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Preserving and Promoting Institutional Heritage: A Descriptive Study of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference Members’ Archives

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Abstract
Academic institutions, even small colleges and universities, acknowledge the importance of archives in order to preserve and promote their institutional heritage. For the past half-century, an increasing number of institutions are establishing and supporting archives. Two over-arching questions soon arise: first, how is an academic institution, especially one with limited funding and staffing, to achieve success with their archives? Second, what can be learned through the shared experience of institutions that currently support academic archives? The author evaluated the websites of the archives of the twelve colleges that are members of the Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference (SCAC) (see Table 1, for SCAC members). In addition, the author surveyed the archivist of each of the institutions. He asked qualitative, open-ended survey questions to determine the successes and failures of each archives. Questions covered such topics as the original establishment of academic archives, funding methods, obtaining administrative buy-in, exhibit and display ideas, among other areas. In addition, quantitative demographic questions were asked, including academic enrollment, number of staff members, library operating budget, archives operating budget and years established among other pertinent questions. The goal of obtaining both qualitative and quantitative data is to take the first step towards a best-practices guide for small, private colleges that are embarking on a path to establish or expand their archives.

*Keywords*: academic archives, archives, institutional memory
The collective experience of the SCAC member institutions’ regarding the original founding and continued administration of their academic archives can provide other small colleges a path to administrative success. It is important for academic archives to learn from each other and not re-invent processes, procedures and practices each time an institution establishes or expands an archives.

This study is primarily qualitative and descriptive with some demographic questions that may be analyzed quantitatively. Since open-ended questions often yield the most usable data due to the flexible nature of answers, the author chose to allow participants to provide free-form answers. The choice of demographic questions that could be used quantitatively grew from the idea that data from the demographic categories may correlate to the open-ended question answers, further explaining successes and failures.

**Literature Review**

Academic institutions take pride in their institutional histories. These histories provide a link among current students, alumni, faculty, staff and the surrounding community. Colleges and universities must preserve and promote their own institutional memory—both positive and negative—to ensure continued remembrance. This institutional legacy connects all campus constituencies and fosters an understanding of shared history among all parties. When colleges make the decision to establish—or expand—their archives, there should be a bank of professional expertise and experience from which they may draw. Academics have written widely on archival theory, but a practical, day-to-day manual of best practices is truly needed to create a common body of archival knowledge. The first step in the creation of this manual is the review of pertinent literature concerning the history, development, purposes and challenges of an academic archives.

The Society of American Archivists (1999) describes the role of the academic archives as one that “serves as the institutional memory of the college or university” (I. Executive Summary). Only though financial and staffing support can the archives succeed in its mission to keep traditions and history alive and thriving at the institution. Students matriculate and transfer or graduate, faculty teach and leave or retire, staff ever changes, but the academic archives acts as a perpetual depository of history, traditions and artifacts.
Roff (2010) provides a brief background to the history and development of archives in an academic setting. Academic archives were slow to take off even with the rise of local history centers and interest in genealogy in the early stages of American history. This lack of development is partly because academic institutions were late to recognize the importance of their own institutional heritages. Harvard University, often on the cusp of educational progress, established a haphazard archives in the middle of the nineteenth century, but it was not until the 1920s that it was properly appreciated since its holdings and expertise were needed to assist with the preparation for the university’s tercentenary. Other universities such as Dartmouth, Amherst and William and Mary, among others, established their own archives in the late nineteenth century soon after Harvard. Still other institutions, while lacking an official archives, employed a librarian whose partial responsibility may have included keeping and preserving university-associated ephemera and records. Cox (1992) echoes the point that colleges and universities have long collected material of historical importance, but the systematic collection of material of institutional importance such as faculty papers, administrative documents and student organizational records is much more recent. While the seeds of academic archives were planted in the mid-nineteenth century, Gilliland-Swetland (2000) states that the vast majority of academic archives were founded much later in the latter part of the twentieth century. This development paralleled the overall growth of academic institutions and their drive to cement their viability through preservation of their history.

