The most public of all history: family history and heritage albums in the transmission of records

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There are not many professions in which one’s duties always combine attention to the inscribed worlds of thought and communication and gratitude to those who offer up such records. Yet, the professional work of archivists always involves the writing of thanks. Thus, it is with special pleasure that I begin my acknowledgements, considering this gift of time I have had for working on, and writing, this thesis.

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In 2005, Hurricane Katrina brought a three weeks’ stay at the Newberry Library in Chicago as a visiting scholar and the chance to see the setting of so much genealogical research. The hurricane also brought a real determination to consider how records about families are counted within people’s lives.

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