This case study focuses on the institutional and professional relationship between three academic units at UNC-Chapel Hill: the Southern Historical Collection, the Southern Oral History Program, and the UNC-CH University Archives. These units are devoted to documenting some aspect of the American South in one form or another. After analyzing the current relationship of these three units, the study tested the ability of the three units to work collaborative in collection development. This study will offer a framework of needs for effective future collaboration in collection development on UNC-CH’s campus and on other campuses.

Headings:

- Universities and colleges--Archives
- Oral history--Methodology
- Manuscripts--Repositories
- Libraries--Special collections--Nonbook materials
- Archives--Administration
- Archives--Collection management
CAn you hear me now?
A case study of collaborative collecting between archives and oral history programs

by
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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.

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Introduction

In cooking, there are ingredients that work well together: chocolate and chili pepper, dill and salmon, and blueberry and lavender. While these ingredients are flavorful by themselves, they enhance each other when combined. Just as there are ingredients which complement each other in the kitchen, there are historical documentary units which can also benefit each other. Such units may work well individually to document or preserve their historical area of interest, but they could also benefit each other by collaborating. These types of units may include archives and records repositories, oral history programs, rare books repositories, manuscript repositories, and state preservation offices.

This case study focuses on the institutional and professional relationship between three of these types of units at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. They include an archival repository (the Southern Historical Collection), an institutional records repository (University Archives and Records Management), and an oral history program (the Southern Oral History Program). These units were chosen because they share common documentary missions, overlap in topical focus, and have some degree of cooperation.

After analyzing the current relationship of these three units, this study will analyze the possibility of extended collaboration between the units and why further cooperation could
be beneficial. First, the study will describe each unit in detail in order to set the stage. Next, this study will examine the current literature on collaboration between archival repositories and oral history programs in order to show how this study’s recommendations fill a need. Based on surveys and interviews with the staff members of the participating entities, the study will then put forward suggestions for an extended collaborative relationship.

This study’s findings are also based on the experience of an independent scholar who conducts oral histories and works with the Southern Historical Collection. The experience of the independent scholar will help to inform this study’s recommendations for further collaboration between the units. Finally, this case study will make suggestions on collaboration to benefit the collection development of each participating entity.
The Campus Units: The Southern Historical Collection

As the nation’s largest non-governmental repository of manuscript materials related to the American South, the Southern Historical Collection (henceforth called the SHC) holds a variety of primary sources such as diaries, journals, correspondence, photographs, maps, oral histories, scrapbooks, literary manuscripts, and much more. These records are unique and mostly unpublished. The SHC has strong collections in historical eras such as the Antebellum South, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Jim Crow South, and the South since 1954. Topics of special interest may include labor, family life, Civil Rights, Southern college student life, plantation life, religion, and slavery to name a few.

At the time of this study, the curatorial staff of the SHC consisted of two members: the collecting and public programming archivist and the administrative assistant. The SHC also maintained two Carolina Academic Library Associates (CALAs) at the time of this study. CALAs are part-time professional graduate student workers. One CALA working for the SHC worked extensively with African American manuscript materials and digital exhibits. The other CALA was the assistant to the public programming archivist. The SHC also traditionally supports an African American materials specialist. This position was empty at the time of the study, but the job was posted shortly before this study concluded. UNC Libraries was also in the midst of searching for a new Director of the Southern Historical Collection during the study period. SHC materials are served out of the manuscripts and archives reading room of the Louis Round Wilson Library at the center of UNC-Chapel Hill’s campus.
The Campus Units: the University Archives

Also served out of the manuscripts and archives reading room are materials from the University Archives of UNC-Chapel Hill. University Archives and Records Management Services (UARMS) serves the University through records management assistance and by acting as the official archival repository for records generated by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the central University of North Carolina System Administration. UARMS provides access to historically significant, unpublished materials related to the University that date from the founding (1789) to the near-present day. Materials include records of the office of the chancellor and records of the office of the president as well as other campus departments such as the department of News Services. Also included are records related to student life; traditionally, these types of materials have not been the main focus of UARMS collecting until recently.

During the study period, the staff of UARMS included an electronic records archivist and a records services assistant. The position for University Archivist was vacant. UARMS also maintained a CALA dedicated to working with student groups on campus. There were also two graduate student assistants. One graduate assistant worked with the records services assistant to maintain the University’s virtual history museum. The other worked as the assistant to the electronic records archivist.
The Campus Units: the Southern Oral History Program

Since its founding in 1973, the Southern Oral History Program (the SOHP) has sought to preserve the story of the American South by recording the everyday voices of Southerners. The slogan that emblemizes the SOHP is present on its website: “you don’t have to be famous for your life to be history.” The SOHP has created over 5,000 oral histories with people from all walks of life.

Some of the SOHP’s research efforts include: the Long Civil Rights Movement, the Long Women’s Movement, labor and life, African-American credit unions, and University history. The SOHP can be considered an activist documentary organization because the staff members consistently connect the history they document to current Southern struggles including poverty, feminism, and changing ethnic landscapes. The staff members are often involved in social and activist movements outside of the SOHP.

The SOHP is based in the Center for the Study of the American South at the Love House and Hutchins Forum on Franklin Street just north of UNC-Chapel Hill’s main campus. The staff at the time of the study was comprised of five full-time staff members (director, associate director, digital projects director, coordinator of collections, and senior research fellow) as well as four graduate field scholars.

Graduate field scholars conduct oral histories and maintain the daily work of the SOHP. Some oral histories are also conducted by undergraduate students involved with the
SOHP either through a class on oral history or through the SOHP’s student internship. Both the class and the internship are offered two times each year in the fall and the spring. The class is open to both undergraduates and graduate students while the internship is reserved for undergraduate students. The internship is competitive, and students compete for only four slots.
The Current Relationship

The current relationship between UNC’s Special Collections and the SOHP is currently collaborative in nature. The SHC is the official repository for SOHP materials including interview recordings, transcripts, and support materials, such as photographs. Second, the SOHP hires and funds a graduate student that works both in the Love House and in Wilson Library’s Special Collections Technical Services as an archival processor for oral history materials. This processor works under the shared direction of the Technical Services department and the SOHP.

