



Mythopoeic Society

mythLORE

A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis,
Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature

Volume 36 | Number 1 | Issue 131, Fall/Winter

Article 2

10-15-2017

Treasure in the Archives: A Celebration of Archival Collections

Laura Schmidt

Wheaton College, Wheaton Illinois

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore>



Part of the [Children's and Young Adult Literature Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Schmidt, Laura (2017) "Treasure in the Archives: A Celebration of Archival Collections," *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature*: Vol. 36 : No. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://dc.swosu.edu/mythlore/vol36/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Mythopoeic Society at SWOSU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Mythlore: A Journal of J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Charles Williams, and Mythopoeic Literature* by an authorized editor of SWOSU Digital Commons. An ADA compliant document is available upon request. For more information, please contact phillip.fitzsimmons@swosu.edu.



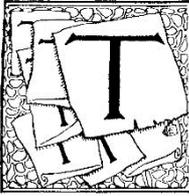
Treasure in the Archives: A Celebration of Archival Collections

Abstract

Describes the collection of the Wade Center at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, which holds extensive archives of the works of *Mythlore's* three key authors—Tolkien, Lewis, and Williams—as well as fellow Inklings Owen Barfield, and writers Dorothy L. Sayers, George MacDonald, and G.K. Chesterton. Also discusses the structure and uses of archives in general.

Additional Keywords

Barfield, Owen—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center; Chesterton, G.K.—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center; Lewis, C.S.—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center; Libraries and archives; MacDonald, George—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center; Marion E. Wade Center (Wheaton College, Ill.); Sayers, Dorothy L.—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center; Tolkien, J.R.R.—Archives—Marion E. Wade Center



TREASURE IN THE ARCHIVES: A CELEBRATION OF ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

LAURA SCHMIDT¹

IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO SPEAK ON A TOPIC so close to my heart: Archives and connecting people with the treasures they hold. Archives are collections of materials from the past, whether created yesterday, or hundreds of years ago. They include everything from original letters and diaries, to audio-visual materials, and even the occasional action figure. Whatever history creates, the fragments left behind have a chance to be stored “for posterity” in an archival repository somewhere. My co-guest of honor William Fliss² and I represent archives in the humanities, and specifically, literature collections with materials from authors who are appreciated by most of the people in this audience. When thinking about what insights we had to share with this group of fans and experts, we agreed that our perspective as archivists has a great deal to offer. I hope by the end of this talk you will see why.

I realize that some of you may know very little about archives, while others here may be archivists or librarians yourselves. I tried to provide something for everyone in this talk, and if you are a fellow caretaker of historic materials then I am counting on you to make sure I cover all the pertinent information!

Our goal today is to learn more about WHAT kinds of treasures archives contain, and WHY they matter. I will share specifics on *what* gems can be found in the collections of the Marion E. Wade Center, and archives in general. Then we will turn to the even more important question: *why* those treasures are so significant, and how archivists help people find that wealth, and make it relevant in today’s world.

WADE CENTER OVERVIEW AND HISTORY

Let’s begin our quest first at the Wade Center and its setting in a snug English stone cottage-looking building on the campus of Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL. The Wade welcomes around 10,000 visitors a year, and whether

¹ Saturday morning Guest of Honor Speech, Mythcon 48, Champaign IL, August 2017.

² See his Guest of Honor Speech in this issue.

you are writing a dissertation or are just there to see C.S. Lewis's wardrobe, we are thrilled to have you come.

The Wade Center was founded by Wheaton College English faculty member Dr. Clyde S. Kilby in 1965. Kilby was an admirer of the works of C.S. Lewis and wanted to create a collection of his books and papers, which later expanded to include six other authors who knew or influenced Lewis. The seven British authors we have in our collections are: Owen Barfield, G.K. Chesterton, C.S. Lewis, George MacDonald, Dorothy L. Sayers, J.R.R. Tolkien, and Charles Williams. Kilby traveled often to the United Kingdom, building relationships with the authors themselves or those who knew them, and today we have excellent print collections for all seven authors, and outstanding original document collections for Barfield, Lewis, Sayers, and Williams (letters, manuscripts, etc.).

