

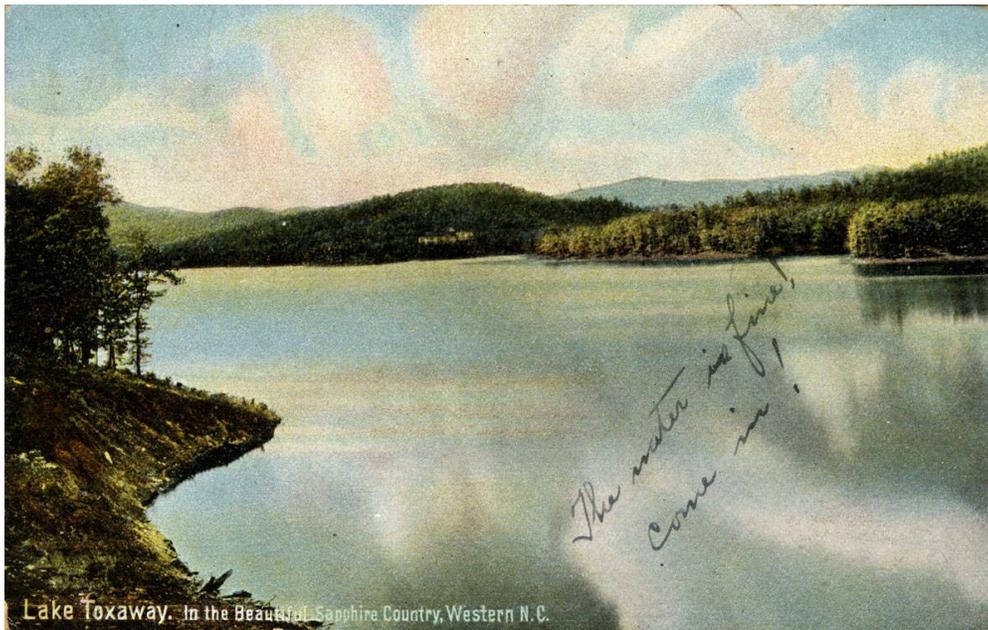


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# Journal for the Society of North Carolina Archivists

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“Lake Toxaway, In the Beautiful Sapphire County, Western  
N.C.” ca. 1910, in the North Carolina Postcard Collection  
#P0052, North Carolina Collection Photographic Archives, The  
Wilson Library, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

# **Radical Love: Documenting Underrepresented Communities Using Principles of Radical Empathy**

by Holly A. Smith

## **Abstract**

This article is taken from a keynote lecture given at the 2018 Society of North Carolina Archivists Annual Meeting, the theme being "Navigating the Web of Community: Archivists and the Ethics of Care." The article focuses on Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor's concept of radical empathy in archives and how archivists can employ these principles, particularly in working with historically marginalized communities.

Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here with you all today. It is truly an honor and a privilege to be a part of this conversation, and to be back with so many dear friends in North Carolina. I extend my profound gratitude to my friend and archival comrades Marcellaus Joiner, Kelly Wooten, Libby Coyner and the Program Committee for the 2018 Society of North Carolina Archivists Conference for this generous invitation to be here with you all today. I would like to thank my family and friends for their continued love and support. Last but not least, I would like to offer a moment of silent recognition for the ancestors who have gone on before us but who are still present in our minds and hearts. A West African proverb states no one is truly dead until they are forgotten. Let us ensure they are not forgotten as we take this pause to remember them and invite them to this conversation.

I grew up in Hampton, Virginia, which—contrary to popular belief by some—is the south. I was fortunate enough to know my grandparents and I treasured the opportunity to sit at their bedside and listen to stories of them growing up in rural North Carolina. My grandfather Percy Hicks had an impeccable memory and would regale me with tales of

growing up in Hertford County, going to the swimming hole with his nine siblings, preparing hogs for the slaughter, and courting my grandmother—whom he had known all his life. My grandmother Beatrice Hicks talked lovingly of picking corn in the summer, sleeping in the attic with her sisters, and how when Papa came to court her, he would spend hours chatting with her father in the den. She would have to call him out to the porch where he could actually "pay a call."

Their memory and stories remain present with me even now and I was blessed to grow up with an expansive concept of history. Another major influence was working as a junior interpreter at the African American Interpretation Program in Colonial Williamsburg. Along with other eager young history lovers—or kids whose parents made them come on a Saturday morning—we learned African folktales, sang African songs, and learned to play music on African-created instruments like the shakere and banjar (the African antecedent to the banjo). We learned stories that enslaved communities shared and practiced dances created on American soil but with African ancestral memory. We saw documents outlining the sale of men, women, and children like cattle and runaway ads where people chose to "steal" themselves into the liberty they were denied. These types of primary documents helped me understand the experiences of black people from the Diaspora but also how those documents can be shaped by who is creating them. The documents during the colonial era were typically not created by black people themselves. In school we discussed the history of enslaved people, Native Americans, women and the working class as tangential to the stories of the Founding Fathers and military victories. What about the people behind these key historical moments, and what are their stories?

History and memory are layered and complex and are seen through a number of lenses. At that young age I felt like the experiences of some communities were not part of our school discussions, or only treated as footnotes to the broader concept of American and global history. From the stories of my grandparents that were not in school books to

the lack of voices from people of color in the curriculum, I developed a strong passion for history and especially the communities I identified with. I wanted to tell these stories that I felt people would not know. I came to love history in a way that felt very personal to me. Before I had the language and praxis to describe it, or the profession to practice it, I had long ago started to ingrain principles of radical empathy in regard to my passion to tell the stories of historically under-documented communities.

I was introduced to the concept of radical empathy by my archival comrades and sisters during preparation for the call for proposals for the 2017 Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. Presenting with my archival sister-comrades Shannon O'Neil, Kelly Wooten, Dinah Handel, Giordana Mecagni, Rachel Mattson, Jasmine Jones, Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez, and Molly Brown, we represented a cross section of the profession— students, mid-career professionals—and shared specific examples of how we put theories of radical empathy into practice by weaving feminist ethics of care into our relationships with diverse audiences, collaborators, and archival materials".

In their ground-breaking article Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor discuss how radical empathy as theory and practice can be activated in archives. Radical empathy is defined as "the ability to understand and appreciate another person's feelings, experiences, etc." Situated within a feminist ethics approach, archivists are seen as

caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual effective responsibility...The proposed care ethics framework sits firmly within the social justice tradition in archival studies even as it critiques and shifts it; in particular the concerns over power differentials and inequities that are central to social justice oriented scholarship.<sup>1</sup>

Caswell and Cifor outline four key archival relationships that a feminist ethics of care centered in radical empathy could

shift. The first relationship is the relationship between the archivist and the record creator. The archivist enters into an "affective bond" with the creators of the materials the archivist is stewarding. The second relationship is the relationship between the archivist and the subject of the records. In this affective relationship the archivist empathizes with the people and communities about whom records are created. The third relationship relates to the archivist and the user. This affective relationship acknowledges the deep connections that users have with records, and those interactions can be deeply meaningful considering what people find or don't find in archives. The fourth relationship is between the archives and the larger community. Here the archivist "has an ethical obligation to empathize with all parties impacted by archival use—the communities for whom justice or impunity has lasting consequences, the community of people for whom representation—or silencing—matter." <sup>2</sup> My colleagues and I also discussed the idea of a fifth affective relationship—that of archivists to each other. Archivists must consider how we empathize and communicate with each other. Our multi-layered and intersectional identities can be just as complex as the records we steward and we must be cognizant of how we support, challenge, and advocate for each other professionally and personally.

After the lightning talks, the presenters served as facilitators for small groups, where participants discussed ways to activate radical empathy in their own institutions and archival practice. It felt effective and engaging to actually have conversations around this topic, and to think of tangible actions we could enact once we left the conference. It was particularly timely to have this discussion during the first year of the Liberated Archive Unconference. Following the traditional SAA meeting, the Unconference was facilitated to "explore how archivists might partner with the public to repurpose the archive as a site of social transformation and radical inclusion,"<sup>3</sup> Community members, activists, archivists, and others came together to discuss partnerships,

resources, collaborations, and avoiding co-operations. Professor-activist-writer Walidah Imarisha set the tone with an outstanding keynote situating the importance of community archives and memory in telling more equitable and comprehensive stories, particularly related to historically marginalized and under-documented communities. Her work on the pioneering Afro-futurist writer Octavia Butler brought me to a frame of mind where we as a society can utilize the past to envision and create the future we want to live in. Activating and practicing concepts of radical empathy in the archive are a way of securing rich, complex visions of those futures.

It was the many evenings spent fellowshipping at the feet of the elders in my family and learning stories of enslaved and free people of color in Williamsburg that allowed me to expand my notions of history, archives, and community. I was able to see my experiences reflected in my grandparents' stories and to see also myself connected to ancestors generations before me. I realized this process was bigger than myself and it was not just a passion but a personal calling to engage in black memory work. My personal theoretical framework is rooted in black feminist theory, particularly the idea that feminism is rooted in the systematic destruction of oppression for all systems of subjection—racism, sexism, colonization, imperialism.

The founding core of Spelman's special collections is rooted in black feminist practices. Dr. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, the founding director of Spelman's Women's Center, envisioned the college archives as a space of intellectual inquiry that celebrates research by and about black women. Whereas mainstream archivists at predominantly white universities might not have documented black women through apathetic neglect or intentional erasure, institutions like Spelman and other historically black colleges and institutions centralize the women of the African Diaspora and the communities and identities which they inhabit. There is not a question that black women's diverse experiences are important. However, being at a historically black college or

university (HBCU) archive does not mean that collection policies, access procedures, and advocacy strategies do not need to be reexamined and refined over the years. We, too, must be careful not to create master narratives of black women's history.

The concepts of self-awareness, openness, and community engagement have guided my archival practice and personal convictions. However I have often found professional challenges in articulating and activating these philosophies. There is a culture in archives that claims we are neutral and our collection philosophies are apolitical. There at times seems to be a negative connotation to connecting your identity and emotions to your work, unless of course you are a person of color. There is the assumption that black people have no problem and in fact are obviously inherently qualified to work with black archives and in black communities. The same goes for indigenous archivists working with indigenous collections, Latinx archivists working with Latinx collections, LGBTQ archivists with LGBTQ collections, and so on. Archivists of underrepresented groups inhabit multiple complex identities. This is where that fifth affective relationship is so critical—building supportive networks among archivists so we can provide empathy among each other in the profession.

I was fortunate to collaborate on a panel proposal with three other sister archival colleagues, Shanee' Murrain, Chaitra Powell, and Skyla Hearn, at the National Conference of African American Librarians outlining particular challenges we face as African American women archivists working with African American-related archives in predominantly African American communities. Some of these concerns include the risk of losing the materials or communities themselves; partnering with organizations and administrations with differing, and perhaps conflicting agendas; working on projects with limited or term funding; and the emotional labor of being a person of color in a predominantly white field trying to support communities that can often reflect our own experiences. We wanted to

emphasize in this panel that as black women archivists, we inhabit intersectional identities and bring diverse experiences to our careers. We advocate for the historically marginalized communities we discussed previously, and we also support one another dealing with professional microaggressions, institutional roadblocks, and recognizing the emotional labor we expend as black women in memory work. We want to be good stewards and serve as a bridge between communities and institutions, while being careful not to feel co-opted or to serve as a representative in any way as the sole black person speaking for an organization, or to allow African American communities to serve as props or have stories co-opted and used to further an institution's agenda.

What happens when archivists are not interested or invested in connecting with the communities they serve and document in a way to make communities feel valued or heard? Or when the archivists themselves feel they are being compromised in a certain way? How can we recognize our privilege in inherent ways? As archivists, we first must have a fundamental understanding and frankly, a reimagining of what we are doing. Archivists are not apolitical, passive keepers of dead records of the elite. Archivists actively shape history and memory by what we choose or do not choose to collect, and the meaning and context of archives can shift with time and memory. We should see ourselves as one of many stewards of records in collaboration with many stakeholders.

