Good afternoon, it is Sunday, August 4th, at 1:30 pm; and you are in Session 210, entitled:

**Low Pay in Archives: A Review of Recent Events, and Where Do We Go From Here?**

- Mark Lambert, Texas General Land Office
- Sara DeCaro, Baker University
- Talya Cooper, Archival Consultant
- Samantha Dodd, Southern Methodist University
- Rosemary Davis, Yale University
- Rose Oliveira, Connecticut College
**Picard management tip: Be on the same side as the crew, not against them.**

My name is Mark Lambert, I am the immediate Past-President of the Society of Southwest Archivists, and the Director of the Texas General Land Office archives here in Austin, with 27 staff and a $2 million dollar budget. I am a grad of the UT School of Information, and I have been a professional archivist for 21 years, and a member of SAA and SAA for the last 23 years.

Like all directors, I miss playing with the stuff, but I now enjoy leading an archives into the future and mentoring my staff.

I will introduce each of our other speakers before each one speaks.

Hopefully you just attended the SAA Council Open Forum on “Archivist Salaries.”

**My Arguments for SAA Pay Transparency and Pay Range Requirements were:**

1. *We are eating our young!* This profession is in crisis - its artificially underpaid people for years, and its especially not working now for new archivists;
2. It’s an implied part of SAA’s Values statement and Strategic Plan ("empowerment");
3. It’s good customer service and public service: as a job seeker, I need to know;
4. As a research-based profession, we can’t even historically research our own salaries;
5. Gender equity – to overcome salary gender bias, it needs to be out in the open;
6. Diversity!!! To attract a more diverse set of professionals, we need to pay better.

I will speak a little here on how we got here, recent events, and where do we go from here?

Our other speakers will address unionization, and the effects of low pay in the profession.

And remember, relatively speaking, we are the archival elite here---many professional archivists can’t afford to come to SAA at all for lack of money or can’t come every year.

I hope I am also speaking for those archivists as well. So, as we discuss this issue, please remember to consider those archivists who don’t even make enough money to travel to out-of-state conferences!
The gap between productivity and a typical worker’s compensation has increased dramatically since 1973
Productivity growth and hourly compensation growth, 1948–2015

Note: Data are for average hourly compensation of production/nonsupervisory workers in the private sector and net productivity of the total economy. “Net productivity” is the growth of output of goods and services minus depreciation per hour worked.

Source: EPI analysis of data from the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) (see the technical appendix of Bivens and Mishel 2015 for more detailed information)

Economic Policy Institute
The economy over the last 40 years has grown by leaps and bounds, but not pay.

The richest 10% of households now represent 70% of all U.S. wealth, and the share of the top 1% wealthiest increased from 23% in 1989 to 32% in 2018.

The middle-class is shrinking, and since approximately 1973 (Two oil crises, “Stagflation,” and “trickle down,” economics or the Laffer Curve years), the economy has been restructured to mostly benefit multi-millionaires and billionaires.

We also need to get over the hero-worship of CEOs and dot.com leaders, like we need to get over the hero-worship of great library leaders. They are lucky people doing a newsworthy job, who, along with politicians, have had a hand in rigging the economy over the last 40 years to mostly benefit those at the top, i.e. themselves their families and friends. This is unethical.

“We have begun to cannibalize the very people that make this economy thrive.” Abigail Disney

This isn’t talk of socialism, this is talk of the creation of an oligarchy over the last 40 years:

- In the 1950s, families could be middle class, and own a home on one income;
- In the 1950s, a typical CEO made 20 times more than their average workers;
• Today a CEO makes 361 times more than their average workers;
• Adjusted for inflation, 2019 workers make 25% less than in 1968;
• This is government by an oligarchy.

This situation is affecting new archival professionals the most.

Along with low pay, we are also saddled with rising medical insurance rates, including the move to high deductibles, for positions that include them, as well as high prescription drug rates.

Rising housing costs making home ownership less likely, and thus less likely to gain the equity in a home that is the largest piece of middle-class wealth traditionally.

This is the longest period in American history without a federal minimum wage increase.

Some Americans now are demanding it be raised to $15/hour, which roughly works out to $30,000/year.

A few institutions and cities are even talking about $20/hr., which works out to close to $40,000/year, which is currently around the starting salary for beginning archivists.

New archivists, or those with children in school considering a career, might start to think, why even go to college and graduate school, and be saddled with all that debt (for the non-privileged), if you can make that kind of money out of high school? This could further effect the U.S. electorate, making it more susceptible to demagogues and fascists, and in the long run hurt American democracy.

Watching teacher activism nationally during the last five years, which garnered lots of support publicly, I noticed their published salaries were very comparable to ours!

