

# SELLING THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES: CURRENT OUTREACH PERSPECTIVES

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**ABSTRACT:** In order to remain a viable part of their institutions, college and university archivists must promote their collections and services to their constituencies on and off campus. How should this be done? How do archivists reach faculty, students, administrators, and staff? This article focuses on eight college and university archivists and describes the outreach programs they have used, what successes and failures they have experienced, and why they believe outreach is essential. The author concludes that outreach must be central to what all archivists do, even at the expense of other archival functions, because it can solidify the archives' position within the college and university community.

*Archivists need to bring themselves to the attention [of] people who would benefit from what we do—if only they knew about what we do.<sup>1</sup>*

## *Introduction*

“Outreach” is defined by the Society of American Archivists (SAA) as “organized activities of archives or manuscript repositories intended to acquaint potential users with their holdings and their research and reference value.”<sup>2</sup> College and university archivists, as part of a larger academic community, must generate positive relationships with administration, staff, faculty, and students to insure continued financial and professional support from that community. In today’s reality of stakeholders, dwindling resources, relevance, and accountability, institutions of higher learning are now forced to scrutinize every aspect of their academic communities. Each department and every program on campus is being asked to prove its worth. To this end, archivists must seek ways to justify and validate their existence, including expanding their customer base. Faculty, staff, and students need to know more about their college and university archives. User groups need to know that college and university archives have value, both to themselves and to the larger communities in which they participate and belong. These user groups need to know that archival materials are accessible and are relevant to what they do. Everyone on campus should know that the archivist is an important resource.

Engaging in outreach directs these user communities towards a heightened awareness of the archives and its resources. Outreach is a powerful tool: it teaches the university community about the history of the institution as well as about the value of the documents that the institution creates.

Although many colleges and universities employ archivists, very little has been written about the different ways that college and university archives reach their constituents, i.e., faculty, students, administration, and staff. Some archivists have written books on the role and functions of university and college archives and in them briefly discuss outreach. William Maher, in his book *The Management of College and University Archives*, addresses nearly every aspect of these institutions, including a section on outreach. In discussing the use of archives, Maher writes that “. . . the responsibility to see that material in one’s archives is used is so fundamental that considerations of use should influence the conduct of the full range of archival activities.”<sup>3</sup>

Other books and articles address general outreach practices, including ideas that college and university archivists can apply. Elsie Freeman Finch, in an article titled “Archival Advocacy: Reflections on Myths and Realities,” states that:

The ultimate archival function is to create programs that, as former New York State Archivist Larry Hackman said, “will ensure the identification, preservation, and accessibility of archives for years to come.” To do this, we must shift our focus on records to a focus on customer relations, marketing, and long term program, seeking the support that these programs require.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, Gregory Hunter, in his book *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual*, takes this sentiment one step further. He writes that outreach is essential: “Over the past decade, archivists have come to realize that outreach and promotion must be an integral part of archival work—not something done occasionally, as with an anniversary celebration.”<sup>5</sup> These overall themes apply to all archivists. They say archivists should promote their archives so that their holdings are used and their archives are seen as viable resources.

College and university archivists need to recognize the relevance of these broader studies to their specific needs. Information gathered from other types of archives, including business and religious archives, can be very useful. Richard Cox writes that for institutional archives public programs are an important part of gaining support both inside and outside the organization. “Although the concept of public programs must be carefully reconsidered when used by institutional archives, these activities can be crucial for the success of the institutional archives.”<sup>6</sup> Outreach can do many things. It can increase support for other archival needs, it can explain the need for the archives, and it can show the archivist how his or her program is perceived by the rest of the institution. This is important because, although college and university archives typically may have firmer support than do those in a business or religious institution, constant fund-raising and promotion are essential to survival. Case studies about archives in nonacademic environments can be used to learn and apply new techniques that may be relevant to the college or university setting. Some of these ideas will be discussed throughout this article.

In 1979, the College and University Archives Committee of the SAA produced a general study of archives in the United States and Canada. In a 1982 article, Nicholas C. Burckel and J. Frank Cook combined this SAA study with a study of Canadian archives, together with their own survey of American university and college archives. According to Burckel and Cook's research, use of collections was not a high priority for college and university archivists. They even noted that some college and university archives deliberately avoided publicity.<sup>7</sup> A great deal has changed since 1982.

In the intervening years there has been not only a general increase in attention to outreach within the archival profession, but there has been specific attention given to the college and university arena. An early example was a handout created by Timothy Ericson for a session entitled "Academic Outreach: The Use of Archival Materials on the College Campus" at the 1984 SAA annual meeting in Washington, D.C. Nine other archivists contributed to this handout and gave examples of their outreach programs.<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately, this handout was never published or widely disseminated. The handout can be useful to archivists because it gives specific examples that could be used in a college or university archives setting. Some ideas include creating bookmarks about the archives to hand out, and using anniversaries for outreach. In addition to Ericson's handout, three case studies were published between 1989 and 1991 that described outreach programs at Carleton College, Clemson University, and The Ohio State University.<sup>9</sup> Both at Clemson and Ohio State, the archivists created new programs that were used in conjunction with the schools' anniversaries. At Carleton, the case study describes using the archives with undergraduate students and explores the possibilities of outreach specific to student needs. While these articles are helpful to some extent—especially in a study of long-term archival practices—little has been written of late that explores outreach programs in use today at college and university archives.

