

## Virtual MAC 2021

By Cara Bertram, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Kayla Harris, University of Dayton

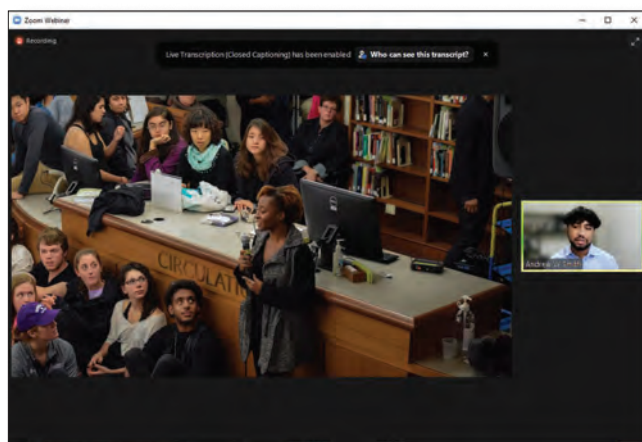


On May 13 and 14, MAC held its first ever virtual Annual Meeting with the theme “Archivists Respond.” Although the 2021 Program Committee had hoped to meet in person in Madison, Wisconsin—especially after canceling the Des Moines conference—the uncertainty of the pandemic made the Program Committee pivot to a virtual format. The conference had 359 registrants from across the United States, including attendees from California, New York, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, and Washington, DC. Attendees gathered online to discuss the projects, challenges, and ideas their colleagues were working on during the past year.

Even though the meeting was in a virtual format, that didn’t mean the conference lacked tours! The Program Committee was fortunate to have four great tours led by archivists from all over the Midwest (Illinois, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin), and attendees had the benefit of attending all the tours. No time conflicts, no caps on attendees, and no early shuttle rides!

Nora Grieman hosted from the Midwest Archeological Center in Lincoln, Nebraska, showcasing the Smithsonian Institution River Basin Survey Collection with records on archaeological sites spanning Idaho

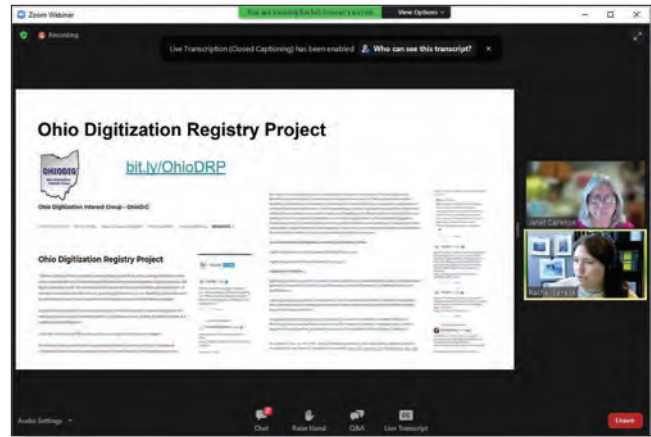
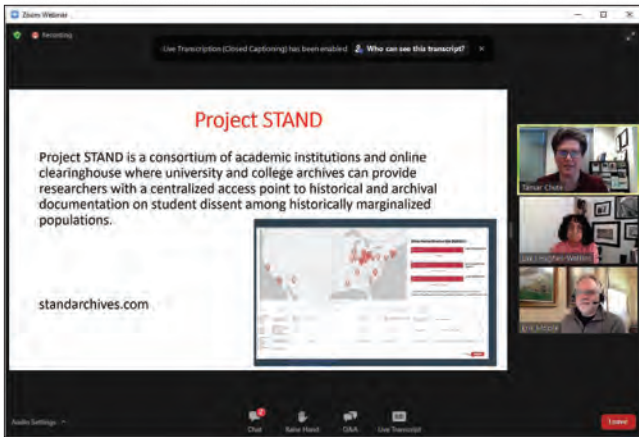
to Georgia. Heather Stecklein, from the University of Wisconsin–Stout, showed off the UW–Stout Archives and Area Research Center’s zoned user spaces in its reading room, which provide quiet and collaborative spaces. Alia Levar Wegner at Miami University provided a tour of the archives’ exhibition *Bearing Witness: The Holocaust and Jewish Experience at Miami University*, displaying original documents and testimonies of alumni and faculty who survived the Holocaust. And Micaela Terronez of Knox College gave an overview of the Teruo Okada Papers, which provide the rare perspective of an international student who attended the college from 1929 to 1933.



