This study examines the processing of the Charles Kuralt Papers at the Manuscripts Department of the Southern Historical Collection. This collection contained a great deal of popular culture material or ephemera and many audiovisual materials that entailed some processing challenges. The study examines the decisions made by the processing archivist and the curator of the Southern Historical Collection through personal interviews and examination of documents produced about the collection such as the finding aid and brochure.

Headings:

Special collections-Case studies

Special collections-Special subjects-Popular culture
PROCESSING TWENTIETH CENTURY COLLECTIONS: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHARLES KURALT PAPERS

By
Jennifer L. Rawlings

A Master’s Paper submitted to the faculty of the School of Information and Library Science of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Library Science.

Chapel Hill, North Carolina
August, 1999

Approved by:

-----------------------------------
Advisor
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. David Carr, who served as my advisor and offered wonderful direction and support. I would also like to thank those who made this project a reality: Tim Pyatt and Jill Snider of the Southern Historical Collection. I could not have done this study without their cooperation, encouragement, and participation in the interviews.
Table of Contents

Introduction.................................................................................................................................1

Biography of Charles Kuralt........................................................................................................3

History of the Southern Historical Collection.........................................................................5

Literature Review.......................................................................................................................6

Methodology..............................................................................................................................12

Results......................................................................................................................................15

Conclusions..............................................................................................................................26

Bibliography.............................................................................................................................29

Appendix A: Topics for Discussion.........................................................................................30

Appendix B: Interview with Tim Pyatt..................................................................................31

Appendix C: Interview with Jill Snider..................................................................................43
Introduction

As more and more twentieth century collections enter the repository, archivists will face many new processing challenges; this paper will examine the progress of the Charles Kuralt Collection through the Southern Historical Collection. This collection offers an extreme example of archival problems due to the high percentage of non-paper materials in the collection. Kuralt’s collection includes many different formats of video and audiotape, pictures, and all types of realia, raising many issues about the position of ephemera in an archival collection.

I use interviews and examine documents to explain the choices made in processing this collection. Some of the documents examined are: the collection agreement signed by the donor that stipulates what to do with items not used in the collection, the transfer agreements which document the transfer of certain items to other areas on campus such as the journalism school, the finding aid and brochure for the collection created by project archivist Jill Snider. The archive also documents the stages of this project by keeping all correspondence between the institution and the donors, and I examined this documentation as well.

This paper will use interviews with the two principal archivists who dealt with this collection: Jill Snider, an archivist hired specifically to process the collection, and Tim Pyatt, the curator of the collection. These two made all of the key decisions for
processing the collection and have agreed to share their decisions and the thought processes behind them so that I may examine how this collection was made ready for use.

By examining this collection I will suggest some of the primary challenges facing archivists processing twentieth century object- and media-rich collections. A frank discussion of these issues will be useful to other archivists in their approach to collections of this type.
Charles Kuralt

Charles Kuralt was born in Wilmington, NC in 1934. He would often return to his strong North Carolina roots for his stories. He proved his writing ability young when he won an American Legion “Voice of Democracy” essay contest in high school--winning a trip to Washington DC to meet the president. To his delight Edward R. Murrow read his essay on the CBS news. Kuralt attended the University of North Carolina majoring in history and started his career in journalism by serving as editor of The Daily Tarheel. He graduated in 1955 and began work for The Charlotte News. In 1956 he won the Ernie Pyle Memorial Award for his excellent work in his “People” column.

In 1957 Kuralt moved to CBS where became the youngest CBS correspondent in 1959. He covered stories in Latin America, Vietnam, and the Middle East. His talent was obvious to his superiors and the CBS executives chose him to host the weekly news program Eyewitness to History. Soon though, he went back into the field to report from all over the world. During all of these years as a correspondent he reported the hard news that was the standard of broadcast journalism of the time. It was not until 1967 that Kuralt convinced the network executives to grant him permission to create the type of news segment that he pioneered: the human-interest stories he called On the Road. Kuralt created the format now known as the newsmagazine. He produced many stories about the state of the country and used his stories to prove his thesis that American society never was in crisis.
Kuralt’s enduring memory lies in these stories of small town people and life. He traveled all across the country with just a few crewmembers in a camper to find some extraordinary stories that touched many of his viewers. He had a gift for enticing the subject to truly share with the camera and focusing the story squarely on the subject—not the journalist. His segments aired as part of the CBS evening news on average thirty five times a year. His segments won many awards, including several Emmys, and spawned a host of imitations. Kuralt produced a number of specials based on his On the Road style.

CBS executives recognized the popularity of Kuralt and asked him to host the CBS News Sunday Morning starting in 1979. The program reported the headline stories of the day but added background information and also special reports on topics that the regular news programs ignored such as science, health, and religion. The program succeeded and grew quite popular. He hosted the program until his retirement in 1994.

In addition to Sunday Morning Kuralt started to host the weekday morning CBS news show—Morning with Charles Kuralt in 1980. In 1992 he served as anchor on a new CBS late night program called America Tonight. In 1994 he retired and fulfilled his dream of living a “perfect year.” This year consisted of a series of months each spent in a place Kuralt had enjoyed visiting before in the month he felt was the most suited to the place. He took notes about his experiences and published it as a book. Kuralt published several books over the course of his career including: To the Top of the World, Dateline America, On the Road with Charles Kuralt, and A Life on the Road. He won thirteen Emmys and three George Foster Peabody Awards for his work. In his last year he had suffered from lupus. He died on July 4, 1997 at the age of 62 of heart failure.
History of the Southern Historical Collection

The Charles Kuralt Collection is located at the Manuscripts Department of the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. The Southern Historical Collection contains 16 million manuscript items, 67,500 photographs and 85,000 audio and videotapes. The collection began with the items collected since 1844 by the North Carolina Historical Society. The trustees of the University of North Carolina authorized the establishment of the collection on January 14, 1930. Under the direction of J. G. deRoulhac Hamilton, head of the History and Government Department, the collection grew to contain the records of senators and other national officials, regional leaders, military figures, religious leaders, educators, planters, businessmen and women from every business. “Ransack” Hamilton collected papers from all over the South: some states, indignant to find their history carried away to North Carolina, were forced to create credible preservation programs of their own.

The collection has only grown in size and importance since Hamilton’s years as director. The Collection draws scholars of the South from all over the country to use the papers and the collection has been the basis for many books, dissertations and articles. Some of the most important areas of collection today are small businesses in the South, civil war papers, and North Carolina writers. Currently the collection houses papers of Thomas Wolfe, Shelby Foote, Jeffrey Beam, Clyde Edgerton and Walker Percy among others. Kuralt has now joined the list of distinguished North Carolina writers to donate their papers to the Southern Historical Collection.
One of the thorniest problems in processing this collection was the superabundance of popular culture materials. In this sense, popular culture materials refers to bumper stickers, pens, buttons, flyers and brochures, magnets, letter openers, matchbox cases, pencils, and a myriad of other small artifact type material. In the past, archives did not have to deal with the same amounts of popular culture because it simply was not produced on the scale it is today, and in most cases archivists regarded these materials as worthless and disposed of them. However, historians now regard popular culture materials as worthy of study and preservation. So archivists must learn to deal with these materials in a responsible fashion—providing preservation and access to ensure that researchers will be able to use the materials. But how do archives, used to dealing with paper materials adapt? Several archivists have written papers discussing the subject.

The journal *Popular Culture in Libraries* deals with the issues that arise from collecting popular materials; its inaugural issue featured a transcript of a roundtable discussion of some of these issues. Michael Marsden, of Bowling Green State University points out that the research needs of popular culture researchers are really the same as any other researchers, and that locating tools are extremely important. Barbara Moran addresses the prejudice that often exists against popular culture materials in libraries. “In academic libraries—the institutions most likely to have
research holdings—the collecting of popular materials goes against the grain of what library professionals have been taught. This mindset is ingrained in us from the onset of our training.” She points out that most librarians have been taught to carefully judge materials in order to buy only the best for the library in order to conserve extremely limited funds. For many librarians paying for popular culture materials is viewed as wasting money; also popular culture materials are often in different formats than items traditionally collected by libraries. These items come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes and make shelving and cataloging difficult. However, Moran argues that thousands of universities offer Popular Culture classes and that librarians must realize people have legitimate research interests using Popular Culture materials as sources. Librarians [and archivists] must

overcome the academic ghetto mentality that a lot of us posses. We must think about ways that push people and broaden their perspectives in order that they will be able to see the benefits of popular culture materials

In the past libraries treated popular culture materials with some contempt. In the University of Pittsburgh’s Hillman Library during the mid-1970s disclaimers were included in displays of comic books to show that the materials were not purchased with state funds. Today more and more libraries are beginning to see the value of popular culture items. However, once the initial resistance to popular culture materials is overcome, the problem of access remains troublesome. This article also raises the issue of object in libraries: what is the proper type of material for museum to collect and what
should be housed in an archive? Can museum practice be adapted to archives, in order to keep track of artifacts?

A survey in Collection building surveyed one hundred and eighty college and university libraries to discover the state of their collection in terms of 3D materials and audiovisual materials. This survey showed that while many libraries have growing collections of 3D materials the current methods of cataloging and housing these materials are not entirely satisfactory. For the most part, these types of items are segregated from the rest of the collection making them more difficult for patrons to access. vi

John S. Baky makes a persuasive case for the collection of popular culture materials in special libraries in his article, “Truthful Lies: Popular and Special Collections.” He argues that in today’s market a special collections library can invest in a popular culture collection and receive much more research value for the money spent. He describes the strategy of his own institution, La Salle University, which selected three areas in which to collection popular culture materials: Imaginative Representations of the Vietnam War, 20th Century Catholic Writers, and Alternative Book Formats, 1965-1995. All of these topics supported part of the university curriculum. With a relatively modest investment, they began these collections and “achieve[d] national scholarly attention in less than three years for less than $10,000 per annum.” vii Baky’s conclusion would lead to the supposition that the time and effort put into processing the popular culture materials in archives is an excellent investment in the institutional collection.
Once popular culture materials, or ephemera, are part of the collection—can researchers find them? Linda Stanley discusses issues of access based on her experience at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania concluding that access is everything; without providing a way into the collection students of popular culture will never be able to make use of the items. In her institution,

Manuscripts were tenderly tipped into gold stamped volumes or folded and boxed according to the state of the art of the time. For ephemera, it provided folders at best, overfilled boxes of loose material at worst…Ephemera within the general manuscript collections, placed in the unpromising category of “miscellaneous,” has had no representation in the catalogs. Access to this and other material that is not available through any finding aid is completely dependent on the knowledge (and good will) of the reference staff.viii

She makes the point that standards for providing access to ephemera in an archive or library have not been developed. Samuel T. Huang and William E. Studwell echo this concern that libraries and archives neglect the issue of access for ephemera. They maintain that

If a popular culture special collection is not cataloged at all, or only partially cataloged, or cataloged with little detail and/or few access points, the collection in practicality becomes a hidden pile of garbage.ix

However, as recognition of its importance as a historical source grows users will demand higher standards of accessibility for these types of items.x

Providing access to ephemera is not a simple as providing access to books. The value of ephemera often lies in its context. When providing access to these items it important to note that they have connections to other items. Diane DeBlois and Robert
Dalton Harris warn of the dangers of separating bits of ephemera. The crucial details that make something historically interesting may be entirely provided by connections with other pieces of ephemera. They advise

In appraising [or arranging] a collection of ephemera, much care needs to be taken to preserve the whole story. The integrity of the collection as found should be recorded, if not preserved; any intrinsic or imposed order should be respected; the whole usually has more meaning than the sum of its parts…but care must be taken not to jettison some of the more subtle parts.\textsuperscript{xi}

One of the primary goals of any archive is preservation. Most archives adequately preserve their paper material, but what about ephemera? Preservation of ephemera raises problems, not just because it differs from the archival standard of paper but because much of the material was not made to last, it was created to be, as its name implies, ephemeral. Lois Olcott Price, a member of the Conservation Division of the Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, recommends that the foremost strategy for maintaining ephemera in a useable condition rests upon maintaining a stable environment. This basic premise of paper preservation serves ephemera well. However, she also suggest preservation photocopying, and ensuring reduced handling with surrogate images and more descriptive finding aids as good methods for extending the life of these items. These suggestions fit in well with the usual tasks of an archive. More extensive conservation such as might be done in museum often involves much more expense than the item merits. However, occasionally an item might need this type of
treatment and the research value merits the expense—each archive must prioritize the conservation needs according to available resources.\textsuperscript{xii}

How to preserve and provide access to ephemera will become a frequent problem for archivists as more twentieth century collections find their way into the archives. The Charles Kuralt Collection at the Southern Historical Collection is a prime example—this collection contained far more ephemera than anyone anticipated and it proved itself to be integral to the collection. Due to the high visibility of this collection it is essential that access be provided to the ephemera.
Notes

2 Cooper 12.
3 Cooper 12-13.
4 Cooper 21.
5 Cooper 25.
10 Stanley 93-105.
Methodology

To gather the information for this paper, I examined documents pertaining to the collection and interviewed Jill Snider, the Manuscripts Project Archivist hired to process this collection, and Tim Pyatt, the Curator of the Southern Historical Collection. The documents that I examined include: the finding aid for the collection on the World Wide Web, the brochure produced to publicize the collection, correspondence between the donors and the institution including initial correspondence from Kuralt, and transfer records showing which items were transferred to another part of the institution and when the transfer occurred.

