

srma

The Rocky Mountain **Archivist**

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The Temple of the Warriors at Chichen Itza after restoration, 1927.
EHM07.02_009_033

Inside the issue

From the President

Processing and Digitization of the Earl H. Morris Papers
Wil Gregg

Reflections of SAA
Katie Johnson, Angela Naumov, & Jennifer Sanchez



I hope this letter finds all of our SRMA members remaining healthy and safe during this unprecedented year. I know many of you are struggling with job loss, budget reductions, family transitions, health issues, impacts from the wildfires, or personal upheaval. On a professional level, I personally mourn the loss of daily face-to-face interactions with colleagues, researchers, and collections – interactions which have significantly nourished me as an archivist for almost two decades in the profession. At the CU Boulder Libraries, we now have limited staff back in the Archives for a few hours a week, but our Reading Room remains closed, and it pains me to see

our collections, most of which have no digital access, languishing in closed, dark stacks. On a personal level, as an extrovert, a parent of a toddler, and a mountain-dweller, the isolation of COVID, compounded by the apocalyptic fires burning in the Rockies, have challenged me in unexpectedly difficult ways – and I know many of you feel the same.

I say this all with the hopes that the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists can be force of hope and a connector between us during this sometimes bleak time. I continue to be energized by the work that the SRMA board is doing to engage our organization and members with sustained practices that support diversity, inclusion, and racial justice. I hope all can join us for two upcoming events on this topic:

» [**SRMA's Fall Forum on Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice \(virtual\), November 9-13, 2020.**](#)

Click here for more information and registration. In lieu of a fall meeting, SRMA is offering this series of 7 virtual, discussion-based presentations on issues relating to increasing diversity in internships and fellowships, anti-racist description practices, privacy restrictions on under-documented histories and records of protest, de-mythologizing campus histories, and more. Member registration is just \$25, which gives you access to all one-hour sessions.

» [**SAA Cultural Diversity Competency continuing education workshop \(virtual\), January 5-7, 2021.**](#)

Click here for more information and registration. SRMA is partnering with the Society of American Archivists to offer this well-reviewed SAA continuing education workshop, taught by Helen Wong Smith. Registration is \$100 for SRMA members only (\$75 for student members), is limited to 30 participants, and registration closed November 30th – so sign up soon!

Additionally, I am excited to report that **SRMA's Diversity, Inclusion & Racial Justice Task Force** began its work in September. Aaron Ramirez (Pueblo Public Library) and Laura Uglean-Jackson (University of Northern Colorado Libraries) are the co-chairs of the task force, which also includes Steve Fisher (retired, University of Denver), Jessica Gerber (University of

Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus), and Allaina Wallace (Denver Botanic Gardens). The task force's charge is to help the SRMA board to develop long-term, actionable goals to support diversity, inclusion, and racial justice in our organization and profession and will deliver its recommendations to the board and membership in Spring 2021. Aaron and Laura will be presenting an update and discussion about the task force's work during the Fall Forum, so please join us to learn more about their efforts so far.

Finally, I want to let you know that SRMA is currently exploring ways that we can offer emergency financial support to members who are facing unexpected hardships. Please keep your eye on the listserv and our website for more information coming soon.

All the best to you and yours from SRMA. May we all find some peace and solidarity in our virtual connections this fall!

--- Megan Friedel



SAA Cultural Diversity Competency course

The SRMA Board is excited to announce another continuing education opportunity for our membership. SRMA is hosting an SAA Cultural Diversity Competency course, **January 5th-7th, 2021 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm MST** (virtually via Zoom). Building off of the Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Forum, we felt it was necessary that we continue to invest in conversations within our profession related to racial justice and diversity.

