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Hidden Potential: Revealing the Hidden Collection in your Archives

Editor's Note

This issue of Primary Source deals with a common issue among archives: hidden collections. "Hidden" can mean different things. First, they may be collections that have been processed, but never used. Secondly, hidden collections can be those that have absolutely never been touched by an archivist's organizational hand. They may or may not have been re-housed. They may or may not have been accessioned.

The problems surrounding hidden collections lead to numerous questions. Should repositories accept collections that have little potential for use? If yes, what responsibility do we have as archivists to make it known to the public that such collections exist? How are we in the profession keeping a record of how we promote our collections?

The articles in this volume show how various repositories are handling their hidden collections and trying to answer some of the questions posed above. They reveal the strategies and methods used to combat the challenges of bringing such collections to the light of day.

While this may not completely eradicate all of your unknown or unprocessed materials, these articles will hopefully help you at your institution when deciding how to begin the process of tackling hidden collections.

Thank you,

Mona K. Vance
Editor

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The Case of a Scrapbook Collection that Tripled in Size: The Benefits and Unforeseen Consequences of Digitizing a Hidden Collection

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Responding to the Association of Research Libraries' call for Special Collection librarians to make their "hidden collections" more visible, the Martha Blakeney Hodges Special Collections and University Archives at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro (UNCG) surveyed its "hidden collections" as it prepared for a move of its holdings to a new location and set processing, preservation, and digitization priorities.[1] Recognizing the growing research interest in documents that reveal the cultural and social life of students and faculty, the department identified a poorly housed and partially cataloged scrapbook collection for a digitization project. While seeking to impose intellectual control over this neglected collection and increase its visibility, the department also realized that this digitization project could be used to establish a collaborative and flexible prototype, for streamlining and expediting the arrangement and description of hidden collections. This paper will examine the benefits of a cross departmental approach (Special Collections and University Archives, Cataloging, and Digital Projects) to manage a digital project and discuss the practical steps of devising a work plan that encompasses the processing, rehousing, preserving, and digitizing of a collection. This paper will be argue that by incorporating these varied tasks together into one project, accelerates and improves the process of making "hidden collections" more accessible and visible. Along with documenting the benefits of this integrated approach to processing and digitization, this paper will also examine some of the unforeseen benefits of this project from the leveraging of library staff's expertise in the creation of metadata to the unexpected growth of a collection.

UNCG Scrapbook Collection: Accessibility and Historic Value

At the time of the 2011 survey, Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) identified eighty-two scrapbooks; the majority of them were stored on open shelving, vulnerable to light damage and accidents. The scrapbook collection was made up of a wide range of sizes. Many of them contained newspaper clippings, photographs, correspondence, printed material, handmade paper, and assorted ephemera (flowers, matches, sugar packets, chewing gum, cigarette butts, etc.). The items found in the scrapbooks were attached to pulp paper by glue, tape, and other adhesives. There were significant preservation challenges that ranged from discoloration, paper tears, loose bindings, brittle paper, and unstable color photographs. Other scrapbooks employed a sticky plastic sheet as a holder of materials and this posed its own distinctive preservation issues. Staff found that little effort had been directed to stabilizing these scrapbooks. Due to their fragile state, the collection was not publicized nor was it widely used by staff members.

While the school's University Archive was founded in 1942, the cataloging of these items was

uneven and their historical value never fully recognized or appreciated. Yet, these scrapbooks are important sources in the documentation of the intellectual, social, and cultural life of students at the school from 1906 through 2002. Within that date range, there were specific "runs" of scrapbooks that documented the evolution of the institution. Many of the scrapbooks reflected individual dormitories, student organizations and clubs, unique events, and specific graduating classes at the University. They also documented social change (desegregation, coeducation), new academic programs, national, state, and local events, as well as cultural trends. Often, the scrapbooks were the sole resource for unique campus traditions. SCUA staff identified this collection for digitization since it believed that these items could be used by faculty and students in the study of American education, women's education, and the history of the University and North Carolina. So, in addition to digitizing these items, the project was intended to fully process the scrapbooks, rehouse the items in archival boxes, write metadata, and create an EAD finding aid.

Project Partners and Evolving Responsibilities

At UNCG, proposed digital projects are prioritized and vetted by a digital projects committee. Once a project is approved, a project team is formed by drawing members from departments that have the expertise to support the specific project. In the case of the scrapbook project, the original plan was for the Library's Digital Projects unit to scan the scrapbooks and upload them into CONTENTdm; the Cataloging department was to update any existing catalog records and provide the needed expertise regarding the creation of metadata and the use of controlled language; and, the Special Collections and University Archives department was to create the metadata and carry out basic preservation work. The SCUA staff was also responsible for assigning an identification number to each scrapbook and matching that number to the scanned items in CONTENTdm and the future finding aid. A work plan was devised that matched team member's skills with their specific project responsibilities. There was no discussion of cross–training staff or the broadening of staff responsibilities within the project. To ensure clear project communication, shared Google Doc workflow charts were used to track the processing, scanning, and metadata creation. An additional form was produced to capture information from each scrapbook including the call number, title, alternative title, year range, creator, physical description, and unique content information. This form was kept with the scrapbook at all times and was progressively used by the three departments involved, as it worked its way through each phase of the project. The Project Team had anticipated that the scanning of these scrapbooks would be slow going due to the use of flat-bed scanners, varying formats, preservation issues, and the challenge of scanning foldouts and inserts. Team members hoped that the crafting of metadata might keep pace with the scanning operation. But, all parties recognized that the project's workflows would have to be refined after the scan of a sample set of scrapbooks.

With the scanning of the first batch of scrapbooks, it was determined that the scanning team was exceeding its estimated rate and that the metadata team was overwhelmed. The metadata team struggled with mastering cataloging terms and format, researching the historical context of specific scrapbooks, and the writing and editing of short metadata entries all while trying to match the rate of the scanning team. These project archivists were not skilled in original cataloging. The disparity in rates as well as the news that the survey of other hidden collections had revealed over one hundred sixty unaccounted scrapbooks led to some internal team frustration. Many of these newly discovered items had been misfiled, mislabeled, or simply had never been accessioned. What had been a manageable processing and digital project of 82 scrapbooks and roughly 3500 scanned pages was evolving into a large scale project of 244 scrapbooks and some 15,000 scanned pages. The original work plan had not taken into consideration any possible "project creep."

