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This paper attempts to highlight some of the challenges commonly encountered by archivists working with modern papers. For the purpose of the study, modern papers were defined as ones where the creator of the papers is still living or has died relatively recently. Five separate case studies of modern papers in the women's history, political, family, professional association, and literary genres were based on personal interviews with six practicing archivists. Findings indicate that modern papers, as compared to more historical ones, often translate to increased complexity in donor relations; issues of privacy, trust between archivist and donor, and ego are common. Physical concerns include a general increase in the size of collections, the likelihood of multiple accessions, and problematic special formats. Finally, the modern market for manuscript materials in general has become quite pricey, at times prohibitively so.

Headings:

Special collections-Acquisitions

Special collections-Case studies

# COLLECTING MODERN PAPERS: SOME INHERENT CHALLENGES

by  
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## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Introduction.....	3
Literature Review.....	5
Assumptions and Methodology.....	18
Case Study Interviews.....	21
Conclusion.....	53
Bibliography.....	62
Appendix A.....	64
Appendix B.....	65
Appendix C.....	66

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## **Introduction**

Archivists collect and preserve the documentary evidence of human history. Lining the shelves of archival repositories around the world are materials dating from distant centuries past, to others created mere weeks ago. The popular stereotype of the archive as a dust-caked eternal resting place for our ancestors' papers not only underestimates the intellectual vitality possessed by even the oldest of documents, but also the growing number of modern materials that are collected.

Some archives focus on a specific, relatively short time period. Others may routinely take in collections that come from a wide range of points along a timeline. Whether modern papers figure frequently or only sporadically in an archive's collecting activities, archivists working on these collections will find the experience to be quite different from that of working with documents from even a century ago. For the purposes of this study, the term "modern papers" will be used to refer to those materials created by individuals who are still alive or who have died somewhat recently. In such collections, whether the creators of the papers are living or not, it is almost guaranteed that some living individual, perhaps many, will have a personal interest in the future of the collection. These interests must be taken into account not only in the process of trying to acquire such collections, but often long after the transfer has taken place.

The ability of an archivist to make truly independent decisions about these collections is often compromised. In addition to the creators of the papers, there are the sometimes numerous other individuals with whom their lives crossed paths. These third

parties also merit consideration because of their right to privacy. Add to the human issues the physical challenges posed by concerns such as modern special formats, including electronic records, and it becomes clear that an archivist has more to think about in these situations than basic textbook archival theory.

With this paper, I aim to more fully explore the many issues faced by archivists working with modern collections. My study involved a look at the current literature that sheds light, individually at least, on some of these issues, as well as interviewing six practicing archivists about their experiences with modern collections of varying genres.

## **Literature Review**

A look at the available literature reveals no evidence of another attempt at a general, comprehensive treatment of the issues of collecting modern papers. However, scattered across a number of articles referencing case studies of modern collections, legislation of interest to archivists, and collection development, many relevant points can be identified. Among the articles consulted, the two most heavily represented topics of interest are copyright and privacy. As a direct result, the majority of the following discussion will focus on them.

Copyright is one of the delicate and often confusing issues faced by archivists today. While many assume that copyright applies only to published works such as novels or essays, in truth the protections are much more extensive. As established by the United States Copyright Act of 1976, and clarified in subsequent court rulings, “an author is protected as soon as a work is recorded in some concrete way.”<sup>1</sup> Given this criterion, unpublished works such as abandoned literary manuscripts or even private letters are also copyrighted material, within a set time period. Protection currently lasts for seventy years after the death of the author. Furthermore, traditional notions of “writings” (the term used in the copyright clause of the United States Constitution<sup>2</sup>) as the sole jurisdiction of copyright law have since grown to include items such as photographs, works of art, and sound recordings. The 1976 Act is intentionally open-ended, laying claim to all “original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression, now known or later developed.”<sup>3</sup>

What does this mean for archivists? Their professional goals include not only preserving archival materials for future generations but also encouraging use of those materials by researchers. These researchers come through the door with a wide variety of motivations and goals, from simple curiosity to writing a scholarly book for publication. The types of activities that constitute infringements of federal copyright law may easily figure in the plans of any of these people. There are six rights—of reproduction, derivative works, distribution, performance, display, and digital transmission—that have been set aside for authors in section 106 of the most recent version of the Copyright Act. As Miller and Davis point out, “the first two are infringed whether done publicly or privately...Also, nowhere does the Act limit an owner’s right to exclude only commercial exploitations.”<sup>4</sup> As such, even a researcher’s wish to make a photocopy of a document for personal use could potentially be considered an infringement.

Still, lawmakers understood that the protection of authors’ rights could be taken to an extreme not intended by the Constitution. To protect against this possibility, they attempted to design “a balance of rights and privileges” with a concern not only for creators’ rights but also for “the need to serve additional public interest in using, learning from, and building upon the creative efforts of others.”<sup>5</sup> Here the right of fair use comes into play. Fair use “is essentially a defense to a charge of infringement...[which] affirmatively raises other important issues and policies by way of mitigation or exoneration.”<sup>6</sup> These mitigating factors come in several typical forms, with educational use being perhaps the most widely recognized, but also extending to “literary and social criticism, parody, and, importantly, First Amendment activities such as news reporting.”<sup>7</sup>



While tradition is a powerful factor in the law, it has not always been strong enough to overrule the fact that fair use is not explicitly defined in the 1976 Act. The law simply lists a few examples of potential fair use candidates and presents four guidelines by which a use should be evaluated: “(1) the purpose and character of the use, including its commercial nature; (2) the nature of the copyrighted work; (3) the proportion that was ‘taken’; and (4) the economic impact of the ‘taking.’”<sup>8</sup> Using the leeway provided by language that can be widely interpreted, courts have at times passed down rather strict decisions, ones that have put archivists on their guard.

Perhaps the most well-known of the narrow rulings came in the 1987 case *Salinger v. Random House, Inc.*, which bore down particularly hard on unpublished manuscripts. The author J.D. Salinger, well-known for his insistence on privacy, sued Random House in an attempt to block their publication of a biography of him. In the book, biographer Ian Hamilton quoted and paraphrased from several of Salinger’s unpublished letters, which were scattered among a small number of university library manuscript collections. The Second Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in Salinger’s favor, citing a 1985 U.S. Supreme Court ruling, *Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc. v. Nation Enterprises*, “in which the Court declared a new general rule: the scope of fair use for unpublished materials is narrower than the scope for published works.”<sup>9</sup>

The two rulings, although linked by the Second Circuit, were not necessarily comparable. The earlier ruling had penalized *The Nation* magazine for essentially scooping and devaluing an upcoming Gerald Ford memoir by underhandedly acquiring the manuscript and printing “some of its most interesting excerpts.”<sup>10</sup> Salinger, on the other hand, was essentially “invok[ing] copyright law as a means of protecting [his]

privacy,” not profits to be gained from letters he ostensibly had no intention of publishing.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, the result—for both archivists and researchers to consider—was the same. The right not only to quote from but also to paraphrase unpublished manuscripts was seriously restricted. And so, while “the decision does not prevent donors from depositing papers or archivists from providing access to them...[it] restrained publication of, and thus public access to, archival information.”<sup>12</sup>

With this and other rulings in the background, archivists have had to be on guard to protect themselves and their researchers from lawsuits. While the person attempting to publish quotations (or paraphrased material) from archival sources is more likely to be the target of legal action than the archive itself, caution is still advisable. Professional archivists in the United States by and large subscribe to the Society of American Archivists’ Code of Ethics, which charges them with the “responsibility for being informed on these matters and passing all pertinent and helpful information on to potential donors.”<sup>13</sup> This front-end awareness and open discussion of copyright issues can forestall a great deal of trouble later on. Donors come into the process with varying levels of sensitivity about their rights. Some, particularly literary figures who stake their livelihood and reputation on their writings, may demonstrate an understandably heightened concern. These figures and their descendants may seek solace in “applying their literary rights to control access.”<sup>14</sup> The authors Walker Percy and Shelby Foote both originally made stipulations that their papers, first loaned to and later acquired by the University of North Carolina’s Southern Historical Collection, not be open to photocopying by researchers. Use of quotations from the materials has been strictly controlled by the authors, their families, and by designated literary agents.

Even in spite of the complicated tangle of rights and privileges, which may seem a burden to the archivists administering these collections, the papers' research value has been judged to be worth the trouble. Furthermore, archivists, even in the midst of looking out for their own goals, can in most cases understand and support papers creators' concerns. In order to assure that the archive-donor relationship progresses smoothly to each participant's satisfaction, the archivist who handled the Percy and Foote acquisitions notes that "it is vital to inform potential donors about how their papers might be used."<sup>15</sup> Although the donor may balk at certain uses and opt to restrict access, it may be preferable to handle these possibilities up front, rather than trouble donors with them sporadically as the years go on and varying types of usage requests are made.