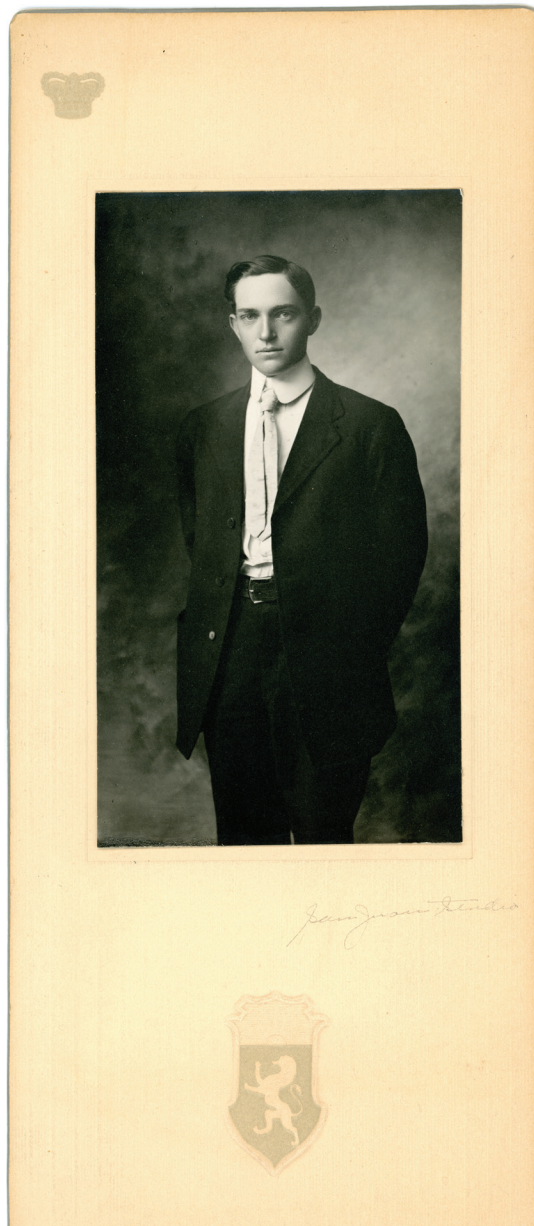
This course is only available to SRMA members. Registration will be limited to 30 participants on a first come, first serve basis. Registration cost is \$100 for SRMA members or \$75 for student members.

Take advantage of this opportunity to enroll in an SAA Continuing Education course at a discounted price! [Register for the course here!](#)

Processing and Digitization of the Earl H. Morris Papers at the University of Colorado Museum of Natural History

Will Gregg (Project Archivist)
University of Colorado Museum of Natural History

"I can suggest that digging up the past may not be as remunerative as hunting uranium, but it is a heap more fun, and I do not regret the choice I made ..."

