

Romance Writers' Use of Archives

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RÉSUMÉ Le lien entre les romans d'amour populaires – un genre fréquemment marginalisé et jugé avec mépris – et le domaine des bibliothèques et des archives a attiré différents niveaux d'intérêt. Pourtant, la question à savoir si les auteurs de romans d'amour populaires se servent d'archives lorsqu'ils effectuent des recherches pour leurs histoires a été peu examinée. Cet article est basé sur un sondage auprès de deux cents écrivains de romans d'amour pour montrer que, de façon beaucoup plus fréquente que n'auraient pu l'imaginer plusieurs archivistes, ces écrivains forment un groupe important d'utilisateurs, souvent très passionné. Presque la moitié des répondants ont indiqué qu'ils ont fait des recherches dans des archives pour leurs écrits, et un plus grand nombre s'est servi de bibliothèques. Les écrivains de romans d'amour aiment travailler dans les centres d'archives, ils apprécient le niveau de détail que la recherche en centre d'archives apporte à leur travail, et ils se sentent inspirés, voire même émerveillés de ce qu'ils peuvent y trouver. Mais comme c'est le cas pour d'autres utilisateurs « non-traditionnels », ils affirment se sentir parfois frustrés de ne pas pouvoir repérer le matériel désiré, soit à cause d'orientation inadéquate, de limitations reliées aux déplacements ou de manque de collections numérisées. En se penchant sur ces faits et sur d'autres résultats du sondage, cet article offre un aperçu des bénéfices potentiels des archives pour les écrivains de romans d'amour, puis il suggère d'autres pistes de recherche et de sensibilisation. Il considère aussi comment les archivistes perçoivent les chercheurs et les sujets de recherche « sérieux » vis-à-vis les « frivoles », et l'impact que peut avoir cette perception dans les interactions qu'ont les archivistes avec les utilisateurs.

ABSTRACT The relationship between popular romance – a frequently marginalized and disdained genre – and the library and archival field has attracted varying degrees of attention. Yet the question of whether writers of popular romance use archives when researching their stories has been little studied. This article draws on a survey of 200 romance writers to show that, far more than many archivists may have thought, romance writers are a constituency, and quite often a passionate one. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they have used archives for researching

1 This article is a revised and expanded version of a paper given at the Popular Culture Association conference held 1–4 April 2015 in New Orleans, Louisiana.

their works, with more using libraries. Romance writers enjoy working in archives, appreciate the level of detail that archival research enables them to bring to their work, and can feel inspired and even awed by what they find there. But like other “non-traditional” users, they also report feeling at times frustrated by their inability to locate materials because of inadequate guidance, limitations in travel, and a lack of digitized collections. Reflecting on these and other findings from the survey, the article offers an examination of potential benefits of the use of archives by romance writers and suggests further steps for research and outreach. It also considers the impact that archivists’ perceptions of researchers and topics as “serious” versus “frivolous” may have on interactions with users.

Introduction

In 2011, a discussion on the Society of American Archivists (SAA) Archives & Archivists listserv briefly turned to a Harlequin romance, *Protected by the Prince*, by Annie West.² The novel features an archivist heroine named Tamsin who meets the hero (a prince!) through the course of her work at the royal archives housed in his castle in a country called Ruvingia. The conversation about her story, however, was somewhat overshadowed by a phrase from the back of the book, which describes Prince Alaric as drawn to Tamsin’s “burgeoning purity.”³ However, this discussion led to further exchanges about romance novels that portray archives and archivists. Soon after, an archival web comic depicted the plot of *Protected by the Prince* using photos of cats (“LOLcats”), and an archives blog held a contest asking archivists how they would respond to the situations presented in the book.⁴ In terms of archival dialogue, the topic of romance novels was a diversion.

Having read, enjoyed, and learned about history from popular romance novels, I was intrigued by the reaction and discussion surrounding *Protected by the Prince*. I have also attended several romance writers’ meetings as the

- 2 The discussion appears under the subject “Harlequin’s Archivist Heroine,” Archives and Archivists mailing list, 22 and 23 February 2011, <http://forums.archivists.org/read/?forum=archives>. See Annie West, *Protected by the Prince* (Toronto and New York: Harlequin, 2010); also published as *Passion, Purity and the Prince*.
- 3 *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books*, a popular blog in the romance community, has also discussed the “burgeoning purity” phrase. See SB Sarah, “Burgeoning Cover Copy,” *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books* (blog), 22 February 2011, <http://smartbitchestrashybooks.com/2011/02/burgeoning-cover-copy>.
- 4 See Rebecca Goldman, “Terrible Romance Novels Are Better with Kittehs,” *Derangement and Description* (blog), March 2011, <https://derangementanddescription.wordpress.com/2011/03/18/terrible-romance-novels-are-better-with-kittehs>. See also Kate Theimer, “The Archivists Romance Novel Contest: What Would You Do If You Were in Her Frumpy Shoes?” *Archives Next* (blog), 8 March 2011, <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1785>; “Winners of the Archivist Romance Novel Contest: It’s the Romantics vs. the Cold-Hearted Career Women,” 3 April 2011, <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1865>, and “Cerulean Pools vs. Archives-Made Shivs: The Honorable Mentions in the Archivist Romance Novel Contest,” 5 April 2011, <http://www.archivesnext.com/?p=1881>.

guest of a romance writer, and have observed that the writers show an attention to detail that reminds me of librarian and archivist colleagues. Although the conversation about *Protected by the Prince* suggests that popular romance is seen as set apart from archives, some romance novels discuss and depict historical events. Thinking about this led to larger questions. Are there intersections between archives and romance novels beyond portrayals? How do historical romance writers do research? Do romance writers use archives for their work? If so, what do they think of them?

Another aspect of romance that made these questions more intriguing is the “disparagement” factor. Popular romance is often labelled “trash” because of its subject matter and treatment of sexuality; its readers have been dismissed as uneducated, sad, and lonely. Members of the romance community point out that people feel comfortable criticizing romance novels even when they have never read one. Both writers and readers dislike feeling that they have to justify their choice of genre, and are quick to defend romance and dispute the labels and assumptions that come with it.⁵

Although popular romance has traditionally been overlooked and disdained, in the last decade it has become the focus of academic conferences and programs, and of a scholarly journal.⁶ In February 2015, the Library of Congress Center for the Book hosted the symposium What Is Love? Romance Fiction in the Digital Age and was a project partner in the Popular Romance Project, which sought to examine issues and questions in popular romance.⁷ The project itself was the target of an unsuccessful defunding bill in the US

- 5 See Sarah Wendell and Candy Tan, *Beyond Heaving Bosoms: The Smart Bitches' Guide to Romance Novels* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009). The authors give a comprehensive overview of the romance genre and community; Wendell also maintains the *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books* blog (see note 3). Other works about popular romance include Jayne Ann Krentz, ed., *Dangerous Men & Adventurous Women: Romance Writers on the Appeal of the Romance* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992); Pamela Regis, *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003); and *The Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, accessed 6 May 2015, <http://jprstudies.org>.
- 6 The International Association for the Study of Popular Romance was founded in 2009, and produces the peer-reviewed *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* (see <http://iaspr.org/about/history>). McDaniel College in Westminster, MD, is home to the Nora Roberts Center for American Romance, <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/undergraduate/the-mcdaniel-plan/departments/english/the-nora-roberts-center-for-american-romance>. It has a romance writing program: <http://www.mcdaniel.edu/graduate/your-plan/academic-programs/romantic-writing>. The blog *Teach Me Tonight: Musings on Romance Fiction from an Academic Perspective* maintains a “Teaching Popular Romance” page that lists courses: <http://teachmetonight.blogspot.com/p/teaching-popular-romance.html>. The author-focused Popular Romance Author symposium was held at Princeton University 24–25 October 2013; see <http://www.princeton.edu/prcw>. (All sites accessed 6 May 2015.)
- 7 More information about the Popular Romance Project: Rethinking Love and Romance is available at <http://popularromanceproject.org>. The Library of Congress Center for the Book is a project partner, as is the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media (George Mason University).