Many, if not most, manuscript collections contain intellectual property belonging to other individuals besides the collection creator. Correspondence series are central to a great number of these collections; with each correspondent represented in the papers, there is one more copyright to be considered. By definition, this is mainly a concern with more modern collections, as copyright is protected for the author's life, plus seventy years. It would be problematic, if not impossible, to undertake a policy of tracking down each and every copyright holder to arrange permissions. This problem has manifested itself in a variety of ways, including holding up the microfilming of a popular literary collection at the University of Maryland at College Park.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the most basic protections archival institutions can put in place for themselves are measures such as placing copyright notices in finding aids, and requiring researchers to sign agreements that include a promise of respect for applicable copyright laws. Another safeguard is to keep control of photocopying in the hands of public

services staff, rather than leaving a photocopying machine in the reading room. Each institution must decide how it will establish the balance between steering itself and researchers away from infringement territory, and making materials as accessible as possible. Some particularly cautious repositories have banned photocopying of the works of any living person, others of items involving “well-known contemporary authors,” and still others have decided to let access be their predominant goal.<sup>17</sup> Once again, keeping the donor informed of policies and procedures, even if one cannot bring all involved parties in the loop, is extremely important. This will assist in “building trust with the donor...[which] will also aid the researcher who requests permission to publish.”<sup>18</sup>

In the effort to simultaneously appease donors and researchers, and to adhere both to federal law and the dictates of their own professional code of ethics, archivists have much to think about. Somehow, they have “inadvertently joined researchers and publishers as the newest ‘gatekeepers’ of legal rights and privileges.”<sup>19</sup> Another one of these critical rights is that of privacy. Similarly to copyright protection, privacy issues are an enhanced concern when dealing with papers that have been created relatively recently. After all, privacy is essentially “a right of living individuals, and there is normally no privacy right for the dead.”<sup>20</sup> Archives professionals must constantly be mindful of the fact that “modern archives that include the papers of living people do hold the potential for embarrassing those individuals.”<sup>21</sup>

One finds plenty of room for concern among items such as correspondence and journals. As with copyright, there are often third parties involved who have no idea that potentially sensitive information about their lives is now publicly available. Again, the SAA Code of Ethics encourages members to look beyond the immediate impulse to favor

unfettered access. They must instead, “when necessary, recommend that donors make provision for protecting the privacy and other rights of the donors themselves, their families, their correspondents, and associates.”<sup>22</sup> Elsewhere in the Code archivists are urged to “respect the privacy of individuals who created, or are the subjects of, documentary materials of long-term value, especially those who had no voice in the disposition of the materials.”<sup>23</sup>

Papers come to archives by means of donors and sellers who exhibit varying degrees of awareness or interest in the potentially sensitive information contained therein. Some send boxes of papers without ever giving even the most cursory glance at their contents, unconcerned about what may be inside. Others meticulously comb through each document, sometimes removing items or excising names or sentences that they wish to keep under wraps; such acts remove “an important personal dimension that in most instances can never be replaced or re-created.”<sup>24</sup> No matter where donors or sellers fall on the spectrum of zeal for privacy, they have typically been the resource archives rely on for highlighting potential problems in that area. This is “an approach [that] has the advantage of drawing upon the donor’s intimate knowledge of the material at hand and the people, situations, and issues represented in the archive.”<sup>25</sup>

That intimacy and close personal connection, however, not only can bring helpful firsthand knowledge but also provoke strong emotions and attempts to constrain access. In the case of the Walker Percy papers, Southern Historical Collection archivists ran up against a family that was deeply interested in image control, and troubled by rumors of homosexuality and depression among certain of its members. The resulting tight rein they kept over photocopying and publication rights, and willingness to threaten legal

action are exemplary of “the hazards of writing biographies when vigilant family members shield themselves from negative assessments, whether justified or not.”<sup>26</sup> Similar “hazards” also exist for those repositories that house, or wish to house, such papers. Another maneuver that donors have made is to request that access be limited to their own handpicked researchers. While such requests were often honored in the past, archivists today are moving away from unbalanced restrictions “in order to ensure that the professional ethic of equal access is followed.”<sup>27</sup> Throughout negotiations, the archivist must test his or her skills as a diplomat. They must assure donors that they share a common respect for persons and papers alike. As with the handling of copyright, the SHC has found that a practice of open communication, sharing documents such as the collection inventory and institutional policy statements, and otherwise demonstrating the good intentions of the repository are key to “insur[ing] fair and equal access in the eyes of the researcher and the donor.”<sup>28</sup>

In spite of the difficulties that may arise in dealing with donor suggestions while deciding on privacy-based restrictions, the task takes on a different sort of complexity when the repository is left to undertake it alone. The archivist’s ability to judge potentially embarrassing material is less informed by familiarity with the individuals involved. Without that personal insight, there is not only the possibility of being too open but also, on the other extreme, of “inadvertent censorship” or “an overactive sense of ethics.”<sup>29</sup> As Sara Hodson points out, “archivists must take care to seal manuscript material only with the utmost caution, rigorously and objectively analyzing the situation without imposing personal beliefs or values.”<sup>30</sup> While the thought behind this directive makes excellent sense, its practical execution can be confusing. Yet some types of

documents, such as student and medical records, send up automatic red flags, as they are protected by federal legislation such as the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Educating oneself on relevant legislation is important for any archivist. A recent study of the archival community's understanding of FERPA revealed widespread confusion about the Act's "ambiguous definition of student records and its lack of guidance on issues of historical research and use."<sup>31</sup> According to the authors of the article, this chaotic state of affairs has resulted in archivists' acquiescence in the destruction of student records by school administrators.

At times the revelation of potentially embarrassing actions, statements, or life choices on the part of an individual is not needed to create privacy concerns; the simple inclusion of a name may be enough. A group of archivists at Yale University grappled with this problem when processing the papers of famed social science researcher Stanley Milgram. Milgram's widow had donated his papers to the university requesting that all confidential papers be restricted for seventy-five years; Yale was left to determine which papers were to be considered confidential. Many of the items were data files from the early 1960's, in the years before the introduction of review committees to ensure the ethical treatment of human subjects. Some requests for the popular papers, made before the materials were even processed, involved a desire to identify subjects of Milgram's controversial obedience studies and approach them for interviews. The Yale archivists felt that such plans would violate the subjects' privacy. However, requests were also being made by people interested in the data alone, not individual participants. For the duration of the seventy-five year closure, Yale decided to allow the provision of redacted

(names-removed) copies of records to researchers on demand, at researcher expense.<sup>32</sup>

Here, archivists were able to secure the privacy of those “who had no voice in the disposition of the materials” but also to salvage access to an important body of documents.

While copyright and privacy are two of the most common, and certainly the most written-about, issues characterizing modern papers collecting, they are not the only ones to consider. One author, in an article discussing the lack of literature dealing specifically with the appraisal of personal (as opposed to government and corporate) papers, highlights challenges that have extra force when the papers are of recent creation. She notes that the literature lacks “specific guidelines for which people within society should be targeted for the acquisition of papers, and which materials within those papers should be retained.”<sup>33</sup> The issue of deciding who to target becomes particularly difficult when one is assessing one’s contemporaries. While some individuals and groups may stand out, such as literary figures or politicians, others may only be judged important many years from now, after history has revealed their part in some greater movement, trend, or emerging demographic. The archivist’s objective—a collection with “research value”—is an enigmatic goal. As Riva Pollard points out, there are many different types of researchers, with many different interests, even within the same field; which of these should archives be trying to please?<sup>34</sup> Researchers interested in the modern papers of today may not darken an archive’s door for many years to come. How are archivists to know now what future researchers will want to know about the present age? Hindsight may not bring complete clarity, but it has its benefits.



Another question raised in the quote above is that of the types of materials one should collect. Modern papers collections, as a result of advances in papermaking, publishing, and technology, tend not only to be more voluminous than their historical counterparts, but also to include machine-dependent formats such as audiovisual materials and computer discs, and dramatically increased amounts of ephemera. A case study of the Charles Kuralt Papers, part of the Southern Historical Collection at U.N.C., discussed the difficulties tied to the appraisal, processing, and housing of modern materials.<sup>35</sup> These difficulties range from dealing with electronic records to providing intellectual access to ephemera (as opposed to the easy but often unhelpful solution: gathering it into a catch-all series labeled “Miscellaneous”).

Some of the other aspects of modern papers that can prove problematic are related more directly to donors and sellers. The Walker Percy and Shelby Foote cases are indicative of at least one of these issues— tax disincentives to donations of one’s writings. Prior to the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1969, individuals donating papers they had created would be able to take a tax deduction based on the appraised value of the materials. Now, deductions are only available for “out-of-pocket costs in the creation of the material...not for the autograph value of the intellectual content of the items.”<sup>36</sup> This frequently leads to papers being placed on deposit with archival institutions, leaving archivists in something of an ambiguous situation as they decide how much time and effort to put into processing. While the Percy and Foote papers were eventually converted to gift/purchase status, it is not unheard of for an owner ultimately to remove his or her papers, leaving archivists with nothing to show for any resources or staff time they may have invested in processing. Further, when living papers creators

donate their materials to an institution, there is a greater likelihood of the collection coming in multiple pieces over a long stretch of time. Again, this leaves archivists fumbling for an appropriate processing plan. It is also not unlikely that, for a person who has already begun to donate his or her papers to an archive, and anticipates doing so again in the future, a certain level of self-awareness and even self-censorship may enter the picture, altering the documentary records he or she creates.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arthur R. Miller and Michael H. Davis, *Intellectual Property: Patents, Trademarks, and Copyright* (St Paul, MN: West Group, 2000), 292.

<sup>2</sup> United States Constitution. Article 1, section 8, clause 8.

<sup>3</sup> 17 United States Code § 102a

<sup>4</sup> Miller and Davis, 323.

<sup>5</sup> Kenneth D. Crews, "Unpublished Manuscripts and the Right of Fair Use: Copyright Law and the Strategic Management of Information Resources," *Rare Books and Manuscript Librarianship* 5, no. 2 (1990): 61.

<sup>6</sup> Miller and Davis, 354.

<sup>7</sup> Miller and Davis, 354.

<sup>8</sup> 17 United States Code § 107, as paraphrased in Miller & Davis, 356.

<sup>9</sup> Crews, 62.

<sup>10</sup> Crews, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Sarah Hodson, "In Secret Kept, In Silence Sealed: Privacy in the Papers of Authors and Celebrities," *American Archivist* 67, Fall/Winter (2004): 208.

<sup>12</sup> Crews, 62.

<sup>13</sup> Society of American Archivists Code of Ethics, IV, commentary.

<sup>14</sup> Hodson, 208

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Pyatt, "Southern Family Honor Tarnished? Issues of Privacy in the Walker Percy and Shelby Foote Papers," from the forthcoming *Privacy and Confidentiality Perspectives: Archivists and Archival Records* (Society of American Archivists, 2005), 149.