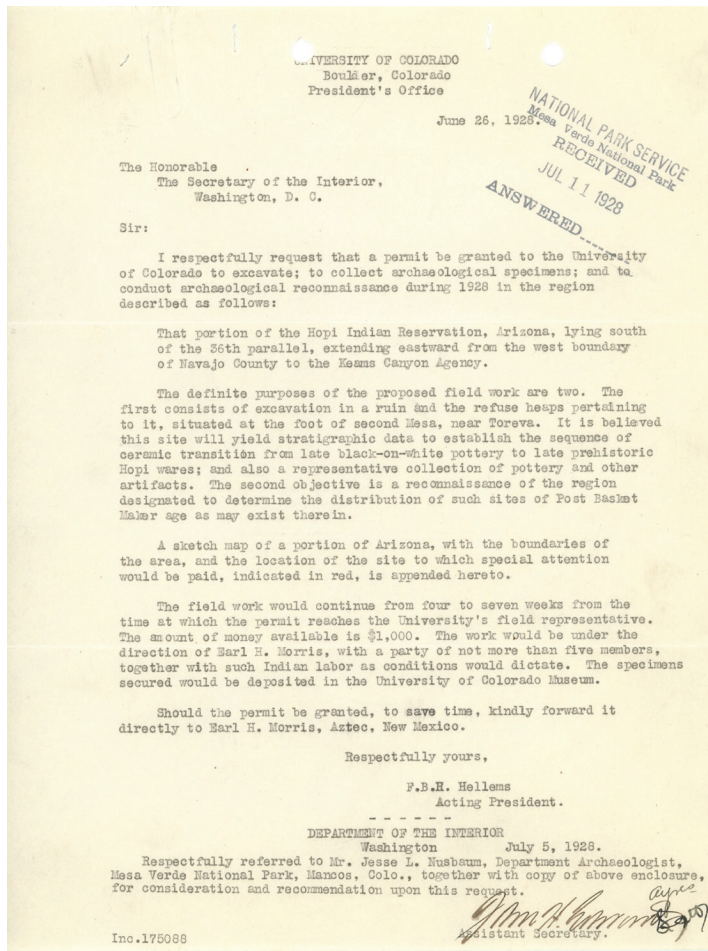


Earl Morris as a young student at the University of Colorado, circa 1910.
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With this statement archaeologist Earl H. Morris (1889-1956) summarized his life and work in a lecture nearing the end of his career. The speech, given to the Colorado Historical Society circa 1950, commemorated a prolific career in which Morris significantly altered the field of southwest archaeology. He is now associated with well-known places such as Aztec Ruins National Monument, Canyon de Chelly National Monument, and Mesa Verde National Park.

On his death and through later accessions, a portion of Morris' field notes, correspondence, and photographs were given to the Museum of Natural History at the University of Colorado (CUMNH) totaling approximately 38 linear feet. One of the most important collections in the museum archives, the papers trace the growth of 20th century archaeology, document interactions between Native American tribes, archaeologists, and the federal government, provide a perspective on the look and feel of communities in the Four Corners region, and assist in identifying human remains and associated funerary objects that fall under the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act.

In the decades after Morris' death in 1956, museum personnel used the papers to develop a number of publications and exhibits. Lack of formal processing, however, limited the potential of this collection for both internal and external users. Seeing the continued



importance of Morris' archaeological work, curators and staff in the Anthropology section of CUMNH funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) to process and digitize the collection. Funding was awarded and work began in October of 2019 led by a project archivist with the assistance of a graduate student in the Museum and Field Studies program.

The collection was thoroughly rearranged in the first months of the project. Previously, the collection had been divided into two broad series. These were refined into an arrangement featuring seven series. A scheme of geographic organization has been applied to the most extensive series in the collection, Fieldwork and Photographs.

After rearrangement, many of the documents and photographs slated for digitization were processed to the item level to improve intellectual control and to facilitate placing restrictions on digitized material for reasons of cultural sensitivity (guided by the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials) as well as in compliance with the Archaeological Resources Protection Act. Digitization proceeded in-house with the help of an undergraduate volunteer.

CUMNH closed to the public and staff in mid-March at the advent of COVID-19. The closure came just as digitization efforts had reached full pitch and challenged project staff to redirect their efforts productively. In light of not being able to create new images, we began to focus on improving old ones: we used Adobe Photoshop to improve the legibility of certain images and improved item-level metadata by researching published and unpublished documents. Digitization resumed part-time in the summer.

Though digitization targets were adjusted in light of COVID-19, a sizeable portion of the collection is now digitized including approximately 2,750 photographs and 388 documents representing 2,450 pages. Most of these images are now available online through the museum's database (<http://anth-web.colorado.edu/ProficioWebModule/MADetailG.aspx?rID=EHM&db=group&dir=ARCHIVES>) and will become available on CU Digital Library in months to come. The collection finding aid is available at <https://archives.colorado.edu/repositories/5/resources/2431>. CUMNH thanks NHPRC for making this project possible.

SRMA DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND RACIAL JUSTICE FORUM

**NOVEMBER 9TH – 13TH
(ONLINE)**



FORUM SCHEDULE

Monday, November 9th

10:00am – 11:00am: Chicana/Latina Collections Roundtable Discussion

2:00pm – 3:00pm : Protecting Privacy Restrictions for Under Documented Histories

Tuesday, November 10th

10:00am – 11:00am: Increasing Diversity in Internships/Fellowships Discussion

2:00pm – 3:00pm: SRMA Diversity, Inclusion, and Racial Justice Task Force Update

Thursday, November 12th

10:00am – 11:00am: Incorporating Anti-Racist Description and Re-Description Practices

2:00pm – 3:00pm: Protecting Privacy of Public Protest

Friday, November 13th

10:00am – 11:00am: De-Mythologizing Campus Histories

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

Please visit our website for
more information:

<https://www.srmarchivists.org/>

(Under the Meetings and
Conferences tab)

Questions? Please email
srmaonline@srmarchivists.org

Registration extended to November 9th

Reflections of SAA 2020

From the recipients of the SRMA Scholarship

Katie Johnson: Beyond Diversity Initiatives

This year I had the opportunity to attend my first SAA conference, thanks to the generosity of SRMA's scholarship funding. Despite the obvious drawbacks and unfortunate circumstances for the shift to online, this year's format also created some unexpected benefits. With no associated travel costs, this year's conference was more financially feasible for individuals like me who do not receive institutional funding. I am also excited that with the recorded sessions accessible after the conference dates, SAA has created a rich resource that I can go back to and continue to learn from.