Congress, which attempted to bar one of its funders, the National Endowment for the Humanities, from funding it or “any similar project relating to love or romance.”⁸

Popular romance is controversial, and its writers and readers have often felt marginalized and dismissed. Just as scholars have begun to examine popular romance more critically, this article presents an opportunity for archivists to do the same, and to consider whether we see archives and romance as separate; if so, is it because the former is perceived as “serious” whereas the latter is seen as “frivolous”? Along with demonstrating that popular romance writers do use archives for their work, this article will show – in the writers’ own words – that they both appreciate using archives and have a keen grasp on how their needs are and are not being met. It will also consider how romance writers offer a perspective on a little-studied group in the archival literature – the “non-traditional” user.

Specifically, this article addresses how attitudes about popular romance have been reflected in the library world and brings the discussion of popular romance into archival territory. After a review of the treatment of popular romance, writers, and non-traditional users in library and archival literature, the article examines the results of a survey undertaken to learn about romance writers’ use of archives. It addresses their responses regarding library and archives use and includes the perspectives of librarians and archivists who also write romance. Finally, the article considers the benefits of taking romance writers’ use of archives seriously, with suggestions about further directions for outreach and research.

What Is Romance?

According to the Romance Writers of America (RWA), a romance has two components: a central love story and an emotionally satisfying and optimistic ending known in romance circles as the Happily Ever After, or HEA.⁹ Popular romance has traditionally depicted heterosexual couples, but in recent years writers and publishers of LGBTQ romance have also entered the market.¹⁰ Romances are generally classified as series or category – Harlequin

8 See H.R. 5155, 113th Cong. (2013), accessed 10 June 2015, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-bill/5155>. For a romance scholar’s reaction, see Eric Selinger, “Congress versus the Popular Romance Project,” *Teach Me Tonight: Musings on Romance Fiction from an Academic Perspective* (blog), 30 December 2014, <http://teachmetonight.blogspot.com/2014/12/congress-vs-popular-romance-project.html>.

9 Romance Writers of America, “The Romance Genre,” accessed 1 May 2015, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=578>.

10 Two publishers of LGBTQ romance (and other genres) are Bold Strokes Books, <http://www.boldstrokesbooks.com>, and Riptide Publishing, <http://riptidepublishing.com> (both accessed 1 May 2015).

romances, for example – or single title, such as a longer historical romance, and are commonly published in paper and e-book versions, many of which are self-published. Romance sub-genres reflect readers' and writers' tastes and interests, and include historical, contemporary, paranormal, and more. Erotica also hit the mainstream with the success of E.L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011). According to RWA, in 2013 romance sales were \$1.08 billion.¹¹ It is the second-best-selling genre in the United States.¹² Finally, romance writers are almost all female, and most do not earn a living writing romance.¹³

Literature Review

Library Literature

Traditionally, literature about popular romance within the larger library community has focused on public libraries' inclusion of such works in their collections and has spoken of the "trash" factor. Earlier writing often discusses the inner conflict a librarian might experience in providing romance novels to patrons. One example from 1980, Rudolf Bold's condescending "Trash in the Library," suggests that librarians set aside their distaste and give the people (pathetic women, in his view) what they want.¹⁴ Librarians later acknowledged the role their colleagues' judgments played in keeping popular romance out of library collections. Mary K. Chelton made the case for offering romance novels in public libraries, telling librarians to "ditch your stereotypes."¹⁵ Mosley, Charles, and Havir's 1995 article on librarians as barriers to romance readers carries an indictment in its title, "The Librarian as Effete Snob: Why Romance?" and in its first line, "What books do the guardians of First Amendment rights pretend don't exist?"¹⁶ The authors implore librarians to become more familiar with the genre.

11 Romance Writers of America, "Romance Industry Statistics," accessed 1 May 2015, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=580>.

12 There are statements that romance is the top and second-best-selling genre, but many offer no attribution. My source is an article in which Bookstats data is referenced; see Library of Congress, "Library to Host Conference, 'What Is Love? Romance Fiction in the Digital Age,'" Feb. 10–11," 11 December 2014, <http://www.loc.gov/today/pr/2014/14-203.html>.

13 Jennifer Lois and Joanna Gregson, "Sneers and Leers: Romance Writers and Gendered Sexual Stigma," *Gender & Society* 29, no. 4 (August 2015): 464.

14 Rudolf Bold, "Trash in the Library," *Library Journal* 105, no. 10 (15 May 1980): 1138–39. Bold's opening sentence describes the "typical" romance reader as "a 200 pound lady with a bad complexion, a husband who philanders, and kids who never shut up." (p. 1138).

15 Mary K. Chelton, "Unrestricted Body Parts and Predictable Bliss: The Audience Appeal of Formula Romances," *Library Journal* 116, no. 12 (1 July 1991): 49.

16 Shelley Mosley, John Charles, and Julie Havir, "The Librarian as Effete Snob: Why Romance?" *Wilson Library Bulletin* 69 (January 1995): 24.

Although much has changed in the decades since Bold's declarations, the librarian and romance writer Cathie Linz and librarian John Charles, in their 2005 article "Romancing Your Readers: How Public Libraries Can Become More Romance-Reader Friendly," include their laments on librarian judgments and their recommendations for how they can become better acquainted with the genre.¹⁷ Between 2006 and 2010, Adkins, Esser, Velasquez, and Hill examined public libraries' collection development of romance, librarians' attitudes toward it, and how libraries promote romance novels. Their findings indicate that romance has come to be more valued – or at least less overtly judged – by librarians and that most libraries work to provide romance novels for their patrons.¹⁸

Following the trend of popular romance scholarship, academic libraries have begun including popular romance in their collections. Alison Scott surveyed holdings of romance novels in academic libraries, identifying this category as a collecting area need in 1997.¹⁹ More recently, Crystal Goldman addressed collecting romance scholarship in academic libraries, advocating that libraries work with the International Association of Popular Romance Studies to determine which publications should be in collections and suggesting a consortial approach to collecting. Sarah Sheehan and Jennifer Stevens discuss their rationale for and experience with building a circulating collection of popular romance at George Mason University in order to ensure its availability for study. They advocate collecting both romance novels and scholarship about popular romance.²⁰

17 Cathie Linz and John Charles, "Romancing Your Readers: How Public Libraries Can Become More Romance-Reader Friendly," *Public Libraries* 44, no. 1 (January/February 2005): 43–48.

