make dealing with born digital more accessible to more institutions, regardless of size or resources.

*BL:* Speaking of resources, for those of you who have not had the pleasure of dining with Jackie, a word of advice. This is never an inexpensive undertaking, and you need to budget accordingly if she's picking either the restaurant or the wine. Oh, and she will almost certainly end up flirting with a waiter. Jackie is nothing if not demonstrative in her enthusiasm for her friends and colleagues—and she's an inveterate smoocher. She worried out loud once when she was my boss whether or not she could be accused of sexual harassment for giving me smooches at professional meetings. The first time I met her was at the Chicago Annual Meeting in 1997. She arrived late from California and got to the Fairmont Hotel just as a group of EAD folks was getting ready to depart the lobby for dinner. I was there through the good graces of Kris Kiesling and Michael Fox. Jackie breezed in and went down the line of her dinner pals giving each a big kiss. I was last in the line, and, after planting a kiss on me, she held me away at arm's length and said, "Wait, I don't know you!" Well, Jackie, you do now.

*MP:* Jackie, we don't have enough time to tell the audience other things we think they should know about you, like your enthusiasm for driving. Perhaps Steve Hensen can relate a story or two about the hair-raising drive to Southern California after the 2008 meeting in San Francisco. Or about your love for your family and especially your step-children. And then there are the cats. Or about how you took on replicating and extending the 1998 Association of Research Libraries survey on special collections, not only in the United States and Canada, but by bringing the survey to the United Kingdom and Ireland. We'll be digging through that data and dealing with the challenges you put forward to the community for some time to come. You still have many years in your career, but I think your enduring legacy will be your relentlessly positive spirit and your ability to leverage and mentor so many of us over the years, including Bill and me and countless others.

And now, please join us in welcoming your SAA president, Jackie Dooley.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Merrilee Proffitt** is a senior program officer in OCLC Research. She provides project management skills and expert support to institutions represented within the OCLC Research Library Partnership. She is an active member of the Society of American Archivists and the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries (RBMS-ACRL), and she serves on ACRL's Research Planning and Review Committee. She has also served on the Metadata Encoding and Transmission Standard Editorial Board and the Text Encoding Initiative Council, and she currently serves on the Encoded Archival Description Working Group. Proffitt has authored or co-authored articles, guidelines, and reports for a variety of organizations and professional journals. She is frequently an invited speaker at international professional conferences and workshops on topics relating to digital libraries and special collections. Her current projects and interests include archival description, increasing access to special collections, the impact of copyright on primary source materials, digital library initiatives, looking at developing better relationships between *Wikipedia* and cultural heritage institutions, and how Massively Open Online Courseware may impact libraries. Before coming to her current job in 2001, Proffitt was director of digital archives development at the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.



**Bill Landis** is head of Public Services in Manuscripts and Archives at the Yale University Library. Previously he served as head of Special Collections Research and Instructional Services at the Louis Round Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; as metadata coordinator for the California Digital Library; as manuscripts librarian in Special Collections and Archives at the University of California, Irvine; and as the first production coordinator for JSTOR. He earned a BA in history from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and holds an MLIS from the University of Michigan. He has published articles, given presentations, and taught classes and workshops on the subjects of archival description and associated standards, user and usability issues, and archival information access systems. He has been a member of SAA's Encoded Archival Description Working Group, contributing to the production of the first two versions of the *EAD Tag Library* and the *EAD Application Guidelines*, version 1.0. He was a member of the U.S. contingent of the Canadian-U.S. Taskforce on Archival Description (CUSTARD) and contributed to the first version of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS). He is currently serving his final year of a term on SAA Council and is a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists.

# Feeding Our Young

Jackie Dooley  
New Orleans, August 16, 2013

If we're interested in being well-regarded in our larger institutions and in society, we have to do our best to nurture young professionals."<sup>1</sup> This is from an April 2010 blog post by SAA member Maureen Callahan, on which more later.

