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SPECIAL EDITION

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Documents from the New York State Archives

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# Meet Brian Keough-the New York State Archivist



Archie and Maia with Brian Keough, New York State Archivist

Archie the JR! Archivist, and his friend Maia, recently sat down with the New York State Archivist, Mr. Brian Keough at the New York State Archives in Albany to learn more about his work.

**Maia: First of all, what is an Archivist?**

**Mr. Keough:** Well, being an Archivist is a big job. We work with records. Records are things like documents, maps, films, photographs even computer files. The archivists that work here at the New York State Archives have five main responsibilities. First off, we preserve records so it's our job to find the best records and make sure the records will last for a long time. Second, we organize the records in a way that helps people understand them and often records are organized by a person, by a family, or by an organization. Third we describe the records in a way that researchers can find them, and we provide access to researchers who come here to the Archives. We also manage the records of our archives, keeping track of things that we have, and deciding which things to add both in the building and to our website online.

**Maia: Wow! That sounds like a lot. What made you want to become an Archivist?**

**Mr. Keough:** When I was a kid, and it was cold outside, I would go to the library a lot. I would read biographies. I loved learning and reading about new things. In history there's always something new to learn. I also enjoy holding original documents which many are one-of-a-kind, rare documents and it's just the best thing to experience.

**Maia: You must love being an Archivist! What is your favorite record in the New York State Archives collection?**

**Mr. Keough:** That's a great question! We hold the records of the Dutch Colony of New Netherland that goes back to the early 1600s. New Netherland encompassed parts of New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, and New York City, which during that time was called New Amsterdam. We have all the records of the government functions of the colonial government and their interaction with indigenous communities such as the Mohawk, Mohicans, and other indigenous groups that were living around New Amsterdam prior to the Dutch coming here. That period of the early 1600s is an interesting time because there's a lot of different people and communities that are living here and interacting together.

**Maia: Wow! How many records are there in the New York State Archives?**

**Mr. Keough:** There are over 270 million records.

**Maia: How can students like me see the records that are kept in the archives?**

**Mr. Keough:** You can go online to our site [considerthesourceny.org](http://considerthesourceny.org). There are actual documents that have been scanned from the archives and you can view them freely online anytime that you're interested.



In history  
there's always  
something  
new to learn!

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Maia:** Can you tell us a bit a little bit more on how you could save records to last that long?

**Mr. Keough:** Sure! All historical records are precious. When they deteriorate, they become brittle. Photographs fade, book bindings deteriorate and fall apart. One of the most important things is keeping records in a controlled environment or in a storage facility. Even if we kept the records in a room that was cooler and stable, those temperature and humidity controls are very important to the longevity, the long-lasting nature, of the records because we want to keep these for many, many hundreds of years. Other things like exposure to light and obviously we don't want records to get wet. We have fire suppression and fire alarm systems, so the records do not catch fire. All of these kinds of things that we do; temperature and humidity control, avoiding light and keeping them in boxes that are not made of any toxic chemicals help preserve the records for long periods of time.

**Maia:** How does someone become an archivist?

**Mr. Keough:** Archivists need special knowledge. They need special sorts of education beyond the high school level, and a college education and Master's degrees in fields like Library Science, History, Political Science and Public Administration. Many people work in the field for a while and also have PhD's in history or other related fields, so it's important to get your college degree in a related field to become an Archivist. While you're in college get an internship, or get some kind of job in an archive, so you can gain some valuable experience.

**Maia:** This is all so interesting! Is the New York State Archives the only archives in New York State?

**Mr. Keough:** No! There are different types of archives throughout the state. There are places like historical societies, that tell the history of your local town or your local city or county. There are many religious institutions that keep record of their memberships going back hundreds of years. One of the oldest churches in the region is the Dutch Reformed Church. You also have have archives that collect records on a particular subject, or a period of time, or certain business activities so there are all different types of archives, large and small.

**Maia:** That's great, people all over New York State can visit archives to learn more about the past.

**Mr. Keough:** Yes! And you can become an archivist on your own! You can develop your own personal archive where you collect documents, photographs, other records, that tell the story of your family.

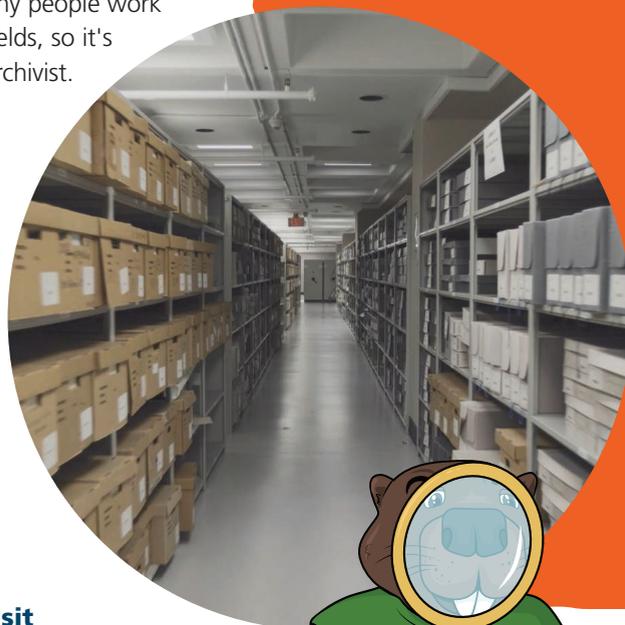
**Maia:** That sounds like fun! Thank you so much for letting us have the time to talk to with you today, Mr. Keough, we learned a lot!

**Mr. Keough:** Thank you, Maia.



Watch the video of the interview here: [youtu.be/hfli3EliVfo](https://youtu.be/hfli3EliVfo)

There are over 270 million records!



## Learning Activity

### Become a *Jr!* Archivist—Create your personal archives!

**You can be a *Jr!* archivist!** Everyone has a story to tell. The documents and artifacts of our lives tell our stories. Start by creating your own archives—a collection of things that tell us about you! Archie has his own archives. He selected things that are important to him. He has his fishing pole, because he loves to go fishing. He has a Certificate of Completion from his Lodge Building class, a report card, his diary, swim cap and goggles, a school report he is really proud of, and his banjo.



**In the space below, list the items you would put in your personal archives.** Think about what is important to you. What documents or objects would help other people learn more about you? Why?

**Create a display at home of your archive items, or draw a picture of them.** Add a sentence or two about why each item is important to you.