The finding aid for this collection provided information about the collection’s organization. It lists the series and subseries of documents and describes the content of each one. Additionally it lists all of the folders and the names of each folder. This is the most comprehensive record of the collection. Jill Snider produced this finding aid after processing and organizing the collection.

Jill also created the brochure for the collection, “Research Opportunities in the Charles Kuralt Collection.” This full color brochure contains images from the collection and highlights research opportunities in the collection. The brochure consists of several different sections: a very brief biographical overview of Kuralt’s life; a brief overview of the collection; a lengthy section detailing research opportunities in the collection, in such disciplines as the history of journalism, American Studies, Popular Culture and Folklore, Travel Literature, and Leisure Studies; brief series and subseries descriptions; and a
reference to the web site of the complete finding aid; and references and descriptions of
other journalism history collections in the Southern Historical Collection.

Correspondence and transfer agreements came from the Manuscripts
Department’s control file on this collection. Correspondence about this collection
includes some of the solicitations for Kuralt’s papers and his responses. It also includes
letters to the Kuralt family after his death working out details about possible restrictions
and returns. The transfer agreements show what items were sent to other departments
such as the main collections in Davis Library, the Nonprint section of the library, and the
Journalism School.

The interviews with Tim Pyatt and Jill Snider comprise the bulk of my
information about decisions made to organize this collection and the reasoning behind
these decisions. I developed a list of topics for discussion and then had the opportunity to
sit down and discuss these topics first with Jill then later with Tim. Both provided me
with a great deal of helpful information about the process of making the collection ready
for the public, emphasizing details about how this collection differed from other
collections. They shared their experiences through the entire life of the collection from
its receipt at the institution to the final processing and the creation of the exhibit and the
gala opening. The complete transcripts of these interviews and the list of topics for
discussion are included in this paper as Appendices A, B, and C.
I used all these resources to answer a few basic research questions that all add up to What made the Kuralt collection different from most collections? I was interested in finding out:

- How did the archive deal with the vast quantity of audio-visual material?
- How did the archive deal with all of the popular culture material in the collection?

Data related to fundraising, the family, and the Kuralt Learning Center to be established at the Journalism School are involved but secondary to the main questions. Answers to these questions could be useful to other archivists beginning processing projects of collections with similar amounts of audiovisual material, collections that require fundraising to meet the processing costs, or collections with a great deal of popular culture material.
Results

**Funding.** One of the first striking differences about the Kuralt Collection involves budget and funding. Normally, when a collection enters the Southern Historical Collection, an estimated processing time is figured for it. This processing formula runs as such:

For Nineteenth century collections: number of boxes x 20 hours processing time

For Twentieth century collections: number of boxes x 10 hours processing time

Tim Pyatt’s preliminary examination of the Kuralt Collection revealed that the material was in labeled file folders—a very useful preliminary organization the archivist processing the papers would follow. He used the formula to calculate an estimated processing time for this collection which equaled roughly a year with a not very full level of description for a budget of about $50,000 not counting the media copying that would be necessary. He figured that a budget of $70,000 to $75,000 would cover this media copying and allow for a full level of description. Normally, the collections are assigned to processors as they become available. In this particular case the Kuralt collection would have had to wait a year or more to be processed according to the regular schedule. In addition, it would have taken several years to get the collection fully processed.

**Fundraising.** A group of Kuralt’s friends, family, and fans banded together to raise money to hasten this process. This donor support raised more money than anyone had dreamed possibly—close to $90,000. This was enough to hire a project archivist
specifically to process this collection as well as a graduate assistant to make listening and viewing copies of the media items. Based on Tim’s preliminary overview of the collection and estimate of processing time necessary a deadline was set for February 25, 1999 for the opening of the collection to be marked with a public ceremony that would include press coverage. The collection needed to be in a processed state by that point with a completed finding aid and an exhibit in place. This created a great deal of pressure upon the archivist to process this collection as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Problems arose. Jill Snider was hired as the Manuscripts Processing Librarian to process the Kuralt collection and she quickly discovered that what appeared to be organization of the papers turned out to be papers shoved haphazardly into folders whose labels described only the top level of the contents. In addition, many of these folders rested upon loose papers that filled the remainder of the boxes. Organizing the collection took a great deal more time than originally anticipated. Because of Kuralt’s sudden, unexpected death the Southern Historical Collection received all of this material from his office without any preliminary sorting from the donors. In addition, the Southern Historical Collection received artifacts intended for eventual residence in the Journalism School’s Kuralt Learning Center.

**Transfers.** A number of transfers to other collections dispersed a number of the materials not suitable or not needed in the Manuscript Department. Transfer records and the interviews reveal that some book material entered the Davis Library Collection. Jill Snider mentioned that duplicate videos now reside in the Nonprint collection and that the
North Carolina Collection took possession of the duplicate clippings for their North Carolina clippings file. This is fairly standard procedure for the Manuscript Collection: if something does not fit the profile of materials usually collected or duplicates materials already in the collection, other departments receive the items as a transfer. Most often these items are books or audiovisual materials. Occasionally art items have been transferred to the Ackland Art Museum and artifacts are often sent to the North Carolina Collection Gallery.

**Kuralt Learning Center.** In this collection a unique situation developed with the Journalism School. The Journalism School will house the Kuralt Learning Center containing many of the artifacts that initially came into the Southern Historical Collection. The project at the Journalism school developed after Kuralt’s death and is unrelated to the housing of the collection at the Southern Historical Collection. However, many items were sent to the Southern Historical Collection that were solicited by, and will eventually end up in, the Journalism School. The Learning Center is not completed yet and some items are still in storage for them at the Southern Historical Collection. Jill Snider expressed a few qualms about that situation noting that the archive does not track artifacts as a museum would—the is no simply no provision for it since there is usually no need. Tim Pyatt mentioned that this is really the first time artifacts have gone to a non-library department other than the Art Museum. In order to make sure the artifacts are properly cared for, the Campus Historic Properties Committee is working with the Journalism School to teach them how to handle artifacts. The fundraising donors to the
project were very interested in both the Learning Center and in the papers and perhaps the combination inspired them to greater generosity.

The artifacts to be transferred to the Kuralt Learning Center include plaques, Kuralt’s many Emmy Awards, and other large artifacts. However, many small artifacts which fans sent to Kuralt and other souvenirs he collected himself remain with the papers. The decision to retain much of this popular culture material and the fan mail that much of it arrived with is one of the most interesting and controversial parts of the progress of this collection.

**Fan Mail.** Fan mail comprises an extremely large portion of this collection. In most archival collections the amount of fan mail would be significantly weeded so that only a sample remained. However, the fan mail in this collection has been kept. Tim Pyatt discussed the reasoning behind this decision. In his initial appraisal of the collection he anticipated weeding much of this fan response material. The CBS archive had first right to the material but they did not want it; Kuralt kept it in his own papers. In Tim’s initial appraisal of the collection he viewed it as primarily a collection that documented the history of television journalism in the United States.

It was not until later that Jill Snider realized the tremendous research potential in American studies and popular culture in this collection of mail. She discovered that a great deal of the fan mail was more than simple requests for Kuralt to visit their home city or state. Viewers responded to Kuralt's presentation of American society by writing to him about their own ideas about American society and culture. Jill decided that this
material offered tremendous research value to historians of twentieth century America and decided to emphasize this material in the brochure for the collection. She describes it as such:

> When the speeches and writings, publicity materials, and media work are coupled with the story-idea mail and fan mail Kuralt received, a rich discourse on the cultural myth of America emerges. His story selection process and the feedback he received from his audience (a remarkably diverse one) provide a lens through which to examine opposing ideas about the meaning of America, as well as conflicting opinions on how the media should portray the country to its citizens and to the world.\textsuperscript{xiii}

After she brought this material to Tim’s attention he came to agree with Jill’s analysis of the material. In my interview, Tim noted that although keeping this material added much more work for Jill, it was the right decision because the material is such a rare and interesting resource.

It is unusual to have such an abundance of fan response mail: most network archives do not keep a large amount of this type of mail. Jill remarked in my interview with her that she considers this primary source of historical value for the collection.

**Popular Culture Material.** The decision to keep this material entailed a significant time commitment for processing it. One of the primary problems encountered in processing this collection was the abundance of popular culture materials sent to Charles Kuralt by his fans. As the literature review suggests, Popular culture has always had a rocky relationship with academic libraries. Fans sent Kuralt pens, bumper stickers,
photographs, brochures and many other items often intended to convince him to profile someone or something on his show. In the archive, each piece of ephemera had to be enclosed in acid free paper and the attachment was annotated with the date of the letter and the name of the sender. This dramatically increased the amount of time student workers spent getting the files in order. Because this type of material is unusual, Jill had to spend a great deal of time answering questions from the students about enclosing and annotating the material.

The decision to keep and process the popular culture materials tremendously affected the overall significance of this collection. Many archives simply do not keep this type of material. It is returned to the donor or disposed of. However, growing interest in the significance of popular culture materials for historical research has pressured archivists into reevaluating the value of ephemera. In this collection the popular culture materials relate closely to the paper materials. To dispose of the ephemera and keep only the paper would destroy part of the record.

**Access.** Making the decision to retain the items and deciding how to preserve them answers only half of the problem posed by these materials. Once an archive commits to retaining the ephemera the tricky problem of how to provide access remains. Unlike in a museum, ephemeral items in an archive never get cataloged individually. Much of the significance of these items lies in the context in which they were received, with the accompanying letters to Kuralt. So the ephemera mostly remains attached to the accompanying paper material and is organized according to the standards for the paper
materials. However, this situation calls for significant additional description in the finding aid in order to lead historians and folklorists to these materials.

Jill describes the popular culture materials in the finding aid: “a significant number of popular artifacts (e.g. buttons, bumper stickers, and lapel pins) are filed in the response/story idea mail and in the clippings and souvenirs.” She also made note of them in the CBS office files series description,

Items in the finished story files include research summaries prepared by staff members, clippings, pamphlets, letters, photographs, and items of popular culture including bumping stickers and buttons, posters, flyers, tourist brochures, and postcards.\textsuperscript{xiv}

However, the bulk of the popular culture materials rest in a series of folders devoted to responses and suggestions from fans.