One of my favorite sessions from SAA's virtual conference this year was titled **Beyond Diversity Initiatives: Nontraditional and Student-centered Approaches to Recruiting BIPOC into Archives and Special Collections Librarianship**, led by archival and library staff from various California State University (CSU) campuses. Azalea Camacho, of CSU Los Angeles, headed the session along with two of her former students turned colleagues, Karina Cardenas of CSU Fresno and Amalia Castaneda of CSU Dominguez Hills. They discussed CSU's Student Assistant Program in the archives, and their strategies to specifically support BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students. As the university I work at serves a high number of first generation and BIPOC students, I was excited to learn about ways that we could enhance our service to these students and interest them in the work of the archives.

The major goal that the panelists emphasized, was the need to dismantle traditional power dynamics in the archives. As archivists, we need to acknowledge that BIPOC students bring their own experiences and knowledge to the table. By creating opportunities where the students can engage in hands-on work and making them active participants, we demonstrate that we welcome and want to learn from those perspectives. The panel offered two examples of how they have accomplished this. The first was through their Student Assistant Program, and the second through class collaborations.

For the students in the Assistant Program, which were paid positions, the panelists talked about the importance of including reference work as part of their experience. By doing so, students learn to become comfortable interacting with faculty, navigating academia and its structures, and preparing research. Additionally, with all our special rules, archives can be intimidating spaces and by having students help orient their peers and giving tours, they can help break down some of those barriers.

Not all archives are able to have student staff, so I appreciated the panelists also talked about effective strategies for engaging BIPOC students through class collaborations. They stressed that hands-on experiences are key to introducing students to archival work and talked about their own successful collaboration with a class where the students curated an online exhibit using archival materials. They also included the students in the public

programming developed around the exhibit. From these experiences' students were exposed to the archival profession and could act as representatives and promoters for the archives in their communities.

The session gave me practical examples and ideas to think about implementing at my own institution, and I hope that it did so for others too. I was also grateful to the panelists who were open and candid about their experiences in the profession as women of color, and the struggles they faced entering the field. As two of the panelists had been through the student assistant program discussed, it was encouraging to know that such initiatives can make a positive difference for BIPOC students.



Angela Naumov: Archivists with Disabilities

I was one of the lucky recipients of the SRMA Scholarship for the SAA virtual conference. This has been a wonderful opportunity to hear of the challenges and successes that other archivists around the country have experienced.

One session that unexpectedly resonated with me was “**Archivists with Disabilities.**” I attended this session in hopes that I might develop policies and procedures for any other person working in the same space, now or in the future. While I hoped it would help me understand certain challenges some people face, I did not expect those considerations to turn inward.

In my generally ableist worldview, there were things that had not occurred to me that could be a challenge for someone, and I believe the pandemic and the resulting quarantine experience made me more receptive to certain challenges. It became quickly apparent to me that I was not handling the quarantine as well as I thought I might. It was time to understand why, and in short order, after some time over Zoom with a psychiatrist, I was officially diagnosed with mild to moderate ADHD. Evidently the mild nature and the fact that ADHD is abhorrently underdiagnosed in women meant I had gone nearly thirty years completely unaware that I had this disorder.

With ADHD you can spend an entire day just convincing yourself to get started on a task or flitting from project to project having achieved no real progress, then deciding you need your fifth cup of coffee for the day, and realizing while you grind more coffee beans that you hadn't taken the trash out yet, and of no that's the sound of the garbage truck now, but by the time you find your shoes and actually make it out the door they will have left, and since you're already in the kitchen and it's so close to lunchtime, you might as well make a sandwich, oh wait you have a scheduled Zoom meeting with your boss and you haven't accomplished anything all day. You join the call trying to appear chipper and not let the shame of an unproductive morning show on your face. The meeting starts with an honest interest in your wellbeing and ends in a reminder to pace yourself and be patient with yourself.