### *Methodology and Arrangement*

This study will first define "outreach" as it applies to university and college archives and discuss its importance. What will follow is a series of examples of outreach techniques used by archivists at specific institutions to promote their archives to students, faculty, and staff. Subsequently, the overall strategies of these archivists will be examined, including a discussion of various methods of outreach, e.g., exhibits, media coverage, and the Internet. Finally, the essay will conclude with a discussion of the ways archivists can evaluate the effectiveness of their outreach activities.

From the onset, it should be stated that this study is in no way an attempt to present an overall picture of outreach in American college and university archives. This is not a survey of all archives in an attempt to produce scientific data on the subject. Instead, this essay is intended to be a snapshot of specific institutions and the way their archivists view outreach and integrate it into their archives. To this end, archivists at six state universities and two private colleges were interviewed.<sup>10</sup> The interviews included questions about the archivists' role at their college or university, their thoughts on outreach programs, and the different programs they created to entice students, faculty, and staff to use and gain greater awareness of their archives. While some results appear similar, this study will show that each archivist has his or her own perspective on the best way to

promote archives. This study will also incorporate several published case studies and the author's experience as Associate University Archivist at The Ohio State University Archives.

The archivists who were interviewed for this study were not selected randomly or scientifically, and their intent was not to speak for all archivists.<sup>11</sup> The archivists were chosen because of their belief in outreach programs and their willingness to discuss the issue and share their experiences. As a result, it is important to note some disclaimers when using these archivists' views in a discussion about outreach. Due to their stated interest in outreach, there is a natural bias in this group to promote it. Additionally, the archivists interviewed represent an average of 21.5 years in the archival field, and an average of 18.6 years at a college or university archives. Therefore, they are more experienced in the archival field and are, on average, better positioned to participate in outreach activities at their institutions than are many other archivists. There is also a geographic imbalance to the group, with all but two of the archivists located in the eastern portion of the U.S.

Yet, in spite of this, there are many benefits resulting from using this group of archivists. While the archivists questioned are well established in the field, they have used their experience to try different outreach programs and experiment with possibilities. Although a small sample, they represent archives of varying sizes and are at institutions that range from very large to very small. And while some readers may see this group's experience as an unrealistic advantage compared to other archivists, these archivists have insights that can be beneficial to both those who have been in the profession for years and those who are just beginning.

### ***What Is Outreach and Why Is It Significant?***

SAA's official definition of "outreach" is narrower than the one used by the university and college archivists interviewed here. Outreach, to this group of archivists, includes anything that puts the archives and the archivist in contact with the public. Some of these archivists believe that everything he or she does is a form of outreach. Anne Turkos, University Archivist at the University of Maryland, defines "outreach" as activities going well beyond the SAA definition. Turkos includes in her concept of outreach such direct and indirect activities as speaking to an undergraduate student or meeting with a donor. Her goal is that all individuals coming in contact with the archives will leave with a good experience that they, in turn, will share with others outside the building.<sup>12</sup> This aspect of direct outreach can be identified as personal contact with members of the community through one-on-one or group communications. Another aspect of direct outreach involves placing written materials or exhibits at various locations around campus. Contact with materials clearly identified with the archives can leave an individual with a positive appreciation of the archives and what it has to offer. Given this broad view of outreach, it seems fair to say that direct outreach activities occur at all academic institutions.

While direct outreach is important and visible, indirect outreach is often difficult or impossible to track, yet is also extremely important. Indirect outreach includes reaching individuals who may never visit the archives. The hope is that these patrons, even from

a distance, will react positively if they hear “good things” about the archives or come to believe that their beloved university is known, in part, by the existence of its archives as a resource to the wider community. By having an impact on this wider community, the archives may gain support and be viewed by the administration, faculty, and students as an important component of the institution, similar to an art gallery that is kept open even if it is not as heavily visited as the basketball arena.

In addition to broadening the description of outreach, the archivists interviewed here view outreach as being of equal or greater importance to core archival duties such as arrangement and description.<sup>13</sup> Nearly every archivist agreed with Timothy Ericson of the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee who said that “outreach IS a core function—that it is every bit as important as appraisal and arrangement and description.”<sup>14</sup> This is true in every type of archives. For instance, James O’Toole, in an article concerning the archdiocese of Boston, emphasizes the outreach lessons learned from the visit of Pope John Paul II to Boston in 1979: “Seize opportunities for creating good archival press whenever they come, adjusting your archival priorities when necessary to emphasize public outreach. The papers you will always have with you . . . and you can always go back to process them and produce finding aids that are works of archival art.”<sup>15</sup> Some of the interviewees said that, although writing finding aids and processing papers are important, outreach can be even more significant. Leon Stout, University Archivist at Pennsylvania State University, commented that if the collection is not used, why is the archives doing anything else? Stout says that while archivists should arrange and describe the collection, just doing those things is “ridiculous” if no one walks through the door. All of these archivists have come to the conclusion that outreach is an essential part of any viable archives. If the archives does not present itself, it becomes irrelevant; if the archives is irrelevant, it will disappear.<sup>16</sup>

