

AABC

NEWSLETTER



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Alan Sheffield, "Archives."
www.flickr.com/photos/arsheffield/2360272233

ARCHIVES, INTERRUPTED

A MESSAGE FROM AABC PRESIDENT, JENNY SEEMAN

Congratulations to the AABC Communications Committee for reinstating the AABC newsletter! As I understand it, this is a place to raise awareness about archives and archival activity among our membership and also a forum for discussion about issues we face in the profession. I trust it will be a respectful forum, and that we will see lots of submissions from our members in forthcoming editions.

2020 has been a disorientating year for everyone. COVID-19 stopped everyone in their tracks and made us all think about what our collective priorities should be. Public health and safety has rightly been at the forefront of our planning, both personal and professional, and time away from the reading room has been

an opportunity to envision bigger disruptions to the status quo. When I talk about archives to non-practitioners, I usually start by saying the joy in archival work is that it gives voice to the everyday people in our collective history. Archival records provide the opportunity to hear the voices of those who might otherwise only be recorded in statistical summaries of society at any given time. I have realised recently that this point of view is indicative of my privilege as a white person. In truth, not all of society's voices are adequately captured in the archives. As a colonial construct, archives without doubt favour white people's lives and keep other perspectives in the margins. We can argue that it is often the (literal) margins that are of interest

to researchers. How often is a draft kept because of the detailed handwritten notes that tell more of a story than the finished document? But to constantly find the only representation of your community as a side note in someone else's story only serves to reinforce the idea that you are suppressed. What can the archival profession do to amplify these voices?

My hope is that our profession is on the cusp of a systematic shift to dismantle the memory-keeping structures that perpetuate silencing of Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) so that archives can truly be the places of connection, discovery, learning, and healing that they aspire to be. I genuinely don't know how we do that retroactively, or if we should, but acknowledging and learning from the conspicuous gaps in our historical record is a good start. Next year, 2021, is the sesquicentennial of British Columbia's joining Canada. Confederation can be seen as the epitome of colonial dominance over lands, communities, and families that existed for thousands of years prior to white settlement and to celebrate it would be obtuse in light of the current discussion. Can we be bold enough to use the sesquicentennial as an opportunity to commit to deprivileging the archives? Can we fund projects that address bias in archival appraisal, description, and access? Can we create more opportunities in the BIPOC community to join the archival profession?

As the 2020 pandemic continues to disrupt our day-to-day activity, let's think about ways we can be proactively disruptive and build truly diverse community memory banks that serve as an investment for our future.

A photograph of a stack of cardboard boxes in an archive, with text overlaid. The boxes are stacked high, and some have labels. The text is in a bold, black, sans-serif font, centered on the image.

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Wikimedia Finland, "Archives," <http://www.flickr.com>
www.flickr.com/photos/127568736@N02/15431374020

GREATER VERNON MUSEUM & ARCHIVES COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Gwyneth Evans, gwyn.evans@vernonmuseum.ca

Community Engagement Coordinator, Greater Vernon Museum & Archives

My name is Gwyneth Evans and I am the Community Engagement Coordinator at the Greater Vernon Museum & Archives (GVMA). I occupy a variety of positions at the GVMA, including receptionist, assistant archivist, and social media coordinator. I graduated from UBC with a honours history degree, and was lucky to begin working as a Young Canada Works' collections intern at the GVMA shortly after. I was hired on to a full-time position at the museum at the end of my six-month contract.

Each week I write an article about a historical tidbit that is researched in our archives and published by Castanet Media, a popular local news outlet. The GVMA's former digital archivist began the project by submitting a weekly photograph and caption from our collection. Readers responded positively, and asked to know more about the stories behind the photographs. In response, I began submitting short articles to accompany the photographs when I took over the position. The public response has been strong, and Castanet has reported that the articles consistently get a significant number of views. Since October 2019, I have submitted over 45 articles. I keep a running list of ideas to write about, but usually select topics that reflect current events. For example, when the COVID-19