18 See Denice Adkins, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez, "Promoting Romance Novels in American Public Libraries," *Public Libraries* 49, no. 4 (July/August 2010): 41–48; Denice Adkins, Linda Esser, and Diane Velasquez, "Relations between Librarians and Romance Readers," *Public Libraries* 45, no. 4 (July/August 2006): 54–64; and Denice Adkins, Linda Esser, Diane Velasquez, and Heather L. Hill, "Romance Novels in American Public Libraries: A Study of Collection Development Practices," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, and Technical Services* 32, no. 2 (July 2008): 59–67. In 2014, Elizabeth Tucker surveyed romance readers and librarians for an MLIS project that also indicated the needs of the former group were being met; see Elizabeth Tucker, "Romance Novels at Public Libraries: Perception Versus Reality" (MLIS project, Southern Connecticut State University, 2014), accessed 28 May 2015, http://www.elizabethtuckermilsporfolio.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/SpecialProject_ElizabethTucker_70417820.pdf (site discontinued).

19 Alison Scott, "Romance in the Stacks; or, Popular Romance Fiction Imperiled," in *Scorned Literature: Essays on the History and Criticism of Popular Mass-Produced Fiction in America*, ed. Lydia Cushman Schurman and Deidre Johnson (Westport, CT, and London: Greenwood Press, 2002), 213–31.

20 See Crystal Goldman, "Love in the Stacks: Popular Romance Collection Development in Academic Libraries," *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 3, no. 1 (October 2012), accessed 28 May 2015, <http://jprstudies.org/2012/10/love-in-the-stacks-popular-romance-collection-development-in-academic-libraries-by-crystal-goldman>; and Sarah E. Sheehan

Archival Literature on Fiction and Writers

Reflecting the *Protected by the Prince* discussion, archival writing about popular romance has addressed portrayals of archives and archivists. Arlene Schmuland's "The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography" includes six romance novels in its list of 128 works featuring archives or archivists. Schmuland notes that author Jayne Anne Krentz includes references to primary-source research in her romances and that she writes under two other names, Jayne Castle and Amanda Quick. Although she lists these identities, Schmuland does not mention that Krentz as Castle is the author of another romance on the list, nor that she was a librarian before becoming a full-time writer.²¹ At a session of the SAA's annual meeting in 2009, Schmuland discussed depictions of sexual acts in archives (not always from romance novels).²²

Moving out of the romance genre, there have been discussions in the archival literature about the intersections of fiction, writers, and archives. Some have investigated issues relating to authors' papers.²³ In a recent study, Devin Becker and Collier Noguez investigate the digital archiving practices of 110 writers, but categorize genre as non-fiction, fiction, poetry, and drama and do not include further breakdowns of fiction categories.²⁴ Another article examines Bram Stoker's *Dracula* through an archival lens and suggests that discussions of such perspectives on fiction could enhance archival outreach.²⁵

and Jen Stevens, "Creating a Popular Romance Collection in an Academic Library," *Journal of Popular Romance Studies* 5, no. 1 (August 2015), accessed 16 October 2015, <http://jprstudies.org/2015/08/creating-a-popular-romance-collection-in-an-academic-library-by-sarah-e-sheehan-and-jen-stevens>.

- 21 Arlene Schmuland, "The Archival Image in Fiction: An Analysis and Annotated Bibliography," *American Archivist* 62, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 24–73; the references to Krentz's and Castle's works appear on pages 57 and 63. See also the website of Jayne Anne Krentz/Amanda Quick/Jayne Castle, "About," accessed 2 May 2015, <http://jayneannkrentz.com/biography>.
- 22 See Arlene Schmuland, "Archives Uncut (NSFW)," *Attila the Archivist* (blog), accessed 2 June 2015, <http://attilaarchivist.blogspot.com/p/archives-uncut-nsfw.html>; Schmuland provides the script of "Archives Uncut, Sex and Sexuality in Archival Fiction," which was presented as part of Archives after Hours (The Light, Literary, and Lascivious Side of Archives), Session 305, Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting, Austin, Texas (14 August 2009).
- 23 See, for example, Jodi L. Allison-Bunnell, "Access in the Time of Salinger: Fair Use and the Papers of Katherine Anne Porter," *American Archivist* 58, no. 3 (Summer 1995): 270–82; and Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil, "Arranging the Self: Literary and Archival Perspectives on Writers' Archives," *Archivaria* 67 (Spring 2009): 25–39.
- 24 Devin Becker and Collier Noguez, "Saving-Over, Over-Saving, and the Future Mess of Writers' Digital Archives: A Survey Report on the Personal Digital Archiving Practices of Emerging Writers," *American Archivist* 75, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2012): 482–513.
- 25 Caryn Radick, "'Complete and in Order': Bram Stoker's *Dracula* and the Archival Profession," *American Archivist* 76, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2013): 502–20.

More parallel with the topic of archives and popular fiction is the *Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction*, a peer-reviewed journal that brings together scholarship on science fiction and archives.²⁶ Popular romance as a collecting area has not been discussed in the archival literature, although there are several such collections at academic institutions.²⁷

Archival User Studies

An examination of romance writers as researchers adds to the body of literature on archival use and user studies. These discussions have generally focused on “traditional” users: academics, historians, educators, and students. Hea Lim Rhee, looking at more than 30 years’ worth of archival user studies, contends that historians are “almost exclusively” the focus of user group studies and suggests that archivists pay attention to the appearance of new types of users.²⁸ Although “non-traditional” users have participated in studies, they are often a small subset of the overall sample. One difference for the romance writer study discussed in this article is that it first sought to determine whether members of a group used archives at all and thus also includes non-users.

In 1984, Elsie Freeman noted that archivists had poor, even adversarial, relationships with genealogists and other “avocationists,” and that archivists’ treatment of users revealed a disdain for what they considered more frivolous pursuits: “That one can do research for fun seems not to fall within our categories of acceptable use; thus we distinguish between the serious researcher and all the others.” She also states, “Similarly, we tend to be cool to the user who is not professionally trained to do research. This category probably includes most of our clientele.”²⁹ Admittedly, Freeman was writing before the Internet opened even more doors for researchers of all backgrounds. This

26 *The Eaton Journal of Archival Research in Science Fiction* is run by the University of California Riverside and is affiliated with the Eaton Collection of Science Fiction & Fantasy, held by the UC Riverside Library’s Special Collections and University Archives in the Tomás Rivera Library. For its mission statement, see <http://eatonjournal.ucr.edu/mission.html>, accessed 5 June 2015.

27 The Romance Writers of America collection is housed at Bowling Green University in Ohio, which holds romance authors’ papers as well. For a list of libraries with popular romance collections, see http://www.romancewiki.com/Romance_Resources_for_Academics, last modified 12 December 2015.

28 Hea Lim Rhee, “Reflections on Archival User Studies,” *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 54, no. 4 (Summer 2015): 34.

29 Elsie T. Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User’s Point of View,” *American Archivist* 47, no. 2 (Spring 1984): 113. Although genealogists remain a unique constituency, I think that they have become more “traditional” in archival settings since Freeman’s writing, owing in part to the Internet, which has made genealogy easier and better known.

may mean that archivists are accustomed to different types of patrons, but not necessarily that they treat them better.

