

[Call for Contributors: Radical Visions: New Perspectives in Special Collections Curatorship](#)

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The archives and special collections field is amid a remarkable shift as we strive to reimagine our structures and practices to build a more diverse and inclusive historical record, to center the communities we hope to collaborate with and welcome into our spaces, and to respond to traditional, non-traditional, and emerging research needs. Curators are central to these efforts, and as such, the role of a curator is being redefined. Once seen as gatekeepers, 21st century curators are now visible ambassadors tasked with cultivating diverse communities through intentional collection building, equitable partnerships, and responsible stewardship. Curatorial positions are newly oriented towards “community focused” collection development and engagement as institutions place increased value on relationships with non-traditional scholars and marginalized communities, as well as alternative forms of memory keeping.

Slated to be published by the Society of American Archivists in 2025 and tentatively titled, *Radical Visions: New Perspectives in Special Collections Curatorship*, this volume is co-edited by Jillian Cuellar and Agnieszka Czeblakow (Tulane University). It aims to offer new theoretical frameworks for the Libraries, Archives, and Museums (LAMs) field to consider, to open pathways to deeper engagements and conversations across allied professions, and to inspire future visions of what we might become.

We invite contributors to respond to the following broad themes and/or engage questions and provocations of interest:

- Definitions of contemporary curatorship, including how roles, responsibilities, and qualifications have evolved and pathways to developing a curatorial career.
- Examinations of curators’ relationships with the book and archives market with regards to building trust, ethics, competition, and the influence of race, class, and generational wealth.
- Approaches to cultivating and working with material and financial donors, including ethical and legal considerations in negotiating gifts; cultural heritage restitution or repatriation requests; acquisition/disposal of collections containing content that is restricted, harmful, or of dubious provenance; managing expectations; and professional codes of ethics.
- Outreach strategies to engage diverse audiences and approaching contextualization of materials

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that may be harmful, particularly when one may be an “outsider” to these communities.

- Building trust and repairing harm through community-centered practices, including reparative description, post-custodial work, enabling self-identity and definition, and respectful engagement with inherited collections.
- Considerations of “community” curator roles with regards to the necessary skillsets; overlap or divergence from traditional curator positions; alignment with broader collecting strategies; and key institutional support.
- Considerations of how curators without traditional LAM backgrounds reconcile outside or lived experience with traditional practice or use it to instigate change in the profession.
- Explorations of how unconventional formats or newly valued documentary methodologies such as oral histories, post-custodial collecting, digital archives, and storytelling impact collection development strategies, resource allocation, or curatorial expertise.
- Considerations of how evolving theory on core archival principles such as provenance affect acquisition methodologies and how curatorial work can help facilitate new understandings of authority, ownership, and recorded memory.
- Strategies for confronting and combating prestige typically conferred on curatorial roles through associations with erudition, exclusivity, whiteness, Eurocentrism, patriarchy, social class, and generational education and wealth.
- Examining new strategies for collecting, such as distributed collection development, decentering “authority” through community involvement, and de-growth, and their impact on other functional areas in LAMs, as well as relevant social implications such as sustainability and the climate crisis.
- Strategies for forming productive organizational relationships to perform core work, such as setting access priorities, creating description, or engaging with creators and donors. Thoughts or recommendations for navigating potential tensions in team-based collection development or in working with senior leaders to advance the larger institutional mission. Examinations of intentionally designed work environments where power is shared and distributed among many as a means to dismantle internal hierarchies.
- Recommendations for strategically approaching career development and developing skillsets that support future-oriented curatorial work in contemporary LAMs.

Final drafts submissions (3,000-5,000 words in length) may take the form of research articles, perspective essays, case studies, interviews, or another format devised in consultation with the editors.

If interested, please submit chapter proposals using this [form](#) by December 15, 2022. Contributors

will be notified by late January 2023; first drafts will be due in June 2023.

Early career professionals or those who have recently assumed curatorial roles or responsibilities, BIPOC professionals and those who identify with marginalized communities, and individuals with a record of innovation and provoking change are especially encouraged to submit.

All contributors will receive a modest honorarium and two (2) complimentary copies of the printed edition of the work.

Editors

Jillian Cuellar, Director of Tulane University Special Collections

Jillian Cuellar is the director of Special Collections at Tulane University Libraries. She provides leadership and vision for the division, and oversees staff, collections, and operations. Jillian is an active member of the Society of American Archivists (SAA); most recently she served as co-chair of the 2020 Program Committee and completed seven years of service as a member of the Association of Research Libraries/SAA Mosaic Advisory Group. Jillian has focused much of her career as an archivist on finding creative ways to engage users who are new to archives and special collections, as well as exploring strategies for more inclusive approaches to collection building and for increasing diversity in the profession. She previously held positions at the University of California, Los Angeles; New York University; and Columbia University. She holds a MLIS from Pratt Institute and a BA in English from the University of Texas at Austin.

Agnieszka Czeblakow, Head of Research Services and Curator for Rare Books, Tulane University Special Collections

As the Head of Research Services at Tulane University Special Collections, Agnieszka Czeblakow provides leadership and management for research services, instruction, and outreach programs. As the Curator for Rare Books, she steward's Tulane's collection of rare books and provides helps to define the strategic development of the collection. Prior to joining Tulane, she was the Rare Books Librarian at University of Texas at San Antonio, where she was responsible for curating and promoting access to post-1600 rare book collections focusing on the history and print culture of the Mexico-Texas border regions and the culinary history of Mexico. As a first-generation, multilingual professional, she is committed to practices that center access to collections and position curators, librarians, and archivists as co-learners and research partners rather than authorities and gatekeepers. She is an active member of the Abolition in Special Collection group. She holds a PhD in Latin American History from Emory University and MLIS from University of Wisconsin.

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