

## THE EXPANDING ROLE OF A COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES

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A substantial body of archival literature documents the development of various university archives and their handling of specific problems. In addition, various in-house manuals of operation include information about processing, preserving, and servicing archival material. From this substantial body of literature emerges the pattern of what many universities have done and are doing in their archival programs. That pattern has been collecting, processing, and preserving non-current institutional records of permanent historical, legal or administrative value. There remains, however, the question of how broadly that role should be interpreted and implemented.

This article assumes that a sound and fundamental program has been established on the basis of principles enunciated in works on archival administration. The suggestions that follow generally point toward more diverse collecting activities and toward a greater commitment to serving all segments of the academic community. Some of these programs will not be new to the reader; some require additional staff and funding; and still others involve sensitive legal and administrative issues. These problems cannot be denied, and yet none seems insoluble. Only after archivists have experimented with these ideas and have reported their efforts and recommendations can these suggestions become part of the mainstream of archival practice. But this is exactly how most innovations become accepted--through the efforts of a few people willing to experiment with the unorthodox. With that caveat in mind, the reader should take from the following pages whatever appears practical or possible for his or her institution, interest, and budget.

### Broadening the Collecting Focus

The archivist can justifiably pride himself on the fact that to a

large extent the materials he collects, arranges, and preserves will determine what will or can be known about the history of his institution. In the past, institutional records in archival repositories have been a major source for the documentation of higher education. Today higher education is increasingly diverse and complex, forcing archivists to broaden collecting policies, to solicit more widely, and to use more imaginative methods of acquiring, appraising, and interpreting the information contained in a variety of formats.

Archives which focus on collecting administrative papers of university personnel and which function in an administrative support role document only one segment of the academic community, and that, perhaps, only inadequately. In addition to routinely receiving records transferred from administrative officers, such as chairpersons, deans, and vice-presidents, the archivist should actively solicit the papers of various governing board members. A personal appearance by the archivist before the board, or presentation of a faculty or administrative resolution encouraging the donation of personal papers, followed by a personal conference with retiring board members, would be an important first step. To encourage donations, the archivist might invite board members to tour the archival facilities. Both a tour and letter or certificate of appreciation after a donated collection is processed would set a precedent encouraging others to follow suit. The archivist's interest in board members might even result in favorable treatment in the budget for processing these collections.

Another collecting focus can be developed around the institutional mission of the college. This may take the form of a particular educational objective or emphasis, such as a medical school, engineering or law school, or specific disciplinary strengths in health sciences, environmental studies, or the urban experience. Some universities have a defined mission, an educational mandate, or a geographic area from which the students are drawn. These limits or mandates suggest a natural collecting focus. For the college or university which serves primarily an industrial region, offering courses in managerial and business techniques, as well as traditional liberal arts, the archivist might try to acquire the archives of local businesses or industries. At universities which excel in specific disciplines or which offer graduate work in limited areas, the archivist might try to collect in these subject areas from off campus sources. Naturally, major universities with established archival and manuscript programs frequently collect nationally but they, too, often have clearly defined areas of collecting. Such policies provide some budget justification to administrators, and possibly help bring money to the university for the preservation of these records.

Frequent and cordial contact with the alumni and their director on campus can also help the archivist build his collections. Through

regular newsletter features he can solicit papers, diaries, memorabilia, or specific items from publications files he may be missing. The archivist can play an active role in preparing displays for reunions as well as occasional articles on the history of the college in the alumni newsletter or magazine. Because the archivist collects from many segments of the academic community, he may have duplicate files which can be put to good use by alumni staff who might need, for example, an old yearbook or past issue of the campus newspaper.

One of the most important responsibilities of an archivist is establishing and maintaining a file of publications, including not merely periodicals or newspapers and newsletters published by the university, but many other items such as memoranda, announcements, and programs. If time and staff permit, these can be traced to their offices of origin and then classified accordingly. The problem, however, is to assure that the archives receives all of these publications. Trying to be on all mailing lists is not always adequate. A partial remedy is to contact the campus printing or duplicating shop. This shop usually files one copy of its work with each work order submitted. It would increase their costs only marginally to file an additional copy of each order in a box for the archivist to collect on a periodic basis.