• And they get summers off (but often take summer jobs)
• We also educate - but no one seemed to be advocating for us.
• So, I started researching it, and I found I wasn’t the first person to write about it.
• Our speaker Samantha Dodd will speak more about teacher pay later.
GLAM with a Lead Pipe!
Others in the Library, Archives and Museums professions have also been writing about our low salaries online since at least 2009-10 from what I could find. (Maureen Callahan, “Why Should You Be Ashamed,” 2010 blog post, You Ought to be Ashamed blog; Hilary Davis, “A Look at Recessions and Their Impact on Librarianship,” 2009, In the Library With a Lead Pipe blog.)

There Are Many Reasons for our Low Pay, but I think the Most Relevant Ones Include:

- Lack of senior archivist leadership;
- Lack of archival organization leadership;
- The archival martyr complex---the work comes first, staff needs come second!
- Personalities attracted to archives work: servant-leaders, obedient, people-pleasers?
- Personal decisions made by archivists; you must be willing to move at times for higher pay or to advance:
  - A personal story and the “salary history” question;
- The fact that most archival work is governmental or non-profit based, which have traditionally had lower salaries than the private sector (w/ pensions-not anymore);
- The traditionally gendered roles in the profession (The “Pink Collar” which our speaker Sara DeCaro will speak more about later.)
As a profession, I also think we end up too often in the weeds, chasing the next widget, when the heart of the archival profession is humanistic: people putting the public in contact with archives, the essential evidence of our lives or govt., to fulfill some individual or collective need.

Poor employee treatment in the corporate world is common (in the “gig economy,” though some tech CEOs regularly claim they highly value their workers), but government, academic and the non-profit worlds need leaders with values and ethics.

We as a profession have forgotten to put our people first, and betrayed our values of accountability, advocacy, diversity, history and memory, professionalism, service, and social responsibility.

I think our pay is WAY too low, in fact, artificially low, considering our high value to institutions and society. I am including records management as part of our duties, but I realize sometimes we work for them, and sometimes they work for us.

We can compare very favorably to accountants, attorneys, managers and IT professionals in the value we bring to American society, government, non-profits and the private sector.

We maintain and manage valuable assets like accountants, we provide context and background for management decisions, we keep businesses within the law and defend people’s, our govt.s, and employer’s rights and the rule of law, we defend free speech and the public’s right to know, and business and govt. transparency like attorneys, and we manage important information sources (on paper) and electronically, like IT professionals.

It makes the most sense to first try to change what we have the most immediate control over: our own leaders; our own institutions; and our own professional associations.

**Hopefully you’ve already read my three articles on the subject**

- Managers need to be better leaders and better advocate for our staffers, and make sure all their staffers make a decent wage or salary, either by raising them themselves if they have the authority, or by appeal to their corporate HR departments;
- Archival organizations need to step up and push for salary ranges to be listed, and salary minimums by region.
- Consider all other available options to raise archival pay, including unionization.

Following my three articles, in March of this year I asked the SSA Board to support a policy of requiring salaries or salary ranges in all jobs advertised by SSA, and it was approved unanimously, (and I hope no future SSA Board ever backslides on that commitment, even in tough economic times).

NAGARA quickly adopted the same policy, and sent a letter to SAA and ACA, suggesting they do the same.
Other regionals started considering the same thing but apparently got some pushback.

- Did any other regionals adopt the same policy?

But SAA apparently needed to survey its members before doing the right thing?

Our Top Directors and Leaders need to lead ethically, including concerning staffing issues!

- I have no issue with the Top Archives Leaders making good money;
- I just think they should pull up the rest of their staff salaries as well;
- Create full-time, permanent positions;
- Minimize contract positions;
- Pay better;
- Stop unpaid internships and be selective about the duties assigned to volunteers.

We tolerate high turnover in a profession that needs a lot of institutional knowledge, due to our low salaries. Just the expenses in training new workers every 3-5 years in very task heavy and detailed oriented jobs should justify handing out some raises.

What are Realistic Salary Goals for the Profession? (within 5 years)

One Useful Resource: MIT LIVING WAGE CALCULATOR: http://livingwage.mit.edu/

Includes typical expenses and the annual salaries for various professions for your area.
For the Austin-Round Rock TX Area, the most relevant salaries to archivists I have listed below: the salaries listed aren’t great, but they might be useful for new archives professionals, and if we start comparing ourselves to accountants, lawyers, management and IT professionals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Salary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>$110,175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business &amp; Financial Operations</td>
<td>$68,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer &amp; Mathematical</td>
<td>$88,758</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community &amp; Social Service</td>
<td>$46,364</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>$79,242</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education, Training, &amp; Library</td>
<td>$47,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, &amp; Media</td>
<td>$54,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare Practitioners &amp; Technical</td>
<td>$64,564</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Another Useful Source: [Salary needed to own a home in 50 metro areas](https://howmuch.net/articles/salary-needed-to-buy-a-house-in-largest-us-metros)

Seems like a useful benchmark for a profession that should be considered middle-class based on its required educational level of a master’s degree (owning a home has traditionally created most middle-class wealth by rising property values, though that could be changing [plus savings, pensions and 401Ks]).
The Chart maybe not 100% accurate: showing $40,400 in Cleveland to 254,800 in San Jose, CA, but it also provides some useful starting numbers.

