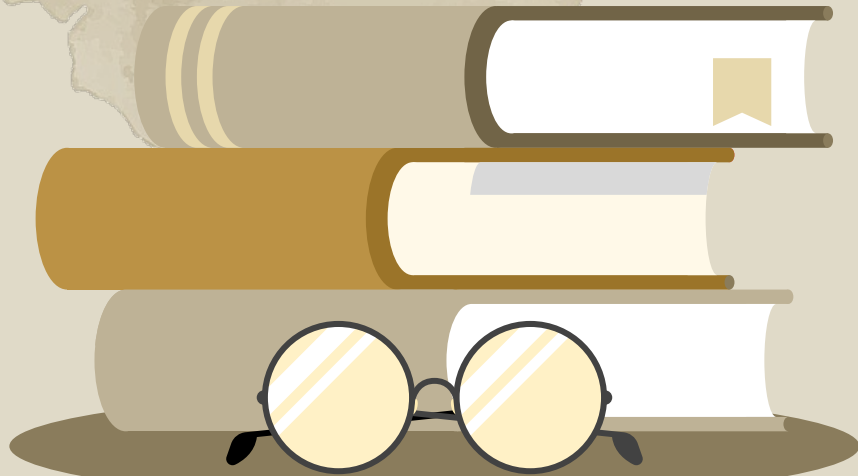


My Reference Co-op at the Massachusetts State Archives

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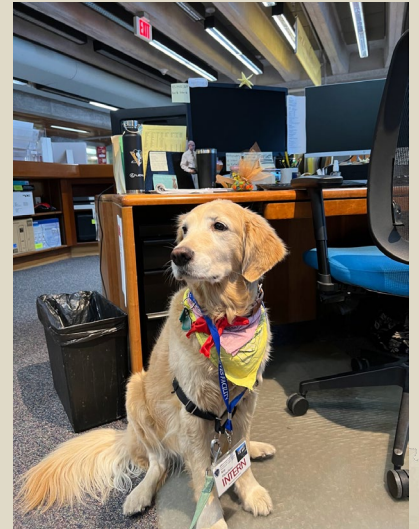
The Massachusetts Archives

- State agency in the office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth.
 - Other areas of oversight include elections, corporations, and historical buildings
- Located on the UMass Boston campus on Columbia Point, across from the JFK Presidential Library
- Holds 30, 000 cubic ft. of records pertaining to the state's establishment as a colony, history, state agency operations
 - Learned a lot about what records are considered essential
- Three areas of work within the organization: Processing, Digital, and Reference



The Reference Intern Co-op Position

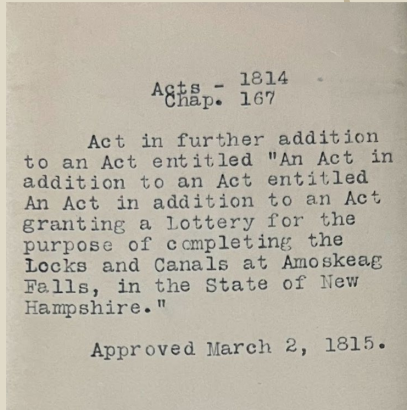
- The Reference department assists with researcher inquiries
- In addition to working on emailed and written requests, I directly interacted with researchers interested in using the Archives' resources
 - While I had previous experience with customer service, this work with researchers was totally new for me
- The core components of the position that are consistent across co-op cycles include: logging mail, recording weekly statistics, creating certified state documents, pulling material from vaults, and maintaining the reading room
 - However, the day-to-day work totally varies. My experience was special because it was the first one in a while that was similar to operations before the pandemic with more in-person researchers and I got to have meaningful conversations with people



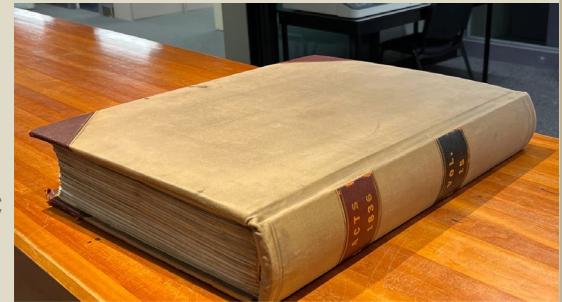
My dog came to visit me at work one day!

