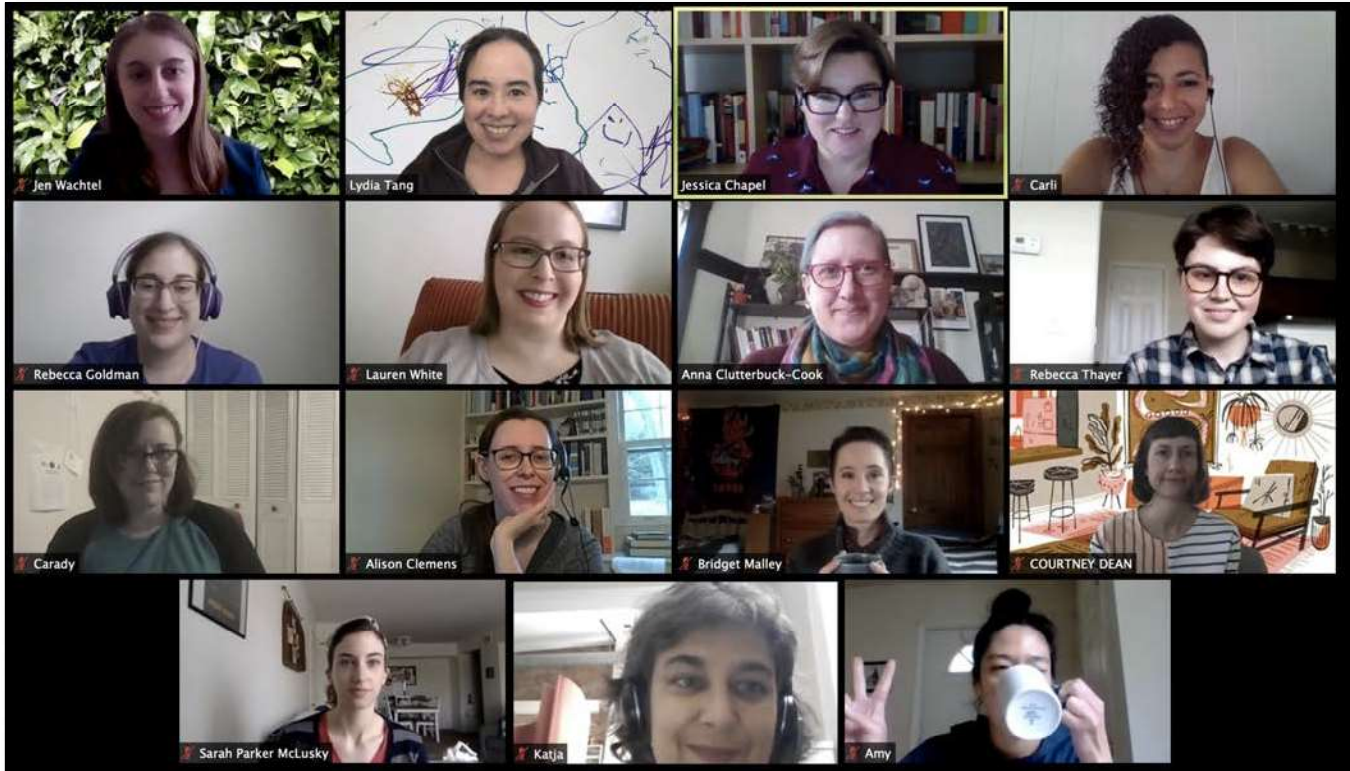


Up-and-Comers: News for Student and New Archivists

Assistant Editor: Meredith Lowe, University of Wisconsin–Madison. Contact Meredith at mclowe@wisc.edu if you would like to guest author a column or have a good idea to share.

Grassroots Organizing of the Archival Workers Emergency Fund

By Lydia Tang, Lyrisis, with assistance from Lauren White, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library; Bridget Malley, Steering Committee member, SAA Accessibility and Disability Section; and Jessica Chapel, Harvard Law School Library



Screenshot of a Zoom meeting of members of the organizing committee of the Archives Workers Emergency Fund, May 2020. Courtesy Lydia Tang with assistance from Colleen Malley.

The Archival Workers Emergency Fund (AWE Fund) is a grassroots mutual aid network for archival professionals who have lost jobs or income due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund is currently administered by the Society of American Archivists, but AWE Fund originated with the grassroots organizing of archivists helping archivists.

In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic was sweeping across the United States and shuttering archival repositories. While I was not furloughed or laid off, I saw on social media that archivists were getting cut from their jobs or scrambling for ideas to justify working remotely. In response, I began a Google Doc called “Archivists at Home” with the SAA Accessibility and Disability section (ADS), which became a crowdsourced playbook for navigating the transition of work during the pandemic and for giving archivists

across the globe ideas for developing and advocating for remote work. In March and April 2020, there were many times when over a hundred viewers were accessing the document simultaneously. You can view and suggest edits to the document through at https://docs.google.com/document/d/16ubmmTtJ7oCjBUFI_75fqG9J62pul9dg_RCd4au4tMw/edit?usp=sharing.