Those submitting story ideas frequently enclosed popular culture items, including bumper stickers, buttons, press kits, photographs, posters, tourist and promotional brochures, restaurant menus, advertisements, and map. Many letters contain memoirs of personal experiences and family stories.\textsuperscript{xv}

The clippings and souvenir series contains popular culture materials as well,

programs, agendas, and promotional materials from speaking engagements and other public appearances; programs from award ceremonies; snapshots of Kuralt and his crew and subjects on the road; publicity stills; signed photographs of celebrities as diverse as Wahoo McDaniel and Placido Domingo; personal mementos (buttons, bumper stickers, personalized cigarette lighters, hotel keys, matchbook covers, press identification cards and passports, fishing licenses); and souvenirs from vacations.\textsuperscript{xvi}

In each series description Jill takes care to detail the type of popular culture material for researchers. However, how will researchers know that the collection
contains these resources before they decide to read the finding aid? The Library of Congress subject heading “Popular culture—United States—History—20th Century” describes the collection in the catalog. However, in addition to that Jill addressed the problem of creating access to these materials by using the brochure to publicize the wealth of research opportunities in popular culture and folklore provided by this collection. She includes a major section of the brochure devoted these ephemeral materials,

Kuralt’s research files, clippings and souvenirs, publicity files, and story-idea mail contain a considerable number of popular culture and folklore items, among which are recordings of songs composed by viewers; videotapes and press kits from show hopefuls; posters and advertising broadsides; buttons; bumper stickers; matchbook covers; artwork (watercolor, pencil, pen and ink, etc.); and a large group of sun images, ranging from knitted to painted to case in bronze.

Popular culture historians and folklorists will find these materials helpful in observing the interaction of traditional folk and popular idioms with the emerging news media. Kuralt’s radio and television files, for instance, provide documentation of many folk traditions still practiced across the country between the 1960s and the 1980s. They also shed light on the fate of later 19th and early 20th century entertainment, such as medicine shows and rodeos, in the era after World War II. In addition, fan mail files offer a rich source for studying the nature of celebrity in America. xvii

Because of the collection’s status as a high profile collection and the production of this brochure, this collection has avoided that major pitfalls that ephemera faces in archives: a lack of preservation and a lack of access tools pointing to its existence.

**Preservation.** The extensive media materials in this collection presented preservation issues. In order to ensure that researchers will have access to all of these materials, listening and viewing copies were made of all of the audio and videotapes.
Because the Southern Historical Collection contains its own studio these copies could be made in-house. However, Jill discussed the difficulties of processing media:

For the audiovisual what a lot of one of the graduates student’s time was spent doing was putting the material in a VCR and viewing it….it’s much more difficult to view something on videotape, you can’t just flip through it: it is time consuming. So it is a very difficult thing for a graduate student to do at the point that they had to do it at the very beginning of the collection--we had not yet processed the collection so we had no paper trail for the video items. 

In addition to this difficulty the sheer scale of the media in this collection made copying and labeling it a challenge: the collection contains four hundred and forty four audiovisual materials including one hundred and sixty-one audiotapes and two hundred and seventy videotapes.

**Computer files.** One fascinating topic that arose in my interview with Jill concerned Kuralt’s computer. She noticed the lack of copies of outgoing mail in correspondence and surmised that much of it remained on the hard drive of his computer. When she searched through the bulk of the Kuralt materials she found the monitor but not the hard drive only to find out that the hard drive had been given to the son of a family friend. Consequently, these files were not recovered. It did not occur to the Kuralt family that the hard drive would contain valuable information. Jill pointed out that people simply do not view their computers the same way that they view their file cabinets. Computer files are more personal and also easily overlooked. However, in the future, archivists must be on guard to remind donors to include electronic records in their donations if they want to donate their complete records. Since the Southern Historical
Collection did not receive any electronic documents the thorny problem of how to preserve this type of item was simply not an issue.

**Restrictions.** Often a difficult issue that arises when processing a collection is the decision about what might need to be restricted. It is common practice to work out with a donor what material might prove sensitive and decide upon some time frame after which the material will be made available. In this particular case, because Kuralt did not survive to presort his papers before donation the presence of sensitive materials could have been an issue. However, Tim Pyatt worked out with the Kuralt family that certain materials composed to members of the family such as from Kuralt to his daughters and vice versa would be returned to the family. Fortunately no real issues arose in this area. It turned out to be very simple.

A different set of material in the collection is under a five-year restriction. A biographer of Kuralt expressed interest in doing oral histories with people Kuralt knew throughout his life. Seeing this as a potentially valuable resource to add to the collection Tim decided to help underwrite this biographer’s costs in creating the oral histories in return for the original tapes of the interviews. In order to allow the biographer a chance to publish the book based on this material the oral histories are under restriction for five year or until the publication of the book, whichever comes first. Agreements such as this can be quite beneficial to an archive resulting in a wonderful resource with little expense in return for some consideration about access until the creator has published their own work.
Publicity. One of the most singular aspects of this collection involved the extensive publicity the collection received. Because many people loved Kuralt and his work they donated a great deal of money to help process the collection. In return for this investment and because money was available for these efforts the Southern Historical Collection gave the Kuralt Collection a great deal more attention and publicity than most collections receive. The opening of the Kuralt papers was marked with a celebratory opening reception and lecture attended by members of Kuralt’s family, donors, classmates and friends of Kuralt, and the press.

In addition to this opening, Jill gave a number of lectures to various groups and some tours of the collection before everything was processed. The Southern Historical Collection had resources enough from the fundraiser to create a full color brochure about the collection highlighting a number of possible research opportunities in the collection. Publicity on this level requires much work from the archivist. Jill discussed the difficulty of being on call to donors to provide talks and progress reports—a duty that archivists are rarely called upon to perform. Donors who do not really understand the purpose and function of an archive might make difficult demands upon the archivist but without their generosity this collection would not have been completed so quickly or so thoroughly.
Notes

14 Jill Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory* (Chapel Hill, UNC, 1999).
15 Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory*
16 Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory*
17 Jill Snider, *Research Opportunities in the Charles Kuralt Collection* (Chapel Hill, UNC, 1999).
18 Snider, personal interview
Conclusion

Ephemera present a challenge to archivists. It is difficult to catalog, requires a tremendous amount of time to process and preserve, and often archivists regard it as being outside the scope of their collection. However, sometimes ephemera provide powerful examples of life in certain places and times. In this collection the ephemera fit in with the fan mail and souvenirs. In other collections it is difficult to find a place to fit it in. Just organizing the ephemera is not enough; access points must be provided. In this collection no one knows if there is a menu from Betty Lou’s diner in Wisconsin but the finding aid does note that there is ephemera and the researcher can look through the boxes to find out exactly what is there. All too often ephemera receive the file folder heading of “miscellaneous” and remains untouched by researchers for years. The decisions to keep this material could not be made lightly because of the amount of time involved in processing it. This decision made a bold statement about the type of material suitable for an archive to collect. This ephemera truly enriches the collection and the description in the brochure and the mentions of it in the finding aid ensure that it will actually receive notice. This is a model for archives everywhere to follow.

This collection provided an extreme example of the type of publicity a collection can receive. Most collections will never generate this type of public interest or support. But the lessons are very interesting: the public will give generously to preserve the papers of some beloved celebrities. At a time when institutional funding may be scarce this is a useful lesson to have learned. Admittedly few public figures will generate this kind of
support and interest, but if some do then the fundraising not only provides the archive with the money to hire personnel to process the collection it provides publicity. This publicity educates the public not only about the famous person’s collection but about the entire institution. Brochures like the one produced for this collection can highlight other related collections and draw more people into the institution. It never hurts to have publicity to make people think about donating their own papers to the institution.

Working with donors can be frustrating but one experience can provide useful insights into the process that might be of use in the future. For the Southern Historical Collection more communication with the donors before processing begins might be a requisite if this situation ever occurs again. A carefully worked out and clearly understood statement of what the archive does and what the archivist can and cannot do for donor groups might prove extremely useful in the future.

Perhaps one of the most interesting lessons of this collection comes from a resource that was missing from the collection. Kuralt’s hard drive may have contained a great many outgoing letters that would enrich the collection. We will never know. This rather dramatic circumstance really emphasizes how important it has become for archivists to pay attention to electronic documents. In this case, Kuralt’s sudden death made the transfer of papers somewhat disorganized. In the future I am certain that the archivists at Southern Historical Collection will ascertain if electronic documents that belong with the collection exist and ensure that they are delivered with the papers.

This collection brought up many issues that face archivists in the future: the role of ephemera in an archive, the tendency of donors to overlook electronic records, and how to interact with fundraising donors. Studying the decisions made at the Southern
Historical Collection could be a useful starting point for other archivists facing the same type of situations.
Bibliography


---. Personal Interview. 16 July 1999.


Appendix A: Interview Topics

Topics for Discussion:

Donor Stipulations and Expectations
SHC vs. Journalism School
Transfers
Restrictions
Academic vs. Popular access points

Processing Challenges and Problems
Personnel Hired (by job description only please, no personal names)
Unexpected Difficulties

Audio and Video Material
Transfers to other mediums
Copyright Issues

Preservation Issues
Audio and Video
Realia

The Future of the Collection
Expected Users
Further Processing
Connection to Journalism Exhibit

Biggest Nightmare/ Greatest Pleasure

Recommendations for Similar Collections
Appendix B: Interview with Tim Pyatt

Today is July 29 and I am interviewing Tim Pyatt, curator of the Southern Historical Collection.

You've had a chance to look at the topics for discussion? Would you like to say something about the donor situation?

You have here something about the library and the journalism school, transferring something about restrictions then academic access points, the first three are pretty easy. We actually had started soliciting. I guess it was in 1993 the Charles Kuralt was given the North Caroliniana society award and at that time we really started putting the official solicitation on him for his papers although we asked as far back as maybe even the 70’s. He was on our list for along time. Things started to heat up again in I think 1996 is when some letters were exchanged. I talked with him in February of 1997 when he was ready to go ahead and ship some things down and then he got distracted and then the next thing we know he passed away. So anyway, the journalism school was sort of a late thing into it, the primary goal has always been we were soliciting papers and we asked for papers and films and video and library copies of things. The journalism school that got into it after he passed away and they started settling the estate and trying to figure out what to do with the contents of his office and all. And the Dean of the Journalism school saw an opportunity to take his retirement office and since they were moving into a newly remodeled building making a Kuralt learning center so that was sort of a late add on. We’d actually, the kind of things they were interested in like the award box was not something we originally solicited we’d really looked for the typical, normal archival materials. So from our point of view that was sort of a late add in and sort of negotiated almost separately although the estate ended up doing it. They were not part of our original approach and certainly don’t date back to the historic solicitation of his papers. So that’s not really, it’s just something that sort of happened with that. As for the transfers of things that had become a little more tricky, some stuff went
straight to the Journalism School cause they actually dismantled his office and it went there and some stuff was shipped directly to us and we’ll probably end up doing some of the award plaques and some of the various things for display in his office will probably end up when they get the Kuralt center going over to that center. But were actually holding some of that material. The artifacts they don’t want will end up going down to the North Carolina Collection Gallery so that’s fairly straightforward. I don’t there’s any other transfer things out of the collections.

The restrictions were more interesting when and were probably the more difficult thing to negotiate in the transfer because Mr. Kuralt died before he made the transfer the family just shipped everything down to us not knowing what was in the box so we had an awkward situation where we had to advise them what to do, fortunately there is a within our gift agreement that kind of flexibility that we can restrict things as we see fit they had wanted certain family items returned and we did end up returning things we found some personal correspondence between Mr. Kuralt and his daughters they had requested that back. So the restrictions were actually negotiated as we ..fairly loosely..they didn’t know what was in the papers until we went through and screened them and so they’d given us ideas of general categories of things they wanted all the correspondence between Mr. Kuralt and his children back ..

We have some oral histories on restriction?

That was something different that didn’t come from the family, that we instigated was having an oral history project and we ended up linking with an official biographer on Kuralt and the restrictions on those primarily because he wants to have first access to them for publication of his book so we put a five year restriction on them to give him a chance to get his book out so that’s were those restrictions come from not anything that was family imposed and I think with some of the people he interviewed they ended up putting
some restrictions on those interviews wanting to get permission before there was widespread use of them but you know more standard oral history type things

So it is usual to do a restriction to give someone a chance to publish?

Yeah, particularly in this case we got a..by doing this we ended up getting the interviews at a bargain rate because the interviewer, the biographer was going to be using them for his own purposes so he underwrote a lot of the cost so we just helped subsidize that we wrote..it would have been a lot more expensive for us to get a professional oral historian to go out…to give him a list and do that whereas having the biographer go out and do it was much simpler so it was worth the trade of for them to be closed for a little bit and generally oral histories that are being used for publication project that is not uncommon for them to do that so that was not a unusual thing but its separate from the negotiation with the family because it is something that we instigated and not…it was something outside of the papers from the family.