Moreover, Special Collections Research and Instructional Services staff promotes the use of SOHP interviews through reference inquiries and instructional sessions. Special Collections Technical Services staff and the SOHP also maintain a working relationship as they implement best practices in descriptive metadata for oral histories and reformate the SOHP database. Technical Services staff also preserves and makes available the audio materials produced by the SOHP.

Although the SOHP already has an established relationship with the SHC and UARMS (though primarily with the former), the units collaborate on technical issues, not collection development. Technical issues include oral history metadata, description, and access.

Project Inception

The idea that the relationship between the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS could expand began to present itself with the beginning of the SOHP’s undergraduate internship in
2012. When the internship was initiated, the current relationship was only slightly collaborative in terms of collection development. In the past, benefits of collaboration have been consistent: audio preservation, access to interviews, storage, description, etc. However, as the SOHP searched for topics for the internship to focus on, cooperating with the SHC and UARMS presented new collaborative benefits such as the development of research topics for the internship, the identification of potential interviewees, and assistance with archival research.

Over the course of a semester, four undergraduate interns study the methodology of oral history, undertake their own oral historical research, and contribute to the daily operations of the SOHP. During the internship’s first iteration, the interns conducted interviews about the student movement at UNC-Chapel Hill against the North Carolina Speaker Ban of 1963. UARMS suggested this topic to the SOHP. The internship resulted in the creation of oral histories, the creation of a performance piece on the historical era by the interns, and contributed to an exhibit in Wilson Library on the 40th anniversary of the Speaker Ban and student protests against it.

The next time the internship took place (Fall of 2013), the SOHP included a graduate student from UNC-Chapel Hill’s School of Information and Library Science. The student acted as the “archival liaison” to the internship. The liaison held an instructional session for the interns on using archival materials for research, presented the interns with three possible research topics based in UARMS’ holdings, and offered individual reference
consultations with each intern prior to interviews. This graduate student worked at the SHC in Research and Instructional Services and was the CALA for UARMS.

After helping the interns decide on a general topic of study (the sexual revolution of UNC in the 1970s), the archival liaison began to realize that the interns were talking to professors and alumni who likely had materials that could be given to the Special Collections. Once one interview session yielded a new set of records for UARMS, the possibility of a different type of collaboration between the Archives and the SOHP began to take shape in the student’s mind. What if oral history programs could inform archival collecting initiatives? The experience of oral history interviewees incidentally gathering archival materials was thus the impetus for this case study.
Project Goals

This case study will examine the relationship between the SOHP, the SHC, and UARMS. While the three have an established relationship, the goal of the study is to answer several questions so that the author can suggest a framework of needs for future collaboration.

First, how can oral history programs (in this case the SOHP) inform the collecting practices of archives (the SHC and UARMS) and vice versa? Second, how do the staffs of the three participants collaborate best? What factors would facilitate further collaboration? Were there factors that would hinder extended collaboration? What are their true needs, and what is superfluous in the relationship? Finally, how can a party independent of both the archives and the oral history program function within this relationship to the end of serving all parties while conducting interviews and collecting archival material? By answering these questions, the author will put forward a set of conditions that are optimal for collaboration between archives and oral history programs.
Literature Review

Collaborative projects are not a new concept to special collections both at UNC-Chapel Hill and elsewhere. On UNC’s campus, the Special Collections might collaborate with the English Department to provide tailored instructional sessions to undergraduate students on using primary source materials. One prominent example of how Wilson Library has worked with the English Department at UNC-Chapel Hill is an English class co-taught by an English Professor and an SHC archivist. The class focuses on the use of manuscript research in the classroom. To establish how this case study fills a gap in the current research, the author will review the literature in three parts. First, collaboration between special collections and outside entities needs to be addressed to show why these projects are helpful to all parties and why collaboration is a useful tool. Second, this review will cover both how collecting policies and special archival projects are designed since the goal of this case study is to understand how special collections can collaborate with others to refine collecting policies and initiatives. Finally, in order to establish why archives should collaborate with oral history programs to form these initiatives, the author will reference examples of collaborative oral history projects.

Because collaboration is such a buzzword, it would be easy for project leaders to say that they are leading a collaborative effort. Sometimes this might be unfortunate, when a project is billed as collaborative to funding partners but really shows very little allied work. In terms of archival collecting, collaboration entails a “conscious process of building collections among groups of individuals” (Abreu P2). The vagueness of this definition works to the advantage of archivists most of the time; collaboration in special
collections does not have to follow any set rules about the number of partnerships, number of “team meetings,” or even level of partnership and commitment. In fact, Abreu cites Jacques Derrida’s 1997 work on the interconnected nature of archives. She makes the argument that because the natural state of archives is a set of relationships between materials, collaborative collecting could be considered inherent to the archival process (Abreu P3). What this means to collaboration in the archival world then, is that relationships between special collections need not be fraught with competition or heavily obligations. Rather, the very nature of archival work itself naturally includes a certain amount of collaboration.