Archives in academic libraries—both large and small—confront similar issues that affect their daily existence and continued success or failure. Brown (2001) describes trends and developments she experienced over her fifteen-year career in academic archives. Archival work is reference-based. That is, the primary role of an archivist, like each library professional, is patron support. Archival material—just like printed material—must be accessible for the patron. Dearstyne (1993) parallels but supersedes this idea in his use of the term “research services” versus reference (p. 174). He writes that the archivist fulfills four roles regarding their collections and research services. First, they encourage the physical use of their holdings. Second, they actively assist patrons in use. Third, they make records available. And, finally, through the use of statistics they design more applicable programming and develop stronger departmental goals. The archival obligation is threefold: to the records, to the institution and to the patron. Brown (2001) also points out that technology has impacted this onus greatly, both in regards to new
avenues for patron accessibility and inquiries but also in the realm of digitization. Johnson and Kenne (2008) view the digital opportunities of small and medium-sized libraries as paramount to their success. These opportunities include the creation of digital collections of high-demand material and the establishment of institutional repositories that could focus on either material in the archives or faculty and student work.

Interestingly and seemingly rare in academic archival theory writing, Brown (2001) concedes that for the success of the mission of the library (and by extension the academic institution as a whole), the financial and staffing goals of archives must sometimes take a self-imposed second place to the overall needs of the Library. Also, the archivist must foster relationship with faculty for two reasons. First, the faculty will act as stewards of the collections, encouraging students to utilize the resources. And, second, they may become donors themselves of their papers. (They may also act as cheerleader for the department in times of need.) Finally, Brown (2001) demands that the archivist in an academic institution elicit a sense of excitement among her patron base. Only through outreach, exhibits, active publishing and publicity can worth be demonstrated and administrative support gained.

Brown (2001) echoes Dearstyne (1993) who writes that the “underutilization” of material is rooted in the lack of outreach work of archivists (p. 176). They all too often simply expect patrons to show up with a thirst for their primary documents. The archives cannot survive with this model. Grabowski (2000) goes even further dictating that the archivist should partner with patrons, groups, academics, anyone who can help in extending the understanding of what an archivist does and the value to her home institution. Exhibits should be coordinated with groups that can mutually benefit from the partnership. Worth must be demonstrated through the patronization and perceived value from the public.

Archives, just like libraries, suffer from the effects of deteriorating budgets. This lack of funding proves true for public, private, for-profit and non-profit institutions; none are safe in a down economy. Archives associated with academic institutions often find themselves near the bottom of many priority lists. Welch, Hoffius, and Fox (2011) write of the successful efforts of the Waring Historical Library of the Medical University of South Carolina to prove relevancy. The first piece of advice they offer is to apply for any grants for which ones’ archives may qualify. Through self-funding, an archives may demonstrate that it believes that its mission is important enough to pursue funding sources on its own. Deals may also be struck between the
archives and its parent institution to match or provide additional funding if some is achieved through grants. Further, once grants are received, it often becomes easier to obtain more. In fact, the Waring has been awarded nearly $500,000 in grants to continue their successful programs and projects.

Next, Welch, Hoffius, and Fox (2011) describe the successes enjoyed by the Waring regarding mass digitization—an issue faced by nearly all archives. Through a joint effort with other South Carolina digitization projects, the Waring was able to expand the audience for its material from a small group of researchers who had to physically travel to its location to a nearly endless stream of users who could access material remotely via the Internet. This partnership allowed the Waring to enjoy the benefits of mass digitization while sharing the costs with other archives. Digitization was originally done for accessibility, but it soon allowed for a greater level of promotion and advocacy—both concerns of the administrative purse holders. They write that by making their own collections relevant, they were able to make the archives as an entity relevant. Finally, they detail the successful use of advocacy. Through the use of the archives, the development and alumni offices were able to procure images and items for publications and promotion. Also, alumni and their families discovered items and images that led to constructive relationships between them and the institution—often resulting in monetary or in-kind donations. Partnerships such as this example often help archives with outreach and exposure through a shared cost and effort.

As someone serving in archivist capacities over the last thirty years, Burckel (2008) offers a historical retrospective on the state of academic archives comparing the results of three different surveys run in 1972, 1991 and 2004. Based on response changes between the 1972 and 1991 surveys, he explains that staff, hours of service and operating budgets increased while patron usage remained constant. Also, priorities shifted from a greater emphasis on processing to outreach, user education and staff training. While it was not restricted to SAA members like the 1972 and 1991 surveys and it did not utilize a random sample, the 2004 survey offered some important new information about the development of archives, such as the importance of an MLIS or equivalent degree.