The debate over which comes first, outreach or arrangement and description, is complex even for archivists who strongly support outreach programs. Some of those interviewed cautioned that too much outreach can have serious repercussions when resources cannot back up claims.<sup>17</sup> Enough resources must be in place before extensive outreach is done. Shelley Wallace, Archivist at Hartwick College, commented that an archives cannot possibly begin outreach until certain basics are in place. Once the archives staff has created useful finding aids and is prepared to handle additional users, then outreach can be considered as important as arrangement and description.<sup>18</sup> If the archives has not done enough arrangement and description, the staff will have problems because they will be unable to meet patrons’ demands. The work must be in order so that when users arrive they will find the archives willing and able to help. If not, as Ericson wrote, “[I]f outreach lures people to the archives and then they are disappointed, then you will NEVER get them to come back or support you.”<sup>19</sup>

Unfortunately, archivists concerned over a lack of time and resources may cut public programs for fear that other less visible parts of the archives will be neglected. For instance, if two months are spent preparing an exhibit, then other things such as arranging a collection or writing a finding aid will be sidelined. While warnings about over-emphasizing outreach activities may sound convincing, especially considering the large processing backlog in most archives, outreach must be done even in times of insufficient staff and large backlogs. If not, archivists risk losing visibility, support, and possi-

bly their very existence. Christopher Densmore, University Archivist at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo, pointed out that outreach programs say, "Hi! We're here!"<sup>20</sup> Unless the public—especially administrators and resource allocators—knows that the archives exists and understands its importance, the archives may be considered irrelevant and unworthy of support when money is tight. The archives cannot let administrators say, "What do they do?" It will not matter how well the archivist preserves and describes a collection if afterwards the archives no longer exists.<sup>21</sup> The archivist's job must include outreach.

### *Target Audiences: Students, Faculty, and Staff*

College and university archivists must connect with everyone in the institution, from first-year students to the president. Since each group has different needs, the best way to do this is to target the groups separately. Students are perhaps the most difficult to reach because they move in and out of the institution every year. Students—even "traditional" archival users such as history students—often overlook the resources of the college and university archives because they do not know that the archives itself exists. Yet, because students represent such a large part of the campus community, and because they will impact the school long after they depart, efforts at increasing student awareness and use of the archives must be important goals. Archivists should work to create programs and instructional curricula for all students because, as Richard Cox writes, "the students of today represent future users and supporters of archives."<sup>22</sup>

College and university archivists, as members of a teaching institution, have an even stronger obligation to create educational programs for students. In these instances, archivists should consider outreach as a form of teaching, which is an essential part of their job. To fulfill this responsibility, archivists may develop term-length classes, or teach a section of a course, or collaborate with a colleague on other forms of bibliographic instruction. As a form of outreach, archivists can teach students about the history of the university, give instruction on the use of original materials, or even show how to get Dad a photograph of a famous football player. Many colleges and university administrations today emphasize the need to improve the undergraduate experience. Creating programs that increase student awareness of the archives may enrich that experience and foster students' curiosity and interest in their surroundings.

The number of students at a university can easily overwhelm an archives that is usually a small department with few employees. For instance, with a staff of seven, The Ohio State University Archives cannot handle the needs of 50,000 OSU students at the same time. Yet there are ways to reach this large body of students in manageable groups. In *The Management of College and University Archives*, William Maher writes that "[I]f one kind of student use tends to create more demand than the archives can handle, it should consider how standard outreach vehicles . . . can answer common questions. If the archives finds that it does not have enough undergraduate student use, it should contact instructors . . . to suggest a class assignment to write a short paper or speech on an aspect of college history."<sup>23</sup> Realizing both the archives' significance to the institution's community—as well as its limitations—the archivists interviewed demonstrated a variety of programs to promote their archives on campus.

Most of the interviewees reported interacting with students in classes, most often history classes. Working with the history department seems natural for archivists, but archivists can and should provide assistance to students in other departments.<sup>24</sup> In some instances, departments such as biology and religion do more with the archives than history or political science departments do.<sup>25</sup> At Pennsylvania State University (PSU) the archives works with architecture and landscape classes more than with other departments. These students perform projects on the history of buildings and, based on their research, redesign or create the campus of the future. For these classes, Stout participates in a panel that grades and discusses the students' projects.<sup>26</sup> In addition, Stout reports that the PSU archives works with English students when they write biographies on a specific figure from the university's past. PSU education classes use the university as a comparison model with other institutions of higher learning, and facilities-planning classes have used the archives for presentations on the history of the campus libraries. As a result, 60 percent of the PSU archives' patrons, which average 4,500 a year, are undergraduates.<sup>27</sup> Undoubtedly, Stout's innovative outreach throughout the university community swells these numbers.

