

Membership Meeting
11-15-15

Sarah Malcolm (sarah.malcolm@nara.gov), an archivist at the FDR Presidential Library, was our guest speaker. She has a BA in History and her MLS. She interned at the FDR Presidential Library before becoming hired there.

She first discussed what being an archivist entails. Archivists arrange, create descriptions for, and digitize records. They process and reprocess materials, for example, they will re-box or re-folder something from the 1950s. They do reference work in which they help patrons find materials and interact with the people in their community through social media.

She then discussed presidential libraries. Former president FDR began the presidential library system while in office to preserve all presidential documents. All presidential libraries contain a research facility and museum. They are built with money obtained via private funds and then turned over to the government and run by national archivists and research administrations, thus, they are all government facilities and all of the employees are government employees. However, things such as educational, public, and digitization programs are funded by their individual institutions. Presidential libraries were optional until President Nixon. The Presidential Letters Act passed after the Watergate scandal made all presidential paper public property, thus, every president since Nixon was required to create their own presidential library.

Specifically, the FDR Presidential Library opened in 1941 and was built using private funds. They are open to the public and you do not need an appointment. They do offer paid internships but are extremely competitive. They receive about 2,000 e-mails/year from people all over the world who are looking for information from FDR's time in office. So, what is in their collection? Within their collection are approximately 17 million pages of documents and in addition to FDR's papers they also have around 400 other collections. Former first lady Eleanor Roosevelt's papers make up their second largest collection. In regards to digitizing their collections they currently have somewhere near 700,00 pages of documents and 2,500 photos digitized (<http://goo.gl/DDn9zQ>). It was rather easy for them to digitize a lot of their collection because they already had whole collections on microfilm/microfiche. They send outside contractors the microfilm and the contractors send them back the raw digital scans to which the archivists at the library crop, arrange, and assign metadata. They do their best to match the arrangement of the digital files to that of the physical files, thus, they present entire folders as PDFs. Soon they will be digitizing their collection of FDR's speeches and speech drafts and will be linking them to their recordings.

Additional Information:

The Spring trip is from March 11-13. Have fun!