

## MAC Fall Symposium Recap

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, we weren't able to gather in person, but it couldn't stop us from gathering on Zoom to talk about "Local Collections in the Digital Age." Ninety-seven registrants from across the Midwest, the United States, and even one from Greece signed up to explore how technology has affected what and how we both collect and share our local history collections.



### DAY 1

#### **“Community Partnerships: Sharing Expertise to Promote Access and Preservation”**

Andrea J. Copeland, PhD, Indiana University, explored the idea of participatory heritage in the plenary talk. She defined the concept as engagement with culture outside of heritage institutions that focuses on content over processes and policies, and shares expertise and authority with the community rather than relying on credentials and hierarchies. Copeland used the Virtual Bethel Archive, a multi-institution project she led to document Bethel AME, a historic Black church in Indianapolis that closed, as a real-world example of participatory heritage. The project included recording oral histories, digitizing church records for congregation access before they were donated to a repository, and 3-D scanning of the sanctuary and translating it into a virtual reality environment. She emphasized patience in developing relationships and the importance of

building trust with institutions and individuals who have been traditionally excluded or overlooked by most cultural heritage organizations.

*Andrea J. Copeland*



#### Lessons Learned Capacity Building, Creating Connections

- Continue to diversify the heritage/memory/information fields
- Can't leave things to chance – need framework for connectivity and inclusivity
- Be prepared to invest a significant amount of time in building relationships
- Do your homework and learn deeply about the communities with you wish to work
- Build connections back to your organization not from it
- Connect with elders and opinion leaders within a given community
- Bring something to the table
- Involve students, volunteers, community members, media in spreading the message about your organization/projects
- Be flexible when moving from one community to the next
- Institutions can be inflexible and prefer “dead things”
- Respect intangible as well as tangible heritage

*(Continued on page 10)*

*(Continued from page 9)*

**Some Concepts**

- **Wayback Machine**
  - Searchable public archive of website dating back more than 2 decades
- **Community Webs Program**
  - Cohort of (mostly) public libraries supported by the Internet Archive
- **Archive-It**
  - The software provided by Internet Archive that we use to manage web archiving activity
- **WARC File**
  - International standard file format for web archives



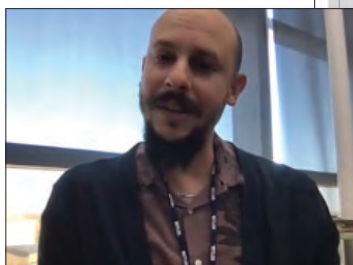
*David LaCrone*

**“Web Archiving for Local Collections”**

David LaCrone, Kansas City Public Library, discussed his experiences in archiving local websites in the Kansas City area. The Community Webs program and Archive-It are good resources for people interested in getting involved in this work. KCPL uses a rubric for evaluating sites for possible inclusion in its project based on how well the sites fit their project goals. LaCrone also shared tips for advocacy, both internally and within the larger community; sustainability; and promotion.

**“History Harvest How-To”**

Stephen Lane, Indianapolis Public Library, provided an overview of the successful “Scan-a-thons” he organized as part of an NEH Common Heritage Grant to capture the everyday experience of Black Americans in Indianapolis. He covered logistics such as staffing, scanning kits, and file naming. He emphasized the importance of connecting with high-profile members of the community or organizations to help foster participation and interest.



*Stephen Lane*

**The Process**

- Have a training guide for staff
- Train staff across branches who are interested
- Have enough kits available for staff to host their own scan-a-thon
- Create a team of people who can train other staff or supervise the scan-a-thon events

**Community Heritage Scan-A-Thon Events**

**Plan a Successful Scan-A-Thon Event**

- 1 Great participants** Invite participants to the beginning of the scan-a-thon. Get a general overview of the process. Have them bring it and get the permission form signed.
- 2 Scan items** Use the scanner and laptop connected to the kit to scan items, starting with the signed permission form. The scanned items go into a bag or bins and formats such as images, files, audio, video, documents, etc. Save two copies of each scanned item: one to the scanning kit USB and one to a USB for the participant.
- 3 Record information** Use the provided spreadsheet to record any information the participant can provide about each item being scanned. Collect references such as the names of people pictured, locations, dates, creators, etc.
- 4 Finish** Give a digital copy of the signed permission form to the participant. Give them the final copy of the permission form to be returned to Digital Projects. Thank the participant and give them their copy of the scan on their designated USB.