We have a beautiful Reading Room, lined with wooden shelves and complete with a fireplace, where anyone is welcome to come and use our collections. There is also a small museum area that contains the desks of Lewis and Tolkien, and the Lewis Family Wardrobe, which C.S. Lewis played in as a child with his brother and cousins and was hand-carved by his grandfather. It stood in Lewis's childhood home in Ireland and was later moved to his home, The Kilns, in Oxford.

The mission of the Wade Center is: "To collect, preserve, and make available to the public all writings and other materials related to these seven authors." We do this in a variety of ways, including publications and public events, but for the purposes of this talk we will focus solely on its function as a special collections library and archives.

WADE CENTER COLLECTIONS OVERVIEW

The Wade Center's collections include:

- **Primary sources:** published and unpublished works *by* the seven authors, such as books, pamphlets, manuscripts, letters, and artwork
- **Secondary sources:** *about* or relating to the seven authors in the forms of books, articles, theses and dissertations, periodicals, oral history interviews, photographs, artwork, merchandise, and audio/visual collections
- **Anything else** relating to the seven authors (board games, action figures, jewelry, you name it!!)

Here are some statistics for the numerically inclined:

- 20,000+ Books
- 22,300+ Articles
- 27,000 Letters
- 1,600+ Manuscripts
- 350 Artwork pieces (both by and relating to the Wade authors and their works)
- 700+ Dissertations and Theses (written about the authors from all over the world)

The archival staff members at the Wade work hard to make exploration of and access to these materials possible for people around the world, and our catalog and collections listings are available on our website at www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/collections/collection-listings/.

There is also information on our website about how to plan a visit to the Wade, and I encourage anyone wanting to explore our collections to come. You do not need a research project in order to use the Wade's materials and can view them simply for personal interest if wished. Before you come you will want to check our hours and closure dates, review our online listings to determine what items you would like to see, and look over the guidelines for using our Reading Room. Archives work a bit differently from the public libraries most people are familiar with, so it's good to know these basics which we will talk more about later. There is a brief one-page application form to use the Wade Center's Reading Room (available both on-site and online), and while it is not mandatory, it is advised that you let the archival staff know about your visit plans so we can ensure the materials you want to see are available and ready for you. Archival staff can also provide information about local accommodations if you plan to stay overnight, etc.

But enough of the surface information, let's go treasure hunting!

INSIGHTS INTO THE WADE'S COLLECTIONS

For all seven of the Wade Center's authors, we have the following kinds of materials:

- **First British and American editions** of their works, and numerous other editions showing publishing history/bibliography. These editions are essential for bibliographers to consult, and for researchers looking at how the book design and textual content have changed over the years. Plus, who wouldn't want to see and hold a signed first edition of *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien from 1937?

- **Books they contributed to** as editor, illustrator, etc. The Wade authors produced a great number of works in this area with prefaces and introductions to books by others, illustrations, individual chapters, or served as an editor or translator. Tracking down all of Chesterton's contributions in this area has proved a challenge all by itself.
- **Adaptations** of their works (pop-up books, children's picture books, retellings, graphic novels, scripts of dramatizations, etc.). Timeless stories are always ripe for a good re-telling, and the Wade authors' tales are no exception. Children and adults alike are enchanted when I pull *The Chronicles of Narnia* pop-up book by Robert Sabuda off the shelf.
- **Translations** of their books into other languages. Works by the Wade authors have been translated into dozens of languages all over the world. *The Chronicles of Narnia* are approaching fifty language translations (if not already there), and the Wade just got *The Hobbit* in Hawaiian a few months ago thanks to a researcher who spotted it in Honolulu.
- **Signed copies** of their books. One of my favorites is a first edition copy of *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* inscribed "To Arthur Greeves" from "Jack Lewis" dated April 1951. Arthur was Lewis's childhood friend in Ireland and their friendship and correspondence lasted a lifetime.
- **Secondary books, articles, and theses** of scholarship, biography, and other topics on the lives and works of the authors. This section continues to swell with no signs of slowing down. It's fascinating to see new studies coming out all the time on the Wade authors' lives, works, and now even how they have impacted culture and media through the films based on their works.
- **Oral History interviews** with those who knew the authors. The Wade began this project under Director and historian Lyle W. Dorsett in the 1980s and has close to 90 interviews on sound and video recording. Many of those interviewed have passed on now, so what a wonderful resource of preserved memories and the actual voices of those sharing them! Come and listen to Owen Barfield share about his experiences growing up, or Fred Paxford describe what life was like living with the Lewis brothers at The Kilns.