Another collecting focus should be the intellectual and cultural atmosphere which the university engenders. This can hardly be determined from a look at transcripts or college catalogs. Two tools that can be used both for archival preservation and possible classroom and recreational use are audio and video recordings of campus events. Student music recitals, productions of the artist-in-residence and of choral groups would show the quality of education, and could be used in the classroom for comparison and criticism. Although many prominent speakers who appear at campuses reflect the popularity of certain transitory causes--political, environmental, or educational--their ideas should be preserved. Not only are such recordings of immediate use in the classroom or for students unable to attend the events, they also emphasize popular trends on campus, reaction of the audience, and depth of the presentation.

This is not to deny problems of copyright or of expense in recording. Yet these are practical problems of implementation, not determinants of the program's value. In the case of recording important campus events, class officers might be willing to subsidize the cost if they are later allowed to excerpt certain parts for an alumni recording to be sold to graduates or enclosed in reunion mailings. Sometimes the sponsors will be flattered by the request to film or tape a performance for preservation and they will cover the costs. If the recordings are used for instruction, budget officers might allocate a specific amount of money to the archives for that purpose.

It is not only courteous, but legally necessary, to secure the permission of the speaker or performer before the event is recorded. This should be formalized by signature on a standard form which the archivist might draft with the cooperation of the university attorney. To persuade the performer to agree to a taping of the session, the archivist may have to agree to certain conditions: that the reproduction will be used for educational purposes only, that it will not be used for profit, that it will not be further reproduced without the consent of the party involved, and that it would not impinge on the rights of the speaker or performer to use the material in his or her presentation for subsequent publication. If the procedure has worked in some instances, then the precedent could be stressed and the archivist could show how previous material has been handled. If permission cannot be obtained, then the archivist has no authority to make a recording, nor does anyone else.

### Documenting Student Life

Papers of prominent persons associated with the university or files of events and publications by the college or its student body are obviously not the complete record of any university. The raison d'etre of higher education is teaching and the viability of most colleges rests on enrollment, yet archivists have done little to document the quality and type of students who pass through their institutions. Because administrators and faculty comprise a fairly stable constituency and because they are the salaried personnel who hold responsible positions, they may be mistaken for the institution as a whole. The student population, on the other hand, experiences the most rapid change of any element in the university; students are not directly accountable to the board of regents, trustees, or the state legislature, and they pay for services that are not readily quantifiable. They are sometimes mere statistics in an admissions, dean of students, or departmental file. These student statistics and records are worthwhile, but they are incomplete. To complete the picture there are several ways of more fully documenting students' experiences. One possibility would be randomly or selectively to choose incoming students and introduce them to an experimental program. Aside from periodic oral history interviews, these students would be asked to save their term papers, exams, and notes on all courses, or classes taken in their major. Fraternities sometimes maintain such files, but often for the exclusive use of their members. Over a number of years these records could be important in evaluating the quality of education, the consistency of the grading system, and the innovation or lack of it in instruction.

A more specific approach involves a cooperative arrangement with members of the English department who teach introductory composition and rhetoric courses required of all students. In this instance, pro-

fessors could assign at least one autobiographical essay or family biography per semester. Either assignment requires students to do some research on their own families, their patterns of settlement, socio-economic status, education, customs and values. The preservation of these essays in the archives would be useful not only for judging the writing style and ability of college freshmen over a period of years but also for determining the kinds of families from which the student population is drawn. Over a number of years these essays provide a profile of the types of students attending the school. In the cases where the school draws mainly from a given geographic location such as a major city or certain counties of the state, the information contributes to a history of the area, especially its ethnic and social patterns. The archivist should speak at one session of each class to discuss how unpublished diaries, journals, and autobiographies have been used by historians to uncover valuable information. At this time he should also explain student rights to privacy and the implications of literary property rights. If students can be guaranteed protection for confidential material (e.g. the size of their parents' income) then they will cooperate enthusiastically. Access to these files can be restricted for a certain number of years, or names of the student authors could be withheld. In any case the archivist should avoid commitments which would restrict him so much that the material would be unavailable for all practical purposes. The project should be voluntary and the student's cooperation should not determine his or her grade.