In response to her assertion, here is my question: are we in SAA doing all that we can do, and should do, to welcome our student members and other new professionals, and to nurture their entry into the archival profession? To ease their way into having this Annual Meeting be productive and satisfying rather than a prospect faced with trepidation? To let them know that when we say, "You are the future of our profession," it's more than a platitude?

First, terminology: I'll be repeatedly using the term "new archivists" to subsume students and new professionals, the demographic to which our eighteen-month-old SNAP Roundtable is targeted. I'll also say "we" a lot—and by this I'll generally mean both SAA's leadership and those members who are too experienced to consider themselves "new." (I rejected using "old" to describe my own cohort.)

Second, the scope of my remarks:

- What brought me to this topic
- The excitement that many new archivists feel about the existence of SNAP (the Students and New Archives Professionals Roundtable)
- "Lessons learned" from my forays into social media

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- Some ways in which I believe we can help new archivists, and vice versa
- Jobs

Third, a preview of the points I suggest as your takeaways, otherwise known as “this is what will be on the test”:

- We in SAA need to have a serious dialogue about the difficult employment market that new archival professionals face. Earlier this year, Council identified employment as a “mega-issue” that the Society must address.
- We need more professional job openings that are truly entry-level and that provide both a living wage and benefits.
- If we are to understand the needs of new archivists, we must be sufficiently tuned into the communication channels to which they are innately attracted; it’s where they are present, and we should be too.
- In that vein, we need to stop dismissing social media as a fad or unnecessary time waster. As SAA member Jeremy Floyd said on Twitter recently, “Twitter is an echo chamber.”
- We need to agree on the value of civil professional discourse as a means of fostering effective communication across generations.

Why should we care about “new archivists”? We have data.<sup>2</sup> Of SAA’s 6,200 members,

- 21 percent are under the age of thirty; a total of 49 percent are under the age of forty.
- 51 percent have been SAA members for five years or less.
- 21 percent of individual members are students.
- 19 percent pay dues in the “under \$20,000/year” category.

In other words, at least half of our members are either graduate students, recent entrants to our profession, or earning far less than a living wage. We do not have data about the percentage of new archivists who are unemployed, underemployed (such as in paraprofessional positions), or employed part time.

Needless to say, archivists are not the only people in this nation who face these challenges—but I’m here to talk about us. It’s useful to consider some of the issues in the context of our broader society—the nation’s economic situation isn’t a conspiracy against the archival profession *per se*—nevertheless, we must ask ourselves what steps may be possible to improve the situation of our newer colleagues.

Why did I select this as my topic before I ride off into the sunset as the latest SAA past president? I didn’t go into my presidential year with a formal “theme” in mind. I was advised by some of my predecessors that I shouldn’t see this year as being “all about me,” but rather as a collaboration with my fellow Council members, the rest of SAA’s leaders, and the members in general. And, a corollary: it would be unwise to declare an “agenda” that is more grand or

ambitious than can be readily accomplished in one year's time. That's all a president has. And Council had plenty on its plate already without my adding to it.

And so, I decided to focus on listening, and to lots of different voices. To be an effective leader, one must know whom she is leading and carefully consider their needs and concerns. As the years of my own career have gotten longer, and longer, one of my absolute top sources of personal reward has been the ability to help newer colleagues. When I walk through the halls at an SAA meeting and run into the many "alumni" (as I like to consider them) of the special collections and archives program that I directed for fourteen years at the University of California, Irvine (UCI), I feel proud. Not that I can take credit for their successes! But I do know that I did everything I consciously could to help them learn the business, have expansive opportunities, and launch their careers well.

