

Samantha M. Crisp. *A Feminist Endeavor: Women's Manuscript Collections – Past, Present, and Future*. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S. degree. April, 2014. 88 pages. Advisor: Denise Anthony

Despite at any one moment comprising at least half of the human race, women have remained largely invisible in the historical record. This study examines the history of women's collections by analyzing both existing literature and interviews with three women's collections archivists, and uses the findings of this analysis to offer projections and recommendations for the future of collecting and outreach efforts. These recommendations, presented together, can offer a framework for directing women's collections activity in the future to close the gaps left by our predecessors, learn from their mistakes, and build upon their successes. Future research will be needed to evaluate the effectiveness of these recommendations in a changing women's collections landscape.

Headings:

Feminism -- History -- Sources.

Libraries -- Special collections -- Women – History.

Women -- History -- Sources.

Women's studies -- Archival resources -- North America.

A FEMINIST ENDEAVOR: WOMEN'S MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS – PAST,
PRESENT, AND FUTURE

by
Samantha M. Crisp

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

Chapel Hill, North Carolina

April 2014

Approved by

Denise Anthony

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
Background.....	3
Methodology, limitations and significance.....	9
Interviews and Literature Analysis.....	12
No Documents, No History: Women’s Collections and the First Wave	12
Mary Ritter Beard and the World Center for Women’s Archives	13
The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America.....	16
The Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College	17
Lessons Learned from the “First Wave” of Women’s Collections.....	20
Growth and Development: The Second Wave of Women’s Collections	23
Andrea Hinding and the Women’s History Sources Survey.....	29
Lessons Learned from the “Second Wave” of Women’s Collections	33
Women’s Collections in the Third Wave and Today.....	36
The Sallie Bingham Center for Women’s History and Culture	40
The Archives of Women in Science and Engineering	44
Lessons Learned from the “Third Wave” of Women’s Collections	48
Findings	51
Moving Beyond the Wave, or, the Future of Women’s Collections	51
Conclusion	76
Appendix A: Recruitment Letter, Kathryn Jacob	77
Appendix B: Recruitment Letter, Laura Micham	79
Appendix C: Recruitment Letter, Tanya Zanish-Belcher.....	81
Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, All Participants.....	83
Bibliography	84

Introduction

Despite at any one moment comprising at least half of the human race, women have remained largely invisible in the historical record. Where women's records exist in archival holdings, they are concealed by imprecise description or a lack of viable access points. Despite the establishment of hundreds of women's repositories in the last 80 years, perspectives of entire demographics of women (such as ethnic minorities, [im]migrants, and impoverished women) are absent from the historical record or, at best, minimally documented. In the age of minimal processing, archivists routinely gloss over women's materials in description, and curators may deem the kinds of records historically created by women (e.g. scrapbooks, samplers, and quilts) to be more trouble than they're worth, and thus pass over them in their collecting efforts.

This paper will examine the history of women's collections, which experienced periods of renewed interest in the 1930s, 1960s-1970s, and late 1980s-1990s (born of the need to document the First, Second, and Third Wave Feminist movements, respectively), by analyzing existing literature as well as three original interviews with women's collections archivists for commonalities and historical trends. I will then use this analysis to offer projections and recommendations for the future of collecting and outreach efforts. I hope to show that many of the same ideas prevalent during these movements still permeate women's history today, many of the same problems with documentation remain, and archivists can thus use the lessons learned from these past experiences as a model to shape current and future collection development activities.

Background

While historians began critically examining the need for women's archives immediately following First Wave Feminism in the 1930s, it was not until the 1970s that archivists made a dedicated effort to publishing articles on the importance of women's collections. In 1973, the *American Archivist* devoted an entire issue to women's role in archival science,¹ and although much of the material in this issue was devoted to the need to close the gender gap among career archivists rather than the need to preserve women's records, archivist Eva Moseley's article noted the changing trends in historical research and urged archivists to reevaluate their efforts to preserve women's history.² The 1960s and 1970s saw the emergence of Second Wave Feminism, and out of this movement grew an impetus to research and write a woman-centered account of women's role in history, one in which women's private or domestic lives in aggregate were deemed more historically valuable than the public contributions of "great" women. Called the New Social History, this movement in historical inquiry rejected the previously established field of contribution history, in which women's lives were documented only insofar as they were able to achieve great things or influence groups of people. Contribution history was rejected on the basis that it defined women's importance within the scope of male-established norms, telling not what women achieved in the past so much as what men told

¹ See *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973).

² Eva Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America," *American Archivist*, Vol. 36, no. 2 (April 1973): 215-222.

them to achieve and thought they should achieve.³

In response to requests from scholars of the New Social History, archivists across the United States began to publish guides to women's collections in the 1970s. Perhaps the most comprehensive and famous of these guides is a colossal two-volume compendium called *Women's History Sources: a Guide to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States*, known colloquially as the *Hinding Guide*, in reference to its editor, Andrea Hinding. This guide was revolutionary in establishing the importance of women's collections, both because it inspired archivists to begin actively collecting new women's collections or highlighting existing women's sources in their repositories, and because it shattered the often-touted argument that "sources on women's history were insufficient to support the field" of women's history.⁴ Local and regional collection guides, similar to the *Hinding Guide* but on a much smaller scale, began to be published in earnest, further calling into question the claim that women were not worthy of study because they were absent from the archival record.

The 1980s saw a continued interest in documenting Second Wave Feminism, although archivists began to critically examine the inclusivity of their collecting efforts. As historical research shifted from focusing strictly on woman's past to an increased interest in woman's present, archivist Suzanne Hildenbrand cautioned her colleagues not to become complacent, pointing out that, in 1986, significant populations of women

³ Gerda Lerner, "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 19.

⁴ Kären M. Mason, "'A Grand Manuscripts Search: The Women's History Sources Survey at the University of Minnesota, 1975-1979,'" in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 89.

(including racial and ethnic minorities and impoverished women) still lacked adequate representation in research collections.⁵ Nonetheless, archivists continued to attempt to raise awareness of the resources that were available, publishing accounts of their activities and guides to their collections in anthologies like Hildenbrand's *Women's Collections*. One of these archivists, Susan Searing, began to question whether separate facilities for women's collections were feasible, remarking on both the benefits to women scholars, faculty, and researchers of having their own woman-centric space into which to retreat from the sexism of the college campus, and the risks of alienating men or anti-feminist sympathizers with such a space.⁶

Issues of access began to be debated in the 1980s as well. At the height of Second Wave Feminism, women's studies, feminist studies, and material about women were seen as largely synonymous concepts; by the mid-1980s, archivists began to see the issues inherent in treating these three often dissimilar aspects of women's history as analogous.⁷ The inadequacy of subject headings and access points was brought into discussion. Nonetheless, women's history continued to grow and gain legitimacy as a field of study,

⁵ Suzanne Hildenbrand, "Introduction," in *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness*, ed. Suzanne Hildenbrand (New York: Haworth Press, 1986), 6-7.

⁶ Susan E. Searing, "Feminist Library Services: The Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large, University of Wisconsin System," in *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness* (New York: Haworth Press, 1986), 153-154.

⁷ Ellen Gay Detlefsen. "Issues of Access to Information About Women," in *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness* (New York: Haworth Press, 1986), 163.

and by 1989, scholarly journals dedicated to women's history and gender studies began to be published.⁸

In the 1990s, archivists embarked on an examination of their own history and role in documenting women. Anke Voss-Hubbard published an article recounting the story of Mary Ritter Beard and the attempted establishment of the World Center for Women's Archives in the mid-1930s.⁹ The visibility of women's collections increased at conference presentations, and the implications of advancing digital technologies and internet applications for women's collections was discussed. As the idea of the activist archivist became more accepted and even encouraged, repositories and collections dedicated to women's records appeared in ever-increasing numbers throughout the 1990s. As with previous trends in the growth of women's collections mirroring a positive uptick in feminist activity, the expansion of women's archives in the 1990s grew out of a desire to preserve the stories of women involved in Third Wave Feminism.

Now, in the 21st century, the creation and preservation of women's archives is still a topic of great interest to researchers, but archivists' voices tend to be underrepresented in the broader discussion of the future of women's collections. Readers and anthologies on the subject of women's archives have been published in the last dozen years, but historians and scholars of fields like women's history, English, and comparative

⁸ Kären M. Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher. "Raising the Archival Consciousness: How Women's Archives Challenge Traditional Approaches to Collecting and Use, Or, What's in a Name?" in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 287. Mason and Zanish-Belcher refer specifically to *The Journal of Women's History and Gender and History*.

⁹ Anke Voss-Hubbard. "No Documents, No History. Mary Ritter Beard and the Early History of Women's Archives," *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 31-56.

literature, rather than archivists, predominate among their authors.¹⁰ The notable exception is the recently published *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, a compendium of articles written by archivists at various women's collections; however, this book largely recycles articles previously published in earlier anthologies and journals, with only a handful of pieces based on new research.

At each point of renewed interest in women's history since the 1930s, archivists and women's historians have looked to the preceding generation as a model upon which to improve. Despite this, many of the same disparities that appeared at the onset of collecting women's history still remain today. At many repositories, finding aids and other descriptive resources, often predating Second Wave Feminism and the consequent rise of scholarly interest in social history, have not been revisited since they were first created, and thus do not reveal women's records within existing collections. Gaps still exist in the historical record for women who do not occupy a position of privilege; racial and ethnic minorities, particularly Hispanic and Native American women, women without access to higher education, poor women of any race or ethnicity, (im)migrant women, and disabled women remain woefully underrepresented. Now, perhaps more than ever, the justification of the continued existence of separate women's repositories and collections is frequently called into question. And, in addition to these same problems that have historically plagued efforts to collect women's records, we are faced with new

¹⁰ See Nupur Chaduri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010); Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar, eds, *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*, (Waterloo, Ont: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001); and Saskia Eleonora Wiering, ed., *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*, (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008).

and more complex obstacles; for instance, current definitions of “women’s collections” are increasingly complicated by the changing notions of what it means to be a “woman.” Are intersex individuals’ records women’s records? What about transgendered individuals’ records, or the records of androgynous individuals of either sex? Another largely unprecedented challenge archivists grapple with is defining women’s collections within the context of progressively digital and web-based content management. While these are issues with which any archivist might struggle, archivists of women’s collections are burdened with the responsibility to use these new technologies to rectify the exclusion of underdocumented groups of women from the historical record.

I suggest that, in order to preserve the future of women’s collections, the past experiences of the archivists who spearheaded the establishment of women’s archives be more closely analyzed and quantified, and the perspectives of archivists actively collecting during those periods be documented and evaluated.

Methodology, limitations and significance

Because it is impossible to conduct studies or interviews with archivists involved in the founding of women's repositories in the 1930s or 1960s-1970s, much of the data for this study has been gleaned from content analysis of the literature produced during those time periods. Publications, studies, methodologies, and other literature have been examined and analyzed for similarities and differences in experiences between and across repositories. These trends were then compared to current practices within the women's collections community to determine whether there exists a set of best practices for continued vitality. For example, repositories established in the 1930s likely struggled with severe limitations in obtaining funding during the economic scarcity of the Great Depression. Though not as economically severe, the economic downturn and resulting recession in the late 2000s likely caused many modern women's collections to suffer great setbacks in obtaining funding, and the effects of the struggling economy can still be seen today. By analyzing the published accounts and records of outreach activities, advocacy, and fundraising performed by archivists at women's repositories in the 1930s, could a set of recommendations that would still be largely applicable and effective for modern repositories experiencing funding difficulties be developed?

In addition to content analysis of existing literature, I interviewed three archivists at women's collections to determine what problems these institutions are currently facing, the challenges and opportunities presented by collecting women's records today, and how

they have overcome past challenges. The data resulting from these interviews have been analyzed alongside trends noted in the literature to determine whether women's collections archivists are still struggling with the same issues, and if so, whether past methodology can be utilized by current archivists to overcome those issues. Finally, data has been synthesized into a list of best practices for future collection development.

This study has been necessarily limited by the relatively small pool of interviewees as well as the limited amount of published literature and data available for women's collections. Particularly in the 1930s, societal stricture and cultural limitations kept women's collections archivists (who then tended to be only women) from publishing articles or presenting at conferences. Although published literature is somewhat scant, the number of women's repositories in existence prior to the onset of Second Wave Feminism in the 1960s is small compared to the number currently in existence, thus existing data can be said to be accurately and holistically representative of women's collections of that time period generally. Additionally, the recommendations made as a result of the study will be largely theoretical, until they are pilot-tested by an existing institution.

This study has resulted in a set of principles that can be used to guide collection development, outreach, provision of access, and processing efforts at existing women's collections or women's repositories. These principles can be generalized not only to women's collections, but also to repositories not defining themselves as women's collections but who nonetheless possess women's records in their holdings, who wish to increase visibility of those collections in their current descriptive practices, secure

funding to reprocess these collections, or otherwise define women's history as a branch of their collection development policies.

