

Transcript of Interview with Bryan Paintiff by Ashley Hampton

INTERVIEWEE: Bryan Paintiff

INTERVIEWER: Ashley Hampton

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 05/07/2022

LOCATION OF INTERVIEWEE: Vandenburg, California

LOCATION OF INTERVIEWEE: Anderson, South Carolina

TRANSCRIBER: Ashley Hampton

ABSTRACT

Bryan Paintiff is a one-year, Master's student concentrating in Global History at Arizona State. He is currently enrolled in HST 580 that focused on managing and preserving The Journal of The Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive sponsored by Arizona State. The internship taught Bryan how to seek employment at archival institutions as well as skills needed in the profession such as curating, data-cleaning, and conducting oral histories. This interview was conducted by his fellow colleague, Ashley Hampton, where they discuss Bryan's experience in the internship, his personal life, his occupation, along with Bryan's future career goals after graduating from the program.

AH 00:10:

Hello, JOTPY internship. My name is Ashley Hampton. I am the interviewer for today's interview and oral history. I am interviewing my colleague, Bryan Paintiff., Brian plaintiff is 35 years old, and he's concentrating in Global History here at Arizona State University. Bryan resides in Vandenberg, California and became interested in a Master's in History after taking a course in archaeology during his undergrad in Turkey. So before we begin this oral history, Bryan, I was gonna go ahead and get your verbal consent. So before we begin, I wanted to confirm that you have read over the informed consent titled "Informed consent COVID-19, Oral History Project" and deed-of-lieu, and that you agree with all the terms, conditions and guidelines for those who voluntarily participate, or choose to participate with the oral histories in the Journal of--The Plague Year, A COVID-19 Archive, do you consent to this?

BP 01:17:

I do consent to this.

AH 01:20:

Okay.All right. Sounds great. So, I was gonna start with our current course that we're taking together, which is History 580, which is archival internship. So, I wanted to ask Bryan, what interest you slash what prior experience did you have with archive work before starting this internship?

BP 01:45:

Yeah, so that's a great question. So I actually had zero archive experience prior to taking this course. And what it actually interested me in it was in a class prior to taking this, one of the students had

brought up that, oh, "I had learned this in like an archiving class.", So I messaged them and was talking to him. And I was like, "Well, what like, what exactly is all this stuff?" And then they kind of explained it to me and then. So that like, really peaked my curiosity, just being able to, like work in stuff that isn't like, necessarily completely available to the public yet, and just being able to see like, all the different types of information that's in an archive.

AH 02:27:

Okay, excellent. Excellent. Um, so all the skills that you've learned in this course, you will say it's fairly new to you?

BP 02:39:

Yeah, exactly. Yeah, exactly. All the skills that we've learned so far, in the archiving process have been new. I mean, I've done previous types of jobs where you do things like data entry, from like, I don't know, I just I got it perspective. But yeah, nothing like as far as what we do in the archive now. Okay.

AH 03:02:

Um, so what has been your favorite skill to learn so far?

BP 03:08:

Yeah, so I would say, probably my favorite skills learned so far has been the curating of oral histories. And that's because it's because we do all the same work in like, the oral history portion than we do and just curating something normal like an object. But the oral history is like, you have to be a lot more focused in like, it's a lot more in depth. Like, if you're curating something that's 30 minutes, it can really take you like, up to two hours, when you're trying to transcribe and just identify all the aspects of what's being covered in that interview, like our interview.

AH 03:47:

Okay, excellent. Um, so, while remaining confidential, if you want to. What oral history that you've curated so far has been your favorite? Like, could you give a brief you know, synopsis of what that oral history was about?

BP 04:07:

Yeah, for sure. And definitely, I will remain confidential. So one, it was a no older gentleman, and he had been prior paralyzed, but it was like, kind of in his youth. So like, in his 20s, I want to say, and then he's now in his 50s. So in the person who's interviewing him, you know, they talked about that a little bit like, "Hey, what was life like," you know, prior to COVID. And then, like, "How was it like during COVID?" And, I mean, just that gentleman's attitude during COVID. It just, he's so optimistic. And just like, he's, even though he's, like, partially paralyzed. He's like, still trying to stay busy with his family trying to stay active and all this stuff. It was just like a really cool perspective, especially when, you know, a lot of the stuff that we would see about COVID is really negative. And it's like, "Oh, hey, well, I