Although collaboration may be beneficial and natural in archival repositories, daily operations should not solely be based on collaboration. If special collections only operated on a collaborative basis, there would be many day-to-day operations that might not be accomplished on a regular basis. A solely collaboration-based operation would also mean that every function would be dependent on the willingness and availability of another unit. Abreu is very clear that collaborative collecting projects are “object-oriented” (Abreu P8) and even possibly have regular deadlines and clear limits. Archival partnerships should have a very clear goal established when they are formed. If there is not a clear goal in mind, the partnership may become unwieldy and ineffective. The idea of limited collaboration is what makes collection development collaboration between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP so manageable. If the collection development shared by the units can be limited appropriately in topic and scale, then the three will be able to collaborate to the fullest within these well established parameters.
In the past, the goal of some collaborative projects has been to meet collecting initiatives to further documenting groups like African American communities or events such as the Arab Spring. Collecting policies and initiatives can often be both a challenge to create and a challenge to fulfill. For established repositories like the SHC, there is already a collecting policy related to the American South though it is worth noting that collection policies are built to be somewhat flexible in order to preserve future possibilities. The SHC’s collecting policy is available online here:
http://www2.lib.unc.edu/mss/shc/policy/index.html. In the case of UARMS, establishing a similar collection development policy has not been an overt priority. This is chiefly a result of the fact that the Archives collecting mandate is a legislative one—to collect the official state records created by the University as a state agency. However, the legal mandate has been supplemented by the development of initiatives to document student life or campus diversity. However, with both of the SHC and UARMS, collecting initiatives are still important to maintain growth and scholarly and administrative relevance.

In order for collecting policies and initiatives to remain relevant, a certain amount of collaboration with outside entities is necessary. In cases such as that of the SHC and UARMS where long-term policies are already in place, or in the case of archives that are not yet ready to commit to a long-term policy, establishing collecting initiatives or short-term policies can be beneficial (Anderson 298). When short-term collecting initiatives are a good option, these policies can be created and fulfilled in a cyclical fashion so that
as one initiative comes to a close, another one can evolve from it. This method of forming collecting initiatives also allows for the ability to respond to chance and opportunity (Anderson 298). This method of responding to chance and opportunity while pursuing collecting initiatives works particularly well with collaboration; cycles of growth allow for each partner to express new interests to the other or to follow-up on leads that arose in the course of previous initiatives. In his article on collecting policies in social history archives, R. Joseph Anderson focuses on how social history archives can navigate the difficulties of forming and fulfilling collecting policies. With both the research method and the creation method, Anderson notes the need for partnerships outside of the archive. Research is relatively self-explanatory: members of the archive or outside partners pursue research and the collecting of existing documents in the topic area of choice from the collecting policy. The Documentation Creation Method goes beyond the collection of existing materials and calls for the creation of documents, most typically oral history interviews or photography. The in-house archivist may undertake creation methods, but it is more often than not outsourced to a community partner (Anderson 299-301).

The above advice also applies to collecting policies for special-subject repositories. However, Linda Henry more heavily emphasized the importance of archivists’ cooperating with others to meet their goals. The goal Henry emphasized was for archivists to pursue special topics in order to equalize archival representation. In many cases the elite are well documented, but representing the full range of classes in society has become increasingly important. To that end, special subject repositories cannot
collect every class or every material in every class. The best practice of archivists could be to cooperate with their counterparts in similar subject repositories in order to locate and create records (Henry 59). Her analysis was similar to Anderson’s. However, Henry went a step further than Anderson in suggesting that collaboration with outside partners was needed on an standing basis rather than a cyclical or episodic basis: “cooperation with other repositories may take the form of informing repositories…of archival materials on their subject, and encouraging the deposit of such materials in those repositories” (Henry 60). While Anderson’s cyclical approach to cooperation and collecting policies would work well for short-term initiatives, Henry’s call for long-term relationships may be better suited to the more established collecting policies of the SOHP, the SHC, and UARMS. In all three cases, the focuses of their collecting initiatives are all firmly rooted in documenting some portion of the American South.

One example of collaboration in creating and fulfilling a collecting policy is the Houston Metropolitan Research Center’s (HMRC) long-standing policy to document the Mexican American community of Houston. The HMRC, which is based in the Houston Public Library, utilized community partnerships to grow its collecting policy. While some of these partnerships are important to collecting methods, a good deal of the collaboration focuses on shaping the collection policy. Once the HMRC actively informed the community of its interest in preserving the Mexican American experience, a network of helpful individuals formed that influenced the direction of the collecting policy and the types of materials that were actively collected. Among these partners were staff members at a branch location of the Houston Public Library within the Hispanic neighborhoods
This partnership was particularly important to the long-term goals of the project: to form a comprehensive collecting policy that would include under-documented Mexican American communities and continue to build that collecting policy as new communities came to light. The partnership with local librarians enabled the HMRC to maintain a permanent and vital connection to the population upon which their collecting policy depended.

On the other hand, the Bruin Archives at UCLA Project exemplifies the ability of partnerships between university or college archives and on-campus organizations to better form collecting initiatives within the official purview of the Archives. The Bruin Archives Project focused around collecting student life records and working with student organizations to stay relevant. The Bruin Archives Project was established by a partnership between the SAA student chapter at UCLA and the Bruin Archives once the student chapter noticed a distinct lack of material related to student life (Buchanan 209). The involvement of the student chapter has led to a critical connection between the Archives and on-campus student leaders. This collaboration emerged as part of a collecting initiative. In the end, the collaboration was sustainable even though student leaders change almost constantly. In fact, the partners to the archives (the SAA student chapter) also continually changed and managed to say in touch with current student trends thus making the initiative organic (Buchanan 216).

Kathryn Neals broke down the dichotomy of how on-campus networks can help university and college archives shape collecting initiatives in “Giving It More Than the
Old College Try: Documenting Diverse Populations in College and University Archives.” Neals identifies three types of individuals/groups that aid in identifying those areas that are under-documented and should be better collected: connectors, mavens, and salesmen (Neals 113-114).

Connectors occupy a few worlds but only in a certain niche. Mavens are like brokers and share information freely about what they know. Salesmen have information and are skilled at persuasion. In the library and archives world, a connector could be an academic researcher. They occupy the realms of different archives or historical repositories but only in the form of an outside researcher. In this case study, the independent graduate student could be viewed as a connector. On the other hand, a maven could be an employee of two different entities such as a historical repository and an oral history program. This employee has access to knowledge from both sides and shares it freely with all colleagues. A salesman, though, could be either independent of or employed by the organization that they want to persuade. This person could be an outside consultant hired by a library to address a need. However, in this case study, the salesman would be a person invested in the outcome of any changes made.

