

Interesting Points from Kansas City Area Archivists Fall Symposium 2017

Tamara Inge

Derek Donovan, Community Engagement Editor, Kansas City Star

Derek started his career at the KC Star coordinating the archiving of the electronic version of the paper. He became the head of research shortly after and is now the Community Engagement Editor.

- The Kansas City Star microfilms the paper copy of the newspaper because they can't swear to the chain of custody of the pdf. There is no question on Copyright if they film the accepted analog print copy. He stressed that analog is still the most reliable and that they are still microfilming for preservation.
- They have a full 2 year run of the Kansas City Star Magazine from the 1920's which was sponsored by Laura Nelson Kirkwood, William Rockhill Nelson's daughter. Pieces from Nelson's fabulous art collection often graced the cover.
- Sadly they have no clue what Ernest Hemingway wrote as there were no bylines in those days and that type of record was not kept. The only record they have of him is a payroll record and his name appears on the WWI service plaque in the lobby.
- They use SCC Media Grid as it can also handle web content.
- Over the years they have fallen victim to distressing purges. Keep in mind the librarians chose what to keep. One librarian in particular hated sports and thought it had little value in the archives so she ordered all sports photos purged from the collection despite staff uproar. A couple of employees went back late that night, retrieved the photos from the trash and stored them in their own basements. They have now been reunited with the collection.

Alex Welborn, Head Archivist, University of Kansas Medical Center Archives.

Alex was hired after the retirement of his predecessor who had been in the job for 30 years. Alex is on his own, combatting the problem that a lot of institutional knowledge as well as system information walked out the door with his predecessor. Alex has been in his role just over one year.

- KUMC Archives was established in 1988 and contains over 3000 cubic feet of archival holdings.
- Interesting parts of the collection include the KUMC archives, the library and medical artifact collection of Dr. Clendering, the Paul R. Harrington Archives, and the Spine and Orthopedic Historic Collection.
- When Alex was hired, he was expected to do library work, serve as the Archivist AND the Museum Curator for the Clendering Museum. His first order of business was to lobby the administration to hire a full time Museum Curator and he succeeded!
- With the museum off his plate, Alex began a systematic approach to familiarize himself with the collection:
 - Clean and organize the workspaces
 - Separate the museum collection
 - Update policies and procedures
 - Record statistics (keep track of visitor numbers, research requests, time spent on various requests and projects)
- Right now they do not have a web presence. Finding aids are on paper and are not discoverable. Alex is looking at ArchiveSpace as a database. They have a Lone Arranger level that is cheaper because they charge by the number of finding aids you create.
- The majority of clients are internal to KU Med.
- Alex reminds everyone that when confronted with this type of project it is important to stay calm, be methodical and be flexible.

Jean Svadlenak, Svadlenak Museum Consulting

Jean is an independent museum and archives consultant working with museums and archives of all sizes and types. Recent projects include exhibits for Children's Mercy Hospital, supervising the removal and preservation of materials from the Hotel Savoy and Savoy Grill, and organizing the Black Archives of Mid America's move into its new building. Jen is also the Historian and Project Archivist for Lee Jeans. She spoke to us about museum/archives project management.

- With most of these types of projects, you are often coming in following a traumatic event: a death, a fire, a flood. The clients are overwhelmed. There is often no order, no system, or when systems exist they are not documented and demonstrate inconsistent use.
- No order and no system can actually work to your advantage as you are free to build something out of nothing rather than deal with systems that may not be complete, or multiple systems that may not integrate well together.
- Project Components:
 1. Scope
 2. Schedule
 3. Budget
 4. Quality
 5. Risk
 6. Communication
- Project Process:
 1. Write detailed report/plan
 2. Communicate and build support
 3. Prepare
 4. Provide orientation/training
 5. Track and access progress daily
 6. Be flexible
 7. Document
- Lessons Learned
 - Projects are like puzzles and it's good to approach them as such
 - Carve out reasonable and achievable parts
 - There is always more to do – think in phases
 - Focus on deliverables and quality
 - Take photos. Then take more photos. Remember you can never go back to capture the before. Too many photos is a good problem to have. Take before, during and afters for your final report and for your file.
 - Keep all your files both in hard copy and electronic. And upgrade those electronic files yearly-you never know when a client might need a copy.
 - Use basic programs when communicating with the client. Just about everyone has access to basic Windows applications like Excel and Word, but maybe not applications such as MS Project Manager and Visio.

- Be flexible - the project timeline will shift.
- Stay calm – things will NOT go as planned.