Has there ever been a situation where there is this sort of joint ownership other material

Technically the ownership is all the State of North Carolina…technically its all the same ownership I don’t recall in my time here, in my five years here, us getting a collection where we ended up dispersing things to a unit outside of the library now, frequently we gotten in collections where we have dispersed portions to the North Carolina Collection, or Rare Books or Davis Library when we’ve gotten photograph materials or publication materials that were appropriate for an other unit and we’ve basically treated this collection the same way with the artifactual material to the journalism school we’re treating that the same as dispersing it to the gallery or another unit so administratively it’s not different it’s just odd to be sending it to a non library agency on campus. One exception would be that we have dispersed stuff to the Ackland Art Museum so that would be comparable the one concern with the Journalism school is that they don’t
necessarily have the same level of expertise as the Gallery or the Ackland for caring for things. So they have to work through the campus historic properties committee to ensure things will be dealt with appropriately so it’s a little more difficult dispersing things to the Journalism school than say the Ackland or another campus department that was “authorized to handle historic material” so it has been a little complicated.

Academic vs. Popular access, what I was trying to get at here was that there might be a number of fans coming in to view the collection rather than researchers so have you done anything different with this collection…

Not in the processing or anything like that but in exposure type things we’ve done several things different. One is (and this is partly in response to the donors, too) we did a different kind of exhibit that we’ve ever done before and did a different type of opening for the papers with more artifacts and memorabilia type things out and we have probably kept within the papers more memorabilia and keepsake type material than we normally would have because of that demand so I would say that it has influenced us some because we want to be prepared to meet that response to it. And the exhibit ran much longer we kept that up in response to the fans as well and we did much more on the website when putting up the finding aid we put up more image and soundbites because we figured there were people who could care less about what’s in the Kuralt papers they just want to see pictures and hear his voice and that kind of thing so we’ve tried to meet that need as best we can within our..the main function is still the archival function of processing and making a research collection available but we tried to as far as we can not exclude those people but the brochure that the Kuralt archivist did if you look at it is does a lot about highlighting research opportunities but it has a lot of nice images and sort of has something there for the Kuralt fan as well so I think we tried to do both as much as we could. It has been very different, I wasn’t here when the Ken Burns materials
came in with the Florentine films but it sort of had the same because he is a popular icon as well so I think that that’s another one that would fall into that same category.

Processing Challenges and Problems…

Ok, personnel hired I was directly involved in hiring the manuscripts processing librarian which is the classification of the person who served as the Kuralt archivist. For that we just did our standard job description focusing on what the project was for that type of position that’s sort of our main entry level professional processing position. We just did a standard search advertising in all the likely places, I don’t know if we did a lot of print advertising, we did the archives listserv and the North Carolina archivists listserv and got a pool and did interviews we didn’t want to bring a lot of folks in we only had a limited search pool and probably the biggest challenge on that which I notice isn’t on your list was getting the money to hire a project archivist because we knew there would be a big demand and we wanted to fasttrack it so one of the things I had to do early on was use our basic formula you know to figure out how much per foot to process to figure out how much money we need and I came out with a bare bones budget that we could do it within a year for $50,00 but maybe not do a very full level of description and maybe not do the media cost of copying and for the Grade A were we could do preservation copies of media and do a full level of description it would take us around $70,000 to $75,000 which everyone thought was an unachievable goal of getting that much money for it and so as soon as we raised the money needed to hire our manuscripts processing librarian and I think entry level at that time was $29,00 at that time plus there’s 19% for benefits so I needed...as soon as we had $34,500 raised, or actually as soon as we had commitments for that, some of them didn’t have the checks in, I went ahead and did the ad and did that out cause we knew we had that basic and we knew we’d have to hire a graduate assistant and supplies so I kind of had that mapped out. It ended up we ended up getting close to $90,000 the donor and alumni support was a lot greater than anticipated so the funding ended up not being an issue which turned out to be a good
thing because the next thing you know there’s unexpected difficulties because in one of the things we encountered we expected the most difficult part to be the media portion of it, it turned out that was not a problem, the difficulties were in my original assessment trying to figure out the processing time of it. I looked at the boxes and saw it was fairly disorganized. We have our usual formula for twentieth century papers we anticipate it will take ten hours per foot of processing. Because of the disorganization I gave it a little more time for that but not a lot because a lot of the stuff was in file folders and the file folders were labeled and what I didn’t know and what happened with a lot of the file folders was the file folder label didn’t really reflect what was in the papers so there was a lot more organization that had to go on plus there was a lot of media that had been associated with the fan mail so it took a lot of time to separate out a lot of things a lot of greater preservation concerns with the papers than in my planning. So that increased the processing time and it increased our student assistant costs as well. So we ended up spending more, it was good that we raised all the money on it because that ended up being quite a bit more time and I think in dealing with a popular personality with a lot of fan mail, another thing, I anticipated weeding out a lot of the fan mail that we would probably only sample it and not keep a lot of it and the project archivist was able to uncover that the fan mail actually was some of the best research material because it had a lot of popular culture things and showing a lot of viewer response to television actually had a lot of research value so we ended up keeping all of the fan mail essentially which I had not anticipated as well in surveying it you tend to..in most collections if you had that kind of thing it would not be something you would think would be necessary to keep all of it, in this case I was convinced otherwise and rightfully so and its ended up being one of the more valuable research components of this collection. So that also increased the time and expense as well. We ended up having to put a lot more student staff on it, we had set up a year time frame and set an opening date. To get the collection processed to the point where we had something available to do the opening and have the exhibit done we had to put more graduate assistant and undergraduate help to help the project archivist get enough work done in time, in fact we’re still doing some wrap up on it even after the project technically ended in March. We still aren’t totally finished with
things it will probably be the fall before things get totally cleaned up. That definitely took more time because of miscalculations in the papers, I mean, we could have done it in the time frame with much less description and much less preservation. We did a first class job on it which was what we intended to do but it took a little more effort to do that than what we had planned.

The audio and visual material….

Ok, let’s see what’s next, the audio and visual material and transfers to other media. That ended up being a lot easier partly because we had a really good grad assistant to do that and partly because there was I anticipated we would have to outsource materials to professional preservation studios and it just didn’t happen. There was no real preservation issues with the particularly the video formats, I was concerned, and we were able to transfer and make Betacam masters for what we wanted to make of that and also then the VHS copies using our own equipment and staff, it was not nearly as problematic as we thought it would be with the audio material there were a few things that we wanted to make preservation masters of and since our studio engineer position was vacant we had to contract with an outside person who just came in and used our studios and did that. Here again, it was fairly straightforward so that ended up being that was what we considered going into it the biggest challenge and it turned out not to be at all. IT was actually very straightforward, I mean, if we didn’t have the kind of facilities for a collection that didn’t have the studio facilities that we do it would be much more difficult but since we can handle most routine film and video things and some fairly sophisticated audio things in house particularly when we have a studio engineer position filled we are actually in very good shape for an archival facility to handle that, to go the next step up you’d have to do to one of the major facilities like the National Archives Sound and Moving LC’s…things like that. We’re not at that level but compared to the places that sort of dabble in dealing with media we are way ahead on that so I feel like we are definitely
well prepared to deal with those issues and it was kind of nice to see in this case even when we are down a staff member it was not..we could deal with it without a great deal of strain and effort.

Copyright issues that is actually going to be much more sticky down the road than it is for us, for us obviously, almost everything we have is protected by copyright and we can certain kinds of in house preservation things under US Copyright Law. Where copyright became an issue for us is wanting to put stuff up on the World Wide Web, getting permission. CBS holds a lot of the rights on it. We’ve had it slow getting rights and permissions and haven’t been able to put up some of the things we thought we might put up but it will be a one of the challenges that researchers who want to make extensive use of the collection are going to have there’s a fairly Byzantine network, well not really Byzantine, I shouldn’t say that but CBS is very proprietary and conservative for materials for which it holds copyright. I think that it will be difficult in some ways for researchers getting permissions because in some ways its been difficult for us as the physical owners of the material to get permissions to do certain things. So I think that will be an inhibiting factor for people doing some of the things down the road. I think it is going to be difficult for some of the plans the journalism school has although we are sort of in a very arm’s length advisory in the Kuralt learning center I think that any kind of non-educational thing that they want to do that CBS holds the copyright will be difficult but for the processing and making it available other than just we couldn’t put everything up on the web that we wanted to copyright has not been a major impediment or issue for us.

Next is preservation issues which I’ve sort of addressed with the audio and video, again, the fragile nature particularly of the video because there is still some question what the shelf life is even of the preservation masters that we’ve made but that’s sort of endemic to the medium there were no real glaring preservation issues or problems probably the biggest one we’ve got is that the oral historian we used wanted to do everything on digital audio tape which is a very fragile medium so we had to transfer that to another medium right away which we ended up putting on reel to reel analog quarter inch analog tape masters and
CD listening copies of those interviews on that. The realia or artifactual material the preservation of that will be done either by the journalism school or the North Carolina Collection…the Gallery is well set to do that and the journalism school is still in the learning process of which the Campus Historical Properties Committee is trying to educate them about what they need to do to preserve that material. Those issues are being dealt with. The preservation for the artifacts is mostly just climate control and security are the big issues.

That’s for the big artifacts, how about the little things that came in with the fan mail?

The little things, I wasn’t really dealing with that, the Kuralt archivist can probably answer that more thoroughly I know that she separated certain material according to standard practice. That was part of the length was separating the artifact material that we kept with the papers and had to annotate and make note of the document what was with it and that took time.

Future of the Collection

The expected users, well, Jill does a real good outline on it, expected users we expected this would be a great journalism history collection and it has components of that but it actually is a much better popular culture thing and I tend to agree with Jill’ analysis that the expected users, I think a lot of American studies people will find this the most useful because of Kuralt’s views of America and the viewer response mail and you know popular culture and people who are studying the history of television are all going to find this interesting because not necessarily because of Kuralt’s career but because of the viewer response mail, I tent to think that’s probably the best research component of this collection is the fan mail and its amazing that he saved it all, ‘cause CBS doesn’t save that—that’s one of the reasons why he had it, it is my understanding that it was stuff that was not wanted for the corporate archives there at CBS. He had it in his
own personal warehouse. Probably no other network is saving this kind of fan mail so this is a fairly unique thing I have a feeling if you got o NBC or CBS or whatever you’re not going to find a great deal of fan mail regarding the shows there unless the individual producer or celebrity has saved it. So I think that is one of the unique things about the collection, it makes sense I was going to throw it away, too!

Further Processing

This is processed as much as its going to get! The connection to the Journalism Exhibit—the Journalism school is going to do a website about their center and they’ll do links to the Kuralt finding aid on the web and we’ll do links to their site from the finding aid and they’ll have our brochure about research opportunities over there beyond that I’m not sure how much connection there will be between the two—the way they plan to use it is going to be very different, its going to be more as a sort of showplace room in Carroll Hall, they are going to use it for seminars and meetings. Probably for recruiting students and various things but it won’t have that research component at least in my understanding I think it is going to be more like a historic room type thing and sort of showplace. We’ll obviously be interested in what they do and see what will be done to the things that’s different.

What was your biggest nightmare doing this collection?

The biggest nightmare sort of falls..there is the personal and the professional. The professional seeing us fall further and further behind on having to pour more and more resources into it, fortunately the fundraising folks overachieved, if they hadn’t it could have been an ever bigger nightmare. The other nightmare was then for me personally to become gravely ill during the whole process while this was coming to a head and missing out on the whole culmination celebration events and trying to keep this whole project going where you are getting sicker and sicker and missing lots of work time. To me the
biggest nightmare would have been February, to have my fortieth birthday and to have major surgery and have to plan this event all at the same time was a lot a stress.!

What was your greatest pleasure doing this collection?

I think the greatest pleasure was to see the kind of exposure and the other thing is that the kind of exposure I mean, one of the nice things about a collection like this and regardless of what you think of the merits of Mr. Kuralt and the overall collection is the trickle effect it has for other collections. The long term benefit I see happening out of this is when we were able to work into the research opportunities brochure that we have lots of other history of journalism collections and I tend to think that down the road the effect and the exposure will help elevate other collections and give a lot of attention to them. I think the overall benefits for the collection and the department are very good and I think that’s the greatest pleasure is to see this success of this particular collection benefit the whole department and the library.