Interviews and Literature Analysis

No Documents, No History: Women's Collections and the First Wave

The 1930s was an influential decade for archival science. The United States National Archives and Records Administration was established in 1934. The Society of American Archivists was chartered in 1936. Following these national trends, some of the earliest women's collections in the United States appeared during this time period. It is significant that this period closely followed the culmination of First Wave Feminism, the period of feminist activity beginning in the 19th century and ending with the passage of the 19th Amendment to the United States Constitution and ensuing reforms in higher education, workplace equality, and health care. The influence of feminism on the establishment of women's collections in the 1930s is evident, but not in an immediately intuitive or expected way. In fact, it was a decline in interest in the feminist movement, rather than a renewed interest, that led to the creation of these institutions.

In her introduction to the book *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness*, Suzanne Hildenbrand remarks that “[w]hen feminism is weak ... women's collections are few in number and have a limited agenda ... Paradoxically, many major women's collections of today can trace their origins to periods of low interest in feminism.”¹¹ As feminism matured and moved forward into later movements,

¹¹ Hildenbrand, “Introduction,” 1-2.

such as the Second Wave in the 1960s and the Third Wave in the late 1980s, women's collections would be able to expand their programs and focus their individual agendas, but the "first wave" of women's collections began purely out of a survivalist instinct on the part of its founders.

During the period of economic prosperity that ensued during the 1920s, societal awareness of feminism (until that point largely associated with the campaign of the suffragists, who won the vote in 1920) began to fade. Suffragists and other feminist activists began to worry about the survival of their records as their beliefs met with increasing disinterest or hostility. By the mid-1930s, women's historians began to push for the establishment of repositories dedicated solely to the preservation of women's history, stemming directly from the desire to preserve those stories that were increasingly in danger of being lost to posterity. Further, the women who called for the establishment of the institutions described below wanted them to serve as dynamic centers of feminist (or otherwise woman-centric) education, mobilizers for feminist activism, and disseminators of information and publications related to the women's movement,¹² rather than static repositories for women's records, and thus rekindle an interest in the feminist movement.

Mary Ritter Beard and the World Center for Women's Archives

Mary Ritter Beard was a historian by profession. But it would become clear by the close of the 1930s that she was also one of the earliest examples of an activist archivist, spending the better part of the decade campaigning to establish a national

¹² Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013), 42-43.

repository for women's records.¹³ Beard had been active in historical scholarship throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, collaborating with her husband to publish history textbooks and publishing books and articles on women's history. But her interest in the documentary evidence of women's lives was not strongly articulated until she voiced her disagreement with many suffragists and feminists, who believed that women had been subjugated throughout history. To the contrary, Beard suggested that when historians "trace the lives and labors of women up through the countless centuries, we find women always playing a realistic and dynamic function, or role, in society."¹⁴ For Beard, the prevailing feminist beliefs of female subjugation and oppression were damaging to women, and she maintained that only by learning their own historical significance and seeing the evidence of the ideals she put forward would women regain their self-confidence.

So when feminist activist Rosika Schwimmer approached her with the idea of establishing a World Center for Women's Archives (WCWA), Beard began campaigning for the center. Unfortunately, problems began almost immediately. Following the inaugural board meeting of the WCWA in October 1935, Beard voiced strong opposition to the board's suggestion that the center collaborate with a larger institution, such as the

¹³ It should be noted that, although this paper is focusing on American women's collections, efforts to establish women's repositories outside the U.S. were happening as well. At the same time that Beard was fundraising for the WCWA, a similar campaign to establish the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (IIAV) in Amsterdam as well. See Saskia E. Wieringa, ed., *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women's History* (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008).

¹⁴ Anke Voss-Hubbard, "No Documents, No History. Mary Ritter Beard and the Early History of Women's Archives," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 34.

Library of Congress. Beard believed that organizational independence was vitally important to both the success of the center and the self-image of the women it aimed to represent. In advocating for a separate archive for women, Beard maintained that “only by dramatizing women can women be recognized as equally important with men.”¹⁵

Despite internal disagreements such as this one, and Schwimmer’s resignation upon recognizing Beard’s refusal to narrow the WCWA’s focus to women in peace movements, the center began collecting sponsorships and established a headquarters in New York. Some sponsors were ambivalent about the center’s mission. Dr. Alice Hamilton, a consultant for the U.S. Department of Labor, sent a small check to Beard along with the following note:

Perhaps I am all wrong, but I have never seen the value of publicizing the work of women in men’s fields. That always seems to me a revelation of our weakness rather than our strength because what we achieve is always so little compared to the record of men. Our contribution to life is different and although quite as important is so much more intangible. As I said, this may be old fashioned and absurd but it is still my feeling and keeps me from joining wholeheartedly in your enterprise.

Beard returned the check, remarking “[w]hen I explain to her that I too am deeply interested in women’s feminine contributions and not primarily in their imitative work, I may be able to win her genuine support.”¹⁶

Even though some prominent women were hesitant to invest in the WCWA, the center received a fair amount of initial support and endorsement. But internal strife again

¹⁵ Ibid., 35-36.

¹⁶ Patricia Miller King, “Forty Years of Collecting on Women: The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Radcliffe College,” in *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness*, ed. Suzanne Hildenbrand (New York: Haworth Press, 1986), 75.

stalled the center's progress when disagreements over racial issues weakened the board. Mary McLeod Bethune and the National Council of Negro Women were invited to assist with the WCWA's establishment, but black women began to distance themselves from the WCWA when it became clear that women of color would never be involved with the organization in a meaningful or influential way. By June of 1940, Beard realized that both the finances and the internal structure of the WCWA were unsound, and she resigned from the board.

Despite the failure of the WCWA, the project's legacy lived on. Beard's involvement with the WCWA led to collaborations with several colleges and universities to establish women's collections. Many of these institutions received the papers that women had donated to the WCWA, which were left in Beard's possession after the organization dissolved.

The Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America

One institution with which Beard collaborated heavily was Radcliffe College. Radcliffe established a Women's Rights Collection in 1943 after receiving the papers of suffragist Maud Wood Park, and college president Wilbur K. Jordan reached out to Beard for advice on growing the collection. Jordan had developed the idea to expand the Women's Rights Collection in collaboration with Arthur M. Schlesinger, and it was Schlesinger who suggested Jordan contact Beard. Beard wrote several letters to Jordan offering instructions and advising him to define a broad collecting scope. Jordan chose to

keep the collection more focused than Beard suggested, but did expand it beyond women's rights and suffrage.¹⁷

The Women's Archives, including the Women's Rights Collection, opened to the public in 1949. Beard continued to correspond with Jordan, but it soon became clear that the college was not as fully committed to her vision of the project as she had hoped. Despite investing substantial funds into the collection and donating several collections in her possession, including the WCWA records, Beard soon fell out of touch with Radcliffe.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Women's Archives became a separate department of Radcliffe College in 1950. Schlesinger headed the department's advisory board, and when he died in 1965, the department was renamed the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America in his honor.¹⁹

The Sophia Smith Collection at Smith College

While Beard was communicating with Radcliffe about the Women's Rights Collection, a similar effort was underway at Smith College to develop a women's collection. Smith College's archivist, Margaret Grierson, was a close friend of Beard's, and embodied all of the skills Beard envisioned for a director of a women's archive.²⁰ College president Herbert Davis contacted Beard shortly after proposing the establishment of a women's collection, and Beard responded with enthusiasm,

¹⁷ Ibid., 77.

¹⁸ Voss-Hubbard, "No Documents, No History," 40.

¹⁹ King, "Forty Years of Collecting on Women," 79.

²⁰ Ibid.

periodically sending the college manuscript collections and books related to women's history.

After establishing the collection, Davis was unsure of the direction in which he wanted to take it. He and Grierson had met with some opposition from alumnae who disagreed with the idea of a woman-centered collection development policy, to which Grierson responded, "the purpose of the collection is certainly not to sharpen the distinction between the sexes ... but further to diminish the distinction by gathering an imposing evidence of work of women comparable in every way to that of men."²¹ Beard encouraged Davis to expand the collection beyond a literary focus to include works by and about women that reflected the achievements and experiences of American women writ large. In 1945, the collection was renamed the Historical Collection of Books By and About Women, and in 1946 it was again renamed as the Sophia Smith Collection, in honor of the college's founder.

The Sophia Smith Collection deviates slightly from Beard's initial instructions in its physical arrangement; in an effort to establish the written contribution of women as equal with that of men, librarians made the decision to shelve women's materials within the body of the general collection. Although this system of organization is a direct departure from Beard's view that physically separate women's collections were vitally important in maintaining women's voices in history, her encouragements did not fall on deaf ears. In 1947, librarians developed a separate subject card catalog for the women's collection, which allowed researchers to more fully locate materials within the context of women's history. This married Beard's ideal with that of Grierson, who believed that

²¹ Voss-Hubbard, "No Documents, No History," 43.

“much of what is purely feminist loses its significance in segregation ... It is artificial to consider one sex as a world apart.”²²

The 1950s saw the election of a new Smith College president, Benjamin Fletcher Wright. Beard was optimistic that Wright would continue Davis’s goal to expand the Sophia Smith Collection, but it soon became clear that Wright had no interest in the project. Beard began to campaign for the establishment of a women’s studies program at Smith, but Wright ignored her pleas. Most of the collection’s patrons were researchers outside of Smith; faculty members were not incorporating the collection’s materials into their research or teaching. These factors, combined with waning administrative support, forced Grierson to undertake a proactive, donor-driven approach to collection development, and Beard frequently recommended potential donors for Grierson to contact. Beard’s assistance in this process proved to be invaluable— many of Smith’s most important donors cited their respect and admiration for Beard as the deciding factor in their donations.

Although Beard was never directly employed by Smith College, Margaret Grierson regards her as deserving credit for the establishment of the collection. Beard, and other women like her, recognized that “only through the establishment of women’s archives could women’s history be thoroughly professionalized and institutionalized.”²³ These sentiments have been echoed throughout the history of women’s collections, and it is only because of tireless campaigning on the part of women’s historians, archivist and

²² Ibid., 44.

²³ Ibid., 49.

non-archivist alike, that the study of women's history has grown into the respected field of research that it is today.

Lessons Learned from the “First Wave” of Women’s Collections

When Kathryn Jacob, current director of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library, was asked whether, at any point in the collection's past, feminism was a motivating factor in its development, she had this to say:

Absolutely it was, and it remains so. It began in 1943 with Maud Wood Park. She had been an important figure in the suffrage movement and in progressive-era activism, and she personally was definitely motivated by feminism. The college took the material and began the Women's Archives because of its commitment to feminism. We now occupy a very large building. It has grown over the past 70 years, and we have thousands of feet of material stored off-site. And feminism was one of our founding principles.²⁴

And yet, it is not the *only* motivating factor. Despite defining feminism as a collecting strength, Jacob does not consider her collection in its current iteration to be a feminist collection. “Our mission is to document the lives of women in America, and that's all kinds of women. So we have pro-suffrage and anti-suffrage women, pro-choice and pro-life women, politically conservative women and über-liberal women, and we have women who took no notice of the women's movement at all.”²⁵

In many ways Jacob's sentiments echo those of Mary Ritter Beard, who encouraged First Wave feminists to expand their concept of feminism and womanhood beyond the subjugation of women throughout history. Treating feminism, female

²⁴ Kathryn Jacob, phone conversation with author, Durham, NC, 27 January 2014.

²⁵ Ibid.

oppression, or any other one aspect as the totality of the female experience does not present an accurate picture of women's history. At best, defining history in such a way ignores the experiences of entire demographics of women outside of these definitions, and at worst, relegating women's history to a single category can affect women's future self-perception. These are ideals that women's collections archivists believed in the beginning and continue to cling to today, and the prevalence of this notion throughout the history of women's collections cannot be ignored when considering future collecting endeavors.

A struggle unique to women's collections, and likely collections focusing on any other numerically large but historically marginalized group, is that of justification. Beard and Grierson faced continual opposition from women and men who believed that women's collections ghettoized women, highlighted the perceived differences between women and men that feminists struggled to counteract, and painted women as historically inferior to men, albeit unintentionally. Comparatively, Jacob points out that "educating individuals about what we do and why it's important that their collections are in archives is a continuing challenge as well."²⁶ Although Beard's battle to justify the establishment and continued existence of the WCWA was ultimately lost, the work she completed eventually led to the establishment of several other prominent women's collections whose librarians and administrators were convinced of the importance of preserving women's history. Archivists today can take a lesson from Beard's experience, and Jacob believes that they should.

²⁶ Ibid.

How to advocate for saving your records and placing your records in an institution where they'll be accessible [is a challenge]. We and other women's archives have done a good job of getting our story honed down to a few good minutes and can make a compelling case if we get an opportunity to talk to someone. Here, because we collect fairly broadly, I'm often talking to women and organizations I don't agree with, and I find it difficult to talk to them. But our mission is to document all women's lives. For instance, there aren't many places that collect conservative women's materials and have made that a collecting focus. If [potential donors] are not interested in us or another women's archives there are not a whole lot of other places they can go. Even archivists here in "liberal new England" at Harvard don't curate a collection and just throw out everything they don't like. [Advocating for ourselves like] this is something I think we can learn from predecessors.²⁷

These sentiments have been echoed throughout the history of women's collections, and it is important for future women's collections archivists to keep their predecessors' experiences in mind when attempting to grow their collections.