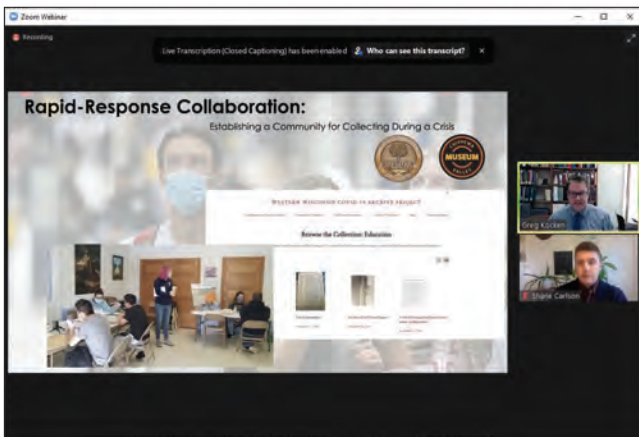
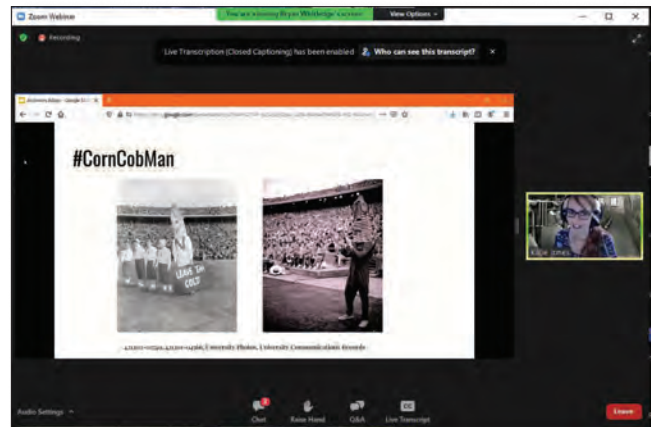
The conference was held over two days, kicking off with a plenary by Andrew W. Smith, a research fellow and graduate assistant with the University of Maryland’s African American Digital Humanities Center. Smith spoke about his work with Amherst Uprising, a project to document student-led protests at Amherst College. An introduction was provided by Project STAND (Student Activism Now Documented) cofounders Lae’l Hughes-Watkins, University of Maryland, and Tamar Chute, the Ohio State University. The session wrapped up with questions from attendees, sparking an interesting conversation about documenting student protests.

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Twelve live sessions were held over the conference, covering topics such as documenting the COVID-19 pandemic; pivoting work, classes, and outreach to the digital environment; documenting service members and veterans; community history; and accessibility in archives. There were also 11 posters to peruse, each one with a short video summary. Three of those posters walked away with awards for best poster! Kathryn Hujda received first place for her poster “Minnesota Methods: Rethinking Appraisal at the Minnesota Historical Society.” Amber Watts received second place for “Processing Physical Collections at a Distance: Exploring the Future of Archival Internships and Practicums in a (Mostly) Remote Environment.” And in third were Tara Bradshaw, Jennifer Woods, and Sai Estep for their poster, “Small Archive Projects in a Pandemic: Entertaining America.”



We did miss walking through vendor exhibitions, but we didn't totally miss out. Vendor presentations were provided by MAC's generous sponsors NEDCC, Atlas Lucidea, Hollinger, Internet Archive, and Crowley. MAC attendees were able to hear about cutting edge technologies, products, and services; ask questions; and

dream of outfitting their archives with all the products and services they could ever want.

The conference wrapped up with the MAC business meeting where 125 attendees showed up without the inducement of a raffle drawing! The meeting covered the state of the association and honored awardees and scholarship recipients, and, at the end of the meeting, past MAC president Erik Moore pounded the gavel one last time before handing over responsibility to the incoming MAC president, Tamar Chute.

While attendees did miss the social aspects of a physical conference, we hope everyone enjoyed the small comforts that a virtual conference can provide like control of the thermostat, comfortable seating, no line for coffee and snacks, and relaxed attire.

The 2021 Program Committee was led by co-chairs Kayla Harris and Cara Bertram, along with Shiraz Bhathena, Anita Doering, Bradley Houston, Kathy Makas, Allison Neely, Shae Rafferty, Danielle Spalenka, and Anna Tunnicliff. The committee would like to give a special thank-you to MAC vice president Michelle Sweetser, who went above and beyond to help the Program Committee pull together MAC's first virtual conference. The committee would like to thank our wonderful plenary speaker, Andrew W. Smith; Lae'l Hughes-Watkins and Tamar Chute; and all of our session presenters, poster presenters, virtual tour hosts, and sponsors!

We look forward to seeing everyone at Madison in 2022—don't forget to submit a proposal! More proposals mean a more dynamic program when we all meet in person!

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