We must also understand and situate ourselves where we are. What types of institutions do we work with? What communities are we surrounded by, what types of stakeholders do we work with? How does this affect collection development policies, appraisal decisions, public programming, and advocacy efforts? Are we reaching the patrons we seek to serve, or are we privileging certain users? Are we privileging more traditional ways of understanding archives, and not considering the truth within oral traditions, stories, artifacts, and historical landscapes that are not part of the written record? How can we effectively activate practices

of radical empathy into our institutions, relationships, and frame of being? How can this praxis serve as our reference point for documenting communities, particularly those underrepresented in the archival record? I appreciate the notice of limitations on radical empathy in Caswell and Cifor's article to make sure empathy does not cross the lines into appropriation and assumptions.

I do not pretend to have all the answers or solutions—but based on my experiences and observations these are a few ways I think are critical for ethical archivists committed to principles of social justice, equity, access and connectivity. We first must be willing to engage in critical dialogue with archival theory and innovative, creative, and interdisciplinary forms of new scholarship. Archivists at predominantly white universities need to recognize the fraught, contentious relationship their institutions have historically had with marginalized communities within their organizations and in the surrounding communities. We need to build genuinely collaborative relationships with potential donors and partners, which starts by listening. We do not need to come to a community meeting with pre-determined agendas and ways to "help" communities, a mentality that is patriarchal and patronizing. Community partners bring wisdom, knowledge, and expertise of their neighborhoods, traditions, and memory. They do not need to see their collections and stories co-opted by any institution. We need to give donors, researchers, partners and ourselves the space to have emotion and feeling related to archival collections, especially those dealing with trauma or discomfoting events and stories. It grounds us and keeps us connected to the humanity of the people we work with and who are or are not documented. I feel it actually frees us and allow us to build more authentic, genuine connections and to feel more aligned with our work. This is where I find radical empathy and the feminist ethics of care such a revolutionary and powerful practice—its the ability to bring your whole self to the work, and to see that as an asset and not a potential liability. It is the ability to examine our own thoughts,

feelings, biases, and privileges in relation to the collections we steward, the institutions where we are located, and the communities we do or do not engage with, and why.

The term "radical" typically has a negative connotation of unhinged or misdirected, but I feel radical relates more to revolutionary. Radical has the potential power to shift paradigm, to reshape mindsets, to encourage transparency. Embracing radical empathy in archival practice must be a radical reclamation of love. For I believe to truly want to change something I believe you have to love it in the first place.

As a child I always disliked accompanying my mom on most errands for one reason: She always stopped to talk to people, from the store manager to the janitor sweeping the floor. However, as I got older, I realized the important lesson my mother's interactions with others imparted on me, which is how to approach every person with a loving, open spirit. She treated everyone with the same courtesy and respect, no matter their race, age, gender, or class. My mother was the first person to show me the revolutionary power of walking in love, no matter what cause I'm fighting for or whom I'm interacting with. That love lesson continues to inspire me today, and I seek to treat every human being with love, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, ethnicity, or social status.

Archivists can shift repositories into these healing spaces where the power of "radical love" flourishes, where individuals and communities (particularly those that have been historically disempowered) can be renewed and nourished. To quote feminist (and former librarian) Audre Lorde, "It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." I believe open, engaging dialog focused on recognizing and celebrating our global communities' collective differences can lead to powerful conversations and collective action to confront social justice issues that affect us all. As socially responsible archivists, we do not want to privilege someone's story over another's, but reaffirm that all

memories and stories are valid. Whether we are in the field building new relationships with marginalized communities or flagging important details in a biographical note—our work is improving the research landscape for future generations and fighting to preserve endangered knowledge and spaces.

*Holly A. Smith is the College Archivist at Spelman College. She received a B.A. in History and Black Studies from William and Mary, an M.A. in History from Yale University, and an M.S. in Library and Information Science with a concentration in Archival Management from Simmons College. She is passionate about community archives and archival advocacy related to collections for underrepresented groups.*

#### NOTES

1. Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, "From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives," *Archivaria* 82 (2016): 24, 25.
2. Ibid, 39.
3. "The Liberated Archive: A Forum For Envisioning And Implementing A Community-Based Approach To Archives," Archives 2017: Society of American Archivists Annual Meeting Program, accessed July 2, 2018, <https://www2.archivists.org/am2017/program/liberated-archive-forum>.



## **Emotional Labour and Archival Practice - Reflection**

by Nicola Laurent and Michaela Hart

### **Abstract**

This reflection piece is based on the talk given by the authors at the Society of North Carolina Archivists (SNCA) conference in March 2018. They spoke on the topic of emotional labour and archival practice, discussing the effects that exposure to records with potentially traumatising content can have on those working with archival materials. Below they discuss the content of the presentation and reflect on the feedback and responses they received at the time.

To begin, we would like to acknowledge those with the lived experience of out-of-home "care," whom we will refer to collectively as Care Leavers during this article but acknowledge that this terminology is disputed. During our presentation we included an image of the Victorian memorial to Forgotten Australians, which was installed in the city of Melbourne, Australia on 25 October 2010.<sup>1</sup> The inscription reads as follows:

*Here we remember those thousands of children who were separated from their families and grew up or spent time in Victorian orphanages, children's homes and foster homes last century. Many were frightened, abused and neglected. We acknowledge the many shattered lives and the courage and strength of those who survived.*

Nothing we discuss tries to lessen those experiences. Instead it also acknowledges the effect that material contained within some records can have, not solely upon a person accessing the records, but also for the archivists and recordkeepers who have processed them and are making them available for use.

As a result of our backgrounds we saw the need to raise the topics of vicarious trauma and emotional labor for the first time in a professional forum at the Australian Society of Archivists conference in 2017.<sup>2</sup> Following our presentation we created a safer space by turning off all recording devices and asking people to refrain from tweeting, enabling

room for a significant and important discussion with our peers on the topic. What became clear was the need for vicarious trauma to be discussed and responded to within the archival profession more broadly.

When we saw that the theme of the SNCA conference, "Navigating the Web of Community: Archivists and the Ethics of Care" so closely aligned with our topic, we knew we had to attend and participate in the discussion happening outside of Australia.<sup>3</sup>

### **Vicarious trauma**

To position ourselves, we are not experts in vicarious trauma, so will not go into this in great detail, instead preferring to share resources on the topic from experts for further reading.<sup>4</sup> The comprehensive definition we use to describe vicarious trauma comes from the *Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA) Final Report*<sup>5</sup> which states:

*Vicarious trauma describes the internal changes that can occur for a worker who is engaged with survivors of trauma and their trauma material. A person does not have to experience the trauma directly themselves, but could be exposed through contact with survivors of abuse, written material with trauma content or hearing stories of abuse. The cumulative effects of this exposure need to be acknowledged, identified and managed. The impacts can mirror those of the person who experienced the trauma, including sleep disturbance, intrusive and distressing memories and sensory experiences.<sup>6</sup>*

### **Supporting staff of RCIRCSA**

This topic was mentioned by the RCIRCSA in the context of its "Well at Work" program, which it described in detail over five pages in the *Final Report*. The RCIRCSA acknowledged the challenging environment its staff worked in and the need to support its employees. The *RCIRCSA Final Report* states:

*In an attempt to mitigate this risk [of vicarious trauma], we developed a comprehensive staff support framework, called Well at Work, that helped staff to*

*build resilience and recognise the early signs of vicarious trauma, and provided appropriate strategies and activities to manage wellbeing.*<sup>7</sup>

The RCIRCSA described it as their duty of care to provide support for the wellbeing of their staff. They completed wellbeing checks, and in-house peer to peer support and debriefing. Staff training on vicarious trauma and resilience and other wellbeing activities were available to staff, who could pick and choose what would support their individual needs and preferences. The RCIRCSA also understood a need to create a positive work culture, recognising that high workloads and the level of exposure staff had to traumatic material and stories would impact people's ability to continue to be well at work.

#### **Archivists missing support**

Unfortunately, what became clear from our session in Australia was that this wellbeing programme had not flowed down to the agencies responding to the RCIRCSA. Archivists all over Australia-- in government, religious, and other institutions--had worked directly with the records recording child sexual abuse for years but had received no support. The privacy and confidentiality of archival work often means that we are unable to discuss any details of our work and this really highlighted the need for the archival community to come together around this topic and support each other.

#### **Community of care**

Any person potentially affected by vicarious trauma, could and should be part of a community of care that can provide peer to peer support. This community of care was brought to life in the organisers, keynotes and fellow presenters at the SNCA conference<sup>8</sup> and extended the concept of an archivist to archivist relationship. This fifth principle was proposed at the 2017 SAA panel on Radical Empathy<sup>9</sup> to add to Caswell and Cifor's four affective responsibilities in their much-discussed paper *From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives*, and is a concept we wholeheartedly support.<sup>10</sup>

We believe anyone and everyone who comes into contact with the records should be included in the discussion,

whether they are archivists or not, permanent or casual, paid or unpaid, accessing the records as a researcher or as the subject of the record. They are all our peers. The article *Volunteers in Australian Archives* called for volunteers to be included in future discussions on the topic of vicarious trauma because due to "the serendipitous nature of archival collections, archival organisations cannot predict what material will affect whom, nor the level of impact the material will have."<sup>11</sup> Many marginalised communities and advocacy groups use the phrase: "nothing about us without us"<sup>12</sup> and we believe this discussion needs to embody this. Because there is also a need to think about how guests, researchers, and donors might react to potentially traumatising content, there should be processes in place to assist staff in how to respond when such a situation arises.

Many acknowledge that experiences in the archives can be both positive and negative. Julia Mant, President of the Australian Society of Archivists, described archives as "full of emotions."<sup>13</sup> We should not be trying to predict what people will feel and when they might need the support, it should be embedded within our workflow and practices, but in place of that, we can create communities of care and support to provide peer, colleague, and friend support. Anyone who comes into contact with the archives or the people affected by them becomes part of the community of care.

### **Radical Empathy and Trauma Informed Archival Practice**

We turn now to the concept of radical empathy described by Caswell and Cifor as "a willingness to be affected, to be shaped by another's experience, without blurring the lines between the self and the other" and how radical empathy can and should impact archival practice.<sup>14</sup> This section will briefly discuss examples of potential places in archival practice where radical empathy can be enacted using the notion of trauma-informed [archival] practice.<sup>15</sup>

"Records and recordkeeping processes are not glamorous. They are, however, powerful and have consequences in both their presence and their absence."<sup>16</sup> This quote by Anne Gilliland correlates with sentiments in the RCIRCSA Final Report which acknowledged the power of absent records, recognising the challenge it created for the Commission's work, and the ability of people to access justice. In our

Australian discussion, archivists spoke about how the effects of vicarious trauma were compounded by the absence of records, leaving them feeling powerless to help in the face of silence in the records.

If we act on this opportunity for radical empathy and achieving trauma-informed archival practice, this challenge could be a chance to put the community first, to find out how we could support them, and in turn leave the archivist feeling more supported. This is a moment to provide more transparent archival description, using evidence to show records did exist, describing what is known to have existed, and explaining why they were destroyed to fill a gap for the community.<sup>17</sup>

Another example of extending radical empathy in the archives and making trauma-informed decisions is switching from basing decision-making processes on what is best for the archive and instead getting to know the community you're trying to represent. Working together with an under- or misrepresented community to learn what is lacking and then using that knowledge to inform appraisal, access, description, and digitisation decisions could be much more effective to fill the silences in our collections. This was a strong theme throughout the SNCA conference and there were countless presentations which discussed projects that embodied this work, which was heartening to see.<sup>18</sup>

Trauma-informed archival practice should also impact our physical space. For example, only allowing pencils and barring phones, bags or photos is daunting and requiring sign-ups is challenging for those with limited access to ID. There are also physical barriers to reading rooms, with a lack of privacy and comfort often limiting the ability for people to explore the records at their own pace. Archives and collections can also be physically inaccessible for disabled people, due to factors such as buildings not in compliance with disability regulations, unavailability of screen readers, and desks and counters at inaccessible heights for wheelchair users. Finally, we also need to think about our archives' presence in the digital realm, because evidence shows that broken links can have the power to re-traumatise people.<sup>19</sup>

The opening session of the SNCA conference, presented by Naomi Nelson, really set the tone, calling for us to bring our full selves to our work, to empathise, to question our physical places (reading rooms), and to understand the

importance of context. If we do all that, we are most definitely enacting radical empathy and bringing trauma-informed archival practice to life.