A further attempt to document student life would include the acquisition of ephemera which is most often associated with student clubs or organizations which have a relatively short institutional life. Their meetings are not necessarily run in a discernible parliamentary fashion. Such groups do not routinely record minutes, and they often meet irregularly. Without becoming an underground member himself, the archivist can only hope to collect what these organizations make available. Hand bills and broadsides often generated in the heat of a controversy are not analytical statements of issues, but they usually represent opinions of those out of power and without the financial resources to hire public relations agents to write news releases. The easiest way of acquiring such material is to accept any handout distributed at rallies, in front of administration buildings, or near student unions or haunts. Such items should be immediately dated and identified as to source. The archivist might also consider placing an ad in the campus paper or underground newspaper soliciting archival material from student groups, or inviting the editors to publish an article on the archives and its collecting policies. He should also subscribe to these publications, or if that is not practical, then he can usually purchase copies from street hawkers near the campus.

## Using Oral History

The technique of using oral history interviews as an important method of documenting higher education is beginning to gain wide acceptance. Frequently, however, this approach focuses narrowly on the biography of the person interviewed or presents the mellow recollections of a person who has retired amid recognition dinners and adulatory resolutions. These people are often unwilling or unable to appraise objectively the university. To balance these accounts, the archivist might obtain interviews with known faculty dissidents, or administrators who have announced a move to another university. With the guarantee of some restrictions or the promise of limited confidentiality, these people may be willing to discuss their view of the university and their role in it. A person who has been at the university for a relatively brief time may have better insights about the institution than a senior faculty member never employed elsewhere. Faculty who have not received tenure or administrators whose jobs have been abolished may not provide an objective view of the university, but then neither does the emeritus dean who has a stake in defending the university. Archivists have frequently concentrated on the people successful in the system, when perhaps they could have learned as much or more from those who have rejected it, or been rejected by it. Of course, many persons may refuse to tape their reflections. On the other hand, those who do consent to tape may have controversial viewpoints which, recorded, might later involve the archivist in legal contretemps which jeopardize his job or that of the interviewee. Long before undertaking such a program, the archivist should seek competent legal advice from university counsel and get the written agreement of the archivist's supervisor and/or the archives committee, where it exists.

Oral history is also a valuable tool for gauging student life and activity. This can be done in several ways. The archivist, in cooperation with the admissions office or with the assistance of a faculty colleague, could either develop a random sample of incoming students or specifically select certain categories of students (minority, athletes, handicapped, high IQ) and follow them through their college career. The archivist would contact these people, explain the project, and then meet periodically with the participants either individually or in groups, to record their college experience. Over an extended period, this would be a valuable research tool for anyone studying the effects of school and society on each other, changing mores of college students, and student interaction with faculty and administration. Archivists could also arrange to meet with certain graduating seniors who headed extra-curricular activities, both official and unofficial, as well as students who majored in different academic disciplines, to get their thoughts and ideas on tape.

Another source for documenting student life through oral history

involves recording demonstrations organized by students. If an archivist were to circulate among demonstrators with a tape recorder in hand he might justifiably arouse suspicion among students. To allay this suspicion, the archivist might have student assistants, with some training in oral history, interview fellow students. The archivist might also want to interview the local police, campus security, faculty, and administrators, if not during the disturbances, then shortly afterward. The problem in these cases is not the collection of information, but the use to which this information may be put. Again, legal advice should be sought and a written policy created to prevent unauthorized use of the material. There are variations on any one of these suggestions, but oral history should not be considered as the record of only the articulate or the elite.

No archivist should undertake an ambitious oral history program without realizing the spiraling costs of a good program. When the time and money necessary for such a program are weighed against the average costs of collecting and processing manuscripts, oral history may not be as important or attractive as it first appears. A preliminary estimate of the expense of oral history may reveal the need for some compromises in an effort to salvage a program. Instead of transcribing the tape verbatim, the archivist could develop a locator index to identify the places on tapes where specific questions were answered or general subjects discussed. Key administrators who consent to interviews might be willing to have their secretarial staffs transcribe the tapes. At least at one university the oral history project is funded out of the president's budget and was developed to record the history of the institution and the achievements of its distinguished faculty. This high-level support eases funding problems. The major consideration here, as with other programs, is the trade-off between undertaking an oral history project and abandoning another program. If it comes at the cost of undermining the regular collecting and processing of the institution's records, then the project's benefits do not outweigh its costs. On the other hand, if a pilot project might convince administrators, alumni, or some outside agency to see the merit of the program and to fund further work, then the initial time and money investment easily justifies itself. There is no mathematical formula for success, and oral history programs should not be undertaken without proper research and thoughtful planning.