I'd like to brag about them. We developed a powerful track record in our fairly small Department of Special Collections and Archives for hiring true entry-level archivists, as well as paraprofessionals headed to or already enrolled in an archival graduate program, who have gone on to become influential members of SAA and the profession in general. I'll name several: Lynnette Stoudt is president of the Society of Georgia Archivists and director of the Georgia Historical Society. Julia Stringfellow is president of the Council of Inter-Mountain Archivists. Adrian Turner has played a central role in building, sustaining, and incrementally improving the Online Archive of California. Cyndi Shein is a star archivist at the Getty Trust. Laura Clark Brown manages the monumental "long civil rights moment" digitization project at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

I probably shouldn't even mention Bill Landis and Michelle Light, both of whom currently serve on SAA Council, since they already knew what they were doing before they came to UCI—and probably taught me more than I could possibly teach them. But I did practice what I preach by giving them wide-ranging opportunities to broaden their portfolios, not to mention many degrees of freedom in their pursuit of excellence, both on the job and in their professional development. And can you imagine how amazing it has felt to be at the Council table with two of my UCI colleagues?

Most of you with many years in the profession have your own list, probably far longer than mine. But I get to stand up here today and heap praise on *my* colleagues, so how could I pass up such a luscious opportunity?

## The SNAP-o-sphere, the Tweet-o-sphere, and the Blogosphere

My adventure in listening caused me to back into what turned out to be a time-intensive foray into the social media sphere—which, inevitably, meant lots of listening to and conversing with (140 characters at a time) some recent

arrivals to the archival profession who are active there. I tuned in through three principal channels—I was a devoted reader of the SNAP listserv, I followed some influential voices on Twitter, and I established the SAA leadership blog *Off the Record*. I'd like to talk about the first two.

First, the SNAP listserv. I subscribed as soon as it was launched in January 2012, and for a few weeks I kept a list of the reasons that participants expressed for being excited about the launch of an SAA group focused on students and new professionals. A summary:

- Network with archivists in a similar phase of their careers.
- Participate in an SAA forum without any fear of intimidation.
- Get to know each other and offer mutual support.
- Reduce the isolation felt by those in distance learning programs.
- Bridge the gap between those with experience and those without.
- Find out about the mentorship program.
- Find out about the ACA certification process.
- Learn about the field in general.
- Help bring new ideas to SAA and the profession and counteract “this is how it’s always been done” syndrome.
- Learn about the Annual Meeting and coordinate with others ahead of time.
- Discuss internships.
- Commiserate with and get advice from others who are suffering through the job search.
- Finally, a supervisor was in search of ideas for opportunities she could provide to students and new archivists on her staff. I was exceedingly happy to see that one.

In other words, I saw three central themes: network, learn about SAA and our profession, and get a job. Is it fair to say that, across the rather vast landscape of SAA sections, roundtables, committees, and other forums, discussion of these issues is largely unique to SNAP? For new archivists seeking a comfort zone, SNAP’s leaders and members have done a brilliant job of building an energetic community in a very short time. The emergence of SNAP has given this cohort a powerful new way to connect and participate and, perhaps most important, feel welcomed.

SNAP also has an active blog featuring posts on topics of interest to its cohort. One example: all 2013 candidates for SAA elected office were invited to answer a few questions. As is so often true when I read something by our incoming vice president/president-elect, the amazing Kathleen Roe, I felt she hit the nail on the head in her typical articulate, direct style: “The Roundtable gives people an immediate virtual network of others with a similar context, colleagues who are likely to have common experiences, concerns, and a desire



to communicate. It can provide the environment for exploring ideas or needs, and particularly at this time when there are real challenges for students in the job market and for new professionals, talking to others is incredibly important and helpful.”<sup>3</sup>

SNAP also hosts periodic Twitter chat fests scheduled at 8:00 p.m. eastern time. Sometimes a topic is announced in advance, and sometimes any topic is fair game. In the run-up to New Orleans, one such chat centered on questions about the Annual Meeting and more experienced participants responded to questions posed by first timers. Suffice it to say that the phrase most frequently spoken was “thank you.”