This is only just scratching the surface of how we can incorporate trauma-informed archival practice into our workplaces to improve our practices and processes, to enhance access, diversify our collections, and start to put communities first when we make decisions about collections that are about them, impact them, or in any way represent them. People with the lived experience are always experts-- you can join them and provide support by bringing archival expertise.

### **Vicarious empathisation**

The concept of vicarious empathisation, or resilience, is developed from the understanding that exposure to the stories of others develops deeper empathy and understanding. This is not new to psychologists who have been studying the effect of trauma, and who understand that following trauma, a person may not always be negatively impacted but instead can grow. This is also referred to as post-traumatic growth, where it is understood people can have increased empathy, insight, tolerance, and compassion as a result of their experience.

Discussed together, vicarious trauma and vicarious resilience can inform a more holistic approach to archival practice. While briefly touched on here, there is scope for further examination of how these can influence archival practices such as appraisal, description, and release decisions. We also hope that somewhere in this conversation, spaces will be created that allow us opportunities to participate in restorative justice processes.

We believe there is a need for safer spaces and networks to share experiences among peers. There is often stigma around emotions in archives: people have been told to just get over it, or to deal with it, or that it isn't for them to feel upset because the records aren't about them, because that is what people have traditionally had to do. Instead, we want to challenge that understanding and argue that organisations should support their employees and volunteers when dealing with potentially traumatic material. As discussed, this new understanding of radical empathy can in turn improve archives' ability to provide a better, more responsive service to

communities. There will always be a difference in support for lone arrangers versus archivists in large institutions and our obligations around privacy and non-disclosure can act as a barrier, so this is where we need support from each other and to support each other.

*Nicola Laurent is a Project Archivist on the Find & Connect web resource. The web resource is part of a larger suite of services offered by the Australian Federal Government to support people who spent time in out-of-home 'care' as a child in the twentieth century. The web resource provides information about out-of-home 'care' in Australia, linking together the histories of institutions who provided 'care' with the archival records created by those institutions and provides information about how the records can be accessed. Nicola was first introduced to the concepts of vicarious trauma and trauma-informed practice during a workshop organised for staff wellbeing.*

*Michaela Hart is a Senior Archivist at the Department of Health and Human Services in Melbourne, Australia. She was responsible for researching the department's response to the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sex Abuse. Her background in nursing and community development informed what her expectations were around workplace support during this time and gave her the skills to identify and articulate her needs. These also made her realise there was a gap in dialogue around this issue in the archival profession and motivated this response.*

## NOTES

1. Alliance for Forgotten Australians (AFA), "Monuments," Alliance for Forgotten Australians, 2017, <https://forgottenaustralians.org.au/about/monuments> (accessed March 5, 2018).
2. Michaela Hart and Nicola Laurent, "Session 4B - Addressing Separation Loss & Trauma," AusArchivists – TV, 2017, <https://youtu.be/RWZNGrxGs44> (accessed August 28, 2018).
3. We would like to thank the SNCA committee, especially Kelly Wooten for your generous help to make that hap-

- pen.
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**It Takes a Village: creating the USC Upstate Oral  
History Pilot Project**  
by Ann E. Merryman

**Abstract**

This article presents a case study of a pilot project to collect oral histories from under-documented communities in Spartanburg, SC and surrounding areas from the perspective of the Coordinator of Archives and Special Collections. The case study covers the purpose of the project, challenges faced developing the oral history process in a single-archivist environment at a university of approximately 6000 students, and the decisions made by the archivist and faculty members that enabled students to participate in the project as novice oral historians. This article expands upon a presentation given on March 15, 2018 at the 2018 Society of North Carolina Archivists Annual Meeting in Durham, N.C. entitled "It Takes a Village: A Collaborative Approach to Preserving Spartanburg County's Under-documented Communities through Oral Histories."

**Introduction**

In the fall of 2017, the Interim Director for the Office of Service-Learning & Community Engagement at the University of South Carolina Upstate approached the Archives and Special Collections department? Unit? with some questions about the types of collections held by the archives. Specifically, he wanted to know whether the archives held any sort of historical material related to African Americans in Spartanburg County, SC, and whether there would be interest in building such a collection if one did not already exist. The Interim Director had been brainstorming ways to incorporate service-learning opportunities into course offerings with a professor of African American Studies interested in having students collect oral histories from African American community members, and they wanted to find an appropriate home for this collection.

Considerations about time commitments and resources required to produce oral histories were necessary before starting the project. Oral histories are more involved than just recording a conversation between two people and saving it. Louis Starr defines oral history as "primary source

material obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving".<sup>1</sup> Thus oral history collection, by definition, would require a significant amount of skill, care for the material, and a detailed preparation plan. The prospect of developing a base level of knowledge and skill and creating a standardized process for the ethical recording and archiving of oral histories, while still performing the other aspects of my job as a public services librarian and archivist, was completely daunting.

However, this project proposal from the outset was different than simply being told "oh, you should really think about doing oral histories." This time, there was the prospect of help from faculty members and their students, who would act as the interviewers. My primary goal would be to develop the infrastructure, the framework, and the guidelines for producing an oral history that would not only be archivally sound and a strong addition to the University Archives, but also serve as a relevant historical record for future researchers. In addition, I would provide assistance and input to faculty members regarding the timeline and workload, and how best to distribute that workload throughout the semester while still respecting the other learning objectives of the course. Finally, I would be responsible for teaching the students and faculty how to complete all the steps of an oral history project. Despite not having any prior hands-on experience with oral histories, the Oral History Pilot Project was born. During the spring of 2018, the archives partnered with two sections of African American Culture and one section of LGBTQ Studies, each taught by different professors, to help the students prepare for and collect complete oral history interviews.

### **Summary of Major Obstacles and Opportunities**

Many obstacles exist for institutions wishing to collect oral histories, whether they are new to the process or seasoned veterans. These barriers include things like lack of funding and staffing, lack of established collection management policies that could be incorporated into a new oral history program, the wide variety of technological formats available for recording, and preservation issues.<sup>2</sup> The University Archives was faced with all of these to a

large degree, but the biggest obstacle to beginning an oral history program was the lack of staffing. In the archival world, solo archivists working with very little or no support staff are known as "lone arrangers," a fun play on words that belies the struggle of working alone on projects both large and small. Like many other archivists, I have additional non-archives-related responsibilities that take time away from archival work. It is important to understand the time commitment involved when considering any new project, and because this was a brand new project, the projected time commitments were an estimate.

Another hurdle was unfamiliarity with oral history methodology and implementation. I had never participated in or facilitated the collection of an oral history, nor studied the process beyond basic reading and anecdotal conversations with colleagues involved with oral histories. During the initial discussion phase with the two faculty members interested in collecting oral histories, it became readily apparent that this project was going to be complex, requiring a significant time commitment to become familiar with the basic process and determine how best to adapt this process to the goals the faculty members had for their courses. For their part, the faculty had to determine how much course time they were going to allocate so that I could train the students on the oral history process. Having the students in the course record the oral history and do all the associated research meant that I would have to teach myself the process, as well as develop tools to quickly teach that process to students.

USC Upstate's library has budget and technology restrictions that are not always found at larger institutions, which can make undertaking larger and more complex projects challenging. As a lone arranger in this situation, I've become fairly adept at using my limited technology and funding to accomplish projects. However, oral history projects require following a set of guidelines to ensure their future usability and safeguard access for all researchers and historians. This means using recording equipment and software that will produce stable, accessible recordings suitable for archiving but that is also economically feasible on a limited budget.

With obstacles come opportunities, and there were a few of those to offset the challenges I would face. One opportunity presented itself in the growing trend across

campus to provide service-learning experiences for students in many different disciplines. High-impact practices, or HIPs, are a growing focus for undergraduate learning and include service-learning, community-based learning, or collaborative projects, all of which would become components of this pilot project.<sup>3</sup> It seemed like a natural fit to integrate the archives and oral histories with student HIPs. This in turn would provide opportunities for students to connect with various individuals in the upstate region, and link students to communities where they may find themselves working after graduation.

Because this project was proposed near the end of the fall 2017 semester, there was very little lead time to develop the infrastructure and process for gathering oral histories that would begin in the spring of 2018. As a lone arranger, I'm inclined not to reinvent the wheel whenever possible, and that was particularly true in this case. So much great work is being done by many archives and libraries around the country and in the spirit of collaboration, most of these institutions have put their resources online for others to access and use. The challenge was to comb through all of the information, and figure out a way to adapt the various processes available to best support the Oral History Pilot Project.

### **Project Design**

Just like any other research project, frameworks and guidelines needed to be in place before beginning the pilot. Designing these guidelines would inform how the project would be undertaken, and also help to ensure consistency as the project matured. However, there was no way to know if the choices being made at the beginning would actually work once the project began. Much like architectural designs, just because the project seemed workable on paper didn't mean that we wouldn't have adjustments along the way, particularly once interactions with the narrators began.<sup>4</sup>

I started by deciding on some basic technical and design guidelines for the project. First, I decided to use the term "narrator" instead of "interviewee" to describe the subject of the interview. This was done based on the terminology described by the Oral History Association in the introduction section of their Principles and Best Practices documentation found on their website.<sup>5</sup> In addition, I felt

that making a noticeable difference between the term for the subject of the interview (the "narrator") and the student doing the interview (the "interviewer") would be helpful for novice oral historians. Next, we would record audio files only, not video, and use the open-source software Audacity to capture the audio using the student's own laptops. I chose this method because video files can be more complex than audio, require more storage space and technical skill to maintain accessibility, and the archives had no budget for software or high-end recording equipment. Transcriptions would be a necessity, but I wasn't sure at the outset how we would be able to complete them within this project. The teaching faculty would build upon their expertise and contacts in their particular fields of study to arrange for narrators to participate in the project based on the goals they had for their specific courses. The students would work in groups of four or five to complete an oral history from start to finish, meaning students could help each other learn the various skills involved. And finally, a photo of the narrator alone and a photo of the narrator with the group that did the oral history interview would be taken and included with the audio file and transcription.

Once these parameters were decided upon, the next step was to think through the process of recording an oral history and develop documentation targeted towards novice oral historians, specifically students in this case. While gathering and preserving oral histories is by no means standardized, there are many institutions who have done significant work developing systems that are appropriate for a variety of institution types and sizes. An excellent resource is the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Center for the Study of the American South. Their website includes a large number of links to many resources and programs around the United States that were particularly helpful in developing tools and forms for the pilot project.<sup>6</sup> It was important that everyone involved with the project was aware of the protocols and requirements and followed all steps to ensure cohesiveness through all recordings. Six documents were designed to help guide students through the process, all based upon work done at other institutions and adapted to the Oral History Project here at Upstate. These forms are described in more detail in the following sections, with copies of each form located in

the appendix.

#### Oral History Release Form

The entire oral history process hinges upon receiving authorization to use the recorded interview in various formats, including sound bites and written transcripts. It is essential to obtain a signed release form for the recording to be archived as a historical document and used for research. Without written approval, the institution could potentially be exposed to legal and ethical liabilities if the recordings were made public. For this project, two copies were signed prior to recording the actual interview, with one copy retained in the archives and one copy retained by the narrator. The release form also outlines copyright for the narrator and provides an option for restricting usage of the final interview if desired.