Policy Process Exposure

- One unique takeaway I gained from working at the Archives was learning a lot about the entire process of creating public policy
- The Archives holds records from every part of this process from the petition to create legislation, to the senate and house journals that document the approval or denial of the bill, to the eventually passed and incorporated legislation or unpassed bill
- I also learned a lot about the public policy that informs how researchers interact with the Archives
 - Certain collections are restricted under Massachusetts General Law such as medical and criminal records
- I learned how tricky it can be to find certain records when public policy does not require its' preservation
- It was interesting getting behind the scenes access that were usually restricted and being trusted with following ethical and legal procedures



A piece of legislation with a hilariously long title



One of the books where the official engrossed acts of Mass. legislation are stored. I carried this huge book down the stairs by myself!

Figuring out My Preferred Working Style

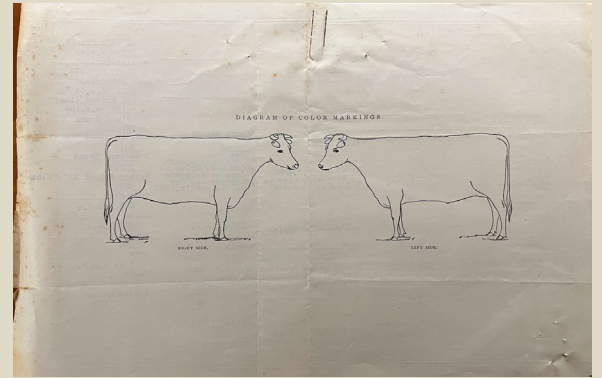
- Aside from any specific researcher appointments, my workday was generally unstructured and I eventually discovered a regular rhythm that helped me feel productive and fulfilled
- I appreciated that we started our day with a quick check in about any appointments so I knew when I had to be available
- In the morning, I usually tried to make progress on the continual projects like certifying vitals or redacting so that I could explore more fun tasks in the afternoon
- On slow days I usually sat working at my computer a lot so I always volunteered to go into the vaults or work with researchers
- One challenge was remembering some of the daily tasks like logging the mail. Because the time it was delivered every day varied, we occasionally skipped it some days



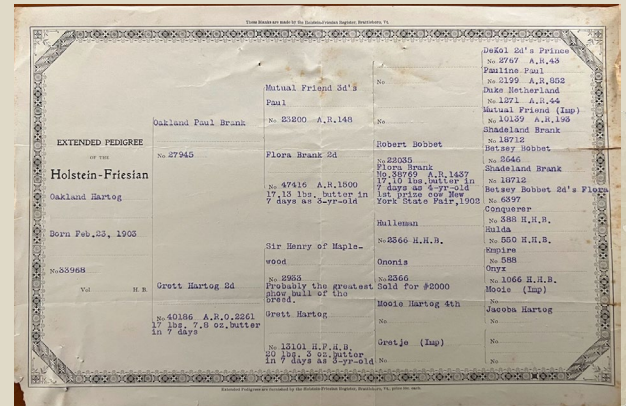
Fulfilling projects

While a lot of daily tasks at the Archives could become repetitive, there were a few projects I worked on that were very fulfilling.

1. State School for Feeble-minded Children redaction
 - One of the largest collections at the Archives is administrative correspondence from Walter E Fernald, an influential figure in disability education, during his tenure as superintendent of the Massachusetts state schools for “feeble-minded” children
 - My project was to read through unprocessed files and look for restricted medical information
 - I received specific training for this project on what to identify as problematic and how to redact documents
 - The researcher working with these materials came in regularly and I had the chance to share interesting discoveries with him and learn a lot about Dr. Fernald



A fun find from redacting was this pedigree chart for a bull!





