


# Managing Student Workers, Interns & Other Paraprofessional Workers in ArchivesSpace

Tyson Koenig, Rach Teasdale, & Kelsey Barnett  
Southeast Missouri State University  
ArchivesSpace Member Forum  
August 4, 2020



# About Southeast, Kent Library, & Special Collections

- Regional public comprehensive (former normal school)
- Kent Library: ~30 faculty/staff plus student workers; 2 IT staff
- Special Collections & Archives
  - Regional History Collections + University Archives + Rare Book Room
  - ~5000 linear feet; ~900 collections; over 2000 rare books
  - 2 full-time archivists, 1 half-time paraprofessional; graduate assistant & 4-6 student workers

# The Path to ArchivesSpace

- Complete staff turnover 2012-2014
  - Existing systems for collections management & public access were riddled with errors, difficult to use, inconsistent, & caused problems
  - ArchivesSpace identified as goal
- 2016: new library leadership enables ArchivesSpace membership
  - Became member in March 2017
  - Began migrating legacy data in June
  - Deadline of fall 2017 semester to have collection-level records for all processed collections in ArchivesSpace

# Implementation of ArchivesSpace

- “Migrating” only from unstructured legacy data-- essentially “copy & paste”
- Staff decision-making about implementation was first step
- Usability was a high priority
- Time was of the essence in effective implementation

# Implementation Plan

- Phase 1
  - Collection-level records & abstracts for all processed collections
  - All instances & locations entered and linked to appropriate collections
  - Completed 2017
- Phase 2
  - Series-level description of all collections
  - Completed 2018
- Phase 3
  - Folder (or equivalent)-level description of all collections
  - Ongoing, probably for years

# Using Student Labor

- Our students are excellent and their assistance was always part of the plan
- Our then-GA in 2017 was integral to setting up the infrastructure and logistics of the workflow for data entry
- We anticipated students would require close supervision, and the process would be very slow
- This sort of data entry is painstaking and requires close attention to detail-tough work even for our best students

# Using Students & Paraprofessionals

- Kelsey Barnett became essentially the “project manager” for ArchivesSpace implementation
- Couldn't have asked for a better experience with a student running things
- Special Collections added .5 paraprofessional position in summer 2018
  - Goal to transition this role to management of ArchivesSpace implementation
  - First incumbent in role left after 10 months (March 2019)
  - Former student worker Rach Teasdale hired, August 2019

# Kelsey Barnett, Student Worker

- Non-traditional student
- Courses in archival studies taken prior to employment
- Began as volunteer in the summer of 2017
- Hired as student worker in the fall of the same year
- Worked 15-20 hours a week on collection level ArchivesSpace data entry



# Project Management

- ArchivesSpace data entry was my primary task but it had to be balanced with other day to day projects
- Time management and proper communication with supervisors were key
- Weekly meetings with Tyson and Roxy to discuss their vision on the utilization of ArchivesSpace
- Spreadsheets were created to keep track of data entry that were accessible by all working on the project
- As my experience with ArchivesSpace grew more trust was placed on me to make decisions

# Training

- After working with ArchivesSpace for a year, I was entrusted with training new volunteers and student workers
- Met with supervisors to ensure the correct information was passed on during training
- Working off of a template the original graduate assistant created, Rach and I wrote workflows for various aspects of ArchivesSpace to use during training

# Moving On

- In the spring of 2019 I began to see expanded duties
- Time was spent on accessioning and processing new collections
- Worked with Rach to pass on the responsibility of finalizing the implementation of ArchivesSpace to her
- Before graduating in the fall of 2019, a comprehensive meeting was held with supervisors to ensure no ArchivesSpace projects were left unattended

# Final Thoughts

- Provided invaluable experience
- Marketable skills
- Research project presentation

# Rach Teasdale - Volunteer

- Started volunteering in May 2018
- Background is in Communication Disorders, became interested in pursuing a career working in an archives. First introduction to archival work was ArchivesSpace
- First impression was that ArchivesSpace is a very user-friendly platform, was able to learn the ropes quickly
- Almost exclusively trained/worked on Phase 2 (series level) of ArchivesSpace with Kelsey. We split the work between University collections and Regional collections (me)
- Kept detailed records in excel sheets of collections entered/worked on; including any issues that needed to be resolved/changes made

# Student Worker

- Hired as a student worker August 2018
- Continued working on Phase 2 of ArchivesSpace, worked with Kelsey on developing a workflow
- Once completed Phase 2, continued onto Phase 3 with the work continuing to be split between Kelsey doing University collections and me doing Regional collections
- Phase 3 (folder level) was a lot more in depth and required the physical checking of collections before the data could be entered into ArchivesSpace
- Had weekly meetings with supervisors to keep them up to date as well as implement their ideas for the project
- More responsibility of the project was passed on to me as Kelsey prepared to leave; felt comfortable with this shift due to familiarity with the project

# Paraprofessional Staff

- Hired as staff August 2019
- Took over as “Project Manager”
- Training Interns and Student Workers
- Each new collection received now gets entered in at Phase 3 level
- Have to balance time between other projects/responsibilities and ArchivesSpace, definitely useful to have trained student workers continuing the work
- Don't do as much Phase 3 entry, but will pick collections for student workers/interns to check and enter

# Conclusion & Lessons Learned

- Very user-friendly, enjoy working with the system, learned quite a bit on collection organization
- Student workers can be invaluable to a project like this
- Communication and joint decision-making are key
- Can be an extremely valuable experience for students who plan to continue on in the field