outbreak reached Vernon in March of this year, I wrote about the polio epidemic of the 1920s and 30s, and how our city survived and emerged stronger as a community. A reader who never met his father after he passed away from polio at the age of twenty-nine, wrote to thank me for the article and expressed his wish that Canadians would support each other through the COVID-19 pandemic

as they did during that of polio. Other article topics include the life of Rosalind Hodgson, a Vernon woman who served overseas during World War Two as a



member of the Mechanical Transport Corps; the history of the Vernon Country Club, a beautiful building built in 1910 on pilings above the blues and greens of Kalamalka Lake; and a crowd-sourced memorial of the well-loved business Nick's Kandy Kitchen, which the public contributed to via Facebook.



Being young and relatively new to this field, the project has given me a wonderful—and humbling—opportunity to explore my passion for history and writing. It has allowed me to form connections with members of the public and to learn about the remarkable people in their lives, like the reader's father referenced above who survived World War Two by seeking

shelter in foxholes and bombed out buildings, yet passed away ten years later from polio.

Anyone who is familiar with our records, including our archivists Barbara Bell and Joanne Georgeson, would agree that the stories lying dormant on our shelves are truly fascinating. The articles allow these stories to come to life and reach a wider audience. I hope these articles provide the public with a moment to pause in a world that is usually filled with stressful media consumption. It gives me a chance to reflect on the nature of history and take solace in the idea that no matter how bad current affairs may be, they too shall pass and become the stories we tell in the future.

I would encourage heritage professionals to reach out to their local news outlets, be they print or visual media, to see if they would be interested in forming a partnership. It is a win-win situation—you have a chance to promote the work you do and the media receives free and well-researched content. Don't be afraid to put yourself out there and be creative in the content you suggest. Send them a sample of what you can provide in that first email or letter. We have to be our biggest advocates. Other people can't help but pay attention when you are passionate about something. And attention is what we need to ensure that the general public comes to recognize GLAMs as integral public institutions.

If I can be of any assistance in starting a similar project at your institution, or you would simply like a sounding board to discuss ideas, please send me an email at gwyn.evans@vernonmuseum.ca. I would be happy to help however I can!



Caroline Léna Becker, "Archives municipales de Toulouse."
www.flickr.com/photos/27892629@N04/15958244721

STUDENT PROFILE - DAVE LANG

My name is Dave Lang and I'm a mature student working to complete an MA in History at the University of Victoria (UVic). My current research focus is British Columbia's log export policies in the twentieth century. I've been fortunate to secure funding from both the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and UVic to support my studies.

Why log exports? British Columbians have been arguing over this issue for more than a hundred years, but no one has written a book about it! What has been written is full of mistakes. The log export story touches on the province's origins as a resource extraction colony and has a lot to say about how we are governed.

My research is on hold due to the necessary closure of the British Columbia Archives and the University of British Columbia's (UBC) Special Collections, but this pause has allowed me the time to learn more about the archival profession. I completed the Archives Association of British Columbia's (AABC) *Introduction to Archival Practice* course this summer and am enrolled in the AABC's upcoming *Managing Archival Photographs*. I am considering pursuing a Master of Archival Studies degree at UBC once I have completed my MA at UVic.

In one of my past lives, I worked in information technology, and I'm fascinated by the opportunities, and learning about the risks, that digitization offers the archives. As a student, I have benefited greatly from primary source documents that have been shared online by archive.org, hathitrust.org, and UBC.

I was surprised to learn that the relationship between historians and archivists can be strained at times, and am quite interested in working toward strengthening the bonds between the two disciplines.

Are you a current or future archival studies student? We want to hear from you! Contact AABC Secretary & Newsletter Editor, Victoria McAuley at aabc.secretary@aabc.ca to be featured in our next newsletter issue.

REIMAGINING A REFERENCE ROOM, OR HOW TO OFFER ACCESS DURING A PANDEMIC

*David Alexander, dalexander@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca
Acting Head of Archives, Royal BC Museum and Archives*

In March, to meet provincial requirements and ensure everyone's safety, we closed the BC Archives Reference Room and staff quickly – within days – pivoted to working from home. The team's work soon focused on answering remote inquiries, improving collections data and quickly – again within days – and creating an online transcription program (and all the processes behind it) so staff could transcribe records. This project allowed staff who might otherwise not have work to do from home – such as the box office and exhibition teams – to do meaningful work that enriched access to the collections.