To address the growing tension within the team, a project meeting was convened to consider each

team's expectations and department goals. This facilitated discussion helped to highlight differences in expectations regarding workflows. Project members acknowledged that the scanning of items was a very different task than researching a scrapbook and describing its historic value. Members also acknowledged that metadata creation was time intensive. The group concluded that the various team's expectations had to align with the project's central goals.

To better streamline the processing and digitization of this growing scrapbook project, the project team reconsidered project responsibilities to better support the creation of metadata. For example, the scanning team was now asked to both scan the items and assign basic descriptive metadata such as the measurements and page count of each scrapbook. The scanning team was also asked to input all of this information into CONTENTdm. The cataloging team was no longer expected to serve in a consultative role; they were now being asked to supply a list of applicable subject headings and edit metadata entries. The metadata team (made of archivists) was now focusing its energy on applying its subject expertise to the research and description of these items. The team wrote metadata copy that was then reviewed and edited by catalogers. The catalogers, in turn, imported the clean metadata copy into CONTENTdm.

With the refining of project responsibilities and the realignment of team goals, the overall production rate of metadata began to rise. The working teams no longer "siloed" their responsibilities; instead, archivists and librarians were now leveraging their skills in new ways to support this large scale digitization project. The project team was also applying a more holistic approach to making a "hidden collection" visible and accessible. Instead of developing multiple work plans that moved a collection through distinctive stages of processing that might involve coordinating different department workflows and priorities, the project team streamlined workflows, clarified a shared project vision, and stressed open communication.

Preservation: Rehousing the Collection and the Use of Digital Surrogates

The scrapbook project plan also sought to address the collection's long-term preservation needs. Due to the scrapbooks open shelved storage, the collection was at great risk. To be sure, the project team believed that the creation of digital surrogates would help in the overall preservation effort by encouraging patrons to examine scanned scrapbooks online and thus minimize the wear and tear caused by the handling of these fragile items. Nevertheless, the creation of digital surrogates did not address the immediate need to stabilize the collection. With the initial surveying of the collection, SCUA staff also analyzed the preservation and storage needs of these items. The staff determined that the interleaving of acid-free paper between the pages would offer some minimal intervention and help address such preservation concerns as: newsprint, photograph to photograph contact, as well as the acidification of pulp paper. Along with interleaving, staff purchased flat archival boxes to store scrapbooks in a more protective and stable setting. Many of the scrapbooks had damaged bindings and loose paper inserts. Finally, staff also secured new over-sized shelving to hold a wide range of different sized storage boxes.

The Incredible Growing Collection

The department's original survey of its "hidden collections" helped to spark an internal discussion of processing and digitization projects. This moderate-sized collection was seen as a good test case for piloting a new approach in combining all aspects of the processing and digitizing of collections from start to finish. At the same time, Special Collections and University Archives was also preparing for the relocation of its collections to a newly renovated space. Preliminary planning for the construction of staff offices, researcher room, HVAC system, and stacks area began in 2006. In 2010, bids were submitted and construction began in 2011. The project was completed in

2012. Throughout this six year project, Special Collections and University Archives considered the issues of improving access to collections, reviewing collecting priorities, planning for collection growth, and gaining intellectual control over all existing collections. They also had to prepare collections to be physically moved; therefore, all collections had to be boxed and labeled. All collections (processed and unprocessed) had to be surveyed.

By chance, the scrapbook digitization project began roughly at the same time as a general review of all department collections was being carried out. Staff surveyed various unprocessed "hidden collections" and discovered scrapbooks that had been mislabeled or tucked in with non-related items. For example, one unprocessed collection had a boxed labeled "binders" that contained scrapbooks. Staff also found scrapbooks in processed collections that did not have a record of a scrapbook in the collection's finding aid. As the pace of the surveying and rehousing of collections increased, the number of scrapbooks "found" also increased.

In addition to discoveries within the department's existing collections, Special Collections and University Archives was promoting increased outreach to the University community through faculty engagement and records management initiatives. In speaking to faculty and department heads, staff emphasized the department's mission, its distinctive service and research support, as well as its unique collections. Staff also spoke about its online collections and current digitization projects. Hearing of the scrapbook digitization project, several academic chairs donated departmental scrapbooks to the project. SCUA's surveying of its collections as well as its outreach efforts to the University community contributed to the scrapbook collection tripling in size and extending the project's completion due date by several months.

Conclusion

With the processing and digitization of the scrapbook collection of University history, Special Collections and University Archives has been able to promote both the collection's rich content as well as its online access. SCUA staff have spoken to faculty about ways to incorporate this collection into course assignments and lectures. The staff have themselves considered how this collection can be integrated into campus walking tours, information literacy classes, exhibits, class demonstrations, as well as for a proposed mobile app for a self-guided walking tour. The scrapbook digitization project also produced an effective prototype for processing and digitizing hidden collections. Indeed, Special Collections and University Archives will be using this model for the processing and digitization of another scrapbook collection (found in its manuscript holdings). The manuscript archivist has identified 70 scrapbooks and is excited about applying the lessons learned on the previous scrapbook project to help expedite the efforts to increase the use and visibility of this collection. A great deal of attention will be directed towards cross-training project staff and the managing of team member's expectations. The leadership of the University Library is excited about ongoing efforts to improve the management of cross department projects and the arising opportunities to leverage the expertise of non-SCUA staff members to assist in future digital projects.

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[1] Barbara M. Jones, "Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers: Creating Access to Unprocessed Special Collections Materials in America's Research Libraries," RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage, 5:2, (Fall 2004), 88-105.