In 1991 Michael Widener discussed different types of users, noting that archivists lagged in their examinations of non-traditional users. He categorizes users as academic, practical, and non-specialist, noting that “to this basic scheme one could also add artists who use archives as a source for ideas and inspiration.”³⁰ As this article will show, romance writers who use archives both for fact-finding and inspiration fit the non-specialist (“the lowest class, in the eyes of many archivists”³¹) and artist categories. In 1991, Ian Wilson discussed how more general users, including writers, were coming into the archives, and he outlined some of the barriers to archives use, such as restricted hours, inability to travel, and difficulty accessing information.³²

Elizabeth Yakel directly engages different user types, including four “avocational” users, in “Listening to Users.”³³ The article opens with a quote from a flustered avocational user, recalling an experience when an archivist was not helpful because the user was not seen as a serious researcher. Other subjects in this study express both frustration at being unable to get the assistance needed and a kind of awe working with original materials, both sentiments echoed by the romance writers below. Yakel states that archivists bear responsibility to establish common ground with users and need to think further on how to educate and interact with them. In Yakel and Torres’s “Archival Intelligence,” 3 of the 28 users interviewed were avocational. Some of the observations made by the subjects of Yakel and Torres’s study bear similarities to comments made by the romance writers discussed later in this article; these include remarks about how the rules of archives affect their work and issues related to knowing if they are searching in all the right places.³⁴ Neither of these articles, however, identifies interviewees by category of user when quoting them, making it difficult to see which statements were made by avocational users.³⁵ More recently, Duff, Yakel, and Torres’s “Archival Reference Knowledge” focuses on the role that reference archivists play in researcher discovery. This study includes seven “general researchers” in its sample of 28 government archives users who were interviewed to determine the factors that lead to more successful experiences

30 Michael Widener, “The Status of Users in the Archival Enterprise,” *Provenance* 9, no. 1 (1991): 4, accessed 20 May 2015, <http://digitalcommons.kennesaw.edu/provenance/vol9/iss1/2>.

31 *Ibid.*, 8.

32 Ian E. Wilson, “Towards a Vision of Archival Services,” *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91): 91–100.

33 Elizabeth Yakel, “Listening to Users,” *Archival Issues* 26, no. 2 (2002): 111–27.

34 Elizabeth Yakel and Deborah Torres, “AI: Archival Intelligence and User Expertise,” *American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2003): 51–78.

35 There is enough context given in the article to suggest that the opening quote referred to earlier in this paragraph is from an avocational user.

for users.³⁶ These articles point out that the archivist bears responsibility for ensuring that the user understands how to use the archives, and they include discussions about the issues that have an impact on understanding.

In looking at romance writers as archives users, this article addresses several gaps in the literature. Its perspective is that of romance writers as archives users rather than a library-focused view of romance readers. It also focuses on non-traditional users – albeit ones with a common purpose – whereas previous studies have included non-traditional users as a subset of a larger group of more traditional users. Consequently, this study provides further information about what non-traditional users find helpful or frustrating, and also offers insight into romance writers' use of archives. It also adds to the discussion of non-traditional users by considering how archivists' perceptions of "serious versus frivolous" for both topics and researchers may affect interactions with users. Finally, this article considers a different view of the relationship between archivists and authors, wherein the latter are users rather than donors or collection creators.

Methodology

This study was reviewed and approved by the Rutgers University Institutional Review Board and carried out via a Qualtrics web survey. The survey call was circulated with assistance from the Romance Writers of America.³⁷ There were 12 multiple-choice and open-response questions, some of which would only display as the result of a particular previous response. Writers were asked how long they had been writing, how many stories they had written, and in what sub-genres. The survey provided the SAA's definitions for differences between libraries and archives and asked which repositories respondents used in their research and whether use was in person or online. The survey asked how helpful respondents found these resources and what types of archival institutions they had used, and invited comments on their experiences using libraries and archives. Respondents were asked if they had attended a graduate-level library or archives program or had worked in libraries or archives and in what capacity (full-time, part-time, or as a student or volunteer). Those who indicated library or archives education or work experience were asked if

36 Wendy M. Duff, Elizabeth Yakel, and Helen Tibbo, "Archival Reference Knowledge," *American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2013): 68–94.

37 I contacted the Romance Writers of America, asking permission to access the writers' loop (listserv) to circulate an email about the survey. Instead, they ran the email in their biweekly "eNotes" electronic newsletter several times between September and December 2014. With the RWA's permission, I also contacted some RWA chapters and they circulated the call as well. As I did not have access to the individual email addresses and wished to keep the survey anonymous, the survey was accessible via a link.

they felt this had influenced their romance writing in any way and if they saw any commonalities between their writing and their training or work. There was space for respondents to describe their general research process and to provide additional comments. Of the 218 respondents who started the survey, 200 provided usable data (although not all respondents answered every question).³⁸ For this article, I focused on data from questions 4 through 12, as I found they more directly addressed my questions about research process, how and why writers use archives for their research, and their attitudes about research (see the appendix for the survey instrument).

I reviewed the survey using QSR NVivo data analysis software. I coded responses to categorize them by type and formed queries such as how many archives users had attended graduate-level library or archives programs. The data is a mix of quantitative and qualitative and, given its volume, bears further exploration.

As the survey's intention was to learn more about romance writers' use of archives, this article will focus on those responses. It also provides information about library use given that libraries are closely allied and associated with archives in the United States, even though these institutions have different missions – understanding what users like and dislike about libraries may provide insight into their thoughts about archives along with points of comparison. Respondents were asked about library and archives training and experience in order to distinguish “insider” responses and also as a determinant for receiving the question about commonalities. The degree of experience was also qualified by the type of work (for example, professional librarian or archivist versus student worker or volunteer), but anyone who answered this question affirmatively was asked the follow-up question. Quotes from such respondents have a double dagger (‡) after them. Some respondents indicated receiving training in library and archives use while studying another discipline. This was not counted as experience, but it does indicate the diversity of backgrounds found in non-traditional users.

The survey was anonymous, although authors were given the option of providing an email address for follow-up and were assured of confidentiality in exchange.³⁹ Respondents were not asked to identify a gender, but as most romance writers are women, they will be referred to as “she” in the subsequent discussion.

38 The final total was 218, but a number of people dropped out after consenting or did not go beyond the first questions. The RWA has approximately 10,000 members, but this also includes librarians and booksellers, publishing industry workers, and people who have not yet written a romance; see <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=504>, accessed 4 November 2015.

39 As further questions would have required Institutional Review Board review, I followed up to thank the authors who had provided addresses and to answer any questions they asked on the survey.

Findings

Responses indicated that romance writers have used archives when researching their books but that a larger percent have used libraries. Although comments about archives use were generally positive, respondents also recounted negative experiences or problems – difficulty finding information, not knowing how and where to get started, and a desire for more material to be available online. Several respondents indicated that they felt romance was an overlooked genre, but only one indicated that she felt judged while doing research.