And so a huge thank-you and congratulations to Rebecca Goldman, the intrepid force behind the creation of SNAP, and its founding chair, for having made all this happen, and to her supporting actor, Council liaison Kate Theimer, for lending enthusiastic support and facilitating preparation of an excellent proposal that sped through the Council approval process.

My final word on SNAP: the true test of its success will be to launch its members successfully as confident and productive participants in SAA and the profession at large. I look forward to watching as each of today’s students and new archivists takes to the podium and the leadership roster, enriching us all with their energy and new ideas.

I’ll now move on to everybody’s favorite social media scapegoat, Twitter.

Here’s a quick tutorial for those who have stayed as far away as possible from this much-ridiculed networking medium. Twitter’s model for making connections is this. You search for the names of people or organizations of interest and choose to “follow” them; you can then see all their postings and the conversations in which they’re involved. They may or may not notice that you’re a follower. They don’t have to approve you, though apparently they can opt to ban you from their feed. This model means that you can enter a conversation silently, and if you don’t speak up, no one knows you’re there. Surprising things may ensue.

Before beginning to troll Twitter in pursuit of my listening objectives, I was connected mostly in circles related to my day job in OCLC Research. I tweeted from conferences, forwarded links I found interesting that related to issues in the archives and research library sectors, and followed “thought leaders” who are important to my work. I then expanded my horizons and found myself reading threads involving archivists who are mostly much younger than my own demographic.

So what did I experience?

- I was an outsider in that I didn’t know standard Twitter conversation conventions and wasn’t part of groups of people who know each other, even if only on Twitter.

- I felt I was an intruder (though I can't know whether others saw me that way): many conversations seemed to carry an implicit assumption that no one was listening who might have a different perspective.
- I felt a need to speak up to become a known presence rather than an invisible lurker. If I didn't engage, how would I learn anything of value?
- I sometimes became very frustrated when trying to ask what I felt were fair questions, seeking to have a balanced conversation, but encountering what seemed like inflexible black-and-white attitudes. (This is where the truism about the impossibility of conducting nuanced dialogue in messages of 140 characters or fewer comes into play.)
- Increasingly, I wondered whether some of the profoundly negative, even nasty, comments I was hearing were skewing my attitude about our younger members. Happily, visits to SAA student chapters, listening to SNAP, and other interactions counteracted that.

Conflict and misunderstanding across generations is nothing new, but in today's world, it's so much easier than ever to speak "publicly" to disseminate one's ideas and attitudes. Formerly private conversations are now easily available to many readers for whom the words weren't expressly intended. We've all known this for years in the context of email listservs ("Oops, didn't mean to 'reply all' to that one!"). The ease is that much greater in the Twitter environment and to a lesser degree in the context of other social media.

I recently received the following comment from an SAA member who is active in the leadership of one of our component groups. She expressed the nature of my fretting better than I had been able to voice it for myself: "I am concerned about the generation gap between established archival professionals and new archival professionals. I am solidly in Generation X, and I have ten years of archival experience under my belt. I am troubled by the bursts of rage that erupt on social media from time to time about the archival profession. It sometimes seems as though young professionals are so frustrated with the profession and their situations that they would gladly rip apart SAA if they could. I don't have any answers, but I think that bleak futures for some of the young professionals and the concomitant anger at SAA merit careful thought and action."

I agree with every word. The rage is often warranted, but the conversation can be destructive. SAA's leaders must think deeply about these complex issues and identify meaningful actions in response.

## The Job Market Really Is a Problem

Some of the most potent takeaways from my adventures in Twitter relate to employment.

- How frustrated some new archivists are by the dismal job market
- How virulently angry some are about management practices they've encountered in the workplace
- How unfettered they can be in expressing their anger and disgust, sometimes anonymously
- How controversial the topic of internships can be

And now, the source of the title of this talk, "Feeding Our Young." Some in the audience will have guessed at the outset.