²⁷ Ibid.

Growth and Development: The Second Wave of Women's Collections

With the onset of World War II, many of the campaigns to establish women's collections slowed. Although established collections continued to expand their holdings related to women, widespread motivation to continue documenting the lives of women was too lagging to carry the movement through the war in a meaningful way. Many repositories were poorly funded and severely understaffed, and these institutions languished throughout the 1940s and 1950s.²⁸ But with the dawn of Second Wave Feminism in the 1960s and a renewed interest in women's history, there was a noticeable uptick in activity related to the documentation of women.

The major difference between women's collections in the First Wave and women's collections in the Second Wave was "a radical shift in the history profession."²⁹ This shift, called the New Social History, was marked by a rejection of women's treatment in historical scholarship up to that point. Previously, the writers of history had treated women in only very limited ways. One method with which historians addressed women's history was to research and write only about the public lives of notable, "great" women. This method centered on women who were outliers, whose experiences were not representative of women's history as a whole. Another method was contribution history,

²⁸ Hildenbrand, "Introduction," 3.

²⁹ Elizabeth A. Meyers, "I Am My Sister's Keeper: Women's Archives, a Reflection," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 437.

referring to “women’s contribution to, their status in, and their oppression by male-defined society.”³⁰ While this method of historical research covers a broader range of the female experience and acknowledges the oppression of women throughout history, it characterizes the achievements of women in male-defined norms, effectively describing nothing more than “what men in the past told women to do and what men in the past thought women should be;”³¹ and it imposes limitations on the ongoing contributions of women by painting them as constant victims of oppression. In a 1975 essay, historian Caroll Smith-Rosenberg defined the historical shift more directly:

These early historians of women accepted the profession's traditional hierarchy of significance, a hierarchy structured around public policy; they accepted as well the traditional political periodization and political theories of causation ... They did not explore the W. C. T. U., the Purity Crusade, or the free-love movement in terms of female-male power relations within Victorian America ... Rather, clinging to the political orientation and descriptive methods of the old social history, they dismissed such movements and causal patterns as irrelevant to public issues and therefore as marginal to American history. The result was unintentionally, but implacably, to define the majority of American women as also marginal to American history.³²

The New Social History sought to redress these historiographical limitations by writing a woman-centered history of women on their own terms.

This shift in historiography meant that women’s records began to be viewed in a new light, as valuable pieces of history. But there was some pushback from (particularly

³⁰ Gerda Lerner, “Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges,” *Perspectives on Women’s Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 19.

³² Caroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The New Woman and the New History,” *Feminist Studies* 3, No. 1/2 (1975), 186-187.

male) historians, writers, and archivists, who still viewed women's records as incidental. This view manifested itself among potential donors as well. Families who inherited their female ancestors' records tended to destroy them because they did not recognize their importance. Similarly "women, accustomed to being 'just' housewives or 'just' schoolteachers, or to being known as their fathers' daughters or husbands' wives, tended toward greater diffidence."³³ This is a line of thinking that Gerda Lerner and other women's historians of the social history school aimed to combat. Women's perceptions of their own inferiority were so deeply ingrained from centuries of systemic androcentric influence that "[t]o challenge the system meant a fundamental reordering of values, with special respect to sexual equality."³⁴

Throughout the period encompassing Second Wave Feminism, women's collections archivists and women's historians fought to legitimize and justify their work to critics. Professor Mary Rubio struggled for years against pushback from male editors when she undertook a project to edit the journals of L.M. Montgomery, author of the *Anne of Green Gables* series, in the early 1980s.³⁵ Her initial grant application to the Social Science and Humanities Research Council was turned down because the reviewers did not consider Montgomery's journals to be worthy of scholarly attention. They believed, incorrectly, that Montgomery's novels were read only by women and children, and thus did not deserve to be treated as academic research. One reviewer wrote

³³ Eva Moseley, "Sources for the 'New Women's History,'" in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 109.

³⁴ Meyers, "My Sister's Keeper," 446.

³⁵ It should be noted that Rubio is a Canadian author, but her experiences are largely representative of American women authors of this era.

“Montgomery has a very limited appeal and challenge ... I mean that in the literary-critical sense, of course,”³⁶ implying that Montgomery’s female readership was neither discriminating nor capable of critical engagement in their choice of literature. When the project finally came to fruition and Rubio prepared the journals for publication, her publisher, William Toye, cut much of what Rubio believed to be valuable commentary on Montgomery’s life because he saw the material as “trivial.” His edits to Rubio’s introduction to the journals caused further grief.

My comment about “silenced women” finding “their voice” disappeared, for instance: what he asked, would the general public make of the statement that women did not have “a voice?” The public knew, he semijoked, that women “talked all the time.” And a phrase calling Montgomery an “artless” writer mysteriously appeared ... I felt that this phrase was the voice of patriarchy assuring male scholars that Montgomery might be published by Oxford, but that this did not mean that she was to be taken as seriously as a “real” author.³⁷

The continued scrutiny under which women’s records were and are placed has been a constant struggle throughout the history of women’s collections. Nonetheless, because the nature of the New Social History was such that women’s private documents and personal reflections were more valuable than secondary accounts of their lives, a renewed interest in women’s collections was ignited in the late 1960s. This flourish of activity (much like the first wave of women’s collections in the 1930s) was a product of feminist ideology, both because of the inherently feminist nature of the desire to equalize women’s history, but also because of the need to preserve the papers of feminist activists.

³⁶ Mary Rubio, “‘A Dusting Off’: An Anecdotal Account of Editing the L.M. Montgomery Journals,” in *Working in Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents*, eds. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 52-53.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

But unlike the first wave of collecting, the second wave of women's collections was marked by a collective understanding that women should take a more active role in the curation, management, and administration of these collections.

Prior to the onset of Second Wave Feminism, women's representation in the administration of the Society of American Archivists, the management of state archives,³⁸ and in the body of archival literature was miniscule at best, despite a notable level of interest in archival science among women. The lack of opportunity for advancement, similar to other academic professions at the time, can be contributed to sexist employment policies (as Elsie Freeman Freivogel noted in a special 1973 issue of the *American Archivist* dedicated to women archivists, "it is an irony of the history of women that they have traditionally been allowed to lift thirty-five-pound children [for] free but can be denied the chance to lift thirty-five-pound boxes at \$3 an hour")³⁹ as well as the general sexist attitude among upper-level administrators that kept women from viewing promotions and publication as feasible attainments and thus not seeking them out.

However, Second Wave Feminism brought with it the desire to redress these inequalities, and as with many professional societies and organizations, women began to call for reforms to the administration and organization of archival and library associations. Miriam Crawford noted that, despite an increase in female membership in the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in the first four decades of its existence, the

³⁸ According to research by Mabel E. Deutrich, women were in charge of only six state archival institutions in 1973. See "Women in Archives: Ms. Vs. Mr. Archivist," *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973), 177-178.

³⁹ Elsie Freeman Freivogel, "Women in Archives: A Program for Action," *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973), 199.

proportion of women in leadership positions had not substantially increased.⁴⁰ Crawford noted that women's history was essential to the total study of history, that women archivists were best situated to uncover the history of women, and as such, women should have a more powerful role in the administration of the SAA, both by establishing a permanent committee on the status of women in archives and by rallying informed male support.⁴¹

Along with a renewed interest in feminism, women's history, and advancing women's involvement in the field of archives came an introspective examination of the organization of women's collections. Archivists continued to struggle with the idea of the separate women's repository. Some archivists believed these repositories characterized women as inherently separate and inferior, while others recognized a continuing need for separate collections. According to Eva Moseley, "perhaps the day will come—but it has not yet—when Antoinette Blackwell's papers will be housed in a theological collection and Alice Hamilton's in a medical library—and when Blackwell will be referred to simply as a minister (not a woman minister) and Hamilton as a physician."⁴² Additionally, women's records and family papers had been preserved in the years since the First Wave, but now archivists were faced with the question of how to facilitate access to those records. Traditional archival tools and library catalogs were found to be inadequate, and classification practices, cataloging standards, and subject headings were

⁴⁰ Miriam I. Crawford, "Women in Archives: The Status of Women in the Academic Professions," *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973), 225-226.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 230

⁴² Moseley, "Women in Archives," 221.

frequent sources of contention.⁴³ Archivists' reaction to the often sexist and regressive nature of Library of Congress subject headings for women's collections were ambivalent, recognizing the need for separate catalog cards for women while acknowledging their sexist undertones:

"Women as . . ." and "Women in . . ." They are chauvinist, for there is no heading for "Men as artists" or "Men in public life," and the titles do not make sense in a library like the Schlesinger where virtually everything is on women. And yet, if a student goes to any general college library or to a special subject library to find material on female violinists or female botanists or orators, is it not useful to have those chauvinist "Women as . . ." and "Women in . . ." cards in the catalog? Perhaps some day the sex of a violinist or botanist [sic] will be of no interest because a specialist or artist will as likely be female as male. But for the time being, we must consider the existence of women's repositories and the proposed unified listing of women's records as desirable steps forward, despite their discriminatory" overtones.⁴⁴

In order to rectify these inequalities of subject access, archivists for women's collections began to consider other means of getting researchers to their collections. Archivists were aware of the need to collaborate and communicate across repositories to best facilitate research into a broad spectrum of women's history, and this shift came in the form of the union catalog.

Andrea Hinding and the Women's History Sources Survey

At the annual meeting of the Organization of American Historians (OAH) in 1971, a group of women's historians met to discuss ways in which to improve access to women's collections. Their discussion led to a conference session on the subject at the

⁴³ Hildenbrand, "Introduction," 5.

⁴⁴ Moseley, "Women in Archives," 221.

1972 meeting. One of the session's coordinators was Andrea Hinding, curator of the Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota. The response to the session was overwhelming, and it demonstrated that there was a clear interest in increased access to women's records. In preparation for the meeting, Hinding created a list of women's collections and repositories that the session's panelists represented, and this list was distributed to session attendants and mailed to hundreds of other individuals who requested it later. This list was the first stage of what would become the most comprehensive catalog of women's collections in existence, *Women's History Sources: A Guide to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States*, also known as the *Hinding Guide*.

Following the success of the session and the resultant list of repositories, Hinding and her colleague, Clarke Chambers, were soon asked to submit a grant proposal to fund a comprehensive survey of American women's collections. Hinding and Chambers were chosen both because of their motivation and archival expertise, and because their parent institution, the University of Minnesota, would be able to partially fund the project.⁴⁵ Hinding and Chambers submitted a National Endowment for the Humanities grant application in 1973 to secure funding for the project. In their application, they noted:

Though women have lived half of human history and though their experience has been a separate and identifiable one, biologically and culturally, scholars have given little systematic attention to women's lives ... But recently, contemporary feminism and developments in urban and minority history have reawakened interest in the study of women's past and the role women have played in society ... If this interest in women's history is to result in substantial scholarly work, the

⁴⁵ Kären M. Mason, "'A Grand Manuscripts Search': The Women's History Sources Survey at the University of Minnesota, 1975-1979," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 76.

primary material housed in archival agencies and manuscripts repositories must be re-assessed and made known to the scholarly world.⁴⁶

The grant application was turned down, largely because its reviewers believed it would duplicate the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* (NUCMC). Hinding and Chambers revised the application, explicitly stating the ways in which their survey would be different from the NUCMC, and their revised proposal was accepted in March 1975, receiving about \$347,000 from the NEH and roughly \$34,000 in matching funds from the University of Minnesota.

Work on the survey began almost immediately, starting with a comprehensive list of potentially relevant repositories and collections. Project participants estimated that about 3,500-6,000 relevant collections existed, but in fact 11,000 repositories were ultimately contacted.⁴⁷ Throughout the process of drafting documentation that would be used in the survey, project staff remained highly conscious of the possibility that the archivists they contacted would dismiss their project as trivial or tedious, and thus tried to be as congenial, direct, and approachable as possible. “They stressed collegiality and cheerfulness, language as clear and direct as possible, and forms that were attractive (not grey) and legible—and that didn’t appear, at least initially, intimidating.”⁴⁸ Initial responses to form letters revealed that most repositories insisted that they had no records pertaining to women. Those that responded positively were sent packets of questionnaires. If a repository was unable or unwilling to participate in the survey, or if a

⁴⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 79.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 80.

repository believed they had no records related to women but project staff strongly suspected that this was not the case, field workers were sent to survey these collections on behalf of the project.

