

# MAC midwest archives conference

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*Preserving the Documents of the Past and Making Them Accessible to the Future!*

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## President's Page

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#### Why Are You an Archivist?

*By Tamar Chute, President, Midwest Archives Conference*



Why are you an archivist?

A lot of discussion recently, both online and within my university, has focused on burnout, the struggle to find joy in what we do, and the question of how to create a balance of work and home life. The questions and challenges are significant, and I have wondered, what is it about my job that is important to me? I've often been asked how I became an archivist, but very rarely why. Why am I an archivist?

Last March, my dean asked me to supervise on a temporary basis a division of subject librarians in addition to the archives. While hesitant at first, I accepted the position for four months with the thought that perhaps it would help me understand what drives me in my work life. In the end, I found the answer to my questions back in the archives.

Over several months, I learned a lot about subject librarians and the ways they are similar to and different from archivists. I was inspired by their commitment to teaching, and we came up with several ways to collaborate in the future. Most significant for me personally, I discovered that what I still truly enjoy is the archives part of my job. I do a lot of other things (countless meetings), but my joy is within the archives. I am at my best when I connect researchers with their family's past or create a presentation for the alumni club about the history of the football stadium. I like explaining why the public records law requires us to provide access to the records, even ones that someone years ago incorrectly marked confidential. I love to create exhibits to share archival materials with a

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wide range of people. And I am passionate about challenging others to see archives as essential and that the gaps in our collections must be rectified.

Doing the “archives” part is why I became an archivist, and it is still, along with the archivists I work with, the most important part of professional me.

So what matters to you? Why are you, or why do you want to become, an archivist? You may look at my list and shudder at the idea of doing any of those things. Perhaps your archivist side is what allowed you to take the next step toward administration or even outside the field. No matter your path, I strongly believe that being an archivist has shaped your journey. I hope MAC has been, and continues to be, a positive part of that journey.

Throughout MAC's 50th anniversary year, we have engaged with MAC's history and present. Perhaps you attended the Annual Meeting in Madison or participated in the hybrid sessions online. Or do you plan to be in Indianapolis for the Fall Symposium? Maybe you glanced through the timeline and read about MAC's history or saw the slideshow where members shared what MAC means to them. As we look ahead and plan for MAC's future, what should we offer to students and new archivists? What about those in the middle or nearing the end of their careers? Do you have ideas of how MAC can help the archivist in you?

I would love to brainstorm about the future of MAC or contemplate the next set of archival challenges. If you have suggestions, please be sure to send me a note or ask to jump on a Zoom or regular call. I'm always ready to talk archives and what comes next.

I hope you all have a wonderful fall and that we will see each other soon.

Take care,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tamar Chute". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tamar Chute

President, Midwest Archives Conference