Archivists in smaller colleges may be able to be even more involved with classes and with the entire student population. For instance, as Archivist at Smith College, Margery Sly gave presentations to many classes and used examples from the collections to teach students how to use primary sources. One of her objectives was to show students the relative value of the material as evidence. Sly made an annual presentation on the archives to new students at First-Year Orientation and at a special orientation for incoming African-American students. By doing so, Smith's students were exposed to the archives early in their career. This is important in that it increases the odds that these students will remember the archives as a resource, not only during their student life, but in their career after graduation or as supportive alumni.

Unlike students who come and go, faculty members tend to stay longer at an institution, often for their entire career. Therefore, archivists should spend considerable time with as many faculty members as possible. "The archivist and the faculty can and should enjoy a close working relationship," Nicholas Burckel writes.<sup>28</sup> The archives should help faculty in the classroom, in their research, and in day-to-day activities. If, for example, a professor happens into the archives looking for material to write an obituary or a tribute to a colleague, the archivist should take advantage of this visit to discuss other available material and to show how the archives can serve the faculty member's needs.

Faculty members cannot be left alone to find their way into the archives. They must be reminded of the archives' existence on an ongoing basis. At SUNY Buffalo, Densmore leaves nothing to chance. When he learns that a professor is interested in a certain topic, Densmore sends that person information about a useful collection that may connect to his or her interests. This is a way to regularly remind the faculty member about the archives' resources.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, whenever a collection is processed Ericson sends copies of the completed finding aid to the related department and to the dean of the school. This shows the dean and the department that the archives has material that may be important to them and is also encouragement to use the collection.<sup>30</sup> Archivists can learn faculty members' needs from different sources, including publications, news releases, and articles in faculty/staff newspapers. The

archivist can then use this information to remind faculty that the archives exists and its staff is ready and willing to help.

Sometimes archivists at smaller colleges can work more closely with faculty than can staff at larger institutions. At Smith College, Sly created a useful and unique relationship with the faculty that would be difficult to form at an enormous university. Sly secured a two-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities that paid professors to do research in the archives' collections and to include the collections in their curricula. One professor who took part in the grant introduced an assignment requiring the students to use the archives to read the diaries and letters of Smith graduates. The professor then required the students to answer a set of questions that she found during her own research in the collection. In addition to this program, every semester Sly read the college's course guide and sent memos to faculty members who were teaching courses related to collections in the archives. Sly also offered to do exhibits connected with these classes or help in some way with their research. Sly's innovative approach to the faculty is especially appropriate to a small setting like that at Smith College that has fewer faculty and course offerings. While archivists at a large university cannot hope to track every course, they may be able to identify a subset of the course offerings and start an effective outreach program with selected faculty, similar to Sly's NEH grant. Archivists at all academic institutions, large or small, would benefit from a closer relationship with faculty members by showing a connection between archival collections and the professors' class work and research.

Some college and university archivists have good relationships with faculty; others do not. A poor relationship can be a problem for the archives, especially when faculty members send students off campus to do research that could be done at their own institution. For instance, at the University of Maryland, it seems that some faculty members do not know that the archives exists. Turkos tells the story of a history professor who sent his students to Baltimore for material that was actually in the historical manuscripts collection on campus. The archivist did not learn about this until a few students who were unable to drive to Baltimore finally struggled into the archives. After realizing what had happened, Turkos had the curator of historical manuscripts call the professor immediately. Although too late to help most of the students in that class, Turkos hoped this experience would show both students and faculty that in the future the archives on campus could be an important resource.<sup>31</sup>

Encouraging faculty to share their knowledge of the archives should be an important aspect of outreach. Too often many professors who use the archives throughout their career do not share the news of this "hidden" resource with others. While faculty members are under no obligation to share their sources, archivists should encourage faculty to become advocates for the archives. For example, a letter might be sent along with a brochure explaining the ways the archives can help in different classes or identifying collections that might fit into the curriculum. Today, with E-mail lists, archivists can send a short message inviting faculty to look at the archives' Web site or to visit the new exhibit in the reference room. By doing this with the intention of forming a closer bond with faculty, archivists can create a continuous link to campus departments and, through them, to their students.

Although the faculty is a key part of any college or university, departmental staff members and administrators may have more day-to-day need of the archives. To this end, archivists should cultivate this relationship through archival work and in records management. Many archivists also are records managers and are, therefore, responsible for connecting with staff at every departmental level.<sup>32</sup> By helping to explain the archives, the archivists show campus staff how to deposit and retrieve material when necessary. Staff members' files document everything at the university and are essential because they may be the only source of this material. Critical to the archives, the staff and administration are so important that their needs must, at times, take precedence over the needs of others. Good service for the administrative staff is essential to the well-being of the archives. A bad relationship can make accessioning material, communicating with key administrators, and acquiring needed resources much more difficult.

Ideally, archivists should always foster positive relationships with campus staff members. With that in mind, archivists must realize that the information available in the archives may not necessarily coincide with the needs and expectations of staff. For instance, at SUNY Buffalo, Densmore meets with development officers and public relations staff. In general, the development officers are interested in promoting the university and the archives can be a part of that process. On the surface, this is good for the archives—except when the information on file does not present the view of the institution the staff or administration wishes to portray. Densmore points out that archivists must sometimes confront ethical questions when dealing with public relations staff.<sup>33</sup> While public relations personnel want to promote the positive aspects of the university, they are not as eager to show the less attractive side. This raises the question, "Is the archivist obligated to provide all types of material or should he/she provide only the information that fits the university's need to promote itself?" In these situations, archivists must work diligently with campus staff to provide a careful balance between the need to promote and the need for accuracy. Effective outreach involves not only providing access to materials, but making sure patrons receive all relevant information.