Neals borrowed these archetypes from Malcolm Gladwell’s The Tipping Point (Neals 113-114). The point of singling out these three types of actors is that in sharing their information and enabling collaboration, they may help institutions form specific collecting initiatives that target underrepresented populations in the archives.
The literature suggests that collaboration has been a successful way for archives to form and fulfill certain collecting policies and initiatives. How effective then is collaboration between archives and oral history programs in forming and achieving collecting initiatives? Ellen Swain argued in “Remembering Alma Mater: Oral History and the Documentation of Student Culture” that oral history projects can contribute documentation and more to the Archives; benefits can include: improved collection development, user service, and outreach (72). Over the course of the University of Illinois’ oral history project with alumni, six new collections of student life materials were acquired for the archives (Swain 83). The involvement of an oral history project with UI’s Student Life and Culture Center directly led to the benefit of the SLC’s collecting policy and allowed the archivists to pursue documentary leads that probably would have remained hidden.

While in the case of the University of Illinois, the oral history project was established in-house, community collaboration with oral history projects might often occur more by happenstance. This may be especially true when the topic of the project is of interest to multiple parties within a community. In Yellow Springs, Ohio, the idea of documenting historical and present-day racial diversity/progress was adopted by two separate community entities: the James A. McKee Group and WYSO radio station. Both of these groups learned of each other and decided to work together (Bryan 75-76). Because these parties did not set out to collaborate together, the similarity of their interest was what made them compatible. The major lesson of this collaboration was that the initial planning stage was vital to success. This importance was placed on planning because of
the need for all community partners to be on the same page about the ultimate goals of the project and how it would be conducted (Bryan 81). Ultimately though, the partnership between the two allowed for the WYSO radio station (who funded the interviews) to more easily access historical community members through the James A. McKee group.

Another example of oral history programs facilitating collaboration was the project between DePaul University students and the Exhibitions Committee of the Chinese American Museum of Chicago (CAMOC) in the spring of 2010. The students were all upperclassmen in Anthropology, and in the case of this paper, the main message is that oral histories are an effective teaching tool for university students (Baxter 62). However, the collaboration between the two partners did not just benefit the students; the collaboration directly benefited the museum since the end goal was an exhibit entitled “From the Great Wall to the Great Lakes,” which depicted Chinese immigration to the Midwest (Baxter 63). This project also had a firm time frame of 10 weeks; the time line would fit within a semester and be an appropriate opening time for the exhibit. Ultimately, the collaboration resulted in well-researched oral histories for the production of a thoughtful museum exhibit and educated students who became more involved in a local community. Although collaboration in archival repositories can have long-term benefits, this cooperative project produced a short-term result. In this case with the creation of museum exhibit, a foundational relationship was laid.
Ultimately, the collaboration between archives and oral history programs to better define collecting policies and create collecting initiatives is just another iteration of a documentation strategy. Documentation strategy is one approach to collaborative collecting as it “presents a cooperative approach to the acquisition problem, recommending that efforts to document a topic or area of activity begin with a study by a group of experts, records creators, archivists, and users” (Malkmus 387). Records creators and experts may include oral historians and oral history programs. Records creators might also include community members that hold manuscript materials. In essence then, suggesting that archivists work with oral history programs to become more aware of their collecting ability is just a natural extension of documentation strategy. But for any collaboration to work well, it must be clearly defined with an ultimate goal.
Research Methods

This research project is a mixed-methods case study. The research instruments and tools consist of two sets of electronic surveys, one set of in-person interviews, and one electronic questionnaire. The electronic surveys and the interviews were conducted with selected staff members of the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP. The information collected was anonymized. The electronic questionnaire was submitted to the independent graduate student. The graduate student would answer the questionnaire based on the experience of collecting archival materials for the SHC while conducting oral histories.

Prior to inviting any staff members or the graduate student to participate in the study, an application to UNC-Chapel Hill’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) was completed in December of 2013. The IRB application was returned once for revision and the application was declared exempt by the application board in January of 2014. Issues that were raised by the IRB staff included confidentiality and privacy. Because this case study is focusing on three entities and interviewing two members of each staff (apart from the independent graduate student), there is a possibility that despite anonymized transcripts individual staff members may be identifiable. The staff participants of this study, however, were made aware of this possibility in the consent agreement they received prior to their interviews. The possible identification of staff members was not considered an issue during the surveys since staff members were not asked to denote which entity they represented.
The first electronic survey was created with Qualtrics and distributed via email on January 25, 2014. This survey was designed to ascertain staff members’ level of commitment to collaboration with the other participating units and the extent to which they worked together at that time. A thank you email was sent after the student received all anonymous surveys. In addition to being polite, this email served the purpose of reminding the staff participants of the upcoming electronic survey that would be distributed at the end of February and its purpose: to explore the staff members’ needs for effective collaboration and their desires for future relationships between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP. While the study period for this project was too short to observe any measurable changes in staff behavior, the student anticipated that a month would allow staff members to analyze their own needs, desires, and even frustrations that arise from collaboration.

Because the ultimate purpose of this study was to establish a framework of needs for collaboration so that archival repositories might work more effectively with their oral history program counterparts, giving staff members a chance to express their needs after an initial survey was important. The first survey was designed to bring thoughts of collaboration to the surface. The second survey was designed to reveal the needs and complications behind working relationships. The second survey was distributed on February 27, 2014.

During the week following the distribution of the second survey, the student interviewed each of the six selected staff members for 20 minutes. These interviews were designed to
delve more deeply into each individual staff member’s requirements as well as ideas for collaboration that could not be expressed in a multiple choice survey.