<sup>16</sup> Jodi L. Allison-Bunnell, "Access in the Time of Salinger: Fair Use and the Papers of Katherine Anne Porter," *American Archivist* 58, Summer (1995).

<sup>17</sup> Allison-Bunnell, 281.

<sup>18</sup> Pyatt, 150.

<sup>19</sup> Crews, 61.

<sup>20</sup> Gary M. Peterson and Trudy Huskamp Peterson, *Archives and Manuscripts: Law* (Chicago, IL: Society of American Archivists, 1985), 40.

<sup>21</sup> Hodson, 196.

<sup>22</sup> SAA Code of Ethics, IV, commentary.

<sup>23</sup> SAA Code of Ethics, VII.

<sup>24</sup> Hodson, 207.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 197.

<sup>26</sup> Pyatt, 146-147.

<sup>27</sup> Hodson, 197.

<sup>28</sup> Pyatt, 150.

<sup>29</sup> Hodson, 200-01.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>31</sup> Tamar G. Chute and Ellen D. Swain, "Navigating Ambiguous Waters: Providing Access to Student Records in the University Archives," *American Archivist* 67, Fall/Winter (2004): 229.

<sup>32</sup> Diane E. Kaplan, "The Stanley Milgram Papers: A Case Study on Appraisal and Access to Confidential Data Files," *American Archivist* 59, Summer (1996): 294.

<sup>33</sup> Riva Pollard, "The Appraisal of Personal Papers: A Critical Literature Review," *Archivaria* 52, Fall (2001): 140.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 143.

<sup>35</sup> Jennifer L. Rawlings, "Processing Twentieth Century Collections: A Case Study of the Charles Kuralt Papers," A master's paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. August, 1999.

<sup>36</sup> Peterson and Peterson, 36.

### **Assumptions and Methodology**

In the midst of informal discussions with several archivists, and in my own work as a graduate assistant at the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), I began to be struck by the some of the differences between working with modern and more historical collections. I then reviewed archival literature pertaining to modern collections, taking note of the sorts of issues that I felt were at least partially a result of the recent creation of the papers. Combining the points taken from conversation, practice, and research, I formulated a series of assumptions about the unique challenges of collecting modern papers. I hypothesized that one would commonly encounter:

1. An increased likelihood that donors will be the papers creators themselves, or close family/associates.
2. (*When #1 is true*) The introduction of interpersonal complexities to the acquisitions process, as an archivist must “court” the donor rather than simply offer the right price (which would be all that is required from an unattached dealer).
3. An increased likelihood of collections arriving in multiple accessions, rather than one complete unit.
4. An increased likelihood of restrictions being placed on access to and use of papers, due to privacy and copyright concerns.
5. A general disinclination towards outright donations of self-created works, due to the effects of the Tax Reform Act of 1969.
6. Increased difficulty in determining research value, due to a lack of historical distance and insight.
7. The appearance of increasingly varied and challenging special formats, including ephemera and electronic records.
8. A general size increase in modern collections versus more historical ones.

With the goal of testing these assumptions, I decided to interview several practicing archivists whose work with modern collections could offer useful insight. Five

interviewees were chosen based on recommendations from my advisor, Duke University Archivist Tim Pyatt. Various types of modern papers come with their own set of challenges, some of which are tied to the genre, some to the time period in which they were created, and yet others to a combination of the two. To ensure some variety and increased representation of the many collecting fields, I opted for a case study format; each interviewee was asked to talk about a different genre of papers. Participants were offered the option to either talk about one representative collection, or several collections of the chosen genre. With the case study approach, I hoped to identify issues that were unique to the broader topic of “collecting modern papers” by looking at the commonalities between collecting the various types of papers under examination in the interviews.

Each potential interviewee was approached via email with an explanation of the purpose of the study, and was asked to participate in a one-on-one, audio-taped interview of approximately one hour in length. All were offered the opportunity to ask any questions they may have had about the study in advance, and to receive a copy of possible interview questions. If the person agreed to participate, I made a general suggestion to choose collections about which he or she could talk as freely as possible. However, I also assured all participants that I would omit donor names from the resulting paper if they wished. They were also given the option of personally remaining anonymous. Before the interviews began, each interviewee signed an informed consent agreement (Appendix C). In general, the interviews were based on the set of sample questions included in Appendix A. These questions were generated from the above-mentioned assumptions. Other questions arose during the course of each interview,

building from the responses that were offered. The only deviation from the pattern of face-to-face, audio-taped interviews came with the professional association papers case study. The archivist originally approached for the interview, Russell Koonts, recommended that his colleague Mira Waller also be included. When schedule conflicts made a meeting between the three of us impossible, I interviewed Koonts in person according to the usual procedure. Using the general information he had given about the collection being discussed, I created a revised version (Appendix B) of the standard question set and emailed it to Waller. She sent her answers via email.

Once the interviews were complete, I reviewed the audiotapes and Waller's response and identified the main points contained therein. The details of each interview are reported in the following Case Study Interviews section, with subsequent analysis in the Conclusion section.

## **Case Study Interviews**

### Women's History<sup>37</sup>

The concept of building an entire collection around the lives and work of women is itself relatively modern. The two premiere women's history collections in the United States, the Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College, and the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, part of the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study at Harvard University, were established in the early 1940's. These endeavors lent legitimacy and provided source material for the nascent women's studies discipline. Although quite a few years younger, the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University, founded in 1987, is already a well-respected addition to the growing body of institutions devoted to this area of study. Laura Micham, director of the Bingham Center, points out that collecting genre is part of a modern movement of proactive archival practice that seeks to pull in materials documenting non-traditional groups of interest. While echoes of their voices may have been audible "behind the papers of husbands and fathers," Micham notes that women, like many other marginalized groups, were not "collected for themselves" until the mid-twentieth century.

Working in what had been for so long an untapped market, there is a great deal of ground to cover. While the female demographic had always existed, the lack of credence in the worth of its contributions meant that documentary evidence was often scattered, much of it irretrievably lost. Nevertheless, the Bingham Center, created in 1987 from an

endowment by its namesake, has gathered materials from as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. These earlier materials can garner a great deal of attention in part because of their rarity. Still, a great number of the Bingham Center's collections are modern ones, fed by the advances of one of the feminist movement's most salient effects—women's "increasing perception of their own importance." As is the case in many other genres, modern collections of women's papers tend to be more sizable than their older counterparts. Micham hypothesizes that women's newfound sense of self-worth helps feed that growth, as they are emboldened to produce, share, publish, and save more writings.

With such a large number of the Bingham Center's collections having been created in the last one hundred years, Micham notes that acquisitions typically come directly from collection creators or their close associates. Some papers creators choose to work through dealers or agents. However, unlike a case where the Center purchases a Civil War-era woman's journal through a dealer, there is still the potential for a direct relationship with the creator of the papers. Micham often makes a point of capitalizing on that potential by actively pursuing such interaction. In the process she must assure dealers that she is not attempting to get around them and subvert their rightful profits; rather she has a specific goal in mind unrelated to financial matters. As she puts it, the aim is that "this person will have an ongoing relationship with us... We may invite them to speak, or there may be additions to the collection. We need to have the space and the time to establish that relationship to make sure it works for both parties."

The advantages of working directly with the creator of a collection can take many forms; one of the most basic is the person's ability to fill in any information gaps. The Bingham Center recently acquired a collection of 19<sup>th</sup> century missionary journals.



Although the items came through a descendant of the author, he could provide very little in the way of genealogical background. Micham laments that “the greatest tragedy is that we have these fabulous missionary diaries that are incredibly in vogue these days for research and you’re going to have to read every one of them and extrapolate...We don’t have the resources to be able to do that kind of processing.” Where those who have created the papers are still living and willing to engage with and be a resource to the repository, such gaps are not insurmountable.

It is true that working with these individuals can facilitate and enrich the incorporation of a collection into a repository. It is also true that it introduces a unique complexity to the process that is absent when papers come through an emotionally unattached dealer. As Micham points out, the dealer “doesn’t have a personal stake, only professional and financial...When you deal with [the creator], it’s a dance of trust. You have to dance around each other in a way you would with your college roommate or anybody with whom you’re going to have this ongoing, close relationship.” In her time at the Bingham Center, Micham often works with donors who were and are deeply involved in the women’s movement. Their experiences have led some of them to be suspicious of institutions such as Duke, wary of the “white male, Southern plantation mentality.” As Micham works to reverse these misgivings, she has found that the very existence of the Bingham Center as an endowed entity provides assurance in terms of the long-term stability of the repository. Unlike dealers selling materials in which they have a purely financial interest, living collection creators are typically concerned about what takes place after the donation or sale. Micham has found that her donor population “wants to know that [those who see the papers] aren’t going to be just eggheads...they

want to know that a wide variety of people will see them, that they won't just sit dormant." Knowing this has deepened Micham's commitment to creative programming and use of the materials. She has found that her donors "have high expectations because they themselves are so creative." Therefore, Micham's past utilization of collection materials in "Celebrate Our Bodies Week" activities, and staging of a three-day abortion symposium, for example, have helped to spark the interest, trust, and enthusiasm of potential donors.

Working closely with an individual and that individual's papers can at times create confusion in terms of defining the archivist-donor relationship and its boundaries. Developing a familiarity with such papers undermines the shield of privacy that typically exists between individuals in a business relationship. Manuscripts curators often go into donor's homes, sometimes on multiple occasions. At times, Micham has noticed, "once you are in someone's house and you cross that boundary into their nest sometimes something crosses over in their head and they misunderstand what your role is." A donor's assumptions about the dimensions of the social and political link being established sometimes go too far; for example, a donor once told Micham that she considered her a "political protégé." Under these circumstances, an archivist must find a way to get the relationship back on business terms without offending the donor.