Further, Burckel (2008) details the results from the 2004 informal survey of seventeen large research institution’s archivists. The survey, paralleling Brown (2001), found that technology—both in archival description and patron accessibility—was making the job of the
archivist easier. This changing technology included the greater availability of finding aids both on the Internet and listed in libraries’ online catalogues. One of the most important findings from this poll was that archivists’ patron base began to make more non-scholarly, research-based inquiries and ask more questions concerning institutional history. This evidence directly points to the finding that archivists were more active in administrative support and fundraising than in the past when their focus was mainly support of academic research.

Maher (2009) also offers a retrospective on a three-decade career in academic archives, but he goes further than Burckel (2008) stating that in order to remain relevant, the archivist must ensure that collaboration is achieved between the archives and the faculty and students. Only by demonstrating relevance in the classroom—similar to Brown (2001)—will the archives achieve funding and staffing security in an age of ever-tightening budgets. Simply acting as the keeper of institutional history cannot guarantee an archives’ exemption from budget and staffing cuts. It must demonstrate its relevance on a day-to-day basis. Maher (2009) also sees the role—and embracing—of technologies by the archivist as paramount to continued relevance. He concludes by offering advice to the academic archivist. The archivist must take an active role in the decision-making regarding new record systems. Also, limits to what can realistically be saved and processed must be established, and archivists must set limits that will ensure that staff members are not stretched too thin regarding classroom teaching.

Further, Maher (2009) states that archivists should plan strategically on a three or five-year cycle to ensure that projects have time enough to succeed. Moreover, paralleling Brown (2001), he suggests that alliances should be sought between the archives and faculty and staff, since the archives exists to provide institutional support. The archivist cannot maintain institutional support if she only collects ephemera in isolation. Maher (2009) finally offers that the archives must take its rightful place among all university departments. That is, the archives is just as important as other offices because without the shared organizational history collected by the archives, the other departments would be without an institutional foundation on which to build their priorities. Similarly, Samuels (1998) describes the importance of the archivist and archives in the daily existence of the university. She writes of the importance of archival documentation and preservation in the primary areas of influence that the academic institution wields over its constituency.
The role—and biography—of the archivist is changing, but the collective experiences and decisions of those archivists who have come before is invaluable to all archival administrators. Only through an incorporation of the practices of those currently in archival roles can the newly minted archivist—and even veterans—succeed in her own institutional goals. If she fails, much is at stake. Only through official respect and acknowledgement of an institution’s past—especially at a college—will students take pride in their alma mater. And only through the graduating of prouful and successful graduates can a college endure. The academic archives fulfills an important role in this relationship.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative, descriptive study is to take the first step toward preparing a best practices manual for academic archives in small colleges based upon the collective experience gained from more established archives at similar institutions. This study explores two central questions: first, how is an academic institution, especially one with limited funding and staffing, to achieve success with their archives? Second, what can be learned through the shared experience of institutions that currently maintain academic archives? In support of these two broad questions, more specific research questions arise. Why is an institutional archives important to a college or university? What do archivists wish they had known when they first went about establishing their archives? Finally, how can institutional buy-in be obtained to gain support from the other departments in a college or university?

**Methodology**

Through a descriptive study research method, the author utilized the qualitative examination techniques of observation and surveying. The author analyzed the SCAC members’ archives’ websites to obtain examples of finding aids, collection development policies, founding documents and statements of purpose. He also surveyed the archivists listed on each institution’s web page. If no archivist was listed, the author contacted the library director for the archivist’s information. If there was no archivist employed, the library director was asked to answer the set of questions that provided information on each archives’ activities, processes, organization, successes and failures (see Table 2, for list of survey questions).
The collegiate members of the SCAC were specifically chosen; therefore the selection method was not random but purposive. This specific group of colleges was selected for three reasons. First, the members are similar in that they are all small, private, liberal arts and sciences colleges making them an easily-comparable group. Second, each university, with the exception of two, employs an archivist. Finally, the group of twelve schools is a manageable size for evaluation and analysis. Since the author planned to contact the representatives via email with a prepared questionnaire, he first contacted Valdosta State University’s Institutional Review Board for approval of his proposed study. He subsequently applied and was granted an exemption under Category 2 (IRB-02807-2012). Each participant was informed of the proposed use of the information collected. The survey questions were qualitative and open-ended. Demographic questions were also asked. It took one month to collect information and an additional month to analyze the research. From start to finish, the study lasted two months.