If you had to do this project over again, or make recommendations to someone starting a project like this what would you recommend?

Do more sampling of file folders to make sure the content matches! Don’t assume that standard type appraisal decisions will hold in this case, in my case the fan mail…the standard thing is that you sample fan mail, that’s pretty much a given particularly if you are doing political figures and to realize that television celebrities are a little different and that the other thing is to not assume that –this came in as a history of journalism and broadcast media collection and it turned out that yeah it is that but is actually a lot more of a culture and American studies, not to totally assume the content. This is difficult because obviously we would have loved to have seen it on site before we shipped it because of Mr. Kuralt’s sudden death that wasn’t a possibility. Obviously in most cases we would have..some of the things that caused us to have
pitfalls is the way the collection came in and that is sometimes just something beyond your control. You can’t control that someone dies suddenly, if we had done the systematic transfer of the papers that Mr. Kuralt and I had discussed in February 1997 I tend to think that some of our miscalculations wouldn’t have occurred.

*Maybe he wouldn’t have shipped us all that fan mail*…

I think we got a lot more stuff than we would have gotten so it was in some ways to our benefit…

I was discussing with Jill that historians might have a different approach than people trained in library science..

Oh definitely, I think the fan mail is a good place to…let’s just say historian versus archival/library science since not all archivists are library science trained, it’s sort of the standard archival appraisal decision you read all the books about fan mail, which is what I was going through judging it whereas Jill came in trained as a historian first…

I’d like to think if I was the person who was processing it I would have noticed that and changed my appraisal that I made in my initial evaluation of it. But that’s the biggest thing I can see, that’s the difference between the historian approach, I think Jill kept more and probably even if I had been in the same position, I would guess generally—this is my general characterization of historians versus archival/library science-they [historians] tend to keep more overall in the appraisal decisions, which may have value either way. But particularly the big issue on that was our differing and I think, in this case Jill’s correct opinion about the fan mail.
Well thank you very much I appreciate it. It’s interesting about the fan mail, Jill didn’t mention it…

Well I thinks its more in my mind because she made a different decision than I did, I consider that my biggest miscalculation. I mean, the folder thing there’s just no way you can know that.

I’m trying to think if there were other issues on that, did you want to get into the donor thing? Are you doing anything about the kind of negotiations with them? There’s one thing, the only thing that was different about this that would be interesting for me to to give you and something that I gained a lot of experience from because I had never done that was working with lawyers settling an estate. This was different because you’re dealing with someone who’s deceased and you’re trying to get the tax laws, it made it a little more complicated on the evaluation for example, because they were trying to get a lot of things cleared up they couldn’t take an extension so they really pushed an appraisal much quicker so actually I before we even had the whole fund raising thing I ended up hiring a grad student to make a very summary, and actually I did a lot of it personally, too a grad student and I before Jill was ever on the scene we went through and made an initial box list of everything and made a list of all the artifacts we did that with in a couple months of the material coming in so we actually learned that we had to move very quickly on getting that ready. And I worked very extensively with the attorneys trying to get an appraiser on that because that was difficult one is that here you have a massive collection, its unprocessed, they need a fast appraisal and who’s going appraise it? There’s not a whole lot of possible out there. That was hard job finding an appraiser. They ended up getting a very excellent appraiser to do it but they ended up having to talk to a lot of people, I sort of gave them leads I mean, the appraisal issues’ always difficult. Obviously we know who the appraisers are because we work with them all the time to appraise collections but we are not allowed to recommend anyone or anything like that so I had to advise them on different areas to contact get suggestions for people who might be qualified but it has to be totally the donor’s because we’re an interested party they have to get a disinterested party for that kind of …to make sure it stands up to IRS scrutiny and the trick is that the most difficult appraisal, it was difficult for them they had to fly a guy in he
stayed here for a week going through rough, unprocessed papers so that’s complicated in of itself. So that was a wrinkle that would...the other thing was that we negotiated the gift agreement after the materials were already here that was kind of unusual as well but that was more a fact of the fact that Mr. Kuralt died suddenly. He did commit verbally and in writing to put his papers here but to have that after the fact was kind of difficult as well.

To me it was unusual, the money, the fundraising efforts and the people who felt they had a vested interest in what was going on..is that a situation that Southern has had to deal with before?

It was a unique situation, yes. Again, that’s a another good point. The fundraising thing, I think if you’re a university that has a lot of alumni support and you have a popular figure of the university pass away, I think that that kind of fundraising campaign can work. I think its only ever worked for a very…for example, not that I will any ill will to him but Andy Griffith or someone like that, if he was to die suddenly and tragically and his papers were to come here he’d be another one that would engender support, it would be very easy to fundraise like that, I think you know, even for people who are politically active and some other ..I think it is rare individuals you could do that with, Kuralt just happened to hit a certain niche with people it has to be someone in that group of the public consciousness, for most other people, for example our late chancellor, it would be difficult even though he had a lot of support he didn’t have the same kind of engendering feeling I don’t think a fundraising campaign would work for his papers because papers are hard to sell to people. I was very skeptical, I figured if we got enough to hire the project archivist and we had to eat the supply costs we’d be doing well I was just astounded by the response.

They have different connections than us and its actually much easier to sell what they are doing than what we were doing, a room was sort of a shrine is much easier to sell than something like what we are doing which is much less tangible or visible to the public eye. So that’s why I was amazed that it worked this
well. Umm, I’m pretty sure the fundraising campaign started even before the journalism school has the
idea of doing that so we started getting money in early on so I think even the journalism school hadn’t done
the Kuralt we would have gotten the money that we needed just based on…I’m still amazed at that…that
was pleasure, a surprise and it was pretty much effortless on our part the development department and
alumni took care of the whole thing on that, too. Usually I feel like I’ve earned every penny I get when I do
any kind of fundraising effort on this one it sort of came in on a platter so it was very unusual.
Appendix C: Interview with Jill Snider, Manuscripts Processing Librarian for the Kuralt Collection

Let’s start with talking about donor stipulations and expectations. Would you like to comment on these topics?

In terms of donor stipulations, I was not here when the initial agreement was signed, so I’m not exactly sure what all the negotiations were about, but I can say some about what the expectations were when I came on board this project from the beginning. When I began work on the project, which I believe was in March of 1998, part of my job was to work as a liaison with the Journalism School. The Journalism School had agreed with the Kuralt family and the donors to the Kuralt project fundraising donors, that they would create a Kuralt learning center which would be housed in the Journalism School and would be a recreation of Kuralt’s office. Part of my job was to advise them as to what kind of artifacts we had received that they would be eventually getting. We would talk about some ideas or what kinds of materials they would want to put in the office, what kinds of computer applications they wanted to have available to people coming into the office to use it, if it was to be used not only as a display area but as a working conference area where classes could meet there, small seminars could meet there, individuals who wanted to learn more about Kuralt could come in when it was not being used for group purposes, and I believe what they decided eventually to do was a kiosk, a touchscreen kiosk where you could come in and touch the screen they could go to different applications or they could listen to oral histories of they could view images from the Kuralt collection. So part of my job in the beginning and they was something very much that the donors were interested in having was to work as a liaison for the Journalism school and thinking about ideas for designing it, helping them get access to materials that were in the collection that were to be used for these computer applications, advising them as to what kind of psychical artifacts we have here that they would eventually be using, giving them tours of those artifacts, discussing with them security issues.
about those artifacts. So in terms of donor stipulations and expectations the work with the Journalism
School was something that doesn’t normally happen in a project archivists life. Usually you have your
project and you work on it, you may do some public outreach for it but you don’t normally work as a
liaison with an entirely different project particularly one which from the point of view of the journalism
school has not really jelled yet. They have an idea but they didn’t have a fully planned out Kuralt learning
center so the donors in many ways had a lot of say so in what this was going to be because it wasn’t
planned out in the beginning. I’m not sure whose original idea it was for the Kuralt learning center but my
suspicion is that the donors wanted that.

*It’s not something Kuralt had planned?*

It’s not my understanding, you can ask my boss about that but it is not my understanding that that was a
stipulation in the will, I’m not positive about that it may have been and I was not aware of that but I believe
that that was something that the fundraising donors and its one of the things that’s different in this
collections and most collections is that normally you have a donor who gives you the materials and in this
case it’s the Kuralt family and your main job is to work with those donors in terms of setting up a gift
agreement, making decisions about access to the collection, processing of the collection, eventual
disposition of the items in the collection, the transfer of things, in this case we were also working with a set
of fundraisers who were raising money for the project what that created was a large set of expectations as to
public outreach on this collection and the Kuralt learning center is one of the major things that the donors
were interested in doing. IN this instance we also as an archive had a lot of expectations, we had a lot of
expectations put on this project for public outreach with this collection that one doesn’t normally work with
this kind of large collection and we can go ahead and talk about those kinds of issues or it is also
somewhere else in your outline…let’s just go ahead and talk about the kinds of expectations that I met as
project archivist that were not the usual fair for a project archivist, I was expected to do a large amount of I
guess you would call it public outreach work which is in addition to reference work, you are often, you are
almost always required to do reference work on a collection which is when researchers come in and want
access to the collection you help them find materials, help them identify what kinds of topics they might
address using those materials. In this case, I was doing a lot of public speaking, speaking not always to other librarian groups which an archivist is often required to do talking about access or whatever but also to alumni groups to the donors themselves who required quite a bit of reporting on this project so making presentations to donors often using materials form the collection, making presentations to local groups, giving tours to local groups. In addition to the public speaking aspect of the project we talked a great deal about access—making the collection accessible and we did that in some ways we often do with collections we put up an exhibit with the Kuralt material, we also made a link on our website to the Kuralt material, in addition to that what was atypical about this collection was having to deal with the press which we don’t often do with a collection. We on occasion may speak with a reporter from a University magazine or a local magazine and this collection especially when we had the opening for the exhibit. I gave interviews to a large number of the press and that’s a kind of access that is not often provided for collections, TV interviews, newspaper interviews, talking with people to whom you have to interpret not only what kinds of things are in the collection but what a collection is, what an archive is, in many ways this position required that I be a public relations person for our archive not simply for this collection. Because this collection because of Kuralt’s status as a celebrity brought a great deal of attention to an institution that rarely gets attention at all from the press. So a lot of my job in that situation was to interpret not only Kuralt but to take that opportunity to interpret for the public what an archive is and what it does which is quite a challenge.

We also did for this collection a brochure, the brochure focused on research opportunities in the collection which was also a segment of the exhibit and that again is something that we usually don’t have the money with most collections to offer that. I must say here that one of the things that concerns me here as a historian—my training was in US historian rather than library science but I have practical training in libraries working in archives—as a historian I’m very aware that going as a researcher to an archive and there are several very nice brochures in front of you for different collections that is very much the temptation to look at those collections, you will also do research in your area using the other finding aids that you have in the collection but it is very hard to avoid the temptation of, “Oh wow, look at this brochures, look at these pictures, this is nice, I think I’m going to look at this collection.” And the decision to make the brochure was made for a monetary reason: we were given the money to do it. It was not made on the basis of what are our most important or our best collections. What are the collections that meet
historical criteria for putting a priority on them for making them accessible to the public so in effect what you are doing in some way is allowing groups with the available resources to determine what becomes most accessible to researchers and the public and that skews, I believe, for the public, our determination of what is actually the most important material in the collection. Because I believe that the assumption of the public and our researchers is that if materials are available to them that makes something very accessible then that must be the best stuff that’s in there. That must be what’s most important or why would they take the, put the resources into making it accessible. So often I think that collections that from a historian’s point of view might be much more important, I’m not in any way saying this is not an important historical collection, it is, but that fact is not the reason we chose to do the brochure. We chose to do the brochure because the fundraisers wanted one. The fundraisers had the money and encouraged us to do a brochure to make the collection more accessible and more visible. So as a historian I have some qualms about that in terms of the long range effect of producing access materials based solely on the criteria of who has the money to produce them. Because I do believe it skews perception of our archives and what’s in it and the prioritization of the materials for the public. I think that’s mostly what I had to say on that category.