For a donor acclimating herself to this unique dynamic, where personal revelations are almost entirely one-sided, it is natural to seek some balance, and a sense of reciprocity. One of the collections in the Sallie Bingham Center is that of a former clergywoman who revealed her homosexuality upon retirement. Before she agreed to place her papers with the Center, Micham recalls that the woman essentially told her that

“I need to know how you tick, I need to know your sexual history, I need to know your religious history, every bit of you to feel o.k. about my papers being here.” She also charged Micham to “go into your own denomination and transform it” as she had done in her own. In these and other instances, Micham has had to become adept at diplomatically explaining the limits of the donor-archivist relationship. It is important to tread lightly, not only to salvage the goal of acquiring someone’s papers, but also out of concern for their feelings. Micham notes that “there is so much ego involved in archives...not because [donors] are egotistical but because we’re dealing with their private, sensitive materials. You have to make them feel so comfortable and so safe.”

Apart from navigating the professional relationship with her donors, Micham must also work with them to protect their privacy and that of related third parties before collections reach the shelves. Working with this particular donor community, she has met with a variety of restrictions, from the temporary closing of all correspondence between a donor and former lovers, to the HIPAA-related and other concerns that arise with the papers of comprehensive care centers providing abortions. While she still feels the archivist’s general inclination toward access, Micham realizes that, when collecting in this genre, “the reality is that some of these collections are so desirable and so fugitive and in danger of not surviving that I am more amenable to restrictions than I was straight out of library school.”

Many Sallie Bingham Center donors are activists, or are involved in some way in causes that are countered by an equally passionate opposition. The possibility exists that these papers will not only be used by supporters or supposedly neutral historians, but also by those who wish to attack or discredit their creators. While some potential donors have

expressed a reluctance to put their papers in an archive for this reason, Micham proposes an alternative way of looking at the situation. In such cases, she tells the person that “people are going to write the story no matter what...If individuals write about you in a way that is not consistent with your records you have a much better leg to stand on than if your records were not in an archive.” Other donors have a natural inclination toward unabashed openness. At times Micham is concerned that detractors may take portions of the papers out of context in order to harm these women. Still, with the donor’s inclination serving as a guide, she reassures herself of the importance of letting the papers express the entire, complex truth.

An ongoing relationship with collection creators has its practical effects, such as the reality of receiving collections in multiple additions, and the processing decisions that must be made with that fact in mind. Another, less easily defined, concern is that the relationship may affect the papers themselves, as they are being created by a person who has already begun placing her materials in an archive. Micham has thought about what she calls “the anthropology of archives,” which comes with a range of possible implications that can be dependent on the how thoroughly developed the donor’s unique “voice” is. Thinking of one prominent feminist leader whose papers are at the Bingham Center, Micham explains that “before I came along, she had one thought about something as simple as the way she kept her files and now she has a different thought about it...But I think that her voice is so well-established that it would be arrogant of me to imagine I am altering it.”

On the other hand, Micham is occasionally approached by high school girls who wish to contribute some of their writings to the Center’s collection. She makes a practice

of encouraging the girls to wait before thinking of taking such a step. The fact that these girls are not famous is not the deciding factor; instead, she puts them off because “we do not want them to think of the archives, whatever that means to them, to be standing over their shoulder every time they write in a diary or an article.” The archive-donor relationship will inevitably have an impact on certain relatively minor aspects of the donor’s life. While this is acceptable to a certain degree, Micham is careful to avoid relationships that may compromise an as-yet-undeveloped voice. Her concern is made stronger by the fact that the community from which she collects is continually working to liberate itself from past constraints on individuality and self-determination.

### Political Papers<sup>38</sup>

*Note: For the sake of convenience, the words “congressman” and “congressmen” will be used in this section as generic terms, with the understanding that there are women among the group.*

In the early years after its founding in 1979, the Carl Albert Congressional Center Archives at the University of Oklahoma collected papers from congressmen across the western United States. The focus has since narrowed to federal congressmen for the state of Oklahoma, or ones with some connection to the state. While it has scattered materials dating as far back as the Civil War era, new acquisitions typically come to the Carl Albert Center from congressmen as they are leaving office. Therefore, many papers were created as recently as a few months before reaching the archive. The age of the oldest papers in each incoming collection depends, of course, on the length of time the individual was in office. Todd Kosmerick, now the University Archivist at North Carolina State University, worked at the Center from 1992 until 2004. During that time, he dealt almost entirely with modern collections.

Prior to the 1994 election, in which the Republicans achieved a majority in the United States House of Representatives after some 40 years of Democratic power, there had been a sustained period of limited turnover among Oklahoma congressmen. Kosmerick remembers the start of the new term after this election as the occasion for a tremendous influx of new acquisitions. Not only was the Center suddenly inundated with a previously unheard of number of collections, they were collections that tended to be quite sizable, coming from politicians who had been entrenched on Capitol Hill for decades in some cases. The vicissitudes of the collecting landscape in this genre are somewhat uniquely dictated by forces outside of the control of archivists. While the

identification of potential donors and of clear-cut opportunities to acquire new collections are more obvious than with other genres, there is also a more routine tendency for current events to force political papers archivists into action. This is sometimes the case in other personal papers collecting, for example if an author begins “shopping around” his or her papers to a number of institutions and the archivist has to make a move or lose the opportunity forever. As the Carl Albert Center did have competitors within the state, the time for acquiring the papers of nearly all outgoing congressmen could be limited.

The official records of Congress pass by law to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), but most of the materials emanating from congressmen’s individual offices are left to be dealt with as each congressman chooses. Such were the papers that the Carl Albert Center looked to acquire from Oklahoma congressmen. Although termed “personal papers,” Kosmerick points out that “because of the way they are constructed, [these collections] are more like corporate body records because they reflect the activity of an office. The ones creating the records are usually staff.” There was also very little in the way of the standard conception of “personal papers” in the collections. Rather, the bulk of materials tended to be one of two things: letters from constituents seeking assistance on a variety of matters, and so-called “issue mail,” in which individuals and businesses wrote to support or denounce legislation and policies of interest to them. In Kosmerick’s experience, staff members also tended to be the main contacts in the acquisitions process; interaction with the congressmen themselves was rare.

This combination of business-oriented papers and a general lack of involvement on the part of the congressmen made for less of the emotional complications that come

with other modern papers collecting. As opposed to correspondence with family and friends, journal entries, literary manuscripts, and other items that entail a deeply personal contribution, these collections of political papers did not often evoke passionately protective urges from those credited with creating them. Occasionally, congressmen would “wanted us to basically guarantee that nobody would use the collections for political gain or monetary profit. It was highly unlikely that this was ever going to happen.” At the suggestion of the university’s legal affairs office, the Carl Albert Center inserted a statement prohibiting such activity into the agreement signed by researchers. As Kosmerick had anticipated, there were no such problems. He remembered that there were “a couple of instances where people requested to look at records a short time after we had received them, and I sort of wondered what their motives were.” However, the somewhat standard closure period (to be discussed shortly) prevented access to all but those receiving special permission from the donor.

The privacy concerns most commonly voiced by the congressmen or their staff pertained to third parties. The constituents, who were the recipients of congressional services and the authors of the letters constituting the bulk of materials, were essentially the only ones injecting personal information into these collections. They also had no control over the disposition of that information. At some point, the Carl Albert Center decided to scale back the amount of papers taken from congressmen’s district offices, because materials emanating from them tended to be constituent service case files. Kosmerick explained that “because of privacy laws, we would be holding onto these papers for a long time before we could open them up to researchers. They were also rather voluminous and extremely routine...and we did not really have a lot of requests to



look at that kind of record.” As he often reassured donors, researchers looking at any of the documents involving constituents usually were not working on projects that would result in a threat to privacy. With the issue mail, for example, “researchers do not really care about who the individuals were who had such-and-such opinion, [rather] that 50 people wrote in with this opinion and 75 with that opinion. It was usually more of an aggregate like that...or [wanting to know] certain background kinds of things like what part of the state this person was writing from.”

Most collections at the Carl Albert Center tended to carry a 10-25 year restriction period. Kosmerick recalled that some congressmen requested a 25-30 year closure, similar to the typical set-up at NARA. He thought that “once they found out [the way NARA operated] they would decide, ‘Well, mine should be closed for that long, too.’” Although restrictions of this length were generally acceptable to staff at the Carl Albert Center, the rare requests that papers be closed until the death of the congressman were not. This was a matter of institutional preference from which Kosmerick does not recall straying. As some of the congressmen were fairly young, he feared that the papers could be off limits to researchers for an unreasonable amount of time. In these cases, an emphasis on access was pitted against a common problem in modern papers collecting—the increased potential for lengthy restrictions. Such conflicts, however, were rare and Kosmerick recalls little trouble in resolving them.

The very regularity of the average 10-25 year closure removed some of the pressure and variability that can come with other types of manuscripts collecting, where there is no blueprint for restrictions. It also created a situation in which most incoming papers were not fully processed until many years had passed. This may have made long-

term planning somewhat easier in that one could predict periods of heightened activity and demand on staff and resources.

As alluded to earlier, collecting political papers also takes some of the mystery out of identifying prospective donors. In the case of the Carl Albert Center, the people of Oklahoma are basically responsible for determining the potential donor pool. The situation at the Center is analogous to that of a governmental archive, as it consistently receives the same types of papers and is linked (although less systematically) to a regularly scheduled event—elections. What unpredictability there is comes mainly in awaiting the outcome of the elections and convincing donors to place their papers with the institution. When Kosmerick first began working at the Carl Albert Center, the standard practice was to approach congressmen before they left office to try and convince them to donate. Similarly to the way other manuscripts repositories pursue living collection creators, “we would try and court them, let them know we existed, let them know we were interested and available to answer any questions.”

The most frequent obstacle to the congressman’s acquiescence was some personal connection to another university. Otherwise, the Center frequently was successful in acquiring the papers. However, the 1994 elections brought in such an overwhelming amount of new collections that the university administration began requiring staff to seek approval before pursuing any more. This policy continued for some five years; when no similar inundations took place, “the pressure lessened.” So, even while the Center was temporarily constrained regarding the number of donors it could pursue, there were rarely questions of who it should be targeting, anxiety about under-representing some marginalized group, or similar worries that trouble other manuscripts collectors.

