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What Archives Reveal: The Hidden Poems of Amelia Earhart

Sammie L. Morris

Purdue University, morris18@purdue.edu

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What Archives Reveal: The Hidden Poems of Amelia Earhart

The importance of primary source materials to scholarship is undeniable. Primary source materials can verify or contradict information accepted as true in history books and other secondary sources. They can tell the whole, or at least more complete, story of events. Unlike secondary sources, primary source materials offer first-hand accounts from the past, bringing history closer and making it feel more real. It can even be argued that primary source materials are less susceptible to the loss or misinterpretation of information over time in subsequent edition revisions. In particular among primary source materials, manuscripts such as diaries and letters offer glimpses into history where historic figures are untainted and unskewed by the biographers and scholars who interpret them. Unpublished manuscripts have not usually been censored or edited to reflect modern thoughts, beliefs, or politically correct views the way secondary sources often are.

At their best, primary source materials reveal new information about people and events from the past. In the following article, the author will tell the story of how recently-discovered poems found among Amelia Earhart's personal papers shed new light into the life of the famous, yet elusive aviator.

Discovery of Earhart's Poems

*“At one time and another, AE wrote many fragments of verse, for she found deep pleasure in building little images with words. That aspect was very private—almost secret.”*¹ --George Palmer Putnam

During her lifetime, Amelia Earhart (1897-1937) wrote three books about her flying career: *20 Hrs. 40 Min.* (1929), *The Fun of It* (1932), and *Last Flight*² (1937). In addition to these accounts, she wrote chapters and introductions for several children's books and articles on aviation for numerous magazines and newspapers such as the *New York Times* and the *New York Herald-Tribune*. She even served a brief stint as Aviation Editor for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, writing articles and answering readers' questions about flying. It is still widely unknown today, however, that Amelia Earhart secretly dreamed of becoming an accomplished creative writer. In addition to her published non-fiction works, she wrote numerous poems and drafts of short stories; the majority of these efforts were written before she became a famous aviator. Few of these pieces have been published. Considering the public's endless curiosity about Amelia Earhart, one might ask why historians and biographers have not previously discussed her writings in detail.

The answer to this question lies in the mind of George Palmer Putnam, the charismatic publisher and promoter who became Earhart's husband in 1931. After

Earhart's disappearance, Putnam donated approximately fifteen cubic feet of his wife's working papers, medals, and other select memorabilia to Purdue University³. Although the collection was rich with documentation on Earhart's major flights and other accomplishments, it contained no personal papers and very few items dating prior to Earhart's first major flight in 1928. For decades, biographers and researchers have relied upon Purdue's collection of Earhart's papers established by George Palmer Putnam, as well as the Earhart Papers at the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute. These two major Earhart collections contain little personal information, and leave researchers questioning who Earhart really was as a woman, a wife, and a person.

Amelia Earhart's sister, Muriel Earhart Morrissey, comes closest to answering this question with her book, *Courage is the Price*.⁴ Unlike other biographies of Earhart, which barely skim the surface of her personal life, Morrissey's book contains her accounts of growing up with Earhart: what types of books young Amelia enjoyed reading, what games she played, and what her early life was like. The only problem with Morrissey's book is that the only information the reader receives about Earhart is second-hand. There were very few primary source materials available for Morrissey to draw upon when she wrote her sister's biography in 1963. Although Morrissey and other biographers allude to Earhart's passion for reading and writing poetry, there have been few examples of Earhart's writings to quote from, or to analyze for their potential

biographical significance. If, as many authors have argued, Earhart frequently wrote poems, where were they?

For over half a century, scholars assumed that Earhart's early writings and other personal papers burned in a fire that destroyed part of the Putnams' home in Rye, New York, in 1934. This was a logical assumption, as the papers never showed up on the market, and George Putnam did nothing to discourage this belief. In fact, most of Earhart's earliest writings and papers did burn in the fire, but not all of them. George Putnam saved a collection of approximately five hundred documents that had been most personal to him and Amelia. Just as he had during their marriage, Putnam respected his wife's privacy and her wish to never share her personal life with the public. He held onto Earhart's personal papers, undoubtedly aware of their significance to future researchers, but he never revealed their existence to anyone, including Earhart's immediate family.