Around the same time, Jessica Chapel, another steering committee member in the ADS, observed that a relief fund existed for archival workers. Chapel posted an invitation on SAA channels and social media about the mutual aid effort, and archival workers and students from across the country responded to the call and joined our Google Group. Using the hashtag #DisplacedArchivists, we informally began to track the impact of COVID-19 on archival workers on Twitter.

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Meme discussing resources for archivists impacted by COVID-19 from the Twitter account @archivistmemes. Reprinted with permission.

Both the “Archivists at Home” and our emerging mutual aid effort took off when @ArchivistMemes tweeted about them on March 16, 2020.

Within a span of only a few weeks, the ad hoc volunteer organizing committee created a proposal, application form, and rubric to present to the Society of American Archivists. SAA approved the AWE Fund in April 2020 as an initial six-month pilot, later opting to extend it for a full year, and so now we are celebrating its first birthday! While the Archival Workers Emergency Fund is administered by the SAA Foundation and an appointed application review committee, the AWE Fund organizers continue to meet biweekly to pursue fund-raising initiatives, plan surveys, discussion panels, and other projects.

Over the past year, individuals, student chapters, and regional organizations rallied together to help support the AWE Fund, and we are so grateful. To date, we have been able to distribute more than \$145,000 to support 173 archival workers in need. The fund is still open, and we encourage archival workers impacted by the pandemic to apply! (Link to SAA webpage on AWE Fund at <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/saa-foundation-board-of-directors/archival-workers-emergency-fund>.)

The impact of the pandemic on the archival profession will be felt for years to come. While the initial shock and first wave of layoffs have passed, budget impacts manifest in discontinued contracts, hiring freezes, furloughs, and other ways. Building and sustaining the AWE Fund has become a marathon and not a sprint for the volunteer organizing committee. *Would you like to join us or help out?*

Here are some ways you can:

- Join our Google Group to attend organizer meetings, as detailed in Michigan archivist Sarah McLusky’s blog post at <https://awefund.wordpress.com/2021/01/26/join-the-awe-fund-organizers>.
- Follow us on Twitter at @awefund2020 or visit our website at <https://awefund.wordpress.com> to find out about upcoming fund-raising initiatives, surveys, and events.
- Consider setting up a recurring donation—it could be the price of a cup of coffee—through the Coffee 4 Colleagues GoFundMe campaign. We currently have \$345 pledged in recurring monthly donations. Collecting \$1,000 per month in small donations would ensure that one archival worker will be funded each month (<https://charity.gofundme.com/o/en/campaign/coffee-for-colleagues-tea-on-me>). If you prefer making a one-time donation, you can donate through the SAA Foundation website.
- Are you crafty? Persistent Stitches (spearheaded by Anna Clutterbuck-Cook) has sponsored two Auction For #AWEFund events. Check out and bid on the clever and cozy creations!



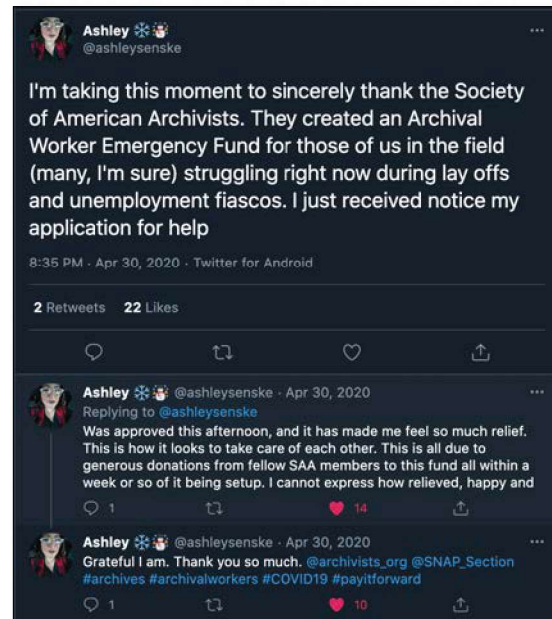
Archives Dino created by Sarah McLusky for an Auction For #AWEFund in December 2020, image credit Sarah McLusky. Reprinted with permission.

What Else Are We Up To?

Since the fund's inception, we have been periodically issuing surveys to keep an eye on the extent and impact of the pandemic on archival workers. While many archival repositories have been trying to document the pandemic's impact within their communities, we are trying to measure and project the impact of the pandemic within the archival profession. Here's a link to our summer 2020 survey summary: <https://awefund.wordpress.com/2020/11/10/summer-2020-archival-workers-emergency-fund-survey-summary>. We are currently working on the analysis of the December 2020 survey and look forward to sharing those results with you soon on our website. If you would like to help plan future surveys, please get in touch!

We have also organized panel discussions. The 2020 panel discussions addressed mutual aid, salary transparency, and disability. Our 2021 line up will center on students and newer archival workers, labor and solidarity, and environmental sustainability. Please tune into our website and Twitter @AWEFund2020 for registration information closer to the events. Past events are recorded and posted to our YouTube account and website.

Both the "Archivists at Home" and AWE Fund projects have demonstrated to me the power of collective care. When we organize to support our colleagues, we are stronger together.



Tweet by Ashley Senske, April 30, 2020. Reprinted with permission.

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