The collections that were created in the 1960's through the early 1990's were generally quite large, many taking up hundreds of cubic feet. Kosmerick felt that this correlated to the fact that they were mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century collections, created at a time when paper was readily available and heavily used. He noticed a definite downward shift in the size of collections beginning in the 1990's, when e-mail and other electronic advances began to slow the use of paper. While tapes and discs of electronic records were coming in and the means to access them were quickly passing into obsolescence, the Center, like all too many other archival institutions, had not begun to take a serious look at how to preserve these materials (at least not before Kosmerick's departure in 2004). The semi-standard closure of collections for at least ten years and the subsequent delay in processing meant that the problem often stayed in the back of archivists' minds. Other special formats, including disc and audiotape recordings, film, and different types of videotape, were also "pretty much left as they were." This will almost assuredly become a major problem for the Carl Albert Center, as it may even for the more proactive institutions in the coming years.

### Family Papers<sup>39</sup>

One of the staples of most manuscripts repositories are collections of family papers. While the prominent and influential families of a given region have always been of interest to archivists, there is a growing emphasis on documenting more than just the “privileged few.” Michael Plunkett, the head of special collections at the University of Virginia (U.Va.), has seen the difficulties that can arise when attempting to diversify an institution’s traditional focus. One of the U.Va.’s current goals is to broaden their representation of African-American individuals, families, and organizations. However, Plunkett and other colleagues at predominantly white, formerly all-white, Southern institutions have come up against a powerful current of distrust coming from the African American community. This has been the case in several instances where Plunkett has approached African American families for papers. After a long history of pointed exclusion at worst and simple negligence at best, the modern interest in African Americans by these repositories looks to some like tokenism, an insincere adherence to a fleeting trend, or a more sinister effort to control the coffers of black history. These suspicions can only be overcome with time and continued assurance, in words and actions, of genuine respect and a desire for reparation.

The determination of research value is always an inexact science. Just as past efforts in this area led archivists to disregard African American materials, there is always the possibility that some group in modern society is being similarly overlooked. Plunkett has recently been made aware of the very real possibility that archivists will make mistakes in some cases, no matter how good their intentions. For the past two years, the special collections division of the U.Va. library has been using a Mellon grant to look at

the use of its collections and pinpoint what researchers are interested in. He says that he and his staff have been surprised that certain types of collections for which they had high hopes, particularly political papers, actually receive rather minimal use (after the first wave of interest ebbs). Plunkett agrees that it may be more difficult to understand the research value of papers that have been recently created. Outside of some of the obvious categories that have always been collected (in this case, the papers of prominent Central Virginia families), one can only guess what historians and other academics will one day choose to highlight from the current era. Even a distance of 25-50 years can be highly revealing; for example, Plunkett referenced several events from the post World War II era (e.g. the Civil Rights movement and other activist causes) that are already the object of much attention from researchers.

As with other modern personal papers, family collections often come to a repository directly through the creators of the papers or someone with a direct link to these individuals. With family papers, the deep-seated emotional attachment can be compounded; not only is one's own reputation and legacy being opened up for interpretation, but also that of one's closest relatives. All of the complex defensive and protective instincts that come with the familial bond have the potential to complicate negotiations regarding the acquisition of family papers. Plunkett has noticed that while donors often seem to be willing to part with papers in theory, it is not uncommon for "separation anxiety" to arise when he or another staff member actually comes to take the papers away. An archivist must demonstrate as fully as possible his or her respect for the papers and the individuals who created them in order to gain trust. The archivist must also be prepared to deal with another common aspect of modern papers collecting—the

arrival of materials in multiple additions over time rather than a single, discrete deposit. Not only is this a matter of donors taking the time to steel themselves to part with particular items little by little, but also one of pulling together materials created by a number of individuals over the course of many years, and of yet more materials still being created.

Plunkett has noticed that the average size of family collections has decreased over time, and attributes this to family members “looking through the papers and performing an initial weeding on them.” As collections come to a repository in this ongoing way, archivists are placed in a long-term relationship with donors. This can be alternately advantageous and irksome, but is in any event quite a different situation from purchasing a complete set of century-old papers from a dealer who is simply doing business.

Plunkett often finds himself having to reassure families that their papers will not be obscured in the vast amount of materials at the University. Still other donors are attracted by that very same size, and by the prestige that is attached to it. Increasingly, Plunkett discovers that donors today want promises of a website featuring their materials. Manuscripts dealers who are working independently of the creators of the papers do not need to be reassured or courted in this way at all; as long as they get their asking price, there is nothing left to discuss or negotiate.

Plunkett also spoke at length about what he feels is the salient characteristic of modern papers collecting. It first should be noted that he was not talking exclusively about collecting papers that were in themselves modern, but about the modern state of the collecting business in general. According to Plunkett, money is now a factor in far more acquisitions than in the past, and prices are reaching unforeseen levels. When he arrived

at U.Va. some seventeen years ago, the donation-to-sale ratio stood at approximately 70/30; this number has now been reversed. While the likelihood of having to obtain collections by sale rather than gift is more of a given with literary papers, Plunkett says that this shift has also been exhibited in the family papers arena. He jokingly refers to this as the “*Antiques Roadshow* effect,” referencing the popular Public Broadcasting Station show in which antiques collectors appraise items brought in by everyday individuals. Whatever the source may be, there is a growing awareness among would-be donors of the potential market value of their papers. This awareness in many cases has the effect of subduing altruistic impulses. Plunkett acknowledges that large institutions like the University of Virginia are in a stronger position to shoulder the growing expenses, while their smaller counterparts are often not so fortunate. This almost guarantees that those smaller repositories will consistently lose out on acquisitions carrying a high price tag, as generally there are competitors waiting in the wings with the necessary capital.

Not only has the modern emphasis on seeking financial compensation for manuscript items affected archives’ ability to add new collections, it has also threatened collections that have been sitting on the shelves for years. As Plunkett explains, U.Va. and a number of other special collections with origins in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century are finding that their archivist forebears tended to take in new acquisitions on deposit (i.e., a loan without transfer of ownership), by means of tenuous “gentleman’s agreements.” When descendants find out about the situation, some do not feel compelled to prolong it—at least not without being paid. Facing individuals with legitimate legal claims and the aforementioned awareness of the papers’ market value, repositories must produce the

money or return collections in which they have invested time and resources. At U.Va., the fallout from such incidents led to a deliberate tightening of acquisition policy and an extreme disinclination to taking anything on deposit.

In Plunkett's experience with modern family papers at U.Va., there has been very little anxiety on the part of donors for privacy or copyright protection. He has only found the two issues to be a concern with donors who are in some way public figures or recognizable names in the region. However, donors do still tend to maintain their copyright rather than signing it over to the repository. Typically, any concerns they may have are taken care of by means of the copyright notice found in the researcher agreement.

Special formats are increasingly a concern with modern family papers collections, as with most other genres. These formats include everything from artwork and "realia" to electronic records. As to handling the latter, Plunkett readily admits that U.Va. has by no means figured out the proper approach, and has only been able to deal with it on an "as-you-go" basis. He is grateful for the existence of a media center in one of the main campus libraries. The staff there have partnered with the special collections library to advise on and help care for items such as audio cassettes. While having such an entity available on-campus helps to avoid some of the pitfalls of collecting "papers" that contain electronic and other special formats, the larger problem remains unsolved. Even with access to more impressive resources than many archives possess, U.Va. is still "walking a tightrope" on this issue.



### Professional Association Papers<sup>40</sup>

It is somewhat rare to be able to say that an entire profession began at one institution, but that is the case with the physician assistant (PA) career and Duke University. As such, it logically follows that Duke would be the home of the fledgling Physician Assistant History Center (PAHx) and of the Society for the Preservation of Physician Assistant History (SPPAHx), which directs the course of the PAHx. The Duke University Medical Center Archives (DUMCA), which houses the records of Duke's own PA program, has also committed to "process, maintain, and provide baseline archival support for the special collection being assembled by the PA History Office and Society."<sup>41</sup> The PAHx holds the records of the SPPAHx. It has also gained the sponsorship of four professional organizations in the PA field, and is in the midst of negotiations to bring the their papers to the PAHx as well. One of the overarching goals of the PAHx and SPPAHx thus far has been to "collect, process, digitize, and present via the Internet materials related to the cultural development and legacy of the PA profession."<sup>42</sup>

This case study involved two interviewees. The first was DUMCA Archivist Russell Koonts, and the second PAHx Archivist Mira Waller. While the PAHx is collecting or aiming to collect more than just the records of relevant professional organizations, Koonts and Waller were asked focus on these organizations' records for the purpose of this case study. At the time of the interviews, the SPPAHx papers were the only ones yet housed at the PAHx, but Waller's preliminary work with the other organizations was also considered while answering questions.

As the profession itself is less than 40 years old, practically all of the materials now being collected at the PAHx can be considered modern. Waller feels strongly that the collection she is helping to build is inherently valuable because “the birth of this profession is tied into the history of medicine, military history, and nursing history, as well as Duke Medical Center’s history.” She also notes that one of the one of the earliest individuals to serve as a model for the PA profession was Buddy Treadwell, an African American; and so, additionally, “this runs right into African American history.” Of course, the importance of collecting materials documenting the PA profession is much more easily established than the individual research value of any of the substantial number of items available. Waller notes that the PAHx is “trying to go away from acquiring everything and [move] more in the line of being a clearinghouse or portal to materials.” As the SPPAHx and the other organizations are ongoing entities, “there is no lack of materials. All of our organizations are producing tons of materials.”