Data Collection and Analysis

Through direct observation and surveying, the author collected information. The twelve archivists (or archival representatives) of each SCAC member institution received an emailed list of qualitative, open-ended as well as demographic questions. Out of twelve surveys sent out, the author received eight responses: six via email and two via telephone. When a non-responder email was sent two weeks from the initial email, the author offered the option of calling respondents if that would be easier and work better with his or her schedule. Two archivists took him up on this offer, and he asked them the survey questions over the phone and took notes. Further, the author visited the website of each member institution to view the archives’ website for examples of finding aids, collection development policies, founding documents and statements of purpose to supplement responses.

To analyze the collected information, the author entered all answers into a spreadsheet so he could utilize content analysis to find patterns in the responses of participants. Topic coding was also utilized to more easily group responses. The author compared the successful and unsuccessful experiences by archivists to determine if patterns arose between successful programs and levels of funding and staffing based upon a correlation analysis of the open-ended questions and demographics. Answers that occurred often may lead to foundational principles in successful or unsuccessful archival administration. Also, responses that proved very successful at
one college could be candidates for implementation at other universities. Some might have to be modified for specific goals, resources, etc., but many could be general enough to be used with few alterations.

Findings and Discussion
Respondents’ answers can be broadly grouped into four categories. First, each respondent offered data on the overall organization and daily processes encountered in his or her archives. Second, the importance and struggles for institutional and constituency buy-in focused prominently in answers. Third, each respondent discussed outreach between the archives and the institution and community and solicitations from these same constituencies. Finally, the impact of the archives—and overall struggle for existence—tempered nearly all responses.

Organization and Daily Processes
The self-reported demographic figures demonstrate the similar nature and environment in which the respondent’s archives exist. The average number of enrolled students at the eight respondents’ institutions is 1,229, with a maximum of 2000 and a minimum of 800. All of the respondents’ archives were founded in the last thirty years, with the oldest in 1982 and the most recent in the late 1990s. The archives’ operating budget ranged from $0 (the most common figure) to small endowments established for preservation ($2,000) or as part of a larger collection ($7,000) to one with a relatively large budget ($23,000). The number of staff members in the archives ranged from zero to two. To supplement this lack of staff, all respondents utilized student assistants in their archives for processing, arrangement and preservation activities. No patterns arose among number of students, number of archival staff and operating budget. Almost all archival staff had earned MLIS or other master’s degrees, but many stressed the importance of hands-on training. One respondent even stated that, in her experience, practical training and experience trumps academically-earned archival credentials. These statistics prove important because they show that these archivists support campus communities with minimal funds and staff. With few resources, each still sets-up displays, supports other university offices and complements faculty lessons among other accomplishments, positively impacting the experience of many different constituencies of the campus community.

The exclusive use of students proves interesting because it may spotlight the lack of administrative respect in many universities based on the lack of a perceived professional nature
of the department. That is, many administrations may question why funds should be spent on more resources or a larger archival staff if they presently survive through already-funded minimal staff supplemented by students. But while students may be able to accomplish some of the routine archival tasks, a trained archivist must be charged to lead the department. Although they can process and digitize and contribute greatly to the work of an archives, student assistants cannot take the place of archival professionals.

Respondents offered advice that, looking back, they wish the original founders of their archives had been given. Each archivists’ recommendations was basic and practical, possibly reflecting on the self-sufficient nature of small, academic archives. Administrative suggestions included ensuring that there is room for physical expansion; using true archival databases from the onset; and maintaining good relationships with office assistants who are the gatekeepers to records. One respondent proffered visiting campus offices on a regular basis to provide advice on storage and record maintenance before eventual transference to the archives. Other recommendations include always being flexible with both methods of preservation and patron accessibility. That is, archivists cannot become recalcitrant when it comes to methods of doing their jobs. There is always room for improvement and technology must be embraced.

