

You Had Me at 3 Years

The Ethics and Practicality of
Project Archivists

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Survey on Project Archivist positions: [keep an eye on the listservs for our survey, coming out in the summer months](#)

Why do managers continue to propose and hire these positions?

- Grant funding/donations only bring money for temporary employment
- Entry level = beginning salaries
- Mentoring initiatives
- Trying out project archivists before committing to permanent employment

What are concerns for project archivists and the ongoing practice of hiring short term employees?

- Grant projects that limit work tasks
- Isolation
- Lack of resources, at work and at home
- When/how to start looking for the next job
- Sustainability for the collections that were processed

Sarah Leu

Edwin Forrest Curator of Performing Arts Collections at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania

Advocates for combining smaller projects to create longer contracts

- Longer contracts can have better benefits
- Greater opportunity for becoming involved at the organization and mentorship
- Experience on a variety of collections
- Supervisor doesn't constantly have to retrain new people for each project
- Enhanced grant narratives
- Beware of downsides (e.g. timing and misunderstanding of digitization projects)

Amy C. Vo

Cold War Collections Project Archivist at New York University

Advocates for embedding project archivists within the current work environment

- Involvement in larger departmental initiatives, meetings, and planning
- Inclusion of student workers and assistant staff
- Pros and cons of core/routine responsibilities
- Contingent on flexibility of funding

Sheridan L. Sayles

Technical Services Archivist at Seton Hall University

Advocates for multifaceted projects to make the archivist more employable

- Skills beyond “just processing:” project mgmt., preservation, outreach, etc
- Support for professional development for existing and possible workflows
- Credit for completed work and involvement in larger institutional initiatives

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin

Manuscripts Librarian and Curator, Joseph R. Biden, Jr., Senatorial Papers at University of Delaware

Advocates for mentorship of project archivists

Know when to advocate for permanent positions (sustained work)

Consider using contractors/consulting firms

What do you want from a project position?

Final Discussion Question

Can we advocate for a mutually beneficial short term employment opportunity?

What would that position look like?

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