The determination of what should be taken in often comes down to the recommendation of PAHx Director and founder, Dr. Reginald Carter. According to Koonts, Dr. Carter’s expertise as one of the leaders of the Duke PA program “has enabled us to get a lot of the contextual history. We know some of the key players, we know what the important documents are.” While fully appreciative of Dr. Carter’s irreplaceable work in developing the collection, Koonts also sees that “because he is so intertwined in the history and development of the program, we also have to educate him on being an archivist as well and say, ‘Yes, [this material] is great but we cannot save everything; what are the historically important documents we need to be looking for?’” Many of the older items clearly relate to groundbreaking moments in the history of the

profession; others, being produced daily, may seem to be of a more routine, administrative nature. Perhaps these latter materials will one day be revealed as keys to understanding the development of some as-yet embryonic shift in practice or theory. Although the insight that comes with time may be unavailable now, decisions must still be made.

In some ways, the role of the PAHx in the lives of these organizations will be somewhat like an institutional archive, if not in terms of actually housing materials than at least for consultation purposes. Koonts points out that some of the organizations that have been approached for cooperation are hesitant to actually place their papers with Duke for fear that “they will lose control if they send them somewhere else.” He has also encountered “the mindset that Duke is trying to take over the world” as a hindrance to the establishment of trust.

When an association is amenable to some level of involvement, Waller meets with representatives to flesh out what it currently does in the way of records management. She tries to determine if the organizations have retention schedules, what types of materials they are saving, and whether anyone is currently in a position of responsibility for the records. She asks organizations for their opinions on the long-term significance of various materials, and finally what the PAHx can “do to facilitate or assist in identifying and saving the materials.” Ultimately, the desire is to see these materials cared for properly; even to see them go to another institution would be preferable to letting them fall out of protective hands. It is not a given that an organization will naturally have the same concern. Waller laments that “we have groups whose vision of

processing papers is to scan them, put them in a database or in PDF format, and destroy the paper versions. This is definitely not my vision of how to process the papers.”

Whatever function the PAHx eventually performs with the records of the professional organizations, Waller sees many advantages to working with contemporary organizations and their papers as opposed to defunct ones. These considerations are somewhat analogous to those of working directly with collection creators in other genres. As mentioned earlier, the fact that these groups are still active and continuing to produce records means that there is an ever-growing abundance of materials to be had. As ongoing, cohesive units, organizational memory is still easily tapped into and utilized in the process of understanding otherwise unexplained pieces of a collection. Oral history interviews have been made possible because the accessibility of “original board members and key players.” Vibrant organizations can also ease the collection development process. As Waller points out, “if we miss something or if someone informs us of historically significant materials we should have, we can usually get on an organization’s listserv or membership list and send out a calling for the item.”

Of course, there is also another side to working with modern organizational papers. The aforementioned abundance of materials can be “too much,” according to Waller. She adds that “it is really hard for one or two people to be responsible for the professional memory and history of a young, growing profession.” Another potential difficulty is that these groups are essentially evolving organisms, and “each time the administration changes, styles and files change, so it can be challenging to get people to maintain a system for retention.” She has had to contend with individuals at specific organizations who, with the best of intentions, want to impose questionable conceptions

of archiving onto the papers. For example, some “talk about sorting all of the materials into subjects—mixing collections so to speak—and then arranging and describing them through a database index.” Materials are often disposed of or lost when an organization changes localities. All things considered, Koonts feels that “it would almost be easier to work with a defunct society.” He sees some of the advantages as including “a definite start and end date... You do not have to give them a call and say ‘Well, it’s been a year since you last sent materials, it’s time to start thinking about sending [more].’”

Furthermore, as with living donors in the manuscripts world, privacy and confidentiality can become major concerns. “People who are alive want editing control over sensitive materials,” Waller notes, “not just putting restrictions of, say, 25 years, but actually redacting correspondence, et cetera, in order to prevent ‘bad press.’” She has noticed that this is a particularly complex issue for Dr. Carter, because of his close relationship to many of the individuals involved. Waller understands that “there is a sense of loyalty and the desire to tread lightly in potentially negative waters. But of course history needs to reflect the good and the bad, and archivists are in the job of preserving, not rewriting.” Waller continues to try to find the proper balance, which sometimes includes restricting portions of collections for specific periods of time and also “redact[ing] materials on an as-needed basis.” The PAHx avoids some of the more automatic privacy and confidentiality issues by refusing to take medical records of any kind. However, some of the organizations with which they are partnering are PA accreditation boards. Collections from these groups could contain legally protected materials that “are mixed at the item level, which does not make it easy to restrict or redact materials.”

Staff at the PAHx are making an effort to address the electronic records issue on the front end. Waller often advises the associations on the importance of considering electronic records in the creation of retention schedules, of printing out and filing important emails, and the intrinsic value of original items (in an effort to dissuade groups from making digital versions of materials and then throwing the originals away). She has been encouraged to find that most of the organizations do back up valuable files on a server, but is still having to work to advocate for additional off-site servers. Oral histories on video and compact disc, digital photographs, and fully online newsletters are among the materials she sees being created that may create problems in the future. Right now, Waller can only brace herself and her archivist colleagues for the fact that migration of old and new formats will be a necessity at some point, and that limited funds and capabilities will likely force difficult prioritization decisions.

### Literary Papers<sup>43</sup>

Until the latter decades of 20<sup>th</sup> century, literary papers were generally overlooked by institutions such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), written off as being of only marginal importance to the study of history. Only a very few influential authors received much attention. Now, particularly with the increasingly diversified use of special collections by people other than historians, literary papers are highly sought after. Walter C. (Tim) West is the curator of the Manuscripts Department at UNC and the director of its Southern Historical Collection (SHC). He has observed this shift and one of its direct consequences—“If you intend to succeed in being the repository to acquire collections of notable literary papers you have to deal with [authors] while they are alive or someone will seal the deal first.” Those older papers that are available for purchase, some of which come to repositories through descendants, tend to be of “the less notable writers, and [are] probably less attractive from a research point of view.” His comments indicate that collecting literary papers increasingly involves contemporary authors who are still producing materials. Therefore, modern papers make up a significant portion of the collecting possibilities.

As noted by West, an institution must approach authors early in their careers in order to have a chance at acquiring papers. By the time an author is judged to be “well established and likely to be studied in the future, it is likely that they are already committed some place.” This imperative to “act now” frequently leaves archivists in the position of having to predict, with rather limited indicators, what will be the future research value of a young author’s papers. Many authors place their materials with the universities at which they teach or from which they graduated. However, the likelihood

of such arrangements cannot be taken for granted. One of the SHC's greatest regrets in the area of literary papers collecting is that the papers of author Doris Betts, a professor emerita at UNC, ended up at Boston University (BU). In one of the earliest major drives to acquire literary papers, BU had in the late 1960's and early 1970's approached a number of up-and-coming authors, including Betts, for papers. By the time UNC thought to ask, it was too late. Using the lesson of this missed opportunity, West and the SHC now make a point of monitoring the potential that lies within the immediate campus neighborhood. By bringing in the papers of selected teachers in the creative writing program, for example, they aim "to document writing that is coming out of the university and certainly to be the home for the papers of somebody who does become prominent later." Where there are no university connections to direct the SHC's interest to new authors, it must let factors such as "the critical thinking about that person, the reviews that have appeared, and faculty input" guide the way. Of course, other institutions are doing the same and so archivists frequently find themselves in a position of direct competition.

Whenever one is dealing with collections of personal papers, human nature inevitably inserts ego into the equation. This may be true even more when dealing with authors, who make a living from and invest much of their identity in their writings. West has found that it is easy to view "the level of your interest [as] being a reflection of the relative importance of the person as a literary figure." Authors are sometimes aware of the price a repository has paid for another author's papers. If a comparable offer is not made, wounded pride could threaten the archivist's chance of success. West sometimes finds himself trying to explain that "our focus is on research value, not on literary



reputation particularly. [Even] for somebody who is a well known, very well respected writer, they may not have papers that have a high research value because they just have not saved correspondence or saved drafts.” Sometimes, the papers of less well known authors can be surprisingly valuable. For example, West recalled the case of one relatively obscure author whose papers were made more interesting to the SHC because they contained transcripts of interviews he had conducted in the course of his work. That occasional disconnect between literary reputation and research value can be hard for writers to accept.

Understanding the existence of a thriving market for literary papers in general, authors often sense the strength of their bargaining position. West has seen this lead to a sort of veiled process of “shopping around,” under the somewhat disingenuous label of searching for the repository that would be the “best match.” As West explains, “I really have a feeling the place with the ‘best match’ will be the one that offers the most money.” He has also sensed that, among the few well-established authors who have not placed their papers in a repository, there are those who are holding back because they think the value of their papers “is going to grow as they continue to write, so they do not want to sell themselves short.” Although the SHC is in a better financial position than many smaller institutions, it has had to give up its pursuit of several collections because the prices were simply too high. Even archivists’ proposals of payment plans have met with mixed reactions from authors; after all, there is a strong likelihood that some other repository will be willing and able to immediately pay in full.

The tendency for modern collections to come in multiple accessions also applies to literary papers. This creates yet another difficulty in terms of assigning prices. The

ideal for a repository—both for administrative and financial reasons—would be to let one contract and one price cover the initial group of materials and all future additions. This type of arrangement is often agreeable with donors of other types of collections, such as the papers of a relatively unknown family. However, many authors do not see this as a fair arrangement, and so new accessions often mean new negotiations. In his former position as director of collection development at the Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library, West once saw something like a combined version of the two possibilities. According to the terms of a long-standing agreement with this particular author, “a certain payment is made every year and an accession is made each year of material that accumulated or was produced during that year.” This unique scenario at least eliminates repeated returns to the bargaining table.