#### Pre-Interview Checklist and Biographical Data Form

The Pre-Interview Checklist outlines all the steps prior to recording the interview. One of the most important steps is completing the Biographical Data Form, which lists basic information about the narrator: place of birth, family members, schools attended, any degrees earned, jobs held, and other similar information. This data is used to aid in completing transcriptions as well as in writing the finding aid for the oral history. Often a transcriptionist is not familiar with location names, so having the form allows for a more accurate transcription. In the same way, the form ensures personal names are all spelled correctly. Oral historians complete background research on their narrators using traditional library and archival sources along with online sources. The form is designed to provide places to start the research process, such as considering the historical era in which the narrator spent their childhood or what historical events may have impacted the narrator's life. This background research, along with the Biographical Data Form, allows oral historians to develop a focused list of questions and topics to guide the interview. Students in both courses were asked to develop a list of ten questions, which would help keep the interviews all approximately the same length. Another important step on the checklist asks the narrators about other materials related to the oral history interview that they may wish to deposit with the archives

such as photos, diaries, or publications. These types of supplemental materials add depth and context to the interview. Finally, the checklist includes the required file naming structure to be used with all materials generated as part of the interview, a sample opening announcement to be recorded at the beginning of every interview, and a reminder to practice with the recording equipment prior to the day of the interview.

#### During the Interview Checklist

This checklist clarifies the time goals for the interview process and the estimated time required for setup and breakdown of the recording equipment, ensuring enough time is scheduled. For this project students were encouraged to aim for a 45-minute to one hour recorded interview, guided by the list of approximately ten questions developed from the background research and the Biographical Data Form. The checklist also explains what each member of the group is responsible for during the actual interview. Because this was a group project in both courses responsibilities were divided amongst group members, with one student acting as the interviewer and one student monitoring the recording equipment for technical issues that could occur during the interview. The remaining group members ensured all questions from the list were asked, documented any follow-up questions asked that were not part of the original question list, and took notes on the actual interview. Part of the follow-up assignment for students in both courses was to write a reflective essay on the interview itself, and the process of completing the oral history. A "how-to" section is included as part of the checklist, reiterating the order in which questions and follow-up questions should be asked, along with a reminder to take the photos of the narrator and the group. The photo guidelines include taking two photos (one of the narrator alone, and one with the whole group), without using filters if phones are used to take the photos.

#### Field Notes and Post-Interview Checklist

An explanation of what field notes are and how to write them is included in the checklist, as most novice oral historians are unaware of their importance when archivists write up the finding aid. Field notes should include a description of why the narrator was chosen for the project,

personal reflections and opinions about the interview process, notes on key themes or points that were included in the interview, and possible future research ideas. It is also helpful to include a detailed description of the interview location, all other individuals present (including their roles assigned), as well as any unexpected topics that came up during the interview.<sup>7</sup> Field notes should be written immediately following the completion of the interview, or as soon after as possible. For this reason, students in the pilot project who were not assigned as the interviewer or technology person during the interview were encouraged to begin writing their field notes during the interview session. The field notes help provide context and background to the actual recorded interview, and can help future researchers using the oral history.<sup>8</sup> The post-interview checklist reminds interviewers once more to confirm that release forms have been distributed and photos have been taken, reiterates the file naming structure, explains how to export the WAV file from Audacity, and reminds students in the pilot project of the importance of sending a hand-written thank-you note to the narrator. Also included as part of the post-interview checklist is a *Sensitive Content Checklist* which helps to identify if any actionable content was inadvertently shared during the interview.

#### Audio Guidelines Checklist

For the Oral History Pilot Project, Audacity recording software was chosen for its ability to export recorded files in WAV format, the accepted file format for long-term archival preservation of audio files. In addition to being open-source, Audacity has an intuitive user interface that was easy to teach students how to use and is available for download on both Mac and PC. Students downloaded Audacity to their own laptops, and were encouraged to practice with it prior to recording their interviews. The only hardware purchased for the project were basic dual-lavalier microphones, which help to reduce ambient noise during an interview and allow both the narrator and interviewer to be clearly heard. A variety of microphones are available on Amazon, and customer reviews of the different models helped make the decision easier. The main criterion for the microphones was for them to be compatible for use with laptops (both Mac and PCs). The model chosen for the pilot

project retailed for around \$30, but several similar models fell within this price range. The archives purchased two sets for the pilot, and the Center for Women's and Gender Studies purchased two sets; all microphones were held at the circulation desk of the library for check-out by the students.

### **Implementation**

The two participating faculty members had very different course structures, so I was not able to use the exact same teaching methods for both. One faculty member was teaching a single section of an upper-division methods course, where enrollment was restricted to juniors and seniors and the course was capped at 15 students. The course was newly re-structured into a hybrid service-learning model where the students and professor only met in person once a week for lectures. The other day was available for out-of-class time to work on the oral history project assignment. The professor devoted two class periods during the first two weeks of the semester for oral history instruction. I used the time to share some background on the evolution of modern oral history, to walk through the entire oral history gathering process using the checklists developed for the project, and to teach the students how to use Audacity software and the microphones to capture the recorded interviews. The class met for 75 minutes, so in total 2.5 hours were used to provide training to the students. While I maintained contact with the professor throughout the entire semester, after the initial training was finished the students took control of their projects and were responsible for scheduling and completing all components by the deadline. I was available to the students throughout the semester for consultation and met with several of them at various points to provide additional direction, training, and troubleshooting.

The second faculty member approached the oral history project from a different perspective. This professor was incorporating oral history into two sections of a lower-division course that allowed any student, from freshmen to seniors, to enroll. This meant that there were second-semester freshmen participating in the project, which was a marked contrast with the first faculty member's course. In addition, these two sections each had an enrollment cap of 25 students which was met for both sections, meaning there were 50 students of widely divergent ages and academic

experience involved in the pilot project. Also of note, in this course the oral history assignment was not given large blocks of dedicated time as in the special topics course. After the initial meeting between both faculty members and myself just prior to the start of the semester, I was not in contact with this faculty member until much later in the semester regarding the project. Ultimately these sections did not begin to talk about the project until just prior to spring break in March, leaving the students with far less time to complete their projects which involved the same amount of work. The professor dedicated one 75-minute class period in each section so I could explain the purpose of the project and teach the students the process of collecting these oral histories, although there was not enough time to go over the mechanics of using the recording software Audacity. However, the students knew that they could come to me for additional direction, training, and troubleshooting. Only a few students in this course took advantage of this option, and the requests came very close to the end of the semester.

### **Conclusions**

In spite of the short timeframe for development, the pilot phase of the Oral History Project turned out better than expected and provided some valuable insight into changes that will need to be addressed before undertaking it again. Some changes require the cooperation of faculty members, and some are more technical or procedural in nature.

One of the most important takeaways from the pilot phase was the necessity for sustained participation of the faculty and contact between the faculty and the archives. In the instance of the faculty member implementing the project in two large sections of a single course, it was difficult to know where the students were in the process and whether they needed additional instruction or support due to the lack of interaction. In addition, the faculty member did not share their course syllabus, so I did not have a clear understanding of how much time was being dedicated over the course of the semester to the completion of the project. In contrast, the faculty member teaching the special topics course met with me prior to the start of the semester to ensure that they understood the amount of time needed to invest in the project and that enough time was allocated throughout the semester for the students to complete all the required parts. This

information was then worked into the course syllabus.

The second takeaway from the pilot phase was how much impact a student's academic experience had on their interaction with the project. Students in both courses approached me informally a number of times. I observed that freshmen and sophomores struggled more with understanding the importance of oral history as a means to preserve and document individual experiences and the collective memory of communities. By contrast, students in their junior or senior year were able to draw on academic knowledge gained from other courses to contextualize the stories they were gathering and make connections to their own communities and personal experiences, providing a richer learning environment. This is significant information that will be used to educate faculty interested in incorporating oral history into courses in the future.

Another key learning outcome of the pilot project was that reducing the size of the groups to perhaps three students per group may help with scheduling issues that cropped up. Coordinating class and work schedules between four or five students was difficult for many of the groups in both courses, and potentially allowed some students to not fully engage with the project. Additionally, by reducing the size of the groups in the future students will be involved with more facets of the oral history process, increasing the impact of the project on their overall educational experience.

Finally, the pilot phase of this project has indicated that in order to help support faculty who are providing students with meaningful HIPs, as well as ensure a quality end product, the archives cannot undertake multiple courses or sections for different faculty who want to do oral histories in the same semester. It was far too difficult to manage the varied expectations and timelines for two different faculty members teaching two different courses with two different goals for their oral histories. In addition, the competing timelines impacted other archival projects. Near the end of the semester, I was inundated with last-minute requests for one-on-one training, meetings with students, and other technical issues that were difficult to work into a crowded schedule. Had there been a single course, these issues may have been less overwhelming and would not have impacted my own workload nearly as much.

In the end, the Oral History Pilot Project was a great

However, the technical knowledge gained throughout this pilot phase will help inform changes for the next set of oral histories, and provide a better experience for future students.

*Ann Merryman works as the lone archivist at USC Upstate, and has primary responsibility for the University Archives and Special Collections. In addition, as a member of the library's public services team she provides reference services to students and faculty, creates discipline- and course-specific research tools for the History and Political Science departments, and teaches information literacy instruction sessions for both her liaison areas as well as the first-year composition sections. She helped develop a grant proposal for the creation of a digital preservation program, and designed and implemented physical changes within the library to expand archives stacks square footage and create a dedicated reading room. She earned her Master of Library & Information Science in Archives/Archival Administration from the University of South Carolina-Columbia.*

#### **Appendix A**

- Oral History Release Form
- Pre-Interview Checklist
- Biographical Data Form
- During the Interview Checklist
- Field Notes and Post-Interview Checklist
- Audio Guidelines Checklist



**University of South Carolina Upstate  
Oral History Release Form**

Course Name / Number and Instructor:

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Date of Interview:

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Location of Interview:

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Name of Interviewer (please print):

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Name(s) of Narrator(s) (Interviewee):

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The oral history interview session you are about to participate in is part of a collaborative effort between the University of South Carolina Upstate Archives and Special Collections, the Office of Service-Learning & Community Engagement, and University of South Carolina Upstate teaching faculty to collect, preserve, and make available the unique stories and experiences of various communities within the upstate region of South Carolina. While this interview is part of a class assignment, the final products of the oral history conducted will be integrated into the overarching project, housed in the University Archives, and made available for educational purposes and public use through various electronic means, including the World Wide Web.

By signing the form below, you (the **Narrator / Interviewee**) give your permission for any audio recordings, video recordings, and / or photographs made during this project or submitted by you (the **Narrator / Interviewee**) as supplemental images, to be used by researchers and the public for educational purposes. These include, but are not limited to publications, exhibitions, presentations, the World Wide Web, and any other media now existing or later developed throughout the world. You also grant ownership of the physical property and the right to use the physical property that is produced as a result of your participation here (for example: the interview, audio / video recordings, photographs, and any written materials including biographical interview documents) to the University of South Carolina Upstate. By giving your permission, you do not give up any copyright or performance rights that you may hold.

I agree to the uses of the materials described in the paragraph above, with any restrictions noted here:

\_\_\_\_\_

Name (please print):

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer's Signature:

\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Adapted from the following sources:

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### **Pre-Interview Checklist – USC Upstate Oral History Project**

The following checklist must be completed **\*prior to\*** completing the recorded oral history interview:

Contact your narrator by phone to introduce yourself and your role in the project, and to explain what the goals of the interview are, and the steps in the process. Schedule a convenient time to complete the Oral History interview, and then send a confirmation of the time, date, and location **IN WRITING** to the narrator, either via email (if available) or postal mail.

Inquire about any additional materials that the narrator might want to deposit in the Archives along with the oral history. Documents, photos, or other materials enhance the archival record for future researchers, and help to provide additional context and insight. If the narrator would like to deposit materials such as these, please contact the University Archivist for further instructions.

Ensure the narrator knows that we plan to take a photo of them to include with the oral history interview, as well as a possible photo of them with their interviewer. If there are any objections to this, please inform your instructor.

