

Massachusetts Historical Society  
Dean Eastman Undergraduate Library Resident  
Undergraduate Library Resident  
Final Report  
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### Introduction

The MHS Undergraduate Library Residency program was established to introduce undergraduates from structurally marginalized backgrounds to the fields of public history and library science. Over time, we hope that the Residency will inspire the residents, through paid employment in those fields, to pursue careers in public history and/or library science – bringing their unique perspectives and experiences to their work.

The program was developed by Anna Clutterbuck-Cook, Senior Reference Librarian at the MHS, with the aid of an advisory committee comprised of MHS staff and professionals in the public history and library science fields. The inaugural cohort of library residents began their work at the MHS in September 2022 and complete their tenure in May 2023.

### Hiring Process

Selection of the inaugural residents was competitive. Twenty-two viable applications, eight from students at public institutions and 14 from students at private institutions were received. The hiring committee selected seven finalists to interview. Among the finalists, we had two students from community colleges and five from private institutions. Our finalist group also included one Black/Latina candidate, one candidate with tribal affiliations, and one nonbinary candidate. After the interview process the two positions were awarded to:

**CJ Haggard** -- a freshman at Simmons University who intends to major in history. She is a Georgia native and has a work background in retail and food service, as well as past internships focused on political canvassing and church outreach. CJ completed a research project during her first semester on the transnational activism of Anna Julia Cooper. Her academic reference spoke of her willingness to tackle challenging research using primary sources and her ability to navigate difficult conversations, particularly around issues of race and racism. We felt that the combination of her existing strengths with her academic status as a second-year undergraduate positioned her to make the most of this residency in terms of skill-building and making decisions about graduate school and possible careers during the next few years.

**Erin Olding** comes to us from Cape Cod Community College, where she has been studying history with the goal of transferring to UMass Boston in order to take advantage of their public history program. She is a Plymouth, Massachusetts native and has volunteered in the Cape Cod Community College archive, where she assisted in processing the papers of a local poet. Erin's work background also includes retail and food service and her references spoke highly of her eagerness to learn and thoughtful

questions as she pursued academic research and work in the archives. We felt that Erin's eagerness to learn about public history work, as well as her transitional position as someone planning to make the move from a community college to a four-year program, fit the profile of the sort of student this internship was designed to reach.

We gathered demographic information, separately and anonymously, from the full applicant pool. A full breakdown of responses to our demographic survey may be reviewed in Appendix A.

### **Fall Semester**

The residents began work in mid-September. Both students worked 14 hours/week. The fall semester began with intensive training in the Reader Services department, intended to familiarize the students with all aspects of their work in the department as circulation assistants. They spent 50% of their time working in Reader Services and spent the other 50% of their time on residency-specific activities including weekly readings, field trips, and attendance at MHS events. Readings and field trips were designed to introduce the students to different types of public history institutions with a focus on historically marginalized communities. Thanks to the generosity of our colleagues in the area, we were able to visit the following institutions:

- Museum of African American History
- The History Project: Documenting LGBTQ Boston
- The City of Boston Archives
- Medical Heritage Library
- Northeastern University Archives & Special Collections
- West End Museum

Assigned readings (or podcasts or videos) were thematic to the site visit each week (e.g. Black public history; queer community archives; digital archives etc.).

The students began work on sections of a subject guide to Boston neighborhoods, documenting where in the MHS collections researchers may find materials relevant to the Chinatown (Erin) and Fenway/Kenmore (CJ) neighborhoods. This project for LRS, along with their spring semester special projects, will become part of the tangible work product of the residency that they will be able to add to their portfolio.

## Spring Semester

The death of the program administrator Anna Clutterbuck-Cook in late January had a significant impact on the spring semester plans. Director of the Library Elaine Heavey stepped in to supervise the residents and facilitate their special projects in other MHS departments.

Beginning in late January, with the end of winter break, the residents continued to work 14 hours per week. With the sudden change in program leadership, the external field trips were discontinued, and the residents focused on expanding their knowledge of the types of work done within the MHS. In a typical week, each resident spent 3-4 hours working in the library's reading room supervising and facilitating the work of researchers, 3-4 hours working on their subject guides, and 5-7 hours exploring the work of other MHS departments either through their special projects or shadowing staff.

The special projects paired one resident (Erin Olding) with our researcher department and the other resident (CJ Haggard) with our exhibition team. Erin researched, scripted, recorded interviews for, and edited an episode focused on the medieval manuscripts held in our collections for our podcast (<https://www.masshist.org/podcast/season-2-episode-8-illuminated-manuscripts>).

CJ completed two projects. First, she worked with our exhibitions teams to develop content and prep materials for our upcoming exhibition marking the anniversary of the Boston Tea Party. While CJ supported exhibition development in many ways, her primary focus was curating a case of materials telling the story of Phillis Wheatley. She was able to work through the process from start to finish, selecting materials for display, researching and writing interpretive labels, designing the case layout, and observing the work needed to prep the materials for display. The exhibition opened to the public in October 2023 and will remain open through February 2024.

CJ's second project allowed her to delve into documentary editing. Working with the staff of the MHS publications department, she participated in the collation and verification steps of preparing the next volume of the journal of Caroline Dall for publication.