West is quick to point out that there are still authors who take a more altruistic approach to the matter. For example, he recalls that Anne Tyler donated her papers to Duke with no price attached after saying that “she was not going to charge money for something so close to her heart.” Still, even in some cases where an author would consider donation, tax laws concerning self-generated materials can become a disincentive. West has been able to convince the occasional writer to deposit papers with the SHC; while deposits are not usually an attractive option for repositories, there is a crucial next step that can make this arrangement agreeable to both parties. The authors leave the papers to descendants in their wills, with the understanding that the descendants will make the actual donation after the author’s death and receive the tax benefit.

According to West, modern literary collections themselves are changing, in terms of their physical dimensions and makeup. To begin with, he believes that the average

size of collections is growing. He partially attributes this to the fact that older collections that find their way to a repository many years after an author dies have likely been “scattered or winnowed by time.” The other suggestion he makes ties in with the previously discussed demand for literary papers. In the past, he says, “I think writers had less of a sense of their importance...so they were not as likely to hold onto things.” Now manuscripts collectors—both institutions and private individuals—are routinely paying prices that assure authors of the existence of a lucrative market for their papers. With this realization of status and fiscal potential comes a motivation to save everything “because the more there is, the more they will probably get.”

One of the core pieces of the average literary collection—drafts of published and unpublished works—also are changing. Because of the widespread use of word processors, the very survival of the sorts of discrete, successive drafts seen in the past is threatened. West has occasionally encountered authors who print out drafts at various stages in the writing of a book, but feels that for most writers, “it may be more of a fluid process than it was at one point.” Even if archivists did not lament the loss of the traditional draft model of writing, the nearly universal use of word processors means that more and more records will arrive at a repository in electronic form. Besides the standard worries about obsolescence, preservation, and storage, West also questions how electronic materials should be accessed by users. The practice of printing electronic documents for use in paper form “can be a disservice to researchers,” for example those who wish to publish edited editions of manuscript material. Their task would be simplified greatly, West notes, by having access to an electronic copy.

Literary papers are perhaps the most susceptible of all manuscripts genres to problems related to copyright. Only in the rarest of cases will a repository be able to obtain copyright on a collection of modern literary papers. Authors are often persuaded to place their papers with a repository only after repeated assurances by the archivist that the relinquishment of control of the physical items themselves does not equate to loss of copyright. The SHC boasts of “fairly tight copying procedures,” including the absence of a copying machine in the reading room, which can prove attractive to anxious would-be donors. Added measures are sometimes necessary to satisfy donor’s nerves. In one case, West agreed to require researchers to sign an additional document promising respect of copyright, even though it essentially reiterated the same language used in the standard agreement signed by all researchers.

As public figures, authors understand that their papers are more likely to be scrutinized for personal information than would, for example, a collection of letters from an everyday World War II soldier. Whether their estimation of public interest is accurate or artificially inflated, their concerns for privacy must be handled with respect. Individuals vary in terms of the degree to which they mind the thought of researchers poring over the documentary evidence of their personal lives. Donors have been known to hand over entire filing cabinets of materials with little obvious concern for what the archivist (and, subsequently, researchers) may find therein. When this happens and potentially sensitive information is discovered, West questions whether the donor’s laissez-faire attitude is actually rooted in ignorance of what he or she has put in the hands of the archivist. If there is any doubt, he sometimes feels compelled to bring the matter

up for review with the donor. When handled properly, such overtures can help to assure the donor of the archivist's good intentions.

The disinterested donor is something of a rarity however, and West points out that most literary collections tend to carry at least partial restrictions (if not because of the donor's own sake, then for the protection of third parties). Typically, requests are reasonable, and tend to involve closing material for a set period of time. When West speaks with authors who have strong misgivings about opening their papers even in the distant future, he stresses the fact that materials do not have to be opened for some time, but that it is important that they eventually are. Authors are sometimes under the impression that their professional writings are the only papers that will be of benefit to researchers; West must explain that "the personal context will be interesting to people over time." Much of the role of collection developers and curators of modern papers is rooted in the establishment of trust, an assurance of respect for those whose lives are documented in the papers, and in educating donors about the true mission and worth of the archival endeavor. All of these factors come into play as West reminds donors of the role primary sources from all sorts of individuals in generations past have played in "helping to understand ourselves," and adds that "it will be a gift for those who will come after us if you are willing to be open."

## Notes

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<sup>37</sup> Laura Micham, personal interview, 18 February 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Todd Kosmerick, personal interview, 24 February 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Michael Plunkett, personal interview, 25 February 2005.

<sup>40</sup> Russell Koonts quotes from a personal interview, 2 March 2005; Mira Waller quotes from 11 March 2005 email.

<sup>41</sup> [www.pahx.org/about.htm](http://www.pahx.org/about.htm).

<sup>42</sup> [www.pahx.org/about.htm](http://www.pahx.org/about.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Walter C. (Tim) West, personal interview, 28 February 2005.

## **Conclusion**

Although there are certainly many collecting issues unique to the individual genres represented in this study, these interviews also revealed a number of other ones—some assumed at the start of the study, and some not—that may be linked to the age of the collections. To begin with, each interviewee agreed that working with modern papers tends to entail some involvement either with the individuals who created them, or a close associate. Even in the case of political papers, where Todd Kosmerick rarely interacted with the congressmen credited with creating the materials, staff members were there to voice donor concerns. Ongoing relationships with collection creators offer many benefits; for example, they can do much to clear up information gaps in otherwise mysterious papers. However, they can also inject substantial complications into the work of the archivist.

Perhaps the greatest demand created by the existence of parties with a personal interest in the papers is the need to take their needs and wishes into consideration while attempting to acquire collections and make them available to researchers. An independent dealer who sells a set of letters written by an abolitionist in 1854 only cares that an archivist will meet their list price; it would be highly unusual for that person to also seek assurance that the letters will be kept out of researchers' hands for 25-30 years or used in an online exhibit. Such dealers have no need to trust the archivist as a collection curator, only as a business partner. When modern papers are in the hands of

their creators or others close to them, a deeper level of trust must be built. As Laura Micham pointed out, dealing with personal papers almost guarantees the presence of ego, because these papers are physical manifestations of an individual's thoughts, feelings, and life choices. It would be difficult not to care deeply about who will see the materials and how they will be used. While working to assure donors of respect and sympathy for their lives and papers, archivists sometimes have to simultaneously draw donors in and keep them at arm's length. The archivist-donor relationship is somewhat unique in its necessarily one-sided offering of personal openness.

Women's history, family, and literary papers can more easily be considered "personal papers" than the political and professional association papers discussed here. They generally reflect the private lives of a small group of individuals, while the latter two focus on the life of an office or organization. As Tim West observed, authors sometimes wish to leave truly personal materials out of their collections and instead contribute only literary items. There is an understanding that being open about one's personal as well as professional life increases the level of vulnerability.

Still, even modern collections built entirely on a professional undertaking are not free from privacy concerns. After all, organizations are run by human beings, and typically involve contact with other individuals outside of the group. Even when the congressmen Todd Kosmerick discussed worried very little about how the materials would reflect back on them (perhaps because potentially damaging items were routinely weeded before deposit), they understood that they had a responsibility to protect their constituents' privacy. In the case of the professional association papers discussed by Russell Koonts and Mira Waller, the materials are tied to an active community of



colleagues who have a strong instinct for maintaining control of their individual reputations. As long as there are people involved who are uncomfortable with the potential interest in their papers, restrictions will be necessary. In some cases donor reluctance is not the only potential roadblock—legal constraints may apply, as with some of the records from accrediting bodies in the PA profession. Archives increasingly collect modern papers from ordinary individuals. Michael Plunkett noted that these types of family papers present less privacy concerns than those attached to prominent families. The relative obscurity of such individuals offers some of the only relief available to archivists who prefer full, immediate access.

While pursuing the goal of increased representation, archivists have run into difficulties. With previously ignored or marginalized groups, such as women and African Americans, historical wrongs may block the path to modern relationships. The effects of years of rejection from one side and suspicion from the other cannot be erased with one, all-healing conversation. Under these circumstances, trust may only come when an institution shows a persistent, unflagging commitment to these groups. Laura Micham has found that the endowment of the Sallie Bingham Center and her own active programming have helped to calm the fears of donors who would not normally look to Duke University as a haven for women's rights activists. Michael Plunkett has met with no easy solutions for convincing African Americans of the good intentions of the predominantly white, Southern, and traditional University of Virginia. He must continue to make overtures and look for opportunities to assure that community of his belief in their central importance in the region's history, and of the critical need for inclusiveness if archives are to fulfill their valuable mission.

This mission is often misunderstood by those who have no previous experience with archives. Therefore, archivists often must build trust not only in themselves as conscientious curators but also in the worth of their cause, and the methods they use to care for collections. Donors frequently need a sort of personalized, introductory education in the basic tenets of the archival profession. Mira Waller discussed the misconceptions held by many of the professional organizations with which she has worked, believing in digitization as the functional equivalent of archiving. She mentioned organizations that had in the past made the decision to throw materials out when they moved offices, rather than take the trouble to save them. Tim West spoke of having to convince authors of the depth of contextual insight to be added by placing their personal papers alongside their literary works. He has had to encourage donors to think of the lessons they have learned from historical figures, and point out that future generations will need the same guidance.

Others, of course, are more than convinced that their papers belong in a repository and that there is money to be made in the process. This presents another major challenge of modern collecting—the existence and widespread awareness of a pricey market for manuscript materials. While many older papers, such as Civil War letters and journals, also command high prices, there is again an added complexity to dealing with living collection creators, or their heirs and assigns. Apart from the merely opportunistic motivations of many (including descendants who take advantage of the weak nature of the “gentleman’s agreements” keeping their ancestors’ papers in a repository), others equate price with personal reputation and self worth. This is more often the case with literary papers, perhaps because of the fact that an author’s writings are his or her means

to achieving financial security and professional significance. Tim West has seen many authors walk away from a potential deal, insulted by the fact that they were offered less money for their papers than was a fellow writer. However, Michael Plunkett points out that even those “everyday” individuals who do not lead such public lives now approach archives with an assumption of bargaining power. The “*Antiques Roadshow* effect” has been the undoing of many potential acquisitions, particularly at smaller institutions with tightly limited funds.