This treasure trove of Earhart's personal papers include her marriage license, letters she wrote to Putnam while on her flights, a premarital agreement she wrote outlining her desire to maintain her independence during their marriage, short story drafts, notes for speeches and books, dozens of poems and poem drafts, and even a flight log from her record-breaking 1932 solo flight across the Atlantic. It is likely that Earhart wrote much more than what has survived.

Incredibly, it was not until 2002, when George Putnam's granddaughter Sally Putnam Chapman donated Putnam's cherished private collection of

Amelia's personal papers to Purdue University, that the existence of the papers was verified. Following Putnam's death, his widow Margaret Lewis inherited his estate, including Earhart's personal papers. In the 1980s, when Sally Putnam Chapman began writing her book on her grandparents' relationships with Earhart, she relied upon the papers to tell the personal story behind Earhart and Putnam's romance. Subsequently, Margaret Lewis gave the Earhart papers to Sally Putnam Chapman.

After publication of Chapman's book in 1997, she considered her options on where the papers might be donated so that the public could access them. Purdue was among her choices for the collection, primarily because most of Earhart's papers had resided there since 1940, with her grandfather's initial donation. Chapman ultimately chose Purdue over other institutions because she wanted to reunite Earhart's aviation papers with her personal papers and to fulfill her grandfather's wishes. As Chapman noted: "my grandfather chose to give the collection to Purdue because Amelia loved Purdue and because of Purdue's generous sponsorship of her flights. They were married during Amelia's time on the faculty at Purdue, and they spent time on the campus together. I am just fulfilling what he would have done. The whole collection is finally home again."⁵

Like buried treasure, Earhart's personal papers contain a wealth of new information about the private side of Amelia Earhart, just waiting to be discovered by researchers. In particular, Earhart's poems tell the story of an

intelligent young woman who possessed a love for words and a burning desire to write. They reveal her thoughts on flying, aging and death, love and heartbreak, and they provide new insight into the aviator's early life.

The Poems in Context: Earhart's Early Life

Amelia Earhart grew up in a family that valued books and knowledge. From an early age, young Amelia liked to play with existing words and invent new ones. She was often intentionally creative in the spelling she used in her letters to friends and family. As a child she enjoyed studying poetry, and for a brief time she and her sister Muriel [Earhart Morrissey] were taught at home by a governess who incorporated poetry into her instruction. According to Muriel, the governess stressed poetry over more traditional subjects: "We omitted geography almost entirely from our studies, but we reveled in poetry far beyond our years."⁶ In an interview, Earhart's mother Amy stated that Amelia composed her first poem between four and five years of age.⁷ Among the few school papers of Earhart's that have survived are notes she took on various meter and rhyme schemes for particular types of verses.⁸

Around 1917, at the age of twenty, Earhart began to create a large scrapbook of poetry clippings revealing many of her early interests, such as women's rights, that she planned to compile into an anthology when she found the time. For years, she collected and saved poems that spoke to her; this portfolio of

clippings still exists today, and is part of the Earhart Papers owned by the Schlesinger Library at the Radcliffe Institute.