### *Outreach Strategies*

Archivists employ many different strategies to reach students, faculty, and staff. However, exhibits are one of the most common forms of outreach and are used to interact with every constituent group. All of the archivists interviewed for this study create exhibits of one kind or another, usually displaying them in multiple places or reusing them for other groups of viewers.<sup>34</sup> The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign has multiple exhibit areas, but the one drawing the most attention is located in a hallway that leads to the vending machines. This exhibit is split into two sections. One section, "New in the Archives," is a rotating display of six to eight new documents recently accessioned into the collection. The other half of the case includes a series of exhibits in alphabetical sequence, each letter showcased for two weeks. Individuals would often come into the archives to discover more about one of the letter displays. Recently, University Archivist William Maher wrote that the archives changed the focus of the exhibit and switched to a cycle through the signs of the zodiac. "There is nothing astrological about our collection, but we can try to link the zodiac signs to related UI

activities, such as Water Resources Research and Water Recreation/Ecology for Aquarius.”<sup>35</sup> These inventive exhibits draw attention to the archives and are well worth the effort to create them and to find display cases or areas that will draw the most viewers.

Although it is very important that, according to Gregory Hunter, outreach be an “integral part of archival work” and not done just occasionally, anniversaries and promotions are a natural place for archivists to reach the wider community.<sup>36</sup> Archivists can link exhibits to many types of promotional events. For example, Maher and the University of Illinois at Urbana archives recently sponsored a major campus event when they opened the James B. Reston Collection. In addition to a large exhibit, the events included nationally known speakers who also appeared on a National Public Radio call-in program in conjunction with the opening, together with a public lecture and a reception at the exhibit. “[The archives] managed to have more coverage of the Reston Collection on the front page of the local newspaper than the Illini victory over Michigan in football!” Maher said.<sup>37</sup> At the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, archivists created a major exhibit using material from the Milwaukee Press Club collection and formally opened the papers during Archives Week 1999. Approximately 150 persons attended the event, including the university chancellor and a number of media people. The archives received wide coverage in the print and television media, causing archivist Tim Ericson to say the event “resulted in new donations to the collection and enabled [the archives] to make some great media connections.”<sup>38</sup>

These events on two major university campuses emphasize the importance of developing a mutually beneficial relationship with the media. Much can be done to cultivate that relationship.<sup>39</sup> Reporters in both the local media and on campus can be helpful allies. For instance, whenever Ericson notices an article in the news he believes would have been better if the reporter had used the archives, he sends the reporter a letter mentioning the archives’ holdings. This action has elicited very good responses from local reporters. In another example, the University of Maryland’s *Outlook*, the faculty and staff newsletter, has often featured the archives. Although the information published is sometimes inaccurate, it is worth the “hassle” to get the word out about the archives’ existence. Not only is the image of the archives enhanced, but such publicity may lead to new acquisitions. In one instance, a man who worked for the campus photographer during campus riots in the 1970s read an article about the archives in *Outlook* and donated his collection of photographs taken during that time.<sup>40</sup>

Archivists also use alternative outreach venues to reach constituents. The Ohio State University Archives, for instance, created a slide presentation called “OSU Family Album: Another Look” that describes the history of the institution. Audiences have included first-year students, campus dignitaries, student organizations, professors, and alumni in Texas and Florida. The archivists can add and replace slides depending on the audience. Recently the archivists updated and altered the presentation specifically for the Office of Minority Affairs. The *OSU Alumni Monthly Magazine* has advertised the slide presentation, notifying individuals and groups who wish to use it for recruiting purposes that it is available for purchase and that a viewing can be scheduled by contacting the archives. Based on the success of the first slide presentation, the archives has created a second that focuses on specific buildings on campus. This presentation is

shorter and is intended to appeal more to students as well as to alumni and staff who were the target of the previous presentation.<sup>41</sup>

In today's electronic world, the Internet and electronic mail Listserv capabilities have become powerful outreach tools for all archives. The interviewees see their Web sites as useful for administrative communication, as outreach tools, and for keeping up with the rest of their institution. While none of the archivists could verify how useful their Web pages are, they did say they were adding to them and monitoring the activity on the site. Most concurred that a Web site is an important tool for patrons, and may have other uses. Densmore observed that a Web site can also serve as an excellent method of connecting the archives to the institution's resource allocators.<sup>42</sup> By having a Web site, the archives can prove that it remains relevant and can connect with the university's mission to be viable in the computer age.