The survey received thousands of responses, which project staff took great care to log in a consistent and representative way. Project staff made the decision to include as much identifying information as possible for the women whose papers appeared in the survey, including their married names, maiden names, husbands' names, and nicknames.⁴⁹ *Women's History Sources* was published in 1979 in a two-volume set. Overall, it was positively received by researchers and archivists, but it did have limitations. The guide made little progress in helping identify the records of women of color, aside from the few collections that were coded with racial and ethnic identifiers. It was also limited by its static nature, as "the very act of publishing such a guide inspired archivists to more actively collect women's history sources" after the guide was printed.⁵⁰

Despite its limitations, the *Hinding Guide* had major implications for the field of women's history and women's collections. Archivists for both women's repositories and general repositories were challenged to reimagine their holdings in order to accurately represent them in the guide. Consequently, many of them made note of women's collections of which they had previously been unaware, and some began more actively acquiring women's collections when they realized there was a dearth of women's records in their repositories. Some archivists even experienced a political reawakening as a result of the survey, such as one curator in a small Connecticut town, who realized that women

⁴⁹ Ibid., 85.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 89.

in her community had historically been uninvolved with local politics and persuaded more women to run for office.⁵¹

Lessons Learned from the “Second Wave” of Women’s Collections

In 1980, women’s collections Eva Moseley wrote: “Most archivists and manuscript curators don’t write history. But, with the decisions we make, especially in appraising records and papers and in describing them, we can either promote new trends in research or throw up roadblocks in their way.”⁵² Moseley’s declaration accurately summarizes the time period encompassing Second Wave Feminism and the emergence of the field of social history. Women’s history researchers urged archivists to collect materials to support a woman-centric account of history, and archivists responded by increasing their efforts to document women in the present, proactively advocate for their collections, and help each other uncover women’s lives in existing collections when a redefinition of collection development policies was impossible. Making women’s records more accessible positively impacted women’s awareness of their own cultural significance, and this “heightened sense of ownership of their lives and bodies”⁵³ resulted in the continued development academic interest in women’s history and women’s studies.

The *Hinding Guide* is a notable example of archivists using their influence to promote new trends in research. Although the guide was, at the time of its conception,

⁵¹ Ibid., 92.

⁵² Moseley, “Sources for the ‘New Women’s History,’” 116.

⁵³ Saskia E. Wieringa, “The (Sexual) Revolution of the Amsterdam Women’s Archives and Library,” in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia E. Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 13.

and continues to be an example of the incredible lengths to which women's collections archivists were willing to go, it was only the beginning. Racial and ethnic groups remained underdocumented in the guide, potentially valuable collections were missed, and its \$175 price tag likely limited its distribution. In order to continue the work of the guide, archivists must "continue to work collaboratively to ensure that [their] archives reflect the rich diversity of society and that the sources [they] uncover are preserved and made known to a broad range of users."⁵⁴ Online databases and E-resources have made some headway in this area, but the information they provide is not always conclusive. Many small repositories, local historical societies, and community archives do not have the technological infrastructure to support the integration of their collections into these resources, and in many cases, collections at these repositories have never been described except in the *Hinding Guide*.⁵⁵ Building meaningful partnerships between these organizations and more technologically advanced institutions is the key to bridging this digital divide.⁵⁶

Central to the success of documenting underrepresented groups is the idea of the activist women's collections archivist. Although women's collections archivists of the First and Second Waves did not necessarily refer to themselves as such at the time, merely by advocating for the dedicated documentation of a marginalized group, they became the precursors of openly activist archivists of later decades. At the same time, many archivists still clung to the belief that they should be truly detached and neutral

⁵⁴ Mason, "A Grand Manuscripts Search," 95.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁵⁶ The Online Archive of California (<http://www.oac.cdlib.org>) is an example of such a partnership.

custodians of history, and this prevailing belief likely limited the success of endeavors like the *Women's History Sources* survey. But despite the internal conflict that archivists and the archival profession suffered during this time period, many of the extra-archival effects of outreach to underdocumented groups began to present themselves (for instance, the Connecticut archivist who became involved in local politics thanks to the *Hinding Guide's* influence). For the first time in many archivists' careers, they began to see the tangible benefits of targeted collection development, and these ideas would continue to grow and flourish throughout the years, leading to eventual groundbreaking developments in the areas of documentation strategy and activist archiving.

Women's Collections in the Third Wave and Today

Throughout the 1980s, established feminist institutions began to decline. Feminist consciousness began to shift from public campaigns to achieve equality in male-dominated areas, such as closing the wage gap, breaking the glass ceiling, and combating sexism in the workplace, to much more personal and semi-private expressions of dissatisfaction with the continuing patriarchal system. As the 1990s set in, girls and young women looked back on the stories and achievements of their predecessors and began to create their own outlet for protest and feminist expression. Called Third Wave Feminism, this movement was different from the First and Second waves. Third Wave Feminism grew out of the activities of girls, and the emerging influence of 1990s feminist punk rock bands led to the formation of Riot Grrrl, a subdivision of Third Wave Feminism with a DIY and artistic slant wherein girls used the creative outlet of a revolutionary document, the zine, to express their feminist ideals.

Zines are individually produced low-budget documents, often consisting of a combination of hand-drawn and notated passages and cut-and-paste images and text, photocopied onto 8.5"x11" copy paper and stapled to form a makeshift magazine. These documents would then be hand-distributed in small numbers to members of the community, friends, and other zine creators. Zines were ephemeral expressions of their creators' thoughts and feelings and, as noted by Kate Eichhorn, they were documents temporally rooted in the present. "Valuing expediency over posterity ... [girls'] hastily produced publications rarely pointed beyond the moment of production." This

temporality became a defining characteristic of the Riot Grrrl movement and Third Wave Feminism more broadly. “Centered around the category of the girl, itself temporally bound, rather than the more enduring category of the woman, the temporal orientation of zines permeated feminist activism and cultural production in the 1990s.”⁵⁷ Reflecting this shift, new and fleeting forms of protest emerged during this time, such as flash mobs and other performances.

By extension of the fleeting nature of their activism (or perhaps contributing to it), Third Wave Feminists became increasingly aware that the achievements and political gains of their Second Wave predecessors were rarely permanent, but instead subject to perpetual scrutiny and the threat of undoing. This notion manifested itself in the protest movements that they formed. An example is the Reproductive Rights or Pro-Choice movement, which seeks to ensure women’s access to safe, legal abortions. The legalization of abortion in 1973 under *Roe v. Wade*, a result of Second Wave Feminist activism, is a decision that has been protested, challenged, and threatened constantly since the ruling. Riot Grrrls’ concurrent awareness of both the potential impermanence of their own achievements and the observable danger in which many of their predecessors’ achievements were placed led to the somewhat serendipitous preservation of Second Wave Feminist thought within the records of the Third Wave; Riot Grrrls incorporated the stories and messages of Second Wave Feminism into their zines, effectively preserving them both in the transient format of the zine and in perpetuity when a proactive interest in zine archiving eventually emerged among women’s collections in the 2000s.

⁵⁷ Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, vii.

Meanwhile, as the field of women's studies expanded to the college classroom and became a respectable field of study, activist women endowed collections to support growing interest in woman-centered research. Existing collections began to broaden their scope to include diverse geographic areas and underrepresented groups. New applications for women's collections management emerged as well, including the creation of special subject librarians for women's studies. The University of Wisconsin system, endeavoring to create a body of resources to support its women's studies program but recognizing that a single collection would not suffice for its twenty-six campuses, had supported such a position since 1977, and by the mid 1980s this position became "accepted as an integral component of library services in the state."⁵⁸

As more women's collections and positions within those collections were created, a need for collaboration and increased representation in the Society of American Archivists emerged. In response to that need, the Women's Collections Roundtable was established in 1989. Prior to that time, members of the SAA's Women's Caucus had been discussing for years the need for a more focused group surrounding the creation and management of women's collections, and an application was finally circulated at the annual Women's Caucus meeting on October 26, 1989. In its official application to the SAA, the roundtable stated that its mission was 1) "To identify and address the concerns of archivists who are interested in or responsible for women's collections," 2) "To promote the development, preservation and cooperative acquisition of women's papers and archival collections, and" 3) "To develop a network of interested archivists, librarians, and historians to push for increased funding and support for women's

⁵⁸ Searing, "Feminist Library Services," 160.

historical collections and archival projects on the local, state and national level.”⁵⁹ At the time of its founding, the roundtable listed 103 members on its mailing list.

The archivists and librarians who founded the roundtable saw it as a forum for discussion of issues to specific women’s collections, a discussion which they aimed to bring to the larger community of the SAA through efforts including journal publications, conference sessions, workshops, and lectures; the publication of a newsletter and a directory; and the selection of roundtable representatives to serve as liaisons to other SAA sections and roundtables in the hopes of “facilitating cooperative efforts and networking around common concerns or shared projects.”⁶⁰ However, despite its emphasis on outreach to other groups, there was some pushback from members of the Women’s Caucus, who questioned whether a women’s collections roundtable was necessary or sustainable. In a letter to Lucinda Manning, one of the Women’s Collections Roundtable founders, Eva Moseley shared her criticism of the roundtable, stating that women’s collections archivists’ collective goal should be to make other archivists “aware of women’s collections issues, not just a ‘ghetto’ of women archivists interested in women’s papers... Even when it comes to session proposals, better than having women’s sessions is to try to ensure that women’s concerns, repositories, and collections are well represented in sessions of interest to others.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ “Women’s Collections Round Table Three-Year Plan Reporting Form.” From the Society of American Archivists Records, MSS 172 200/06/09/04, Box 2, Folder 22, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Letter, Eva Moseley to Lucinda Manning, 14 September 1994, Society of American Archivists Records, MSS 172 200/08/04, Box 3, Folder 11, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department.

Even though Moseley and other Women's Caucus members fought the roundtable for years, criticizing it for dividing archivists interested in women's issues, the prevailing belief among members was that the roundtable "offered one of the few places to network easily and also provided a forum for many different people interested in women's collections."⁶² Whether archivists agreed or disagreed with the establishing of a roundtable specific to women's collections, it was clear that generating a dialogue with other groups was vitally important to both factions, and increasingly throughout the late 1980s/early 1990s, women's collections archivists in particular expressed a demonstrated need and desire for a platform for discussion and networking within the SAA.

In the early 1990s, for the third time in history, a desire to preserve a "moment" in feminist history led to the creation of new women's collections and archives to house this material. Collections charged with documenting the lives of women who remained underrepresented in the historical record were founded in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and zine archives began to appear in the early 2000s. Two of these collections, the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture at Duke University's David M. Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library and Iowa State University Library's Archives of Women in Science and Engineering, are described in detail below.

The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture

The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, like many other women's collections throughout history, was established not by archivists, but by

⁶² Minutes of the Women's Collections Roundtable meeting, 1 September 1995, Society of American Archivists Records, MSS 172 200/08/04, Box 3, Folder 13, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department.

historians with an interest in women's history. In 1987 Sallie Bingham, a women's historian and feminist activist, was publishing a feminist literary journal, *The American Voice*, and invited fellow women's historian and Duke University professor Anne Firor Scott to submit an article. Scott's article, "Whose History Are We Talking About, Anyway?" caused Bingham to consider the future of her papers. She had been considering the Schlesinger Library because of her family's ties to Radcliffe, but as a southerner she was intrigued about the idea of creating a repository for women's collections in the South. Bingham contacted Scott to inquire as to whether Duke University would be appropriate for such a venture, and after a successful visit to Duke University's campus in 1988, Bingham decided to fund the Women's History Archives only a few months later.

At the time of its founding, Bingham recognized that she had the monetary resources to fund the Women's History Archives in its entirety, but it was important to her that the collection be relevant to the rest of the university, and that library administrators and the Duke University community be invested in the success of the collection as well. Bingham recognized the very real possibility that a women's collection could easily become marginalized without dedicated institutional support. Thus, when the collection was established, Bingham made sure that the library would always support a percentage of the collection's operations. Fortunately for the collection, the director of Duke's Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library (RBMSCL) at the time, Robert Byrd, was deeply invested in the success of the collection, which helped to ensure its survival. He worked with Bingham to create a collecting initiative in which the first priority was to uncover and highlight existing women's

collections within Duke's holdings, then begin building the collection around a carefully crafted collection development policy, and use funds to build staff resources.⁶³ The Women's History Archives became permanently endowed in 1993, and the collection became officially known as the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture in 1999.

Feminism's influence on the Bingham Center is apparent from the time of its establishment to today. 25% of the Bingham Center's first collection development policy was dedicated to feminist activism and theory as an area to document, and this remains true today. Further, the current director of the Bingham Center, Laura Micham, refers to the process of creating and running a women's archive a "feminist endeavor," much in the same way that every initiative to document a marginalized group is an inherently progressive one. "The enterprise and the urge of people who participate [in this process] is a feminist urge," Micham says, "but [the Bingham Center] is also an academic enterprise, so we are motivated by a need to balance that [idea] and to document all stories, including apolitical, anti-feminist viewpoints." Documenting all aspects of women's experience has proved challenging for the Bingham Center.

