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## Janet DeVries '14 Alumnus

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### At Florida Atlantic University

**Major:** History and Political Science

**DEGREE:** B.A. in History from Florida Atlantic University 2013, summa cum laude. Currently pursuing a master's degree at Florida State University, School of Information, Information Studies; MLIS degree expected August 2015.

**CURRENT POSITION:** Library Technician II, Archives at Palm Beach State College. I am also an author, historic researcher and president of the Boynton Beach Historical Society, working on two books about Palm Beach County history—a murder mystery and a biography.



*Photo by Tim Stepien, 2014*

**FIRST JOB:** My very first job was as a pool attendant at the Lawn Aqua Pool during the short summer season in Chicago. Part of the job was learning to dive down to the bottom of the 12-foot deep pool, which led to my fondness of snorkeling and free diving in the clear waters of the Atlantic Ocean and exploring shipwrecks.

**BIGGEST CHALLENGES:** My biggest challenge is finding time to do everything I need to do versus what I want to do, which is to solve historical mysteries. As president of the historical society, I search for historical photographs and documents from Palm Beach County's early days, using these primary sources to tell stories of forgotten people and places.

**BEST FAU MEMORY:** Dr. Engle leading our entire Senior Seminar class across the campus and taking us to the library and up the stairs to the history section is something I will never forget. I also remember Dr. Holloway teaching us about something called "revisionist history," which was a new concept for me. Since then I have forged a path into Palm Beach County's history by researching and publishing a revised history of Boynton Beach's true founding citizens in my book *Pioneering Palm Beach* (History Press, 2012).

**ROLE DEPT. OF HISTORY PLAYED IN YOUR CAREER:** The history department professors taught me to seek out primary sources such as land and legal records, newspapers, diaries, correspondence, receipts and other documents to develop ideas and hypotheses, rather

than relying on local folklore. Dr. Bennett taught me to “let the sources drive your paper” and Dr. White showed me the FBI microfilm at the library. Dr. Norman encouraged me to think of the many layers of our environmental history and to make historical connections.

**GOAL:** My goal is to pursue a second master’s degree (in history) and to continue researching, writing and lecturing on Florida history topics. I enjoy teaching, publishing and sharing my passion for history with future scholars and generations of Floridians. My ideal job involves leading a dynamic team of historians and information professionals in a library, archive and museum setting; preserving, digitizing, describing and promoting historical treasures.

**Favorite Book:** Books have always played a major role in my life. In my elementary school days, the Nancy Drew Mystery Series were favorites. Those books led to my lifelong quest to solve history mysteries. Today, many of my favorite books are pre-1923 Florida history books found on Google Books, Internet Archive and HathiTrust. Dr. James A. Henshall’s 1884 *Camping and Cruising in Florida* provides an intimate look into Florida during the pioneer era.

**PERSONAL:** I am an intrepid historic researcher with six published local history books. I am passionate about Palm Beach County’s history and have 17 years’ experience in libraries, museums and archives. I am available as a consultant for family history projects, books and personal archival collections. In my spare time, I enjoy traveling, boating in Florida’s coastal waters, and exploring old cemeteries. One of my recent discoveries involved a 100-year-old photo album of important historical Palm Beach County images rescued, researched and shared with the community.