Earhart's taste in poetry was eccentric, and encompassed many periods and styles. She seemed to have a preference for Symbolist poetry, recognized by poetry scholars as a particularly complex subgenre; she also appreciated Imagist, Victorian and Romantic poetry, as well as modern verse. The strongest similarities among the poems she collected were recurring themes of melancholy, death, love and heartbreak, and the effects of time and aging. Many of the poems touted the transience of human life, or the belief that beauty and the written word could convey immortality after the physical body succumbed to death. She seemed to have a preference for women poets, and probably appreciated the new voices of female independence she observed in poets like Edna St. Vincent Millay and Elinor Wylie; she also admired Carl Sandburg.⁹

Many biographers who knew Earhart personally, including her sister Muriel Earhart Morrissey and her husband George Palmer Putnam have commented on Amelia's love for both reading and writing poetry. Yet, until the rediscovery of Earhart's personal papers, there was almost no evidence of Earhart's own poetic efforts. Numerous biographies include Earhart's poem "Courage," but have few other examples to provide.¹⁰ Morrissey wrote in her biography of her sister that while they were living in Chicago they were "devotees of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine."¹¹ Perhaps unbeknownst to Muriel,

Amelia submitted some of her poems to the magazine. Using the pseudonym “Emil Harte,”¹² twenty-three year old Amelia submitted four poems to *Poetry* on April 6, 1921. She included with the poems a letter that stated simply: “Enclosed are four small efforts of a novice.” The original letter and poems she submitted can be found in her personal papers at Purdue, along with a personal response from *Poetry*’s editor, Harriet Monroe. The poems Earhart submitted are titled “Palm tree,” “To M-----,” “My Friend,” and “From an Airplane.”¹³ All of the poems are short and written in free verse. Although they were rejected, Harriet Monroe wrote back to “Mr. Harte,” stating that she considered the poems to be “unusually promising,” and urged him to contribute more in the future. Monroe’s opinion demonstrates that Earhart’s poems had potential.

Although Earhart was still honing her poetic skills, the four raw, brief poems she submitted are undeniably moving; they reveal her keen observation skills and successful use of rhythm and meter to convey mood. One of the poems, “Palm tree,” includes a description of a tree encased in ice.

Palm tree.

*Like crackling icicles,
your brittle sword-branches
rattle in the small breezes
of thick warm nights.*

*Knowing nothing of cold,
is it with malice of ignorance,
that you chill
the thick, warm dreams
of souls uneasy at discomfort?*

Earhart incorporates strong trochaic words into the poem to bring to mind the harshness and brutality of winter; she frequently uses “k,” “t,” and “l” sounds to convey the sharp snapping of the tree’s frozen limbs. The poem exudes a coldness that is associated with the palm tree’s ignorance of the freezing destruction of winter. There is an overall air of melancholy and loneliness that is captured by the image of the single palm tree, standing out of place in the winter landscape.

In the short poems “To M----” and “My Friend,” Earhart describes the personalities of two people in character snapshots that illustrate Earhart’s fascination with the inner workings of the human mind. They also reveal Earhart’s early feminist observance that women were often more appreciated for their beauty than for their intellect. In one of the poems a beautiful woman scornfully laughs at her admirers for appreciating her body without noticing her inner qualities.

The majority of Earhart’s poems illustrate her fascination with watching

others, and her need to understand the people she encountered. The poems served as an outlet for the personal thoughts and emotions of a very private person. On the reverse sides of the poems “To M----” and “My Friend,” Earhart wrote the word “personality.” This word also appears on the verso of other poems that she wrote but did not submit for publication. It is possible that Earhart planned to write an entire series of poems based on various types of people she encountered.

The last of the four poems Earhart submitted to *Poetry* magazine, “From an Airplane,” is particularly interesting due to its connection with the beginning of Earhart’s aviation career. At the time she submitted “From an Airplane,” Amelia was taking flying lessons, having just completed her first ride as a passenger in an airplane the previous December. Women pilots were still a rarity in 1921, and Amelia was occasionally photographed for the newspaper. When interviewed, she was usually asked to tell a little about herself; she never failed to acknowledge her appreciation for literature and her desire to write. Yet, at the same time, she rarely shared the poems and stories she created. Her love for poetry was like her love for beauty and solitude—absolute. “From an Airplane” captures her ability to observe and appreciate the beauty of nature from her privileged location in the sky.