Let’s talk about transfers a little bit, what types of items were transferred and to what sections of the University to which they were transferred.

What were our criteria for transfer? Book materials we rarely keep in an archive because we don’t like to duplicate what the libraries’ mission is which is to make book materials available so a large number of books that came in with the collection where transferred to the library. We also transferred videotapes and audiotapes that we had multiple copies of for the Nonprint section. I believe we…that may be all we transferred to the main libraries. We transferred to the North Carolina Collection items that were psychical artifacts, as a paper archive we only keep small physical artifacts anything beyond a certain size we feel we don’t have the facilities for, the space for and we feel its not really our mission, we’re not a museum, we are an archive, so we transferred things like—we had an artist’s proof of Bob Kuralt had written an introduction to that book it was in a large wooden case. In terms of its research value per se, we determined that it was…this book was published it is available to the public it was not something
we felt it was a real priority to make accessible for research purposes. But it was a very nice item for
display so that was something we transferred down to the North Carolina Collection. We also transferred a
large number of clippings to them, newspaper clippings that were duplicated of what we had to maintain
their North Carolina biographical clipping file. I believe we transferred some additional copies of, we had
multiple copies of things like a bound speech that Kuralt had made, publicity material that we already had
copies of and we felt since he was from North Carolina the North Carolina collection would appropriately
house. Transfers was one of the fairly easy things. We are also transferring a large number of physical
artifacts that were packaged with the papers and they will eventually be transferred to the Kuralt learning
center, we are storing them at the moment. And again I’m not sure what the initial agreements were about
that, those transfers so I can’t really speak to the donor stipulations in that situation.

*We have some material under restriction? How long will be under restriction?*

The material in this collection that is restricted is actually material that was received after the main body of
the collection. It was not given to us by the donor individuals. The materials under restriction are the oral
histories, what we did—there is an individual who is doing a biography of Kuralt who was in the course of
that going to be doing a large number of oral histories and we made and agreement with him we would sort
of offset his costs, pay him a small amount per interview with the agreement that he would deposit those
here. And we worked it out with him that he could put a restriction on those items until he finished the
biography or five years whichever came first. And that is a common practice that if someone is creating
materials that will become part of our collection that they have a use for and we are benefiting from them
donating them to us then we will often work out a short restriction period so they can use them in the way
they planned then they can open them to the public there are times when we restrict materials for much
longer than five years, those tend to be materials that come in a collection of a highly personal nature that
individuals may want to wait until most of the members of the family are no longer alive, or the people
involved in the incident, whatever is documented are no longer alive, that’s a fairly common practice to do
that. In this collection what we are restricting is just the oral histories.
Let’s talk about access…we talked about access a little bit…

As I said earlier, the access end of this collection is much more developed than most collections we receive. Most collections when we receive them, we process them we catalog them we make a marc record, we put that into OCLC so that is available to researchers through the internet and through OCLC searches. And we do reference work on a collections when individuals come in, walk in reference, people can call us and ask reference questions, they can call us, email us. There are a lot of venues in which we are answering questions about the collection or helping people use the collections and mostly that’s what we do. IN this project because we had a lot of funds from the fundraiser we did a link off our main departmental website, I’m not sure if we have any other links to a particular collection off this website, we have a few things from the folklore collection available there, some items from different collections, it is not really a separate website it is a version finding aid that has visual images. So you can go there and see visual images from the collection photographs, posters…and you can, there is available audio and video clips from the audiovisual material in the collection. I know that we do have some of that available form other collections but not the extent that we do on this link, this finding aid link. The exhibit that we put up from this collection, it is not unusual that we would do an exhibit: it is unusual that we would do an exhibit that is as extensive and as long running as this one and that was directly a result of donor desires. T his exhibit, I believe, we put it up in February and it will come down in August. You might check when you do your other interview how unusual that it, it is my own impression that that is unusual. That may just be my own impression. Again, we did a full color brochure on this exhibit which is very unusual to do.

Is that the only color brochure we’ve done?

That’s something you’ll have to ask him, it’s the only one I’m aware of…it has a great deal of text in it, it is more than just images from the collection, so it had a great deal of effort put into it. As I mentioned before we had a great number of public talks as well as talking to the press, giving a lot of public tours and that is very unusual for a collection, usually if you got a large collection in you might give a small number of tours especially in the beginning of the project then it gets very quiet. In this instance I was always on call to do
brochures, that was one of the difficult things to try and focus and concentrate on processing while always being available, being on call for press members, for donors, requesting presentation or tours or just calling to discuss progress of the projects, there were lots of interruptions, donors got very involved in almost every aspect of the project’s progress. They wanted to be very hands on, you might often get a donor of the material who is very concerned with the material, you know—where is my material, what are you doing with it this week, that’s a different kind of pressure than to say, I’m going to be in town in a few weeks and I’d like it if you could do a presentation for a group while I’m there. That requires a lot more planning, the actual time to do it, setting up the space, that sort of things.

Do think that knowing there would be popular interest in the collection influence how you wrote the finding aid?

Let me think about that…I don’t think so. The finding aid, I treated very much as a normal finding aid. When I do a finding aid I do consider both historical researchers and that there might be individuals who might be using this collection who are not historians, not trained as historians who have different reasons for looking at the collection I think there were some things I did differently in terms of processing but not in terms of writing a finding aid. I did include description that would address the needs of historical researchers, the general public, journalists, but I would do that in any collection, I would always consider what is my audience for this collection so I can safely say no, I didn’t really do the finding aid in a different way than I normally would but I did make some processing decisions that we different because of who would be using the collection. And we can talk about that now…

OK, processing is next on our list of topics anyway…

One of the first decision I made about this collection that I recognized right away was a different decision than I would make on another collection was about photographs. We had a very large number of photographs in this collection. I made the decisions to put almost all photographs in Mylar. Which is not a decisions I normally make, I believe in Mylar, I also recognize there may be long term problems with
Mylar, not problems but there are concerns among preservations about Mylar. They are not concerns that are very large for us because we have a very well climate controlled environment. Mylar is more a problem if you are storing materials in a damp or muggy environment where the plastic sticks to the photograph. We don’t really have that problem because we have good preservation materials and we have a climate controlled stack environment so that’s not really much of an issue for us. The reason I made the decision to put them in Mylar was because I knew that many of the individuals who would come in to handle the manuscripts would not be people trained to handle manuscripts, journalists and fans, in particular. And I knew that that would most likely be the part of the collection that they were interested in. Journalists came in and wanted to do a story they’d want good images to use. Fans want to come in and see his childhood pictures. It’s not that we wouldn’t explain to them how they should handle the manuscripts but its when you are coming in and you are enthusiastic about the material it is difficult to remember oh yeah, I have to put the gloves on, I have to open the folders a certain way…so I just felt it would be safer if I put the photographs in Mylar there would be less damage from overhandling and that’s not a decision I would make with most collections. I rarely put things in Mylar unless there is a specific reason to put something in Mylar. IF a photograph is partially damaged and the Mylar would add some physical integrity to the item I might choose to put it in Mylar. Normally I just put photographs in a folder. I guess that could take us into other processing challenges and problems one of the other categories on the list here.

This collection was quite a challenge in terms of processing. Two things come immediately to mind, one is when we first received the collection before I arrived and a time estimate was put on how long it would take to do this collection it was based on a couple of things, one was previous experience on how long it takes to process X amount of material, how many linear feet. And in this case this turned out not to be a good…everything looked as if it were in fairly decent order. File folders were labeled and looked to be labeled in a fairly reasonable way so it didn’t look like there was going to be a lot of sorting, a lot of organizing that had to be done, a certain amount but not a huge amount. When I was hired and we started actually processing the collection we ran immediately into two very large problems. One was that the semblance of order was not true order. You would open a folder that was labeled Kuralt correspondence 1985 and it was clippings or there was one letter and lot of clippings and a notebook, a lot of different kinds
of materials. So that we found immediately that what seemed to be a well organized collection had a semblance of order but not a particular order. We also discovered that there were a lot of boxes that on the top had folders and then below where just stacks of papers so that just doing a quick initial survey it seemed those boxes were well organized but when you actually started taking things out of the boxes, it was half organized and another thing we ran into and this was atypical of collections in the past although I’m not sure it will be atypical of collections in the future and in this one to a much larger extent, was the amount of popular culture material in the collection, much of which was small artifacts. For instance there’s a large percentage of this collection consists of fan mail that Kuralt received. When fans wrote him they would attach many items to their letters they would take the envelope and put the letter in and put in photographs of themselves, snapshots, a brochures for a local event they wanted him to come and cover for the show, they would put a button for the event, they would put a bumper stickers for the event, they would put newspaper clippings about themselves or others or something that they wanted him to do a story on. So almost every letter that he received had at least one of these types of items and many had multiple items enclosed. What that creates for the processor is a lot of preservation issues. If you have a newspaper clipping which is highly acidic material you have to enclose it in acid free material and since you are separating it, often these things were all stapled together. Often when these things arrived the secretary would take them out, would staple them all together so that they weren’t lost and pass them on to him or answer them herself. What we would have to do is remove the staple take the item such as a bumper sticker which had adhesive on the back which was leak out or similar items and put them in acid free material or material that could contain them if it was something like a lapel button with a sharp back we’d put some Styrofoam on it to make it safe so once it rusts a researcher is looking through the material they don’t accidentally stick themselves and get tetanus. Then we’d put that in a small envelope and all of those items had to be annotated so that it was clear what letter they originally arrived with and when you are working with many, many, many boxes of these materials it is a very time consuming process. A very frustrating one for most of our students workers who often were running across items they’d never seen in a collection before so they’d have to stop interrupting the flow of their work and come and ask someone what do I do with this? That was also a semi-nightmare for me having seven or eight people with frequent questions interrupting my work to ask very legitimate questions about either, I have this train token
attached to this letter, what do I do with it? In terms of processing this was a very labor intensive collection and we often have had specific items that have been labor intensive but we’ve never had them to the extent we have had them in this collection. It is an atypical collection in the sense that it contained fan mail and most of the collections that we will receive in the future unless they are celebrities won’t have that kind of material. But I do believe that it is a trend in twentieth century collections as people begin to understand the importance of ephemera they will simply save more of it. There is simply being manufactured now a huge amount of ephemera. People collect things in huge amounts of times that they never would have thought of, normally they would have thrown them in the attic or thrown them away. Or sold them at a flea market. People now understand because of the growth of the field of popular culture and of American studies people understand the historical importance of items in the past were viewed as junk and either discarded or returned to donors. We now often keep those items because we understand that people will want to use them as physical artifacts, as historical artifacts, and so I think that that is something that we have to think about in the future even though we are not a museum there are certain kinds of items, small ephemeral items that will become more and more a part of our collections and archivists will have to learn, have to get training in what is traditionally thought of as museum studies. Because you have to treat physical artifacts differently from paper artifacts there are different preservation issues, accessibility issues, tracking issues, and with manuscripts we rarely, we don’t do registers we do finding aids whereas if you do a collection that has a large number of museum items in it, and mostly the things in this collection were small enough and intimately attached enough to the papers items that that was a fairly easy thing just file them with the item but if we had had a large number of small artifacts that we decided to keep and we weren’t transferring them to the Kuralt learning center then we have to create a way to track those items, preserve those items, and make those items accessible in a way that a traditional finding aid doesn’t do.

Now did we keep all of the ephemera that came in?

We did not keep all of the ephemera. That is something that we discussed. And I think this comes to a, there were some disagreements about whether to keep all of the ephemera and I think they break down along the lines of something that I think is one of our topics today which is a historian’s view of archives
and an archivist’s view of archives. As a historian, that is someone trained as a historian it is very difficult for me to throw artifacts away. I certainly understand from my archival training the importance of discarding duplicates, discarding materials that really have no historical value, and I understand the important of space issues, you can’t keep everything you have to make priority decisions if you keep everything then eventually you run out of space and you can’t keep anymore of anything. So I understand the archival issues, I also understand that in a collection like this probably its primary importance in many ways is going to be the popular culture artifacts that it contains. This collection I think will in the future be used mostly by people interested in American studies and in popular cultures and folklore. It also offers many opportunities for journalism history and other areas but I think its primary usefulness because of the large amount of fan mail and other artifacts is going to be for pop culture. Given that, if I had been able to make all of the decisions myself I would have kept many more of the popular culture items.