Provide the narrator with a copy of the **Biographical Data Form** for them to complete and return to you **BEFORE** the interview session; alternatively, arrange a time to meet with the narrator to complete the form together either via phone or in person. This will allow you to use the information to complete your background research, as well as identify any areas that may provide good topics of discussion or questions for the recorded interview. If the information is incomplete or you are unsure of spelling, etc. contact your narrator for clarification.

Conduct **background research** prior to your interview. This may include research on the narrator, but should also include research into the time period of the narrator's life, the geographical area(s) where they have lived, and any significant social or political events that took place which may have an impact on their story.

From the Biographical Data Form and your background research, develop a **list of questions and topics** for the interview and save as a .doc or .pdf file using the file naming structure of the Oral History Project. You will refer to these questions and topics during the interview, but do not feel constrained by them. Allow the conversation to develop and flow from these questions, making note of any follow-up questions asked not on the list. You can also use this list to steer the conversation back towards points you would like to cover.

Assemble all the necessary forms you need for the interview:

- Release Form (2 copies)
- Completed Biographical Data Form
- List of interview questions and topics
- Verbiage for the interview opening announcement (see guidelines)

**Practice with your recording equipment!** Ensure you have the correct version of Audacity downloaded to your laptop (either Windows or Mac). Ensure that you practice with the external microphones, using your list of questions and a partner. Test the playback of the audio file. (see audio guidelines for additional information)

**File Naming Structure for \*ALL\* file types:**

[OH]\_[narrator LastName][narrator FirstName]\_[interview date YYYY.MM.DD]\_[type of file...release, audio, etc.]

**Examples:** OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_releaseform

OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_biographicaldata

OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_audio  
OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_transcription  
OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_questionlist  
OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_currentphoto  
OH\_MerrymanAnn\_2017.12.14\_suppliedphoto

**Interview Opening Announcement verbiage (use with each Oral History):**

"Today is [month-day-year] and this is [your name]. I am recording an oral history interview for the USC Upstate Archives with [narrator name] at [location of interview], discussing [topic of oral history interview]".



**Narrator Biographical Data Form – USC Upstate Oral History Project**

*Information from this form helps supplement data gathered during the actual oral history recorded interview. Please fill out each item, or write N/A if not applicable. Attach additional pages if needed. **PLEASE PRINT.***

**Name:**

**Nickname(s):**

**Place of Birth (City, County, State, Country):**

**Date of Birth (MM/DD/YYYY):**

**Father's Name:**

**Mother's Name (including maiden):**

**Paternal Grandfather's Name:**

**Paternal Grandmother's Name:**

**Maternal Grandfather's Name:**

**Maternal Grandmother's Name:**

**Sibling(s) Name(s):**

**Education (please list all education completed; include name of school and level / degree attained):**

**Former cities and states of residence with approximate dates:**

**Current occupation:**

**Brief list of past positions / occupations:**

**Marriage (dates, names, places):**

**Children (names and birthdates):**

### During the Interview – USC Upstate Oral History Project

The following checklist will help ensure that your interview flows smoothly. Ensure you have familiarized yourself with all the points included here prior to your interview date.

Allow approximately 1.5 – 2 hours for the interview.

The actual interview should ideally be about an hour in length, but you need to allow time to set up equipment, answer any questions, and then conduct the interview.

Make sure you bring a notepad and a pen to take down any notes or additional questions you ask.

Ensure the narrator reads and signs the Oral History Release Form (both copies). Ensure that the narrator understands that they may impose restrictions on how the interview is used (e.g. they prefer not to have the interview posted online but used only within the Archives), and that they retain copyright and performance rights to the material in the interview. ***We cannot accept or record interviews for which we do not have a signed Release Form.***

At the start of the interview, ask general "life history" questions first to establish a rapport with the narrator and provide context for the interview as a whole. DO NOT ask for any contact information including address or phone number on the recording.

Pay attention to and make note of any names, acronyms, or proper nouns that you (or a transcriber) might have difficulty spelling later on. ***Once the interview has ended, ask the narrator to clarify the spellings of these words.***

At the close of the interview, ensure that a photograph of the narrator is taken along with a photo of the narrator and the interviewer together. Do not use any Instagram or Snapchat filters or other photo manipulations; make sure the photo is taken in color, from the waist-up in good lighting so that faces are clear.



**Field Notes and Post-Interview Checklist – USC Upstate  
Oral History Project**

*Field notes and post-interview checklist should be completed as soon as possible following the completion of the interview, to ensure accurate recollections and impressions of the interview. It is recommended to complete field notes and checklist the same day as the interview.*

Narrator Name:

---

Interview Date:

---

Interview Location:

---

**Post-Interview Checklist:**

Write up your field notes as soon as possible after the completion of the interview. This should include a description of why the narrator was chosen for the project, your personal reflections, your opinions about the interview process, notes on key themes or points, and future research ideas. It is also helpful to include a detailed description of the interview location, all other individuals present (including their roles assigned) as well as any unexpected topics that came up during the interview. These notes will assist you in writing your more polished and formal reflection paper.

Confirm you have the signed release form (2 copies: 1 for narrator, 1 for USC Upstate Archive).

Ensure photos of narrator have been taken.

Consistently name all files (audio, biographical data form, photos, etc.) according to the official File Naming Structure (see Pre-interview Checklist for specific format).

Send the narrator a written thank-you note.

Ensure that the audio file is exported as a WAV file and sent to the University Archivist as soon as possible. A working copy of the file can be returned to you if necessary.

Send the narrator a written thank-you note.

**Sensitive Content Checklist:**

Does this interview recording contain personally identifying information such as: a physical address, healthcare information, a phone number, social security number, or any other content that potentially poses a future privacy risk?

Does this interview contain confidential or sensitive information (about anyone) that USC Upstate should consider prior to making this interview available online? Examples: discussions of personal tragedies, medical conditions, sexual abuse, or violence. *I.e., if this interview were your story, is there anything in this recording that you would not want made searchable or available online?*

Does this interview contain criminal allegations against another party?

Does this interview contain potentially slanderous or libelous language pertaining to another living person?

Does this interview reveal institutional, trade, or corporate secrets?

Does this interview use culturally insensitive or biased language?

**FIELD NOTES: (give a substantive summary of the content of this interview; see post-interview checklist above. Approximately 500 words)**

**Additional interview questions asked that were not included on the Question Summary:**

## **Audio Recording guidelines – USC Upstate Oral History Project**

After consulting with other solo archivists undertaking Oral History projects around the country, the most widely suggested audio recording software for a project such as ours was **Audacity**, a free, open-source audio recording and editing software available for both Windows and Macs. The benefit to using Audacity is that it can export an audio file in WAV format, which is the preferred archival file type for preservation, providing consistency and stability to the Oral History Project in the long-term. **This is the preferred method of recording audio for this project.**

Audacity can be downloaded here: <https://www.Audacityteam.org/> Ensure you select the correct version for either Windows or Mac.

Here is a great article about getting started using Audacity for oral history projects: <http://ohla.info/getting-started-with-Audacity-for-oral-history/>

Record to WAV format at a rate of 16 bit / 44.1kHz (this is the default setting for Audacity).

## NOTES

1. Louis Starr, "Oral History," in *Oral History: An interdisciplinary anthology* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, ed. David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 40.
2. Reagan L. Grimsley and Susan C. Wynne, "Creating Access to Oral Histories in Academic Libraries," *College & Undergraduate Libraries* 16, no. 4 (Oct-Dec 2009): 284, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10691310903355903>.
3. Frances Davey, Kris De Welde, and Nicola Foote, "Oral History as Inspiring Pedagogy for Undergraduate Education," *Our Schools / Our Selves* 25, no. 2 (Winter 2016): 110.
4. Patricia Leavy, *Oral History: Understanding Qualitative Research*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 28, EBSCOHost eBook Collection.
5. "Introduction," Principles and Best Practices, Oral History Association, last modified 2018, <http://www.oralhistory.org/about/principles-and-practices/>.
6. Oral History Resources, Southern Oral History Program, UNC Center for the Study of the American South, last modified 2018, <https://sohp.org/resources-2/>.
7. "A Practical Guide to Oral History," Southern Oral History Program, UNC Center for the Study of the American South, 2014, [https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History\\_march2014.pdf](https://sohp.org/files/2013/11/A-Practical-Guide-to-Oral-History_march2014.pdf).
8. Judith Moyer, "Step-by-Step Guide to Oral History," revised 1999, [http://dohistory.org/on\\_your\\_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html](http://dohistory.org/on_your_own/toolkit/oralHistory.html).



## **Laying the Groundwork for a Born-Digital Records Management Program**

by Erin Gallagher and Katie Causier Howell

### **Abstract**

Implementing a digital records management policy is especially difficult when the University Archives isn't sure which records may be at-risk. This paper describes a 2017 Atkins Fellow project to survey how the various departments at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte store their digital records. This project also included a proposed workflow which outlines the basic steps and details involved in ingesting files into a newly-built repository. While this project did not involve the transfer of digital records to the repository, it laid the groundwork for new policies and procedures to address concerns of both the University Archives and University departments.

### **Project Background**

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte is an urban research university that currently serves nearly 29,000 students and employs over 3,000 faculty and staff members. Since 1970, when the first records retention and disposition schedules were written and approved for its use, there has been some form of records management program in place. Today, the responsibility for guiding and promoting the records management program lies with the university archivist, who works in Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) in J. Murrey Atkins Library. This work is supported by a full-time records analyst in SCUA and through a close working relationship with the University's Office of Legal Affairs, especially the public records officer in that department.

In 2007, UNC Charlotte adopted the *University of North Carolina General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule* for use by all campus offices and departments.<sup>1</sup> The system schedule is based on the provisions of Chapters 121 and 132 of the General Statutes of North Carolina and is published by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources. It guides the public universities in North Carolina on the proper retention and disposition for the public records

they create. The retention periods for scheduled records differ based on their subject matter, resulting in some records being transferred to the University Archives for permanent storage, while others are marked for destruction. This schedule is format-neutral and eliminates the need for specific record series for electronic records.

When the schedule was adopted by UNC Charlotte, it established a new mandate for SCUA to collect, preserve, and maintain the University's electronic records. However, at that time SCUA was not well-equipped to carry out this responsibility due to limited staffing and technological infrastructure. While paper records continued to fill the archives and off-site storage, an increasing amount of born-digital records was being independently maintained by the offices of origin.

By the 2010s, the university archivist was concerned that offices were maintaining born-digital records on unstable portable media or other storage devices, and possibly even deleting their records. In 2014, SCUA and Atkins Library Technology and Digital Strategies (TDS) developed and launched Goldmine, a preservation-quality digital repository built on the Islandora platform. With the newfound ability to appropriately store and preserve electronic records, SCUA staff members developed a plan to assess the state of at-risk born-digital University records.

In 2015, Atkins Library developed the Atkins Fellows Program, an eleven-week paid summer residential fellowship designed to provide participant fellows with professional-level work experience.<sup>2</sup> Library staff and faculty interested in hiring a fellow were required to submit a competitive project proposal to be approved by the selection committee. At that time, SCUA did not yet have a digital archivist on its staff, nor did it have a full-time staff member able to work with born-digital University records. SCUA staff hoped to hire an Atkins Fellow who could begin the work of assessing the state of digital record-keeping on campus.

The university archivist and the interim head of Special Collections (now associate dean of Special Collections and University Archives) submitted the digital records assessment project for consideration for the inaugural Atkins Fellow program. Their project was accepted and in the summer of 2015 a graduate student fellow was

hired for the project. The fellow's initial goal in the position was to conduct a pilot project to produce a workflow and processes for the future file transfer of electronic University records. Working with the university archivist and interim department head, she developed a brief five-question survey and sent it out to four high-level University offices: the Chancellor's Office on behalf of the Board of Trustees, Academic Affairs, the Graduate School, and Faculty Governance. The survey asked about the existence of born-digital records as well as their storage, extent, and file formats. Unfortunately, the survey did not generate enough meaningful responses to complete the pilot project, and so the work of the fellowship shifted to developing a more general outline for eventual file transfers and accessioning workflows, among other tasks.

