



News

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Smithsonian Libraries and Archives Names Wesley Chenault Associate Director for Strategic Initiatives and Programs

Wesley Chenault has been appointed Associate Director for Strategic Initiatives and Programs of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives.

In this inaugural role, Chenault will oversee outreach, communications, education and exhibitions. He will support Smithsonian Libraries and Archives colleagues in developing new initiatives and programs and develop and implement strategic initiatives within the unit, pan-institutionally across the Smithsonian as well as cultivate strategic collaborations with community partners locally, nationally and globally. Chenault will collaborate with advancement leadership to build programs related to fundraising, donor relations and the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives Advisory Board, as well as event concept and management for advancement activities. His work will raise the research profile of the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives, increasing knowledge sharing among Smithsonian partners, peer research institutions and international communities beyond.

“I am thrilled to welcome Wesley Chenault to the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives,” said Tamar Evangelista-Dougherty, director, Smithsonian Libraries and Archives. “His creative leadership and wide-ranging experience will shape engagement and outreach for both longstanding partners and new and diverse audiences, ensuring a robust future and legacy for our newly-merged organization.”

Chenault holds over 20 years of experience in research settings, with a focus on rare and distinctive collections in museum, public and academic libraries. Most recently, he served as Director of the [Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives](#) at [Cornell University](#), where he oversaw collections, programs and research services. His prior positions include work with the Herndon Home, the [Atlanta History Center](#), [Auburn Avenue Research Library on African American Culture and History](#) and [Virginia Commonwealth University Libraries](#).

“It is my honor to join the world's largest museum library and archives system at this historic time, building upon the incredible and important work being done,” said Wesley Chenault. “I look forward to working collaboratively with the Advisory Board, the Smithsonian internally and our many

communities and partners to broaden the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives' scope and add to its success locally, nationally and globally."

Chenault has broad experience in education, developing syllabi and advising on curriculum development, serving on dissertation committees and leading initiatives in research settings. In addition to teaching undergraduate and graduate students in universities, he has developed internship programs, administered research and travel grant programs and served in roles such as reviewer, consultant and grant staff for humanities agencies including the [Georgia Humanities Council](#), [National Endowment for the Humanities](#) and the [National Historical Publications and Records Commission](#). In 2020, he was a participant in "Teaching from Digital Archives at Home and Around the World," a summer teachers' institute sponsored by Hemispheres, an international outreach consortium at the University of Texas at Austin.

Chenault is a published scholar, with articles authored and co-authored in edited volumes, such as [Educational Programs: Innovative Practices for Archives and Special Collections](#) and [Queer South Rising: Voices of Contested Place](#), and academic peer-reviewed journals and encyclopedias, among them [New Georgia Encyclopedia](#) and the [Journal of Southern History](#). With Stacy Braukman, Chenault is co-author of [Gay and Lesbian Atlanta](#), a pictorial history.

Chenault has exhibited widely as an individual and in collaborations. For the latter, he was a founding member of idea collective John Q, whose interests in public scholarship, interventions and memory have been featured in educational programming and exhibitions across the nation, from the [GLBT Historical Society Museum & Archives](#) in San Francisco to the [Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia](#) in Atlanta. Outside of the collective, Chenault's curatorial work spans his career from exhibitions at the Atlanta History Center to Cornell University, where he was a co-curator for the exhibition, *Social Fabric: Land, Labor, and the World the Textile Industry Created*, which opened Nov. 4, 2022.

Chenault holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from [Auburn University](#), a master's degree in women's studies from [Georgia State University](#) and a doctorate in American Studies from the [University of New Mexico](#). A member of several library and museum organizations, he has certifications from the Archives Leadership Institute from the [University of Wisconsin-Madison](#) and the Leadership Institute for Academic Librarians from [Harvard University](#).

About the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives

The [Smithsonian Libraries and Archives](#) is an international system of 21 library research centers and an institutional archives. It maintains a collection of nearly 3 million volumes and 44,000 cubic feet of archival materials. The Libraries and Archives serves as an educational resource for the Smithsonian Institution, the global research community and the public. Locations are in Washington, D.C., Maryland, Virginia, New York City and the Republic of Panama.

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