

2021 MARGARET JENNINGS AWARD PROFILE

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



As a final subject as part of the Graduate Diploma of Information Management, I was very lucky to be placed at my old high school archives, an independent school in Melbourne's north-west. Of course, there was some heavy nostalgia associated with cataloguing uniform items and photographs of students I remembered well from school.

The wonderful archivist who supervised me here was invaluable in showing me how rewarding looking after and growing a collection could be, and I was sold.

What has surprised you most about the profession?

I think I was initially surprised at how different the role is from a librarian. My post-graduate course groups the two together as branches of one profession, and while the goal is the same—helping to connect users with the right information sources—management of the collection has different priorities. In an archival collection, preserving authenticity and credibility is essential, and the archive is only as good as the archivist.

The other surprise was that archives are everywhere! When I started to look for them, I realised that many institutions that I had never considered as potential employers maintain their own archival collections.

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

One of the most significant advantages of working in the field is that employment opportunities are incredibly varied. Working with an archival collection can be incredibly rewarding for someone who appreciates detail and history, although nothing ever seems to be a finite task. A collection is never really finished, and you have to be ok with that.

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

I think facilitating remote access to more archival collections will become a higher priority for institutions across the world. The importance of this was brought into focus during the pandemic when users couldn't access physical collections for a long period of time, and I think improving and expanding access to collections is something many institutions will continue to work on as operations return to normal, post-lockdown.

I think many collecting institutions are now actively working to fill gaps in their collections relating to underrepresented groups or neglected subject areas, so we will start to see more diverse collections, described in more user-friendly terms that are more suited to the world we are living in.