During the lockdown, access to the provincial collections was via our collection database, curated online resources and digital learning programs as well as access via remote inquiries to any records that had been previously digitized. Two archivists were assigned to return to the archives every couple of weeks to meet any really urgent requests – such as access to health records or the odd divorce order (not surprising, there were very few marriages happening).

When restrictions lifted in May, we all breathed a sigh of relief and some staff returned to a much different workplace, one



photo by Shane Lighter, RBCM

with: room occupancy signs, directional arrows, lots of reminders about social distancing and barrels of hand sanitizer to ensure we were all safe.

Almost immediately, we began to look at the challenge of how to provide more access – under COVID everything we knew had changed. Remote access wasn't a problem (staff were back at work with the collections, and small requests could be digitized and forwarded to researchers), but the larger requests though were problematic. The biggest question was: how do we reopen the Reference Room?



At the same time, despite most provincial archives and academic libraries and archives remaining closed, a group of researchers started a media and letter writing campaign to have the Reference Room open. In addition to the stresses of a pandemic, returning to work and interacting with others after months of being in isolation, staff felt outside added pressure of having to entirely rethink how to provide access, and all the processes and procedures behind it.

The Reference Room during COVID is a puzzle. Instead of in the before times when the Reference Room might hold 30 plus researchers at a time, with two or three staff moving about, our parameters have shrunk considerably. Under WorkSafe BC requirements, we can only have 8 people in the Reference Room; staff still need to access the room for remote inquiries – which leaves us room for five researchers at one time. And despite some fancy plexiglass work from our Exhibitions team, we determined that it wasn't going to be safe providing one-on-one interaction between staff and researchers.

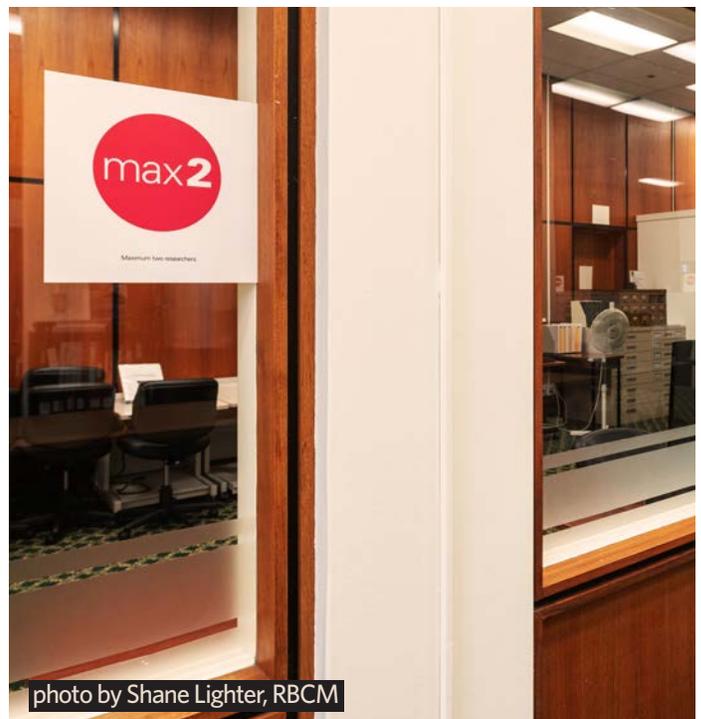
As well, to limit the potential spread of COVID 19, any boxes in use by researchers, any boxes from offsite or those handled by staff are quarantined for 72 hours. Records are loaded onto carts – the researcher, at the start of their appointment, will find a cart with their name on it, unload, do their work and then load the cart at the end of the day. Staff wearing PPE will then wheel the carts into a quarantine room for three days.