We consciously decided not limit ourselves geographically, topically, etc., whereas other collections did limit themselves in those ways. When you decide not to define yourself that way, what you've created is an almost endless puzzle of how to define yourself and your vision, and how to articulate your mission. My predecessors in particular did such a great job of that that we are routinely mentioned along with the Schlesinger [Library] and Sophia Smith [Collection].⁶⁴

⁶³ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

When Micham took over as curator of the collection in 2002, the collection had become an established and integral part of the RBMSCL. Micham remarks that her predecessors' personalities were wildly different than hers and that they had built fiercely loyal relationships with Bingham Center donors, many of whom were still living and still making regular deposits. Building similar relationships with these donors was challenging, although a ten-month gap between her predecessor's departure and Micham's arrival did ease the transition, as "people weren't as quick to size me up or compare us." Perhaps even more challenging was convincing new donors to place their papers with the Bingham Center. Gaining the trust of potential donors, many of whom are feminists, activists, or women otherwise wary of the academy can be difficult "when you're the director of women's archives at Duke, because it's historically southern, white, and male. So there is a period of time where [the donor and I] had to feel each other out. They let me know what their discomforts and anxieties were, and many had to test me in feminist ways."⁶⁵

Continuing in the same vein as many women's collections archivists during Second Wave Feminism, Micham considers herself an activist archivist, and sees the Bingham Center as an opportunity to instrumentally support the work of activists, even if the collection itself is not an activist archive. Women's collections, and collections that document other marginalized groups, have the ability to promote "restorative-reparative-transitional justice"⁶⁶ through the preservation of these groups in the historical record.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Samantha Crisp and Claire Radcliffe "Did You Find Any Women Today?' Revealing Women's Lives in Archival Description and Research" (paper presented at the

The Bingham Center sees itself as uniquely situated to “provide new ways for people and organizations to document themselves and, by extension, express their own agency, reality or representation.”⁶⁷ These sentiments echo those of Mary Ritter Beard and other women’s historians of the First Wave, who saw the establishment of women’s collections as tools for women’s empowerment. As Jacques Derrida notes, “archivization produces as much as it records the event.”⁶⁸ In other words, the preservation of a group’s experience in the historical record is the only means of ensuring that group’s survival in historical memory. Micham, Beard, and other champions for women’s collections believed and continue to assert that the archivist writes history inasmuch as s/he preserves it. As women’s collections have moved through the period of Third Wave Feminism, and as these collections have become increasingly dynamic and culturally connected spaces, the idea of activist archiving has been closely intertwined with the preservation of women’s records.

The Archives of Women in Science and Engineering

The Archives of Women in Science and Engineering (WISE) at Iowa State University was created in 1994 to meet a growing need among the university community for primary source materials related to women in the sciences. Partially motivating the establishment of the collection was the department head’s desire for “something to be

annual conference for the Librarians Association at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, March 10, 2014).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever : a Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 17.

famous for,”⁶⁹ a unique and unfilled niche that Iowa State University Library could fill. The collection’s first curator began on a half-time basis and only remained at Iowa State for about six months before leaving. The immediate past curator, Tanya Zanish-Belcher, assumed this position in January 1995. At this point, the WISE project was essentially a blank slate. Initially Zanish-Belcher worked with the WISE archives on a full-time basis before assuming the role of head of Special Collections and University Archives in 1998, while maintaining her duties as curator of the WISE archives.

Zanish-Belcher considers the WISE archives to be a feminist collection, even though the women it documents may not identify as feminists, because it documents the constant discrimination women in STEM faced throughout their lives. “The first day I was there I read one of Margaret Rossiter’s books and was flabbergasted that women were treated in this way,” Zanish-Belcher says, “and this was only confirmed the longer I worked in the collection ... It was obvious when you did oral histories with people who were still working that [sexism] wasn’t as overt as the early twentieth century, but it was definitely still there and manifested in different ways.”⁷⁰ The WISE project was important because it was one of the most comprehensive documentation efforts for women in the sciences; Zanish-Belcher and her cohort did not limit themselves to a particular branch of science, but approached the topic broadly to gather as many perspectives as possible, including the perspectives of those women in paraprofessional science positions, such as lab workers.

⁶⁹ Tanya Zanish-Belcher, interviewed by author, Winston-Salem, NC, January 29, 2014.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

One of the driving forces behind the WISE project was oral history. Oral histories are regarded by many to be a democratizing force for archives, particularly for marginalized groups. For groups that have historically been unable to create and keep paper records due to a lack of material access, illiteracy, or language barriers, oral histories may present the best option for ensuring that these groups are documented in the record. In the case of the WISE archives, many of the women represented did not suffer from a lack of access to the necessary materials to keep paper records, as “they were all very educated women, usually they had Ph.D.’s, were driven, and had a distinct sense of self.” However, many of them did end up throwing out the records they kept, deeming them unworthy of preservation. This experience is not uncommon among women as a whole, and the oral history format offers some promise of bridging this gap. Zanish-Belcher notes that the audio component of an oral history is particularly successful in this regard:

I went to the Tri-State Meeting [of the Society of North Carolina Archivists, Society of Georgia Archivists, and South Carolina Archival Association] and the executive director of the Oral History Association [Dr. Clifford Kuhn] spoke about people coming back to the word. [Archivists] were always about transcriptions, but now increasingly people are coming back to the audio. In some ways that takes the pressure off for major oral history projects. Women in science and engineering tend to throw away their papers, so the spoken word is really important for these women.⁷¹

The WISE project demonstrates that oral histories can either be used as supplements to the written record of women or as representations themselves of women’s experiences, thereby redressing existing gaps in documentation. Zanish-Belcher has carried this belief through to her current position as Head of Special Collections and University Archivist

⁷¹ Ibid.

for Wake Forest University, where she has begun an oral history project on women in science.

Despite the perceived success of the WISE project, Zanish-Belcher and her predecessor did meet with some difficult challenges, particularly in working with administrators. When Zanish-Belcher was hired, the dean was excited about the WISE archives. However, when the dean eventually left Iowa State, “all her enthusiasm went with her.” This is a frequent problem faced by women’s collections, including the Sophia Smith Collection, which suffered when a disinterested president took over in the 1950s. Women’s collections archivists are particularly burdened with justifying themselves to administrators, who have tended to experience difficulty relating to the mission of women’s collections, because they have historically represented a single (white, male) demographic. Zanish-Belcher notes that her predecessor had first-hand experience with this problem: “I think her biggest challenge was dealing with the department head, who was male and had absolutely no sense of women’s history and women’s collections, and really just wanted a topic whereby he could gain attention for his department. They had some run-ins over collections that really horrified him and he made her take collections that she didn’t want.” Although Zanish-Belcher was more successful than her predecessor in circumventing these issues thanks to her previous experience in the field, she met with similar challenges when applying for a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant.

I thought, “How could anyone turn down WISE?” But the reviews were brutal, and I got horrible responses from historians about it. I decided to try another in 2005, and I worked with someone who specialized in grant proposals. It was probably one of the best proposals I’ve ever done, focused on women scientists in biology and life sciences. Again, I thought, “How can this be turned down?” And

the NEH had even said they wanted to fund an oral history project! It got to the second round and went down again, because they didn't think I had enough information about my travel plans. I still got people to agree [to participate] but I was never able to get the funding so it didn't happen.⁷²

Zanish-Belcher notes that once she assumed the role of Head of Special Collections at Iowa State, the WISE archives began to suffer. Zanish-Belcher cites a lack of investment on the part of university and library administrators coupled with limited staff resources as ultimately dooming the project. "Fundraising was always an issue and also institutional support. My dean couldn't have cared less about this collection. It's really a pity. We could have done so many more things and could've become so much more established, and it's been allowed to wither on the vine because there's no one there to take care of it."⁷³ Zanish-Belcher's experience with the WISE archives is likely representative of many women's collections, and it illustrates how influential administrative support can be in ensuring the survival of an undocumented group in the historical record.

Lessons Learned from the "Third Wave" of Women's Collections

As more women's collections have been established in this third wave of renewed interest in women's history, it is important to take note of the many different forms women's collections can take. Women's collections of today exist in many diverse iterations, including (but not limited to) "freestanding buildings, endowed positions for women's studies archivists, and mainstream repositories that include women's papers as

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

a significant collecting focus.”⁷⁴ Defining women’s collections in the digital age becomes even more complex, as digital projects and exhibits designed to reveal women’s records in institutional repositories and subject collections not otherwise ostensibly identified as women’s collections continue to emerge.⁷⁵ With this diversification comes the opportunity for women’s repositories to narrow or focus their collecting scope within the context of women’s history. This means that the opportunity for closing the racial and ethnic gaps that still exist among women’s collections, gaps of which women’s collections archivists have remained ever cognizant since the 1930s, has never been closer than it is today.

The decades encompassing Third Wave Feminism saw a technological boom that redefined the way archives and manuscript collections could be conceptualized. The birth of the World Wide Web revitalized networking, collaboration, and outreach for women’s collections. Tanya Zanish-Belcher recalls, “One of the great benefits [for the WISE archives] was that the World Wide Web exploded. I didn’t have email until I got to Iowa State. I remember I was on the web all the time looking for people to connect with. It was a tremendous way to connect with other people. I feel like I spent the first year just surfing the web.”⁷⁶ As the internet, social media, and digital technologies continue to

⁷⁴ Kären M. Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher, “A Room of One’s Own: Women’s Archives in the Year 2000,” in *Perspectives on Women’s Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 125.

⁷⁵ See, for example, the Pacifica Radio Archives’s project, “American Women Making History and Culture: 1963-1982,” <http://www.womenmakinghistory.org>, and the Southern Oral History Program’s project, “Mapping the Long Women’s Movement,” <http://projects.dhpress.org/lwm/dhp-projects/long-womens-movement/>

⁷⁶ Tanya Zanish-Belcher, interviewed by author, Winston-Salem, NC, January 29, 2014.

expand, women's collections archivists are continually met with both the opportunity to use these technologies to better connect with donors and community members, and the responsibility to use these technologies to redress decades of omission from the historical record. As the temporally bound expressivity of the zine gives way to the brevity of the 140-character Tweet or the complex digital format of the blog, women's collections archivists must continue to keep themselves actively informed of new opportunities and challenges in an increasingly digital age.

Findings

Moving Beyond the Wave, or, the Future of Women's Collections

It is clear that the history of women's collections has been fraught with challenges and obstacles as well as successes and achievements. It is worth noting that, in many cases, history has repeated itself. Archivists for women's collections have experienced the similar problems, and their stories have echoed each other across all three waves of feminist activity. With this in mind, how can women's collections' collective past be studied and utilized to influence the future of women's documentation? I conclude this paper by analyzing the experiences of women's collections archivists since the field's inception, resulting in a set of twelve over-arching "lessons," or themes frequently cited by women's collections archivists. These lessons, presented together, will offer a framework for directing women's collections activity in the future to close the gaps left by our predecessors, learn from their mistakes, and build upon their successes. By adopting this framework, women's collections today can more effectively reimagine their collection development activities, access provisions, patron and donor outreach efforts, and public presence to build collections and collection spaces that better encapsulate the totality of the female experience.

1. People must continually be reminded why women's collections are relevant.

As years have passed, many wonder if the metaphor of the “wave” has lost its usefulness for feminism. Perhaps moreso than ever, women's collections have struggled and continue to struggle with the prevailing notion that 21st-century America is a post-feminist society. If we are living in a post-feminist world, why do we need to target women in our collecting strategies? After all, many reason, women have achieved a great deal thanks to the past hundred years of feminist activism; have women's collections not become redundant in that time? This understanding of society limits the potential of women's collections in its assumption that the documentation gaps for women, much more than for other marginalized groups, have been adequately addressed. It is notable that in 2014, “you are scarcely going to encounter someone who questions black archives, or labor archives, but you will still encounter people who question having a women's archive.”⁷⁷

Archivists for women's collections understand that even though women's collections have been arguably successful, the “success of women's collections today should not obscure the limited and fragile nature of that success.”⁷⁸ Women's collections have never been truly safe in terms of administrative backing, public support, or adequate funding. Additionally, the notion that we exist in a post-feminist society is a questionable one. Laura Micham notes that women's collections are “not becoming less relevant because we like to believe were in a post-feminist world. We aren't. We're still in a

⁷⁷ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014. These sentiments were echoed by Kathryn Jacob and Tanya Zanish-Belcher as well.

⁷⁸ Hildenbrand, “Introduction,” 6

patriarchal culture, so there still needs to be women's history archives. There's no end in sight... What's going to hurt us more than post-feminism, if we ever achieve it, is not being activist."⁷⁹ In other words, women's collections archivists must learn to effectively advocate for themselves and their repositories if their goal of closing existing documentation gaps is ever going to be achieved. Often this can be as simple as demonstrating that the historical record of women is, in fact, far from complete.

Scholars and researchers of women's history have been acutely aware, both in the past and currently, that "*all* archives are, in the end, fundamentally unreliable."⁸⁰ They are unreliable in the sense that they are never comprehensive, and they provide an inherently biased snapshot of history thanks to omissions of certain perspectives, whether willful or unavoidable. This has been particularly true for women and other marginalized groups, which have been documented only insofar as they have been oppressed, achieved greatness, or spoken publicly. The fundamental flaw with collections that have historically centered on women's history is that they have documented only pockets of women's history, rather than examining the historical experience of all women. Gerda Lerner notes that "men have lived with an intellectual construct called History that affirmed the agency and heroism of people like themselves, namely men."⁸¹ The reason that a "men's archive" sounds absurd is because it is widely regarded that the male

⁷⁹ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014.