Collection creators are aided in their pursuit of high prices by the variety of institutions, at all points along the scale of financial power, with competing interests. Michael Plunkett, Tim West, and Laura Micham have all found themselves tested by donors who are “shopping around” their papers to a number of repositories. It would be overly cynical to believe that money, as opposed to the integrity and compatibility of the archival institution, is the bottom line for most modern donors. However, it would also be unrealistic to suggest that this is never the case, particularly as market awareness grows. Tax disincentives to donations of self-created works also factor into the decision to sell rather than donate. Again, literary papers are a prime example of this possibility because of the fact that an author’s writings are his or her main source of income. Collectors of literary papers must sometimes ignore their professional aversion to taking materials on deposit in order to secure an acquisition by salvaging a tax deduction for the author’s heirs.

Also embedded in the comments of many of the interviewees is the implication that this awareness not only inflates prices but narrows the window of opportunity to purchase collections. Where competition exists—and it almost always does in archives,

even in spite of loose cooperative understandings between repositories—the reality is that one must often pursue living potential donors early in order to meet collecting goals. Tim West highlighted the urgency inherent in literary papers collecting, where even before one has time to form an interest in an up-and-coming author, the rights to his or her papers have likely been acquired. Although the political collections Todd Kosmerick worked with were typically available as donations rather than purchases, he also understood that if he did not contact congressmen as they were leaving office (or even before), they could easily find another taker within the state of Oklahoma. Nearly all of the interviewees have approached potential donors early, and have then taken in collections as they are being created. As assumed at the start of this study, archivists agree that these situations almost always lead to multiple accessions for single collections. In the simplest of cases, this translates to questions about when to fully process collections and make them available; in the most trying ones, it could mean negotiating a new contract and a new payment for each accession.

Making collecting decisions under pressure, about materials that have not yet “stood the test of time” in terms of attracting and holding interest, increases the difficulty inherent in the already problematic job of predicting research value. Literary papers are currently experiencing intense popularity in the manuscripts world; the interest was likened by some in this study to a collecting “fad.” According to Michael Plunkett, the archivist’s faith in such interest does not always bear fruit; U.Va.’s Mellon grant to research collection use revealed that one former trend genre, political papers, has not shown long-term researcher appeal. Still, it is difficult not to be carried along by these

movements when researchers, administrators, financial donors, and others expect a repository to keep pace with them.

With potential reasons ranging from the increased availability of paper and the advent of word processing tools, to a surging sense of self-worth among previously marginalized groups, most of the archivists interviewed agreed that 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century collections are typically larger than those that came before. Todd Kosmerick reported, however, that he was beginning to see a reversal of that trend as the prevalence of electronic mail (and other documents saved only on computer disk or tape) cut away at the linear footage of incoming collections. His observation leads to several related issues, discussed in greater detail below. However, returning to the great number of rather sizable modern collections, there are other concerns to be addressed. With increased size comes an increased demand on staff time and resources, not to mention shelf space. These are all precious commodities in even the best-equipped archives. When there is not enough of any of these things, the extent and specificity of processing and description must decrease.

Two of the major assumptions with which I entered this study were discussed in slightly less depth than I had expected, perhaps because of the current status of the archival community's response to each. The first issue was that of copyright. It appears, quite logically, that copyright is more of an issue with donors who make a living from their writings. Todd Kosmerick, Michael Plunkett, Russell Koonts, and Mira Waller were not discussing such donor groups, and so had little to say on the matter. Tim West and Laura Micham, on the other hand, both talked about such donors. Each spoke of the importance of an archivist's educating oneself on the law, and assuring donors that they

will protect their interests. West and Micham also noted that transfer of copyright to the repository is a rare occurrence. Given this reality, both argued that the archive's best response is to direct responsibility for proper use towards the users themselves, by means of copyright notices in researcher agreements (and, in the case of the Southern Historical Collection, removing copy machines from the reach of users). With such measures in place, the hope is that the archive would be protected from legal action in the event of a researcher's accused infringement. The unexpectedly short duration of our conversation on the matter may relate directly to the somewhat standardized, routine handling of the problem.

In contrast, there are few such standard responses to the issue of special formats, particularly electronic records—except, unfortunately, a sort of overwhelmed state of inaction. While there are some encouraging signs, such as Michael Plunkett's partnering with audiovisual media specialists at U.Va. to protect such materials in his collection, and Mira Waller's efforts to encourage the physician assistant groups to back up electronic records on off-site servers, the problem still seems to be too big for individual institutions to handle. Many forward-thinking archivists are beginning to push the professional community to face the oncoming struggle to salvage items that will soon be threatened by obsolescence and degradation. Hopefully this push will soon lead to creative, viable solutions for a world where “modern materials” do not stay modern—and therefore accessible—for long.

Human beings and the collections of papers they leave behind are endlessly complicated. Working with modern collections means that an archivist must often deal directly with both sources of complexity—the donors and the papers. Intangible issues of

privacy, ego, trust, control, and archival vision are added to physical ones such as size and format. Furthermore, modern papers increasingly come to an archive by means of a somewhat mercenary modern market. That market is characterized by the demand that a repository produce substantial amounts of money within a small amount of time or risk losing out to the ever-present competitor. Archivists working with modern papers should be prepared to adapt their training and experience with older papers to this challenging convergence of issues.

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## Appendix A

### Basic Interview Questions

Briefly describe how modern/contemporary papers fit into the collection development goals of your institution.

Is it safe to say that the acquisition of modern collections is more likely to involve donors/sellers with some personal connection to the papers?

Using your experience with this collecting genre as a focal point, can you describe some of the differences between dealing with papers creators or their families versus dealing with an unrelated donor/seller? (i.e. Do papers creators or their families tend to have a more or less realistic evaluation of the papers' financial worth, research value, etc.?)

What, if any, restrictions do you typically encounter with these types of collections? Do you tend to experience conflict between privacy concerns and a desire for broad access?

Do you find it more/less/equally difficult to determine a collection's research value and relevance because of its recency? How does this affect decision-making in regards to acquisitions, processing level, disposals, etc.?

Have you found that these collections tend to come all at once or in several installments? For those that come in installments, what sorts of considerations drive your decisions on when and how thoroughly you process partial collections? How do situations involving multiple installments change the relationship with donors/sellers?

How have questions of copyright ownership figured into the negotiation of the deed of gift/sale? Has copyright become an obstacle to access?

Do these collections tend to contain modern material formats such as audiovisual equipment, computer disks, etc.? While these materials certainly require special processing and preservation measures, do you feel that they are necessarily more of a challenge than working with older materials?

How does the size of modern collections of this genre compare to that of most older collections of this type?

Think of older collections of a similar genre that you have worked with—Are there any other issues that you can link to the fact that they were acquired relatively soon after their creation?

## Appendix B

### Questions for Mira Waller

Please share what you think are some of the benefits and some of the challenges of acquiring/processing the papers of an active organization, versus those of a defunct organization.

Given that the papers of these professional organizations will continue to come to you in segments for an indefinite period of time, how do you decide when and how thoroughly to process?

Have you attempted to set up a system whereby certain types of papers are coming to you on a regular basis from the organizations (somewhat like the system at a university archives, for example)?

What have been your biggest hurdles in convincing the professional associations to turn their papers over to you? Also, does their vision for how the papers will be processed, used, etc., tend to match your own?

Have privacy issues been a major concern? If so, how do you deal with them? (Do you find, for example, that the professional associations' concern for privacy ever conflicts with your desire for access?).

Do you feel that, given the recent creation of these papers, it is difficult to determine what their long-term research value will be?

Are you encountering a lot of modern special format issues? In particular, have you developed a "plan of attack" to deal with audiovisual materials and electronic records?

## Appendix C

### Informed Consent Agreement

*Project: The Challenges of Acquiring and Processing Modern Collections*

*Conducted by: Jessica Tyree, spring semester 2005*

As part of the requirements for completing a Masters of Library Science degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I am preparing a research paper on the differences in acquiring and processing modern collections versus more historical ones. The purpose of the study is to present as accurate a description of the challenges of modern papers collecting as possible in order to prepare inexperienced archivists for the types of problems they may encounter in this area. I also hope to open discussion among the archival community about these issues and thereby promote the sharing of strategies to meet such challenges.

Given your professional position and experience collecting both modern and historical papers, you are being invited to participate in this research study. A total of six archivists will be separately interviewed. Information gleaned from these interviews will form the basis of six case studies, each describing modern papers collecting in a different, specific genre (i.e. literary, faculty, artist, or congressional papers). If you agree to be a part of this study, you will be asked to participate in an audio-taped interview, to last approximately one hour. You will be asked to base your answers on one specific modern collecting genre or collection of your choosing, and to compare this experience with your work on older collections of the same genre. Your interview and those of the other participants will be discussed separately in the paper, and then analyzed as a group to pinpoint commonalities that may be linked to the relatively recent creation of the collections.

There are no anticipated personal risks associated with your participation in this study. You may request that the audio recording be stopped at any time, for any reason. You may refuse to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the interview will not result in any negative consequences for you. If you are uncomfortable providing names of collections, donors, or other involved parties, and/or personally wish not to have your own name included in the study, special care will be taken not to include identifying information.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please contact Jessica Tyree at (xxx) xxx-xxxx, or her advisor, Duke University Archivist Timothy Pyatt, at (xxx) xxx-xxxx.

The Behavioral Institutional Review Board (Behavioral IRB) at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has approved this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant in this study, you may contact the Behavioral IRB at (919) 962-7761 or at aa-irb@unc.edu.

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**I have had the chance to ask any questions I have about this study, and they have been answered for me. I have read the information in this consent form, and I agree to be in the study. There are two copies of this form. I will keep one copy and return the other to the investigator.**

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(Signature of Participant)

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(DATE)