Respondents' initial descriptions of their research revealed several trends: using Google, Wikipedia, and YouTube; building a personal reference library; finding people who could give information; and doing more specialized research (examples included bondage domination/discipline sado-masochism [BDSM] clubs and clan historians). Five mentioned Google Books, two listed the Internet Archive, and one indicated she uses HathiTrust. Respondents mentioned libraries and librarians almost five times more than archives and archivists.⁴⁰ Several indicated that they use different resources depending on the sub-genre they are writing in (most respondents write in more than one).

Seventy respondents said they had worked at a library or archives in some capacity. These included 14 respondents who had received a library or archival science master's degree. Not all of the full-time library workers had degrees, and not all degree holders had gone on to full-time work in the field.⁴¹

Library and Archives Use

Writers were asked to indicate if they used libraries, archives, or neither when doing research. Their responses showed that a higher percentage use libraries and/or archives for their research than not. Although 42% of respondents use archives for research, fully 75% use libraries (see tables 1a and 1b).

Respondents with library and archives training or work experience were more often library and archives users, suggesting a higher comfort level with undertaking such research. As discussed later in this article, several such respondents stated that they believed their experience helped them better understand the resources.

40 Libraries and librarians appeared in 54 responses to the general research process question; archives and archivists were mentioned in 12. In both cases, several responses did not refer to libraries or archives as places, but to personal collections.

41 Of the 70, 10 were classified as volunteers, 30 as students (11 part-time, 19 full-time).

Table 1a: Library and Archives Use by Respondents.⁴²

	Overall		With Library/Archives Experience*		No Library/Archives Experience	
	Number of Respondents (N = 200)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (n = 70)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (n = 125)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
Only Use Libraries	75	37.5%	28	40%	47	37.6%
Only Use Archives	10	5%	2	2.8%	8	6%
Use Both Libraries and Archives	74	37%	33	47.1%	37	29.6%
Use Neither Libraries nor Archives	41	20.5%	7	10%	33	26.4%

* Respondents who indicated that they had attended a graduate-level library or archives program or had worked in libraries or archives were counted as experienced.

Table 1b: Total Library and Archives Use by Respondents.

	Overall		With Library/Archives Experience		No Library/Archives Experience	
	Number of Respondents (N = 200)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (n = 70)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (n = 125)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
Total Library Use	149	74.5%	61	87%	84	67%
Total Archives Use	84	42%	35	50%	45	36%

42 Five people who answered the use question did not answer the experience question; the numbers for tables 1a and 1b are adjusted to reflect that.

Table 2: Types of Archives Used.

INSTITUTION TYPE	Number of Respondents (<i>n</i> = 83)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
Public Library (Local History Room)	63	76%
Historical Society	61	73%
College or University Based	50	60%
Government	50	60%
Religious Institution	10	12%
Corporate	4	5%
Other*	15	18%

* Responses included museums, Ancestry.com, and organizational archives

Respondents who used archives indicated they were more likely to use a public library's local history room, a historical society, or a college or university archives than corporate or religious archives (see table 2). This may simply reflect the accessibility (both in distance and availability) of such archives given that libraries, historical societies, and colleges are more likely than religious or corporate archives to be open to the public.

Sub-genres

The survey asked respondents which sub-genres they write in: contemporary, erotic, historical, inspirational, paranormal, romantic suspense, young adult, or other.⁴³ The responses indicate that most write in more than one sub-genre (see table 3); consequently, it is a limitation of the survey that it did not ask whether they use archives for specific sub-genres. The expectation would be that historical romance writers rely on archives, but not all 84 respondents who use archives write historical romances. This suggests that writers use them for other sub-genres as well, but more investigation is needed.

43 For more about sub-genres, see Romance Writers of America, "The Romance Genre: Romance Subgenres," accessed 5 June 2015, <https://www.rwa.org/p/cm/ld/fid=579>.

Table 3: Archives Users and Sub-genres.

SUB-GENRE	Number of Archives Users Writing in Sub-genre (<i>n</i> = 84)
Historical	60
Contemporary	53
Paranormal	32
Romantic Suspense	22
Erotic	21
Other*	12
Inspirational	11
Young Adult	4

* Other sub-genres supplied by respondents included new adult, gay romance, and cross-genres such as historical paranormal.

Table 4: Helpfulness of Libraries and Archives.

	LIBRARIES		ARCHIVES	
	Number of Respondents (<i>n</i> = 148)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents	Number of Respondents (<i>n</i> = 83)	Percentage of Total Number of Respondents
Very Helpful	86	58%	52	62.6%
Somewhat Helpful	60	40.5%	29	35%
Not Helpful	2	1%	2	2.4%

Helpfulness

Respondents who have used libraries or archives in their research mostly reported finding libraries and archives very helpful or somewhat helpful (see table 4). In both cases, two respondents indicated “not helpful.” Only one of the respondents who found archives not helpful expanded further, saying, “Finding information to piece together failed for me. I need more guidance getting started.”‡ This and further comments discussed below suggest that archivists are still not working to finding the common ground that Yakel wrote about in “Listening to Users.”

Among the responses from those who indicated that they found libraries and archives helpful, there was both positive and negative feedback. As for libraries, comments reflected a general love of libraries and librarians, with statements such as “Librarians rock!” and “A good librarian is worth his/her weight in gold.”[‡] More negative observations about libraries mention lack of resources, waiting times for resources, and books being “out of date” or limited in some way:

I’ve found very few things in our public libraries that are helpful. Our public libraries are not adequately funded, and this is reflected in their collections. The university library is quite good, but more difficult to access because of parking issues. For that reason, I buy as much of my research material as possible.^{‡44}

One respondent expressed frustration with library staff, saying that the degreed librarians at her library (“gems”) were “replaced with mummies who needed part time jobs and had none of the knowledge of how to use the databases, etc.”

Just as issues like adequate parking impact ability or desire to visit a library, several respondents indicated that disabilities or finances prevented them from making research trips. Instead, many build their own personal reference collections by purchasing books.

Responses about Archives

Turning to archives, respondents did not speak of archivists in as glowing terms as they did about librarians. In fact, there are fewer mentions of “archivists” than of “staff” or “employees.” This is similar to an issue Yakel notes in “Listening to Users” – interviewees almost always referred to reference archivists as “reference librarians.”⁴⁵ The more generic designations in this study suggest a lack of awareness that archivists do public-facing reference.

Although the users found the archives helpful, they were aware of the limitations of archives use, thrilled when they found a helpful resource, and wished more material could be made available online. Some of the more positive responses about archives conveyed a sense of awe at being able to work with old and unique documents, with statements such as “Seeing the actual text is amazing.” Respondents also expressed appreciation for the information that comes from primary sources:

44 Here, and in all other quoted responses, respondents’ original spelling and punctuation are transcribed exactly.

45 Yakel, “Listening to Users,” 121.

It is one of my favorite places in the world. As I [*sic*] writer I can discern more about a situation, a person or a place from reading (for example) an unpublished diary of a young girl growing up in the late 1800's, than from reading an historical account on line.‡

I've used the [archives] extensively, both online and in [person]... I find it seriously cool that I get to touch 18th century documents, but also a little weird and trusting.

