

**Society of American Archivists
Picture This! Contest Submission**

Astonishing Idea

LAURA UGLEAN JACKSON, Assistant Archivist
American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming

Travel provides people the opportunity to explore cultural institutions, such as museums and historic sites, in a relaxed frame of mind. I love to travel, and wherever I go there is always a group of people getting on and off a bus to go to their next destination. For the Society of American Archivists' Astonishing Idea Contest, I propose a bus tour that would take senior citizens to several archives in one region. Through this unique experience, participants would learn that archives are welcoming and comfortable places to visit, do research, and relive the past.

Passengers would board the bus together in a designated town and go from one repository to the next. Once at a repository, the group would spend most of the day learning about the institution. Activities could include tours of the stacks, speakers and lecturers, a "how to" for archives research, or even free time to conduct research. Each repository would plan activities appropriate to their mission, collections, and resources, including offering lunch or having a wine and cheese reception in the evening. The length of the tour would depend on the number of repositories involved and the distance between each place. Hotels, meals, and other stops, such as historic sites, would be planned in advance to meet the needs of a senior group.

Because this outreach effort involves a considerable amount of planning, participating repositories would need to collaborate and divide tasks equally. Staff would need to work together to create a comprehensive itinerary, book accommodations, plan convenient meals, and charter a bus. Advertising for the event could be done through local senior centers, AARP, libraries and archives, and local newspapers. Despite the amount of preparation involved, if archives pooled their resources and began planning early in the year, having a bus tour in October would be entirely feasible. After all, cultural heritage institutions worldwide do this everyday. Travelers would pay for accommodations, meals, and transportation like they would when booking any other all-inclusive trip.

A bus tour to multiple repositories is one way for seniors to get a sense of their region's unique cultural assets. It provides seniors with a relaxing and fun way to learn about archives and get excited about records, whether in doing their own research or recognizing that their papers and family history materials may make a valuable addition to an archives. Reaching out to a community that is often overlooked in American society, such as the elderly population, projects a positive image on archives because it demonstrates that archives are available to all people; you need not be a scholar or member of an institution to feel comfortable visiting archives in your region.