A well-designed Web site also provides a link to administrators, staff, faculty, and students and allows quick response to questions. At the University of Illinois at Urbana, the archives developed a series of brochures and subject guides on the Web. The archives staff frequently refers patrons on and off campus to the site. Maher wrote that "the value of the Website as being first for administrative communication and response to inquiries (transfer guidelines for faculty papers, etc.) more than as an outreach vehicle per se." He adds that "given the campus buzz about outreach and access, this [having finding aids on the Web to make collections accessible] is a useful position to be in, but our thinking has flowed from the defensive rather than offensive position."<sup>43</sup>

One of the new possibilities in the electronic world besides Web sites may be the use of the campus Listserv for outreach activities. Although none of the interviewees mentioned using this resource, college and university archives should consider following the example of business archives to reach their constituents. Craig St. Clair, Corporate Archivist of Digital Equipment Corporation, used two different types of electronic on-line news bulletins to reach employees at the company. The E-mail campaign was sent to all employees, highlighting different themes of archival activity and interest.<sup>44</sup> College and university archivists could borrow this idea with some modifications. For example, students could be sent a message regarding their organizations and fun facts about the institution. Faculty and staff could be reminded that the archives would like to receive their records and publications. Both types of messages would bring the archives to the eyes of the campus and encourage use of the material. It would be beneficial for archivists to try this and see how such Listserv use could be applied to their own institution.

Although the Internet and E-mail can be useful outreach tools and bring people closer to the archives' holdings, there are some problems with users' expectations of instant gratification. While archivists usually answer telephone and letter requests quickly, E-mail has a different connotation that seems to demand immediate response. Some patrons also expect that "everything" is on the Web.<sup>45</sup> For example, The Ohio State University Archives has received requests for on-line descriptions of courses dating back to the 1940s while other patrons wonder when the archives will scan every year-book onto the Web. To combat this misconception, the archives has included a disclaimer on its Web site's search page. When a search is completed, the page instructs the user: "If your search failed to return any results, please contact the Archives staff as

we do not have our full collection on-line."<sup>46</sup> This should encourage those who do not find what they are searching for to take the next step and E-mail or call the archives.

Alternatives to putting everything on-line are "frequently asked questions" and patron information pages. The University of Maryland Archives has added a section to its Web site enabling patrons to answer, themselves, some questions about the university. *University of Maryland A to Z: MAC to Millennium* is an alphabetical listing of facts, myths, and answers to frequently asked questions about the university. On this site, one can discover the number of trees on campus, the significance of a building, and when the first lacrosse team began play.<sup>47</sup> At the State University of New York (SUNY) at Albany, Geoffrey Williams is mounting a 100-page chronology of the history of the university that would give patrons a "single source of looking information up about the University."<sup>48</sup> By publishing this type of information on the Web, the archives is promoting itself by introducing the archives to students, faculty, staff, alumni, and the public.<sup>49</sup>

Although little has been done to evaluate the way Web pages are used, it is clear that as an outreach tool the Internet has the potential to increase interest in and use of the archives. At the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, since 1996 "the number of incoming genealogical research requests that come via e-mail (most are directly related to the Web site) has tripled while the number that come in via telephone and regular mail has remained virtually the same." Archivist Ericson believes that this growth is due to the outreach provided by the archives' Web site.<sup>50</sup> While many Web patrons will be interested in specific college or university information, Web sites can also reach casual Web surfers. With an attractive and well-constructed page, the archives can connect to people who are not associated with the university but who may be interested in the archives' collections. By using technology to promote the archives, the archivist may expand its holdings, contact donors, and encourage researchers to visit. Even within the university, the archives' Web site has the possibility of connecting to other sites, such as the student activities page or those of individual departments. It may take time for archivists to learn to use the Internet and to use electronic Listservs to their greatest advantage, but as outreach tools, these technologies present many exciting possibilities.

### *How Effective Is Outreach?*

Considering the many ways archives do outreach, archivists should ask the question "How effective are these programs?" While the literature on outreach stresses the importance of outreach, as it should, it does not explain how to evaluate these programs. To focus on outreach programs without identifying which ones are the most useful will not provide the "customer satisfaction" that Elsie Freeman Finch writes is necessary to an archives' survival.<sup>51</sup> Ericson comments that archivists seem to evaluate outreach by *what* they are doing, not on how effective it is. "[W]e ignore whether or not that 'something' is an effective use of time and resources."<sup>52</sup> While some attempts may be more effective than others, no one knows if the program that takes the most time is the best or the worst. Without some kind of evaluation procedure in place, judging the impact of outreach is difficult if not impossible. An archivist cannot guess beforehand whether patrons will like the program and must plan for any reaction. Afterwards, however, the

archivist should take note of any reaction for future use.<sup>53</sup> The archivist must learn to gauge an activity's effectiveness if decisions are to be made based on the most effective means of outreach. For example, how best should an archivist measure the impact of a particular exhibit? An archivist approaching a visitor may receive positive feedback, but weighing the response may be difficult. The visitor may have responded positively simply to be polite, or the patron may not know if this exhibit will influence future behavior in regard to use of the archives. Thus, it is critical that archivists develop means of evaluation so they can focus on those outreach programs that are the most successful.

One approach for archivists to assess their outreach programs would be to develop surveys on users' attitudes and reactions to outreach efforts. None of the college and university archives programs discussed in this article evaluate their outreach activities. This may be due, in part, to the fact that they have no set criteria for success or, if they have, none seem ready to share these thoughts with the archival community.

