

“Local Collections in the Digital Age” November 4–5, 2021 Kansas City, Missouri

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Archives in public libraries, colleges and universities, and historical societies are the loci of where local history is found. As part of their communities, they document and share what defines and characterizes a place. As the profession has more generally sought how to make the collections we build more diverse, inclusive, responsive, and relevant, approaches and tools have changed. More often than not, those tools and approaches involve technology in some way. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, perhaps at no time in our history have we been so locally focused but also so digitally tuned in and connected. With an emphasis on digital collecting and digital storytelling, the MAC 2021 Fall Symposium will focus on how the digital age and technology have changed what and how we collect and how we share those collections.

The program will open with a plenary by Dr. Andrea Copeland, chair and program director of library and information science at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. Drawing from the 2017 book *Participatory Heritage* (Facet Publishing, 2017), which she coedited, she will share the benefits of and strategies for local individuals and groups and cultural heritage institutions partnering to preserve and provide access to the primary sources critical to ensuring comprehensive histories of communities through digital community archives. Follow-on sessions will focus on web archiving for local collections; how to conduct a successful history harvest; creating online exhibits from physical ones and involving community in the process to retell local history with an emphasis on diversity, equity, and inclusion; and various approaches to sharing local history and collections through podcasts, digital history sites, and virtual history trails.

Ironically, for a symposium so focused on the local, it may end up being decidedly not. More than 200 members responded to the April 2021 survey

that sought to gauge the outlook for professional development funding and the ability to travel, preferences for virtual or in-person offerings and safety precautions in consideration of COVID, and expected price points for virtual symposia. The results showed much uncertainty, but there was a moderate preference for meeting online, which would open the event up to a much larger potential audience. At this point, we know that the meeting will not be exclusively in person. It will either be all virtual or a hybrid that allows members who want to meet in person to do so but also accommodates those who prefer to attend virtually, for whatever reason. If there is an in-person option, LaBudde Special Collections at the University of Missouri–Kansas City has graciously agreed to host physical attendees.

Another element to consider is cost. The Fall Symposia typically have higher registration fees than the Annual Meetings. This is in part because of the smaller audience that has been the hallmark of these meetings, a characteristic that contributes to the concentrated experience around a single theme. In addition, conversations in recent years about equity and the value professionals contribute combined with the miniworkshop format of many sessions have led MAC to provide honoraria to symposium presenters. With these costs in mind, an online or hybrid meeting has the added benefit of allowing for more attendees and lowering the cost to individuals, as compared to past events.

In consultation with the vice president, the Local Arrangements Committee will continue to monitor conditions to ensure a safe and educational learning opportunity. A final decision is expected in late summer, so please stay tuned as we invite you to come see KC, virtually or in person!