Finally, a questionnaire was sent to an independent graduate student. The questions sent were designed to discover the origins of the collaboration between the student and the participating units and the student’s thoughts on how scholars could facilitate collaboration. This questionnaire was sent to the graduate student in January of 2014 and returned in March of 2014. The graduate student signed a consent agreement agreeing to participate in the study. The agreement also guaranteed that the student’s identity would be anonymized.
The Analysis of the First Survey

The first survey included questions designed to determine the current nature of the relationship between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP. The questions were in two sections. The first questions related to frequency of current actions (“how often do you…”). The questions in the second section dealt with how each participant would act after the survey (“how likely are you to…”). The questions were as follows:

1. How often do you meet with members of the other collection/program professionally?

2. How often do you discuss collecting/documenting priorities with members of the other collection/program?

Please rate the possibility of the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being highly unlikely and 5, highly likely.

1. I will meet with the staff of the other program/collections to discuss collecting priorities and interests.

2. I will send information on donors or interviewees to the staff of the other program/collections when I believe that they may fall under their collecting purview.

3. My program/collection will create documentation to institutionalize collaboration between the SHC, SOHP, and UARMS.
In the first portion of the survey, respondents were asked to respond by selecting from the following options: never, rarely, sometimes, often, and all the time. The two questions in this section ask participants how often they met with the staff members of the other collection/program and how often they discussed collection development. The six respondents mostly answered positively (sometimes, often, or all the time). There were two negative responses (rarely) in response to the question about collection development.

The answers to the questions regarding frequency of collaboration/meeting reaffirmed what this study already noticed about the three units: they have a close relationship. In fact, many of the staff members of the three units cross paths on a day-to-day basis because of proximity.

However, responses to the second question about frequency revealed collection development is not a priority in the collaborative relationship between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP. In fact, only one respondent said that they discuss collecting priorities all the time with staff members of the other collection/program. Two out of the six respondents said they rarely discussed collecting priorities, and the majority (three respondents) said only sometimes do they discuss collection development.

The inconsistency in these responses indicates that staff may be uncertain about how collection development figures into the existing relationship between the three units. While one staff member discusses documentation priorities with colleagues all the time,
other staff members appear to see this topic as tangential to their working relationship with the other units.

The current state of the relationship between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP is strong and well established. What is lacking in this relationship, however, is a clear definition of the role that collection development is supposed to play in the relationship. While it may be discussed occasionally, staff members do not consistently view it as a major goal of collaboration.

The final three questions of the first survey examine the imagined future of the relationship between the three entities. The questions explore the possibility of institutionalization, collection development collaboration, and active participation. The answers to these questions revealed how willing staff members might be to alter the relationship between the three participating units.

Participants were asked to respond to these questions by selecting one of the following: very unlikely, unlikely, somewhat unlikely, undecided, somewhat likely, likely, and very likely. In aggregate, the majority of responses to all three questions (16 out of 18) were positive (somewhat likely to very likely). This outcome suggests that the staffs of UARMS, SHC, and SOHP are committed to working together more closely over time. Staff members are open to eventual changes in the current relationship.
However, there were two negative responses (very unlikely to undecided). One staff member said that it was somewhat unlikely that they would meet with the staff members of the other units on a regular basis to discuss collection development. Another staff member responded that they were undecided on whether or not their unit would institutionalize a collection development relationship with the other units.

All participants indicated a strong likelihood that they would send information on donors or interviewees to other staff members when the information was relevant to another unit’s collecting policy. Five out of six respondents answered very likely, and one answered likely.

Over all, these responses were a sign that this study may prove useful to the future relationship between the SHC, UARMS, and the SOHP. The first section of this questionnaire revealed that staff members currently collaborate but the focus of their collaboration is not collection development. The second set of questions showed that staff members would be willing to intensify in the existing relationship.
The Analysis of the Second Survey

The second survey was designed to discover what staff members had accomplished during the study period (January through February). Although this study is on collaborative collecting, accomplishment was measured in terms of *collaboration* not *collection development*. This means that the relationship between SHC, SOHP, and University Archives was not analyzed based on the number of collections ingested or oral histories created.

The second survey was distributed as an electronic questionnaire via Qualtrics software, and responses were anonymous. It is important to note that because responses were anonymous, and because the survey did not ask the participants to indicate which campus unit each represented, the results of the questionnaire do not reveal much about the individual units. Instead the questionnaire results reveal the broad trends of collaboration within this cohort. However, if another project of this sort were conducted, including a question that would allow participants to indicate which documentary function they represent would be useful to analysis.

The questionnaire was comprised of six “yes/no” questions that focused on collaborative actions. The questions were as follows:

1. Did your program/collection make any significant contacts during the study period?
2. If you answered yes to the previous question, were any of your potential or realized interviews/acquisitions/transfers due to information shared by a staff member of the other program/collections?

3. Did you send information on entities of interest to the staff members of the other program/collections?

4. Did you receive information on entities of interest from staff members of the other program/collections?

5. Did your program/collection create documentation to institutionalize collaboration between the SHC, SOHP, and UARMS?

6. Do you think that collaboration between the SHC, SOHP, and UARMS was productive?

In general, respondents’ answers showed active collaboration during the study period. Five out of the six participants stated that they had made significant contacts during the study periods. *Significant contacts* in these circumstances would mean oral history interviewees or possible donors of records or manuscripts to the SHC or UARMS. Again, the word *contacts* was used because it can take weeks, months, or years for the contributions of possible interviewees or donors to come to fruition.

In response to question two, three out of five respondents said that those significant contacts had been made because of the contributions of the other program/collections. Again, this was a question when it would have been nice to know which units were represented by participants who answered no. From the responses it is hard to know why
the answer was no. Was there a lack of communication or simply a lack of overlapping subject area?

Participants largely responded in the affirmative to the questions about sending and receiving information from the other program/collections. Five out of six said they did send information about contacts to their counterparts; four out of six said their received information. While these numbers do not seem to match up, they do reveal that there had been collaboration to the end of collection development. However, the numbers also show that that collaboration was not consistent or institutional.