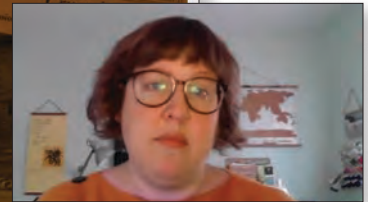
### “More than a Moment: Ethical Approaches to Archival Work”

Dr. Anthony LaBat and Sandy Rodriguez, University of Missouri–Kansas City, shared their experiences in creating a new digital exhibit that challenged biases in a former exhibit on the same topic; their colleague Lindy Smith moderated the discussion. They shared background on the project then touched on the importance of doing this kind of work, how and why they took a different approach, the ongoing nature of the work and changing receptiveness, and using position and power to make space for critical feedback. Rodriguez and LaBat emphasized the importance of making antiracist and anti-oppressive practices part of daily work and approaching this work with empathy, agency, and humility.

### DAY 2

#### “Go Tell It Online: Digital History Projects”

Jason Roe and Katie Sowder, Kansas City Public Library, presented on a variety of local history digital projects they’ve been involved in over the past few years as well as some works in progress. They touched on platform selection and organization, the value of collaboration and partnerships, reconsidering institutional habits, staffing, and the importance of paying participants for their contributions.



Katie Sowder



Jason Roe



(Continued on page 12)

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### “Podcasting 101 for Local History”

Suzanne Hogan, KCUR Public Radio, discussed what makes podcasts unique as accessible and “intimate” media and the nuts and bolts of producing a podcast such as methods of recording, mixing, publishing and sharing, and fostering engagement. She also suggested considerations for starting a podcast and guiding questions such as who is your audience? what do you hope to accomplish? and is a podcast the best medium? Her tips for successful storytelling included finding the compelling or meaningful, keeping the audience interested with a surprise or a journey, and highlighting the humanity in interviewees. Hogan also encouraged attendees to pitch their story ideas to existing podcasters and to realize the expertise they can offer.

### “Taking It to the Streets with Digital Interactives”

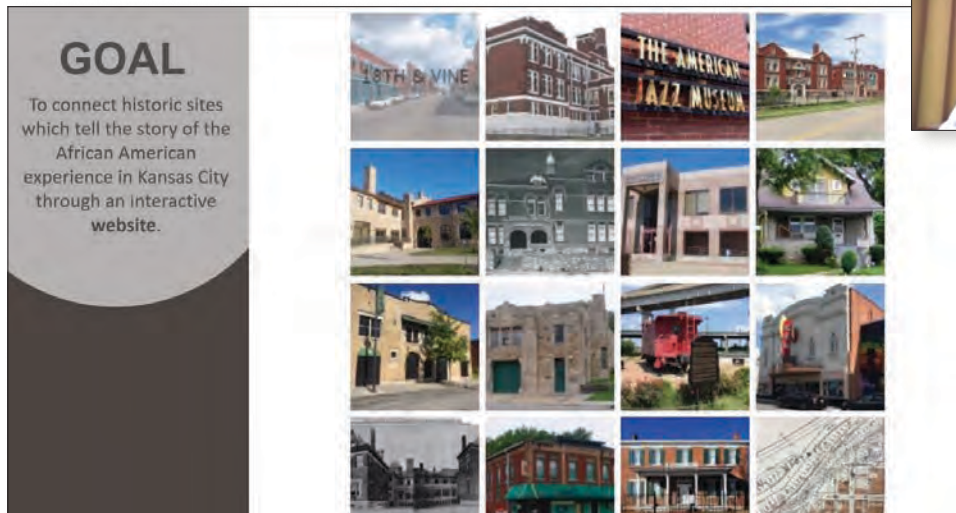
Dr. Carmaletta M. Williams, PhD, Black Archives of Mid-America, and Bradley Wolf, City of Kansas

City, Missouri, shared their experiences in creating a virtual African American Heritage Trail of sites in Kansas City, Missouri. They highlighted some of the difficulties that come along with a project like this, the importance of getting out of silos, finding a balance between passion and profession, and resiliency. As with nearly all of the presentations, they focused on the importance of community contributions, involvement, and feedback. Future plans for the project include adding more content and expanding the scope to be more regional.

A common theme that emerged throughout the Symposium was the importance of developing authentic community relationships, sharing authority and expertise with local stakeholders as we do our work, soliciting and heeding feedback, and planning for sustainability. We hope all attendees received new ideas to apply to their own work.



*Bradley Wolf*



Thank you to everyone who made this event a great success. Our generous sponsors UMKC University Libraries, the Kansas City Area Archivists, the Heritage League of Greater Kansas City, Heugh-Edmondson Conservation Services LLC, and recap sponsor, committee, and anonymous donors made it possible to keep registration cost low and to offer live

captioning. Current and former members of Council as well as Public Information Officer Kyna Herzinger, Webmaster Kate Dietrick, and former Development Coordinator Ida Mangum provided much-appreciated support. And, finally, a special thank you to Vice President Michelle Sweetser whose patience, good counsel, and mad Zoom skills were invaluable.



*Carmaletta M. Williams*