When your entire job is based on order, precision, and attention to detail an inability to organize your own thoughts and focus on a single task feels like your own mind is turning against you. The order that you so pride yourself on creating keeps escaping your grasp, both in your personal life and in your work life. It took a worldwide emergency to bring my ADHD up to a level where I truly struggled to function normally, but luckily for me, all the accommodation I required was a bit of extra trust and encouragement.

Many archives aren't exactly accommodating to those with disabilities, and many of the speakers during the session spoke of downright disregard of their struggles even after they had brought them up with their superiors. Simple accommodations are rarely a burden on those supplying them, but are a tremendous relief to those who need them. I finally caught a glimpse into the world of someone with a disability and I hope to use what I learned from those in this session to continue to consider the abilities of others when I do my work, whether that affects archivists who will take my place here in the future or the accessibility of the collection to researchers.



Jennifer Sanchez: Archivists with Disabilities/Imagining the Holy

I want to let the SRMA community know how much I appreciate the opportunity to participate in the Society of American Archivist virtual convention this August. I was amazed with the number of events in which I could participate. I especially liked that I could view some recorded sessions later that conflicted with some of the synchronous presentations. I thought I would share with you the two sessions that elicited the most thought provoking discussions for me during the conference.

The first session I really enjoyed was the talk on “**Archivists with Disabilities.**” This was a great discussion about people with visible and invisible disabilities and their challenges. This discussion hit home for me as a person of small stature. While being petite is not nearly as challenging as working in an archive with a physical or invisible disability, the discussion around these challenges highlighted my own difficulties of working in the archives. The standard of lifting up to 40 lbs. in my job is difficult. Even though I am petite, I can lift the required 40 lbs., but it is difficult to lift a box above my head and shove it onto the shelf, all while in a narrow aisle. I have also gotten hurt from lifting heavy boxes at work and I am aware and fearful that I might do serious harm to myself in the stacks. It got me thinking-- why are those classic record boxes that size and more importantly, why do they have to stay that size? Saving a few more linear feet compared to a person’s safety does not make sense. I am assuming, right or wrong, that everyone in an archival position has plans to retire in this field or a similar position. No matter our gender we will all get old at some point. Archival materials should not live, even temporarily, in a box this big. I have seen my stronger male colleagues struggle with these boxes. In the reading room, I have seen all genders, sizes and ages of patrons have problems with these large boxes as well. After watching this presentation, I suggested at our staff meeting that we start phasing out record boxes within our archives. The suggestion was met with general approval and it made me very happy.

The second presentation that I loved was about National Geographic Society's Archive. The title of this session was **"Imagining the Holy: Digitally Transforming Our Understanding of Historic Palestine."** In this presentation, they talked about how the early magazine staff identified and described Palestinian images in the first half of the twentieth century. The current staff went over the complexities of updating this wording. At the time these pictures were taken, the people from the magazine had a much different standard of description than we do today. The original editors and staff ended up applying their colonial viewpoints and offensive wording that dehumanized and marginalized the subjects of these photographs. In this project, the current archivists, along with a researcher, worked diligently to include people's names when they could or change captions to nonbiased descriptions. It was fascinating to see their process and solutions. They did not attempt to hide the racist past, and were able to move forward and give the people of Palestine more of a voice. I loved this talk because my work includes describing archival photographs. It made me feel like I was not alone in my struggles with the colonial, paternalistic and racist terminology I encounter in our legacy collections, and I came away with some good ideas going forward.





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Archival Storage Materials

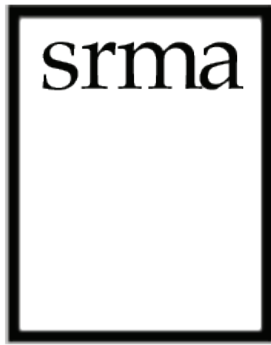
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Need to renew your membership?

Contact David Fasman
david.fasman@du.edu

Do you have any projects or collections to feature in the next issue of *Rocky Mountain Archivist*?

Contact Nathalie Proulx at
nathalie.proulx@du.edu