⁸⁰ Mary Elizabeth Perry, "Finding Fatima, a Slave Woman of Early Modern Spain," in *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*, eds. Napur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 4.

⁸¹ Gerda Lerner, "Holistic History: Challenges and Possibilities," in *Perspectives on Women's Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 125.

experience is complex and varied, that men represent half the earth's population, and no single perspective can be defined as inherently male. It is vital to show constituents that the same is true for women's collections, and that women's history will never be on equal footing with men's history until existing gaps can be redressed.

While it is possible, perhaps even hopeful, that women's collections will one day outlive their usefulness, major surviving gaps in the historical record render these repositories currently both relevant and necessary. While the end is not in sight, "[a]rchives build: as they grow... the knowledge they produce will alter the way we read archival subjects in general, and gender in particular."⁸² Women's collections can take steps today to ensure these gaps are closed in the future, including targeted outreach to underdocumented groups and collaboration with grassroots/community organizations. We must also be both aware of and open about our biases (for instance, many collections today display a feminist bias and lack documentation of right-wing organizations and conservative groups), both so that they can be immediately corrected and avoided in the future. Continual introspective analysis of women's collections' past biases can help avoid making the same omissions. As Micham notes:

I've learned from the people that came before me... that it was completely natural for the first women's history archivists to create women's archives in the same way that men's archives were created: great white women. It took us a while to realize it was absolutely obligatory to create archives around marginalized women... I think we are the ones who have the largest obligation to come up with really workable donor relations and documentation strategies to make collection development a truly collaborative democratic experience and to break out of the traditional ways of measuring success. We're getting there. We're getting away from the idea that uniqueness is necessary... We've learned the value of truly

⁸² Marlene Kadar, "Afterword," in *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*, eds. Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar (Ontario, Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 115.

proactive collection building... Those kinds of methodologies are relevant to everyone, but especially to women.⁸³

Tanya Zanish-Belcher had a similar experience with the WISE Archives: “Just because I’m a feminist, that doesn’t necessarily ring true with the women you work with... I do like the idea that, even if I don’t agree with them, their stories are told... However [WISE’s] collections focused on elite white women. We need to be aware that we tend to collect who we identify with.”⁸⁴ Archivists must make efforts to publicly own these biases and remind stakeholders that they exist, until such time as the relevance of women’s collections is no longer continually called into question.

2. Every collection can be a women’s collection.

An implication inherent in a holistic approach to women’s history is that women’s records are not necessarily relegated solely to women’s collections and repositories. Records are not defined as women’s records only when they are housed in a collection calling itself a women’s collection, and neither is the preservation of women’s history the sole responsibility of women’s collections archivists. In fact, “the need for a complete synthesis of the historical experiences of women ... should be a major goal for archivists and historians alike.”⁸⁵ The definition of “women’s collections” is a necessarily complicated one, and one that is arguably expansive enough to encompass any repository

⁸³ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014.

⁸⁴ Tanya Zanish-Belcher, interviewed by author, Winston-Salem, NC, January 29, 2014.

⁸⁵ Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss, “Introduction,” in *Perspectives on Women’s Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 3.

or collection that takes a proactive stance to both target women in collection development activities and to reveal existing women's records that may be hidden within its collections. In other words, "[t]he only guide to whether or not a collection is a women's collection is if the sponsoring institution describes it as such."⁸⁶

One reason that the *Hinding Guide* was so successful was that it illuminated the vast amount of material related to women that existed in repositories across the country, most of which did not identify themselves as women's collections. Archivists at these institutions were unconvinced that they had anything of value in their holdings until field workers and project staff explained the different definitions of "value" for women's records. Therefore, part of the program of self-advocacy for women's collections archivists described in my previous recommendation should be using one's detailed knowledge and practical experience evaluating women's materials to educate archivists at repositories who do not identify as women's collections. These repositories likely have valuable information in their holdings, but lack the necessary knowledge to uncover them. Once existing records have been found, women's collections archivists can help other archivists develop a documentation strategy that works in concert with an existing collection development policy (for instance, targeted outreach to women in an oral history project on labor history or incorporating women's records into an unrelated subject guide). Eventually, this will result in women becoming better documented in their collections, but making these archivists aware of the existing gap is the first step.

⁸⁶ Hildenbrand, "Introduction," 7.

3. There is justification for the continued existence of separate women's collections.

Because the responsibility ultimately falls on every archivist to ensure that women's records are preserved and accessible, many administrators and stakeholders question whether separate women's collections, including both separate physical spaces and bodies of material within a larger repository, are beneficial or necessary. Much like the objectors to Mary Ritter' Beard's World Center for Women's Archives, some believe that separate women's collections are in fact a hindrance to achieving equality for women and their history, in that they are "ghettoizing women,"⁸⁷ placing them in a secondary status and hindering their consideration in the greater body of historical study. Women's collections archivists have grappled with these notions throughout history as much as today. In the early 1980s, University of Wisconsin Women's Studies Librarian-at-Large Susan Searing wrote at some length on the problems posed by separate women's collections: "One can imagine a pooh-pooher of 'women's lib' stumbling upon an interesting feminist book while off in the stacks on another errand."⁸⁸ This roadblock to serendipitous consciousness-raising, as well as problems inherent in fundraising and collection development, lead Searing to conclude that both separate collections and integrated collections were advantageous and disadvantageous and that the decision to separate women's materials should be left up to individual repositories.

Most women's collections archivists will agree that the importance of separate women's collections lies in the fact that they "have a greater meaning than the collections

⁸⁷ Mason and Zanish-Belcher, "A Room of One's Own," 125.

⁸⁸ Searing, "Feminist Library Services," 156.

they house.”⁸⁹ At their outset, their existence is justified by the earlier omission of women from the historical record, as outlined in the first lesson above. But even as gaps continue to close and documentation becomes more comprehensive, separate women’s collections are important because of the weight they confer upon the study of women’s history. They call attention to women’s records in a way that integrated collections cannot and encourage scholars to incorporate them into their study. Further, in cases where women’s collections exist in a physically separate location than the rest of the collection, they provide a space for intellectual discussion and engagement for women, a symbolically significant space that serves as “a refuge from the sexism of the campus at large, a place to study together with other women, a comfortable but stimulating intellectual nest.”⁹⁰

Even if women’s collections do not exist in their own separate spaces, they still offer unique benefits. For instance, naming a collection as a women’s collection outwardly demonstrates an institution’s support of women’s history and women’s studies. These collections can be empowering and validating for women (discussed in detail in recommendation 9 below) in a way that an integrated collection can never be. These points illustrate that, as long as women seek a separate avenue for intellectual discussion, study, and research, separate corpora of women’s collections, whether they be physical spaces or nominal expressions of a collecting goal, will be both necessary and supported.

⁸⁹ Zanish-Belcher and Voss, “Introduction,” 8.

⁹⁰ Searing, “Feminist Library Services,” 153.

4. Archivists must reimagine the women's collections "space."

The definitions of women's collections "spaces" are obviously varied and diverse. For women's collections to be truly successful ventures, the idea of the women's collections space should be reimaged to incorporate women and materials outside the physical walls of the repository. This will necessitate a dynamic outreach plan both for educational purposes and for connecting with potential donors. For instance, some women's collections have had great success in generating enthusiasm for women's history in educational outreach to K-12 students. The IIAV and other Dutch institutions have used new media to promote the diverse history of the Netherlands in elementary and secondary schools.⁹¹ The Sallie Bingham Center conducts an annual zine creation workshop with a feminist girls' summer camp, Girls Rock Camp.⁹² These institutions show that bringing special collections to the K-12 classroom gets girls enthusiastic about their history early on, paving the way for greater awareness of women's impact on history throughout their formative educational years. Beyond K-12 initiatives, dynamic public programming can spark women's interest in their own history, perhaps encouraging donations or collaborations with community groups.

⁹¹ Özden Yalim, "Passing on 'Invisible' Histories: New Media and the Cultural Heritage of Immigrant Women in the Netherlands," in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women's History*, ed. Saskia Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 190-191.

⁹² See Kelly Wooten, "Outreach and Instruction at the Sallie Bingham Center," in *Make Your Own History: Documenting Feminist and Queer Activism in the 21st Century*, eds. Liz Bly and Kelly Wooten (Los Angeles, CA: Litwin Books, 2012), 39-44.

Elizabeth Meyers states that “[a]rchivists must focus on finding women *where they are*,”⁹³ rather than passively waiting for materials to come to them. Meyers further declares that “archivists must welcome third-party participants into our professional dialogue—partners in creating access and promoting collections we all value—whether they are archivists or not.”⁹⁴ Reaching out and building meaningful partnerships with the donor community will necessitate breaking down the walls of the archive to bring community members into its intellectual space, digitally or otherwise. Effective outreach efforts may include publication in newsletters, television news, or blogs; hosting community events; or attending conferences, community events, and protests outside the field of archival science. Relationships forged at such events in concert with word-of-mouth recommendation can often greatly influence donor decisions. This has proved true for the WISE Archives in particular.

Working closely with the Iota Sigma Pi [women’s chemistry honorary group] historian, the WISE curator made presentations at the group’s centennial event and to local chapters. In turn, the chapters provided WISE with the names of potential interviewees for the Women in Chemistry Oral History Project. These groups are inclined to be receptive because they are already organized to support each other as women in the profession and therefore value and appreciate the idea of a women’s archives.⁹⁵

A similar initiative at the Sallie Bingham Center met with great success as well.

I was here in 2003 for [the thirtieth anniversary of the legalization of abortion under] *Roe v. Wade*. . . [We held a] two-and-a-half-day conference that brought in

⁹³ Meyers, “My Sister’s Keeper,” 445.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁹⁵ Mason and Zanish-Belcher, “What’s in a Name,” 295.

faculty speakers, student groups, and scientists. The keynote speaker was [reproductive rights activist] Merle [Hoffman], and she would say that is what changed the tide for her to decide she had a bigger, broader role in the Sallie Bingham Center and decide to endow my position. It also affected how we built the abortion collection, which we do much more of than everyone else.⁹⁶

Building truly collaborative partnerships with communities of undocumented women begins with creative programming, but it does not end there. Often these partnerships demonstrate that it is “incumbent upon archivists and other heritage professionals to support, in creative and in post-custodial ways, the physical and digital futures of those independent archives which are outside the walls of the formal archive or museum.”⁹⁷ In other words, even though outreach to community groups may not result in a donation, it can create a collaborative relationship between the archivist and the group to expand the scope of the collection, broadly conceived, beyond the walls of the repository.

5. The success of women’s collections is heavily dependent upon administrator buy-in.

The kinds of creative programming described above, as well as the overall longevity of a women’s collection, relies very heavily upon administrative support from the library director or dean. The Bingham Center’s *Roe v. Wade* event would have been stalled if it were not so instrumentally supported by the special collections library’s director, Robert Byrd. Beyond influencing public programming, administrator buy-in has been shown to fundamentally make or break the success of a women’s collection. Tanya

⁹⁶ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014.

⁹⁷ Andrew Flinn, “An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?: Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge,” *Ariadne* 62 (2010). Accessed March 23, 2014, <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue62/flinn>.

Zanish-Belcher frequently cited a lack of support on the part of her superiors as ultimately killing the WISE project, whereas both Laura Micham and Kathryn Jacob remarked that their institutions would not have survived had it not been for the support of administrators.

The same sentiments can be applied to support staff as well. Both Micham and Jacob commented on the importance of a truly invested staff in their daily operations. Jacob notes that the most helpful aspect of transitioning to her current position was that “the staff was highly motivated and committed to women’s history, so when I took over as curator and had a fairly large staff, as opposed to other places I’ve worked, morale was not a problem.”⁹⁸ Micham has had a somewhat different experience, particularly with her collection development colleagues outside of the Bingham Center: “I found that my colleagues were much quicker to believe that the crazy donors were the ones for the Bingham Center, thanks to internal sexism, and I’ve been able to show over time that our donors are no more challenging, just in a different way. And subtly but clearly suggest that that thinking is sexist.”⁹⁹ Keeping both staff and administrators motivated to meet the goals of the collection will be a continuing challenge for women’s collections archivists, but one that must be addressed if these collections are to survive.

6. Archivists must reevaluate methods of providing access to women’s records.

One of the obstacles to women’s discovery of their history is that archival description generally, and descriptions of women’s records in particular, has “undergone

⁹⁸ Kathryn Jacob, phone conversation with author, Durham, NC, 27 January 2014.

