

Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

October 2017



Employee Spotlight

Meet David Holt

What is your role at the State Archives?

I hold the Database Administrator position for the Digital Archives. In English that means that I'm responsible for maintaining all the data that drives the Digital Archives' various applications.

What do you find the most challenging at the State Archives?

What I find the most challenging is also what I find the most rewarding. Being in the information technology field, we encounter a myriad of issues that we have to solve, often at a moment's notice. This forces us to think creatively, and constantly refine ourselves and our techniques.

What has been your favorite project at the State Archives?

There are lots of great things about working for the State Archives, but my favorite is working with my team at the Digital Archives. We are a relatively small crew, each member often holding various responsibilities. I really appreciate the rapport we have with each other, how effectively we are able to share ideas, and provide awesome feedback we might not have thought of on our own. Our brainstorming sessions especially take the cake!

What is the most important lesson you have learned about archives in the last year?

The most important lesson I am constantly reminded of, thankfully not the hard way, is that information security is everyone's job. We are lucky to have our stellar folks that manage our IT infrastructure, who also actively monitor our firewall and network activity. Those guys are



David Holt, Database Administrator.

relentlessly fending off malicious attacks to our various systems. As developers of technology, we also need to be hypervigilant in our practices to write code of the highest security. Furthermore, as consumers of technology we have to fight the good fight as well.

Describe which technology has affected your job the most.

WARNING: GEEK TALK AHEAD! In the State Archives we're responsible for holding on to records, right? Traditionally, in the paper world, we'd typically find a safe acid-free box to place the records in, and a nice and sturdy shelf for said box to rest ad infinitum. In the digital world, it's not all that different in concept. We've been piloting a new object-based storage system to act as the box and shelving to hold all of the digital files we receive as records. This new system will be easier to maintain, faster, and more scalable than our current system. It will also open the door to allowing us to support a lot more types of content. We're all really excited to implement this system in the near future. Stay tuned for exciting features from the Digital Archives!

If you could change anything about the Archives, what would it be? (it doesn't have to be just one thing)

I'd love to see the agency embrace modern paradigms of workplace flexibility. Other Washington State agencies and especially the private sector support their staff to telework frequently. This reduces traffic congestion, emissions, and interruptions. If you tally the time saved in commuting I know I'd free up an extra hour and a half in my day. As a single father I'd be able to better handle my personal responsibilities and probably be more rested and recharged for the next day's work. In this era with the all the great technology at our disposal, it just makes sense.

What legacy would you like to leave at the Archives?

The Digital Archives was the first state digital archives in the nation. We are leaders in our field. I want to help drive our team to continue to innovate and improve this space. Even though we've already been at it for over a decade, I feel like there is still a lot we can achieve.

How do you recharge in the middle of a long day? Besides coffee.

First I like to take 10 deep breaths, practice some yoga, and then sip on some chamomile tea. Wait, no, that doesn't work for me. While we have folks to back me up if I'm out, I'm the only



David's kids.

database administrator for the Digital Archives. As you can imagine, that makes me a pretty busy guy and to top it off I get to face new technical challenges every day. The only way for me to recharge is MORE COFFEE!

What did you know about the Archives before working here?

In my previous endeavor I worked for the Department of Ecology, so I was already familiar with retention schedules and knew that some records went off to the Archives.

Before working at the Archives, what was the most interesting job you've ever had?

Early on in my career, I worked for Circuit City and my job was to go to customer's houses to set up or repair various electronics or computers. In that role I got to experience a very wide spectrum of our customers, for better and for worse.

If you could witness any historical event in Washington, what would you want to see and why?

I'd love to witness some of the bootlegging operations that occurred during the Prohibition in our state. I find that era fascinating and it also serves as a good reminder that you can't legislate everything.

Who (outside of your family) is your personal hero?

Probably Robert S.S. Baden-Powell. B-P was a British Army officer and author. He is responsible for penning the book Scouting for Boys, starting the Scouting Movement. I'm very passionate about Scouting. I feel that the best way to make this world a better place is to invest your time instilling great values and leadership skills to those who will be responsible for its care: our youth.

If you ruled the world, what would you change on day one?

Mainly I'd put an end to hate crimes, forced labor, and human trafficking. Our world, while imperfect, is pretty spectacular as it is. I feel like it'd lose its luster if a magic wand was waved to make it perfect.

If you could visit anywhere in the world you've never been, where would you go?

That's a tough one! The UK, Italy, and Thailand all rank pretty high on the list. I'm always up for a good adventure!



David backpacking.

If you could go back in time to give advice to your 18-year-old self, what would it be?

Work like a beast now; you're capable of more than you will ever think is possible. Take more risks and trust in your ability to figure it out. Should you fail, remember failure is just a learning opportunity.

What is your favorite family tradition?

Every year in early December my family and I go to a tree ranch a ways north of Spokane. We take a hay ride up from their main shop to the area where the trees are. We spend a bit of time picking out the perfect trees and cut them down to bring home. It's a small thing, but it gets the holiday season in gear for our family, which is pretty exciting. We've done this for over 20 years now, wow!

What was the best concert you ever went to?

Hands down, seeing the Foo Fighters at the Gorge a couple years ago. While out on tour Dave Grohl, the lead singer, broke his leg at a show. Instead of canceling the tour, they made him a throne to jam on. That throne turned out to be pretty epic and even though Dave was confined to it, he played his heart out!

What's your talent?

I started brewing beer as a hobby about five years ago and have gotten pretty hooked on it. Really, I love learning and solving problems so brewing is just another thing to geek out on. Plus, the by-product is great, so there's that. As a budding brewer, you're always looking to improve your equipment to streamline the process. At this point, my home brewery is about the size of a small startup craft brewery. Prost!

Do you have an office nickname? What is it?

Oh gosh! I have a knack for finding unconventional solutions to solve stubborn problems. I have been dubbed the title of Napster, reminiscent of the computer hacker from the movie the Italian Job.

Which movie or book character do you identify with the most?

Most definitely Batman! We both cherish our geeky gadgets, have extensively studied martial arts, love helping people, and despise bullies. I hope I didn't get the theme song stuck in your head now.