We opened in stages: mid-June, we provided access to researchers that had urgent court or treaty deadlines coming up. End of July we opened to anyone with an urgent deadline and on September 14 we open to all researchers.

Researchers are required to make an appointment ahead of time, the reference interview is done remotely, and they must identify anything they require access to no less than 7 days in advance. They can only reserve one day a week: either Monday, Tuesday, Thursday or Friday (the museum and archives are closed on Wednesday to do a thorough clean).

In the end, there were a myriad of challenges we had to overcome but we've opened, and – most importantly – we've created an environment that is safe for staff and researchers.

We have some considerable learning from this experience and have drafted a reopening plan. I am happy sharing this or our experience with other archives if they are interested.



HONOURING VANCOUVER'S JAPANESE UNITED CHURCH



Powell Street Church congregation, [1920?], Box P-44, file 2, Chizu Uchida fonds, Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives of the United Church of Canada.

Blair Galston,

Archivist, Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives of The United Church of Canada

The Pacific Mountain Regional Council of the United Church (aka the Bob Stewart Archives) is located in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. We are mere steps away from Japantown, a once thriving community of Japanese Canadians, prior to their internment in 1942.

The Vancouver Japanese United Church (VJUC) and the Bob Stewart Archives recently launched a website, *Enduring Faith...Through Hardship and Joy, the Story of Vancouver's Japanese United Church*. The centerpiece of the site is the hundreds of digitized photos, primarily from the pre-war era. But the site is more than a collection of digital objects; it conveys a message, telling the story of VJUC's struggle to build and sustain a faith community in the face of prejudice and grave injustice.

The Vancouver Japanese United Church once stood at the corner of Powell Street and Jackson Avenue. The church originated in the early 1890s from within the Japanese-Canadian community itself, rather than through mission work of the mainstream Christian church, as was more typical. The church provided an alternative to the Buddhist religion and, at that time, was a means for new Canadians to integrate within the dominant Euro-centric Canadian culture—for better or worse.

Besides its obvious spiritual role for its

members, the church provided many important social supports within the Powell Street community and beyond (e.g. it provided English-language instruction and childcare for preschoolers, a "Japanese Hospital and Clinic," and a gym for the wider community).

During the Second World War, when Japanese Canadians were unjustly uprooted from the West Coast and scattered throughout the western provinces in internment camps, the Vancouver congregation had to leave its building in trust to the wider United Church. From 1949 on, the federal government allowed Japanese Canadians to return to the coast. The now smaller returning congregation wanted to resume using the Powell Street Church. But the United Church did not make that easy, and sold the building in 1953 without regard to the congregation's wishes.

The roots of the project reach back over a decade, when the United Church apologized to VJUC for its sale of the building. More about the Archives' role in the process can be found in the Fall 2009 AABC Newsletter.

The United Church promised redress, and that occurred once the congregation was ready to come forward with an amount. In late 2018, The United Church of Canada and BC Conference presented a \$500,000 ceremonial payment to VJUC. At that time, VJUC approached the Archives

to create a website to make their records more widely available. One of the aims of the website would be to reach out to the diaspora living in the rest of Canada, whose roots trace back to the Vancouver congregation.

As many of us have learned, the process for a collaborative project with a community begins with a trusted relationship; ideally, a project grows naturally from that foundation. In this case, the Archives already had a meaningful history working with VJUC in the lead-up to the 2009 apology. We shared that experience and many common points of reference, including familiarity with some of the elders who were no longer living. Our friendships grew through shared meals, visits to a member's home, collective participation in a Christmas Sunday worship service, and genuine hospitality and concern for one another's well-being.

Not only did the project benefit from the growing friendship between Archives and congregation, but our work was also enriched and made easier through the generosity of other organizations. For example, the Nikkei Museum and Cultural Centre has made an immense amount of information available, and staff were generous with their expertise.