In 2016, Katie Causier Howell was hired as the new university archivist for UNC Charlotte. Eager to move forward with collecting and preserving at-risk born-digital records, Howell formulated a revised plan to gather information about how departments were creating and maintaining these records. During the summer of 2017 she applied for an Atkins Fellow to carry out this plan and continue the work started by the previous fellow two years earlier. In May 2017, Erin Gallagher was hired as an Atkins Fellow with two primary goals. The first was to develop and implement a survey tool to gather information about University offices' born-digital records and record keeping practices. The second was to develop and draft procedures for the transfer and ingest of permanently valuable born-digital University records.

### **Survey**

To gather the pertinent information concerning record keeping practices of University offices, Gallagher developed a survey to learn the content of their records, the context in which they were created, and how they were stored. The results of the survey were used to determine if any records were at-risk, as well as to determine the record keeping practices of the departments overall. To draft questions that would gather the appropriate archival information, she consulted the current *Digital Materials Donation or Transfer Form* used by SCUA, as well as donation forms used by other university archives and special

collections departments.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, she consulted the 2007 *General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule*, as the 2018 edition was under revision at the time.<sup>4</sup>

The final survey tool consisted of twenty-one questions, seen in Appendix A, that highlight which factors will be the most important when ingesting collections into Goldmine. The survey questions were grouped into six categories:

#### Introductory Questions and Contact Information

**File Content and Context:** The questions in this category provide insight into the types of files typically created by the departments interviewed, as well as understanding of the context in which those records were created. Considering this information, as well as the retention schedule, and SCUA's collecting interests, the university archivist can better advise departments on how to store and dispose of their records. Additional questions in this category offer an idea of the date and stability of the digital records, as well as their place within their respective time frames on the retention schedule.

**Volume:** The volume of digital records can affect how SCUA archivists may approach the transfer of records. This question was also important for this project, as the volume of digital records would affect the identification of a suitable candidate for the initial test ingest into the digital repository.

**File Storage:** To gain additional context on the types of materials created by the interviewed departments, the file storage questions inquire about the file extensions regularly used for department documents. With a variety of digital formats, SCUA needs to determine how to ingest and provide accessibility, as different formats may require different software, hardware, and processing. Additionally, this category of questions touches on file destruction, as this had been a concern for Howell and her predecessor. Without the guidance and regular records management required with paper records, Howell was concerned that departments would destroy digital records, rather than archive them.

Backup: The backup category of questions gathers information on how, or if, the departments were backing up their records, and if the departments might require assistance creating backups. This section includes questions on hardware failures, as University departments could be missing important files or need additional instruction on how to proceed.

Accessibility: Finally, the survey asks the interviewed departments about the accessibility of their records, including if any of the records were password protected, compressed, or if they required additional proprietary software to access. This information could affect not only the ability of future users to access the files, but also could affect SCUA's ability to access the digital records for preservation.

Once the survey tool was complete, Howell and Gallagher contacted six departments to conduct the initial face-to-face interviews. They chose to conduct the survey in person so that participating interviewees could ask questions or raise concerns they had about records management of digital records. Howell and Gallagher could respond immediately and engage in useful conversations about current practices. Five departments responded positively to the requests, while one department did not provide a response. The departments surveyed during the summer of 2017 were: the School of Nursing, J. Murrey Atkins Library Administration, the Graduate School, Student Union Activities and Recreation (SUAR), and Research and Economic Development.

Howell and Gallagher selected J. Murrey Atkins Library Administration and the Graduate School because their staff members had all recently undergone training on records management. They also chose to survey the School of Nursing due to its upcoming 50th anniversary, which would likely spark an examination of its records for notable and celebratory materials. Howell identified SUAR as an area of desired collection growth, as their records concern student organizations. The Research and Economic Development department was of interest as a participant because it already had a large body of paper records in the care of the University Archives, and their interview would determine if they had born-digital materials ready for transfer to the archives.

Of the five interviews, four were conducted shortly after the completion of the survey, while one department was unavailable until the end of Gallagher's fellowship. Once Gallagher and Howell had completed the interviews, Gallagher formatted the responses in a spreadsheet for comparison across departments. The results gathered from the department surveys illuminated the level of record keeping literacy around campus. This information also helped determine what measures should be taken to aid the departments in keeping records and in determining the next steps of ingesting born-digital materials.

### **Results**

The review of interview results revealed that a common thread among all of the departments was the use of cloud and network-based record storage. All five departments stored files on Google Drive, the chosen suite of UNC Charlotte, as well as internal shared networks. Dropbox was regularly used by two departments, and only one department noted use of external hard drive storage and continued creation and storage of paper records. The interviewed departments did not regularly use portable, unstable media as storage, as was a concern of the former university archivist.

Another concern raised by Howell's predecessor was that departments would delete the files that they felt were out of date. However, the results of the interviews showed the opposite to be true. Often, the participants noted that they refrained from deleting any digital records, from fear that they could prove useful in the future. At the time of the interviews, the Graduate School was the only department that actively employed an electronic records destruction policy, while Library Administration applied disposition to paper records only. The other departments interviewed did not actively destroy records, whether paper or digital.

Anecdotally, several of the interviewed participants weren't familiar with the University's retention schedule. This unfamiliarity could be due to the fact that without the imposing presence of physical records, these administrative offices were not consulting the university archivist as frequently as is recommended. The interviews themselves, and the act of reaching out to these departments, began the

reintroduction of the University Archives and SCUA as a whole, and raised awareness of the University's records retention and disposition policies and procedures. Those unaware of the retention schedule were eager to learn about it and welcomed direction on how to better manage their records.

Once the survey was conducted with all the participating departments, Gallagher provided, as part of a stretch goal, a suggestion for which department would be a good candidate for a pilot transfer. Considering the close proximity and the previous communication on records management practices, she identified the J. Murrey Atkins Library Administration office as the best candidate of those interviewed.

#### **Additional Materials**

Once the majority of the interviews were complete, Gallagher shifted her focus to drafting procedures for transferring born-digital records to the repository. In addition to these procedures she created supplementary materials, some of which are a direct response to the record keeping questions brought up by the interviewed departments. She created other forms and guidelines based on information gathered from meeting with SCUA and TDS staff.

The draft of high-level procedures for the transfer and ingest of born-digital University records into Goldmine was organized into a proposal workflow. The proposed workflow draws from a variety of sources, including workflows published by MIT and Yale, SAA's *Accessioning and Ingest of Electronic Records Manual*, and the existing SCUA processes used to ingest materials into Goldmine.<sup>5,6</sup>

The proposed workflow, as seen in the appendix, categorizes the steps through four distinct stages in the processing of born-digital materials: pre-transfer, transfer, processing, and accessibility. Pre-transfer steps include the actions needed to determine the records management and transfer needs of the department, as well as the creation of metadata for the records to be transferred. The steps in the transfer section allow departments to explore ways that they can transfer their records to SCUA. The section also includes the first steps SCUA archivists should take upon receiving digital records. The processing steps involve creating additional metadata, descriptive information, and further

preparing documents for ingest into the repository. The final steps, under the accessibility section, involve providing the information and materials for public consumption.

While Gallagher wasn't able to fully define the individual procedures necessary to ingest University records into the digital repository, she designed an introductory, high-level workflow composed of common stages. The granular items within each stage indicate the actions and options that SCUA staff should take when processing born-digital materials. The suggestions put forth by this proposal can be refined and tested to provide a more comprehensive view of digital record ingest once those individual actions are fully developed. The goal for the proposed workflow was to provide a guideline that could evolve to better reflect the processes and tools used for ingest and accessibility as they become more defined. This document will serve as a useful tool as Howell and other SCUA members train additional staff and student employees to ingest materials into Goldmine. It is also a useful visual aid for explaining to campus records liaisons what happens to their department's records once they are transferred to the archives.

Through meetings with SCUA and TDS staff members, Gallagher and Howell learned about the existing workflows being used for non-University records such as manuscripts and oral histories. Once the materials and appropriate metadata are gathered, the metadata needs to be formatted into a schema that the Islandora platform can read. For efficiency, the staff ingesting digitized materials created templates to format the metadata into XML format, according to Metadata Object Description Schema (MODS). To aid future digital records processors with their accessions, Gallagher created an additional template to help format the relevant metadata unique to university documents and records. The template provides appropriate options for the types of records departments may need to ingest into the repository.

The suggested template included minimally required metadata fields as well as additional metadata fields typically utilized for university documents and records. The *creator* and *role* fields are included, as they are helpful to contextualize the information within in the records, but are marked "if applicable" since many records are owned by the office and not an individual. Also included are the *abstract*

and *subject* fields, as they provide a fuller understanding of the materials and add searchable terms used to aid in discoverability. Once the files and their associated metadata are gathered and formatted into an ingest folder they can be uploaded to the Network Attached Storage (NAS), which will then be pulled into the Islandora platform.

In light of some of the more pressing questions brought up by record keepers during the first four departmental surveys, Gallagher created a document on record keeping tips and best practices. This guide defines important terms in record keeping such as obsolescence, and provides information on version control, file naming conventions, and proper file storage tips. This guide can be consulted by record keepers on a day-to-day basis and serves as a reminder for best practices that aid in archival storage and access.

The previous fellow expressed concerns that offices were unsure how to determine the size of the digital files to be transferred to SCUA. In response to this uncertainty, Gallagher created two instructional tools that guide departments on how to find the size of their folders and files, regardless of operating system. This information is important for archivists to know before accepting the transfer of digital records, as staff may need to adjust processing time and storage space for the records.

Another helpful reference for departments is the *Record Keeping Cheat Sheet*, outlining which files, based on content, are to be permanently retained by SCUA. This document was created in response to the questions from offices on how to determine which records have long-term archival value, and which documents should be retained or disposed. It notes each type of file marked for permanent retention in the *University of North Carolina General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule*. Each entry is given a summary of their in-office retention and time of transfer, where applicable.

Once the fellowship projects and interviews were completed, Gallagher consolidated the above-mentioned materials and additional information, such as links to relevant University policies and the records retention schedule, in a LibGuide website.<sup>7</sup> This information helps explain some of the basics of record keeping and can be used to acquaint departments with the information needed to

manage their digital records. It can also be used during future interviews to answer common questions. Additionally, as the ingest process continues to develop for digital materials, this LibGuide can instruct interested parties on the appropriate next steps.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps**

In 2017, SCUA hired its first digital archivist. With this position newly filled, the department is finally able to enact some of the recommendations that resulted from the survey that Gallagher and Howell carried out. In the summer of 2018, Howell and the digital archivist successfully proposed yet another Atkins Fellowship. This fellow's first project was to pull born-digital files from portable storage devices that were transferred to the archives prior to 2015 and ingest them into Goldmine for preservation. She also updated collection descriptions and accession records in ArchivesSpace to reflect the extent, content, and formats of the digital records.

Moving even further into the future, the digital archivist and university archivist will work together to transfer born-digital records in bulk from campus offices and departments. They will examine and test various tools for accepting file transfers, including but not limited to Google Drive, Dropbox, and portable storage devices like flash drives and external hard drives. In conjunction with TDS, they may also explore building a custom tool that could be used to transfer files. Their goal is to keep the transfer process easy and accessible so that designated records liaisons in University offices can quickly and securely transfer files without first having to learn a complicated or highly technical process. Howell hopes that using familiar tools will encourage a higher level of participation from campus offices.

This work will require a plan for prioritizing offices or specific record series to target in the first push for records. Based on the 2017 survey results, Atkins Library Administration was determined to be a good candidate for a pilot transfer and ingest. Other surveyed offices are currently being identified by Howell as potential partners to make records transfers in the pilot project. Criteria for inclusion will include the quantity of records at hand, the retention rules for the body of records, the research

potential of the files, privacy concerns, and technical challenges posed by the body of records. There will need to be some targeted outreach and careful direction given to the selected pilot offices, as transferring born-digital records is a new process with new policies and procedures. The supplemental tools created by Gallagher, such as the record keeping tips and best practices and record keeping cheat sheet will be used to assist participating record liaisons.

