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### Librarians Present Panel at ASDAH Conference

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# LIBRARIANS PRESENT PANEL AT ASDAH CONFERENCE

By Katharine Van Arsdale



Bethany Howard Presenting

On April 13, 2023, ASDAL librarians presented a panel at the Association of Seventh-day Adventist Historians triennial conference held at Southern Adventist University. The panel, entitled “Curating the Past: Libraries, Historians, and the Archive,” aimed to discuss areas of overlapping interest for historians and librarians or archivists, with particular emphasis on the behind-the-scenes of library work and how librarians’ contributions impact historians as researchers, writers, and educators. Presenters included Stanley Cottrell and Bethany Howard (Southern Adventist University), Barbara Stovall (Oakwood University), and Katharine Van Arsdale (Andrews University / Adventist Digital Library). Julie-Ann Bocoock-Bliss of Hawai’i Pacific University served as chair.

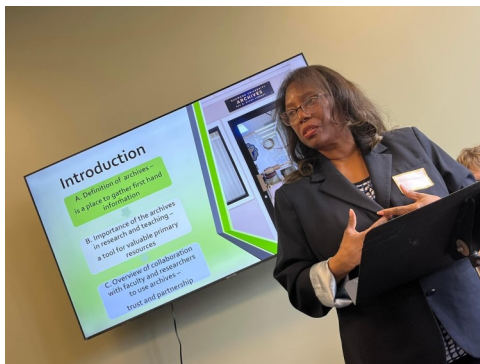
The panelists divided their presentations into two blocks. The first block dealt with the collection, cataloging, and delivery of resources, while the second discussed putting resources to use with students, faculty, and researchers. Stanley Cottrell opened by walking the audience through a brief history of library catalogs before he demonstrated the process of cataloging a book. Using Michael Campbell’s *1922: The Rise of Adventist Fundamentalism* as an example, Cottrell showed how catalogers create records that lead to effective Discovery search results. “I showed how we catalog items and how we use subject descriptors and standardization for names to make it easier to find materials on different subjects or by the same author. I also tried to explain what a Discovery Interface is and the types of resources that it includes,” Cottrell said. “Hopefully that will help [historians] understand why they get the results they get when they search our holdings.”

Katharine Van Arsdale’s presentation followed and built on similar themes, with a discussion of workflows and priorities, metadata challenges, and software decisions that lie behind digitization programs and the delivery of digital works. She highlighted digitization work being done by Adventist institutions and shared through the Adventist Digital Library. She asked the audience to reflect on what voices or perspectives might be missing from the Adventist-held record. “Library professionals have a responsibility, as curators of the archive, to ensure that all groups are represented. At the Adventist Digital Library, we’re making strides to expand the scope of what we digitize and share. We’re a world church—we want world representation in our shared repositories.”

During the second block, Bethany Howard spoke

about methods of connecting students to “the archive,” which she defined as the locally available historical record, regardless of format. “Connecting students to the archive is vital to historical and cultural research, as many students are unfamiliar with the unique resources an archive or special collection can provide,” she said. Drawing on work she has done at the McKee Library at Southern Adventist University, Howard shared effective strategies for familiarizing undergraduates with the archive, from brief introductions during campus tours to one-on-one research and writing support. In the presentation that followed, Barbara Stovall focused on ways that library professionals and researchers can collaborate to use, enhance, and extend the archive. She opened with a quote from W.E.B. Du Bois, which she offered as a guide to historians and librarians in their work: “Nations reel and stagger on their way; they make hideous mistakes; they commit frightful wrongs; they do great and beautiful things. And shall we not best guide humanity by telling the truth about all this, so far as the truth is ascertainable?” Stovall shared exciting news about her current efforts to preserve and present truth through the archive. In concert with colleagues from the Harvard Radcliffe Institute, Stovall is working to curate, process, digitize, and share Oakwood University’s Eva B. Dykes Collection.

Following their presentations, the panelists fielded questions about duplication of effort between institutions, the scarcity of funding, and ways to break down resource “silos” within the Adventist system. Librarians and historians pondered the different ways we define terms shared between our fields, such as “the archive.” Collaboration across the board was a major theme, and Stovall reflected that “the opportunity of sharing my collaborative experiences with faculty, researchers, the community, and others is



Barbara Stovall Presenting



Panelists

one of the benefits of being an archivist. The privilege of sharing archival resources enriches the value of the position.”

Reflecting on the panel afterward, Stan Cotrell said “I think it’s always good when librarians help professionals outside of our discipline understand what we do, and that we can help them in their profession. We should always be willing to present to all kinds of organizations, because libraries (and librarians) are here to help everyone.” Panel chair Julie Bockock-Bliss added “I think that the panel was a great addition to the ASDAH conference because of what libraries/archives and librarians/archivists provide in aid of the research historians do. We know our value (or should), but those we serve don’t always know the full value we bring to the table. Also, I believe there can be awesome synergy in collaboration, especially when we’re looking at people from different areas with different strengths working together.” Overall, the panelists felt welcomed and enriched by the opportunity to connect with historians and to discuss areas of common interest. They hope that librarians will choose to present at ASDAH in the future.

Katharine Van Arsdale is the Digital Librarian for the Adventist Digital Library at the Center for Adventist Research