Each resident learned more about the behind-the-scenes work required to provide access to archival collections, spending 3-4 hours shadowing the conservator, the digital productions assistant, and a manuscript processor. They also shadowed our director of public programs and VP for communications to learn more about the non-library aspects of the work of the MHS.

The subject guide project provided an opportunity to deepen research skills. Each resident combed our catalog and other resource finding tools, including interacting extensively with the reference staff, to locate, review, and document materials in all formats across the collection that related to the history of the assigned neighborhood. The resulting subject guides provide a powerful resource finding tool for researchers and reference staff working onsite at the MHS library.

## Final Assessment

The first year of the MHS Undergraduate Residency went well overall and met its objective in giving residents an opportunity to gain work experience and explore career opportunities within the public history field. The residents gained confidence in their work and reported a positive learning experience – both in work specific to special collections librarianship and in the wider public history work they completed and field trips attended.

The residents provided feedback indicating that the volume of reading in the 1<sup>st</sup> semester was daunting, but that the readings themselves added value to the field trip experience. And each expressed some regret that that portion of the work was eliminated in the spring semester. These points will be considered in planning for the next cycle of residents.

The residents showed demonstrable growth in their work as library assistants. After completing the training we provide to new library assistants, both residents were still very trepidatious in approaching researchers about handling of materials, etc., and at first relied very heavily on the reading room supervisor to do that part of the work. Over the course of the first semester Anna worked with the reading room supervisor to reinforce the training and expand their knowledge of handling of special collections materials to empower the residents to approach researchers more directly. Through the second semester their confidence grew and each played a much bigger role in interacting with researchers. We will adjust training for future residents to provide a stronger foundation in both handling of special collections materials and approaching researchers with constructive feedback so that they are more comfortable in the role from the beginning.

The staff and the residents all found the 2-person cohort integral to the success of the program. It was helpful to have a peer to work through the training, navigating the collections, and fitting in with the MHS staff. The conversations that evolved from the reading assignments and field trips in the first semester were richer having multiple residents perspectives in conversation with the program supervisor. And in the second semester, the two supported each other in developing their collection guide projects. We plan to maintain the cohort model moving forward.

### **An Early Success Story**

In October 2023 former library resident CJ Haggard, now a junior at Simmons University officially majoring in history, responded to a job posting for an open library assistant I position and returned to the MHS as a part-time staff member. Her continued interest in special collections library work is a testament to the success of the pilot year of the project.

### **The Future of the Program**

The death of Anna Clutterbuck-Cook in January 2023 inhibited our ability to put out a timely call for residents for the 2023-2024 cycle. Our staff saw this as an opportunity to take time to reflect on the successes and shortcomings in the pilot year, while hiring a reference librarian to take on the stewardship of the program. The program will relaunch with a call for applicants for the

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2024-2025 cycle going out in late January. Reference Librarian Lauren Gray joined the team at the MHS in October 2023 and will carry the program forward.

Through FY2024 we worked to secure funding a second resident position. The MHS has pledged to show its support for the program by funding the second resident in the 2024-2025 cycle.

Appendix 1

**Anonymous Demographic Survey of Applicants**

**What is your gender identity? (23 responses)**

Female: 73.9%  
Male: 17.4%  
Nonbinary: 8.7%

**Do you identify as trans? (23 responses)**

Yes: 0.0%  
No: 100.0%

**Do you identify as a sexual minority under the LGBTQ+ umbrella? (23 responses)**

Yes: 52.2%  
No: 47.8%

**If you do identify as a sexual minority, what word(s) best describe your identity? (12 responses)**

Bisexual: 4  
Lesbian: 4  
Queer: 3  
Queer and/or bisexual: 1

**What word(s) best describe your racial identity? (23 responses)**

Afro-Latina: 1  
Biracial white+black, Latino, Brazilian: 1  
Caucasian: 3  
Colombian-born: 0  
Chinese person: 1  
European/Mediterranean: 1  
Hispanic: 1  
White: 14  
White, and culturally/ethnically Jewish: 1

**Do you identify as disabled? (23 responses)**

Yes: 13.0%  
No: 87.0%

**Do you identify as neurodivergent? (23 responses)**

Yes: 34.8%  
No: 65.2%

**Are you currently a primary caregiver to children, elders, or others? (23 responses)**

Yes: 8.7%  
No: 91.3%

**Are you a first-generation college student? (23 responses)**

Yes: 21.7%  
No: 78.3%

**Are you an English language learner? (23 responses)**

Yes: 4.3%

No: 95.7%

**Are you an immigrant to the U.S.? (23 responses)**

Yes: 4.3%

No: 95.7%

**Are you now experiencing, or have you ever experienced, financial precarity? (23 responses)**

Yes: 21.7%

No: 78.3%

**Are you over the age of 21? (23 responses)**

Yes: 47.8%

No: 52.2%

**Are you pursuing your undergraduate degree ... (23 responses)**

Full time, while not working for wages: 30.4%

Full time, while also working for wages: 47.8%

Part time, while not working for wages: 4.3%

Part time, while also working for wages: 8.7%

Other: 8.6%