⁹⁹ Laura Micham, interviewed by author, Durham, NC, January 17, 2014.

an evolution which in fact, has made less rather than more information available to researchers."¹⁰⁰ Lack of financial or staff resources, historic ignorance about the value of women's records, and recent shifts among archivists toward minimal processing have all combined to hinder the amount of description provided for women's records, and researchers of women's history have felt the negative effects of these developments. A 1989 study by Diane Beattie showed that only six percent of researchers deem women's collections' finding aids to be effective means of locating women's records, while two-thirds of the respondents ranked finding aids as fair or poor. These researchers noted that "formal descriptive tools in archives are less frequently consulted than informal research tools by historians researching women," including consultations with reference archivists, citations in secondary sources, and discussion with colleagues.¹⁰¹

Women's collections archivists must address the fact that archival description tends to be limiting, and as such "we need to explore issues of intellectual control and access, such as descriptive practices that can either promote or hinder the discovery of these collections by our public."¹⁰² We need to "learn the relevant questions to ask"¹⁰³ so that finding aids and other tools can best serve the researchers who are dependent upon them to provide access to women's materials. By extension, women's collections

¹⁰⁰ Heather Beattie, "Where Narratives Meet: Archival Description, Provenance, and Women's Diaries," in *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009), 84.

¹⁰¹ Diane L. Beattie, "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989-90): 43.

¹⁰² Zanish-Belcher and Voss, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁰³ Honor R. Sachs, "Reconstructing A Life: The Archival Challenges of Women's History," in *Library Trends* 56, no. 3 (Winter 2008): 663.

archivists need to be aware that they are not always the ones who are best situated to determine what those questions are, but instead draw from the knowledge base of the community or organization that created the records. In other words, to generate the richest possible descriptions and relations between records, archivists must acknowledge that “the participants are more knowledgeable about the archival materials than an archivist alone can be.”¹⁰⁴ Bringing in an outside perspective on archival description can both influence researcher access and change the public perception of women’s role in history. As Elizabeth Meyers notes, “[t]he more accessible the content, the larger the challenge to persistent critics who assume women’s contributions to history have been minimal.”¹⁰⁵

7. Archivists must remain conscious of the changing definitions of womanhood.

It is becoming increasingly clear that 21st century historians, researchers, and women in general “negotiate gender and its construction every day to varying degrees,” and therefore, “archivists of women’s collections should pay attention to and think critically about how gender is documented.”¹⁰⁶ Gender binaries are continually evolving and transforming to include marginalized groups, such as transgender men and women, intersex and genderqueer individuals, and androgynous individuals, and archivists for women’s collections must contend with how best to preserve these individuals’ perspectives in their collections. It may be that these perspectives do not fit within a

¹⁰⁴ Flinn, “An Attack on Professionalism.”

¹⁰⁵ Meyers, “My Sister’s Keeper,” 451.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 447.

women's collection, but would instead benefit from remaining in a community or organizational archive with a mentor-mentee relationship with a larger women's collection.

Beyond decisions regarding proper placement of these materials, women's collections archivists are further burdened with the responsibility to describe them accurately in finding aids and catalog records. Above all else, changing gender expressions require that archivists respect records' creators' self-definitions; ascribing labels such as "lesbian" and "transgender" in archival description and subject headings based on subjective definitions of those terms is, at best, irresponsible, and also potentially inaccurate, depending on whether these individuals would describe themselves as such. Scholars such as Melodie J. Fox note that "[a]lthough gender and sex are fluid in reality, current cultural standards are constrained by the man/woman binary, so those of ambiguous gender generally end up in one category or another based on outward appearance." However, "if gender is considered 'social position,' we must allow that one can be a woman without ever acting... [or] feeling like a woman, or even having a female body."¹⁰⁷ Fox suggests remedying this problem by incorporating prototype theory into classifications and concepts, in other words recognizing that inclusion into a particular category is contingent upon fitting some, but not necessarily all, of the characteristics of that category. Employing pangendered concepts and classifications in archival description is a step in the right direction, but this idea still presents problems for some groups. For instance, gender-nonspecific subject headings are problematic for

¹⁰⁷ Melodie J. Fox, "Prototype Theory: An Alternative Concept Theory for Categorizing Sex and Gender?" in *Knowledge Organization* 38.4 (Oct 2011), 331.

Latina women thanks to the lack of generic pronouns and nouns in the Spanish language; “Concepts clustering around *parental* in English—rights, duties, leave, and so on—would have to be assigned to the subject heading ‘Mothers’ or ‘Fathers’ or to an awkward string including both.”¹⁰⁸ Because gender concepts and expressions are so fluid and subjective, archivists must be acutely aware of creators’ self-definitions when writing descriptions, and amend these descriptions to be as reflective and inclusive as possible.

8. Women must be made to feel like their papers matter.

Time has shown that one of the biggest obstacles to documenting women’s history has been the lack of historic importance women place on their own records. This mindset has created a cycle of omission: women do not see other women’s papers in the archives, and thus do not deem their own papers worthy to place in an archives. This problem is manifested in varying degrees of intensity across all demographics of women. Tanya Zanish-Belcher noted that many women scientists destroyed their papers before she could reach them, and Deborah Gray White remarks that “black women have infrequently saved and donated papers because they have grown used to being undervalued and invisible.”¹⁰⁹ Even those women most attuned to the historical significance of their cohort have tended not to deposit their papers. Mary Ritter Beard, despite campaigning for the preservation of women’s history, destroyed most of her

¹⁰⁸ Suzanne Hildenbrand, “Information for Equality: the Documentation Center of the Women’s Institute in Madrid,” in *Wilson Library Bulletin* 68, no. 7 (1994), 47.

¹⁰⁹ Deborah Gray White, “Mining the Forgotten: Manuscript Sources for Black Women’s History,” in *Perspectives on Women’s Archives*, eds. Tanya Zanish-Belcher and Anke Voss (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013), 59.

papers, and Maryland State Delegate Ann R. Hull, known for spearheading the movement in the 1970s to preserve Maryland's government papers, had to be convinced that "the focus of [her] activities and interests [made] them [historically worthwhile] by documenting not only [her] activity but interrelationships with other members of the Assembly and other groups" before she would donate her papers.¹¹⁰

This mindset has spread to women's organizations as well, many of which have not developed a culture of preservation in their daily recordkeeping. Often these organizations have failed to create records out of necessity. A "community group that is concerned with saving women from domestic violence, for example, may not assign a high priority to creating either a digital or a paper archive. There may be little time to spend scanning material or archiving emails when a battered woman needs refuge and legal help."¹¹¹ Both individual women and women's organizations must be made to feel that their papers matter and that keeping records is important, respectively. Much of the outreach activity described above in my fourth recommendation can assist with this, but archivists must be willing to actively and contemporaneously assist organizations who do not have the means of preserving their own records, if a complete and accurate representation of women's history is to be created.

¹¹⁰ Elizabeth A. Novara, "Documenting Maryland Women State Legislators: The Politics of Collecting Women's Political Papers," *American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (May, 2013): 200.

¹¹¹ Antonia Byatt, "'World Became One Village': How Women's History Can Use New Media," in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women's History*, ed. Saskia Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 125-126.

9. Documentation empowers women.

By extension of the previous point, seeing that their records are both wanted and needed can be empowering for women. Omission from the historical record has repercussions for women beyond merely reinforcing that they are historically insignificant. For instance,

histories and the memory institutions which tell those histories can play a significant role in bolstering the shared identity which underpins the 'imagined' community of the nation or a region; but these histories also have important lessons about 'belonging' for those who do not find their stories reflected in the archive and the museum and thus are not invited to share in the meaning.¹¹²

In other words, beyond facilitating the donation of existing papers, the existence of women's archives can bolster women's collective understanding that they have a significant societal role both historically and currently, and women's collections can create "an impetus to people outside an institution to create and collect historical documentation with the knowledge that it will be preserved and made available to a broad audience."¹¹³

An example of this validating effect can be seen in the Georgia Women's Movement Oral History Project, which collected Georgia women activists' oral histories and mounted them on the web. Project coordinators note that participants "have expressed satisfaction and excitement when they first see their presence on the Web, and they encourage friends and relatives to visit their section on the site. Potential

¹¹² Flinn, "An Attack on Professionalism."

¹¹³ Mason and Zanish-Belcher, "What's in a Name," 300.

interviewees and donors are equally enamored of the site.”¹¹⁴ Mounting the interviews on the web bolstered the self-perceptions of not only the participants, but also their families and friends, as well as future donors of material. The potential for exponential growth of women’s self-awareness cannot be understated when discussing the preservation of women’s materials, and it is important that women’s collections archivists stress this concept when advocating for themselves and their collections.

10. Women’s collections archivists must be directly involved in the creation and preservation of oral histories.

If the goal of women’s collections is to close the gaps still existing in documentation, perhaps the most promising method of achieving this goal is investing one’s resources into an oral history project. Oral histories have the potential to be one of the most democratizing forces for archivists seeking to preserve the stories of undocumented groups. This is partly because of the ability of the oral history to provide a platform for women who are unable to create paper records to tell their stories. Women who participate in oral history projects may be limited in their ability to keep paper records by a lack of material access or illiteracy, issues that the oral history interview overcomes. Further, it allows women to tell their life stories in their own words and their own languages, which causes “a distinct enthusiasm, engagement, and affirmation [to emerge] from within the dominant discourse in which ordinary women’s experiences are

¹¹⁴ Morna Gerrard, “Hear Them Roar: Challenge and Collaboration in Putting the Georgia Women’s Movement Oral History Project on the Web,” in *Archival Issues: Journal of The Midwest Archives Conference* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 18-19.

best conceived as a subculture. These are stories in which women are the central actors, even if their stories are camouflaged by modesty and disclaimers.”¹¹⁵

Women’s collections archivists should make oral history projects a priority because they can fill in the gaps created by centuries of women being conditioned to believe that expressing themselves with the written word is something of which they are both incapable and unworthy. Additionally, the intersections between the public and private lives of all people (but especially women) are intrinsically connected and inseparable, and oral histories provide one of the only means of capturing these connections. In other words, these interviews provide “a holistic view of women’s lives and their multiple roles and responsibilities... It is difficult if not impossible to understand a woman’s career without the context of her home and family, and vice versa.”¹¹⁶ If archivists are unable to take on an oral history project due to the limitations imposed by time and finances, then concentrated efforts should be made to preserve the records generated by community oral history projects and other sources.

11. Women’s collections have a vested interest in the development of digital initiatives and web-based content.

Elizabeth Meyers notes that “the promise of the archival future rests in the continued, perhaps even reinvigorated, emphasis on local collecting and the sharing of

¹¹⁵ Judy Nolte Lensink, “Beyond the Intellectual Meridian: Transdisciplinary Studies of Women,” in *Pacific Historical Review* 61.4 (1992), 472-473.

¹¹⁶ Mason and Zanish-Belcher, “What’s in a Name,” 292.

that content online.”¹¹⁷ The reason for Meyers’s conclusion is twofold. On the one hand, greater interest in digitization, electronic records management, and web archiving stems from the nature of records management in the 21st century. Paper files and diaries are increasingly being replaced by born digital records and blogs. This is especially true for women, whose traditional forms of expression (zines, journals, and letters) have naturally migrated to online or other computer-based formats. Women’s collections archivists must actively seek out these sorts of materials both because they represent the main platform for today’s women’s expression and because of the unstable nature of digital content. As Francisca de Haan and Annette Mevis point out, “paper, to some extent, is patient, but bits and bytes are not,”¹¹⁸ and if archivists are to capitalize on the record-enriching benefits of woman-centric web-based content, we must act now to acquire it.

But perhaps more importantly, the future of women’s collections lies in online content because of the democratizing effect it can have for women who otherwise would not have access to their own history. Sharing content online has the potential not only to bring women’s collections to a larger audience, but also to affect a complete cultural shift in the way that both archivists and donors approach historical preservation. IIAV archivists have discovered that digital technology has fundamentally changed the scope of their operations. “Whereas we used to focus on a physical collection, we now focus on connection. We used to collect and preserve information, and while we still do that, of

¹¹⁷ Meyers, “My Sister’s Keeper,” 458.

¹¹⁸ Francisca de Haan and Annette Mevis, “The IAV/IIAV’s Archival Policy and Practice: Seventy Years of Collecting Receiving, and Refusing Women’s Archives (1935-2005),” in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 42.

course, we now also to aspire to participate in the creation of knowledge.”¹¹⁹ By investing in digital initiatives, women’s collections can transform themselves into dynamic knowledge production centers, much like Mary Ritter Beard’s vision for the WCWA.

It should be noted that this suggestion does come with a caveat, mainly that “archivists must take care not to become so infatuated with technology that they forget those who have no access to the internet, lack the knowledge or skills to use it, or choose not to use it.”¹²⁰ Digital initiatives should be coupled with public programming and face-to-face outreach in communities where computer access or literacy may prove problematic, and part of a repository’s digital strategy should be to take steps to see that these issues are addressed. But, in general, “what is at stake with Archives 2.0 and History 2.0 is not just the potential of new collaborative technologies but a culture shift which embraces democratization, a de-centring of authority and perspective, a refiguring of thinking and practice, and a thorough-going participatory ethos.”¹²¹

12. Women’s records are inherently rooted in the present.

Throughout the history of women’s collections, many archivists and historians have echoed a single point on the close relationship between women’s collections and the present. This point is perhaps most succinctly articulated by Jacques Derrida, who writes that “the arkhe—the archives—appears to represent the *now* of whatever kind of power is

¹¹⁹ Tilly Vriend, “From Physical to Digital: The Impact of Information and Communications Technologies at the IIAV,” in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 117-118.

