

Awards and Scholarships

Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship for Graduate Students in Archival Administration

By Karis Blaker

I am incredibly grateful to have been chosen as the 2021 Midwestern Archives Conference Louisa Bowen Memorial Scholarship recipient. It is a true honor to be included in the legacy of Bowen's scholarly and archival work, especially at such a pivotal moment in my own archives career.

In my first semester as an undergraduate, I was hired as a library assistant at a small media library operated inside the film department. As a first-generation college student, I did not realize to what extent my work as a library assistant would shape my undergraduate experience, motivating me to pursue a career in archives and librarianship. I am now entering my second year of a graduate program pursuing a degree in public history and an MLIS simultaneously. My previous academic pursuits were in English literature, women's and gender studies, and writing. I soon realized that what excites me the most about these subjects is the chance to tell the stories of remarkable people who are so often left out of the historical canon. I feel a deep desire and serious calling to accurately remember the achievements and obstacles of those whose stories are overlooked. I am delighted to have been given this scholarship honoring Louisa Bowen, a trailblazing woman who

was also dedicated to her value of knowledge and preservation.

My value of accuracy drives me to dig deeper into areas of tension that I have encountered in seemingly commonplace things (newspapers, periodicals, drafts of scripts and speeches) and highlight the truth, no matter how it might complicate existing beliefs. Throughout my entire academic career, I have trained myself to balance the analytic work of cataloging historical information with the ethos that drives reparative efforts in the public history sphere. My combined graduate degrees in public history and library science will allow me to dive into the archival world with this goal in mind. In my studies so far, I have created a virtual underwater exhibit for residents of the Edgewater neighborhood in Chicago; I have produced independent archival research on print culture and lesbian feminism in the 1970s; and I volunteered my time this past summer with the Frances Willard and WCTU archives in Evanston, Illinois. I want to sincerely thank the scholarship committee and the Midwestern Archives Conference for helping support my volunteer work this summer and for bringing me closer to my goal of becoming a librarian and archivist.