

Transcript of Interview with Ashley Hampton by Bryan Paintiff

Interviewee: Ashley Hampton

Interviewer: Bryan Paintiff

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Location (Interviewee): South Carolina

Location (Interviewer): California

Transcribed by: Bryan Paintiff

Abstract: The interviewee, Ashley Hampton, discusses what archiving experience she had prior to taking this ASU archiving course and what aspects of the course have been easy vs challenging. The interviewer, Bryan Paintiff then swings the interview towards COVID questions and Ashley describes how COVID impacted her work life, to include being laid off and hired part-time at retail stores as they were essential businesses. Then, Ashley is asked about family life and COVID where she describes not being able to see her immediate or extended family for almost two years. Next, Ashley describes how COVID and remaining safe impacted her choice of attending graduate school online as instead of in person. Then, Ashley describes how the future of COVID may impact historical preservation, which is one of her future goals: to work in that field. Lastly, Ashley talks about her goals and how the archiving course has helped her understand history with a greater understanding.

Bryan Paintiff 00:00

My name is Bryan Paintiff, and today is 7 May about 5:30pm, Pacific Standard Time, I'm in California and Ashley is in South Carolina. I'm interviewing my colleague, Ashley Hampton, who is 25 and resides in Anderson, South Carolina. Ashley is pursuing her graduate degree in Global and North American History as she's always been interested in various kinds of history, especially Ancient History when she was younger. Before we begin, I just want to confirm that you have read over the informed consent titled "Informed Consent COVID-19 Oral History Project" and the Deed-of-Lieu, and that you agree with all the terms, conditions, and guidelines for those who volunteered...voluntarily participate in the oral histories for the Journal of The Plague Year, A COVID-19 Archive. Do you consent to this?

Ashley Hampton 00:56

Yes, I consent.

Bryan Paintiff 00:57

All right, great. Well, we'll go ahead and get started. So, prior to taking this History 580 archive course, did you have any prior archiving experience?

Ashley Hampton 01:11

Yes. So, during my last year of my undergraduate, I had did two internships that summer, I wanted to go in both to summer school, because I wanted to graduate within like four, I believe, four and a half years. And so, I was like, I was trying to, you know, make them work. So, I didn't have to, you know, take out loans. So, I did summer school, and I was like, Oh, um, I saw that they had two intern classes there that they offered at my undergraduate. So, I took, I did an internship with the Anderson County Museum in Anderson, South Carolina. And they're just a local town residential museum. And I helped the main curator there, Dustin Norris. And then later on that summer, I did another internship at the Clemson African American Cultural Museum. And my directors, there were husband and wife, Pam and Robert Kemp, and I helped them with both their curation and their administrative positions there...so.

Bryan Paintiff 02:26

Okay, great. So, what interests you in taking this archiving internship?

Ashley Hampton 02:31

So those previous archival internships, I felt like were really fun and just awesome experiences. So that really just interested me honestly, to want to pursue it and take it again. Definitely it made me interested in learning the field in more of a greater depth. Because both internships are more like an introductory... introduction into the field. But later on, I did ultimately decided that I wanted to do more of a historic preservation side, because I received some information about that from Dustin and a couple of the other faculty at the Anderson County Museum. So, I understand while those are two different disciplines, the preservation still requires a lot of research, analysis, record keeping and general curation knowledge, which are all skills you learned from the archives.

Bryan Paintiff 03:35

Okay, great. What has been your favorite skill to learn so far in this archiving course?

Ashley Hampton 03:43

Curation because even with my personal you know, experience as being a legal assistant at law firms, I just really love data entry and organization like, this is really my jazz. I just really like, you know, being behind the scenes and putting stuff together and drafting up you know, to me, it's almost like legal work with drafting, you're just putting stuff together and you're making it look nice and neat. For the final, you know, product.

Bryan Paintiff 04:15

Definitely. What skill has been the most challenging to learn in this course?

Ashley Hampton 04:22

Definitely the oral histories. There's a lot of legality and ethical procedures that you must constantly keep in the back of your head while you're doing it. Also, transcribing is very much time-consuming and

then having to go and listen to the audios as well to redact and stuff can be a little bit taxing at times because you have to make sure you get at the particular minute mark and so forth, but also remember like which qualifies as being you know, know what information qualifies for being redacted and what doesn't. So, it's just a lot of details you have to remember...it's very detailed work.

Bryan Paintiff 05:10

For sure. So, after talking about the challenging stuff, what has been the most easiest aspect of working on this archive?

Ashley Hampton 05:19

I would say definitely the curation and revising metadata side.

Bryan Paintiff 05:27

Yeah, for sure. Alright, so we're gonna shift the interview here a little bit and try to focus more on some COVID related questions. So first of all, how has your work life changed throughout...the lockdowns and COVID?