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Putting Private Papers on Deposit: A Case Study

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As the part-time Archivist and Curator of the Massachusetts General Hospital, I am occasionally free to moonlight as a consultant for other organizations in need of advice about what to do with their historical records. For several years I have served as Consulting Archivist for the Wakefield Charitable Trust, an educational foundation that administers the buildings, grounds, and fortune bequeathed by Mary M. B. Wakefield, the heiress of a venerable Brahmin family. Mrs. Wakefield lived on a twenty-one-acre estate (now known as the Wakefield Estate and Arboretum) in a semi-rural part of Milton, a Boston suburb. In younger years she was a talented landscape architect and an advocate for environmental causes. She died at an advanced age in 2004 after years of illness accompanied by mental confusion. Her will stipulated that her property (buildings and grounds, as well as investment income) should be used for some worthwhile educational purpose. The terms were not clearly defined, but it was known that she wanted the estate's gardens and arboretum maintained for public enjoyment.

Distinct horticultural areas on the estate include terraces, lawns, meadows, a rose garden, an apple orchard, pastures, a cultivated dogwood grove, and natural woodlands. Song birds frequent the many well-stocked feeders, and wild turkeys nest in the underbrush. Major buildings include the rambling, Federal/Georgian style Isaac Davenport Mansion (1794), a farmhouse (ca. 1735), and a barn (ca. 1866) used over the years for horses, carriages, vintage cars, and, more recently, as storage for books and papers. Smaller structures include an eighteenth-century carpenter's shop and early-twentieth-century buildings like the "Red Cottage," the sheep shed, the henhouse, a gazebo, the root cellar, and a mist house. In the winter of 2007, with help from a stalwart archivist-in-training, I completed a survey of manuscripts, books, periodicals, and other paper-based materials scattered throughout the estate's many buildings. The mansion, which is chockablock with oil paintings and antique furniture, reminded my assistant of the big house behind the Bates Motel in *Psycho*. My thoughts turned to Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations*.

The papers were voluminous and thoroughly disorganized. Materials were, for the most part, randomly or idiosyncratically distributed among 309 boxes, baskets, shelves, steamer trunks, suitcases, drawers, cupboards, binders, and loose piles in the mansion, farmhouse, and barn. Each numbered entry on the survey list included the name of the room, attic, or basement in which the materials were found (e.g., "Mansion – Pink Bedroom – Basket 101") with an estimated quantity. Squirrels and mice seemed much at home in the accumulated clutter, so gloves and dust masks were indispensible accessories. Many materials, including eighteenth- and nineteenth-century family papers, were seriously endangered by poor environmental conditions, and only a small percentage had been kept in ways that hinted at the information they contained. No one beyond a small circle of people associated with the estate knew of the existence of the papers, and the contents were unknown even to them.

The Trust places heavy emphasis on education, and I accordingly integrated Simmons Library School students who were studying to be archivists into as many aspects of the Archives Project as possible. Six different graduate students worked on the project, usually two per semester, and several returned for more than one semester. The Trust paid them a modest wage, using investment income; no outside funding was applied for or received. The students targeted specific

types of documents by referring to my survey lists. I transferred batches of materials selected for processing to a de facto processing area in the old farmhouse. After listing and arrangement in acid-neutral folders and boxes, the papers were shelved in temporary storage rooms in the same less-than-fireproof building, subject to violent swings in temperature and humidity and occasional visits by rodents. The students were not inspired with confidence by the rat poison left in strategic locations or the antiquated fire suppression equipment. On one occasion, my fingers groped a dead rat while reaching for potato chips in a bag left in the farmhouse kitchen over night – its remains were unpleasantly cold and wet.

The papers include deeds, correspondence, diaries, and images relating to the Davenport, Hayward, Cunningham, Binney, and Wakefield families. Among the highlights are letters written by a young Civil War doctor, journals describing a mid-nineteenth-century voyage to China, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century land records, and an account of cow pox vaccination from 1790. The Archives Project complemented other educational initiatives on the estate by improving physical and intellectual access to historical plans, maps, blueprints, drawings, photographs, planting schemes, bills, etc., related to the buildings and grounds. It also organized and facilitated use of a wealth of biographical and genealogical documents. People associated with the estate in one way or another made good use of the collections once they had been processed. These on-site researchers included the estate's Landscape Supervisor and Educational Coordinator, one of whose on-going projects aims to restore gardens, ponds, paths, stone walls, and other overgrown or neglected landscape features to reflect Mrs. Wakefield's intentions; graduate students from the Preservation Studies Program at Boston University, who study buildings on the estate; material culture scholars from the Winterthur Museum; and high school students supervised by the B.U. Department of Archaeology, which oversees digs on the property. A rare books expert from Simmons Library School catalogued and studied the titles owned by different families in different eras.

I attempted to orient the Trustees to the objectives and protocols of the Archives Project by drafting a mission statement: "The mission," I wrote, would be "to serve the purposes of the Trust in accordance with the provisions of Mrs.Wakefield's will [which] aims to preserve the houses and grounds of the Wakefield Estate and Arboretum for the education and appreciation of members of the public…interested in the historical and horticultural significance of the property. A specific goal…will be to document the history of the Estate and the people who were are a part of that history through identifying, collecting, and preserving historically significant papers and records. The Archives will serve and promote the interests of the Trust by appraising, collecting, organizing, preserving, and providing physical and intellectual access to historically significant papers and records in a responsible manner according to established professional standards and guidelines; and promoting the educational purposes of the Trust…." My statement of policies and procedures detailed more specifically what was suitable for inclusion in the archives and special collections: "Photographs, architectural plans, blueprints, deeds, wills, and other materials documenting the physical appearance of the buildings and grounds of the Wakefield Estate throughout its history; [and] photographs, correspondence, diaries, reminiscences, videotapes, sound recordings, and other materials documenting key people and activities associated with the Estate, including family papers…."