Questions about accessing born-digital University records still linger as these materials often contain confidential or personally identifiable information that, like existing paper records, will require well-thought-out access policies for internal and external researchers. However, by using the survey tool and other supplemental documents created during Gallagher's fellowship, Howell can get a more accurate picture of which records transfers would be most likely to contain protected records and apply access policies appropriately.

The survey tool outlined in this article has proved instrumental in giving SCUA staff a better understanding of how a broad variety of University offices are creating and maintaining born-digital records. It will allow archivists at UNC Charlotte to craft new policies and procedures for digital records created by the University that address the common concerns and record keeping practices of campus offices and departments. Howell will also utilize the survey during early conversations with departments preparing to transfer born-digital records in order to gain a better understanding of the scope, content, and technical specifications of the records. Overall, this survey was an important and necessary step to begin implementing a fully-functioning born-digital records management program at UNC Charlotte.

*Erin Gallagher recently earned her MSIS, with a concentration in Archives and Records Management, from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Currently, she is acting as the Digital Research Librarian at the Environmental Protection Agency.*

*Katie Causier Howell is the University Archivist for UNC Charlotte. She has previously worked for Central Piedmont Community College and the Austin History Center. She*

*received her MSIS with a specialization in Archives and Records Enterprise from the University of Texas at Austin.*

#### NOTES

1. As of January 2018, UNC Charlotte has adopted the revised Records Retention and Disposition Schedule: Institutions of the University of North Carolina System. "Records Retention and Disposition Schedule: Institutions of the University of North Carolina System," North Carolina Department of Natural and Cultural Resources, last modified January 2018. [https://www.northcarolina.edu/sites/default/files/university\\_generalschedule\\_2018\\_0.pdf](https://www.northcarolina.edu/sites/default/files/university_generalschedule_2018_0.pdf).
2. "Atkins Fellow Program," University of North Carolina at Charlotte. J. Murrey Atkins Library, accessed July 1, 2018. <https://library.uncc.edu/atkins/atkinsfellows>.
3. "Digital Materials Donation or Transfer Form," University of North Carolina at Charlotte, accessed July 1, 2018. [http://guides.library.uncc.edu/ld.php?content\\_id=34294718](http://guides.library.uncc.edu/ld.php?content_id=34294718).
4. "University General Records Retention and Disposition Schedule," North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, last modified April 2007. [https://files.nc.gov/dncr-archives/documents/files/unc\\_system\\_general\\_schedule.pdf](https://files.nc.gov/dncr-archives/documents/files/unc_system_general_schedule.pdf).
5. "Digital Preservation," Conservation and Preservation Services: MIT Libraries, accessed June 30, 2018. <https://libraries.mit.edu/preserve/about/digital>.
6. "Born Digital @ Yale: Digital Accessioning Service," Yale University Library, accessed June 30, 2018. <https://guides.library.yale.edu/c.php?g=300384&p=3593184>.
7. Erin Gallagher, "Born-Digital University Records," last modified November 13, 2017. <http://guides.library.uncc.edu/c.php?g=700131&p=4966718>.

## Appendix A: Digital Materials Information Sheet

Name/  
Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

Email  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

### Basic Information:

Could you tell us about the role of this office/  
department within the University?

Do you often receive files created by other offices?  
If so, how do you manage these files? (Separation,  
File Hierarchy)

What is the content and context of the files? What  
categories do your records fall under?:  
(Administrative Records) (Personnel Records)  
(Development Records) (Financial Records) (IT  
Records) (Faculties Service Records) (Library  
Records) (Safety Records) (Student Academic  
Records) (Student Athletic Records) (Student-  
Financial Aid Records) (Student- Health Services  
Records) (Student Life Records) (University Police/  
Public Safety) Other (please specify)

Do you manage any files that contain sensitive  
information? (Student Financial Aid Reports)  
(Financial Reports) (Employee Assistance

Programs) (Employee Medical Records) (Personnel Files) (Student Health Records) (Other)

What is the approximate date range of files?  
(YYYY to YYYY)

**Volume:**

Approximate total amount of data:  
\_\_\_\_\_ (megabytes,  
gigabytes, terabytes)

**File Storage:**

Do you have files that exist in both digital and paper formats? (y/n/not sure)

What file extensions do your records typically have? (.doc) (.docx) (.pdf) (.xls) (.ppt) (.xml) (.txt) (.mp3) (.wav) (.tar) (.zip) (.7z) (.csv) (.sql) (.exe) (.py) (.ai) (.gif) (.png) (.tiff) (.css) (.html) (.mp4) (.mpeg)

Do you have any other, atypical file extensions occurring? (E.g. .hki, .idw, .adp)

How are digital files organized? (E.g. filed in named folders, all files together in one folder, etc.)

Are any digital files destroyed in regular intervals?

What kinds of systems were these files created on?  
Mac or PC or Linux?

Do you have files saved on any external hardware? (Thumb drives, external hard drives, etc.) If so what kind and how many?

Do you have any files stored on any unusual or older storage medium? (E.g. floppy disk etc.)

Could you give us the approximate date that the files were transferred to the physical media?

Do you regularly use any cloud storage, and if so, which one? (Dropbox, Google Drive)

**Backup:**

Do you transfer files from your old computers to your new computers? If so, what types are transferred? Did you encounter any problems with transfer?

Have you ever experienced a serious hardware failure? If yes, were the files from the affected computer recovered?

Are you transferring information from external media to cloud or network storage?

**Accessibility:**

Do any files require passwords?

Are any of the files compressed?

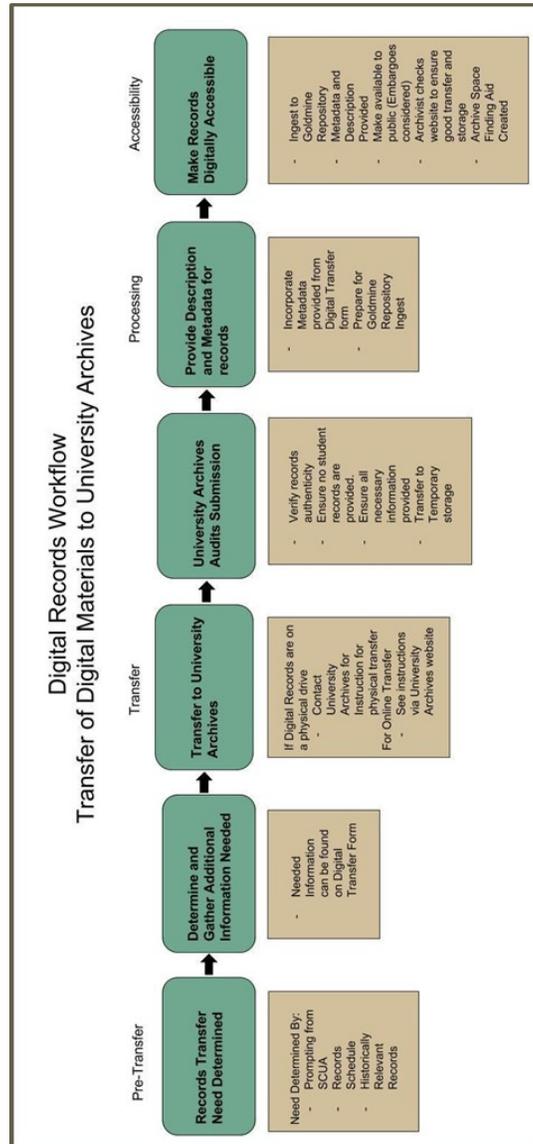
Do you use any specialized or non-typical software to open or access your files? (Ex. Photoshop, Garage Band)

Do you or your office use any specific file naming schemes, or version control? (Ex. *17\_agenda\_gallagher.pdf*)

**Other:**

Are there any other special or unique circumstances that we should be aware of?

## Appendix B: Proposed Workflow





## REVIEWS

**Anthony Cocciolo. *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*. Chicago: The Society of Archivists. 2017. 224 p. Table of Contents, introduction, appendixes, illustrations, examples, conclusions, notes, epilogue, glossary. \$69.99 (nonmember); \$49.99 (member).**

*Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*, written by Anthony Cocciolo, provides valuable guidelines and strategies for both archivists and non-archivists. This nonfiction text fosters curiosity regarding the current and future status of archival practices as well as the technology needs of moving image and sound materials. Although preservation of moving images and audio collections can present a challenge, this book recommends techniques for preserving older audiovisual collections. This impressive eleven-chapter book informs and answers the questions regarding preservation in archival practices, organizations, and format-specific structures. More specifically, Cocciolo remarks on sound, film, analog audio/tape, and digital collections with examples from other universities, glossaries of terminology, and outreach resources, and merges all of these elements into a very cohesive instruction manual.

Anthony Cocciolo is qualified to discuss the importance of the archives and digital preservation in light of his education and affiliations, in addition to his personal enthusiasm for the subject. Cocciolo has a B.S. in Computer Science from the University of California at Riverside and an Ed.D., Ed.M., and M.A. in Communication, Media, and Learning Technologies Design from the Teachers College at Columbia University. He currently teaches future archivists and other professionals at Pratt Institute's School of Information in New York City.

Cocciolo's account demonstrates his determination to teach the preservation and proper storage of the following media formats: film, magnetic tape (U-Matic, VHS), audio tape (vinyl records and cassette tapes), digital audio and video (CD, DVD), digital video tape (BetaSP), and digital audio tape (DAT). While Cocciolo's book concentrates on the technical archival practices in universities and other academic institutions, this information is also relevant to personal collections that contain a variety of audiovisual materials.

Upon navigating the challenge of preserving such data, Cocciolo indicates that moving images and audio are at great risk of being lost. This informative book explains this risk as it illustrates the differences between audio and video formats. The digitization processes for audio and video are quite different and require special equipment and software for preservation and access. For example, Cocciolo writes about the best practices of "analog audio to be digitized and born-digital audio to be migrated off carriers, and both incorporated into trustworthy repositories" (11). Moreover, Cocciolo notes that some audio format qualities may need to move higher on the priority list for digitization so the item does not decay resulting in loss of content. Further, he explores ways in which to clean the decayed audio tapes for proper preservation.

As Cocciolo points out in Chapter 9, *Moving Image and Sound Producers*, moving images represent a category of material that historically has been left behind in most libraries and archives due to the expense, time, and labor-intensive migration process to ensure preservation. I was electrified by Cocciolo's discussion of the challenges of moving images and equipment that were being threatened, endangered, and may become extinct according to the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA). In this chapter, the author discusses the logistical and technical aspects of migrating such collections into preservation repositories, and argues that this process begins with the creator of the materials Cocciolo states:

Moving images and sound producers create a wide variety of products, from simple recordings of meetings, interviews, and events to oral history projects, documentary films, independent films, television programs, and feature-length motion pictures. Although most general archives are much more likely to include recordings of events than they are to have the original source material of feature-length motion pictures, priceless opportunities and treasures may be presented (84).

In addition, producers (and even consumers) are generally uneducated on how to properly store their media collections. "For example, if you have an archival storage room that is

controlled and monitored (55-70 degrees Fahrenheit and 30-55% humidity) to remain cold and dry through-out the year, this can be a positive inducement," writes Cocciolo (88). This is the reason why active collaborations between archivists and producers can be critical in taking proper steps to preserve content on fragile and often unstable formats.

The complex topics involved in the migration and preservation processes of moving images and sound collections were well-explored and covered throughout each chapter. Cocciolo's thoughtful analysis educates the reader as he collaborates with a producer, appraises the item, accessions the content, and converses about the various forms and challenges of analog and digital collections. He pairs various techniques with explanations of the required equipment, discussions of the benefits that come from preserving these collections, and descriptions of several media formats. The combination of all of this logistical and technical information provides a fascinating read. *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* would be beneficial to anyone who works with media and is interested in preserving audio and video formats that need to be maintained for the long haul. This is also a great read for archivists, librarians, curators, educators, and students who have various audio/video formats in their collections and/or are learning best practices for handling, preserving, and making accessible these types of unique formats.