In many ways, the "heart" of the Wade Center's holdings rests in the truly unique, irreplaceable materials we have in our book, letter, manuscript, and archives collections.

AUTHOR LIBRARIES

For all seven authors, we have books from their personal libraries, many of which include annotations. Not only can you see what titles were on their shelves, but the thoughts or insights they had as they read through them and marked the pages with underlining, questions, and notes. Some of the books even belonged to family members and have their notes too, like Joy Davidman's annotations in Lewis's *The Problem of Pain*.

Here are the numbers of volumes owned by the Wade that belonged to each of our authors, and complete listings of these titles are available on our website listings and in our catalog:

Name	Number of Personal Library Books at the Wade Center
Owen Barfield	200+
G.K. Chesterton	16
C.S. Lewis	2,400+
George MacDonald	40+
Dorothy L. Sayers	200+
J.R.R. Tolkien	14
Charles Williams	140+

Lewis's library is the largest of the author libraries at the Wade, and researchers come from all over to view it. It remains one of our most frequently used collections, as Lewis's book annotations contain largely unpublished material. A crowd favorite remains Lewis's copy of *Don Juan* and pointing out that he wrote the date he finished reading the book on the last page, February 10, 1924, with the emphatic words: "Never again!"

LETTERS

The Wade's letter collections for each author contain everything from family letters to business correspondence and fan mail. The numbers for each author's collection are shown here, with Sayers winning easily with an astounding 17,500 letters.

Name	Number of Letters at the Wade Center
Owen Barfield	800+
G.K. Chesterton	1,300+
C.S. Lewis	3,300+

George MacDonald	400+
Dorothy L. Sayers	17,500+
J.R.R. Tolkien	110
Charles Williams	3,200+

Sayers scholars are fortunate that most of her personal and business correspondence was kept and preserved over the years. Lewis was not a keeper, and while his letters sent to others were kept and cherished by those who received them, the majority of letters sent to him do not survive. The Wade has described each collection by item-level (letter by letter) in our online collection listings. The Williams letters collection will be the last one to receive this specialized description treatment and we hope to get started on that soon. The Sayers letter listing work was just recently completed and took the better part of over 20 years to itemize and catalog. Letters provide unique views into the daily lives of the authors and those in their communication circles. Preserving the originals also guarantees that the authoritative source content is never lost in the event that disputes on typos, misread dates, etc. arise.

MANUSCRIPTS

Manuscripts consist of handwritten or typed pre-published (or unpublished) versions of works by the Wade authors. Viewing the writing process through the physical pieces left behind and changes made along the way is an important area of scholarship. Sayers and Williams are in close contention when it comes to quantity of manuscripts at the Wade:

Name	Number of Manuscripts at the Wade Center
Owen Barfield	191
G.K. Chesterton	135
C.S. Lewis	210
George MacDonald	11
Dorothy L. Sayers	615
J.R.R. Tolkien	5
Charles Williams	508

It is edifying when the unpublished material remaining in these collections is carefully edited to be shared via publication with the larger public. Only one of the Wade authors, George MacDonald, is currently entirely in the public domain. In other cases, the Wade and scholars must work closely with the literary estates and executors for permissions to copy or publish manuscript materials.