Answers to the question of how the respondents triage projects were enlightening. One stated that when each student intern is hired, the interests of the intern are compared with the unprocessed collections to assign a collection that will be the most interesting to the intern. Another stated that since a backlog has recently been cleaned, no collections are accepted if the archivist does not have time to process them. A third respondent stated that all unprocessed material is stored in archival-safe containers until time is available to process it. Finally, one archivists stated that she is mainly concerned with processing at the macro level when new material arrives. If she knows what generally is in a collection and which broad subject terms to apply, she can catalogue at a level that will provide cursory access for patrons. Processing, while a top priority for all archivists, often must be superseded by other, more time-sensitive responsibilities. Each archivist processes when she can—or outsources to students—but each understands that without processing and cataloging material, no patron will be able to utilize her collection. Since patron access is paramount, processing is always a top priority. Similarly, it is important to have an approved and printed policy for acquisitions and processing that can be used to answer any questions or settle any disputes.
All of the archivists are currently engaged in digitizing material. But the interesting facet of this effort is that the digitization is for accessibility not preservation. All responses reflected this divide; the archivists do not see digitization as a legitimate means of preservation of material not born digital. The original material must be preserved, of course, but by traditional means of preservation. One respondent made the point that when compact discs trended as preservation media, digitized material was stored on them. Now, in many instances, data must be migrated again. Paper, as long as it is preserved, can always be accessed; as technology changes, digital files may not. This digital preservation and preservation of born-digital media is a current issue for librarianship in general, not just in archives. With the ever-changing methods of material creation, this debate will continue. The archivist must be diligent in maintaining a collection development plan that addresses this issue so that the procedure for processing, cataloging and preservation will be determined even before material is acquisitioned.

Regarding the location of the archives, all respondents stated that the location was in the library. All were pre-existing, and the archivist has little or no input into renovations. More than one also stated that the HVAC system was a major concern when it came to preservation of material. Only half had climate-controlled areas for material. Also only half have an emergency and disaster plan specifically for archives. The other half responded that the archives was incorporated into the overall library’s or university’s emergency and disaster plan. In nearly all cases, the physical state of archives is dismal. From the survey, it appears that there lacks any real (read: financially-supported) effort to modernize archives. There is perpetual anxiety in many archives as to when the next disaster will come and collections ruined. From responses, it seems that many archives are simply thankful for existence, so pushing for physical plant upgrades seems simply out of the question.

**Buy-in**

Most archivists found that while there is some level of administrative support for their mission, this support does not translate into funding or staff. Some described those particular departments that used the archives more regularly than others (alumni, development, public relations and communications) seem to see the benefits the most. But, it is important to remember, those departments that used the archives most often were not the ones that controlled the university purse strings. An alumni office may be dependent upon the collections and support of an archives, but the board of trustees or vice president for finance may see less opportunity for
long-term financial benefit stemming from the funding of an archives. It is often hard to convince administrations that simply by preserving institutional memory, an archives is fulfilling a very important mission—a mission that, if forgotten, may negatively effect an institution through a lack of students’ connection to their alma mater. If students feel that their university does not honor and value its own history, they might ask themselves why they should contribute back and help support it financially. But preserving institutional memory cannot be the only role of an archives. Other respondents pointed out that while faculty, alumni and the administration recognized the archive’s value, convincing students of its worth can be difficult. Converting students to the importance of archives should be a paramount concern for archivists. While enrolled, students live and create institutional memory and, once graduated, become patrons of and donors to the archives. Archives must be able to measurably justify themselves to their administrations through showing its importance to other departments, to students and faculty and to the continued success of the university.

