

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE IN ARCHIVES: INCLUDING ME IN THE WE

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

- Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner



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THE CSU SYSTEM

23 Campuses

- CSU is the largest four-year public university system in the United States
- Educates 485,550 students a year
- Most Master's level granting
- Student populations vary-1,000 to 40,000

Campus Locations

- 800 miles from Humboldt to San Diego
- Rural To Large Metropolitan
- Many "Lone Arrangers"

Archivists Position Classifications

- Part-time and Full-time
- Non-exempt Staff
- Temporary Grant Funded
- Technicians
- Tenure-track Librarians
- Adjunct Faculty/Lecturers



ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

“Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.”

Domain

- Identified common needs
- Identified common interests
- Identified participants
- Variable participation

Community

- Hosted an open community discussion
- Started the conversation
- Heard and shared ideas
- Worked together
- Evolved with participation

Practice

- Meet as a group
- Hear and share ideas
- Space for speaking openly
- Variable participation
- Identify common needs and interests
- Evolve with participation

THE HISTORY OF US: CSU ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVISTS' ROUNDTABLE



The CSUAAR Community of Practice

- Identified need (2017)
- Contacted colleagues
- Started the conversation
- Evolved over time
- 2019, 2020 Transitions

TRANSITIONS: THE ME IN WE

- Shared Google Drive for easy transfer
- Co-facilitation - Share the leadership roles
- New perspectives from new leaders
- Adjusting to changes
 - adjusting frequency of meetings
 - regularly identify new topics of interest
 - check-ins with the needs of the group



CHALLENGES

- Personal barriers
- Professional barriers
- Finding time, balancing priorities
- Finding your commonalities rather than your differences
- Technical issues
- Finding 'your people'





HOW A CoP DIFFERS FROM PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

- The sense of solidarity and trust
- Your success is our success
- Putting the Me in the We!
- It's smaller, yet big enough
- Baseline common ground

IDEA (INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, EQUITY, ACCESS)

Welcoming environment that includes:

- Participants are encouraged to contribute topics
- Access to Informal knowledge base (no registration / no fees)
- Allows for Multiple Contributors
- Everyone in the CSU Archives
- Has always been led by Women
- Started By And Always At Least One Woman Of Color Leading

REDEFINING THE WORKPLACE



What is the CSUAAR doing for you?

Quotes taken from responses to question posed to CSUAAR in Summer 2021

“...a community space where I learn so much from my fellow CSU archivists and find camaraderie. Thanks so much to our wonderful facilitators for holding such a **welcoming space.**”

“Creating a **sense of community** when even our library-connected colleagues don’t really know what we do.”

“It allows me to keep in touch with archivists throughout the CSU system, **providing a network of colleagues** to learn from and share ideas with. Many of us are either the only archivists on our campus, or one of very few, so it’s nice to regularly touch base with others interested in and working with archives.”

“I think this meeting space is invaluable as we do not have an **efficient mechanism for communicating** amongst our archives institutions that share so much in common, from an LMS to funding to management issues and missions.”

“Working in a **rural CSU**, it is wonderful to connect to other archivists when there aren’t those networking opportunities locally. It is helpful to review best practices, see how other archives are handling similar situations, and **learn from my CSU colleagues.**”

“Meeting with fellow archivist workers on their own projects and hashing out concerns is very insightful. I appreciate that through our discussions, we are able to **develop collaborative projects** as well.”

“I really appreciate being able to meet fellow archivists that I would not have the opportunity to otherwise, especially during the pandemic. The camaraderie we share **has made a sometimes solitary profession feel less so.** I also appreciate hearing about what other CSU’s are doing, and what their policies are, and to talk about ways we can work together more often.”

“Provides a space to **share ideas** and commiserate on frustrations. I learn a lot in each meeting, and take ideas back to my work. It also gives me a sense of **connection** in an academic life that can feel very isolating.”

BUILDING AND SUSTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

- Intentionality
- Building trust, sharing power, vulnerability
- Creating a welcoming environment
- Consistency
- Be open to change



FUTURE OF THE CSUAAR COP

What would you like CSUAAR to do?

Quotes taken from responses to question posed to CSUAAR in Summer 2021

“...**provide a voice for all of us** if we want to present a proposal or project that involves all the CSUs.”

“**Act as a platform for greater advocacy of collaborative projects. Pooling resources and working collaboratively** will greatly benefit our individual campuses and the broader CSU system.”

“Keep **providing opportunities for us to learn what other campuses are working on.** See if there are ways to support each other’s work (grants, marketing, training). **Use our collective voices to advocate for support for Special Collections** at the Chancellor Office’s level - it would be nice to receive more funding to encourage collaboration between campuses.”

