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# CAA News

Spring 2018

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## MARAC Recap: Finding the Sweet Spot in Hershey by Michael Maloney

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference was held in Hershey, Pa this year. The conference was a great chance to go to some interesting sessions, learn what projects people from all over the region are doing, network, and of course, eat chocolate. Also a nice surprise was finding out that Troeg's Brewing is based in Hershey.

I arrived in Hershey on Thursday, only slightly dismayed that my childhood memory of the city smelling like chocolate was untrue (my hotel did, though). After a quick walk around the town, I went to a lone arrangers meetup. Meeting with other solo archivists and learning about their projects, problems, and goals was very refreshing. There was a lot to learn and many decisions about which sessions to attend.

### Start Today: Digital Stewardship Communities and Collaborations

Friday's plenary speaker was Trevor Owens who is the Head of Digital Content Management for Library Services at the Library of Congress. Mr. Owens' presentation focused on the challenges of digital preservation and he also introduced his 16 axioms of digital preservation. His book, *The Theory and Craft of Digital Preservation* (which is online at <https://osf.io/preprints/lissa/5cpjt/>) goes into more detail about his work in digital preservation.

He started off by making a point about digital anxiety by polling the room, "How many of you are involved in digital preservation?" Pretty much everyone in the room raised their hand. "How many are worried about their efforts?" Again, everyone raised their hand. This anxiety comes across in two different ways. One common line of thinking that often comes from well-meaning board members and sometimes the public is "why can't you scan everything." Another that we often see from various news outlets is the digital dark age where all of our efforts at digital preservation will be wiped out.

So, how do we get over that anxiety and start doing meaningful work?

## New York Archives Conference 2018

### 2018 Conference Location and Dates

June 6-8, 2018



UNIVERSITY  
AT ALBANY

State University of New York

Speaking of conferences, this year's New York Archives Conference is conveniently located for all of us Capital Area Archivists. It will be held from June 6-8 at the University at Albany. Presentations on topics including collections for historically marginalized groups, rights statements for online collections, born digital records, preparing archives students for life outside of the classroom, and more will be offered.

### CDLC Regional Collections Grant

The Capital District Library Council is offering another round of funding for their Regional Collections grant. They invite applications for the second round of Regional Collections grants through June 8, 2018. All CDLC member institutions, including individual public and school libraries, are eligible to apply.

Formerly known as Retrospective Conversion, Metadata, and Digitization (RBDB) grants, CDLC members may apply for a grant for a retrospective conversion or metadata project; a digital collection grant to contribute content to New York Heritage, or a digital newspaper grant to contribute content to NYS Historic Newspapers.

Projects considered for funding should improve access to collections and content or raise the visibility of regional collections.

The application and more information can be found here:

<https://cdlc.libguides.com/c.php?g=721367&p=5540336>

**The CAA newsletter is made up of stories and news from your institutions. Please consider submitting an article or promoting an event in the next newsletter. Send any ideas to our newsletter editor at [librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org](mailto:librarian@schenectadyhistorical.org)**

## DHPSNY Update



Documentary Heritage & Preservation Services for New York has been hard at work planning and putting on workshops around the state. Their next one, **Identification and Preservation of Photographic Collections**, will be held during NYAC at the University at Albany on Wednesday, June 6. Sign up and find out more here, <http://dhpsny.org/workshops>.

Deadlines to apply for their planning and assessment surveys is coming up soon, but you still have some time to apply. Applications for their Archival Needs Assessment, Preservation Survey, Condition Survey, and their Strategic Planning Assistance are all due on **Friday, July 13<sup>th</sup>**. The applications can be found at this link, <http://dhpsny.org/planning-assessment>.

## NEDCC Preservation Training

The NEDCC is hosting **Preservation Management and Collections Care** A two-day, In-person Workshop at the Vermont Historical Society.

This two day workshop provides a basic introduction to the concepts and standards used to build an effective preservation program. The curriculum covers preservation policies, environmental and storage conditions, care and handling of collection materials, reformatting, emergency preparedness, and program assessment. The instructors will discuss realistic approaches to preservation at small and medium sized organizations, and small group work will encourage participants to discuss their own preservation goals together.

This workshop is made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH).

The cost for this workshop is \$80 for both days. Find out more and register at <https://www.nedcc.org/preservation-training/registration?p=367>.

## MARAC Recap

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Owens' axioms serve as points to define what digital preservation should and shouldn't be. One grammar oriented axiom was axiom #4 which is, "Nothing *has been* preserved, there are only things *being* preserved." It's a reminder that preservation is an ongoing process, no matter what the medium. We need to continually remember that preservation is not just a one time cost. One of my favorites was #11, "It's long past time to start taking actions." He went on to say that you can think about digital preservation, and read paper after paper, but you need to take action in order to "get the boxes of the floor." After outlining his axioms, he identified the most important steps in getting the boxes of the floor. These included, identifying what you need to keep, scheduling a plan for improving, reading the NDSA levels of preservation paper which can act like a checklist to improve your institution's preservation policies, and join the communities of practice.

Owen's presentation was a great overview of the problems we're facing in an increasingly digital world.

### **"Sing Out, Louise! Sing Out!": The Archivist and Effective Communication.**

My second session of the day focused on how to better engage with your board, supervisor, coworkers, and the public by being an effective communicator. The presenters told us to throw out the idea that successful communication has anything to do with your Myers-Briggs test results and that it is more of a learned skill that you can improve, even if it's not something we are naturally born with.