Grounded as it is in the work of reconciliation, the process of working together was central. VJUC formed an advisory group to guide the project. The group helped define the scope and vision, organized oral history interviews, and made decisions about content. They supplied the glue that held everything together: the passion and the human aspects of the site. The Archives was able

to produce the project proposal and plan, and provide the project team needed to bring their vision to fruition. The mechanics of that work and related tasks are well documented by others.

Modeling our approach on the Residential School History and Dialogue Centre (with whom we have been fortunate to partner), all research, writing, and image selection was VJUC-led. Although I did the research and initial draft of the written history, nearly 100 percent of the research was based on sources from the Japanese-Canadian community. A communications professional with family roots in the congregation conducted the oral history interviews.

A secondary goal of the project was to create a pedagogical tool. We recognized an opportunity to present this story as a microcosm of the larger story. To accompany the site, we included a study guide to help children, youth, and adults explore and reflect on themes of racism and reconciliation.

Aside from being a "really cool" project and a great way to highlight the relevance of archives, the website gave VJUC and the wider church a chance to walk a little further down the path of reconciliation and enjoy new friendships based on mutual and intercultural respect. As many have already pointed out, archives can help shine a light in dark places and unearth hidden stories. And sometimes they can help heal old wounds. But with this project, I've realized once again that archives can serve to strengthen human connection and create meaningful bonds—perhaps a new spin on the "archival bond" concept.



Some members of the advisory team identify people in images. Photo courtesy Rev. Daebin Im.



MEET THE 2020-2021 AABC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

KAT LOURO, MEMBER-AT-LARGE

Kat Louro has a B.A. in English and History from UNBC, and a M.A.S. from the UBC iSchool with a concentration in Indigenous knowledge management and protocol. She is currently the archivist and librarian for the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council where she is building a resource centre to support self-governance and reconciliation aims. A settler-Canadian who grew up in Northern B.C., Kat is passionate about community run initiatives, GLAM partnerships, and rural and Northern outreach. Outside of work she can be found occasionally running, playing guitar, sewing, and reading graphic novels.

'What drew me to a career in archives? The short answer is: I'm nosy! As a kid I was obsessed with the movie Harriet the Spy and how she collected information to understand the world a bit better. After a summer work experience in a municipal archive, I realized I loved assisting researchers in finding the answers to their questions by following narrative threads through disparate pieces of information. It's sort of like being a detective.'

DANIEL COLLINS, VICE PRESIDENT

Daniel Collins is the Senior Digital Archivist with the Government Records Service in the Corporate Information and Records Management Office of the BC Government. Prior to joining the BC Public Service, he worked as the Digital Archivist for the Vancouver Canucks. He holds a Master's Degree in History from the National University of Ireland Galway and a Master of Archival Studies from the University of British Columbia.

'The highlight of my career thus far has been creating a collage of photos so a coach could tell the difference between Daniel and Henrik Sedin.'

ANNOUNCEMENTS



Quinn Dombrowski, "Archived."
www.flickr.com/photos/quinnanya/4281034404

FALL 2020 ANTI-RACISM ACTION PLAN UPDATE

In June 2020, the AABC Executive released *A Statement Regarding Black Lives Matter Activism and Anti-Racism Initiatives*, in which the following commitments were made to our community: the creation of an anti-racism working group; the production of an anti-racism action plan; the development of an AABC bursary for Black, Indigenous, and People of Colour (BIPOC) community members; and, the circulation of updates throughout the 2020/2021 term via our newsletter. (The full statement can be found on our website at aabc.ca).

The Executive is pleased to report that we have begun discussions with interested Working Group participants, continue to seek volunteers for this initiative, and are engaging in ongoing bursary development. The implementation of both the Working Group and Bursary are key components of the AABC's developing action plan, and we look forward to providing more information to our community as this work continues over the next year.

To participate in, donate to, or provide feedback on our ongoing Anti-Racism Initiatives, please contact President Jenny Seeman at aabc.president@aabc.ca

VOLUNTEER WITH THE AABC

Volunteer for AABC committees today and support archives and the archival profession throughout the province.

We are seeking enthusiastic and conscientious volunteers to sit on our standing and ad hoc committees. Participants will get an opportunity to network and gain valuable skills while fostering the development of the provincial archival community. Participation does not require a major time commitment and committee schedules are flexible.