didn't get to do this or that," but this gentleman, he was just he had a really positive light and it put a smile on my face. So, it was cool to be able to see that. Nice, I'm glad I had a really, you know, positive impact. So, from that experience, do you feel like if you ever decided to take an archival position in the future, like you will be interested in pursuing or doing something along that sector of, you know, archival work like oral histories? Yeah, definitely. So I'm particularly because when you're when you're like curating, or working in an archive, and it's with like, actual objects or stories, like, that's cool, you get a lot of perspective in that, but when you're doing or like just even reviewing, like an oral history, it's so much more in depth. Because you have the the emotion, and just like the different verbal aspects of it, like it's more alive, I feel like. So that's, and that's one thing that I guess I didn't really know about archives in the past, is just that, like, it really does capture that moment in history. And then so to be able to listen to it, you know, it gives you even more depth to that event or area that you're trying to focus on. So, yes.

AH 06:30:

No, nice, nice. So, what skill has been the easiest to learn during this internship? So, the one that's been the easiest for me has probably just been the data cleaning, because it's so it's so focused, because like with, with curating, there's, it's like more holistic, it's a lot of things that you have to pay attention to at once. Whereas like with data cleaning, you're just pouring through like multiple items just trying to fix like one or two things. So it's things that have already been curated. And just like, "Oh, hey, like, maybe we just need to add all these items to a certain collection," so you're just poring through there. And so it's, it's a lot easier, but it's still important, because that has, like, builds the strength of linking certain item sets to larger data collections so... Okay! So um, what did you use? Whether it was from previous courses? Or what did you use to basically help you overcome those challenges with curating?

BP 07:40:

Yes, so as far as the challenges, I don't know, if I've used prior experience at all, I definitely leaned a lot on the tools that are available to us in the archiving course. Like, obviously, the instructor and then some of the other full time curators that we have at JOTPY, I like that they have been like amazing. Just being able to hit them up with certain questions, or actually, like, Zoom with them and be like, "Hey, I'm not understanding this." Yeah, I would say most of the ways I've overcome the challenges have just been through this course.

AH 08:20:

Okay. So how do you feel like the input of Slack and using Slack has made a difference with this internship Or how do you feel like it's affected your experience with this internship, I should say?

BP 08:37:

I think that's a great question. So, just from that technology aspects...so to include Zoom, as well as Slack. Slack has been great, because it's a lot easier. I feel like to get a hold of people quicker, especially when you're trying to be like, "Hey, I'm not understanding this," or "Hey, can you check this work over

before I do more to make sure I'm doing it correctly?" And as well as because in that Slack channel, we have a specific channel that we use, just to track work. So we put in there like, "Hey, I'm working like these 10 items." So that one, no one is also working the same thing. And then like, if someone finishes it before you then the work you've done doesn't actually count. So yes, Slack has been, great for that. And then Zoom, I think has been great just for us all to be able to, like link up once a week, kind of see each other kind of talk about the materials we were doing that week, as well as diving in any questions we were all having with oral histories or, or curating in general. So I think utilizing the technology aspects of this online archive have been really helpful. I can't imagine trying to do this without Zoom. I mean, we're using Zoom right now. I can't imagine doing it without technology.

AH 09:58:

Definitely, for sure. So, um, how would you say considering all those factors..with all the technologies we're using, along with all the resources, has changed your impression about the archives?

BP 10:14:

Well, I'm not really sure. Because I don't know if I had an impression of what archival was prior to this. So it's like my only exposure to Archives has been via technology...so, yeah.

AH 10:28:

Nice, nice. So we're going to shift a little to just, you know, COVID related questions in general, because that's kind of what we went over during our pre interview with each other. So, one of the questions we asked was, how did family life change due to the pandemic?

BP 10:53:

Yeah, so for sure, um, family life changing during the pandemic... so for me during the the initial portion, I was single, so it may, and then I lived overseas in Germany. And so my family live, they live in the US. So trying to see them was obviously impossible for quite some time. And then I didn't end up meeting someone and everything and then but it made a made that challenging as well, just with lockdowns, and not being able to go out into like, the real world and hang out, it was like, "Oh, we can only like hang out in each other's places and stuff." So it definitely made that challenging. But I also think it was really cool, because we got to spend like a lot more time just one-on-one, which is really cool. And I felt like like we grew faster together and stuff so...

AH 11:51:

Okay, nice. Nice. So has COVID-19 In general, change anything other aspects of your personal life?