ARCHIVES

Archives are collections of materials gathered by a certain individual (i.e. their personal papers) or institution (institutional records), or collected in relation to a specific topic (like the Tolkien Centenary celebration in 1992). They can be a few folders, or consist of hundreds of boxes of materials in varied formats (paper, audio-visual, 3D objects, etc.). As one of my graduate school professors told us, even your wallet is an archive. It's a collection of your stuff! Note also that the term "archives" can refer to the REPOSITORIES that hold archival collections, or describe the kinds of COLLECTIONS within an archival repository.

Here is the breakdown of the Wade's archival collection numbers by author:

Name	Number of Archival Collections at the Wade
Owen Barfield	5
G.K. Chesterton	4
C.S. Lewis	35
George MacDonald	2
Dorothy L. Sayers	33
J.R.R. Tolkien	4
Charles Williams	8

The Wade's archives are topically varied, and processed as unified collections when we deem it appropriate to keep a set of records together due to their common origin or topical association. Keeping such items together is itself a carrier of context and meaning that would be lost if they are dispersed. When such materials must be separated, the Wade will still often include notes like "item X was removed from this collection and can now be found in the book collection under call number Y."

Archivists play a crucial role when making these decisions on how to organize and describe collections. Their goal is to make the descriptions as

transparent as possible and provide researchers with the best access routes to the information they need. Those kinds of decisions are not easy, and as I tell the Wade Center student workers who help with archival project work: you must always have the researcher in mind when making choices. How would I want to see this described or listed if I couldn't see the physical documents right away? What do I think someone might find most important in this folder? How should I arrange this in an easy-to-understand way? We are like special effects artists. The better the job, the less likelihood that researchers will notice the work that lies behind the end product.

Listings of what each archive contains are called "finding aids." Finding aids also contain a great deal of information about the history of the collections, biographical information on their creators, how the archival staff organized each collection, and what other materials may be pertinent to a researcher's topic in the library's holdings.

One interesting archive at the Wade Center is the Stella Aldwinckle Papers. Aldwinckle served on the pastorate staff of Oxford University and formed the Socratic Club with C.S. Lewis where agnostics, atheists, and Christians could come together for rigorous, honest debates, allowing the arguments to lead where they would to whatever conclusions. The nine boxes that hold the Aldwinckle Papers have a great deal more material than just the Socratic Club documents, however. They trace Stella's life and career through her other ministries, correspondence, and personal areas of interest. This collection represents Stella Aldwinckle as a whole person, which is why it is essential to keep the materials together rather than simply segregate the Socratic Club content due to its direct connection with our author of interest: C.S. Lewis. While working with the Aldwinckle Papers, I got to "know" Stella well as I organized and described her correspondence, copious notes, and ministry materials. Our archival listings are now in an interactive format, which makes it easier to see an overview of each collection and then navigate to different sections of the finding aid through hyperlinks and hierarchical listings. The finding aid information is managed in a platform called Archon (archon.wheaton.edu), which was actually developed right here at the University of Illinois.

OTHER ARCHIVES

The materials in archives and libraries have great stories to tell and people to connect with for anyone willing to listen and learn. And they are everywhere: in almost every town and library you will find some kind of archival collection preserving history and the lives therein. In addition to the Wade Center, here are some other repositories with collections relating to the Wade authors:

- Azusa Pacific University, Azusa, CA
- The British Library, London
- Chesterton Study Centre, England
- Center for the Study of C.S. Lewis & Friends, Taylor University, Upland, IN
- Bodleian Library, Oxford
- Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT
- Brander Library, Huntly, Scotland
- The Dorothy L. Sayers Centre, Witham Library, Witham, England
- Special Collections, Raynor Memorial Libraries, Marquette University, Milwaukee, WI

For even more, see our website: www.wheaton.edu/academics/academic-centers/wadecenter/authors/.

WHY DO ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS MAKE THE WORLD RICHER?