We are seeking volunteers for the following areas:

- Anti-Racism Working Group
- Constitution and By-laws
- Indigenous Advocacy
- Grants
- Membership
- Nominations and Elections
- Programs
- Finance
- Communications

Volunteer spaces are limited so contact aabc.president@aabc.ca by November 1, 2020 to reserve a spot.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

Donation numbers are low, but making a donation is as important as ever. We understand that COVID-19 has made it difficult for many professionals to donate, but your contributions provide awards to UBC School of Information students every year and provide support to the annual ACA@UBC conference. This is a key part of the AABC's mandate to foster the development of our province's archival community.

Help us meet our goal and donate now at <http://www.canadahelps.org/en/dn/3515>

BRITISH COLUMBIA ARCHIVAL EDUCATION AND ADVISORY SERVICE (EAS)

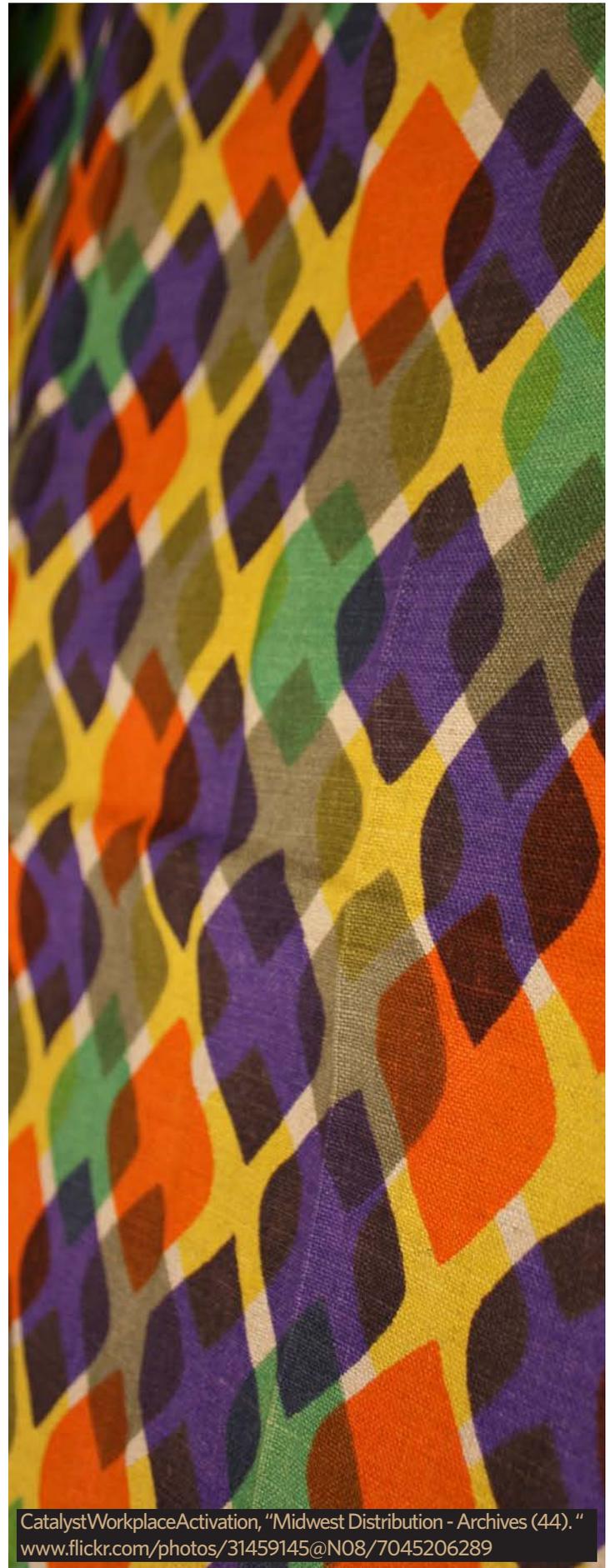
Lisa Glandt, EAS Coordinator

Like many, the Education and Advisory Services program has had to adjust priorities as the current COVID pandemic defines our “new normal” for 2020. A crash course in managing Zoom for the May AABC-ARMA VI online conference has built the foundation for four successful webinars: “Introduction to MemoryBC”; “ABC’s of Archival Appraisal and Deaccessioning”; “Setting Up Your Archives”; and “Privacy 101: Managing Personal Information in Collections.” If you missed one of the webinars, please contact me – access to the recordings is free for AABC members (\$15.00 for non-members). Future webinars are in the works and suggestions are welcome.

Our distance education program is most definitely COVID-friendly as all readings and assignments can be completed at home or at work. We are thrilled to support a growing international cohort – our most recent course included students from Switzerland, Belize, India, Hong Kong and Nigeria. Registration for the January-March 2021 course, “Oral Histories: From Theory to Practice,” will be available on the website on October 5.

We have adapted two workshops to an online format so that training is not delayed. The AABC hosted the Canadian Conservation Institute’s first virtual “Digital Preservation” workshop from Sept 15-17, 2020. We are also excited to partner with BC HERN to present “Preservation and Disaster Planning for Archives” in November. This multi-day workshop will include a virtual salvage session and participant homework where you will get to practice your own disaster and recovery techniques... yes, we are actually giving you permission to destroy things! Registration and information about the workshop will be posted shortly.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me at aabc.advisor@aabc.ca if you have any questions.



