MAC 2001 Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship Recipient

By Kristy Sorensen

I am halfway through the program in Library and Information Science at the University of Texas at Austin, working towards a master's degree with an emphasis in archival studies. It is hard to believe that two years ago I had little practical knowledge of what was actually involved in the archival profession. With the support of scholarships like the Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship for Graduate Students in Archival Administration, I have been able to greatly expand my knowledge of the archival profession.

I began my exploration of archival administration after I graduated from Nebraska Wesleyan University in Lincoln, Nebraska, in 1999. I had earned a double major in English and Women's Studies and was working as a communications associate at the Nebraska State 4-H Office. I had always been interested in pursuing a graduate degree, and the field of Library and Information Science in general appealed to me because of its focus on service and knowledge. It was my interest in history and my belief in the importance of context that led me to look at Library Science programs with strong archival components.

My experience at the University of Texas at Austin has been an enjoyable mixture of classroom theory and practical experience. In completing an introductory course in archives and manuscripts during my first semester, I had the opportunity to undertake a volunteer group project at the Austin History Center, a local history archives affiliated with the Austin Public Library. As my group grappled with the boxes of papers from a recently retired city council member, I was able to put into practice the theories of provenance, original order, and archival arrangement that I had been studying in the months before. That convergence of theory and practice is one of the most attractive parts of the archival profession. It is both academic and practical.

This summer I am working as a volunteer in the archives and manuscripts department of the Center for American History on the UT campus. I have had the opportunity to process a small collection of papers and, with the support of the staff at the center, I have learned a lot about making arrangement decisions, basic preservation concerns, and the importance of archival theory in creating good archival practice. I plan to continue my work at the Center for American History after I finish with this initial collection by working with the registrar to complete initial inventories of the incoming collections.

Although I have not had any paid archival experience, I am hoping to get a part-time job in an archives this fall. With the financial support of the Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship, I will be better prepared to leave my current job and take an entry-level position in a local archives. I am looking forward to gaining more hands-on experience to complement my theory-based course work. After graduation, I plan to return to the Midwest and work with a nonprofit or university-affiliated research archives. My expectations for my future in archival enterprise are not based so much on subject or place as they are on the spirit of research and the overall mission of the organization. I hope to find myself in an environment that challenges me and that, once again, combines the importance of archival theory with the necessity of archival practice.

I would like to thank the Midwest Archives Conference and the Louisa Bowen Scholarship Committee for selecting me as the 2001 recipient of the Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship for Graduate Students in Archival Administration. I am honored to receive this recognition, and my continued explorations in the world of archival administration will be greatly enhanced with the support of this award.

Nominations Sought for MAC

(Continued from page 3)

Only one nomination per year may be put forward by each state committee, but as many as three awards can be presented each year. The deadline to submit nominations to a state chair is November 30, 2001. For further information about the award, consult the MAC Web site: <www.midwestarchives.org>.

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