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An icy personality does not attract friends

If that is a map of Boston you have before you, it shows there are nearly five hundred miles of electric railway tracks,

ELEVATED CLO
The Rapid Transit L
(See Illustration on P

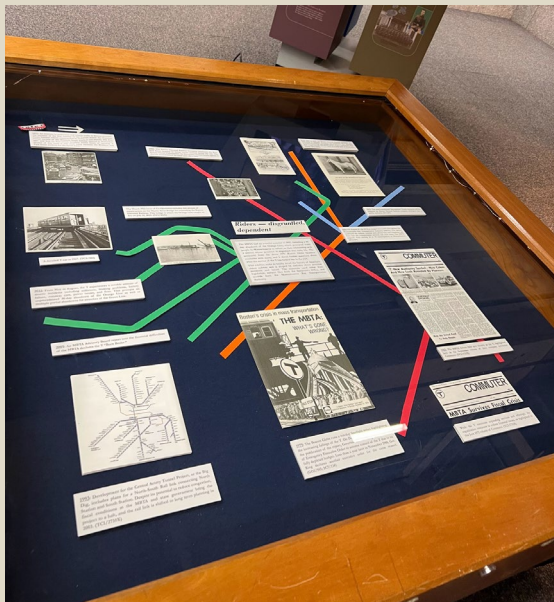
At elevated, subway and tunnel stations who is the man that sweeps and cleans the long platforms, numerous

Some of the materials we collected for the exhibit



Fulfilling projects cont.

2. Creating an exhibit



Our exhibit will be on display through June!

- This optional project is open to all reference co-ops and we chose to do one!
- Picking a topic was initially challenging but after everything that happened this summer with the T, we decided to research the history of the MBTA and focus on other accidents and issues that had occurred
- Not only did I learn a lot of interesting information about subway systems, but I also got the chance to learn how to create formal exhibit displays

Co-op Challenge: Architecture Plans

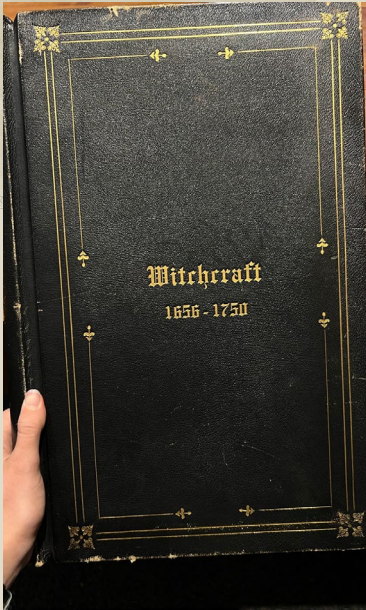
- While all of the work was a new experience for me at the Archives, the most daunting task I faced was architectural plan appointments
- The Archives has a huge collection of historic architectural plans that require staff handling when requested by researchers
- Not a complicated process in theory, finding and handling plans can easily become tricky because of their condition and the sheer amount of plans
- I got an unexpected amount of practice working with plans after my co-op coworker broke her ankle and I took charge of these appointments
 - I could (and sometimes did) get help from other archivists, I was able to greatly improve my ability to handle these situations



Photos I took of part of the architectural plan collection at the Archives (there's many more!)



MISC Fun things



The original binding for the witchcraft volume of our oldest record series



Some of the many historic logos found in one series



Celebrating Halloween!

Future Plans

- Looking ahead, my experience at the Archives has definitely inspired me to look for another co-op in archival or library work (that I will possibly self-develop)
- I really enjoyed working in reference, and I'm definitely considering pursuing a Masters in Library Science to return to this kind of job
- I am actually returning this semester to assist part-time at the reference desk!

