

2021 MARGARET JENNINGS AWARD PROFILE

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Tell us how you first got involved in the archival profession?



I was studying for my PhD in musicology when I did an internship at my university's music archive. I loved it there so much that I stayed for a decade, eventually becoming the assistant archivist. As soon as I finished my PhD and turned around and enrolled in my grad dip in Archives and Records Management. There were times when I regretted it, as it meant that I did ten years of part-time study without a break, but I'm really pleased that I did because my two fields of expertise complement each wonderfully.

What has surprised you most about the profession?

When I first started studying I was surprised at the diversity of roles available. It seemed to me like people working in government archives had very little to do with what I was doing in a performing arts and heritage one. However, as I learnt more, I began to see that we are joined by an underlying set of principles that works across our industry.

If you could change one thing about archival practice, what would it be?

I'd like to see more diversity in the people who study and practice archiving. I'm disabled and I often work with collections that feature disabled people that have clearly been put together by people with no knowledge of our community. Likewise, I've also been lucky enough to work with some Indigenous Australian and Maori archivists doing wonderful work in their home communities. As archivists we are responsible for preserving the knowledge of our communities, so it is important that we really are representative of those populations.

What would you tell someone who is thinking about studying in the area?

Do it. Even if you're not directly considering employment in the field, a thorough knowledge of archival principles has so many benefits, whether you're working in research, government departments or community organisations. I've recently been using the skills I learnt to support a family member in their Australian citizenship application, as they had no idea of how to navigate the historical archives of their birth country to find their details. To that end, I would also love to see archiving subjects made more widely available to people studying courses in other fields.