Ashley Hampton 05:46

So, my work life when I remember, I actually remember when...January...when it first took off, and just sitting down at, you know, at home and seeing it on the news COVID. And I was like, "Oh, what's this?" And thinking, like, "Oh, this is, you know, one of those types of like, flu viruses is just going to kind of blow over," and I didn't really think it was on the impact my work life, like that until literally, you know, rumors in February started circling around of like, oh, you know, the Trump administration, and like, you know, the government's going to shut down the, you know, country for this. And I was like, "Oh, wow, this is getting pretty serious." And I'm just thinking, like, you know, what's gonna happen with our jobs, and just the rumors, you know, that more and more true. And then I remember my, our boss, like, kind of just pulling us all in like a little huddle when we're closing down. I was actually a supervisor at a retailer, when this happened. They're like, "Yeah, so basically, we're about to shut down and get ready and file for unemployment," because you know, you will be laid off. And I was like, oh, wow, this is very, you know, different, because I've never, you know, experienced a layoff before, but it's really interesting, for my first experience of being laid off to happen with the pandemic, it was definitely a different situation. But one thing that did happen, though, was because of the fact that businesses were shut down but essential businesses like grocery stores, and, you know, home improvement warehouses were needing workers and needing to still be open to fend the public, I was able to get another job really pretty easily. Because of that, but then again, because of the fact that they really just needed people to help out. And they necessarily didn't want to hire people in because then they didn't know how businesses were going to, you know, keep their funds at bay with everything that was going on. Yeah, the jobs it very much let you know, from the beginning, like this is only temporary. And basically, when the government mandate for being shutdown was lifted, that they were gonna just, you know, let us go, which they ultimately did. But luckily, you know, since I was just, you know, laid

off from my job for a minute, I was able to go back to my regular job. And it was just so different. I had to go all the time, every day, get a temperature check. I remember wearing gloves because I was handling the money and wearing you know, face mask all the time. And for about over a year and a half, the fitting rooms were shut down. So, nobody can ever try on clothes. So, we had refunds, like we just had a massive amount of refunds. Because, you know, people couldn't try stuff on in the building. So, they would have to go home and it's just a lot of refunds. So, I personally on the business side, I don't know how that affected with the business and like their sales. But I know, it was just, you know, really just a lot...for the workers that were working there because we would have mountain piles. I know because I worked as a clothing retailer, we would have mountain piles of clothes that we would have to basically quarantine as they call it when we would like basically, you know, put them to the side for a couple of days and not let people you know, wear them or like buy purchase them for a couple of days and then put them back out on the floor. But yeah, we had that for months on it while I was working there. So...

Bryan Paintiff 09:35

Wow. So kind of spinning again here a little bit. Has COVID impacted your family life or has that changed at all?

Ashley Hampton 09:45

So during the first year when the pandemic started in 2020, me and my family I think...only like gathered twice. And that was because I think it was my grandmother's birthday. And then it was some other occasion. And I don't even think I was able to even make it to those two because I was working. But we did not see each other at all for a whole year. And that was pretty much not just me with my family, but like the whole entire family was not like visiting or seeing each other at all. And it was just extremely weird, because like, a lot of my family resides in Atlanta. And, you know, they live, you know, a pretty reasonable driving distance from each other, but they weren't even seeing each other either. And, you know, it was just really different because they're really like, you know, close-knit over there in just nothing, you know, being able to go and visit each other every other weekend, or go to church together, which is really different. But later on, one of my uncles and aunts had kind of like, worked their way around and started doing like Zoom meetings and prayer meetings, through the phone and stuff. So that's when we got to see each other a little bit more. And then eventually, as time progressed, and like...the scare of like, COVID started to digress a little bit more and more, the more we started to try to like gather for like holidays. So just recently, I just had Thanksgiving with them last year. And then I had Christmas with my intermediate family. So now we see each other back more on a regular basis. But like that whole first year, we were not seeing each other at all so...

Bryan Paintiff 11:28

yeah, definitely I understand that. How is like COVID and lockdown and everything like that, how is that affected, or has that affected your schooling in any way?

Ashley Hampton 11:41

So, the only real difference, I could really say it's just that attend. Initially, I was gonna do grad school and person but because of what COVID had happened and everything I was really like just fearful of like, trying to like, you know, because I have a sister that resides in Arizona so I was planning on actually moving out with her and like trying to go to ASU through there, but because of the fact that COVID was so, you know, severe that it made me just really like paranoid about moving across the country and trying to make that move to like trying to do grad school. So that's the reason part of the reason why I chose to do it online. But it has been beneficial to do it online in ways. You know, just kind of like time management and scheduling, it's a lot easier versus having to drive somewhere in-person or be there in-person. But yeah, it did impact like my overall decision of like how I chose to do schooling.

Bryan Paintiff 12:47

Yeah, for sure. Do you think COVID is gonna have any future impacts on your life?