**Outreach and Solicitation**

All respondents but one stated that the archives regularly sets up exhibits displaying material from their collections. While no respondent has an official archives exhibition policy, ideas usually come from the archives staff, but input is often solicited from other campus departments. One archives correlates exhibits to specific academic offerings, on-campus events and museum exhibits. Some examples of past displays at respondents’ institutions include: institutional history and traditions, honorary degree recipients, focus on faculty achievements, student diversity, larger social movements in the context of the college, new archival acquisitions, photograph highlights, information specific to donors and patrons, alumni achievements and special collection material such as rare documents or texts. Most exhibits seek to spread the word on unique aspects of the individual colleges. The number of displays ranges from one to six per year. Usually the archivist or director decides on topics and designs and executes the displays through library staff and student assistance. The opportunity to set up displays and exhibits provides the archivists’ main opportunity to spread the word on her activities. Countless “I didn’t know that!” moments can come from a well-timed and well-positioned display of treasures from a collection.

Almost all respondents stated that they seek the donation of material both from inside the university and from outside constituencies—including both the community and alumni. Many
did so on a continual basis, but some made concerted efforts at certain times of the year to physically visit offices to encourage transmission of material to the archives. One respondent stated that she visited each department and faculty member in the spring before the end of the term to solicit material and update them on recent archives projects. Those respondents that did not actively solicit stated that the reason was the lack of staff for direct solicitations, and one participated in mixed solicitations from some constituencies and not others. Not only does visiting offices provide an avenue for the transference of material to the archives, but it allows the archivist to get out of her office and spread the word on past, current and upcoming projects. It creates a din of chatter about the importance and activities of the department. If no one knows what the archivist does, how can anyone be expected to support and fight for it? By leaving her archives and physically visiting constituencies, the archivist is able to both collect material that may have otherwise been lost and also build bridges among staff that may lead to administrative allies.

**Impact and Struggle**

Concerning the importance and impact of the archives on the campus community, each respondent echoed the others. The archives often provides support for the university’s alumni office for both their events and daily activities such as researching old yearbooks and records at the request of alumni’s families. It also assists the public relations and communications offices by providing material and copy for university publications. Further, the archives often supports researchers looking for information on countless topics and subjects. At other institutions, the archives actually sponsors faculty appreciation events highlighting items from both the institution’s history and faculty’s present achievements. Several also mentioned that the archives actively provides support for the classroom experience of students through partnership with faculty and exposing students to primary documents. Exposure to primary documents is important for students of history, as well as all other disciplines. Not only can a student explore the evolution of the text and participate in textual criticism, but students in nearly any subject can appreciate the history of the printed word and apply it to any field. Also, it allows direct connection between a text and students—a connection that cannot be gained by viewing an item online or in a re-printed form. One of the interviewed archivists teaches courses and energetically raises awareness of the subject of public history. Each college that contains an archives has a history center on campus; each college that contains an archives has a primary
document repository on campus. Through the use of archival holdings, professors are able to utilize material that is already owned by the university. No cost is associated with its use—only with its preservation. The overarching theme in the responses is that each archivist actively engages in his or her campus community. Those at small colleges know that the key to survival and success is to be an ubiquitous presence on campus.

A theme throughout the respondents’ answers was the basic struggle for existence for academic archives—for funding, for staff, for legitimacy. While in theory a university supports the idea of having a repository for institutional memory, when it comes down to funding and staffing such an entity, many colleges are less eager to go to bat for their archives. When there is no money for staff raises or the expansion of programs, convincing administrations to spend on preserving the institutional memory is often a challenge. There are sometimes few tangible, presentable benefits stemming from an archives’ existence. More accurately, the benefits of an archives are not as explainable and clear-cut as other departments’ contributions to a college. The cost-benefit analysis is hazier. A crucial aspect of the archivist’s work today is demonstrating that worth. This worth can stem from exhibits, outreach, partnerships with other departments and faculty, among other activities. The archivist must continually look for ways to advertise both services and holdings. Standing firm on idealistic ground of protecting the collective memory no longer ensures survival for an archives.