One of the main points the panel brought up was to know your audience and try to find a way to connect with them. Different strategies might work for different groups. If you're speaking at MARAC to a bunch of archivists, you know that you can use archival jargon and people won't be alienated. If you're speaking to members of your board or members of the public, know to stay away from terms and make what you're talking about as accessible as possible. Not everyone will have the knowledge or enthusiasm of archives that you have, but it's important to find *some* way to connect with the people you are talking to.

They also stressed being your authentic self when presenting, even if that authentic self is sort of nervous about speaking in public. When you're authentic, what you're saying comes across as genuine. When thinking about your presentation, try to focus on the presentation that you want to give and the information that will reflect what you want in an interesting, engaging way. It can help to think about presentations that you've given, or have been to in the past. You can learn from interesting ones as well as the less successful ones. Take note of what catches your attention during a presentation and reflect on that when preparing. Preparation goes a long way. Rehearsing what you're going to say and practicing your speech out loud can also help with nerves

Public speaking is something that most of us have or will have to do at some point and with practice it is something that you can get better at. Advocacy is also an important part of being an archivist and knowing how to better communicate to a variety of audiences can help in this role.

## MARAC Recap

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### If You Plan It, They Will Come: Archives Month Event Incubator

The presenters at this session focused on archivists in Philadelphia who participated in Archives Month Philly (AMP). Held in October, AMP is a month-long city-wide festival that focuses on educating the public about local archives through public programming. October is for outreach and the goal of Archives month is to get people acquainted with and excited about our collections. This session gave some tips on how to do so. It was also a great way to learn about what has worked and what hasn't in other institutions

It consists of both centerpiece events which were multi-institution events intended to stand out as highlights of the month-long calendar and independent events which were developed independently at local institutions and submitted to the AMP calendar.

One of the main centerpiece events was an archives take-over of Nerd Nite. I hadn't heard of Nerd Nite before this session, but the concept is pretty familiar, it's a monthly lecture series held at local bars across the city. The oldest centerpiece event was a lantern slide salon where 6-8 institutions presented their lantern slides from their collections using a historic lantern projector. Others included archives/history pub trivia and a showcase of collections around a certain theme. Independent events included pop-up exhibits, tours, an archives themed escape room (!!!), and a séance. All very cool events, but making them work requires a few things.

One main thing is to start planning early, especially if it's a larger, multi-institutional event. Planning takes time and other organizations might need to get approval. Starting early also gives you time to get promotional material together and get the word out. Location matters and having an event at your institution will get people in the door who might not visit otherwise. Taking an event out of your institution and going to where people already are can also be a great way to connect with the public.

Most people agreed that one key to a successful program is to start small with a behind the scenes or exhibit tour. This is something that will bring the public to your institution without requiring an overwhelming amount of planning and coordination. Free food and drink also tend to be a draw for programs, or better yet, having it a place that serves food and drink. Evaluating your event is also an important step of the process, finding out what people liked or disliked can help guide future programs. It can also be a good follow up to remind people about your institution and can encourage them to come to other events.

This session provided some great inspiration for this year's archives month and served as a reminder to start planning soon.

Find out more about Archive Month Philly at: <https://archivesmonthphilly.com/> and <https://storify.com/ArchMonthPhilly/archives-month-philly-2017>

## MARAC Recap

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### Investing in our Future: Archival Education Collaborative Project in a 5th-Grade Classroom

Reaching a younger audience can sometimes be a challenge, but The Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC) found a way to form a partnership with a 5<sup>th</sup> grade class at Washington Irving Intermediate School. This partnership would enable the class to learn about the value of primary resources and to view archives as a resource. The presenters consisted of two archivists at the RAC, one of whom is also a parent of two students at the school, and a 5<sup>th</sup> Grade teacher at the school.

The main goal of this project was for students to complete a research project about a certain historical topic of their choice. Students were presented with a variety of research topics and they could then choose a topic and write a research paper on it. After the paper, they were tasked with making a poster session about their topic. There was also a town hall type meeting where the students could present their research.

To get the students thinking about primary and secondary sources, the archivists at the RAC coordinated a tour of the archives and also had in-class visits. One interesting exercise for the students was “sort the source” where students would categorize sources into primary and secondary. They also tried to get the students to start thinking like researcher and historians. They started using terms that researchers use and explained that there are many different ways to research and there isn’t a specific ‘right’ way to do so. Students were also required to create an annotated bibliography, something that I didn’t have to do until college.

One important skill that they wanted to impart on the students was how to trust sources. One of the topics focused on Admiral Byrd’s 1926 North Pole flight which led some of the students to the hollow earth theory. Googling hollow earth leads to some seemingly legitimate sources, including a .edu site which many students are taught to trust and Wikipedia goes into great detail about the theory. This led to a discussion with the students about how to find legitimate sources and also to continually question the sources that you do find. The students were also taught how to plot out their research, how to take notes and organize information, that the research question can be just as important as the answers, and how to accept and give help.

This project didn’t just consist of researching and writing a paper, it also required the students to present the information to the public. The students participated in a panel discussion where they answered questions from their teacher and the archivists who participated in the project. They also put together posters to present their research to archivists and historians at the RAC.

This turned out to be quite a program and the results were very impressive. The students learned skills that will continually help them as they progress through school. The preparation and collaboration on the part of the teacher, archivists and students was also impressive. It can be tricky to try something new like this, especially with schools focusing more on STEM and reading skills, but many of the skills used in this project could be transferred to other subjects.