Now we are going to switch gears from “what” to “why.” We have answered the question of *what* archives contain, but perhaps an even more vital question is *why* the materials stored in archives are important; how do they impact the world and tangibly enhance it? Materials are preserved, after all, to be *utilized*. If archival collections remain unused, then the information they hold may as well be lost.

✎ AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES

One of the main benefits archives serve is the retention of authoritative, primary sources that can be used to verify all future reproductions, quotations, and publications. Even when documents are carefully transcribed, typos, mistakes, and misreadings can occur when they appear in their published form. Handwritten historical documents can be especially difficult to decipher, and it can take several people working to get the job done successfully, sometimes requiring years of time and patience. There are times in the *History of Middle-earth* series when even Christopher Tolkien has to give up and call his father’s handwriting “indecipherable.” Continued republication of texts can also introduce new errors with each print cycle.

Having the original source material accessible in a library or archives setting ensures that future scholars will have the ability to prove and refer back to what was originally written. At the Wade Center, it is not uncommon for errors in letter dating to be discovered in a published volume versus what is written on the original letter in our collections. So in this way, archives help us see what is actual gold, and what is “fool’s gold” parading as the real deal.

In the opening notes on the text of the *Lord of the Rings 50th Anniversary Edition*, Douglas A. Anderson, Wayne Hammond, and Christina Scull describe the web of errors that had occurred over the years as *The Lord of the Rings* was republished, re-typeset, and made its journey into the world of digital text (xviii). They state that in preparation for the 50th anniversary edition, between three and four hundred emendations were made, not only by reviewing past editions, but also by their close reading of proof copy revisions and the *original manuscripts* kept by the good folks at Marquette University. Thank you, Bill!

✿ PROXIMITY

The next way archives benefit the world is by gathering similar materials together, enabling a proximity of like materials that otherwise could not exist. Imagine approaching a huge cavern full of treasure and being asked to find only the red gems that are cut in a certain shape. All of them. You begin to despair when you are told that this is one of many caverns, none of which are guaranteed to have the kind of gems you need, and you will have to travel to each one on a journey covering hundreds of miles. That is when the quest gets really impossible.

Archives that are doing their job well will have something called a “collection development policy” which dictates what kinds of materials they are going to try and collect, narrowing the scope of what items they will allow into their repository. Ideally, you won’t have any two archives with exactly the same collection development policy, but where there is overlap it benefits them to be in good communication on what each one has to best help scholars know where to go and what they will find.

In addition to such policies, archives also spend a great deal of effort organizing and describing their collections into finding aids, databases, catalog records, and other finding tools. Those search boxes you use every day online do not just magically appear, believe it or not, but are carefully crafted by folks who care about helping you find what you need. So fear not, dear treasure seekers: you do not need to travel to caverns over hundreds of miles with no hope in your search. Start with your computer and you can limit it down to which caverns are essential to visit, and even which portions of the caverns are most likely to have the gems you want. Keep in mind though that archives, like all good treasure quests, do require some effort and *digging*.

✿ MEANING

A third way that archives benefit the world is by providing the opportunity for meaning and sense-making through engaging with their materials. This can take an intangible form such as someone tearing up when they first hold an original letter by C.S. Lewis, or catching their breath when

they get to read a Lord Peter Wimsey mystery in the dramatic penmanship of Dorothy L. Sayers herself. It can also be more practical in making connections between vaguely-formed ideas and real solutions when analyzing the materials archives hold. Once you have dug through the books, mined the articles, read the original letters, and combed the manuscript files, your thoughts can't help but be transported to new directions, possibilities, and plausible applications with your new-found insights. This is a life stream bringing currents of change in academia, in helping communities; perhaps even transforming *you* in new ways and how you see the world. In turn, we get new art, new history, new writings that carry meaning by those who were inspired by what came before. It is a continual, beautiful, cycle of health, growth, and learning that society depends upon to be fully *alive* and well.