Conclusion

An academic archives at a small college or university deserves the respect of administrators afforded other departments. This respect is deserved for many reasons. First, the academic archives buttresses institutional identity for all students, faculty and staff. Second, the archives reinforces the classroom experience of students through partnerships with faculty for the use of primary documents and sources. Third, it assists university departments such as the alumni, admission, development, president’s and public relations offices, in their daily processes and activities. Finally, donors and outside organizations may be more willing to assist the colleges financially if they see a strong respect for their own history. Through quantitate measures, the archives can provide proof of its worth by statistically tracking requests, events, exhibits, internships, etc.
But there are also some failures regarding academic archives at small colleges. Most of these failures stem from the dismal state of the physical plant of the archives. The physical locations of the archives are completely lacking and haphazard. Minimal significant effort has been made to upgrade archives at small academic colleges. If worth is proved more quantitatively, maybe administrations will be more likely to invest funds in the physical aspects of the archives. The lack of funding must also be counted as a failure of small, academic archives. Why have academic archives not been able to prove their worth sufficiently to earn a place and a budget line on the list of respected departments? Based upon the complete lack of funding across the board as observed in this study, this problem seems systemic. How can this be overcome? Simply demonstrating value in concrete terms and not shying away from going to bat for archives may be the simple answer. A further study could look at specific examples of tangible benefits and compare them to funding changes.

Libraries and archives are able to learn from other institutions as to what works and what does not. Of course, each library and archives is unique, but many principles and processes that have been successful at one college could be tailored and then implemented at another institution to great success. The research obtained and information analyzed in this study has taken the first step toward providing a best practices manual for existing academic archives and those that are just being established. This manual will be valuable to small colleges and universities that may not have the resources to bring in an expert when founding, expanding or strategically evaluating their own academic archives. From the archivists’ answers and the author’s ideas based on the response, a preliminary list of best practices could include:

- Present on the history, traditions and customs of the institution using material from the archives’ collection to all incoming students during new student orientation to firmly cement in each student’s mind the importance of the institutional history and identity.
- Become active in on-campus occasions, such as alumni and athletic events for two reasons. First, it allows the archives to showcase holdings specific to the overall event’s theme or topic. And second, it provides an opportunity to solicit new material from participants who may not have known that the archives collects material of institutional importance.
- Coordinate with other offices on exhibits to piggyback off of already planned events and ask other departments to join with archives to drum up support and divide effort.
• Partner with other campus constituencies to set-up displays and exhibits that are intra-departmental. These could include the alumni office, the president’s office, athletics or the campus museum. It reduces the amount of work and resources required and widens the audience.

• Taylor archival student assistants’ assignments to their academic interest. If they are more interested in the subject matter, they will do a better job. Also, employing students allows them a hands-on experience and may spark their interest in public history, archiving or librarianship.

• Remind administrators of the importance of the archives through measurable benefits rather than depending on the importance of preserving the ephemera of the university through such things as records of archival visitors and researchers, number of classes requesting primary documents for lessons, number of applications for archival internships or published material that cites the archives.

• Publish both scholarly articles and non-academic pieces that highlight different aspects of the university’s past and present using material from the archives. This could include writing for national archival journals, local newspaper or campus newsletters. Any print or online item that can be used as evidence of outreach could help prove an archives’ success.

• Solicit material from all offices on campus at specific times of year for material of institutional importance. Based on individual colleges’ schedules, the end of a term might be best, whereas at others the beginning of a term may yield the best results. Archivists know their own institutions best. But the important lesson is to be consistent. The departments should know that once a year the archivist will be by to ask about any material that could be transferred over to the archives.

• Establish consortia to extend resources for digitization and collection projects. If multiple archives are working towards similar goals, they can each share responsibilities and roles in order to maximize return on always-limited staff time. Associations can either be formed with similar colleges or with much larger colleges depending on individual goals and collections.

• Attend faculty meetings to elicit faculty support for funding dedicated to the preservation of material that may be of use in classes. Also, the archivist should contact specific
faculty members who teach classes that have topics or assignments that could be complemented with material from the collections. The archivist can explain possible connections between holdings and syllabi.

- Catalogue collections at the macro-level immediately—or as quickly as possible—to allow for quick, cursory patron access. If a collection is physically in archives but is inaccessible to patrons, there is no benefit for it to have been preserved.
- Apply for alternative funding such as grants that may allow the archives to be funded through sources in addition to budgets directly from the associated colleges and universities. If administrators see that the archivist feels her archives is worth securing alternative funding, they may be more willing to fund it themselves. The archivist may also be able to secure matching funding from a university if grants can be secured.

