

Catalyst Profile
Brian Wilson

In 2005, Brian Wilson, who graduated in 1997, went down in history because of his knack for preserving it. The city archivist and WCU alumnus, then stationed in Kingsport, was presented with the James H. Thweatt Archival Advancement Award from the Tennessee Society of Archivists.

Now, Wilson serves as a prospect research analyst in the Department of Alumni Relations at Emory University. Before finding his way to Atlanta, however, the former Catamount had to find his way in “the special place that is Cullowhee.”

In 1995, with an Associate of Arts from Tulsa Community College under his belt, Wilson began pursuing his bachelor's degree in American History at WCU. Professor James Lewis in the Department of History served as Wilson's advisor.

“Even though I did not follow through with his suggestion to pursue a teaching career,” said Wilson, “I did embrace the idea that I should work in the field of history.”

After graduating Magna Cum Laude in 1997, his knack for history led Wilson to Florida State University's graduate program in Archives and Museum Management. There, he worked for their Institute on World War II and the Human Experience, an initiative to display memories from the military branches and shipbuilding yards.

Since 2003, Wilson has found himself doing everything from implementing library exhibits at the Gwinnett County Public Library to revising articles for *Provenance: The Journal of the Society of Georgia Archivists*. From 2007 to 2010, he even tried his hand at being a reference archivist for the Georgia Archives.

“I was able to work as the ‘public face’ of the archives for the last couple of years by providing tours and giving presentations to school and community groups from all over the state,” said Wilson.

In his current position, Wilson is in charge of alumni genealogical research and family trees. Last July, he delivered a presentation entitled “Making the Past Prologue” at the 2015 Association of Professional Researchers for Advancement Conference in New Orleans. In October 2014, the Atlanta resident published a piece analyzing the connection between genealogy and donor relations in *CURRENT* magazine.

After ten years of working in archives, Wilson urges current WCU students to perceive the study of history differently.

“There is so much you can do with a degree in history,” said Wilson. “Open your imagination to its synergy with other professions and interests.”