As it was, was it just a percentage that you kept?

We kept a percentage, we kept a representative percentage and it was a fairly large parentage, it’s not like we threw everything away but I think I would have kept more.

Alright let’s see…you were hired to work on this collection and you had a number of people you supervised. How many people were working on this collection?

Well we started soon after I was hired in March of 1998 we had a graduate student who already worked for us who switched his time to this project. His first duty was to create a database for the audiovisual materials he left when he graduated in May and we hired another graduate assistant to complete that process to continue the database and to make listening and viewing copies of all the audiovisual materials for us. SO for the first six months of the project it was primarily myself and a graduate student in addition to that we used off and on a number of undergraduates who weren’t working on it full time but occasionally we would need them to do a specific part of it. Beginning around August we had I believe 4 or 5
undergraduate workers ad soon afterwards we added two graduate students working on the project, if not all of their time a great amount of their time-these were not full time workers but people working between ten and twenty hours a week. By about October I believe we had pulled in in addition to that a couple of additional undergraduate students and by November we had about five undergraduates, three graduates including the audiovisual person, and one contract worker all working on the project. Beginning in late December, early January we also occasionally would pull in all of the undergraduate we had—about 7 or 8, plus the three graduate students, plus the contract worker all working on it. In the last probably week of the project we pulled in full time for three or four days two additional full time staff. So it was pretty labor intensive.

Maybe we should talk about the reason you had to have it done….

The reason we had to keep pulling additional people in was that we had a very specific deadline which was a little less than a year from when I started, I started March 15 and the deadline was the 25th of February so three weeks shy of a year. We had to have the collection completely processed and on the shelves, the exhibit mounted, the website link to the finding aid up and running, all of that done and the exhibits opening planned by the 25th of February. What that meant for me was that I had to put an exhibit up in two weeks, design, plan, create and mount in two weeks which meant that I had to pull back from overseeing the processing which is when the two full time permanent staff stepped in and for the last week anyway oversee the final completion of the processing part. We had to have everything in the boxes, labeled and numbered and on the shelves. Getting the finding aid finalized and up on the web. That definitely...often when you get grants you have a deadline but you can get a little leeway in terms of some of the requirements. When you have donors standing at the door wanting to see what’s there and wanting to see the exhibit, and have a presentation made to them, it has to be done by that day. And when the press shows up to do a story on it --it has to be done. So that was atypical...so it’s not always that you don’t have pressure to finish collections, you do have pressure to finish them within the time frame of that grant, what was different was the scrutiny here. Everything had to be perfect, perfectly on the shelves and done to a T. In a way that in a grant project, you would have a couple of weeks leeway or more in terms of whether
every box is labeled as long as the bulk of the project is done, you’re ok but in this case there was immediate public scrutiny of whether or not it was done.

And that ties in with the whole expectation that the original order was useable….

That time frame that we were put under was based on an expectation that this is about the amount of time it takes to do a collection of this size and complexity. But we didn’t in the beginning understand that it was going to be a far more complex…and I guess it is a possibly under a grant that if you got into it and realized, whoa this is going to be ten times more work you could negotiate that with your granting institution to get an extension on the grant—we’ve discovered all these preservation issues and we didn’t know they were going to be there and the granting institution might not be happy about that but they are much more flexible than ok, the press is outside and they want to see an opening when there is supposed to be an opening. So that was atypical in this collection, the kind of pressure to do it within the deadline and that pressure was brought to bear by the donors as well. They had a timeline in their minds, and it is understandable they are raising a lot of money for you, they are putting a lot of effort into this and they make promises to the people they are raising the money from and they have their own set of pressures and they’ve made promises to people and that’s the understanding under which people gave them money. So I understood the pressures, they weren’t just being arbitrary, they had promises they had made and they were out there raising money and they expect you to follow through. And come through on those promises.

So there were really a lot of people involved….

A lot of layers involved in this project. And there are always a certain number of layers but there is usually an interface between the curator and the individual or group the items are being donated by there were two additional layers that I see here one was the donors themselves the individuals raising money for the project and the other was the development office of the library who were sort of in-between us and the donors. Sometimes we dealt directly with the donors sometimes the development office did. But we even when the development office dealt with the donors we had to deal with the development office. To keep
communication going so that everybody knew what everybody was promising everybody and everybody knew what the expectations were. So there was a lot of just interfacing with a lot of individuals on campus that we don’t usually and I guess there were three layers here because of the Kuralt learning center there was also a liaison with the Journalism School. So there were a lot of components to this that most projects don’t have. It wasn’t the traditional donor-curators relationship. It was donor-curators-fundraiser-development office-journalism school relationship.

We’ve talked about the unexpected difficulties, this collection had a significant amount of audio and visual material how did we treat this?

How did we treat this in terms of preservation issues?

Preservation and access…

We have in the past, we have definitely in quite a number of collections had audiovisual materials so we had experience with that what we had never had before was the large amount of audiovisual materials in this collection. I believe we had and I don’t remember the exact number you can check this on the finding aid, but I believe we had umm, over 200 audiotapes or almost 200 audiotapes and almost 300 videotapes in different forms, we had VHS, we had pneumatic (?) tapes, we had Betacam tapes, we also had different formats in audio materials, reel to reel tapes, audiotapes, audiodiscs, videodiscs, phonograph records, LPs and 45s we had one photograph record-a combination of a photograph and a 45..we had a lot of different formats. This we had a huge amount of it and it is much more difficult to survey audiovisual materials than paper records, papers records are fairly easy to flip through boxes you can visually see what’s there. For the audiovisual material what a lot of one of the graduate student’s time was spent doing was putting the material in a VCR and viewing it trying to..it is much more difficult to view something on videotape, you can’t just flip through it, it is time consuming. So and it is a very difficult thing for a graduate students to do at the point that they had do it at the very beginning of the collection and we had not yet processed the collection so we had no paper trail for the video items. We didn’t yet know, we
didn’t have documentation for them, so we didn’t know what he was looking at it unless it was labeled well, which it was not we didn’t know is this video material related to his On the Road program, video material related to his Sunday morning program, material not related to either and its some other project that we don’t know yet or anything about…we didn’t have enough of a background gained if we could have processed this collection in an optimal circumstances we would have processed the paper items first, or we would have processed the body of the collection and then we would have had the knowledge to be able to sort the audiovisual material much more quickly and probably with more accuracy. One of the things in terms of access to the collection that I feel least good about is the description of the audiovisual material because I never had the time to truly go through it myself and describe it. A graduate student was going through it and providing a describing but that was based on no knowledge of the collection because that was something that wasn’t available to him and I never had time with the collection once I had processed it to go back and completely redo the organization of the audiovisual material and that’s something that I feel this least good about, its not that it is in bad shape it just could be improved a lot. We do have listing in the collection of every videotape in the same way we do folder lists so there is accessibility to it but I have a feeling, my suspicion is that if I went back and reviewed all those tapes myself I would probably label some of them differently and I could write a much better description of the material that is there basically my description was based on the database that was compiled and like I said that database was compiled without full information by someone who didn’t have a knowledge of career or the papers.

Do we have viewing copies of all the tapes?

We have, decisions we made in terms of audiovisual materials we have a viewing copy of all visual items and we have a listening copy of all audio items. The only thing that is not true for is some of the multimedia material such as the CD-ROM, videodisc and those kinds of things which we don’t have the capacity to create viewing or listening copies and all those listening copies are on cassette for listening copies and on VHS for the video items. In addition to that we made preservation masters of selected audio items on reel to reel tape and that is the standard preservation master medium for audio items. We also
have, we also made copies of selected video items on Betacam tape. They are not true preservation masters, per se. We did them in house and we don’t really have the facilitates to create true preservation masters but they are serving in that capacity because it is extremely expensive to outsource preservation masters and we want to do a larger number, it is selected items but it is a good number of them, so we have those on file. So there is available a viewing or listening copy of almost everything and we do have preservation masters and what I would call preservation copies of our most important items. The items that have the most historical value.

So we didn’t have any items that came in on formats we couldn’t access?

No, one of the things that was an issue and a very large issue for this collection in terms of electronic records was something that we never received and that was the issue. When I first got the collection I was struck by the small amount of outgoing mail there was a huge amount of incoming mail and not a lot of outgoing mail and we hypothesized that perhaps a lot of the outgoing mail was on the hard drive of Kuralt’s computer so we went out to the storage area where some of the additional physical artifacts are stored over in Durham for the Kuralt learning center. We went through some of the boxes there hoping to find his computer and we found the monitor, we discovered that the hard drive had been given away to the son of a friend who wanted a computer. Our suspicion is that many, many records went with that hard drive. I really learned a lesson from that its one of things we are going to have to face as archivists in the future is that people do not think about their hard drives as records in the same way as if they had a file cabinet. They think, oh I need to send those papers over the archive, but people don’t think of what is on their computers as public record or a record of any kind. I think they tend to think of it in a very personal way. This is my stuff on this computer, my files, and that is separate from the institution, the individual's files that they think of as the record and they don’t think that when they pick up a hard drive and hand it to someone “I’m handing him my file cabinet” they think…but encoded in that item is a large number of records and that’s something in the future when we are doing collection development work when we go out and talk to individual I think we need to be very careful to remind them and we also want your hard drive—or copy the things off your hard drive and make them available to us. That gets into a whole other area of
further problems for archivists which you’ve probably read about in terms of gathering electronic records and preserving electronic records: there is number one making people aware that they are records, and number two once you get them and as you were indicating earlier they are in all these formats what do you do with them. Using software that you don’t have available in your archives. I have run into that in other archives having computer disks that I have had no way to access. Unfortunately I didn’t get to run into that because we didn’t get the electronic records but I felt like it had the potential to really weaken the content of the collection, we really don’t have much outgoing correspondence in this collection and that makes it a less useful collection. There may be other explanations for that as well, it may not simply be a…that it was all on his hard drive, that’s our hypothesis, that’s our suspicion but I think its something that we need to think about in the future a lot, when we go out we should to ask to see things in addition to the file cabinets and boxes in the attic. We need to ask about computers and ask people what other formats might you have records in?

I think that’s a really fascinating point that no one thought of that.

When I think about my computer, say I bought a new computer and I wanted to give the old one to a friend or relative. I’m not sure if there were nothing on that I cared if they see that I would take the trouble to erase the files on the hard. I’d make copies of the stuff I wanted personally but I’d say I don’t need that anymore, I don’t need that. I wouldn’t bother to erase it I would just give it away because I think of it as an item almost like a piece of furniture.

Ok, let’s see…we talked about the preservation issues for the ephemera…

Well, actually, let me..I see on here you have realia and I’m thinking in terms of one thing we didn’t talk about was the physical artifacts that we will be transferring to the journalism school. We have a large number of awards that Kuralt received including his thirteen Emmys, everything from framed posters, to paintings, to a chair, t-shirts, hats, I think we have a bust of Kuralt, his hat, woven baskets that someone sent him, a Mickey Mantle baseball, we have wooden toys, license plates, oil paintings, just a large number,
wooden folk sculptures, items that he kept in his office, or had hanging in his office and other items. One of the things that struck me when I first came here, we have it stored upstairs in carrels, was that to this point there has been no tracking of those items, if we were a museum when those items came in we would immediately assign those items object numbers, we would input them into a database, we would have an immediately way to track them, some museums barcode items…and partly we didn’t do that because that’s not our job, we are the paper archive and we are transferring these to the journalism school and that will be their duty. But it did strike me that for over a year we have had them here with no way of tracking them. And I just recently did a partial database of items, basically a table in a database of the items that we received in the initial delivery of the collection and that had just made me nervous to have them on site with no tracking and because we are not a museum and we are not trained in museum preservation we have had them stored in the packaging it came in what the movers put on. And I don’t know a great deal about museum items but I know that’s probably not how they are supposed to be stored. So that is one aspect of the project that has made me a little nervous and its not truly our responsibility per se but just by being the people who are storing them for over a year, I do feel like we have some real responsibility to ensure they are safe. We have not put them in a highly trafficked area where people can play with them but I feel like there is probably more that could be done and that’s an issue in archives when archival training and museum training are very different and there is seldom cross training. I think that’s an area, not necessarily a big problem area but it is an area where improvement could definitely happen. That the just more you know about how to treat physical artifacts, the better. Because I feel that as archives we will increasingly be dealing with physical artifacts, whether they be large or small in the future, especially archives with an interest in collecting the papers of celebrities, those items are simply going to come and as we understand the importance of keeping more realia that we will need to gain some additional training in that area even if it is just one course added to archival training program.