I have used our local historical society archives when writing western historical romances.... They have so much great stuff... old newspapers, old letters or odds and ends that talk about what life was like here in territorial days. It can give a glimpse into everyday life that you can't get from other sources.‡

A primary reason I use archives is because they, more often than not, and more likely than any other source, allow me to familiarize myself with material that is "from the source," if you will. Such as letters, periodicals, and other materials that are time, place, organization specific that provide details and a depth of research opportunities that don't exist in "reportage" sorts of materials. Biographies are great, but always must be viewed through the lens of the author's opinions, what they may have misinterpreted, etc. Letters and journals are immediate and carry the authenticity of time, place, etc. While there may be much that cannot be used, because of my interest in research, I never mind having to sift through more, to find the nuggets of research goodness I am seeking.‡

These responses reflect Yakel's findings that no matter what the level of expertise of the researchers, their awe and abiding appreciation for the record are apparent.⁴⁶ These comments also suggest that those familiar with using archives understand the value of primary sources both for their intrinsic worth and for how they help the user in their work. These respondents feel they need this direct engagement with the past in order to bring to life the details of the stories they wish to tell, and they appreciate having the opportunity to do so.

Respondents also spoke about finding inspiration when they use archives for their work, an aspect Widener discusses in his article:

It can be a fun part of the writing process when I find something that inspires me.

Even when they're not helpful for my specific project, archives almost always present ideas, new avenues to look at, details to enrich my writing, questions to spark a plot or solve a mystery...

Another respondent specifically addressed how archivists are helpful:

46 Ibid., 122.

I have often worked with archivists from a variety of locations. I find them quite interesting and willing to aid me in finding details related to my topic. I'm particularly amazed at their ability to pull up information on local laws pertaining to the time period.

Respondents also reported negative experiences using archives, such as problems caused by an archives' rules.

I can understand the need for security, but I was not even allowed to bring in a jacket or sweater at the [name] historical archives and I froze to death. I kept having to get up and leave the room in order to warm up. I caught a cold. The employees were very helpful and I found what I was looking for, but it would have been a better experience if the room temperature had matched the security measures.

In "Archival Intelligence," Yakel and Torres note that archives' rules, mostly regarding retrieval of resources, are disruptive to users' patterns for research, but the "freezing" respondent points to the issue of how reading-room practices and policies can impact ability to work and make a visitor feel "unwelcome." This also demonstrates the importance of making rules easy to find, although without knowing if this patron had the opportunity to familiarize herself with that institution's policies, it is not possible to determine if she might have been able to prepare herself better for the cold.

As seen in previous user studies, negative perceptions of archives often arose from issues with finding resources:

Despite the awesome amount of information out there, it often seems like I end up hitting the same sites a few times while researching the same kinds of questions. You can't really get enough resources online. There are always more questions.

Everyone TRIES to help..... but the online finding aids are usually pretty inadequate, so I have a tough time framing my question or even knowing if I am in the right archive for what I need.‡

Both of these respondents indicate the problems with online resources – they do not give enough information to answer users' questions, and there is no assistance to guide them in the right direction. Although it is unclear whether the last respondent goes to archives in person after using online finding aids, she indicates that when she asks for help she still faces difficulty. These responses suggest that the barriers Yakel identified remain almost 15 years later.

Another respondent indicated that she was not willing to use archives for romance writing owing to a bad experience as an independent scholar. "It came to the point where I'd rather give up the fantastic details I might've found in a special book or resource because of the time and process involved, and just go with what I could find on my own. Less time and aggravation." This remark directly mirrors Yakel's statements about how encountering

difficulties may cause users to form negative associations: "A bad experience with primary sources – either inside or outside a formal archives or special collections – can frustrate users and make their experience using primary sources unpleasant."⁴⁷ Again, although the archival emphasis on preserving materials means that users accustomed to libraries may find archives more complicated to use, archivists need to consider how to prepare users for this.

One comment sums up a number of issues about using archives as a romance writer and says that archivists are not focused on meeting users' needs. The respondent also implies that she has encountered judgment about her work.

Archivists often don't understand how to help you find what you need and are often wrapped up in the technical aspects of maintaining the archive rather than helping expose that info to a wider audience. Then, there is a distinct bias against romance as well. The idea of the use of their material for one of "those tawdry romances" often offends their academic snobbery to the max unfortunately. They seem to forget that they [*sic*] glory of history is in understanding people from the past, not just events, and any medium that allows people to enjoy various aspects of history is valid – not just academic uses of that information which no one will ever read. There are Archives I wouldn't ever have had access to if I didn't pull my History credentials.....and that is a real shame.

Clearly the respondent does not feel valued as a non-traditional patron and suggests that she receives more welcoming treatment when presenting herself as a historian. Her points about wider audiences and the validity of popular romance as a vehicle to talk about history speak to one of the core values of archivists – that archives be accessible to all types of users.⁴⁸ However, her actual experience suggests that such users will be treated less well, which may lead them to form negative associations and turn away from use of archives. This bears out Freeman's statements that archivists may have a "not worthy" attitude toward anyone using archives for "frivolous" reasons. This respondent's comments suggest that archivists need to broaden their views – that it is a professional failure that they cannot recognize how romance writers' work can bring an appreciation for history to a wider audience than more "academic" treatments can. Her remark about archivists valuing technology over reaching users echoes a concern Freeman expressed that archivists' "romance with information technologies ... has hazards enough. It is already clear that we are well on the way to creating electronic systems that do not supply

47 Ibid., 116.

48 See the Society of American Archivists Core Values for Archivists, particularly Access and Use and Service, accessed 29 May 2015, <http://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics>. The values do acknowledge that institutional mandate may conflict with openness, but that archivists strive to be open and treat users equally.

what users want or, far more important, what they will actually use.”⁴⁹ Both Freeman’s statement and the respondent’s observation speak to the concern about whether the technologies archivists use actually help us reach people or draw too much of our attention and resources. Complicating this issue further is that, as comments in the next section will show, users want archivists to use technology to make more material available online. But the responses in this section suggest that while archivists and archives can be recognized as helpful, the issues that previous studies brought to light still exist. There is still the need for archivists to provide better user education – both about the “rules” of archives and about how to locate materials – and to take more care with personal interactions.

More Digitization, Please

Respondents often expressed their wish that more material be made available online, either because their time and ability to travel are restricted or just because they would find it more convenient:

I’d love it if everything was on line! Especially rare documents and books from the past such as diaries, travel accounts, ledgers etc. Also, much better search functions to find these treasures.

My only comment is that time and resource availability sometimes hinder researcher and librarian alike. Would love to see more special-collection materials digitalized (wouldn’t we all!).

Archives are less helpful to me because they tend to be so specific. But digitized archives available online are INVALUABLE.‡

I especially appreciate finding some digitalized collections.... I think too many people, not just writers, rely only on what they can find on-line. They miss out on unique, primary materials that archives offer. Yet, many archives can not put all, or even many of their collections on-line. However, not everyone has the funds to travel.‡

The more holdings that research libraries and archives place online, the more helpful this is to those of us who are disabled or live far away from research libraries and archives.‡

Aside from simply making the material available, it is clear that more guidance on how to find it would be useful as well. One respondent indicated that she felt “more education needs to be done about the online resources that are available because I think that’s what most writers will gravitate to.”‡

49 Freeman, “In the Eye of the Beholder,” 112.

As this section shows, the issues romance writers encountered in using archives are not new. It is discouraging that problems brought to light by previous user studies, dating back to the 1980s, are still prevalent. Although technology has opened up access to archives, it has brought with it other issues that leave users unsure what their next step should be. Archivists need to work more on the issue of not just how to help users navigate individual institutions, both in person and online, but also how users can approach archival research solely online, and what techniques and resources will help them better find the primary sources related to their topics.