What would Lewis and Tolkien have written had they been denied access to Norse and Greek myths and Anglo-Saxon poetry? What would Lin-Manuel Miranda be doing today if he hadn't sat down to read a biography of Alexander Hamilton a few years ago (written by an author who had hunted through archives and libraries for his book's content), and how will our society's engagement with American history change in the future because he did? These are the questions that must be asked when we try to understand the role that archives play in our world.

HOW ARCHIVISTS HELP: RANGERS AND DRAGONS

As we have already seen, a researcher's journey needs archives and libraries in order to find treasure, but the process of hunting and reading treasure maps can be challenging without a little help. We will turn now to looking at how archivists can help researchers in their quests, and because this is the Mythopoeic Society we will compare archivists to "rangers" and "dragons."

There are many reasons that bring researchers to archives. They might be trying to gain more historical context in a certain area, prove a hypothesis, understand a historical figure or communities better, develop certain areas in a needed field of study, or even get insight for themselves or others in personal areas of the intellect, heart, and spirit. As I have heard over the years from researchers, these quests can be hard, time-consuming, and lonely.

🗝 ARCHIVISTS AS RANGERS

Archivists can serve in this context as "rangers" to come alongside and help researchers. They are on the front lines making those handy guides and databases I keep mentioning that point out resources to researchers just like treasure maps. They work with materials in their collections constantly and can give advice on the most likely places to find pertinent information. They know

where the *athelas* grows and can take you to it, my friends. Many archivists are also dedicated educators who work with teachers and students from elementary to graduate school levels, and help them connect their course materials with original documents and historical collections. Teaching is a big part of our job as we are always at the ready to help patrons navigate archival resources. Archivists are also the memory keepers, having worked closely with their collections sometimes for many years and seeing the wealth of information these records contain. One of my graduate school professors said that when you work in libraries and archives “facts stick to you like Velcro.” It’s true. That memory, we are convinced, needs to be shared with the world. Indiana Jones’s passionate phrase “it belongs in a museum” is our battle cry, too, so that these valuable collections and the information they hold belong to the world and not just a limited audience (*Raiders*).

Archivists also work hard to understand and incorporate the researcher’s point of view in patron communication and collection organization. We want to know what your questions are and how to connect you to materials that will provide answers. I think that researchers will truly benefit if they try to meet archivists in the middle and learn more about how archives work too.

In our “ranger mode,” the Wade archival staff has had a wide variety of experiences. We have had the pleasure of working with researchers from the following countries (not including email correspondence): United Kingdom, Canada, France, Germany, Argentina, South Africa, China, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Finland, Russia, Czech Republic, and South Korea. Wade staff has helped those working on articles, presentations, books, theses, and dissertations. We have provided photo loans to publishers needing photos of our authors, and original materials to be filmed for documentaries and the like. We have been interviewed for radio, film, and television to give insight into the Wade and the authors we collect. We have given guidance on copyright questions, developed new tools and resources over the years to better serve our patrons, and given presentations to thousands of students and visitors on the lives and works of our authors. It is gratifying work that keeps me on my toes and always brings new experiences.

Additional examples from the Wade just from this summer include:

- Coordinating upcoming **researcher visits** from: Texas, Missouri, Michigan, California, Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Canada, and locally in Illinois.
- Hosting a “**Tolkien and Lewis**” class of 27 Wheaton College students preparing to give walking tours to author-related locations on their summer trip to the UK.

- Helping someone at the Oxford Center for Christian Apologetics chase down remaining **citation information for a dissertation**. We have helped this researcher for several years.
- Assisting a teacher in Ohio **brainstorm ideas for his Lewis and Philosophy course**, and aiding him in locating resources relating to philosopher B.F. Skinner.
- **Verifying Lewis's signature** (along with three other Lewis scholars and Oxford University) and discovering a 2nd "C.S. Lewis" at Oxford (St. John's College): Clifford Stanley Lewis, killed in World War I in September 1916.