I further explained that a well-considered Archives Program should go beyond processing collections to include safe, climate-controlled space; preservation activities to ensure the long-term survival of collections; and a person carefully trained in archival methods to administer policies, answer reference questions, and oversee other essential activities. I prepared a series of reports discussing the key points that such a program should embrace. Eventually, the Trustees asked me to elaborate, and I accordingly drafted a number of alternative proposals about how to plan for

safer, long-term storage and how to provide better physical and intellectual access to the papers. I calculated cost estimates for each option. Proposed alternatives included constructing a free-standing, climate-controlled research facility on the grounds or renovating limited-access, climate-controlled space in an existing building. But the nature of old wood-frame buildings begs consideration of how much weight their floors can sustain. Too much weight in the middle of a room can lead to structural damage or collapse, and shelves placed too close to exterior walls expose boxes to unacceptable dampness. Additional options discussed the pros and cons of renting off-site space near Harvard, B.U., or another research university, and placing papers on deposit at a local university or historical society.

After prolonged deliberation, soul-searching, and delay, the Executive Director and Trustees, in consultation with me and others, decided to put the paper-based historical collections on deposit at a repository in the Boston-area where they would be more readily available to a wider spectrum of scholars, but still close enough to be used by the estate's own educational programs. The result was a deposit agreement between the Trust and the Massachusetts Historical Society (MHS) in Boston. A processing archivist at the MHS is reorganizing the collections to make them more compatible with the historical society's preferred finding-aid style. Finding aids are, or will be, available on-line by means of ABIGAIL, the "Automated Bibliographic Information Gateway and Internet Link," a well-designed catalogue named for the capable wife of President John Adams. The decision was influenced by the fact that the MHS could provide improved environmental conditions; increased safety from fire, flood, and theft; and enhanced intellectual and physical access (via ABIGAIL and a carefully supervised reading room).

It was duly noted that the spirit of Mrs. Wakefield's will establishing the Trust did not specify that papers or objects needed to be kept on-site. Depositing family papers at a well-appointed historical society and lending artwork to prestigious and well-frequented museums seemed to be in perfect harmony with Mrs. Wakefield's intentions, and the arrangement is working well for all concerned. A particularly attractive incentive for the Trustees was that the arrangement with the MHS did not cause any additional drain on the limited financial resources of the Trust. Other options, if adopted, would have required construction or renovation, installation of special environmental controls, better fire prevention systems, adequate office and reading room furniture, additional communications equipment, and a permanent (albeit part-time) staff member to administer the archival collections.

The hodgepodge of papers gathered from the Wakefield Estate, now safer and more easily accessed, have much to reveal about the social connections, culture, aspirations, accomplishments, and disappointments of privileged Americans who walked the same acres and inhabited the same buildings over the course of three centuries. State-of-the-art archival practices and the amount of money that trustees or directors are willing to spend can sometimes seem irreconcilable. But difficult circumstances urge creative solutions, affording archivists the opportunity to educate others about what we do and why. Flexible, cost-effective, and responsible solutions can often be found when the fundamental goals of an archival program are understood and appreciated by all concerned.

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Archives, their Reception, and the Nature of Archival Reading

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Introduction

This paper offers an introductory discussion on how archives contain and disseminate information, considered within the context of what is hidden and revealed during the process of creating archival collections. Here, the view is put forth that archival collections can be conceptualized as works, and acts of archival access and use, as acts of reading. The archivist, in evaluating and making accessible archival collections, helps to determine what archival information will remain hidden, and what will be revealed, within a body of records, and how the user will read the archival work.

Archives can be described as assemblages. As objects, they are made up of bodies of records, structures for containing records, and structures for representing and facilitating access to records. They are also defined by policies and practices that determine how they are to be processed, appraised, arranged, and described. The creators of records and the archivist both contribute to the artifactual identity of archival collections. Creators generate the archival content, which is later augmented by the archivist's contribution of archival structures and interpretations, if the records are selected for retention within an archival repository. The records creator and the archivist are collaborators in the creation and construction of archival collections. [1]

In considering the nature of hiddenness in archives, I offer the perspective that conceptualizing archival use as an act of reading can be helpful in positioning archives as works that are constructed and maintained so that they may be read. This perspective can also aid in better understanding the role of the archivist in constructing archival objects, and in facilitating archival reading and reception. This can allow for a consideration of what can, and what cannot, be read within archival collections.

Archives as Works

The archival collections that reside within an institution are defined by generative and creative acts. Records are generated by creators, and if they are acquired by an archival institution, will be processed, appraised, arranged, and described. During this process the archivist acquires, either through donation or acquisition, content that possesses archival potential, and sculpts it into an archival object if long-term preservation and retention is warranted. Archival objects can be conceptualized as archival works, a particular category of texts. This work is made up of the original records, but in addition, also includes the arrangement and description structures that are created by the archivist during the process of constructing the archival object. An archives, initially defined by the enduring values that merited its being kept and preserved, also becomes defined by these additional archival structures. The mark of the records creator, and of the archivist, are present in equal measure. [2]

Records with archival potential, once evaluated and processed by the archivist, become part of the archival work. A primary distinction that exists between an archives and the body of records from which it is generated is the nature of what structural characteristics are made visible, and which are left implicit. In the archival work, through the processes of arrangement and description, the

archivist reveals the material and content structures that exist within a body of records. These include the physical and intellectual relationships that cause individuals records to form an organic whole. In addition to this materiality, the records are also defined by their intellectual contents and their contexts. The physical objects contain accounts of events, activities, ideas, actions, and conditions. A critical aspect of the archival function is to reveal these narratives and characteristics to the user.