Most participants (four out of six) answered no to question number five which referred to institutionalizing the relationship between the three units. This result was not surprising, again because the study period was so brief. However, the responses were also interesting because it showed varying levels of commitment to continuing a collaborative relationship in collection development between the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS.

The responses do not necessarily mean that the four participants that answered negatively are not dedicated to a collaborative collection development, rather, the responses may well suggest that during the study period, those respondents had other priorities. Again, this is not necessarily a negative finding. It does, however, raise the issue of priorities and how different priorities could affect a collaborative relationship. If priorities continue to remain different (either because of different bureaucratic structures, resources, documentary goals, or users), this could affect both how regularly
collaboration happens as well as the methods used. Differing priorities would need to be considered when a system of cooperation and communication is being developed.

Finally, all respondents but one said that they did find collaboration between the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS to be productive. The one participant who did not find collaboration productive actually did not answer the question. Of course, in some ways this last question was a leading question. All of the respondents agreed to participate in a study regarding collaboration, so they certainly have a vested interest in it. Moreover, there is an existing collaborative relationship between the SHC and the SOHP in technical services, so the participants are already aware of ongoing benefits from collaboration. However, despite some of this obviousness, the question does serve to explicitly confirm the continuing importance of collaboration to these staff members.

Collaboration between the three units has been productive in the past. It is possible that collaboration between these units in other ways could be just as productive because of the cooperative nature of the staffs. All of the participating staff members simply reaffirmed the need for this study and future projects to suggest methods of effective collaborative collecting.

Overall, the results of the second survey showed that the staff of the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS did collaborate in the field of collection development. However, this collaboration was not consistent and perhaps did not share the same level of prioritization among all three of the campus units. Still, during this brief study period of only two
months, the six staff members did participate in collaboration and see the its value to each of their respective collection development initiatives. The results showed an excellent beginning to a continuing relationship.
Interviews with Staff Members

Staff members of the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS were sent two requests (separated by the space of two weeks) to be briefly interviewed for the purpose of this study. Staff members were told that the interviews would fall between ten and fifteen minutes. One staff member from the SHC and one from UARMS responded to the first request. The other SHC staff member and the two SOHP staff members responded to the second request. Interviews ranged in length from five to thirty minutes. This difference in length was in itself revealing as some participants had much more to say. Unfortunately, the recording of one SOHP staff member’s interview was lost due to technical difficulties. Information given from that interview is based on the interviewer’s notes and the interviewee’s follow-up email.

Participants were asked only three questions. The intent was that the interviews would help answer questions raised by the second questionnaire such as: what were the circumstances surrounding any collaborative collecting that occurred? Why would staff members like to see collaborative collecting continue? What did not work in the collaboration and what did? What would make collaboration easier? Most of the interviewees answered many of these questions in responding to the three instigating questions. Some follow-up questions were asked to garner information on the development of future collaborations.
After being given a consent agreement to sign, the interviewees were asked three questions:

1. When you were first approached about participating in this case study what were your thoughts on collaboration between the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS?

2. In the survey, you were asked about collaboration and significant contacts. Did your program/collection make any contacts because of collaboration? Why or why not?

3. If you would like to continue a collaborative relationship with the other units in collection development, what would facilitate collaboration and what would hinder it?

Several themes were common across all of the interviews: physical location, current relationships, equal partnerships, resource allocation, leadership’s commitment, and open communication.

It is important to note that the presence of the SHC and UARMS in the same building does affect the level of collaboration between those entities. Archivists from UARMS and the SHC noted the natural collaboration between the SHC and UARMS because of close proximity. Conversely, the distance between the SOHP and both the SHC and UARMS makes constant collaboration less natural and requires planning.

One oral historian noted that because of the physical separation of the SOHP from the library, it might be difficult for library units to maintain an equal and informed
relationship with the SOHP. Their reasoning for this was an inability of the SOHP to understand the bureaucratic structure of the Wilson Library and vice-versa. Because of the physical distance between the SOHP and the Wilson Library, staffs were not necessarily familiar with the internal workings of each entity. The same oral historian worried that this lack of mutual understanding did stem at least partially from differences in structure and a physical distance.

An archivist with the SHC noted that while the flow of information between UARMS and the SHC came naturally in terms of collaboration in collection development, that a collaborative collecting relationship with the SOHP was less familiar. Part of this could be attributed to the lack of a solid precedence in collaborative collecting, and part could be because of the physical distance separating the SOHP from the repository. This physical distance was a constant theme throughout the interviews that will need to be considered when recommendations are made.

Another theme throughout the interviews was the types of relationships that currently exist between the SHC, SOHP, and UARMS. One SHC archivist noted that the relationship between the SOHP and the Wilson Library as a whole seems to flow in terms of research and instructional services as the Archives staff uses oral histories as a teaching tool and answers reference questions about the collection. One oral historian understood the current relationship between the SOHP and the Archives as largely technical: the SOHP deposits their oral histories in the library so that archivists can describe and preserve them before making them accessible to the public.
However, an oral historian said that the relationship did seem to be shifting from a one-way to give-and-take relationship. While in the past it has seemed that SOHP simply deposited materials in the Archives, the oral historian thought that this simple dynamic has begun to change with SOHP’s recent hiring of a coordinator of collections. The coordinator of collections is an archivist specializing in digital projects and oral history description and metadata. This oral historian believed that the presence of the coordinator of collections has allowed SOHP staff to better understand the archival work that goes into preserving and making accessible the oral histories that they create. In turn, they felt that library staff has come to better respect and understand the expertise of the SOHP staff, particularly in regards to restrictions. The oral historian said that their staff has been contacted more frequently by archives staff and has been given the reigns on making those types of decisions. This SOHP staff member still understands the current collaborative relationship as technical in nature. When asked further about collection development, the oral historian was interested, but thought that the SOHP would need to establish an equal relationship with the Wilson Library before those conversations could take place.