Despite her devotion to reading and writing poetry, Earhart’s intensely private nature probably prevented her from capitalizing on her poems after she became famous. According to one of her closest friends, Marion Stabler, Earhart

“was never too tired to discuss art, science, poetry, religion, or politics,”¹⁴ but she never spoke about anything of a personal nature. This makes the discovery of Earhart’s hidden poems even more significant—they provide a rare snapshot of the young aviator as very few people knew her.

Publication

Only one of Earhart’s poems was published during her lifetime, and initial publication of this poem was against her wishes. The poem “Courage” first appeared in a 1928 issue of *Survey Graphic* magazine, in an article titled “Who Is Amelia Earhart?” by Marion Perkins.¹⁵ The public dissemination of Earhart’s belief that “Courage is the price that Life exacts for granting peace,” was well timed, as Earhart was in the midst of her first major flight, the one that would bring her instant fame as the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. In her diary of the flight, Earhart wrote: “I got a wire from M.P. [Marion Perkins] asking permission to publish one of my poems...as the subject was ‘courage.’ I refused as I know the luck it would bring forth. Anyway I can’t remember whether I liked it.”¹⁶ This statement, written at the very beginning of her aviation career, suggests that Earhart was less concerned with her image as an aviator than she was with her desire to publish a poem of quality.

Despite the public’s seemingly insatiable need for information about her, Earhart wrote many more poems that never appeared in print. Dozens of these

can be found in her personal papers at Purdue. Keeping in mind that she was later married to George Palmer Putnam, one of the nation's most prominent publisher/publicists, it is almost certain that if Earhart had wanted to publish her poems she would have done so.

According to her friend and colleague Eugene Vidal, Earhart wrote and submitted numerous poems for publication anonymously: "She wrote poetry for magazines under another name and often showed me the poems before mailing them."¹⁷ It is unknown whether the poems Vidal is referring to were the four submitted to *Poetry* in 1921. It is also unknown if Earhart used aliases other than "Emil Harte." It is likely that Earhart was willing to publish her poetry under an alias before she became famous, but after becoming known throughout the world for her aviation feats she felt the need to guard her privacy more strictly. It is also possible that Earhart wanted her poems to stand on their own merits; her fame would have complicated that possibility.

Aging & Death Poems: Supporting Biographers' Claims

Most of Earhart's poems, like the ones she collected for her scrapbook, describe love and heartbreak, the transience of life, a romantic notion of death, and the effects of aging. George Putnam, Mary Lovell, and other biographers have noted Earhart's fear of growing old, but it is only when reading Earhart's poems and other personal papers that one is able to verify this. Earhart frequently

wrote of her fascination with death, and her fear of aging. She described herself to friends as a “fatalist,” and felt all good pilots should be willing to die for that one grand adventure. Such a strong fear of growing old may seem strange for a woman who never reached forty years of age, but Earhart’s fears were most likely a result of the excessive longevity that flourished in her family (her grandmother, mother, and sister all lived well into their nineties).

As a young adult, Earhart would have been aware that her yearning for constant adventure would be harder to satisfy as she grew older. Likely, she witnessed the increased dependence and decreased physical capabilities of family members as they aged, and this heightened her fears. Whether or not this relates to a fear of aging, or being perceived as old, it is interesting to note that her records show that while still in her early twenties, Earhart began telling people (and even writing on official documents) that she was born a year later than she actually was. For this reason, many sources still list her birth date incorrectly, as 1898 instead of 1897.¹⁸