An archives, like a book, or a painting, is a physical object. And like the book, and the painting, an archives has a maker. An archivist works in records to create the formal archives that come to reside within his or her repository. Through appraisal, arrangement, and description, the archivist decides what qualities, characteristics, and relationships will be made most explicit and most visible. [3]

Primarily, the intention of the archivist is that the collections under his or her care will be used as evidence. The particular quality of this evidence will vary. Archives can be used for purposes of accountability, historical evidence, cultural value, and community empowerment. However, though the particular nuance of this use may vary, the communicative function in each of these instances of use is not unique. As objects, archives are valuable because they are capable of communicating information that can be used to create knowledge and meaning. [4]

An archival work, like any text, can be the subject of multiple readers and multiple readings, and can be used to generate multiple meanings and interpretations. The archival text is defined by its fluidity. Readers may present an archives with a multitude of questions, theoretical perspectives, and intentions. The dynamics of a collection may change as additional records, and related collections, are discovered or acquired. However, this fluid text does have its boundaries. The archivist works to construct an archival text that possesses hospitable contours, which allows for the containment of, and access to, records.[5] In reading archival works, in addition to evaluating the evidence contained within the records, the user, whether consciously or unconsciously, engages with an account of archival practice, and interacts with mechanisms that contain and describe archival structures and contents. [6]

Archival Use as an Act of Reading

How is an archival work read? What is read when an archival collection is used? The records creator, and the archivist, both contribute structures and contents that influence the characteristics and form of the materials that make up the archival work. Records creators generate, compile, and destroy records. This influences the documentary characteristics of the material with which the archivist will work. The archivist is a scholar of documentary relationships. In gaining physical and intellectual control over records with archival potential, the archivist by necessity, reads, documents, and interprets relationships. These relationships are complex, and are artifactual, evidential, and documentary in character. [7]

Through understanding and documenting these relationships, the archivist obtains an understanding of the complexity that exists within bodies of records, which allows for usable archives to be constructed. The archivist's interpretation of the records creator's documentary structures, and the practicalities of physical arrangement, augments those already present within the documentation. Archival readers will interpret these structures as they navigate through collections, boxes, files, either analog or digital, and when they decipher the documentary and intellectual relationships that exist between artifacts.

Archival reading includes an engagement with the physical structures that order and contain archival objects and documentary relationships. This type of reading can be described as one that evaluates the archival collection as a physical object. These structures contain and support the content contained by the records. An archival reading includes an assessment of archival content, and archival structure. The two cannot be separated from one another.

In using an archival collection, the reader engages with the records creator and the archivist. The creator generates the content in the form of records, and then the archivist determines to what extent they warrant inclusion within an archival repository. Both parties influence what is included and excluded from an archival collection. Archival reading consists of evaluating what is present, and what is absent, from an archives, both in terms of structure, and in content.

An archival reading begins with engagement with the collection's representation. [8] The finding aid documents the collection, the actions of the creator in generating the records, and offers an account of the archival work, including the archivist's choices in creating containment and descriptive structures. What the finding does not tell, what it does not reveal about an archives, or about the choices that were made in its arrangement and description, is as important as what is described. In creating usable archives, decisions to exclude, remove, and destroy are necessary ones. This is most explicit in our considerations of appraisal and acquisitions, but it is also a critical aspect in our considerations of what aspects of a body of records to include, and exclude, through description. What does the archivist choose to reveal? What information remains hidden? What factors influence how the archivist addresses these questions? [9]

Archival use as a reading practice is made up of multiple readings of the elements that come to form the archives that resides within repositories. Records, documentary relationships, and archival structures determine how an archives functions as a mechanism for communicating evidence. Archival content cannot be accessed without engaging with the archival structures that contain and describe the sources themselves. The structures of containment and representation, though designed to augment records, are not secondary to them. The archival work is made up of records and documentary and archival structures. These influence what a collection will communicate, and also what it will not communicate.

The Nature of Archival Reception

Archival practice is defined by its concern with the evaluation and consideration of values. Because archivists make decisions about what should remain with an archival collection, what should be described within a finding aid, and how the documentary structures of a collection should be represented, they ensure that there are usable collections. In order for collections to reveal themselves and the information that they contain, they also must withhold information. Not all archival information can be made usefully explicit.

How can archivists determine to what extent their collections effectively communicate what they contain? How can archivists evaluate the degree to which their practices assist in communicating their collections' values? Positioning archives as works, and archival use as an act of reading, might be one possible approach for evaluating how effectively, or ineffectively, a collection fulfills its function. Conceptualizing our collections as works, and our users as readers, also requires that we conceive of our collections as objects that will be received, rather than simply accessed. This places emphasis on the communicative power of archival collections. Asking to what degree a collection is able to communicate its contents, its relationships, and the role of the archivist in its construction, can aid archivists in evaluating what information collections could possibly communicate to archival audiences. The evaluation of communicative value can serve as a

measure for evaluating the integrity and usability of archival collections.

Conceptualizing archival use as reading, and archival access as reception, also positions the archivist as an active agent in mediating the relationships that exists between the archival works and archival readers. The records creator generates archival content, the archivist creates archival structures and interpretations, and from this, the reader creates knowledge and meaning from archival information. The archivist helps to structure what will be read and influences how the user will perform his or her reading practices. Considering the active role of the archivist in constructing these objects places emphasis on considering the nature of what is hidden within collections, and what they should reveal.

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[1] For a discussion of the concept of the assemblage as it relates to information objects see Bernd Frohmann, Deflating Information: From Science to Documentation (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004): 264.

[2] Wendy Duff and Verne Harris, "Stories and Names: Archival Description as Narrating Records and Constructing Meanings," Archival Science 2 (2002): 263-285.

[3] The author acknowledges Dr. Richard J. Cox for introducing this perspective on archival practices and archival objects.

[4] James M. O'Toole and Richard J. Cox, Understanding Archives and Manuscripts (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006): 40-43.

[5] Duff and Harris, Stories and Names: 279.

[6] D.F. McKenzie, Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 13-14.

[7] O'Toole and Cox, Understanding Archives: 87-107.

[8] Elizabeth Yakel, "Archival Representation," Archival Science 3 (2003): 1-25.

[9] Heather MacNeil, "Picking Our Text: Archival Description, Authenticity, and the Archivist as Editor," American Archivist 68 (Fall/Winter 2005): 278.