The issue of equal relationships was also raised by another SHC archivist that remarked that the traditional relationship between the Wilson Library and the SOHP was essentially been one of curator to donor with the SOHP being the donor. For that archivist, the ideal relationship between the Archives and the SOHP would be that of curator to curator where SOHP staff had an equal place at the table instead of just being a valued donor.
For the SOHP and the Archives to effectively collaborate on collection development, the archivist noted that the SOHP should not be considered just another donor to the SHC. Part of the richness of the Wilson Library collections at UNC-Chapel Hill is both their breadth and depth so that not only do the archives collectively hold a wide variety of types of materials on different topics, but collections also interact to give depth to research topics. For the archival materials and SOHP oral histories to compliment each other and add depth to Wilson Library’s holdings, the relationship should be that of parallel curators. This archivist gave the example of the Long Women’s Movement project conducted by the SOHP as missed opportunity for the SHC; if the heads of the SOHP and the SHC had been communicating as partnering curators, then the SHC might have collected rich manuscript materials complimentary to the oral histories which were created in that project.

One issue raised by an SHC archivist was the hiring of a new director of the SHC. At the time of this interview, library personnel had announced that a new director had been hired and that the director would begin in July. This archivist saw the arrival of a new Director as a potentially important event in the establishment of an equal relationship between the Archives and the SOHP. The newly hired director is an academic scholar by trade; the archivist hoped that this would enable a new era of collaboration between the SOHP and the Archives since the relationship would be scholar to scholar since the head of the SOHP was traditionally a faculty member.
Similarly, the arrival of a new director of the SHC raises the issue of resource allocation. Because the SHC director will have access to fiscal resources, the archivist noted that the SHC director could make a strong statement of commitment by allocating funds to furthering a collaborative relationship with the SOHP. At the time of the interview, this SHC archivist also acted as the liaison to the SOHP. While important, acting as liaison could only take up so much time of the archivist’s work since it was not the entirety of their job. The archivist asserted that the dedication of very limited time and resources only allowed the Archives to “keep its head above water” in the technical relationship as the library began to digitize oral histories and make them available online. If resources were devoted to a full-time staff member whose sole responsibility was to develop and maintain a relationship between the SOHP and all of the special collections in the library, then the relationship could become more collaborative in terms of collection development.

An oral historian also mentioned the need of monetary resources to maintain and grow a relationship in collaborative collecting with the Archives. On their end, the oral historian thought that hiring a field scholar or student devoted to a relationship between the Archives and the SOHP would be helpful. This student would be devoted to topical and collection development issues as opposed to the coordinator of collections who is devoted to technical issues. Another oral historian mentioned the need for a similar hire, such as a field scholar devoted to working with UARMS as the SOHP continues to build its University History collection of oral histories. The first oral historian did raise the concern of monetary resources for digitization. Because all SOHP oral histories were
consistently digitized and made available online at the time of this interview, an SOHP staff member was concerned that any archival materials collected through collaboration with specific SOHP projects would need to likewise be digitized and made available through the SOHP database. The parallel concern was storage space for these diverse types of materials.

Another issue raised was the need for leadership in collaboration. A UARMS staff member mentioned the need of a University Archivist to be a present leader in establishing collaborative collecting with the SOHP: “it is hard to move forward in earnest without department heads.” At the time of these interviews, the University Archivist position was vacant. An oral historian also mentioned wanting to meet with the future University Archivist to establish a relationship with this unit’s leadership. A UA archivist thought that institutional commitment to a collaborative relationship would do a lot to further any efforts to collect collaboratively. The University Archivist would need to make it a regular part of the archives’ work, and the overall Director of the Wilson Library would need to identify collaborative collecting with the SOHP as a strategic initiative that special collections should devote resources to accomplish.

Finally, all interviewees mentioned the importance of open channels of communication and how that could be achieved. One oral historian mentioned the desire to meet face-to-face with the new University Archivist when one is hired in order to establish a personal relationship. They believed that having this direct and personal relationship would enable an open flow of communication about potential projects and acquisitions.
Another oral historian also mentioned the possibility of meeting with everyone at the same table. SHC and UARMS staff members all mentioned having annual, semi-annual, or monthly strategic planning meetings to share project ideas or collecting initiatives.
The Role of an Independent Scholar

When the independent scholar was first approached, the study assumed that they shared a relationship with both the SOHP and the SHC. However, while the scholar was conducting oral histories for her own research, these oral histories were not yet being integrated into the SOHP’s collection of histories. The independent scholar that participated in this study was a graduate student at Brown University in the Population Studies and Training Center. Because the scholar’s specific interests fell in migration and social networks, the graduate student began to conduct oral histories as part of her research project. The graduate student’s project was to document African American migration North from the mid-South.

The student was asked four questions under the assumption that her relationship was with both the SHC and the SOHP.

1. Could you tell me how you began your project of conducting oral histories while collecting archival materials?
2. Which came first: Conducting oral histories or collecting archival materials?
3. From the scholar’s perspective, do you think that one person is necessary to bridge the gap between oral history programs and archival repositories?
4. Would you like to continue a collaborative relationship with the SOHP and the SHC?
When the student first began their research, they approached interviewing people as collecting tabular data, and questions were not open-ended. The student described a fortuitous twist of events in which more and more interviewees began to answer simple questions (like, *did you ever integrate?*) with rich stories that extended beyond numerical data. As this trend continued, the student’s perspective on the outcome of the project also changed from the expectation of a project relying on hard data to the windfall of life histories. However, with this change in methodology a floodgate seemed to have been opened. The student said that as people told their very personal stories, they began to offer custodianship of their “stuff” – memorabilia, papers, scrapbooks, yearbooks, pictures, etc. The relationships that the student formed with the interviewees was close, and the interviewees began to see the student as someone they could trust not only with their stories but also with all the materials they had created and gathered along the way. The interviewees acknowledged that the memorabilia would probably just go into a dumpster after they had gone and they began to ask whether there was an alternative to this loss. In this way, a project gathering simple data was transformed into creating oral histories and how creating the oral histories brought the student to collect archival material.