### Increasing Current Use of Holdings

Programs devoted to solicitation of papers, recording oral history interviews, developing a publication file, recording and preserving the record of campus events, and collecting papers of students, all help to document more fully the role of higher education in society. They are concerned with the collection, and in some sense

the creation, of records which will be used by social scientists of the future. Beyond that, however, developing current use of past records is a parallel concern of archivists and researchers. The following may suggest new services an archivist can provide to encourage use and increase recognition of his collections by faculty, students, and administrators.

The archivist and the faculty can and should enjoy a close working relationship. By surveying the faculty, the archivist can determine what research they are doing and what courses they would like to offer. In only a few instances can he expect faculty members to solicit his help and these are in the most obvious areas, such as a history course on methodology or original research. But at the risk of appearing obtrusive, the archivist might, for example, approach the professor teaching statistics for social scientists with the idea that he might send his students to the archives to develop random samples or test hypotheses, and develop correlations. Student records, alumni files, and instructional reports, all provide enough material for students both to learn the techniques of statistical work and to experience what their professors often do with other primary records in researching articles and monographs. The possibilities of research papers using the university's records are infinite, but the archivist must suggest them, have them ready, and be willing to work directly with faculty and students in exploiting those possibilities. It should go without saying that in encouraging research he should not sacrifice the confidentiality nor jeopardize the physical security of the records. These safeguards must be guaranteed.

In institutions which offer graduate programs, or even undergraduate honors programs, the archivist might contact the faculty who have a good teaching reputation or who are particularly innovative to show them how archival material can be used in the classroom. It is a sad commentary on the education of many undergraduate and some graduate students, that they have no idea how scholars research and write articles and monographs. To prove to them that monographs are seldom written exclusively from published sources, a few days in the archives would give the student an appreciation both for the difficulty an archivist encounters in collecting, arranging, and preserving historical records, and the problem a scholar has in properly interpreting them. This, of course, can all be told in the classroom, but it does not come alive until the student encounters the problem himself. By assigning research papers using university records, teachers guarantee that the students will not be researching a topic for which there are not available sources, and that they will have the guidance and assistance of someone not merely familiar with the topic, but supportive of the effort. The archivist benefits both by the increased use and service generated, and also by the final results of the research which he may want to secure for the archives.

## Serving the Researcher and the University

Many faculty are as interested in research as in teaching and the archivist can also be of service here, but this requires more than providing professors with a guide to the collection, a card catalog, or a container list. The problem is to convey the archivist's often intimate knowledge of his collections to the faculty member whose research may benefit from that knowledge. Communicating that information is not always easy. By perusing a file of faculty publications, the archivist may find certain faculty have research interests which might bring them to the archives. Instead of waiting for them to come to him, however, he might make appointments with them and invite them to the archives.

Often the problem is showing what records can be used and in what manner. Therefore, it is wise, before approaching faculty members, to compile a list of research topics and potential source material. Even if the archivist does not have time to visit individual faculty members, he might invite appropriate departments or divisions to meet with him at the archives for a tour and a brief explanation. At that time, if the archivist has a list of possible subjects, a preliminary guide to his holdings, and a knowledge of the experience of other institutions where faculty use of holdings is high, then he stands an excellent chance of developing interest. But as with most other programs suggested here, the archivist must be willing to extend himself in order to develop a versatile and service-oriented college archives.

Archivists can not only supply professors and their students with research ideas, they might themselves offer a course in the regular program, or through the university's extension, outreach, or adult and evening classes. Academicians may be receptive to such offers, especially if expenses are minimal. Most obvious are archival training classes or ones concerning historical agencies, offered either in the library school or as an internship program giving credit for a semester's work in the university archives. Although methodological courses have been de-emphasized or dropped in many departments, there remains a need for teaching students how to use primary sources.