Collection Level Records for Hidden Collections: Our Responsibility to Users

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Statement of Problem

There is no shortage of literature discussing processing backlogs in United States repositories and the need for a shift in approach.[1] With many institutions currently facing decreased support and funding it becomes essential for collection management practices to be as efficient and productive as possible.

This article will highlight the experiences of Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) at the University of Oregon Libraries in uncovering hidden collections by utilizing collection level records and supporting this work with a grant by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Over the past several years we have undertaken a major effort to assess our backlog, realign technical service priorities, and create efficient policies, procedures, and workflows.

Department background

SCUA is comprised of manuscript collections, historic photographs, rare books, and university archives. Our mission is to provide public access to records that document the university as well as defined collecting areas.[2] Our collecting strengths include Oregon and Pacific Northwest politics and history, transportation, power, and mining in the West, natural resources and forestry, journalism, conservative and libertarian movements, intentional communities, missionaries, and literary collections including writers of western fiction, science fiction, and illustrated children's literature.

SCUA holds an estimated 45,000 linear feet of materials comprising over 3,000 collections. We accession an average of 700 linear feet of materials each year. Staffing includes 6.75 FTE faculty positions, 1.25 FTE staff, and 1 FTE grant funded position. Our student, intern, and volunteer work force are essential for daily operation and estimate between 4 to 6 FTE throughout the year.

Hidden Collections

As of the summer of 2010 only 20% of our collections were discoverable online either in the form of a MARC record in the library catalog or an EAD finding aid in Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA). Thus, the majority of our collections were "hidden" from users since the collections had no online access points. Even staff did not know about most of the collections content and could not inform users of relevant collections during a reference interaction.

University archives collections were largely hidden from staff and users because 97% of collections were never processed or received any attention since initial accessioning, if they had been accessioned at all. Our accession records for the majority of materials only contained an accession number, tentative title, and the number of containers. Many accession records were labeled incorrectly, included inaccurate descriptions, and still represented a mix of nonpermanent and permanent records. Since no further arrangement or description occurred after materials arrived, it

was difficult for staff to navigate and make sense of the provenance and context of university records.

Manuscript collections fared slightly better as 26% of collections were described in some way online.[3] While many of collections were processed by archivists years ago, they remained hidden and were rarely (or never) discovered or used as they had no online presence. The majority of these collections had detailed (at times item-level) paper finding aids available within the reading room or only consisted of a single item or folder. Paper finding aids are helpful to both users and staff, but do not solve the problem of online access and discovery.

Previously, many of these collections were considered "processed" as archivists had provided various levels of arrangement and description. In 2010, we began to revise our definitions of processed and unprocessed collections. In SCUA, an "unprocessed" collection is now a collection that has no online access point, regardless of previous arrangement and description work, and therefore remains "hidden" from our users.

This was a big turning point for SCUA, because it enabled us to envision how to harness the arrangement and description work of our predecessors, utilize current technology and tools, and complete a high volume of foundational work with minimal resources.

Collection Level Records Solution

In conjunction with an overhaul of our technical services functions we decided that collection level records offered an opportunity to meet our responsibility to users in providing access to collections.[4] While in a perfect world, we would want finding aids with detailed container lists; this was no longer feasible on our shrinking budgets (and really, was never feasible in the first place.)

Collection level records allow us to provide detailed and concrete descriptions of our collections, alert users to further resources (such as a paper finding aid in the reading room), utilize our resources wisely, and help move the department toward making user-driven processing decisions. For over 1,000 collections under one linear foot (about 33% of manuscript collections) no additional arrangement and description work will ever be necessary for adequate access once collection level records are completed.

Grant Funding

To assist in our efforts we wrote and were awarded a NHPRC basic processing grant specifically to target hidden collections. The project runs from October 2011-September 2013. The main goals and products are:

- Creating at least 1,128 EAD finding aids in Northwest Digital Archives (NWDA)
- Creating at least 1,128 MARC records in the library catalog
- Eliminate backlog of university archives collections
- Significantly reduce backlog of manuscript collections
- Reappraise collections to determine fit in collecting policy resulting in list of possible collections to deaccession

Staffing for the project came from a combination of cost-share and grant funds including the following positions:

- Archivist for Collections Management (project manager; 50%)
- Project Archivist (grant funded, 100%)

- Head of SCUA (5%)
- University Archivist (5%; vacant thus far)
- Electronic Records Archivist/Records Manager (5%)
- Manuscripts Librarian (5%)
- 2 catalogers (12.5% combined)

Implementation

Planning

Over the two-year period before the grant began we made several changes to department policies and procedures to lay groundwork that resulted in a dramatic increase in productivity and efficiency of our technical services functions. Changes included revising (and when necessary creating) collection development policies, employing accessioning as processing techniques, dramatically updating our processing policies, procedures, and practices, and implementing the Archivists' Toolkit (AT) for our collection management and description needs.[5]

Reappraisal

All collections included in the grant (as well as collections for non-grant work) now go through a brief reappraisal process to help prioritize collections. Curators evaluate what we know about a collection, utilize our collection development policies, records retention schedule, and their knowledge of similar collections to make a reappraisal recommendation for each collection before other work can proceed.[6] Performing this reappraisal step before any additional arrangement and description work means we spend our resources on collections that fit our collecting policy and prioritize work on collections with a higher demand or research value.[7]

Automation, Workflow, and Production

Once a collection has "passed" reappraisal it is available for staff (or students) to construct a collection record in AT following detailed, specific workflows and procedures. We gather information from accessions and resource records in AT (imported from previous internal databases), donor files, processing files, paper finding aids, and when necessary the records themselves.

We automate the process as much as possible by pre-populating standard AT fields and constructed default text for selected finding aid notes.8 This allows us to quickly add information to a particular record, while still offering an opportunity to edit, remove, or add anything specific for a collection.

We concentrate on writing a concise abstract and a robust scope and content note. Notes describe the current arrangement of materials (or lack thereof) as well as descriptive information about the form, content, dates, relevant people, places, and subjects of the materials. When possible we provide detailed series descriptions by utilizing paper finding aids and/or accessions lists. In this way we harness the work of previous archivists while providing the user a more than adequate overview of a collection.