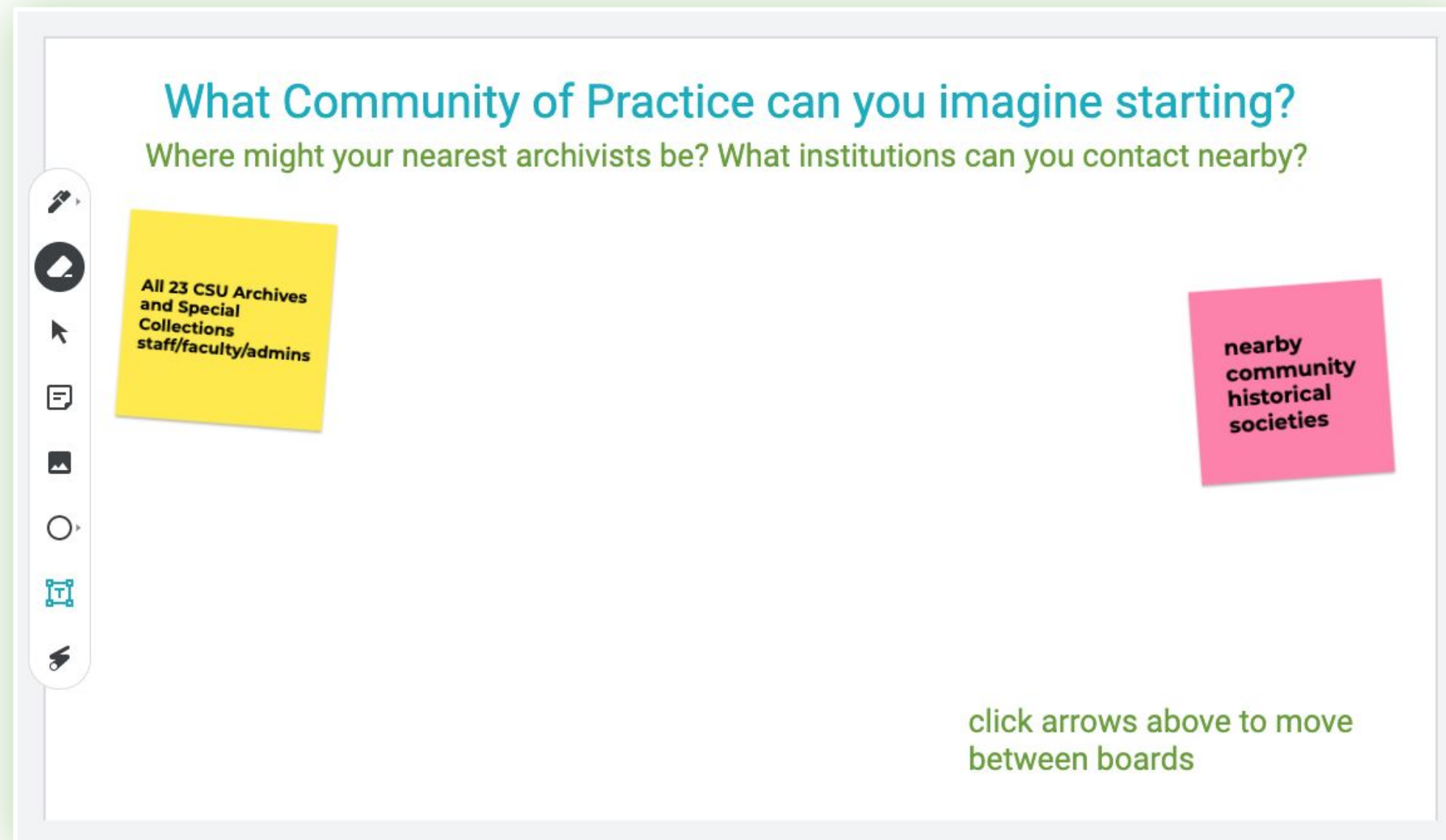
“I want CSUAAR to continue to provide monthly meetings so we can **get together and learn/commiserate/plan** together. I’d also love to see more ways for us to **collaborate and support each other in our projects, research, and advocacy** on our campuses.”

“**Advocate for better representation** in the CSU library community. I think all **archives units are misunderstood and undervalued in our greater library communities.** Also the incredible need for a CSU policy on university archives and records retention/management which is greatly lacking in our institutions.”

IMAGINING OUR COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

Add your anonymous thoughts to our community board: bit.ly/CSUAAR-cop

What Community of Practice can you imagine starting?
Where might your nearest archivists be? What institutions can you contact nearby?



The screenshot shows a digital community board interface. On the left, there is a vertical toolbar with icons for editing, navigation, and other functions. Two sticky notes are visible: a yellow one on the left and a pink one on the right. The yellow note contains the text 'All 23 CSU Archives and Special Collections staff/faculty/admins'. The pink note contains the text 'nearby community historical societies'. At the bottom right of the board, there is a green instruction: 'click arrows above to move between boards'.

All 23 CSU Archives and Special Collections staff/faculty/admins

nearby community historical societies

click arrows above to move between boards



INVITATION TO OUR Q&A TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION

11:45 AM PST on Friday, August 6, 2021



August 2020 CSUAAR Meeting

THANK YOU!

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