In 1937, just prior to her fatal world flight attempt, she told reporter and friend Carl Allen that she had a feeling there was just one more good flight left in her system, and after finishing her world flight she intended to give up major long-distance flying. Although she did not intend to retire from flying completely, Earhart may have already been considering herself too old for such adventures, half-mockingly stating to Allen: “I’m getting old, and want to make

way for the new generation before I'm feeble too!"¹⁹ According to Allen, Earhart also said, "As far as I know, I've got only one obsession—a small and probably feminine horror of growing old—so I won't feel completely cheated if I fail to come back."²⁰ For Earhart, life simply was not worth living in a diminished capacity. According to her husband George Putnam, she once said: "It is hard to be old—so hard. I'm afraid I'll hate it. Hate to grow old. ... I think probably, GP, that I'll not live—to be old."²¹ She also told Putnam that when she died, she'd "like best to go in [her] plane. Quickly."²² In some ways, Earhart seemed to welcome death, and several of the poems she wrote reflected this. Earhart probably shared the Symbolist concept of death as a liberation from the harsh realities of the world. In one of her poems, "Carrion," she describes death as a bird of prey that mercifully ends the lovelorn suffering of the living.

Carrion

Merciless Life

laughs in the burning sun

and only Death,

slow-circling down,

shadows the aerid flesh

*bruised by the panther-paws of love.*²³

Earhart's notes accompanying the "Carrion" poem state: "The vulture is kind. Life is merciless."²⁴ In a similarly themed poem, Earhart implies that there is a seductive side to death: "some meet death/ with closed eyes of horror/ dare infinitely/ for another glimpse."²⁵

Not all of Earhart's poems are as dark as these. In some, Earhart promotes the idea that life, not death, should be cherished. In one poem, she expresses the very mortal desire to capture and preserve certain instances in time, to "snatch molten moments from the fire of Life," holding them "until the brief glow fades and they are hardened to their everlasting shape."²⁶ Unlike her assertion in "Carrion" that life is merciless, in this poem Earhart suggests that there are happy, or "molten moments" in life, but because they are fleeting they must be seized and treasured. Arguably, this *carpe diem* philosophy played a significant role in the development of Amelia's aviation career, influencing the pilot's decisions to take more risks and push herself to her limits.

Love Poems: Contradicting Biographers' Claims

After becoming a famous pilot, and despite her hectic schedule, Earhart still wrote many fragments of verse privately. According to her husband George Palmer Putnam, she always found deep pleasure in building little images with words. Of the small number of Earhart's later poems that have survived, a few are love poems. One of these poems was included in Putnam's biography of

Earhart, which was published after her disappearance.²⁷ In this poem, the speaker notes her lover's presence in the room and remembers how "the stars watched us as we lay."²⁸ Another unpublished love poem of Earhart's follows:

I have seen your eyes at dawn beloved
dark with sleep
And lying on your breast—have watched
the new day creep

Into new depths, putting aside old shadows
spun by night
To show again the lovely living colors
*of your sunlit sight*²⁹

The significance of this poem is that it can be dated to a time between 1931 and Earhart's disappearance in 1937, during Earhart's marriage to Putnam. Some biographers have described their marriage as simply one of convenience, a manager and his client living and working together without love or passion. The poem is written on the letterhead of a hotel they frequented, making it likely that Earhart wrote this poem to Putnam. At least one of the names listed on the hotel letterhead belonged to someone who did not work for the hotel until 1931, offering new evidence to possibly contradict biographers' claims that Earhart and Putnam were in a passionless marriage.³⁰

It is interesting to compare Earhart's mature love poems of the 1930s to a poem she wrote about desire in the 1920s, in which she personified passion as a winged entity who comes to her "with out-stretched quivering hands."³¹ This poem reflects a young woman's fiery and romanticized view of desire, whereas the two love poems Earhart wrote after marrying Putnam in 1931 suggest a simple acceptance of the tranquil beauty of adult love.

Significance of Earhart's Poems to Future Scholarship

Earhart was known for her extreme privacy and great reluctance to share any of her personal life with the public. Although she likely would have considered her love poems to be deeply personal and would probably never have published them under her own name, she still chose to keep these intimate poems among her personal papers to be discovered after her death. In addition to providing a much-needed outlet for the emotions of an extremely private person, it is likely that Earhart's poetry was born out of her yearning for achievement, fame, and even immortality.

