

Out of the Archives

a newsletter from the Washington State Archives

January 2018



Employee Spotlight

Meet Devin O'Brian

What is your role at the State Archives?

I am a Librarian Archivist Paraprofessional in Imaging Services, working to improve the way state and local governments access their information.

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

I find it challenging to find time to take a deeper look through some of the material I process.

What has been your favorite project at the State Archives?

I really enjoyed imaging Daniel J. Evans' private collection of scrapbooks that he kept throughout his political career serving the people of Washington. I realized the great care and forward-thinking put into assembling these scrapbooks. It was an interesting trip through interesting times.

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

Keeping track of your work by taking notes. It makes it much easier to retrace my steps if I ever want to go back to a specific collection.



Devin on his way up to the summit of Mt. Ellinor.

What did you know about the Archives before working here?

I knew the Archives held and maintained documents detailing the state's history. However, I initially had a hard time conceptualizing the physical size and effort required to operate such an institution.

What is the strangest thing you have ever discovered in your research?

Elijah Wood is the spitting image of King Carl XVI Gustaf during the 1960s. I found this after looking at several images kept in Evans' scrapbook that I came across where he was the guest of honor. The King of Norway was entertained at an event in Seattle by the governor.



King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden looking like Elijah Wood, c. 1966.

If you could trade places with someone from your research, just for one day, who would it be, and why?

I'd like to walk in Governor Evans' shoes during the mid-1960s. It must have been surreal to be governor during such a dramatic cultural shift in our country at that time. I think I would also be grateful that it's only for a day.

What three words would you use to describe the State Archives?

Integrity. Permanence. Openness.

What legacy would you like to leave at the Archives?

I think it is fun to think about how long my handwriting will be floating around on the various folder tabs and labels from re-boxing and re-folder projects.

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

I take walks. It helps me process my thoughts and work off excess energy.

Do you have any tips on how to efficiently search the Archives?

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Everyone holds a piece of the puzzle.

What is the weirdest topic you have researched at the Archives?

The Department of Ecology's role in taking orcas into captivity before they became a protected species. I don't think anyone realized the impact of their actions.

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

The Pig War of 1859. I'd like to see how this escalated to the point of armed conflict before rational minds determined their reactions were silly.

Name four individuals, living or dead, you would like to sit down with for dinner.

Theodore Roosevelt, Jack Kerouac, Dan Carlin and Matt Taibbi.

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

Special Agent Dale Cooper from Twin Peaks. He's an innocent who is interested in the mysteries of life.



Devin on top of the Retirement Services of Alabama Building, Montgomery, AL.

What would be the ultimate gift for you to receive?

Not exactly in the gift genre, but all I can think of at the moment is a variable speed Bridgeport milling machine.

What are you most afraid of, and what is it stopping you from doing?

Falling. I will never go skydiving or bungee jumping. I was once a glazier, installing glass on the sides of skyscrapers. I have had enough thrills of that sort.

What was the best concert you ever went to?

Lollapalooza 2003 still tops it for me. Normally, I can't stay up late enough to catch any new shows.

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

Every day, everyone will sit down and eat at least one meal with family, friends or loved ones with no outside distractions.

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

I'd like to see Italy and the South of France.

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

Don't be afraid to make some mistakes. That's how we learn.

What's your talent?

Problem solving.

Which novel is the best sequel?

Restaurant At The End Of The Universe, by Douglas Adams.

What is your biggest pet peeve?

Speed bumps are not 'stop bumps.'

Tell about a time you took a huge leap of faith.

Five years ago, I moved to Olympia from the Midwest. I had no idea what to expect. I had only seen a few pictures of Olympia before I moved cross-country. I had no guarantees but, I went ahead anyway, with giving life out here my best shot.

What is the first thing you would buy if you won the lottery?

Lots of land.

What's your most and least favorite foods?

My most favorite food at the moment is Brussels sprouts with bacon and apple. My least favorite type of food is anything that's an imitation of the real thing, i.e., turkey bacon, I can('t) believe it's not butter, tempeh, etc.

What is a superpower you wish you had?

Flying.

Is silence golden or awkward?

It's golden.



Devin hard at work.