Ashley Hampton 12:55

So, I think that COVID might have future impact on what line of work I may be in, because if I go ahead and choose to move forward and pursue historic preservation, I know the housing market has been a little bit like rocky, due both to inflation and COVID right now. So, you know, since their main objective is not necessarily just looking for newer help, but you're looking for older homes, historical, you know, buildings or monuments and trying to see if they qualify to be on the national registry, that still might pose issues with like, the protocols that need to be checked and said and done or operated with these homes. And, you know, there might be an effect on whether they see that building or that, you know, house as a potential biohazard for like spreading disease, you know, considering on how old it is not how great the circulation of ventilation is. So, I definitely see in terms of what the historic preservation aspects affecting that. And in terms of like teaching, which I've also considered as well, I, adjunctly, I think it's probably still going to continue like affecting class sizes. And people who want to continue to pursue higher education because there's going to be still some people who have autoimmune diseases, or just are very fearful about the disease itself, who don't choose to do you know, in-person schooling anymore, so it still might have eventual effect on class sizes for a long while until basically, something kind of almost eradicates it, you know.

Bryan Paintiff 15:00

Yeah, definitely. And so this actually ties into my next question. Great, because you did talk just a little bit about it. But what are kind of your...your goals? And what do you want to pursue after you complete your graduate degree here?

Ashley Hampton 15:19

So what I want to pursue is I have, while I am set determined on this, I like to keep my options, you know, open and whatever. So that's why I kind of am building out multiple ideas. But my main focus is

trying to get into historic preservation. South Carolina actually has like a pretty decent market in historic preservation just because we're in the Old South, and there's a lot of buildings that need to be you know, preserved. But that was my main focus of what I wanted to do after graduation is going into the historic preservation center. But since so that is a really highly competitive field, and usually people who choose careers and then stay in that, that's why I've also already had decided that I want to do adjunct teaching with, you know, at either a technical college, or at a small university. So with that, I just want to basically, either teach like, you know, a Global history class that focuses on like, ancient civilizations, or teach in North American history, you know, class that teaches, like, you know, about these ways until like, environmental history, or whatever, and stuff like that, or anything, but I want to teach more like local histories, particularly about like, what goes on in Anderson, if there was a way I could kind of, like, do something like that, but like, that would be pretty cool. Because, you know, and that ties into the public history factor, because, you know, I feel like a lot of courses teach you kind of like the mainstream and bigger picture sort of histories. But there's not a lot of focus on like South Carolina history, or like residential histories. You know, and, you know, academia...higher academia. And I would like to incorporate that again, because while you know, definitely every narrative is important, I feel like it's definitely important to know the narrative that surrounds you the most, which is your local residence. I think that would be interesting as well.

Bryan Paintiff 17:31

Yeah, that's, that's a really good point. All right. This is my second last question here. And I'm just kind of swing us back to archiving a little bit, how his archive your archiving experience, both before this course, and the taking this course? How has that impacted your overall view of history?

Ashley Hampton 17:52

Overall, it's definitely taught me that history is flexible, and definitely what you make it the reason why I phrase it like that, because being in the archives, I've learned is very hands on. Which this that's one of the reasons why I actually fell in love with it, just because you're really are the participant, as much as you are the historian behind the whole collection in the library, like, just as you know, here with interacting with all my peers, and with Sara and Dr. Kole, I very much have felt that, wow, we have been part of "the work" so like the archive with our meetings and communicating with each other on Slack and creating collection idea of collection ideas, and curating notes, we have also created items for the archive itself. And, you know, I don't feel like a lot of, you know, other fields can sit there and say that they're also students as well as teachers in their like, you know, you know, in their job, but I feel like very much with the archives without anything else. That's what you are. And overall, I feel like whether or not I choose to decide to do historic preservation, or teaching that I'm gonna keep that with me to remember to always be a student, as much as I am like a professor or, you know, an expert in the profession. I want to continue to learn I want to continue to expand my craft and I want to continue to contribute to the field as much as I am, you know, participating in it.

Bryan Paintiff 19:51

Yeah, definitely. All right. Um, so my last question is just is there anything that I didn't cover that you'd like to discuss before we end the interview?

Ashley Hampton 20:01

No, I mean, overall, I would just like to say that I really have enjoyed doing this internship, I feel like I've definitely learned a lot. Like you said during your interview, the technology that's really behind the archive. Because I've literally have sat, you know, and the, you know, meetings and just behind my computer, I just been like, wow, this is really cool. I didn't really know that the archive was really this technologically advanced in this way, and everything. And it's just really cool to see how, you know, digitizing, and like how the Internet has really like changed this whole field. And to a whole different level has taken...it has taken it to a whole different level. So yeah, I just like to end with that comment. But other than that, I don't have anything else to say.

Bryan Paintiff 20:55

All right, great. Well, thank you, Ashley, for taking the time to do this interview and we'll talk to you later.

Ashley Hampton 21:01

Alright, thank you!