BP 12:04:

That's a good question. Ah, other aspects in general, Yeah, I would say, like I don't know, if you're looking for something specific thing. So for one, I know work. So, a lot of people. Even like near where I work, a lot of people were able to telework, but just the job that I have, specifically, like it's not able to

be done teleworking. So that was really weird still having to come in, we did still utilize other aspects of technology to do like video teleconferencing. It's just so we could talk to people all around the world for our job, but um, I mean, cooking. I mean, it really changed everything, like how we plan stuff, how we got to inform where did is pretty, pretty challenging.

AH 12:58:

Okay, so would you say there's any similarities between the archive internship and your current occupation right now?

BP 13:07:

I wouldn't say...yeah, for sure. Because, I mean, we still do, like weekly, like teleconferences and stuff, like in my work, and a lot of those are digital, even though I still have to go into work. And I mean, we're not locked down anymore, or I don't think most people are. But yes, I mean, that's definitely one thing that's analogous is just the video teleconferencing like we do here. And as well as messaging systems such as slack. I mean, we don't use Slack at work, but we use systems that are similar to that.

AH 13:45:

Okay, so how do you feel...that...well, I'll asked another question. So, one of the other questions we went and asked was, how do you feel that COVID-19 is going to continue to impact your life in the future per se?

BP 14:05:

Yeah, so for sure, one way I think it will continue to impact my future is just with basic travel. I've had to travel a lot for I still travel a lot for my job. It was even as like things were being on like locked unlocked and all that stuff. Like you still had to like to show your vaccine card. And again, it's different where you go some places still want you to show like a test like to get a test to go into some place some places like they don't even care about your vaccine card. It's all different by state and it's all different by country so I think that's one way I don't think that they'll do like a legit lock down anymore, but I think they might maybe limit people like limit number of people and then want to see those vaccine cards in the future. Okay,

AH 15:00:

So, leading from that about how you said that COVID will continue to impact your personal line of work. How would you feel that personally, from your opinion, how do you feel that COVID-19 will continue to impact like the archive or libraries, and archival institutions that are here in the United States?

BP 15:21:

Um...well, I know from like from our archive perspective, the way COVID is still impacting is just we're, we're still getting a lot of material uploaded. So, we're still having to...continue to do the normal

curations and all that. Whereas like, if so it's more of like a continuing archive right now. Whereas like, if the archive was done, like with the initial collection, then we would be focusing on that metadata and actually trying to link things up so that everything's more interconnected. But instead, because there's still submissions, we're still having to do those initial types of curations as well. Yeah, and I agree personally with that, as well so...Um, so since you've done this internship, what are your career goals...now after, you know, graduation and receiving your Master's degree? Great question. So, for sure. definitely, one of the reasons why I had initially pursued this degree was because I ultimately wanted to become like a middle school teacher. And so pursuing this degree kind of helps me check that box. So I think that's what that's kind of like my long term, like five to ten year goal. Hopefully, after completing like this graduate course, I can try to focus and get like a local adjunct job or professor jobs just to kind of stay with History and try and like get my feet settled with teaching and stuff for a couple of years before I tried to influence, like younger kids, and try to get them to have that passion of history that like we have.

AH 17:21:

Okay, nice. And do you feel that, um, this internship has or will improve or, you know, how do you feel like this internship or what impact this internship will have on your future career goals?

BP 17:38:

Yeah, that's a great question. I actually don't...like doing this internship really showed like that back end of like history, with like, everything that goes on behind the scenes. Like even taking other history courses and whatnot, and you're, you're doing research and stuff. And then so maybe, like you're utilizing archival features, and you just don't even realize it from that research perspective. So actually taking an archiving course, and seeing all the work that does go into that, and the crazy amount of work that it is, but how, especially with linking that those types of metadata and stuff and how it makes that material more useful to researchers in the future, you want to look back and try and search for whatever they want in this archive.

AH 18:26:

All right. Well, I will leave the last question open to you. Is there any last final thoughts or comments that you would like to make?

BP: 18:37

No, I don't think so. I think I think you had a really good range of questions there.

AH 18:41:

Thank you. I was trying to remain unbiased as possible. I didn't want to sound like I was steering you one way or another..so yeah. All right, well, thank you, Bryan, for doing this interview with me. And thank you all, um, at the JOTPY internship and I hope everybody has a great day.

BP 19:03:

Awesome, thanks Ashley.

AH 19:04:

Bye!

BP 19:04:

Bye!

AH 19:05:

You too.