

SAADA Video #1

Ayshea Khan

Asian American Community Archivist,
Austin History Center

- ◀ SAADA First Days Reporter
- ◀ SAADA Metadata Working Group Member
- ◀ Archives Collective Co-Chair





**WHY
VOLUNTEER?**

“

“Candidates must prove that they want it enough, prove that they are ‘the best’, where ‘the best’ sometimes just means the most willing and able to work for free”

-Cate Hudson, We Hire the Best

VOLUNTEERING WITH SAADA

- ▶ The ability to see my identity reflected in the archival work
- ▶ Opportunity to become part of a **community** invested in South Asian American stories
- ▶ Working with other people of color
- ▶ Flexible time commitment and scheduling



[👤 About the Team](#)[👤 Join the Team](#)

Bureau Chief

100+ stories

Senior Correspondent

50+ stories

Correspondent

25+ stories

Senior Reporter

10+ stories

Reporter

3+ stories



Hi, I'm Ayshea Khan.

Reporter | ★ x 4

Ayshea Khan is currently a MSIS Candidate at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Information. She is actively pursuing a career in archives and preservation, focusing on audiovisual preservation, digital archives, and collection accessibility and outreach. She holds a B.S. in Cinema & Photography from Ithaca College and her work as a cinematographer has screened at film festivals nationwide. She currently works with Austin youth as an Austin Film Society Filmmaking Mentor and enjoys volunteering her time with the Texas Archive of the Moving Image and the American Genre Film Archive.

Interviews

1. [Moravia de la O](#) 2. [Aslihan Akkan](#) 3. [Vanessa N](#) 4. [Shwetha Mallya](#)



Hi, I'm Indrani Saha.

Reporter | ★ x 4

Indrani Saha is a junior and Mellon Mays Fellow at Duke University pursuing a self-designed major in Cognitive Aesthetics. She interned with the South Asian American Digital Archive in Fall of 2012 where she documented the stories of three South Asian American artists in Michigan and curated an exhibit of their works. She also contributed to the First Days Project by sharing her family friends' initial experiences in the United States. The project has encouraged Indrani to continuously learn about and engage with the histories of those around her.

Interviews



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The Metadata Working Group

The value and barriers of decentralized
post-graduation volunteer work



What did we do?

- ◀ **Goal:** To create a DACS-aligned metadata schema that still met the needs of describing South Asian materials and prioritized use accessibility
- ◀ Hour meetings once a week
- ◀ Drafted a Metadata Guidelines, Designed New UI for online viewing, began converting Collection & Item Level Description pages.
- ◀ Created Form Submission Workflow for Describing Future Collections



Tools Used

- ◀ Google Hangouts and Conference Calling
- ◀ Google Team Drive, Google Suite (including Google Forms)
- ◀ Slack
- ◀ Platforms Tried: Atlassian JIRA wiki, Trello





Successes as a Volunteer

- ▶ New professional opportunities and questions
(how do we describe south asian materials?)
- ▶ Addressing/Learning archival description across
information silos and spaces

(perspectives from archives, libraries, taxonomy;
different geographic location)
- ▶ Again, building a community of care and support



Challenges

- ▶ Schedule Coordination
 - ▶ Lack of Face Time
 - ▶ Finding the Right Web-Based Project Management System
 - ▶ Burnout & Keeping Momentum
- 



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Recommendations

Lessons learned from volunteering with
community archives






Building a Volunteer Community

- ◀ Flexibility
 - ◀ Regular Check-Ins & Open Dialogues
 - ◀ Mentorship and Professional Opportunities
 - ◀ Periodic Acknowledgement of Volunteer Labor
- 



Advocating for your free labor

- ▶ Working for free is still valid work experience
 - ▶ A low salary history does not imply lack of or a lower level of work experience
 - ▶ Request specific job titles as opposed to “volunteer” or “intern” (ie. reporter/oral historian, processing or digitization assistant), metadata consultant
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Advocating for Funding Community-Based Archives

- ◀ What are the implications of relying solely on underpaid and volunteer labor?
- ◀ Breaking the cycle of job creep/always expecting to do more with the same set of resources
- ◀ Allow funding for operations and admin-related resources -- building in equitable salaries

Thank You!

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