On an otherwise sunny day late in 2012, I followed a link in a tweet that led me to a blog titled *You Ought To Be Ashamed*.<sup>4</sup> Its URL is [eatingouryoung.wordpress.com](http://eatingouryoung.wordpress.com). The blog's tag line is "You were unemployed once too, man," and its statement of purpose is this: "Beware, employers. If you post an offensive and ridiculous job ad for a wage-slave masquerading as a professional position, you may be featured here. And mocked. Mercilessly." Perhaps a couple dozen articles were posted between 2010 and November 2012, at which point the blog fell silent.

*You Ought To Be Ashamed* posted the kind of stories that, in my day, we would have told in smoky bars while putting away a great deal of beer or too many tequila shots while being extremely loud and obnoxious, not caring who heard us, but with a much narrower audience than Twitter affords. We definitely would have spurned the kind of bar visited by the boss types. Perhaps Twitter emulates that kind of camaraderie for the present generation—but anyone can listen in.

The blog's founder is SAA member Maureen Callahan, whom I quoted in my opening as having blogged that "If we're interested in being well-regarded in our larger institutions and in society, we have to do our best to nurture young professionals." That statement is from her very first post, as is this one: "This is a forum to list TERRIBLE job ads (with commentary!), job horror stories, and more encouragingly, stories of excellent employers and strategies for positive professional development that help us all. We're much more interested in *structural* injustices than had-a-bad-day stories." Perhaps predictably, the horror stories were more numerous than the positive ones—but that's to be expected. Such stories rightfully inflame passions. A sense of social justice in the workplace is clearly what brought together the sixteen bloggers registered as contributors. Is there a blog out there that addresses the positive employers and strategies part? One that could serve to *feed* our young instead of focusing principally on the absurd job postings that require a graduate degrees for part-time, temporary positions that offer no benefits and barely pay a living wage? Don't get me wrong. I, too, am appalled by those job ads; their very existence does harm to our profession, not to mention to the effective preservation and delivery of those archival records.

Of course new and aspiring archivists aren't the only ones affected by our "challenging economy," to borrow a euphemistic phrase. The popular press has been addressing the issue with regularity in the broader societal context. A spring 2013 article in the *New York Times* titled "Frayed Prospects" pointed to a lost generation: "If you're a 2011 or a 2012 grad, the competition just got fierce—even more fierce—with the let-out of the 2013 class."<sup>5</sup>

The article drew more than two hundred comments, one of which picked up the "eating and feeding" theme in a mince-no-words fashion that may resonate with some members of Generations X and Y: "America [is] under the leadership of the selfish and narcissistic baby boom generation [that] is now eating its young." Another commenter noted that "... employers are just saying they are not interested in 2009 grads who have spent the last 4 years feeling sorry for themselves, sitting around and not developing their job skills." In other words, it's critical to maintain your professional commitment and zeal during those depressing months, or years, of searching in vain for meaningful employment.

I also discovered a library blog of which I've become quite fond: *Gavia Libraria* (*Library Loon*). In a 2011 post, the Loon (as she self-refers) noted that "Academic librarianship is starting to feel some of the same pressures that have ravaged tenured academia: labor casualization and deprofessionalization particularly, but also the evolution of a much-heralded retirement wave into a wave of position reductions."<sup>6</sup> SAA can't create jobs, but we've declared a commitment to developing modes of advocacy that heighten the image and value of archives—and I'm certain that the passionate professionals gathered here can find ways to do more.