I know we had a bunch of preservation challenges with the realia, I remember you mentioning the lighter collection…
Oh, that’s right, I forgot about the lighters. Yes, Kuralt had collected, he was a heavy smoker and he collected lighters, that was one of the items, we kept representative lighters ones that has special significance form his career, for example we had one from when he covered the Olympics in 1994, we had one from CBS. We didn’t keep every bic lighter he had in the collection. But the issue with the lighters is that they have butane in them. And it is not too likely that they will break open and spill but all it takes if for one to break open and spill, say there is an earthquake and the box gets crushed and the butane leaks out and there’s a spark in addition to your earthquake damage you’ve got in fire. In less dire circumstances if something happens to the lighter and it started to leak, it wasn’t sealed properly then you have butane damage to all the surrounding items. So we actually called our hazardous materials department to ask them advice about what to do about the butane and their advice was to go outside and burn it off so we went outside and held the lighter up and burned off the butane. I had forgotten about that! It did present us some very unique preservation issues.

Let’s move on the future of the collection…we’ve addressed this in terms of outreach, you said you expected folklorists and American studies people who else do you see using it?

Who else do I see using it, there’s two questions here who are going to be the individuals using the collections and I think more what you are actually asking what kinds of historians are going to use the collection? Let me address the first one first: most of the reference questions I have received on the collection thus far are from fans individuals who are interested in Kuralt as a celebrity and want to know more about him so they’ve wanted to see specific items that were tributes to him or just tell more about him per se so their interest has not been historical in any way, there has been a great deal of foot traffic in the exhibit area and those are individuals interested in him and in seeing items owned by him not necessarily an interest in history per se just an interest in Kuralt. The collection has also been used by an individual who is writing a biography of Kuralt. Interestingly, we’ve had one request from someone who—and I think in the future this will be a much larger portion of people using the collection—an individual whose father Kuralt had interviewed at one point and she wanted to know if he had aired the program. Actually, it wasn’t her father, it was a friend of her father’s…her father wanted to know had this show every aired. He
wanted to see it. I have a suspicion that once the collection is widely known that it is available that we will get a large number, because Kuralt traveled for some many years doing stories on individuals across the country once people know that those interviews, the actual programs that he aired, the background notes he took on the filming, once people know that material are here...as people age they just get interested in the past, their own past and the past of their families, and I have a feeling that in the future one of the big uses of the collection will be individuals who in some way were touched by Kuralt, he interviewed them, he did a show on them, he just happened to meet them somewhere and write him a letter, or had correspondence with him and I think those individuals will be a large part of the people coming in and say, “hey my grandfather or my father was interviewed and I want to see what material is there.” So I have a feeling a large portion of the people using this collection especially initially and long terms will be fans or people who in some way his programs were connected to.

The other two groups of people I see using the collection long-term, I don’t know how much initially but long-term will be journalists, particularly journalists interested in doing the history of journalism, academic journalists who want to do research and historians. Within the category of historians there is a great deal of interdisciplinary research going on in history departments across the country and among independent historians. And I think American studies scholars will be the group that will gain the most from this collection. From very early on in his career Kuralt talked about America and how we define America, what are American values in addition to his programs he did a lot of programming on America. He did extensive travelling to talk about it. He was on the lecture circuit probably from the mid-sixties on till the end of his career, till his death really. The major theme of all those years was America, what is America?, how do we define it? I remember especially in the sixties and early seventies one of his big topics was is America really in a crisis? And he disagreed with a lot of other journalists. A lot of journalists were saying America is in a real crisis and he felt like, you are just focusing on the problems, that there was too much negativity and so he was traveling around the country presenting positive stories of America. So he’s really in that tradition of journalism, not only in journalism but in literature of promoting the common person. So looking at classic...how you define the country so I think that American studies scholars are really going to find his work interesting that he has a particular point of view about American but he is also talking a lot about it, and in addition to what he’s saying about it he has a large amount of fan mail where people are
commenting on his comments about America. So people are presenting their own vision of the country, some of which agree with him and some of which disagree with him. So you’re getting sort of a dialogue about what our country is in a time period when that changed dramatically. He career spans from the late fifties to the early nineties. That’s a time period with the whole civil rights movement, the student movement, the women’s movement, got lots of things going on and lots of people challenging what America is supposed to be and discussing what is America and who are the real Americans…a time period when that debate which you see now kind of coming into the whole debate about multiculturalism. It’s like we have a different version of it now but it is the same debate that was going on in the late sixties, early seventies. Who represents America, who are the true Americans, and what represents America what are our true values, what is the great American myth, what is it and who is the champion of it? And Kuralt was a right-winger on that debate from the very beginning and he does it very and I think that makes this collection when you combine it with the interaction he has going with his fans makes it a very good collection for looking at these issues which have always interested American studies scholars.

In addition to that, I think history of journalism there is some really good material in here about the early period when CBS is really coming to preeminence in television journalism, really his career spans the point in time when television really took off, I think he began at CBS in ’57 before that there was television news but it hadn’t been around very long and he really in his career grew up with television news. A lot of the formats that we take for granted he was one of the people who helped pioneer them: the magazine format something which Sunday morning, he really helped establish that and make it popular. I think there is just a lot there for the history of journalism in his correspondence in his subject files that he kept in those early years, a lot of audiovisual material, early interviews he did. This is some good material for historians of journalism.

As we talked about earlier there is a lot of popular culture and folklore materials he went around the country and in many ways was sort of documenting the folk traditions that we sort of think of as gone. He was out there showing people making molasses and those sorts of things, a lot of the things that we think of as dead arts or just aren’t as aware of because the media rarely covers them. But that are out there alive and well, he covered. Individuals sent him, show hopefuls, people who were hopeful of getting on the show sent him large amounts of material about events that they were planning or things that they did, “hey
you should come talk to me ‘cause I still do this old craft tradition’ those kinds of materials are interspersed in the fan mail. So there’s a lot there for popular culture and folklore historians.

There’s also I think this collection will appeal to individuals who want to do work on literary studies, for study of travel literature, certainly anyone who wants to look at the metaphor of the road in American culture will find this collection very, very useful and there are probably many, many areas of research that I haven’t even thought of myself. One of the things that did occur to me is that leisure and recreation studies people will want to come and use the retirement materials. Maybe someone wants to do their thesis on retirement in America, what it means, it is sort of a twentieth century phenomenon, what are people’s attitudes towards retirement, a lot of people wrote him when he retired, talking about how they felt about it, how it changed relationships with family members when they retired. How they felt about their work before they retired, how they feel about it now, financial pressures when they retired, travel, all the things they were doing. It is a fascinating set of correspondence he received from people talking about retirement. I’m sure there are many other topics that people could get out of the collection. That’s one of the exciting things for me as a historian, I can think of these things and say hey you should come use the collection for this great stuff but people will come and they will use this collection and they will do things with this collection and all collections that would never have occurred to me. I think that is something we should keep an eye toward in the future is that we can’t anticipate what is going to be important to people in the future. We can look at our framework of what kinds of research individuals are doing now but a hundred years from now who knows what will be important to people.

Ok, so everything had to be completed by that date, do you envision anyone every going back and doing anything else for processing?

No, unless we get an addition, which is likely. I know that his brother Wallace has indicated he has material he would like to add to the collection. If we get an addition certainly that will be either integrated or treated as an addition. In terms of going back and reprocessing certain sections of the collection or going back and redoing the finding aid, I certainly am presently going thorough the finding aid to make
sure there are no inaccuracies but we simply don’t have the time or the resources now to go through and do a better finding aid and even if we did, probably our prioritization would be, because we have such a backlog of collections, this one is processed, and described, and made accessible far in excess of what we normally do for a large collection like this. We would not go back and…certainly you can say with any collection you ever do I would love to be able to go back and redo this or redo that but it really is a very accessible collection as is and our priorities are that we have all this other material that isn’t accessible at all, its sitting on a shelf and we really need to move on to it and give it some time and attention.

What was your biggest nightmare working with this collection?

My biggest nightmare. I think the hardest thing in this collection for me was juggling everything. Was trying to concentrate and get a handle on a very large amount of material with constant interruptions, constant demands from the outside that pulled me away. You have to do a very different kind of thinking when you are presenting something to the public or when you are talking to a reporter or you are giving a tour or even just discussing something with a donor on the telephone or you are helping people plan something it is a very different kind of thinking than archival—sitting down quietly mulling over what you have, surveying a certain portion of the collection trying to put it into context, into perspective and that gets interrupted in the middle and I’m pulled away for two hours and I come back it is very hard to get back to where I was without starting over. It was very difficult to be trying to write a finding aid when I am interrupted every fifteen minutes by a question, with a very legitimate question but…the conflicting demands of public outreach and working with donors and supervising a large number of people who have had some archival training but are dealing for the first time with a kind of collection none of us had dealt with on any real scale before, and making decisions about audiovisual materials and getting the studio fixed because it is not working…its I think, having to wear so many hats was the hardest part for me. To wear so many hats and make sure it got pulled off by the deadline date. I think that was the biggest nightmare. Especially with donor expectations in this instance. Not the donor of the papers but the financial donors.
What was the greatest pleasure?

I think for me, and this is true not only of this collection but of all collections for me, its heightened with this collection..my greatest pleasure is always once you get toward the end and you are focusing on the access issues. You’ve processed it, described it you feel like it is under control and it no ready to be made available to the public and to researchers. That’s when I get to do what I enjoy the most which is sit-down and brainstorm about ok, how is this going to be used. You do some of that when you are doing your finding aid who is going to use it and what are their purposes, but to really sit down and create some materials you know you are going to put out there and people are going to really know it is here and they will come and use it. So I think for me doing the exhibit and the research opportunities brochure were the two most fun things. Because I was getting to sit down and think about the collection from a historical point of view, think about how other people were going to perceive it and provide my interpretation of the importance of this collection to researchers. That was definitely my greatest pleasure. Especially the brochure because that will be a longer lasting item that’s out there and it focused really upon the research opportunities.

Recommendations for other archivists….

In terms of electronic records like we said before, I’d advise a real attention to their existence and to collecting that, to ensuring that we get those records. I think that I would recommend a survey of the materials be more through than we typically do. To just be aware there may be hidden difficulties in large, particularly media collections. I think in surveying I would also pay more attention to what the formats are. If donors are involved negotiate very early what would and what would not be involved in the public outreach. I think its dangerous in some ways to allow something to be open ended to make a lot of promises that you may regret. I’m not saying not to do public outreach, public outreach is important, I think it is important it doesn’t interfere with the processing of the collection and that there need to be some limits placed on what the donor can ask for in return for fundraising efforts. And that’s a very tricky issue just how, where do you draw the lines if someone is paying you, raising the money for you to do the project,
what rights do they have? And certainly they do have rights to demand certain things but I think you can spend some time planning with the donors trying to anticipate and discussing with the donors what their expectations are and sort those out before you begin the project and just make it clear what can be done and what can’t, and discuss some of the issues that are of concern in an archive. I think most donors are receptive to that, and most donors don’t understand what an archive is and I think its…one of the things I recommend is an initial consultation you sit down with the donor and your explain what it is you do, why you do and what the basic principles are and I think once they have a better understanding of what it is you do then their expectations are more in line with what you can offer them. I think that’s primarily what I would recommend.
2 Cooper 12.
3 Cooper 12-13.
4 Cooper 21.
5 Cooper 25.
10 Stanley 93-105.
14 Jill Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory* (Chapel Hill, UNC, 1999).
15 Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory*
16 Snider, *Charles Kuralt Collection Inventory*
17 Jill Snider, *Research Opportunities in the Charles Kuralt Collection* (Chapel Hill, UNC, 1999).
18 Snider, personal interview