🐉 ARCHIVISTS AS DRAGONS

In addition to the "ranger" role of archivists, we can also be "dragon" protectors of our materials. Now before we all jump to visions of Smaug, let me encourage you to replace that image with friendlier dragons like Toothless, Puff, or Pete's dragon Elliot. Perhaps some of you have met Smaug-like archivists before, and if that is the case you have my sympathy. But let's consider how (kind) treasure-protector dragons can function in good ways too.

Original materials need to be handled carefully if they are going to last for future generations. Archivists spend a lot of mental energy ensuring that collections are handled with care when they are in use, protected from theft, and are stored in ways that will help them last longer. At the Wade, careful handling includes usage guidelines in the reading room like using pencil rather than pen for note-taking, leaving food and beverages outside, storing bags and purses, and checking folders out from the desk one at a time.

I have been asked before and can indeed confirm the sad truth that Gandalf's drinking, smoking, tossing pages around, and use of open flame in the Minas Tirith archives would definitely be frowned upon. The Bodleian Library in Oxford actually still has a "no-flame" clause in their usage policies stating:

I hereby undertake not to remove from the Library, or to mark, deface, or injure in any way, any volume, document, or other object belonging to it or in its custody; not to bring into the Library or kindle therein any fire or flame, and not to smoke in the Library; and I promise to obey all rules of the Library. ("Library Regulations," Bodleian website)

Climate-controlled secure spaces that are free from mold, pests, and damaging light are also essential to extending the life of collections. Archival materials are stored in enclosures (like acid free boxes and folders) that support their preservation. Storage areas have to be ready to protect from fire, water,

and natural disasters too, and archivists are in the heat of the battle to protect the materials in their care from these potential problems, often with scant funding and resources on their side.

At the Wade, we keep our storage areas at 62-66 degrees Fahrenheit year-round with a relative humidity of 45%. We have a state-of-the-art fire suppression system that uses inert gas rather than water so materials stay dry in the event of a fire, which reduces the risk of water damage and mold. We have alarms for security, water, fire, temperature, and power, and can be notified at any time of the day or night to make sure our materials stay safe.

There is also a balance between the owners of collections (donors, copyright holders, institutions) and the researchers who wish to use the collections. The archivist often serves as a mediator between these two parties, and serving both is not easy, but it is essential. Once again “seeing things from the other side’s perspective” is often helpful when explaining to copyright holders why researchers need access to materials, while also describing why the owner wishes to be informed of the use and assured that it is for good purpose. “If these were your grandfather’s letters, how would you feel?” is a line I have used before.

And like any hoard, treasure needs to be gathered and sorted. As each new collection arrives, archivists see their future pass before their eyes of the days, weeks, months, and sometimes years it will take to organize materials and make them available to the public. Taking chaos and transforming it into discernable order does indeed require patience and a dose of magic. A dragon’s lifespan over hundreds of years wouldn’t hurt either.

THE RESPONSIBILITY AND THE HONOR

When I first took the job as Wade Center Archivist, I was a bit intimidated, to say the least, at the amount of responsibility I was about to take on preserving the original works of the authors I esteemed the most . . . for posterity. It’s a life change. It might as well include something akin to a Hippocratic oath. And the thing is, almost all archivists feel this way about their collections, even if their personal attachment to the content of the materials is not as strong as the example of mine with the works of the Wade authors. The job is a duty, assuming a mantle, and we all feel that weight and take it seriously. The Society of American Archivists does have a code of ethics that all archivists are to embrace as the core practices of our profession—look it up if you are interested (“SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,” SAA website).

What I have come to see over the years though is that while the responsibility remains real, it is also an incredible honor to serve these collections and those who use them. I get to see how the materials “come alive” and meet real needs as patrons interact with them. I am reminded as I work with

these materials that they were created by real people and I am handling *lives* rather than just pieces of paper and bits of data. I am thankful that I get to help people access and explore works that have changed my life personally in deep, transformative ways. And one of the biggest takeaways is how small I am with my little knowledge amongst the realm of information I curate each day.