Besides this list of best practices, this study has also provided concrete examples of successes and failures regarding policies, exhibits, staffing and other archival topics on which case studies may be focused for future research. One specific instance where a case study would be applicable is looking at the colleges that utilized the archivist and the archival holdings in the classroom and how that affected students’ experiences. Another example would be a detailed analysis of one archives’ struggle for approval of the conversion of a historic classroom into a suite dedicated to the history of the university with display cases and framed items from the collections and how that has affected interest in and donations to the archives.

This study also laid the theoretical groundwork for a timely and interesting further study. While some respondents mentioned the role of archives in the classroom, no interviewee mentioned the role of the archives as a tool for retention of students at his or her university. The author believes that a survey of more colleges and universities focusing on possible uses of the archives in retention efforts could yield fruitful results and may lead to a greater level of respect for archives as a department within colleges. It seems that a major area of retention is connecting students to their institution more deeply than simply earning a degree and then graduating. If students are more connected to their institution—both through its past and present—the author thinks they might be less likely to withdraw and leave their university. At small colleges where funding is an ever-present issue, it may be easier to elicit support and funds if the archivist can offer quantitative examples of the worth of her archives.
From surveying and interviewing eight archivists, one theme is clear: archivists are able to do much with very little. Funding is not as dependable as it is in the library. There will be funds for books, but an archives—often—survives or dies based on the zeal of the archivist or director. Once more substantiated data regarding the importance and impact of archives is collected, this situation may improve. But change will come slowly and only by convincing administrator by administrator of the worth of the archives. The passion of the archivists was evident in their responses. The spark is there; it may just take time for it to catch fire.
References


### Table 1

*Southern Collegiate Athletic Conference Members for the 2011-2012 Academic Year*

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<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>University of Dallas</td>
<td>Irving, Texas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

List of survey questions.

Demographic Questions
1. How many undergraduate students are enrolled in your institution (FTE)?
2. What is the archives operating budget?
3. What percentage is the archives operating budget of the total library operating budget?
4. How many staff members are employed in the archives?
5. What percentage is the archives staff of the total library staff?
6. Are student assistants used in the archives?
7. What percentage of the library staff members has earned MLIS degrees? Other master’s degrees?
8. What percentage of the archives staff members has earned MLIS degrees? Other master’s degrees?

Main Questions

Establishment of Archives
1. When was the archives established?
2. Were there financial considerations that had to be overcome when the archives was established?
2. What do you wish you knew when your archives was established that you know now?
3. What one piece of advice would you have for someone just establishing an academic archives?
4. Did it take long for your university community to see the importance of having an archives on campus? If you have failed to reach that level of perceived importance, why do you think that is?
5. Has the archives experienced any failures that could be avoided by others?

Structure/Organization/Staffing of Archives
1. Are the archives and special collections combined?
2. Does the archivist also serve as special collections librarian?
3. Are there opportunities for continuing education for archives staff members?

Security/Forgeries
1. Where is the archives located?
2. Was the building pre-existing or was it built specifically for archives? If new, did the archivists have input on the design. If pre-existing, were structural changes made for archives?
3. Is there an emergency/disaster plan specifically for archives?
4. Are there climates controlled areas for storage of archival material?

Collection Development/Donations
1. Do you actively pursue donations from the community or alumni?
2. Is the presence of the archives useful in development and soliciting donations?
3. Do you actively seek material from other administrative departments, faculty, students, organizations, etc.?
Preservation/Processing
1. How do you triage projects?
2. Are you actively digitizing material in order to preserve it? If so, what types of material?
3. Do you focus your time more on processing or preservation?
4. How much of a processing backlog does the archives currently have?

Exhibits/Displays/Outreach/Patron Access
1. Who decides on exhibit and display topics?
2. What are some examples of past topics?
3. Who designs and installs exhibits and displays?
4. Is there an exhibition policy?
5. How many exhibits and displays are mounted per semester?
6. Are both internal and external exhibits mounted?
7. How is patron access to archival material monitored?
8. Do you partner with other departments (such as president’s office, admissions, alumni, etc.) for outreach or exhibits? If so, what kinds? If not, why?

Intra-campus Relations
1. How has your archives been successful in obtaining buy-in from your university—both from other administrative departments and from faculty, students, and alumni?