If he is developing a presentation on the university as part of a course on higher education, educational policy studies, or institutional histories, the archivist might solicit and develop a file of departmental histories and information about endowed chairs, building programs, and curriculum changes or fund-raising drives. Departmental histories provide a valuable source of information about the university which would not be apparent in administrative papers of the central administration.

Archivists are constantly asking scholars to use their records, giving grants to encourage it, and relieving them of as much of the

drudgery of research as possible. In some cases the archivist has done much of the work and might properly complete the entire project. Grants for research are not necessarily restricted to college professors. The American Library Association, American Association for State and Local History, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, are just a few of the professional or philanthropic agencies that disperse funds for historical research, curriculum development, and information dissemination proposals. Although in recent years money from the great foundations has begun to dry up and the federal government has reduced its subsidy to higher education, grants are still available. The archivist is in the enviable position of having custody over the records he wishes to exploit. New collecting ideas or new research in areas already collected might yield source material not just for theses and dissertations but for developing and widening the interest and expertise of the archivist.

Increasingly, archivists have enjoyed success in securing funding from private philanthropies, federal and state government, and professional historical agencies. Even medium-sized colleges and universities have offices which handle grant applications. Offices of extramural support assist faculty in drafting and submitting research proposals. Archivists and librarians are frequently not included among those to whom applications and notices of grants are sent. The archivist should therefore contact the appropriate budget or business officers to inform them of his research interests and how certain grants would be of direct value to the university. Frequent contact with the faculty might also result in their including the archivist in developing educational and research program proposals for grants.

Although institutional policies vary, archivists often need not be on the academic tenure track to apply for research leave with pay, or without pay if a grant is available. A summer or semester sabbatical may be sufficient time to research an archival problem and to write an article. Librarians have already achieved faculty status at many campuses and have had grants or fellowships to sharpen their skills or to research topics and publish their findings. Archivists can make the same claims since their own work is technical and continual updating of skills is necessary in a field with frequent changes in data collection and research methodology. What is often lacking among archivists, however, is not the opportunity, but the commitment to plunge into an unexplored area.

Even without significant outside funding, the college archivist could write worthwhile articles for publication in journals or in-house publications of the university. Examples of the former include a study of random samples of the student population over a number of years to develop a student profile, or a study of the decision-making process based on administrative records available in the archives. There is no

reason why the archivist could not publish a brief pamphlet history of the college which would be used by recruiters and public information officers for free distribution. He could use his knowledge of the campus's past to develop a walking tour of the campus which would feature photographs of buildings, their location, and anything architecturally unique or historically significant about them. A slide show of the campus, its history, students, alumni, and faculty could also be developed using the iconographic collection of the archives. The archivist is the logical person to develop a slide lecture series on the history of the university or to incorporate the university's history into a program of local or state history which may be offered by the history department. A fund-raising project that could be used either for the university generally or for the archives, if sanctioned, might be a highly selective or anecdotal history of the university and its traditions and customs. This has already been done on some campuses, but not all of them have utilized or been fully aware of the university archives; and where it has not been done, the archivists might promote the idea.

In his position as a custodian of the university's records, the archivist is in a unique position to determine and fill what gaps exist in the documentation of the school's history. Gaps that occur as a result of theft, accident, or destruction are probably lost forever. But archivists might be of service to the university in suggesting the routes for collecting certain kinds of data which would be of historical importance. For example, with some training in the extensive literature on forms management, the archivist and university personnel could draft a multi-purpose form for student records which would save students from filling out an endless number of largely similar forms, conserve paper, and save administrators' time, as well as guarantee an easier job of preserving in the archives information that is not essentially duplicated elsewhere. The forms could be a vehicle for surveying students for information which is of historical value and which had not been previously solicited. The archivist might also work with the alumni office in the preparation of questionnaires soliciting information. This would be of immediate assistance to the alumni office, but could also serve as an important research resource in the archives in future years.