Another Useful Source:
The average starting salary for a bachelor’s degree in the U.S. right now is $51,000.

How do salaries in the archival profession defy the laws of supply-and-demand and statistics?

Based on the above sources, we should have at least a $50,000 starting salary for new archivists now.

As I mentioned in my recent articles, if nothing else, if there is no additional money available right now, we could do with less archivists, but pay each more.

I realize supply-and-demand is an issue out of our control: like universities opening new graduate schools for archival training for just status, and not need (Law Schools did the same thing years ago, and now some have closed.)

I would argue that a medium-range goal for most Archives should be a starting salary of $60,000 for new archivists (within 5 years), and a pay scale more like this:

Archivist I: $60,000
Archivist II: $80,000
Archivist III: $100,000
Archivist IV: $120,000
Manager or Director: $150,000-$200,000 (or Assistant Director for the major research centers)
Major Research Center Director: $200,000-$250,000?

SAA can help in this effort immediately, and much more broadly in supporting archivists and their labor issues. What does that look like beyond having salary ranges and salary minimums?

Certainly, putting archival labor at the forefront of the organization, and not treat it as a side issue in Archivy.

Perhaps actually commission a study of possible unionization for SAA, and look at other ways to raise salaries, and to materially improve the lives of our members.

In effect, a Career Center on steroids.

I have not studied it in detail, but I recommend we include a review of the previously mentioned professional associations of accounting, law, information technology as well as records managers and UK archivists (e.g. AAA, AICPA, ABA, ACM, IEEE, ARMA and ARA.)

Other institutions can continue to advocate for Archives in general and the History Profession.

If SAA is unwilling or unable to help, we could first see if the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) is willing to help.

The Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA)

- ACA has less relevance these days than formerly;
- ACA was great for historians, records managers or others moving into archival work to show some bona fide qualifications in 1980s and 1990s;
- But now that most new archivists have a graduate degree in archival science from a school of information or a history or public history program, it does not have as much value anymore;
- We could make ACA membership more valuable to younger archivists in the profession, by converting it into a national archival union organization.

If ACA is not willing to help us, we can find or form another organization, and leave them both behind.

If neither organization is willing to help, I think we should start unionization, and possibly cut out SAA and ACA all together, since they won’t help archivists, and instead start using that money for union dues.

One of our speakers Talya Cooper might have some ideas on unionizing as well.

Additional Steps Needed Now:

**SAA also needs to immediately raise dues on its highest earners making over $90,000/year:**
The money generated can be used to better support archivists job needs and to diversify the SAA leadership – right now it is top-heavy with folks from elite archives.

We can use that additional dues money to better study how to improve the value of archival labor, fund more diverse archivists to attend annual meetings, to be on committees and in section management, to be part of Council, and to fund more diversity scholarships.

If you are a high earner and don’t like the idea of your dues being raised, we could instead reorganize SAA to better serve low earning archivists since you are doing so well, have SAA do less, we could move the SAA offices to a cheaper location, or a combination of them all.

**SAA also needs to go further and recommend salary minimums by region:**
- The Texas Library Association (TLA) can do it
- 6,000 members, though possibly more homogeneous than SAA - are the regions of Texas as diverse as the entire U.S.?
- How would it work: Regionals make recommendations for SAA to post?
- SAA yearly decision on salary minimums at annual meeting from regional RAAC input?

How do we keep this salary momentum going after this meeting?

Extend the SAA Ad-Hoc Salary Transparency Group?

Continue this work with the Issues and Advocacy section? Another section?

We need to keep up the pressure on this topic until there is sustained, concrete action.
For many of us, our salaries are public information – should we do more reporting on big pay gaps at specific institutions?

Please send me links or public reports of your **publicly available** salaries to post on the SSA website, and I will continue studying, reporting and writing about it.

We can even try to get local journalists interested in these issues.

We can’t wait for another *A*Census study (2004) before we actually do something.

We need to start acting soon, before the economy slows, and before *lower charitable donations due to the recent tax changes begin to adversely affect the non-profit sector*.

Thank you. We need to move on to our next speaker now.

Please save your questions for the end.

If you don’t get a chance to say something or ask a question today, catch me later, write it on a business card, or call me or email me later this week, and I will send it to our entire panel.

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