A wise person once told me that as we grow in knowledge we are like concentric circles; each new step forms a larger circle surrounding our previous areas of knowledge. A fool looks to the center and thinks “how great is my knowledge and all the space it fills.” A wise man looks outside of his circle and says “how small I am and how much there is to know beyond where I sit now.” Think of it like the solar system. As we sit on earth we can either look towards the sun and our own neighbor planets, or we can look outside to the size and grandeur of the universe beyond ourselves. One cannot help but see the breadth of knowledge when you work in archives and libraries. It’s humbling, and inspiring. And to paraphrase C.S. Lewis in chapter 16 of *Perelandra*, as we stand in awe of what is beyond us we can at the same time also take comfort in our smallness (197).

In summary, “why” archival institutions are important boils down to two main points:

1. Supporting our cultural institutions (like archives and libraries) is vital to the health and well-being of society, and in maintaining treasures that once lost are gone forever.
2. Whether for research or pleasure, archives have something for YOU and now you have context for your next quest that leads you there.

Are you ready to go treasure hunting?

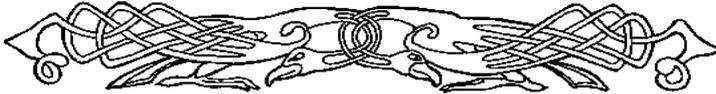
WORKS CITED

- Byron, George Gordon. *Don Juan*. J. Murray, 1906. (owned by C.S. Lewis)
- Lewis, C.S. *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. Geoffrey Bles, 1950.
- . *Perelandra*. Macmillan, 1968.
- “Library Regulations.” *Bodleian Libraries, University of Oxford*, www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/about/policies/regulations. Accessed 11 August 2017.
- Raiders of the Lost Ark*. (Indiana Jones) Directed by Steven Spielberg, performances by Harrison Ford, Karen Allen, and Paul Freeman, Paramount Pictures, Lucasfilm, 1981.
- “SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics.” *Society of American Archivists*, www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics. Accessed 11 August 2017.
- Sabuda, Robert. *The Chronicles of Narnia*. (pop-up book) HarperCollins, 2007.
- Tolkien, J.R.R. *The Hobbit*. George Allen & Unwin, 1937.

- *The Hobbit*. Hawaiian edition, Translated by R. Keao NeSmith, Evertime, 2015.
(available at: <http://www.evertime.com/books/hopita.html>)
- *The Lord of the Rings 50th Anniversary Edition*. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

LAURA SCHMIDT graduated with a BA in English literature and history from Wheaton College in 2003, and a master's degree in archives and records management from the University of Michigan's School of Information in 2005. The degree she values most highly however might be the Doctor of Hobbit Letters (DhL) she received from the American Tolkien Society in 2003. She has served as archivist for twelve years at the Marion E. Wade Center at Wheaton College, and also volunteers as the historian at a local historical society and as a church librarian. She is the author of *Using Archives: A Guide to Effective Research* (Society of American Archivists, 2011), and has spoken extensively on the Wade Center and its seven authors over the years.



Mythopoeic Society Memberships

Regular annual membership is available with print or electronic *Mythprint*.

One year with electronic <i>Mythprint</i> in PDF format:	\$12.00
One year with <i>Mythprint</i> mailed (USA):	\$25.00
One year with <i>Mythprint</i> mailed (Canada/Mexico):	\$32.00
One year with <i>Mythprint</i> mailed (Rest of world):	\$41.00
Additional members at same address:	\$5.00

Life membership in the Society is non-transferrable and includes the Society's quarterly review magazine, *Mythprint*, in whatever format it is published, or in the member's choice of format if multiple formats are available.

Shipping location/Age:	Under 50	50-59	60+
USA	\$400	\$300	\$200
Canada/Mexico	\$540	\$405	\$270
Rest of World	\$720	\$540	\$360

Lifetime memberships can be purchased for additional people in the same household. The price for the primary membership for the household is based on the age of the youngest member:

Age of additional member	Under 50	50-59	60+
Additional membership:	\$100	\$75	\$50

<http://www.mythsoc.org/join/>