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**Kris Kiesling and Christopher J. Prom (editors). *Putting Descriptive Standards to Work*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2017. 362 p. \$39.99 (nonmember); \$29.99 (member).**

Researchers who discover archival material through online finding aids have no idea what went into making those successful searches. The behind-the-scenes work that facilitates the discovery of finding aids and the specific information sought is remarkable—especially in the types of content and wording used and the structure of the data that allowed the content to be found. The latest publication in the Trends in Archives Practice series by the Society of American Archivists, *Putting Descriptive Standards to Work*, edited by Kris Kiesling and Christopher J. Prom, serves as a handbook of four chapters, called "modules," for those creating the content of finding aids. It provides accessible, "how to" guidance to the latest versions of optimal content and data standards.

Kris Kiesling's opening thoughts make a compelling argument about the importance of archival description:

Description is the foundation of archival work. Everything else archivists do—providing research assistance, teaching about archives and their subject matter, mounting exhibitions, developing documentation strategies, and even selecting collections and items for digitization—flows from good descriptive work (1).

Descriptive practices have changed rapidly over the past thirty years to improve access for researchers. The standards covered in the text, and suggestions for employing them, provide a practical handbook to implementing the most recent descriptive practices to make archival collections more accessible to today's researchers—those primarily searching in the online environment.

The book is organized into four modules: Module 17, *Implementing DACS: A Guide to the Archival Content Standard*, by Cory L. Nimer; Module 18, *Using EAD3*, by Kelsey Shepherd; Module 19, *Introducing EAC-CPF*, by Katherine M. Wisser; and Module 20: *Sharing Archival Metadata*, by Aaron Rubinstein. While the modules fit to-

gether intellectually as one publication, the book is not intended to be read cover-to-cover, but rather as texts to consult about specific rules or for advice on certain topics. The modules are written by experts in the field, yet the tone of writing throughout is clear and accessible for non-experts. Each module begins with a concise history or context for the topic being discussed. Case studies and appendices including helpful information and further readings are part of each module. The authors deal with both criticisms of their standards, as applicable, and new trends in description, data, and researchers—the audience for archivists' description efforts. The volume's intended audience is those who describe archival items, including students and archivists implementing these standards for the first time. (The case studies for Modules 18-20 are available for free on the SAA website under "Trends in Archives Practice." One may purchase electronic versions of individual modules through the SAA Bookstore.)

In Module 17, *Implementing DACS*, Corey L.

Nimer knowledgeably leads the reader through analyzing and interpreting the second edition of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (2013). The module is organized conceptually, not following the order of DACS elements as presented in the standard. The module is the most lengthy in the book. It is organized in six categories: "Describing Archival Materials," "Describing Archival Creators," "Describing Relationships," "Providing Additional Access," "Future Trends," and Appendices. The module supplements DACS, interprets the rules, provides multiple examples of DACS practice, and places the use of DACS into the larger descriptive standard community of related professions, such as librarianship.

To discuss and interpret the DACS elements, Nimer creates a framework of two points at the start of each element discussion: "Questions," in which he poses questions that one may have about the elements (and that are answered in each section), and "RDA Considerations," where he lists the corresponding Resource Description and Access (RDA) rules which are most used in libraries. This module stresses standardization so that cross-repository searching is possible and that description will be reusable. Nimer shows how the archival and library fields are now working more closely to create more compatible description standards. Invaluable in this module is advice on how to apply and implement these rules on a local level, with constant reminders to apply the

rules consistently and to document decisions in writing. This practical approach highlights the companion nature of the module and makes the reader feel as though one is getting personal direction about applying DACS.

In Module 18, *Using EAD3*, Kelcy Shepherd introduces readers to the EAD3 schema (2015). The module is organized in six sections: "Why EAD?," "EAD in Context," "EAD3," "Implementing EAD," "Recommendations," and Appendices. Before instructing the reader on EAD3, Shepherd makes a case for EAD, discusses EAD in the context of other descriptive standards, and teaches readers how this data structure standard correlates to DACS and other data value standards. In the "EAD3" section, the gloves come off, and she discusses the technical nitty-gritty of specific elements and EAD3 schemas. In the "Implementing EAD" section, she coaches readers in realistic planning and questions that they should consider. The "Recommendations" section contains eight points of advice, which may be a starting point for those more familiar with the data structure. The extensive appendices contain valuable information, including code examples. These examples would have been better displayed in an online environment; the small format of a standard size book makes these hard to read over multiple pages.

Katherine M. Wisser's Module 19, *Introducing EAC-CPF*, educates readers about this companion standard to EAD for Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families, which was released fully in 2011. The module is organized in four sections: "Archival Description," "Encoded Archival Context—Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families," "The Impact of EAC-CPF on Descriptive Practices," and Appendices. Wisser covers the development of EAC-CPF and relationship of the standard to other standards such as DACS in the archival world, and RDA and Functional Requirements for Authority Data (FRAD) for libraries. Her "Introduction to the EAC-CPF Standard" subsection is particularly clear as she discusses criticisms, international developments of the standard, and uses of EAC-CPF, citing national and international examples. She also shows how EAC-CPF fits into recent movements in description and metadata in international archives and libraries, including linked data. As with other modules, the Appendices are full of valuable information, including crosswalks among several standards.

Module 20, *Sharing Archival Metadata*, by Aaron Rubinstein, challenges readers to change their views of data, much as Wisser challenged readers to change how to think about description for biographical/historical notes. In five sections and several sidebars, Rubinstein succinctly breaks down technical concepts and practices into understandable definitions, without overloading readers with information. He keeps the technical aspects light with practical examples as he covers web Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), Resource Description Framework (RDF), and linked open data. Especially interesting is his discussion of the "new researcher and the digital humanities" in which he suggests that digital humanists may want to mine archival structured data—yet another reason for conforming to standardized data structure practices (305).

*Putting Descriptive Standards to Work* fulfills the mission of the Trends in Archives Practice Series through its accessible treatises by top professionals on topics not covered in archival literature. Nimer's *Implementing DACS* may be the most widely applicable module of the group, as the technical nature of the other three modules by default dictate the need for technical staffing to assist with implementation, which is beyond what most lone arranger shops have available. All four are appropriate for students learning about the archival profession as the authors successfully make technical concepts digestible for students and archivists less familiar with these areas. Through their documentation of these topics, the authors have made a valuable contribution to archival literature.

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**Alison Mackenzie and Lindsey Martin. *Mastering Digital Librarianship: Strategy, Networking and Discovery in Academic Libraries*. London: Facet Publishing. 2014. 183 p. Illustrations, bibliography, notes, index. Price?**

"Now that everything is available online, libraries are obsolete" is a refrain that has likely been directed at most librarians at some point during their careers. Librarians know this claim to be baseless; they know their services are more vital than ever, even as their roles are changing. Libraries can be a place for kismet and wonder, but they are also meant for targeted research, and librarians are responsible for providing users the best possible service with the most current materials. Of course this necessitates a shift toward the digital as more of our users spend more time online and often expect immediate access to resources. So, how does the academic library maintain itself? *Mastering Digital Librarianship: Strategy, Networking and Discovery in Academic Libraries*, edited by Alison Mackenzie and Lindsey Martin, is a useful handbook, not only arguing that libraries can and should shift their services to accommodate users' needs, but also providing strategies by which libraries may adapt to suit those needs in the digital age.

While *Mastering Digital Librarianship* is divided into three themes with three chapters in each, the overarching theme of the book, for me, is the necessity of creating a user-centered experience. If we want the library to remain relevant on campus, we must adapt to suit users' needs; we cannot expect their questions to fit within the mold of the 20<sup>th</sup> century library experience. We must meet users where they are, whether that is within the physical confines of the library or within the online sphere.

The first section of the book, "Rethinking Marketing and Communication," is dedicated to interaction and experience within the virtual context. The thought of "marketing" to library users can be a cringe-inducing thought for librarians who do not want to commercialize their space or their services. But Alison Hicks writes that "online engagement is not just a vehicle for delivering services or promoting a product... [D]igital marketing brings the library to the user, thereby enabling a true sense of participation and ownership of the knowledge creation process" (4-5). The goal of this marketing is not to "sell" to our users, but to

create awareness and increase access to our services.

Dawn McLoughlin and Jill Benn discuss "Reference 2.0" and the ways in which reference services can be offered through virtual platforms. The prevalence of social media means that user interaction comes not only through email, but also via platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. While users engage on those platforms, "over-reliance on simple metrics such as 'likes' or followers reveals little about how users' attitudes or behavior may have been influenced" (38).

The benefits of a user-centered approach are explored by Bury and Jamieson through a case study of Edge Hill University's Learning Services. Instead of marketing the library "as a collection of books and related services," they write, libraries must "build their services around [their users]" (59).

The second section of the book "Rethinking Support for Academic Practice," explores three different avenues for practical library engagement with users on campus. Helen Howard's chapter on Open Educational Resources (OER) frames this advancement as an opportunity for librarians to support their users' needs in a global context, and as an opportunity for librarians to share their own content with a wider audience. A potential stumbling block to success in this area, however, is "a general lack of awareness and engagement on both sides; that is, from librarians engaging with OER, as well as a lack of understanding from those working within the OER area of the support which libraries could provide" (68).

Joy Davidson explores the challenges of and opportunities for data management and curation in academic libraries. Davidson writes that "researchers who share well managed and curated data can expect an increase of up to 69% in the number of citations they receive compared with those who do not" (89), and while there are opportunities for librarians to contribute their expertise to researchers, a 2012 study commissioned by Libraries UK showed related nine areas, including "ability to advise on preserving research outputs" and "ability to advise on preservation of project records," (96) where librarians believed they had skill gaps.

These two chapters present opportunities for libraries to shift their thinking and provide innovative services to their users, but barriers to success may exist in terms of librarians' own awareness or current skillset. In

order for such projects to be successful, librarians may require professional development to augment their own skillset. For the Digital Tattoo project, an initiative seeking to prepare students to curate and manage their online presence, Mitchell and Underhill write "that students want to 'push the easy button' when it comes to managing their online identities" (117). Success for this project, then, may not be based around the skillsets of librarians, so much as it may depend on librarians' ability to connect with and communicate to their users in meaningful ways.

In the final section of the book, "Rethinking Resource Delivery," libraries are shifting the way resources are available to patrons. A library building a mobile site in response to student usage of smartphones and tablets demonstrates a commitment to a user-centered experience (Munro et. al.). Utilizing circulation data to offer recommendations to patrons may not only increase total circulation, but may broaden the materials students are accessing beyond their assigned reading lists (Charnock and Palmer). Moira Bent explores the responsibilities of "home" libraries to their students studying abroad, where challenges range from network speed to local equipment access and copyright restrictions.

This book is a well-curated collection of chapters which are particularly strong alongside one another, but each chapter in the book could be considered on its own as part of a graduate-level curriculum or in service of a particular initiative within an academic library. As a complete volume, *Mastering Digital Librarianship* could really be seen as a handbook for the 21<sup>st</sup> century librarian. The ubiquity of users' digital engagement necessitates a shift in librarians' mindset and service offerings. Whether a librarian is eagerly anticipating this shift or considers it with ambiguity, *Mastering Digital Librarianship* will be a useful guide replete with practical knowledge.

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## **Submissions and Subscriptions**

The *Journal for the Society of North Carolina Archivists* seeks to support the theoretical, practical, and scholarly aspects of the archival professions by publishing articles and reviews related to curatorial issues (e.g., collection management and development), technical services (e.g., cataloging, processing, digital collections, EAD, preservation, conservation, etc.), and public services (reference, instruction, outreach) for special collections and archives.

The *Journal* accepts a range of articles related to research, study, theory, or practice in the archival professions. All members of the archival community, including students and independent researchers, are welcome to submit articles and reviews. Contributors need not be members of SNCA or live in the state of North Carolina. The *Journal* will not reprint or republish articles submitted to and accepted by other publications. Full manuscript submission requirements can be found at: <http://www.ncarchivists.org/publications>.

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