Library/Archives Experience and Romance Writing: Influence and Commonalities

The tone of the archival discussion of *Protected by the Prince* conveyed a sense that popular romance has little in common with the archival profession. In order to understand if this view was shared by librarian or archivist romance writers, respondents who had either graduated from a library or archives program or who worked at a library or archives were asked if they felt their prior training influenced or had anything in common with their work as romance writers. Sixty-two of the 70 “librarian/archivist” respondents answered the question: 58% (36) said they saw influence and commonalities – although some were more emphatic about the connection – and 42% (26) did not. However, a yes answer strongly corresponded to responses from those who had a library or archives degree or had worked full-time in a library or archives. Of these 20 full-time or degreed respondents, 17 (85%) indicated they saw commonalities. Almost all negative responses came from those who had worked in libraries or archives as students or volunteers. Although many of these responses were simply “no,” others gave explanations, such as “Subject matter was completely different, mission and purpose were different, skill sets were different. I do not see any commonalities.”‡

Those who saw influences and commonalities mentioned how they employed research skills and – supporting the remark of the romance writer/historian earlier – engaged their love of history in their writing. The writers often found it fun to be able to use their prior training to enhance their work.

Oh yes..... its [*sic*] been amazing. I once thought I'd write contemporary romance or mysteries but could never land an agent. Then I switched to Historicals, and my knowledge of research skills lets me integrate lots of cool details and insight into the era (no wallpaper history in my books!) Anyway....I think it is my ability to conduct quality research that has allowed me to write interesting novels a little off the beaten path.‡

Absolutely! Romances are a fun way of talking about the past and filtering history through contemporary interpretations. They are much more complex than they get credit for.‡

I do believe that my training as a librarian and archivist influences me as a romance writer. I research more frequently and more in depth, which isn't necessarily a great thing since it often disrupts the actual writing. In both librarianship/archival work and writing, I think there's a desire to reach people through the power of the written word – a love of books definitely led me to both![‡]

Two full-time respondents felt their training did not influence them per se but noted how it enhanced their ability to do research. “I don't think I would say my work in libraries has influenced me as a romance writer, however, it did teach me to appreciate research, and to do it effectively.”[‡]

The respondents' words should dispel any perception of popular romance and archives as separate and provide proof of the existence of common interests that could be the basis of stronger relationships. These respondents' insights, along with others in this study, should push us both to question our perceptions and treatments of users as worthy/serious versus unworthy/frivolous and to consider how we might actively seek out these different types of users, both as users and as supporters of archives.

Further Considerations

The object of this study was to determine if romance writers use archives for their research, to discover how and why they use them, and to learn more about their experiences. Although this survey represents a limited sample and is a preliminary investigation, the responses indicate that romance writers and their work are not “separate” from archives. Rather, some are satisfied users, while others feel there are problems and that their needs are not being met, suggesting that issues that have come to light in previous user studies are still occurring and have yet to be successfully addressed. As another object was to determine whether people with training or experience as librarians and archivists feel that such work influences their romance writing pursuits, it is telling that the more highly trained and experienced a user is in librarianship and archives, the more commonalities are seen.⁵⁰ This is especially true when it comes to the ability to find resources and conduct quality research.

In looking at romance writers as a user group, this study sought to consider the impact of having archivists take them and other non-traditional researchers less seriously than traditional users, an issue that has been noted before but remains largely unexamined in archival literature. Knowing more about romance writers as a group and as an example of non-traditional users, what changes might we consider in how we practise our profession? Given that

50 For the purposes of this survey, although librarians and archivists are not the same, those who attended library school may have taken classes on, or gained experience with, archives, as well as being trained in research methods.

romance writers have a collective focus, should outreach efforts be directed to them specifically? Before answering, it is worthwhile to look again at the relationships between romance writers and libraries.

Romance writers have a strong relationship with libraries and librarians. This is exemplified by the RWA's discounted membership rate for librarians, its Librarian of the Year award, the special Librarian Day at its annual conference, and its presence at the American Library Association and Public Library Association annual meetings.⁵¹ These acknowledgments reflect how public librarians work to promote romance. This relationship with libraries is particularly interesting given that, as the literature review indicates, libraries have previously treated popular romance not only as frivolous, but also as "trash." However, this attitude changed and a system of mutual support developed, in part due to the efforts of the late librarian and romance writer Cathie Linz, who worked to foster better relationships between these groups.⁵² Archivists should consider how a shift in attitude about why people use archives might similarly lead to successful outreach to different constituencies and interactions with individual patrons. For example, several comments in this survey indicated that respondents saw the survey itself as outreach – one contacted me with a reference question, and another told me she had never thought of using archives before taking the survey, thanking me for the "suggestion." Several others expressed appreciation that the survey took their work seriously:

Thank you for having this survey which gives credence to the genre of romance fiction. As a group, we are extremely dedicated to writing the best stories that we can, including wonderful backgrounds be they a fantastical urban paranormal, a Regency historical, a police procedural romantic suspense, or a love story in a BDSM club.‡

Romance writers' desire to write "the best stories we can" and their willingness to engage with archival materials to help them do so should be seen as an opportunity, as should the fact that there are librarian/archivist romance writers who might help bridge the gaps. Looking at the structure of the RWA, for example, members have online chapters reflecting different interests, with more than 100 chapters in the United States and several in Canada. The RWA and its local chapters offer educational opportunities for members, including workshops on doing research. Reaching out to see if members would be interested in learning more about archival research may bring more users to our doors and websites, and the good experiences these users might have could bring advocates for archives as well. I plan to continue investigating

51 Information about all of these can be found via the RWA website; see www.rwa.org.

52 For more information about Linz's efforts and impact, see Donna Seaman, "Remembering Cathie Linz, Romance Writer and Advocate," *Booklist Reader*, 30 March 2015, <http://www.booklistreader.com/2015/03/30/books-and-authors/remembering-cathie-linz-romance-fiction-writer-and-advocate>.

these possibilities along with other intersections between archives and popular romance. Looking beyond the romance genre, we should consider the value of doing outreach for other writers' groups, or any group whose interest might take an archival turn.

Outside the user experience itself, as archivists we need to consider user studies in light of our constant discussions about how to promote ourselves, our profession, and our institutions, and, more importantly, how to gain allies and advocates for what we do. Given the wish to raise our collective profile – most recently exemplified by the SAA's establishment of a committee to help increase awareness of the value of archivists and archives “among the general public” – archivists might benefit from developing relationships with “non-traditional” groups whose members have demonstrated awareness of the value of archives.⁵³

Looking from another angle, building relationships with romance writers as users might also create a path for archivists' efforts to document their community. As scholarship on popular romance increases and more academic libraries work to add popular romance collections, there should be similar efforts to ensure a future understanding of the romance community.⁵⁴ Several RWA chapters list archivists or historians among their officers, indicating that they have an interest in preserving their own history, and that such people might serve as points of contact.