As Earhart began to devote more time to her aviation career she was left with much less time for reading or writing poetry. A newspaper article from 1931, three years after Earhart's first transatlantic flight, states that Earhart "adores poetry, but gets little time for anything but trade journals."³² George Putnam knew his wife's writing was important to her, and in his biography of her

he wrote: “Truly, I think among all her crowding ambitions, AE would have enjoyed best of all the leisure to play about with the friends she liked so well—*words*. Few, I think, realized her great regard for the written and the spoken word, her joy in, as she said, ‘having little words get up and dance for one.’ Always AE cherished a wistful ambition to have one full year of leisure to devote to writing, a year uninterrupted by flights, lecturing, or journalistic dead lines.”³³ Putnam did not believe Earhart had ever been satisfied with anything she wrote, but that she “had the craftsman’s devotion to the labor which eventually produces good writing, if one has something to say, and I had hoped she might have her year, for it was important to her.”³⁴

Despite the allure of being a published poet, Earhart likely recognized that there were drawbacks as well. The public may have found it difficult to take her seriously as a poet *and* a famous pilot, and Earhart was well aware of the need to focus her public image on her work on behalf of aviation and women’s rights. It is interesting that Earhart included subjects in her writing that she never discussed openly with anyone outside her immediate circle of confidants. Her surviving poems reveal her personal thoughts and interests, and are invaluable to researchers seeking to understand her fully as a person.

Although family members and friends of Earhart’s have long stated that Earhart wrote poetry, many biographers have shied away from the subject, lacking sufficient proof. It is unfortunate that most of Earhart’s poems and other

writings burned, because the ones that remain reveal much about her, documenting private thoughts and feelings that exist nowhere else. The three books Earhart wrote contain little of the passion she felt for life; instead, they remain as somewhat aloof accounts of her major flights. Still, these books are among the most widely used sources by biographers searching for first-hand information from Earhart on her life. Biographers would undoubtedly rely more on Earhart's own unpublished writings if their existence were more widely known.

The newly processed George Palmer Putnam Collection of Amelia Earhart Papers brings together again Earhart's working and personal papers as one cohesive collection, offering new insight into the life of the famous and elusive aviator. Earhart's personal writings prove her desire to become a writer, her obsession with aging, her passionate love life. Fortunately, Earhart's poems in the Putnam Collection are now available to the public, and items from the collection are being digitized as part of an ongoing effort to make them more accessible.³⁵ Like tiny pieces of a puzzle, each of the newly discovered poems provides researchers with a clearer, more complete version of a very public figure, yet undeniably private woman with private fears and passions who desired to become a writer.

Challenges to Processing Earhart's Personal Papers

Like most manuscript collections, the Earhart Papers presented several archival processing challenges. Initially, it was unclear whether the poems that were part of Earhart's personal papers were actually written by her. As all archivists know, it is crucial to understand as much about a person whose papers are being processed as possible. After much research into Earhart's life, it became clear that she had been an admirer of poetry since childhood, and had admitted on more than one occasion that she wrote poems herself. However, with very few of Earhart's poems available for study, it was difficult to determine the likelihood that the poems in Earhart's papers were her own.

In order to study the poems for possible revelations into Earhart's life, the archivist felt it was of utmost importance to first exhaust all possibilities that the poems may have been authored by someone else. Recognizing Earhart's voice as a poet was complicated by the fact that some biographies stated she had translated poems written in other languages. Much research work was done to try and determine whether the poems in Earhart's personal papers were ones that had been written by foreign poets, or ones that she had written herself. Another possibility, keeping in mind Earhart's affinity for collecting poems she admired in a scrapbook, was that some of the poems might have been published work by other authors that she had admired and transcribed for future use in her poetry anthology. Again, this required research into trying to identify the poems themselves and who might have written them. After months of searching poetry

databases and anthologies, surfing the Internet, and consulting members of the English faculty at Purdue, the archivist determined that the poems were written by Earhart because they were found in several draft revisions within her papers and could not be found elsewhere.