For collections with multiple accessions, we describe each accession discreetly in the scope and content note. This includes collections whose initial donations were processed as a whole, but have since accumulated accretions. Previously, these accretions remained in the backlog until materials could be intellectually and physically integrated, locally referred to as "reprocessing". This was time

consuming, expensive, and unsustainable as it directly contributed to a growing backlog. Our new strategy allows staff flexibility to easily add new accretions (during accessioning or for backlog collections) to a collection's description without revising previous arrangement. This saves significant time for collections that are large, consist of numerous accessions, or have never been described as a whole.

We have constructed additional text for arrangement and processing notes for collections that have various levels of physical and intellectual arrangement or a complicated processing history. Collections may have received little to no arrangement, have been minimally arranged, be arranged by accession, or have an initial collection with accretions added later on as series. We believe this will help the user understand not only the provenance and custodial history of the records, but more insight into the physical and intellectual arrangement (or lack thereof) of materials.[9]

We strive to include a related materials note for every collection. Previously, this note was only included if a related collection already had an NWDA finding aid. This was a limiting practice. Now we include the collection name and call number ensuring that a) related collections without finding aids are included and b) we do not have to update multiple finding aids when a related collections' finding aid is uploaded.

Contrary to previous practice, we now spend the least amount of time constructing biographical and historical notes. Notes are short and stick to concrete facts rather than providing interpretation. Fuller biographical details may be found in paper finding aids or other sources. While this had been a large focus in the past, we choose to spend our time describing the records in the notes mentioned above.[10]

When draft records are complete they are reviewed to ensure all required fields are correct and any questions are resolved. Catalogers from our Collection Services department assist in performing authority control within AT for names and subjects.

After authority control is complete marc.xml records are exported from AT. Catalogers use a VBR script to convert the files to marc.amc. The script converts the file type and makes global changes to the AT output to fit local practices. Records are loaded into Connexion and reviewed before being uploaded into the UO local catalog and WorldCat.

After MARC export, staff add an NWDA browsing term (a required element in our best practices) to the AT record and export EAD files. These files are then converted using the NWDA Archivists' Toolkit EAD Converter tool to align the files with NWDA best practices and guidelines.[11] Finding aids are then uploaded to NWDA and available to users.

Outreach Efforts

Producing collection level records at a high level allows our staff to easily perform outreach in new ways at an increased level.

Our first step was to create a blog for SCUA: "News and New Collections".[12] A large component of the blog focuses on grant work. Every finding aid we upload to NWDA gets a short blog post containing the collection name, call number, extent, abstract, a link to the finding aid, and a tag to facilitate searching similar collections. For our users, this is just another access point to aid in the discovery process. The blog's internal purposes are: a) making sure our curators and other staff who perform reference know more about our collections and b) using the blog as an outreach tool

by curators.

Curators can repurpose blog information to connect with various user groups. Information can be used to add to current subject guides on various topics as well as create new guides for emerging areas. For example, through our grant collection level work we discovered a need for the creation of an Oregon Politics subject guide. While staff knew of several of these collections, people were amazed at the discovery of how many additional, previously "hidden", collections SCUA holds in this area.

Conclusion and Future Projects

Institutions should consider using collection level records as a tool to uncover hidden collections. We have dramatically increased our finding aid production. Users are extremely pleased that more collections are described online and we are already seeing an increase in reference service.

Beyond the scope of this article, we are harnessing our success with collection level records and developing a plan to eliminate our backlog within the next two to four years. This includes detailed planning, keeping processing metrics, making user-driven processing decisions, and responsibly ensuring that access for our users is our main technical service priority.

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[1] Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist*, 68, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208–263.

[2] The full mission statement is available at: http://libweb.uoregon.edu/speccoll/staff.html

[3] 18% of manuscript collections had both an EAD finding aid online and a MARC record in the library catalog. 8% of manuscript collections had only a MARC record. Ideally, all collections will have both access points, but in the mean time we consider collections with only a MARC record as processed and available online.

[4] We articulate an archivists' responsibility to create access for users through Tom Hyry's six principles. See Tom Hyry, "More for Less in Archives: The Greene/Meissner Approach at Work at Yale" (paper presented at RLG Member Forum: More, Better, Faster, Cheaper: The Economics of Descriptive Practice, Washington, DC, August 8, 2006); Tom Hyry, "Reaccessing Backlogs,"*Library Journal*, Vol. 132 (Spring 2007): 8-9.

[5] For information on accessioning as processing see Christine Weideman, "Accessioning as Processing," *American Archivist*, 69, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 274-283; Donna E. McCrea, "Getting More for Less: Testing a NewProcessing Model at the University of Montana,"*American Archivist*, 69, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2006): 284-290.For information on UO's implementation of Archivists' Toolkit see Cassandra A. Schmitt, "The Archivists' Toolkit as a Collaborative Tool Between Primary Source Repositories," (Presented at the Online Northwest Conference,Corvallis, OR, February 2011); Elizabeth A. Nielsen and Cassandra A. Schmitt, "A Joint Instance of the Archivists'Toolkit as a Tool for Collaboration," (Presented at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists', Chicago, IL, August 2011).

[6] We have developed a worksheet for curators to use to assist in making reappraisal decisions. For "yellow" and "red" collections, curators fill out and save the entire worksheet to assist in further reappraisal and deaccessioning work in the future. This worksheet was developed with the draft of the Society of American Archivists' "Guidelines to Reappraisal and Deaccessioning" (July 2011) in

mind.

[7] For thoughts on reappraisal see Mark A. Greene, "MPLP: It's Not Just for Processing Anymore," *American Archivist*, 73, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 175-203.

[8] Set defaults for Archivists' Toolkit fields include: level, language, extent type, description rules, language of finding aid, sponsor note (since most new records are part of grant), and finding aid status. Notes set as default text (or partial default text) include: conditions governing access, conditions governing use, immediate source of acquisition, preferred citation, processing, arrangement, accruals, other finding aid, and related materials.