In reviewing archival outreach, five goals of outreach become apparent:

- To reach as many people as possible in promoting a positive attitude towards the archives
- To teach constituents about the role the archives can play in their professional and personal lives
- To have users recognize collections
- To teach the history of the institution
- To show that the archives staff and material are of value

Once goals are established, it becomes possible to measure the success of outreach activities in reaching these goals. If outreach programs can be shown to be successful, this information becomes a tool the archivist can use to "prove value" to administrators and to those responsible for resource allocation.

### *Conclusion*

Outreach, in many forms, should be central to what all archivists do. Outreach can be as simple as removing the dust from a box before the archivist gives it to a researcher or as complex as removing old stereotypes about archives. College and university archivists should look at other types of archives and, among themselves, find new ideas and examples of public programs they might be able to modify for their own institution. Through outreach programs and efforts, college and university archivists can generate interest within their college or university, pleasing administrators while promoting the use of archival material as an aid to the entire academic community. Because of the archives' unique position within the college and university community as keeper of the institution's past, present, and future, those who come in contact with the archives will view it as a depository for new and important materials. This will benefit the archives both in terms of its collection and its long-term support.

Through outreach to targeted groups, the archives will be linked to students, faculty, and staff. Students, as members of hard-to-document groups, may provide material from

their student organizations. As alumni, they may provide letters or memorabilia from their tenure at the institution. They may perhaps learn to go to other archives, e.g., at the institution from which they receive their master's degree or Ph.D. Faculty members who come to view the archives as a necessary resource can be valuable allies for new collections and new users. Staff and administrators who use the archives for records management or to answer questions will come to see the staff and collections as important tools. By combining these groups into institutional allies, the archives will solidify its position within the college and university community. While outreach activities do not guarantee visibility, lack of outreach activities will certainly guarantee invisibility. Promoting the archives will ideally eliminate the question, "Why do we need one of those and what do they do anyway?"

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## NOTES

1. Timothy Ericson, E-mail to author, November 7, 1997.
2. Lewis J. Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo, comp., *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992): 24.
3. William J. Maher, *The Management of College and University Archives* (New Jersey: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, 1992): 315. See also Helen Willa Samuels's book *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (New Jersey: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1992).
4. Elsie Freeman Finch, "Archival Advocacy: Reflections on Myths and Realities," *Archival Issues* 20:2 (1995): 116. Finch also is the editor of *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists* (New Jersey: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1994), which can be used as a guide to public relations for all archives.
5. Gregory S. Hunter, *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual* (New York: Neal-Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1997): 198.
6. Richard J. Cox, *Managing Institutional Archives: Foundation Principles and Practices* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 1992): 156.
7. Nicholas C. Burckel and J. Frank Cook, "A Profile of College and University Archives in the United States," *American Archivist* 45:4 (1982): 426.
8. Timothy L. Ericson, comp., "Academic Outreach: The Use of Archival Materials on the College Campus," unpublished handout distributed at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting, Washington, D.C., 1984. In the introduction Ericson argued that "Outreach needs to become an ongoing part of our archival operations—just as appraisal and accessioning." Photocopy of material given to author by Ericson with permission to use.
9. Mark A. Greene, "Using College and University Archives as Instructional Materials: A Case Study and an Exhortation," *Midwestern Archivist* 14:1 (1989): 31–38; Michael F. Kohl, "It Only Happens Once Every Hundred Years: Making the Most of the Centennial Opportunity," *American Archivist* 54 (1991): 390–397; Raimund E. Goerler, "'Play it Again, Sam': Historical Slide Publication in Public Programming—A Case Study," *American Archivist* 54 (1991): 378–388.
10. Special thanks to the following individuals who participated in the interviews: Christopher Densmore (State University of New York at Buffalo), Timothy Ericson (University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee),

William Maher (University of Illinois at Urbana), Margery Sly (Presbyterian Church, USA), Leon Stout (Pennsylvania State University), Anne Turkos (University of Maryland), Shelley Wallace (Hartwick College), Geoffrey Williams (State University of New York at Albany).