Once Earhart's authorship of the poems had been established, the next challenge was to decipher Earhart's handwriting. Not only was it difficult to read, but because she frequently wrote with pencil, some of the text in her work was smeared. To further present challenges, Earhart also used abbreviations, creative spelling, and occasionally invented words of her own. All of these factors made studying and interpreting Earhart's poems somewhat difficult. In some cases, where the text of the poems was very faint, the archivist had to photocopy the text on a dark setting to reveal the words clearly.

In addition to these challenges, the majority of Earhart's poems were not dated. For some of the poems, it was necessary to follow other clues to help establish their dates. For example, Earhart's handwriting style changed somewhat over time, and this helped in some cases with approximating the dates of certain poems. A particular notebook containing poems that were intermingled with notes from high school or college courses provided additional information suggesting approximate dates. In a few cases, letterhead on the paper Earhart used was helpful in determining a possible range of dates.

Research Significance of Primary Source Material

“Unpublished sources pose problems unlike those involved in working with published ones, although both must be evaluated for their accuracy and value. But finding the particular unpublished record needed can present a much greater challenge than locating widely duplicated materials, and even when it has been brought to light, uncovering desired information in a collection of letters or official files remains a larger task than examining a book, newspaper, or report. At the same time, the rewards of the search can include the wonderful excitement of discovering something unique which unlocks a mystery about the past.”³⁶

Since archivists are frequently among the first to locate the historic gems lying hidden in archival and manuscript collections, they are in a unique position in terms of their abilities to recognize and interpret primary source materials that will enhance or, in some cases, contradict history books. Amelia Earhart’s papers exemplify the important role primary source materials play in historical interpretation. The poems Earhart wrote reveal more about her than can be found in biographies, textbooks, or films. Just as a Civil War diary will reveal much more about the living conditions and psyche of a Confederate soldier than a Civil War history book, Earhart’s poems bring to light the human side of the elusive aviator in documenting her thoughts and feelings via her own unique voice.

In Muriel Earhart Morrissey’s biography of her sister, she wrote: “It is our loss, I feel, that so much of Amelia’s writing is purely factual prose. I know she

longed for a time when she could write ‘as the spirit moves’ without regard for deadlines or publishers’ limitations.”³⁷ Had Earhart survived, it would have been interesting to see if she ever fulfilled her wish to devote a year to writing. In addition to her aviation records and her pioneering work on women’s rights, perhaps Earhart might have also been remembered for those friends she liked so well—the words she coaxed to dance.

About the Author

Sammie L. Morris is Archivist/Assistant Professor of Library Science at Purdue University. Morris is a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists, the Society of American Archivists, and the Midwest Archives Conference, and is Vice President/President Elect of the Society of Indiana Archivists. She has given numerous presentations on archives and recently co-taught the graduate course, "Archival Theory and Practice," at Purdue University. She currently manages the George Palmer Putnam Collection of Amelia Earhart Papers at Purdue University.

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Notes

- ¹ George Palmer Putnam, *Soaring Wings* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1939), 170.
- ² Amelia Earhart, *Last Flight* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Co., 1937). Originally to be titled *World Flight*, the book was published posthumously by Earhart's husband George Palmer Putnam.
- ³ George Palmer Putnam, correspondence with Purdue University President Edward C. Elliott, 1940 (Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries).
- ⁴ Muriel Earhart Morrissey, *Courage is the Price: The Biography of Amelia Earhart* (Wichita, KS: McCormick-Armstrong Publishing, 1963).
- ⁵ Purdue University News Service, press release, "Purdue Libraries Land New Rare Items for Amelia Earhart Collection," May 2, 2002, (Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries).
- ⁶ Muriel Earhart Morrissey, *Courage is the Price: The Biography of Amelia Earhart* (Wichita, KS: McCormick-Armstrong Publishing, 1963), 68.
- ⁷ Amy Otis Earhart interview by unknown interviewer, undated transcript, microfilm reel 3, Amelia Mary Earhart Papers (Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute).
- ⁸ Amelia Earhart, poetry notes, n.d., folder W-4 (Writings Series), The George Palmer Putnam Collection of Amelia Earhart Papers (Archives and Special Collections, Purdue University Libraries).
- ⁹ Amelia Earhart, poetry scrapbook, Amelia Mary Earhart Papers (Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute).
- ¹⁰ For example, see Mary Lovell's excellent work, perhaps the most thoroughly researched and best written of all the Earhart biographies: *The Sound of Wings: The Life of Amelia Earhart* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), unnumbered page preceding Table of Contents.