CatalystWorkplaceActivation, “Midwest Distribution - Archives (44).”
www.flickr.com/photos/31459145@N08/7045206289

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Help showcase the incredible work of BC's archives and archivists. The AABC Newsletter is back and we need your stories. Submit your 250-word newsletter content proposals to aabc.secretary@aabc.ca with the subject line: AABC Newsletter Proposal.

We're open to all content ideas, including (but not limited to):

- articles
- paper excerpts
- opinion pieces
- archives / archivist spotlights
- upcoming events
- and more!

PHOTOS WANTED!

The AABC newsletter editorial team is looking for archival images to feature on these pages. Got something to share? Send a 600 dpi or higher scan or photo with a suggested image credit to aabc.secretary@aabc.ca.

AABC EXECUTIVE

Jenny Seeman, President
Daniel Collins, Vice-President
Victoria McAuley, Secretary
Stacey Gilkinson, Treasurer
Katie Sloan, Member-at-Large
Kat Louro, Member-at-Large
Alysa Routtenberg, Past Executive Member

ARCHIVISTS & HISTORIANS: BRIDGING THE GAP

Archivists and historians are natural allies, but the two disciplines don't always see eye-to-eye. History student and AABC volunteer Dave Lang will be hosting a virtual roundtable discussion between archivists and historians in British Columbia with the goal of finding common ground so that we might improve our professional relationships and work together to address the challenges that are facing us all. The results of the discussion will form the basis of an article to appear in the next issue of this newsletter. If you're interested in participating, send an email to davelang@uvic.ca.

CLOSING REMARKS

Victoria McAuley, AABC Secretary &
Newsletter Editor

The AABC and our newsletter are run by an inspiring and much appreciated group of volunteers. Please join me in thanking the following individuals for their tireless work on this issue of the newsletter:

Chelsea Bailey, Assistant Editor
Lauren Grace, Assistant Editor
Dave Lang, Graphic Design / Assistant Editor
Andréa Tarnawsky, Social Media Coordinator
Jenny Seeman, AABC President
Daniel Collins, AABC Vice-President
Stacey Gilkinson, AABC Treasurer
Kathryn Louro, AABC Member-at-Large
Katie Sloan, AABC Member-at-Large
Alysa Routtenberg, AABC Past-President
David Alexander, Contributor
Gwyneth Evans, Contributor
Blair Galston, Contributor

Finally, this newsletter would be nothing without our AABC community and readership. Thank you for your support and enthusiasm.

To paraphrase Dr. Bonnie Henry: Wishing you kindness, calm, and safety.