

2021 MARGARET JENNINGS AWARD PROFILE

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



Becoming involved in the archival profession was never a conscious decision, at least not until right at the last minute when I needed to choose between the Knowledge Management or Records and Archives specialisations to complete my degree. Over the course of my study I had enrolled in subjects that piqued my interest in some way and I found myself increasingly drawn to the records/archives stream. In the course of my work (or watching the nightly news) I often find myself asking 'but why?' (do we do things a certain way or why are particular decisions made) and I believe access to robust records/archives can go a long way towards answering that question.

What has surprised you most about the profession?

I think what surprised me most (although writing this now I don't know why I was surprised) is the absolute relevance archives have to both the present and the future, they are not just some dusty old record of a boring meeting held 50 years ago. We rely (whether we know it or not) on what has come before now to make decisions which impact the present and future.

Equally surprising is the lack of importance put on robust recordkeeping by governments and other organisations. How can sound decisions be made without reference to what has been tried and tested in the past, without knowing who will be impacted and why, without having an evidence-chain that justifies those decisions?

Tell me about someone who has influenced your decision to study and/or work in the archival profession?

I first recall being excited about the notion of archives when studying a subject with Sigrid McCausland (Organisational and Personal Records), her teaching brought to life those dusty old archives and convinced me of their relevance to us all. Dr. Jessie Lymn, former Course Director, shared her passion for records and archives particularly as they related to our shared workplace and, like Sigrid, made the field come alive.

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

Forget what you think you know about archives and take the time to really explore the field, it is definitely an emerging field as we grapple more and more with the volume of records being produced and short-life span of some of those records (those old dusty paper records have it all over their newer, 'shinier' digital peers).

What do you think will change within the sector over the next five years?

I sincerely hope that the sector is allocated far more funding than it has been in the past. Recent news articles have highlighted the fact that unless our current National Archives collections are preserved and digitised in the next few years, they will be lost forever..

What would you like to be doing in five years' time?

I would like to be in a position where I can make much better use of the skills and passions I have developed in relation to recordkeeping and archives. I currently work in a position which could really benefit from the collection and analysis of records, both current and historical, around client demand, work processes, etc. I just need to convince management that there is a link between archives and innovation!