Conclusion

Romance is a traditionally undervalued and marginalized genre, a topic addressed time and again in the romance community and in the literature cited above. It is also a big business, has maintained a large audience over decades, and has increasingly drawn academic interest. Although there will always be people who see popular romance as frivolous or tawdry, the survey responses show that romance writers are users of archives and can be a passionate constituency. As such, they experience many joys and frustrations when attempting to use archives for their work, whether to research details for background or setting, for inspiration, or for other reasons.

The respondents indicated that even though they are sometimes unable to find what they are looking for and on occasion have negative experiences using archives, many enjoy working with primary source material. They expressed needs for better guides to materials, for more help understanding

53 See Society of American Archivists, “Committee on Public Awareness,” accessed 22 May 2015, <http://www2.archivists.org/governance/handbook/section7/groups/Public-Awareness>.

54 There is also the issue of preserving and documenting their websites, blogs, social media sites, and other activities, such as the campaign for more diversity in romance (#WeNeedDiverseRomance).

where to look, and for more materials to be available online. Several also stated that they feel more education about resources would be useful. Such comments, although insightful, are not new to archivists; the findings of the previous user studies indicate similar joys, frustrations, and needs. Although these statements suggest that we have more work to do in both outreach and education, they also point to what we have in common – a love of history and research. We need to learn how to encourage and foster this in different audiences and remember that a negative experience may not only keep a user away from archives, but may also cause users to lose (or never gain) appreciation for them.

Given the parameters of romance novels discussed earlier, it should come as no surprise that *Protected by the Prince* ended with Tamsin the archivist heading toward her Happily Ever After with Prince Alaric (and presumably hanging up her white gloves). Although the discussion the book generated gave popular romance its moment in the archival world in 2011, we should reframe the discussion and view it as a beginning – an opportunity to take advantage of the links that already exist between archives and popular culture and a chance to consider what other relationships might exist with other types of users. We also need to rethink categorizing researchers as “serious” or “frivolous” and consider how we can cultivate connections with any user interested in archives. Doing this will not only help us meet the aspirations of our profession, but will also help us build new constituencies of supporters who care about archives.

Caryn Radick is the digital archivist at Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, New Jersey. She holds an MLIS from Rutgers University and an MA in Victorian Literature from the University of Nottingham in the UK. She is the author of “‘Complete and in Order’: Bram Stoker’s Dracula and the Archival Profession,” published in the American Archivist in 2013. She served as associate editor of the Journal of Archival Organization and is currently the associate editor of the Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries. She was a jury member for the Society of American Archivists’ first archives short fiction contest in 2015. Her research interests include the intersections between fiction and archives and issues in archival professional identity.

Appendix: Romance Writers Survey

1. You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Caryn Radick, an archivist at Special Collections and University Archives at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to learn about research methods and use of archives by romance writers.

This research is anonymous. Anonymous means that I will record no information about you that could identify you – I will not record your name, address, phone number, date of birth, etc., (any e-mail address provided for follow up will be kept confidential).

The research team and the Institutional Review Board at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated and any quoted responses will be kept anonymous. All study data will be kept for five years.

There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. In addition, you may receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time during the survey. In addition, you may choose not to answer any questions with which you are not comfortable.

If you have any questions about the study or study procedures, you may contact me at SC/UA Alexander Library, 169 College Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08901. Email: caryn.radick@gmail.com. Phone 848-932-6152. If you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at: Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 3 Rutgers Plaza, New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559 Tel: 848-932-0150 Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu.

You may print this assent form for your records.

If you are 18 years of age or older, understand the statements above, and will consent to participate in the study, click on the “I Agree” button to begin the survey/experiment. If not, please click on the “I Do Not Agree” button to exit the survey.

- I Agree
- I Do Not Agree

2. How many romance stories have you written?
- 0–5
 - 6–10
 - 11–15
 - 16–20
 - more than 20
3. How many years have you been writing romance stories?
- 0–5
 - 6–10
 - 11–15
 - 16–20
 - more than 20
4. What genre do you write in (click all that apply)?
- Contemporary
 - Erotic
 - Historical
 - Inspirational
 - Paranormal
 - Romantic suspense
 - Young adult
 - Other (Please list below) _____
5. How would you describe your research process for your stories?
6. The Society of American Archivists distinguishes libraries as holding print and non-print materials, such as books, from archives which hold both published and unpublished materials, which are often unique or rare. Visiting an archive often requires following guidelines for access and use of materials. (For more information see <http://www2.archivists.org/usingarchives/whatarearchives>.) Do you use libraries or archives (either in person or online) when conducting research for romance stories?
- Yes (Libraries)
 - Yes (Archives)
 - No
7. How would you rate your experience using libraries for research?
- Very helpful
 - Somewhat helpful
 - Not helpful

7a. Please use the space below if you'd like to add anything about your experience using libraries for research.

8. What type of archives have you visited or used online resources from (check all that apply)?

- Public library (for example, a local history room)
- Historical society
- Based in a college or university
- Based in a religious institution
- Government archives
- Corporate archives
- Other (please describe) _____

8a. How would you rate your experience using archives for research?

- Very helpful
- Somewhat helpful
- Not helpful

8b. Please use the space below if you'd like to add anything about your experience using archives for research.

9. Have you received any formal education, (graduate school) for a degree in library/information or archival science?

- Yes, graduated from library/information science school or graduate program in archives
- Yes, attended library/information science school or graduate program in archives, but did not graduate
- Yes, currently attending library/information science school or graduate program in archives
- No

Please indicate degree received. _____

Please indicate degree pursued. _____

Please indicate terminal degree of current program. _____

10. Have you ever worked in a library or archives (including part-time or as a student or volunteer)? Check all that apply.
- Yes, full time (please briefly describe types/titles of positions held in the line below) _____
 - Yes, part time (please briefly describe types/titles of positions held in the line below) _____
 - Yes, as a volunteer (please briefly describe types/titles of positions held in the line below) _____
 - Yes, as a student (please briefly describe types/titles of positions held in the line below) _____
 - No
11. Do you feel your training and work as a librarian or archivist has informed or influenced you as a romance writer? Do you see any commonalities in your work in both endeavors?
12. Is there anything else you'd like to add?
13. If you are willing to be contacted for follow up questions, please provide your e-mail address below:

The Archival Imagination:

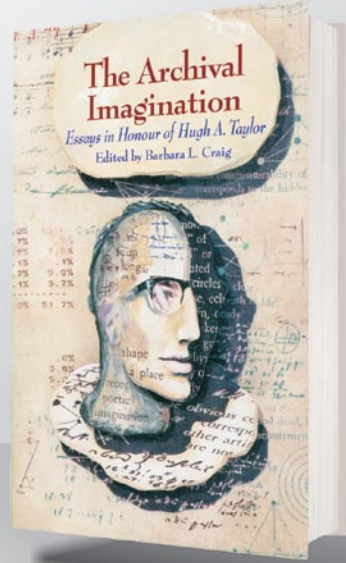
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