

## Conference Report

Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) Fall 2021 Meeting, Gettysburg, PA

Jasmine Smith

My recent attendance at the MARAC Gettysburg conference was both an educational and professional opportunity. As an archival “lone arranger” at Alvernia university, I enjoyed the opportunity to network and problem-solve with other archivists, particularly those who also work in a university setting. During conference networking sessions, I also connected with a new MLS grad in my area looking for opportunities to engage with archives. I love having the opportunity to be a part of upcoming professionals’ career growth. I also had a great conversation with an archivist based in Philadelphia; while too far away for regular in-person engagement, Philadelphia provides plenty of potential partners for virtual collaborations and activities. For this conference, I served as a volunteer for the Local Arrangements Committee, so I helped staff registration and filmed our plenary session.

As the primary caretaker of our Alvernia University Archives collection, I attended this conference with particular interest in two sessions, both on reuniting separated collections. Alvernia holds John Updike materials, as he was born and raised locally. A number of other institutions have archives materials for Updike as well. Session S12 was titled “Reuniting Collections Physically: Reunited and It Feels So Good.” The experiences shared by the speakers would be useful if an institution or individual with Updike holdings wish to transfer them to Alvernia. Considerations about preserving provenance, and balancing that with easy access, would be important in that process. Alvernia is not exploring any new accessions at this time, but it is helpful to be prepared should this happen.

A more timely session for the Alvernia archive was S6, “Reuniting Collections Digitally.” The software shared in this session was impressive. An Archivist from the Kress Foundation demonstrated the tool they have created to digitally unify the Kress materials, which are placed in museums throughout the country. A tool this robust would be outside of our budget, but the metadata structures and user interface would be a good model for any project or budget. An archivist from the JDC Archives talked more about the relationship-building that went into getting digital access to, or permission to share, Jewish collections currently housed throughout the former Soviet bloc. While our Updike materials are different in content, building strong partnerships is a universal skill! We are working with a newly-opened, local Updike collection, and digital relationships between our and their collection would be very helpful for researchers.

The most surprising session I attended was S2: “Using Assessment and Policy to Gain Support and Commitment for Digital Preservation.” While the presenters in this session had a ransomware attack as the inciting incident for serious digital preservation planning at their institution, their strategic approach to digital preservation and records management can be applied anywhere to anticipate and mitigate digital records challenges. I appreciated getting some additional insights into implementing good policy.

Overall, I had a great time at MARAC Gettysburg. I had great conversations with archivists from all over the mid-Atlantic region and learned a few new things about the battle at Gettysburg. I would recommend MARAC membership and conferences for any ACLCP members who work with archives.