11. These institutions were not picked at random, but rather were chosen with help from Bruce Dearstyne and Anne Turkos based on the goals of the original student research project at the University of Maryland, College of Library and Information Services.
12. Anne Turkos, interview by the author, College Park, Maryland, October 22, 1997.
13. Bruce Dearstyne has suggested merging reference, outreach, and public programming to "stimulate program development" and increase use. Bruce W. Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," *American Archivist* 50 (1987): 86. Timothy Ericson wrote, "We may employ all these tools skillfully; but if, after we brilliantly and meticulously appraise, arrange, describe and conserve our records, nobody comes to use them, then we have wasted our time." Timothy Ericson, "'Preoccupied with our own gardens': Outreach and Archivists," *Archivaria* 31 (1990-91): 117.
14. Timothy Ericson, E-mail.
15. James M. O'Toole, "The Pope and the Archives: A Study in Archival Public Image," in Finch, *Advocating Archives*, 119.
16. Stout noted, "[The] more irrelevant, the less resources you get 'til you disappear." Leon Stout, telephone interview by the author, November 6, 1997.
17. William Maher, University Archivist at the University of Illinois at Urbana, commented that public programs are very important for archives. However, he does not believe that it is essential to create specific time that is set aside for them. Maher said that it is fine sometimes to be reactive and not proactive, since part of effective public programming is to be responsive to the questions posed by users. He added that responding to inquiries about collections that are processed, arranged, and described is a part of outreach. William Maher, telephone interview by the author, November 12, 1997.
18. Shelley Wallace, telephone interview by the author, November 5, 1997.
19. Ericson, E-mail. Turkos echoed this sentiment: "If you toot your own horn and can't back it up with services, it's a waste of time and effort," Turkos, interview.
20. Christopher Densmore, telephone interview by the author, November 4, 1997.
21. Margery Sly, telephone interview by the author, November 4, 1997.
22. Cox, 165.
23. Maher, 261.
24. Some archivists, like Geoffrey Williams at the State University of New York at Albany, do presentations on the information in their own archival collections as well as instructing students about archives in general. Recently, Williams increased the number of archival class presentations he does for graduate and undergraduate students, including those who would not be considered typical users of the archives, such as the students in the children's literature classes in the School of Education. Geoffrey Williams, E-mail to author, January 24, 2000.
25. Greene, 35.
26. Stout identified other courses that utilize the archives, including social studies education classes, facilities planning, higher education, sports history, and speech courses.
27. Stout, telephone interview.
28. Nicholas C. Burckel, "The Expanding Role of a College or University Archives," *Midwestern Archivist* 1:1 (1976): 10. Another commentary on the relationship of the archivist to faculty states that "[t]he successful college or university archivist has close, cordial, and effective relationships with the faculty on his campus." Maynard J. Brichford, "University Archives: Relationships with Faculty," *College and University Archives: Selected Readings* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1979): 31.
29. Densmore, telephone interview.
30. On the other hand, Wallace at Hartwick College used to send out a list of specific collections to faculty connected to their research. She decided not to continue this when she received mixed responses from the faculty. Wallace, telephone interview.
31. Turkos, interview.
32. For instance, at the University of Illinois at Urbana, University Archivist William Maher is in charge of the scheduling of records. At The Ohio State University, University Archivist Raimund Goerler schedules records and the archives sends E-mail messages to remind the deans about their record-keeping requirements.

33. Densmore, telephone interview.
34. For instance, SUNY at Albany did an exhibit on theater that was displayed in the library, the theater department, and finally landed in the Alumni House for two years.
35. William Maher, E-mail to author, January 20, 2000.
36. Hunter, 198.
37. Maher, E-mail.
38. Timothy Ericson, E-mail to author, January 25, 2000.
39. Ericson, E-mail, November 7, 1997.
40. Turkos, interview.
41. Goerler, 387. This information also includes the author's insight as Associate University Archivist at The Ohio State University.
42. Christopher Densmore wrote that he "strongly suspect[s] that NOT having a Web site would do us harm with our resource allocators. Keeping up with technology, particularly since the University is marketing itself as high tech, demonstrates that we are a viable part of the information resources of the institution (and hence contributing to the mission of the university and to the institution's credibility in the computer age)." Christopher Densmore, E-mail to author, January 25, 2000.
43. Maher, E-mail to author. The University of Illinois at Urbana archives' Web site can be found at <<http://www.library.uiuc.edu/ahx>>.
44. Craig G. St. Clair, "Electronic Outreach in the Archives: Bringing Them in at Digital Equipment Corporation," *Society of American Archivists Business Archives Section Newsletter*, 1994. Available at <[http://saa-businessarchives.com/saa\\_newsletter-archive.html](http://saa-businessarchives.com/saa_newsletter-archive.html)> (January 13, 2001).
45. Densmore commented that some people think that ". . . if they have seen your Web site, they have seen everything, and there is no need to visit the Archives or make any further inquiries." Christopher Densmore, E-mail.
46. The Ohio State University Archives' Web site can be found at <<http://www.lib.ohio-state.edu/arfweb>>.
47. The University of Maryland Archives' Web site can be found at <<http://www.lib.umd.edu/UMCP/ARCV/univarch.html>>.
48. Geoffrey Williams, E-mail to author, January 24, 2000. The SUNY at Albany Web site can be found at <<http://www.albany.edu/library/divs/speccoll>>.
49. Connecting to everyone at an institution is easier in some instances than in others. For instance, at Hartwick College, Wallace is linked to an extremely well-connected campus. All students receive laptop computers from the college when they arrive, and they are all connected to the Internet. Because the students are so involved with the Web, the archives has made an effort to capitalize on this resource. The archives' Web site includes all of the collections available at the archives. Each description has an introduction, biographical information, the scope of the holdings, and a complete inventory of the collection. The Hartwick College archives' Web site can be found at <<http://www.hartwick.edu/library/archives.html>>.
50. Ericson, E-mail, January 25, 2000.
51. Finch, 118.
52. Ericson, E-mail, November 7, 1997.
53. Ann Pederson, "User Education and Public Relations," in Ann Pederson, ed., *Keeping Archives* (Sydney: Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1987): 313.