

Making History

Three east-side women have carved out unique professional specialties preserving the past for individuals and organizations



By Nadine Goff



Sally Jacobs says people often feel overwhelmed by the number of photographs they've amassed. The feeling kills motivation, making it difficult to begin organizing and preserving important collections. A professional archivist, Jacobs has some unexpected advice: When in doubt, throw it out. Using some practical guidelines, Jacobs helps her clients sift and winnow their collections and provides technical assistance in areas such as how to scan old photos to preserve and share them with current and future generations.

Anita Hecht, an oral and personal historian who has worked with a wide range of clients throughout the world, preserves personal, family, business and organizational histories in print and digital formats as well as audio and video. When she speaks to groups about her work, she often asks if they have written a will.

"Most people will say they have a will, but when I ask how many have recorded a life history, very few people raise their hands," she says. "Why are we much more concerned with material possessions than memories?"



One of Hecht's latest projects is creating and preserving important new documentation about the career of the late U.S. Senator William Proxmire for the Wisconsin Historical Society, which hired her to conduct oral history interviews with Proxmire's friends, family and colleagues.

Sarah White also provides history services for individuals, families, businesses and communities, including memoir-writing workshops and book development and production. As an offshoot of her strong interest in preserving local history, White became one of the organizers of the East Side History Club, a project affiliated with the Goodman Community Center. "The club gathers memories from past and present east-side residents for sharing through publications and programs," says White.

Recently, with the assistance of Pat Martin and Ann Waidelich, White edited “An East Side Album,” a large softbound book full of shared memories, old photographs and delicious recipes.

Jacobs Archival Services (Sally Jacobs)

<http://practicalarchivist.com>

The Practical Archivist (Jacobs’ blog with lots of helpful information)

<http://practicalarchivist.blogspot.com>

Life History Services (Anita Hecht)

<http://www.lifehistoryservices.com>

Sarah White

<http://www.whitesarah.com>

East Side History Club blog

<http://eastsidehistory.wordpress.com>

A freelance writer and information architect, Nadine Goff is working to preserve the history of Madison Central High School (1854–1969) at madisonchshistory.blogspot.com.

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