[9] Additional note text was inspired and built off those used in baseline-finding aids at the Beinecke Library. We have customized for our specific uses. See Jennifer Meehan, "Baseline Finding Aids @ the Beinecke: Reflections on the Evolving Nature and Role of Finding Aids in Light of Different Levels of Processing" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the Society of American Archivists, San Francisco, CA, August 28, 2008).

[10] For information on researchers' use of metadata elements in finding aids see Joyce Celeste Chapman, "User Feedback and Cost/Value Analysis of Metadata Creation" (paper presented at annual meeting for Description Section Society of American Archivists, Washington, DC, August 13, 2010).

[11] NWDA-AT EAD converter was jointly developed by the University of Oregon and Oregon State University. NWDA now makes the tool available to its members and develops and maintains the tool.

[12] SCUA's "News and New Collections" blog available at:http://libweb.uoregon.edu/tools/blogs/scua

Hidden Collections at the Georgia Tech Archives

Jody Lloyd Thompson, Head, Archives & Records Management Department at the Library & Learning Excellence at the Georgia Institute of Technology

There are a variety of ways an archival collection can be "hidden," such as completely unprocessed or inadequately processed collections, no accession records, improper storage locations or insufficient MARC records just to name a few. The archives at the Georgia Institute of Technology had an unusual "hidden" situation. For years, some of the Institute's key historical documents were unknown to researchers and archivists because the materials were bound.

This treasure trove became known a few years ago when the archivists completed a much-needed inventory. In the history of the Archives, it seems, one had never been done. During the inventory, the archivists noticed very unusual, unique materials inside bound volumes. They were bound historical correspondences located on shelves in the rare book section of the stacks. Most of them seemed to document the early years of Georgia Tech starting in 1885. These bound volumes were the typical black or green plastic binding that you find in most libraries and archives, so it was no wonder they had been over looked for years.

At the Georgia Tech Archives, the collections are typically located on shelves grouped by similar physical formats, such as manuscripts and records, photographs, architectural drawings, and books. The discovery of manuscript materials in the book section was very puzzling and concerning. The archivists had to determine how many other collections would be in the same situation and what other rare Georgia Tech materials would surface. With a small staff (3 archivists at the time, 1 library assistant, and two staff in records management) and 13,000 linear feet of holdings, these just added to the challenges.

Once this oddity was spotted, the archivists conducted a thorough search in the stacks, and they located several other collections including the Board of Trustees (now the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia) minutes from 1886—two years before Georgia Tech opened. One volume even documented the creation of the Institute. Other unique materials the archivists located were the Faculty Minutes from 1888-1965 that included faculty discussions, decisions, and rulings at Georgia Tech. Also, the Lyman Hall Correspondences were another asset discovered. These volumes were from 1896-1903. Hall was the second Georgia Tech President (1896-1905). The materials consisted of letters to other universities and businesses asking for assistance in expanding Georgia Tech's campus, library, and curriculum. Additionally, commencement and quarter-centennial celebration programs were unearthed, as well as a booklet with photographs and text commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of Georgia Tech in 1913.

After thoroughly searching the stacks and uncovering these new collections, the archivists looked into provenance and discovery tools for each of the collections. For most of the materials, provenance was unknown or lacking basic information, such as accession dates, any donor information, and deeds of gifts. To this day, the archivists have no idea when the correspondences arrived in the Archives or why they were bound.

Very limited discovery tools were available for these collections. Some had inadequate MARC records. However, for most of the collections MARC records or finding aids were never created.

Without these basic discovery tools, no one could locate these collections in the Library's catalog

or on the Archives' finding aid website.

The archivists determined the number of collections that needed to be processed, along with the number of finding aids and MARC records to be created or revised. Overall, there were just a handful of unusual collections; however, the historical value was great. These collections were going to be valuable resources for Georgia Tech students, faculty, and alumni.

After the collections were processed and finding aids created, the next step was to promote the collections. The archivists worked with the Library's IT staff to create a "new collections" page on the Archives' home page. There, the archivists posted brief information about the new collections (One can access the new collections page here:http://www.library.gatech.edu/archives/). Also, an email was sent to the History subject librarian explaining the uniqueness of the situation, and the importance of assisting in the promotion of the materials. The librarian distributed a mass email to all History faculty and graduate students.

The archivists also worked with Georgia Tech's Alumni Association's Living History Program to get the word out about the new collections. It creates oral histories and videos about alums and traditions, and the archives staff has worked closely with them over time. The Archives' relationship with the Alumni Association has proven to be very beneficial for two reasons. One, it gives the Archives access to alums, and second, this connection has brought in many donations of alumni's personal and professional materials to the archives.

Lastly, archivists promoted the collections by introducing them during class orientations and demonstrations. This was an easy way to get the word out. Numerous History and English classes and freshmen orientations classes came to the Archives during the fall and spring semesters. The classes typically had one-hour orientation classes and semester long projects. These previously hidden collections, particularly the Board of Trustees minutes and Faculty minutes, gave the students an understanding of the early years of Georgia Tech, and most importantly, it gave them hands on experience working with primary materials.

The archivists learned several important lessons in the discovery and subsequent remedy of the hidden collections. The first lesson was the value of inventories. Although this process took several months, it showed the archivists all the issues that needed to be resolved, mainly inadequate accession records, too infrequent or missing inventories, and missing collections. If inventories had been completed in the Archives in the past, there was a very good chance that these "hidden" collections would have been discovered years ago. These "hidden" collections would not have been so hidden. Second, discovery tools proved their importance. Without these useful tools, collections would remain hidden; if they exist but are poorly executed, it also allows valuable collections to remain hidden. It seems strange for people who work so closely with collections to be unaware of materials in their own archives due to improper discovery tools! Lastly, because of the desire to promote these collections, the archivists used new and different methods to promote their recently discovered collections on and off the Georgia Tech campus. In the end, these "hidden" collections became true gems in the Georgia Tech Archives' holdings.