In response to question number three about whether or not one person was needed to bridge the gap between oral history programs and archival collecting, the student was firm that one person was necessary.

“In my opinion, it makes all the difference in the world to have a person who ‘speaks librarian’ as well as the language of the population at hand. It allows both sides to have adequate representation and participation regarding the ways in
which their memories are made into history. This person can be the researcher, a staff member at the institution, or a representative from the community.”

The graduate student saw the role of the scholar bridging the gap, which could be called an intercessor, as someone who could understand the needs and desires of all parties at the table: the interviewee, the oral history program, and the archives. The intercessor would need to understand the interviewee’s desires and concerns in order to develop a trusting relationship. They would need to understand the oral history program’s research interest in this particular person’s life history. They would also need to understand the library’s project initiatives, funds and resources, and overall collecting policy.

Finally, the graduate student explained that the project would only be archived with the SHC rather than the SOHP because although that was originally the plan (to work with both), the project became so massive that working with one entity seemed more prudent. That the graduate student saw this as a problem does raise the question of whether or not a project can be too massive to be collaborative in nature. While one of the SHC staff members mentioned their desire to work with the SOHP on large projects for the mutual benefit of the Archives and the SOHP, the graduate student suggests that these types of collaboration could be too large to be mediated by one person such as an independent scholar. This may mean that a mediating representative might only be useful in day-to-day operations.
The Future of Collaborative Collecting at UNC

From the data collected in this case study, the first take-away is that although the SHC, the SOHP, and UARMS share a certain proximity on the same campus, to date, the collaboration between these units has largely been limited to technical issues. As one of the study participants, a staff member of the SHC, said, “it seems to me that everyone is operating in vacuums.” Almost every person involved in this study made a comment about wanting to have more collaboration in collection development. So the Archives and the SOHP are certainly aware of what they could accomplish by working together more closely to enrich their respective collections and support the work of their documentary colleagues.

The ideas about collaboration expressed over the course of this study were varied. Some staff members seemed to desire more quality face time with their counterparts, suggesting annual or quarterly inter-staff meetings, while others saw the key issue as a need for a way to share information, such as collecting leads or a collection’s administrative files. Should both Wilson Library and the SOHP desire to grow closer, regular and established meetings can be a good way for staffs to share strategic plans, project initiatives, and recent acquisitions, but a more sophisticated system may be needed to facilitate this new relationship.

This formalized and intensified relationship requires resources and focus on the part of library units. Such a commitment requires official sanction from within the library
system. Within Wilson Library, the Director of the Wilson Library as well as the Director of the Southern Historical Collection, the University Archivist, the Curator of the Southern Folklife Collection, and the Curator of the North Carolina Collection could promote collaborative collecting as a strategic initiative if they find it helpful to each collection’s interests.

The Director of the Wilson Library could promote the new collaborative relationship once this strategic plan had been cleared with other members of the University Library. In particular, the Director of the Library could be consulted. When publicizing extended collaboration between the Wilson Library and the SOHP, both the Director of the Wilson Library and the Director of the SHC might emphasize how collaborative collecting meets the library system’s goal of supporting a research institution. If the Director of the SHC prioritizes on-campus and documentary collaboration, they could also dedicate funds to establishing an operational framework. Funds could possibly be directed to two positions for a full-time staff member and a graduate student assistant either in the history department or the School of Information and Library Science. However, based on the level of historical and archival research that may be needed to ensure the effectiveness of collaboration, a history graduate student may be a better participant.

If the SOHP receives funding to that end and finds extended collaboration in their best interests, then they could also create a new framework for collaboration. Funds could be directed to hiring a field scholar (a history graduate student) that would be dedicated to working with the archives in collection development rather than technical services.
Another change that could be considered by the Wilson Library and by the SOHP would be in infrastructure. Because this collaboration spans the campus, Wilson Library and the SOHP may wish to invest in a software tool that would allow them to easily share information vital to both units operations and missions. This tool could be used on a regular basis for the reference of each staff member involved, but it could also be utilized to organize priorities for semi-annual meetings. One possible tool would be Trello, although other project management tools could be considered.

Meetings could be held three times a year in advance of the fall, spring, and summer semesters. This timing would allow for library awareness of the potential student projects in the SOHP and allow for regular and routine direct interactions. These meetings would need to be devoted to collection development issues in order to prevent clouding the purpose of this new relationship. Again, this is not to say that technical services is not important, but as the relationship between the campus entities changes, that collaborative relationship should remain independent of other issues so that it may become fully established. However, ground rules should be established at the first meeting so that none of the parties at the table feel that their collecting/creating practices will be dictated by another collection. All collecting collaboration is merely suggestive.

Ultimately though, many of these decisions cannot be implemented until the installation of a new Director of the SHC which was scheduled to occur July 2014 at the time of this
study. If that timeline occurs, then preliminary collaborative meetings could occur at the end of July in preparation for the new school year.

In conclusion, by examining the current relationship between the SHC, SOHP, and UARMS this case study has answered the question of whether or not collaboration in collection development could benefit all parties. The answer is yes. However, through surveys and interviews with staff members and an interview with an independent graduate student, this study also revealed that collaboration could extend beyond the SHC and UARMS to include all of Wilson Library. The study also revealed the important role of an intercessor or broker of information such as the independent graduate student. Finally, this study established the importance of communication and promotion in the early stages of extended collaboration. If both the Wilson Library and the SOHP find that they wish to pursue the possibility of collaborative collecting, then they will be able to begin by forging a new relationship so that they are not collecting in vacuums.
Bibliography