A particular hobbyhorse of mine is the severe lack of true entry-level jobs. I define "entry-level" as a position that requires no previous *professional* experience. Every hard-won professional opening is precious, and every employer wants to bring in the best possible person who can hit the ground running. But guess what? Many new archivists whose only archival experience consists of internships, volunteering, or a student assistantship can do so impressively. Yes, they'll need more training, but what prouder investment can a supervisor make than to launch a brilliant career? I freely admit that I could never imagine filling a professional position with someone who had no on-the-ground experience whatsoever, no matter how stellar his or her academic record and references. I need at least one reference that says "I can attest that this amazing person has an affinity for this type of work, has a strong work ethic, and will be an asset to your environment in human terms." One of my most amazing hires was Ryan Hildebrand, a newly minted UCLA library school graduate whose only experience was a three-month unpaid internship in rare book cataloging at UCLA's William Andrews Clark Library. His supervisor waxed eloquent about his intellectual gift for the work, amazing productivity, and positive contributions

to the work environment. He quickly became one of the most productive and extraordinary rare book catalogers you'll ever find and moved to the University of Texas's Humanities Research Center as head of rare book cataloging after less than four years of professional experience.

So, please, think carefully about what you absolutely must require in those job postings. Define experience as including paraprofessional, intern, fellow, student, temporary, or part-time. Your candidate pools will be more exciting, and you'll be helping to grow our profession's future.

## Internships and Volunteerism

A March 2012 article in the *New York Times* declared that "The notion of the traditional entry-level job is disappearing . . . internships have replaced them, but also fellowships and nebulous titles that sound prestigious and pay a stipend."<sup>7</sup>

Which brings us to a terrible conundrum. What's the greater disservice to aspiring archivists: eliminating opportunities to gain those invaluable first experiences, or using "slave labor," that ugly term that one sees applied to unpaid internships and volunteer opportunities? The mainstream press recently has been addressing this issue as well, notably in the context of a lawsuit against Fox Searchlight.<sup>8</sup>

This issue led to heated discussion in my corner of the tweet-o-sphere following the publication of a booklet issued jointly by SAA and NARA in fall 2012 on the use of volunteers in archives.<sup>9</sup> Some tweeters declared that this publication demonstrates that SAA doesn't care about new archivists; their stated position was that publication of case studies on how best to use volunteers encourages archives to use volunteers in lieu of paid employees. Employers of course would prefer to have permanent professional staff, or, at bare minimum, be in a position to pay their interns, but it can be absolutely impossible to get funding despite a manager's dedicated efforts. From the employer's perspective, this is one of the harshest realities of managing archives and libraries in today's economy—and has been for many years. This is why we all must become effective advocates for the importance of archives and archivists.

From a practical perspective, can interns or volunteers truly replace a professional? Do they do the same work? They may be assisting with processing collections, but they're not setting policy, planning projects, doing training, or being supervisors. There's a huge difference between leading and doing. Does straightforward archival processing under close supervision qualify as professional-level work? In my view, often it does not.

*Ask a Manager* is another blog with which I've become acquainted.<sup>10</sup> In a recent article titled "Why Unpaid Internships Should Be Legal," its author

declared that “In many industries . . . internships are a normal part of gaining experience that prepares candidates for paying work in the field. . . . In this job market, unpaid internship experience can be what makes the difference between getting interviews and job offers or remaining unemployed.”<sup>11</sup> I agree with this statement—though it raises the specter of social inequity. Taking an unpaid internship isn’t feasible for everyone. Many graduate students need gainful employment to survive while paying steep tuition. For those who can afford the time to gain part-time, on-the-job experience, however, completing a ten-to-fifteen-hours-per-week internship can later make all the difference in a highly competitive job market.

The *Atlantic Wire* reported recently on U.S. law regarding unpaid internships: “The Labor Department has strict guidelines for unpaid interns, and every year, thousands of companies dutifully flout them. Technically speaking, internships must resemble an education rather than a job. Interns cannot work in the place of paid employees. Nor can their work be of ‘immediate benefit’ to an employer.”<sup>12</sup> This is not new law, but awareness of it has been heightened by a recent Supreme Court decision that clarified these characteristics of a legally valid internship.<sup>13</sup> This may well mean far fewer opportunities, but those sites willing to host an unpaid intern who will derive appropriate benefits from the experience will have to consider consciously how to give the student a meaningful professional-level experience.

