Employee Spotlight – Debbie Bahn
Contributed by Tracy Rebstock, SW Regional Branch Archivist

Debbie Bahn works at the Eastern Regional Branch as the Collections Manager and the Digital Archives as the Electronic Records Archivist for the Washington State Archives in Cheney, WA. She was kind enough to take a couple of moments out of her extremely busy day to answer a few questions presented to her by Tracy. Here’s what she’d like you to know about her:

TR: Where did you go to college?

DB: I attended University of California at Santa Barbara for my undergraduate degree. Graduate school degrees were at California State University, Sacramento and San Jose State University.

TR: What degrees do you have?

DB: BA is History, MA in History, and most of a MARA (Masters in Archives and Records Administration). I took the courses for the MARA, but did not do the required internship or the thesis portfolio. I was already several years into my professional career, and I didn’t feel that I needed to do an internship or a thesis, especially with the high tuition costs that went with them!! The MARA course work is where I learned electronic records practices.

TR: What, if any, further degrees or certifications are you pursuing?

DB: No way, I’m done with school!

TR: Do you have any other special training? What is it? Where have you worked before?

DB: This is my second career. I was an accountant in my “first life.” Before I came to Washington State Archives in 2008, I worked at California State Archives in Sacramento. Currently, I’m on the Board of Directors for the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators. I’m also an adjunct graduate faculty member in the History Department at Eastern Washington University.

TR: Could you give us some personal background?

DB: My husband, Tom, and I live out in the woods on 10 acres just west of Cheney. Our daughter, Kate, lives with us, and our son, Joe, lives in Seattle. I have one granddaughter, Emma, who is 10, and she is the joy of my life. My mom, Rose, moved to Cheney from the Olympia area last summer. She is popular with the Archives because she’s a big Scribe volunteer!

TR: What are your hobbies?

DB: Urban hiking, reading, road trips, and baseball (Go San Francisco Giants!!).
TR: Where did you grow up? Did you move around a lot?

DB: I was born and raised in California. I spent my childhood in northern CA and most of my adult life in southern CA. I moved back up north a few years before coming to Washington. My parents and all of my grandparents were born and raised in California. We have some great family history. For instance, one of my grandfathers was in San Francisco in 1906 during the big earthquake. He was from Monterey, and as a boy, delivered newspapers to the Steinbeck family’s home. One of my great-grandfathers was a cowboy in the early westerns in Hollywood and appeared in over 350 films with stars such as John Wayne and Gene Autry.

TR: Are there any political or social issues you feel passionately about?

DB: Yes, human dignity. I work to mentor and assist LGBT young people who may not be able to turn to their own families for support.

TR: Do you have a nickname?

DB: Several, but none that I’m willing to share!

TR: List your favorites:

Fiction Book: *Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck
Non-Fiction Book: *Measuring America* by Andro Linklater
Musicians: Led Zeppelin, Queen, Paul Simon, Madeline Peyroux
Cities: San Francisco, Washington, D.C.
Food: Ice Cream
Quote: “Don’t fret; it will happen differently anyway."

TR: Where have you traveled?

DB: Mainly in the U.S. I’ve been to Canada (BC) and Mexico a couple of times.

TR: Who is your role model, and why?

DB: My mom. She raised her kids to be the best of who they wanted to be, and stood by us, even during the worst of times. I try to pay that forward with my own kids! And Martin Luther King, Jr.

TR: What things do you not like to do?

DB: Clean up after others (which is probably why I don’t have pets).

TR: What is your super power or what is your spirit animal?

DB: I have the ability to send mental messages by looking over the top of my glasses. (See attached photo…that’s right—you know what she’s telling you…)