

**SOURCE: Student Organization for Unique and Rare Collections Everywhere**

Society of American Archivists Student Chapter

Minutes for September 22, 2025, 6 pm Meeting

Contacts: rutgers.source@gmail.com

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**Attendees:**

Ryan Mulligan

Keli Ganey (speaker)

Ashli Aaron

Jillie Fisch

Aaliyah Muhammad

Valentina Ardil

Carson Shilts

Alana Costello

Mitali Abhay

Pranav Reddy

Gabrielle Igotis

Suruthe Prabaker

Emilie Puja

Yaritza Santana

Krystina Matos

Tristan Smith

Michael Pinnella

Adriana Bordonaro

Eileen Hallman

Website: <https://sites.comminfo.rutgers.edu/source/>

Topic: SOURCE September 2025 Meeting

Time: Sep 22, 2025 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://rutgers.zoom.us/j/2793569401?pwd=fTabsW7m6ZXxL0Lb2loGrPVoageQEY.1&omn=99097183556>

## **Restoring History by the Ton with Keli Ganey**

Introduction: Keli graduated with BA in History, specializing in public history and digital public humanities from Messiah University. Internship with Pennsylvania State House of Representatives was formative.

Preservation: Keli is Archivist of Paper, works with 2 other archivists who handle the trains and objects. Some objects require additional security. State does not pay for train repairs. Some employees are state employees. Restoration and preservation employees are paid by Historical Society.

Collections used to take up two closets. Now there is a repository room with storage and desks for workers. There is also an Archives Annex for additional paper collection storage. Map boxes contain 50-200 maps and are still being cataloged. Drawings are in process of being digitized. We make a lot of our own boxes

Restoring the Metal Giants of the Past:

Senior Curator and Locomotive Specialist

“We are in the forever business”

We aim for state when train was retired, not brand new, not to runnable condition. We try to prevent rust so the locomotives can last. We don't use reproductions. Trains come with asbestos and mold and must be treated for safety of museum visitors and staff. 2 employees on restoration staff and some work done by volunteer metal workers.

Digital Archives & Accessibility: This is my responsibility. We have two databases, one we make for archives, and a state database for object records tracking provenance. 20,000 new records every year, mostly done by volunteers. PA is working on a state database for combined collections. The museum's mission is to digitize the entirety of

our collection. We use SilverFast 8 as our scanning software. We use DB TextWorks for our custom database. People are searching by railroad and material type, not by donors or author name. Text searches parses all metadata fields, not just titles or names. Search results include embedded images with museum watermarks.

Our mission: Preserve, Interpret, Collect, Display, Educate the Public

Q+A:

Why are they called snake boxes? **Because they are long and maps are rolled into thin coils.**

Is this the first archive where you custom-made boxes? **No, I had to at other archive jobs. First was to make boxes for books with redrot.**

It seems like you have a wide scope (impact of industry, individual history, area railroad history)? How do you determine whether something is within the museum's domain? Do you have any interesting examples or case studies?

My question is: what is your favorite thing about your job?

**Telling stories**

I was wondering if you have a favorite item in the collection? :)

**John Singer Sargaent Portrait**

Tell us more about women's history on trains. And, about reading on trains, if that came up so far (railway novels).

**Many women stepped up in WW2-related labor shortage. Their stories were not as well preserved**

Are all the materials obtained through donation or does the museum ever purchase materials from private collectors?

**Mostly donation but initial collection was purchased from Amtrak/Conrail auction**

How is the decline of freight rail depicted in museum displays? Is there a cut-off year or do you have objects from currently operating freight companies?

**Our sections are organized by locomotive-steam to diesel to electric. We have a modern cab simulator. Most recent locomotive are from 90s/early aughts**

Do you feel your interest in train history has grown since working in this position, or does your passion lay more in dealing with collections? Furthermore do you think you need to be an expert in the certain topic of collections that you are working in to work effectively within the collection?

**I had no experience with trains before job but have come to appreciate them. Don't be an expert, you need to learn when you arrive.**

Are there any other overlaps with military, social, business, labor history, etc., at the museum?

**Yes. As part of PHMC (Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission), we borrowed objects from military museums.**

As an affiliated institution with the Smithsonian and a subsidiary of the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, what are your thoughts on museums that have the backing of large-scale, state/nationally funded organizations?

**It's a catch 22. People think we have the resources for everything and we don't. If you can't get a state job, start with historical society.**

**We pay for our Smithsonian affiliation. It is easier to get loans because of our membership. We get good and bad press because of our affiliation.**