## What Role Does Archival Education Play?

I’ve frequently seen the sentiment expressed that the true culprit behind our profession’s unemployment problem is that archival graduate schools turn out too many graduates. How can we determine whether that’s true? We’re in a profession that has very soft edges, intersecting heavily with librarianship, records management, digital libraries and repositories, information technology, discovery system design, and so much more. Does taking a job outside an archives *per se* mean that you’ve “left the field”? It’s my belief that your education defines you as much as your job does. That “Frayed Prospects” article in the *New York Times* also said this: “You don’t have a ‘field.’ You must be open to all industries, regardless of your major.”<sup>14</sup> In the archival context, I believe our opportunities are vast across these interrelated sectors, and we can still identify as “archivists” regardless of the sector in which we find employment.

A few other questions on my mind related to archival education programs:

- Are they teaching the subjects that make a student competitive in the job market? (One word: digital.)

- What will graduate schools that require internships do to ensure that their students gain meaningful preprofessional experience if the available opportunities start to dry up?
- Are graduate schools doing enough to help students realize how many other types of work truly take advantage of archivists' skills?

In a recent discussion on the SAA Council listserv, our wise colleague Terry Baxter said this: "As we put together career resources, at least a chunk of those could be letting people know where their skills and education might fit into non-archival jobs. We don't want to end up with a bunch of . . . adjunct archivists living in their cars."<sup>15</sup>

### How Can SAA and Experienced Archivists Help New Archivists and Vice Versa?

Gaining professional experience (and notoriety of the positive sort) can provide some benefits that help balance the cognitive and physical effects of getting older. It's been a huge source of satisfaction and joy to me to be in a position to help new archivists and special collections librarians move forward in their careers. Some of my favorite ways:

- Situational mentoring, including by actively dishing out deserved compliments
- On-the-job support of employees by providing flexibility and tasks that are both challenging and rewarding, enabling them to do what really interests them, and supporting professional development opportunities
- Fostering an understanding of how the workplace (writ large) works—no small thing to master
- Believing in the importance and effectiveness of entry-level jobs

Last year during my term as SAA's vice president/president-elect, I had a fabulous additional opportunity that comes only once in a lifetime: appointing dozens of students and new archivists to committees and task forces. May they all thrive.

So, how specifically can we help the new? Three possibilities:

- Offer praise and credit wherever you see it due. March right up to that new archivist who just gave an amazing talk and say "Wow!" You'll make her day, especially if she recognizes your name.
- Listen without correcting. New archivists have legitimate complaints.
- Learn: they know things we don't. We know how things have always worked—or not. They know what's possible today.

The Library Loon has things to say on this topic as well, such as "A new hire without a budget, a staff, a supportive reporting chain, and other resources necessary for success will not succeed in creating change."<sup>16</sup> (I call upon employers



who are considering hiring a digital archivist to design and launch a new program to pay particular heed to those words.) In the same post, the Loon also talked about “helping people follow their interests and expand their professional skillsets and awareness beyond the confines of their on-paper position description.”

And how can the new help the older?

- Trust us: we’re actually pretty friendly and generous, though possibly as inclined to be hesitant about talking to strangers as you are.
- Teach us: you have the fresh education and know a lot that we don’t.
- Don’t stereotype us: we’re as different from each other as you are from the members of your cohort.

## In Conclusion

Let’s briefly recap those takeaways I mentioned when I began:

- The limited job market for new archivists is a very serious problem, and we all should think deeply about how we might better understand and address it.
- More job postings could be designed as true entry-level positions.
- We’ll all understand each other better if we engage using shared communication channels.
- Social media are here to stay; they should connect generations, not separate them.
- Civil public discourse plays an essential role in a mutually supportive professional environment.

Every one of us has an individual responsibility as an archival professional to feed our new and our young. SAA has a collective responsibility to do the same. Let’s all get to work.