The archives can also be of service by developing and maintaining various vertical files of newspaper clippings organized by subject or person. These are often of use for quick reference and for people who want only a cursory answer to certain questions. There is no need to dismiss such patrons as a nuisance or to inundate them with inventories and container lists. For frequently asked questions, a simple arrangement is to keep a file of answers to the most often asked questions. This avoids having to rely on the archivist's memory or on searches for the material each time the question is asked. These questions most

often include school colors, date of founding, tenure of the presidents, dates and cost of building construction, sports records, or the origin of motto, logo, or traditions. Particularly helpful in this regard - and for researching the institution's history - is a comprehensive subject index of important campus publications. Although its compilation can be a tedious project at the outset, this catalog once current would not be difficult to maintain. It should include the campus newspaper, the alumni magazine, the minutes and resolutions of the faculty and board of regents or trustees--a mammoth project for an institution over a century old, but realistic for any institution less than 25 years old. A specific proposal for this project might gain a sympathetic administrative ear and be funded until the backlog is reduced.

The archivist can also be of service to the university by serving on any number of faculty and administrative committees. He should be an ex officio member of any archives or library committee and could logically serve on a variety of others: committees to name buildings and memorials or to celebrate anniversaries, committees writing resolutions honoring emeritus or deceased staff, historical committees, as well as committees on university records, institutional self-study, and alumni affairs. Campuses vary in the size, structure, and functions of their committee system, but none is without them and they are a vehicle for involving the archivist in the development and ongoing operation of the university.

Where no archives and records management committee exists, the archivist might urge its creation if it would assist him in securing the cooperation of faculty, administration, and students. Although the archivist may have no control over the composition of the committee, he might want included not merely faculty and administrators, but also students and a representative from the community. With input from community and student representatives the archivist could explore a variety of collecting possibilities and means of including those groups whose records are usually absent from a college archives.

Serving on a dedication or commemoration committee allows the direct input of the archivist before plans have been finalized and the archivist is presented with tasks he is not capable of handling, or that do not make the best use of his resources. Multimillion dollar buildings are erected to honor a particular person, but less than a generation after that person's death, no one knows who he was or what relation he had to the university. For almost no additional expense, the main entrance of a new building could be equipped with a display case or exhibition area. Thus at the entrance of a science hall named for an eminent scientist, a display on one of his pioneering experiments could be constructed with an accompanying explanation. For the library named after the war dead of the college or state, an iconographic display with a summary of the college's contributions and casualties during the war would remind patrons of what the building

honored. If a building bears no one's name, but is designated by academic area or discipline, then each discipline could select one of its past distinguished scholars to be featured in a display or the archivist could rotate displays among departmental occupants of the building. For those buildings named after philanthropists whose affiliation with the university is more distant, the archives should make some attempt to acquire the donor's records as part of a memorial to him after death. This would be a step in the direction of documenting the growth, development, and influence of the university on the society and vice-versa, particularly for the private institutions which rely heavily on endowments.

### Conclusions

All of these service and research ideas point to a broader and more active role for the archivist on campus: (1) surveying the faculty to determine their research interests, (2) developing ways of using archival material for instructional use, (3) offering courses, seminars or talks to students and members of the community, (4) researching and writing articles based on collections in the archives, (5) developing vertical files for frequently used material, (6) creating certain types of records, and (7) serving on various committees. Complementary to these services are collecting policies and techniques that can more fully document the development of the college and higher education generally: (1) soliciting the papers of regents, trustees, alumni, donors, and students, (2) establishing files for ephemera, media and publications, (3) inaugurating a systematic oral history project aimed at securing community and student, as well as faculty and administration input, (4) deciding on a collecting focus in line with the location or mission of the institution, and (5) experimenting with a possible inter-institutional loan program.

These suggestions should be considered with caution. No single institution has the staff or budget to undertake all these projects. There may be specific instances, however, in which the archivist can implement a new program or secure funding for a specific project. This may depend less on the state of the general economy, than on the ability of the archivist to develop proposals that do not undermine his basic archival function but rather expand and elaborate it. This is not to beg the question of the difficulty of appraisal, the problem of establishing priorities, and the need to provide certain functions. These are indeed real issues susceptible to no easy solution. Yet it seems likely that a wider contact with the public the archivist serves can only increase his sensitivity to the needs of his institution and to the possibilities for new ways of meeting those needs. The questions an archivist should ask are: Are these services worthwhile? Do the suggested collecting policies help document the history of the college or university or of higher education generally? If the answer to either question is "yes," then college archivists should act.