Mentoring Citizen Archivists

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What does that mean?

- Partnering with community archives projects, personal collectors (citizens), and/or budding community archives
- Providing mentorship, support, and guidance to communities looking to document their histories and stories.
- Knowledge Sharing

We’ll get into the logistics in a bit...

“Desis Rising Up and Moving (DRUM) Photograph # 8”

Courtesy of SAADA
Inspiration

Michelle Caswell
- “Owning Critical Archival Studies”
- “Inventing New Archival Imaginaries”

Jarrett Drake
- “Liberatory archives”
  - A call to action

Bergis Jules
- “Confronting our failures of care…”

“Occupy Wall Street”

Photo by Aaron Bauer
Courtesy of the Internet Archive
Liberatory Archives

- Participatory
- Virtual vs. physical
  - Nature of a physical space
    - Belonging
  - Post-custodial
- Independent & autonomous
The Occupy Movement

- Separate groups of people began collecting materials
  - Initiated by occupiers (working-groups)
  - Initiated by “formal” archival institutions
    - Other institutions focused on digital records
- Archivist Assistance
  - “Formal” archival institutions
  - Groups of archivists
    - The Activist Archivists
      - @actarc - Twitter
- Difficulties:
  - Resources
  - Finding balance in relationship

Image: “Zuccotti Park - Art work” photo by Johanna Clearfield
Courtesy of the Internet Archive
South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA)

- Founded in 2008
- 501 (c) (3)
- Governance
  - 5 member board
- Staff
  - Volunteers nationwide
  - Pro-bono lawyers
- Funding
  - Grants
  - Fundraising site (razoo.com)
  - Individual gifts
- No physical location
- Board members speak at community forums
- Administrative and fiscal independence
- Commitment to social justice aims
- Partnerships

"Curtiss Aviation School Students, including Mohan Singh"

Courtesy of Wisconsin Historical Society and SAADA.
Shorefront Legacy Center

- Founded by Morris (Dino) Robinson Jr.
- "Collects, preserves, and educates the public about Black history on Chicago’s suburban North Shore"
- 501 (c) (3) - 2002
- Museum-like
  - Exhibits & Events
- Board of directors, Board of Advisors, volunteers, resident scholar
  - Archival students
  - Black Metropolis Research Consortium
- Funding: grant based, independent donations

Archival intern, Elizabeth Sanderson (Dominican University), processing the Smith Collection.

Courtesy of the Shorefront Journal
How do we begin?

- Cultivating a community partner
  - Let the "community" define themselves
  - Relationship:
    - Respect
    - Empathy
    - Sensitivity
    - Flexibility
  - Communication strategy
- Broaden your collecting mentality
- Participatory
- Knowledge sharing
- Offer your skills

- “Activist Archivists” - MA?
- Pro-bono work?

“Family portrait photograph of the Saund family”

Courtesy of Eric Saund and SAADA
Possible Obstacles?

- Finding a community
  - Encouraging people their “stuff” matters
- Language barriers
- The digital divide
- Sustainability

Image: "flickr-ows--6218142948" photo by Matt.J.S. Courtesy of the Internet Archive

———. “Owning Critical Archival Studies: A Plea.” presented at the Archival Education and Research Institute, Kent State University, July 2016. [http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/75x090df](http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/75x090df).