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- ¹¹ Morrissey, *Courage*, 110.
- ¹² Although other sources, notably the PBS video *Amelia Earhart* (Nancy Porter Productions, 1993) have stated that Earhart's pseudonym was "Emil A. Harte," a thorough examination of the original letter and supporting documents reveal that there was no middle initial—the "A" was just an extra flourish on the "H" in "Harte."
- ¹³ Amelia Earhart, poems, 1921, Folder W-6 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.
- ¹⁴ Doris L. Rich, *Amelia Earhart* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1989), 41.
- ¹⁵ Marion Perkins, "Who is Amelia Earhart?" *Survey Graphic* (July 1, 1928): 393.
- ¹⁶ Amelia Earhart, diary, 1928, Amelia Earhart Collection 1061 (Seaver Center for Western History Research, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Los Angeles, California), quoted in Mary Lovell, *The Sound of Wings: The Life of Amelia Earhart* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 112.
- ¹⁷ Eugene Vidal radio interview by unknown interviewer, undated transcript, Eugene L. Vidal Papers (University of Wyoming, American Heritage Center).
- ¹⁸ Amelia Earhart, pilot licenses and registration cards, Putnam Collection. Earhart's birth date is listed as 1897 in the records of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Atchison, Kansas.
- ¹⁹ Carl Allen, telegram, July 3, 1937, item VIII.D.4, Putnam Collection.
- ²⁰ Rich, *Amelia Earhart*, 256.
- ²¹ Putnam, *Soaring Wings*, 291.
- ²² Putnam, *Soaring Wings*, 294 and in Scrapbook 15, Putnam Collection.
- ²³ Amelia Earhart, poem, ca. 1920s, folder W-8 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.
- ²⁴ Amelia Earhart, poetry notes, ca. 1920s, folder W-8 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.
- ²⁵ Amelia Earhart, poem, ca. 1920s, folder W-6 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.
- ²⁶ Amelia Earhart, poem, ca. 1920s, folder W-6 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.

²⁷ Putnam, *Soaring Wings*, 171.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Amelia Earhart, poem, ca. 1931-1937, folder M-3 (Family Series), Putnam Collection.

³⁰ For a more detailed account of George Palmer Putnam and Amelia Earhart's loving marriage than is possible here, see Sally Putnam Chapman's *Whistled Like a Bird: The Untold Story of Dorothy Binney Putnam, George Putnam, and Amelia Earhart* (New York: Warner Books, 1997). This book was the first to tell the true story of the Earhart/Putnam relationship.

³¹ Amelia Earhart, poem, ca. 1920s, folder W-8 (Writings Series), Putnam Collection.

³² Alissa Keir, newspaper column, 1931 ("Snapshots" newspaper clipping, unknown newspaper, News Syndicate Co., Inc.), Putnam Collection.

³³ Putnam, *Soaring Wings*, 174-175.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ See Purdue University's web page for the Amelia Earhart Digitization Project:

<http://www.lib.purdue.edu/spcol/aeahart/> (accessed August 20, 2005).

³⁶ David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You* (Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press, 1996), 87.

³⁷ Morrissey, *Courage*, 137.