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Nora Lewis oversees the archives of the Georgia Historical Society

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By Clark Byron

Name: Nora E. Lewis

Age: 36

Occupation: Director of library and archives, Georgia Historical Society, Savannah.

"I oversee the daily and long-term operations of the library and archives. I oversee the library staff and grant projects management. I also participate in the daily functions of the library ... work at the reference desk, catalog books, work with archival material, work with donors to bring new material into the library, with exhibits and a whole laundry list of other things."

Family: Son, 2½ years old

How she got started: "Many years ago, I started volunteering in public libraries to see if I would be interested in this as a career path, and I was. After I volunteered, I became employed at a public library.

"In 2003, when I was casting the net for employment, I ended up here at the Georgia Historical Society. I started here as a manuscript archivist and worked my way up to director."

Educational background: Master's degree in library and information science with a concentration in archival management from the University of Pittsburgh

Favorite part of Georgia history: "I enjoy learning about the everyday person. A lot of materials we have in our collection are related to (things like) the diary of somebody's grandfather or letters from somebody's great, great grandmother, photography that was done by local studio photographers, just everyday activities. It's fun to learn how everyday people lived and functioned."

First job: "When I was about 15, I worked in a local movie theater at the concession stand for minimum wage - I think it was \$3.75 an hour."

Job skills needed: Project management skills, comfort with technology, learning about disaster preparedness for the preservation of the archival materials.

Job perks: "I get to do a little traveling around the state doing consultations and presentations. We do outreach to smaller organizations. We also bring in some fairly well-known individuals for our programming and for our annual gala. Also, working in a public setting, you get to meet a lot of interesting people that come in off the street."

Drawbacks: "Because we are a small nonprofit and always struggle with funding, that can be an issue in terms of either personnel or workload."

Advice: "If there is something that you want to achieve and it seems like it's really far away and maybe that's discouraging, the most important thing to do is, there is a way to get anything done, so set a plan and just execute the plan step by step. No dream is impossible."

Professional Organizations: Coastal Museum Association, Savannah Heritage Emergency Response (archival preparedness and recovery), Society of Georgia Archivists, and Society of American Archivists

Contact: Georgia Historical Society main office at 912-651-2125.