It has been a genuine pleasure, and an irreplaceable experience, to serve as your president. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Maureen Callahan, “Why Should You Be Ashamed?,” *You Ought To Be Ashamed*, September 24, 2010, <http://eatingouryoung.wordpress.com/2010/09/24/why-should-you-be-ashamed/>.

<sup>2</sup> The data is from two sources: SAA membership records and responses to the 2012 survey of members, “Member Needs and Satisfaction Survey” (Spring 2012), <http://files.archivists.org/membership/surveys/saaMemberSurvey-2012r2.pdf>. The two sources vary somewhat because one is based on full membership data and the other on responses to the survey.

<sup>3</sup> “SAA 2013 Candidate Interviews: Kathleen Roe,” March 7, 2013, <http://snaproundtable.wordpress.com/2013/03/07/saa-2013-candidate-interviews-kathleen-roe/>.

<sup>4</sup> *You Ought To Be Ashamed*, <http://eatingouryoung.wordpress.com>.



- <sup>5</sup> Shaila Dewan, "Frayed Prospects, Despite a Degree," *New York Times*, July 19, 2003, [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/20/business/recent-graduates-lose-out-to-those-with-even-fresher-degrees.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/20/business/recent-graduates-lose-out-to-those-with-even-fresher-degrees.html?_r=0).
- <sup>6</sup> Gavia Libraria, "New-Hire Messianism," May 24, 2011, <http://gavialib.com/2011/05/new-hire-messianism/>.
- <sup>7</sup> Teddy Wayne, "The No-Limits Job," *New York Times*, March 1, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/03/fashion/for-20-somethings-ambition-at-a-cost.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Steven Greenhouse, "Judge Rules that Movie Studio Should Have Been Paying Interns," *New York Times*, June 11, 2013, <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/12/business/judge-rules-for-interns-who-sued-fox-searchlight.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> *Resources for Volunteer Programs in Archives*, National Archives and Records Administration and the Society of American Archivists [2012], [http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources\\_for\\_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf](http://files.archivists.org/pubs/free/Resources_for_Volunteers-Final-V2.pdf).
- <sup>10</sup> *Ask a Manager*, [www.askamanager.org](http://www.askamanager.org).
- <sup>11</sup> Alison Green, "Why Unpaid Internships Should Be Legal," *U.S. News and World Report*, July 1, 2013, <http://money.usnews.com/money/blogs/outside-voices-careers/2013/07/01/why-unpaid-internships-should-be-legal>.
- <sup>12</sup> Derek Thompson, "The Murky Ethics (and Crystal-Clear Economics) of the Unpaid Internship," *The Atlantic*, May 9, 2012, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2012/05/the-murky-ethics-and-crystal-clear-economics-of-the-unpaid-internship/256940/>.
- <sup>13</sup> Jordan Weissmann, "The Court Ruling that Could End Unpaid Internships for Good," *The Atlantic*, June 12, 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/06/the-court-ruling-that-could-end-unpaid-internships-for-good/276795/>.
- <sup>14</sup> Dewan, "Frayed Prospects."
- <sup>15</sup> SAA Council listserv (access restricted to members of Council), June 14, 2013.
- <sup>16</sup> Gavia Libraria, "New-Hire Messianism."

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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In 2010, she authored *Taking Our Pulse*, the report of an in-depth survey of special collections and archives in research libraries across the United States and Canada. Her research interests center on the development of standards for cataloging and archival description; she was a member of the research team that designed Encoded Archival Description, editor of the *EAD Application Guidelines*, co-editor of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books*, and a member of the editorial team for the first edition of the *Thesaurus for Graphic Materials*.

Dooley is an SAA Fellow and has served in many other roles within SAA over time, including as a member of Council and chair of the Publications Board and the Nominating Committee. She is equally active in the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries and is a long-standing member of the Association of Research Libraries' Working Group on Special Collections. Her MLS degree is from UCLA.