¹²⁰ Mason and Zanish-Belcher, “A Room of One’s Own,” 138.

¹²¹ Flinn, “An Attack on Professionalism.”

being exercised, anywhere, in any place and time.”¹²² Women’s past and present are inherently linked and inseparable concepts, as the limited and fragile nature of women’s past achievements in gaining equal footing with men is frequently recalled as new initiatives to address inequality are undertaken. Similarly, the inevitable lack of value that most women place upon their records makes these records innately ephemeral, constantly at risk of being destroyed, discarded, or even never created at all thanks to centuries of systemic sexist programming. It is for this reason that initiatives to encourage women to document their lives, like the Sallie Bingham Center’s Girls Rock Camp zine workshop and the Alberta Women’s Archives Association’s guide to preserving women’s records,¹²³ have been undertaken by women’s collections archivists, in the hopes of stemming the inevitable gaps that result from patriarchal influence.

Cultural heritage, and by extension, women’s history, is neither static nor inert. “It is dynamic, and as a result, the value that we attach to it makes a difference... It is a key to the past and to personal identity, it is social capital, and in each community, it can take different shapes.”¹²⁴ In the women’s community of today, in contrast to traditional research-based archives and manuscript collections, cultural heritage takes the shape of documentation for social change. This means that women’s collections today are “both

¹²² Carolyn Steedman, *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 1.

¹²³ Patricia A. Myers, *Preserving Women’s History: An Introductory Guide to Preserving the Records of Women’s Lives* (Alberta: Alberta Women’s Archives Association, 2002), 6.

¹²⁴ Marjet Douze and Twie Tjoa, “The Cultural Heritage of Women in Multicultural Dutch Society,” in *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving, and Sharing Women’s History*, ed. Saskia Wieringa (Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008), 203.

physical collection[s] of objects and the material through which political agendas are performed.”¹²⁵ It is no coincidence that initiatives to establish women’s collections have been grounded in feminist thought. Kate Eichhorn expands on this feminist influence: “Rather than simply reflecting a desire to understand the past, the current archival turn reflects a desire to take control of the present through a reorientation to the past, and in this sense the archival turn under neoliberalism may be understood as a realization of what Wendy Brown describes as ‘genealogical politics.’”¹²⁶

The act of naming a collection as a women’s collection and establishing women’s records as a collecting focus is an inextricably political one, but that does not mean that archivists should shy away from making such a statement. Andrew Flinn illustrates the internal conflict with which many archivists grapple in taking a political stance as follows:

Writing history is a living and continuously fluid activity and an archive... is also a living thing, being constantly extended, reformed and re-imagined. So the activity of democratisation is not something that can be completed, it must be an ongoing process. However... there is still strong resistance to such ideas within the archive profession and perhaps in academia more generally; representing what might be viewed as a 'traditional' position on 'professionalism, standards and scholarship' and viewing such changes as being allied to a short-term and irrelevant external political agenda.¹²⁷

Archives have been and always will be political institutions. They document historical events only insofar as curators deem those events worthy of being documented while they

¹²⁵ Laura Mayhall, “Creating the Suffragette Spirit: British Feminism and the Historical Imagination,” in *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 247.

¹²⁶ Kate Eichhorn, *The Archival Turn in Feminism*, 7.

¹²⁷ Flinn, “An Attack on Professionalism.”

are/were happening. By choosing to target women's records in their collection development activities in the present, archivists can at least be assured that their influence is being used to combat decades of omission of an oppressed group from the historical record.

Conclusion

It is my hope that the twelve recommendations described above will be utilized by archivists for women's collections and integrated collections to work towards rectifying the omission of women from the historical record. These recommendations are neither comprehensive nor failsafe, but rather meant to serve as a starting point for archivists seeking to develop their own approaches to incorporating women's records into their collection development policies. It is important to leave the reader with the reminder that, until the world can be emphatically and unequivocally considered to be a post-feminist society, it will take the proactive work of *all* archivists to close the gaps in the documentation of women, not just women's collections archivists. By electing to read this list of recommendations, archivists have taken the first step toward achieving this goal. But it is only by working together to build truly collaborative relationships with underdocumented communities of donors that a comprehensive representation of women's impact on the historical record can be realized.

Appendix A: Recruitment Letter, Kathryn Jacob

Dear Ms. Jacob,

My name is Samantha Crisp, and I am a graduate student in library science at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I write to request your voluntary participation in an interview as part of a research study examining the past, present, and future implications for women's manuscript collections and repositories. Your contact information was given to me by Kelly Wooten.

Despite at any one moment comprising at least half of the human race, women have tended to remain largely invisible in the historical record. Where women's records exist in archival holdings, they are concealed by imprecise description or a lack of viable access points. Despite the establishment of hundreds of women's repositories in the last 80 years, perspectives of entire demographics of women (such as ethnic minorities, [im]migrants, and impoverished women) are absent from the historical record or, at best, minimally documented. In the age of minimal processing, archivists continue to routinely gloss over women's materials in description, and curators often deem the kinds of records historically created by women (e.g. scrapbooks, samplers, and quilts) to be more trouble than they're worth, and thus pass over them in their collecting efforts.

Archivists influential in efforts to document women's lives have historically grappled with similar issues. This paper will attempt to analyze the history of women's collections, which experienced periods of renewed interest in the 1930s, 1960s-1970s, and late 1980s-1990s (born of the need to document and preserve the First, Second, and Third Wave Feminist movements, respectively), and use this analysis to offer projections and recommendations for the future of collection development and outreach efforts. Because many of the same ideas prevalent during these movements still permeate women's history today, I hope to ascertain whether similar problems with documentation efforts continue to exist and whether archivists can thus use the lessons learned in these past experiences as a model to shape current and future collection development and maintenance strategies.

This research is being carried out in pursuit of my master's paper. Research will take place through interviews with archivists for women's collections and historians who are directly involved in curating historical resources related to women. Your interview will be conducted by phone or on Skype (according to your preference), taking place at a time that is convenient for you, and it will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes. This study involves no known risks or benefits, and you may withdraw your participation at any time.

If you are interested in participating in this research study, please email me and I can provide further information. I can be reached at scrisp@live.unc.edu or at 828-736-6251. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Denise Anthony, at 919-962-3638 or by email at anthonyd@email.unc.edu. If you have questions about this study and the implications of your involvement, you may contact UNC's Institutional Review Board regarding IRB study #13-4035

at CB 7097 Medical School Bldg. 52, 105 Mason Farm Road Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097 or by phone at 919-966-3113.

Sincerely,

Samantha Crisp

Appendix B: Recruitment Letter, Laura Micham

Dear Ms. Micham,

My name is Samantha Crisp, and I am a graduate student in library science at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I write to request your voluntary participation in an interview as part of a research study examining the past, present, and future implications for women's manuscript collections and repositories.

Despite at any one moment comprising at least half of the human race, women have tended to remain largely invisible in the historical record. Where women's records exist in archival holdings, they are concealed by imprecise description or a lack of viable access points. Despite the establishment of hundreds of women's repositories in the last 80 years, perspectives of entire demographics of women (such as ethnic minorities, [im]migrants, and impoverished women) are absent from the historical record or, at best, minimally documented. In the age of minimal processing, archivists continue to routinely gloss over women's materials in description, and curators often deem the kinds of records historically created by women (e.g. scrapbooks, samplers, and quilts) to be more trouble than they're worth, and thus pass over them in their collecting efforts.

Archivists influential in efforts to document women's lives have historically grappled with similar issues. This paper will attempt to analyze the history of women's collections, which experienced periods of renewed interest in the 1930s, 1960s-1970s, and late 1980s-1990s (born of the need to document and preserve the First, Second, and Third Wave Feminist movements, respectively), and use this analysis to offer projections and recommendations for the future of collection development and outreach efforts. Because many of the same ideas prevalent during these movements still permeate women's history today, I hope to ascertain whether similar problems with documentation efforts continue to exist and whether archivists can thus use the lessons learned in these past experiences as a model to shape current and future collection development and maintenance strategies.

This research is being carried out in pursuit of my master's paper. Research will take place through interviews with archivists for women's collections and historians who are directly involved in curating historical resources related to women. Your interview will be conducted in person, or by phone or Skype (if that is your preference), taking place at a time that is convenient for you, and it will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

This study involves no known risks or benefits, and you may withdraw your participation at any time. No personal, invasive, or incriminating questions will be asked. You will not be obligated to answer any question you feel uncomfortable answering. Questions will be limited to those designed to gain a sense of the history, policies, and procedures at your institution and your opinions of the challenges and opportunities that your daily work creates. Because there is no private or incriminating data being collected, data will not be de-identified or made anonymous, and your responses may be quoted and named in my master's paper.

If the above stipulations are agreeable to you and you are interested in participating in this study, please respond indicating a time that is convenient for you, within the next 2-3 weeks, to be interviewed in person (or by phone or Skype if that is your preference) and where you would like the interview to take place. I can be reached at scrisp@live.unc.edu or at 828-736-6251. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Denise Anthony, at 919-962-3638 or by email at anthonyd@email.unc.edu. If you have questions about this study and the implications of your involvement, you may contact UNC's Institutional Review Board regarding IRB study #13-4035 at CB 7097 Medical School Bldg. 52, 105 Mason Farm Road Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097 or by phone at 919-966-3113

Sincerely,

Samantha Crisp

Appendix C: Recruitment Letter, Tanya Zanish-Belcher

Dear Ms. Zanish-Belcher,

My name is Samantha Crisp, and I am a graduate student in library science at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. I write to request your voluntary participation in an interview as part of a research study examining the past, present, and future implications for women's manuscript collections and repositories.

Despite at any one moment comprising at least half of the human race, women have tended to remain largely invisible in the historical record. Where women's records exist in archival holdings, they are concealed by imprecise description or a lack of viable access points. Despite the establishment of hundreds of women's repositories in the last 80 years, perspectives of entire demographics of women (such as ethnic minorities, [im]migrants, and impoverished women) are absent from the historical record or, at best, minimally documented. In the age of minimal processing, archivists continue to routinely gloss over women's materials in description, and curators often deem the kinds of records historically created by women (e.g. scrapbooks, samplers, and quilts) to be more trouble than they're worth, and thus pass over them in their collecting efforts.

Archivists influential in efforts to document women's lives have historically grappled with similar issues. This paper will attempt to analyze the history of women's collections, which experienced periods of renewed interest in the 1930s, 1960s-1970s, and late 1980s-1990s (born of the need to document and preserve the First, Second, and Third Wave Feminist movements, respectively), and use this analysis to offer projections and recommendations for the future of collection development and outreach efforts. Because many of the same ideas prevalent during these movements still permeate women's history today, I hope to ascertain whether similar problems with documentation efforts continue to exist and whether archivists can thus use the lessons learned in these past experiences as a model to shape current and future collection development and maintenance strategies.

This research is being carried out in pursuit of my master's paper. Research will take place through interviews with archivists for women's collections and historians who are directly involved in curating historical resources related to women. Your interview will be conducted in person at your institution, or by phone or Skype (if that is your preference), taking place at a time that is convenient for you, and it will last approximately 30 to 60 minutes.

This study involves no known risks or benefits, and you may withdraw your participation at any time. No personal, invasive, or incriminating questions will be asked. You will not be obligated to answer any question you feel uncomfortable answering. Questions will be limited to those designed to gain a sense of the history, policies, and procedures at your institution and your opinions of the challenges and opportunities that your daily work creates. Because there is no

private or incriminating data being collected, data will not be de-identified or made anonymous, and your responses may be quoted and named in my master's paper.

If the above stipulations are agreeable to you and you are interested in participating in this study, please respond indicating a time that is convenient for you, within the next 3-4 weeks, to be interviewed in person at your institution and the best address where you can be reached at that time (if you prefer that the interview be conducted by phone or Skype, please instead provide your phone number or Skype username). I can be reached at scrisp@live.unc.edu or at 828-736-6251. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Denise Anthony, at 919-962-3638 or by email at anthonyd@email.unc.edu. If you have questions about this study and the implications of your involvement, you may contact UNC's Institutional Review Board regarding IRB study #13-4035 at CB 7097 Medical School Bldg. 52, 105 Mason Farm Road Chapel Hill, NC 27599-7097 or by phone at 919-966-3113.

Sincerely,

Samantha Crisp

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol, All Participants

When and how did you become involved with your institution? Were you there from the time of its inception? If not, do you feel as though you have a good sense of the history of your institution and the motivations/activities its establishment?

Do you consider your collection to be a feminist collection? Why/why not?

Do you consider your current collecting efforts to be motivated by feminism? If so, how?

At any point in your collection's past (including prior to your involvement), do you feel as though feminism or feminist activity was a motivating factor in the policies, procedures, and activities of your institution? This includes its establishment.

What kinds of challenges did you experience when you first became involved with your institution? This includes challenges faced in collection development, outreach, processing collections, providing reference/access services, fundraising, and any other aspects of collection management.

What kinds of challenges do you currently face at your institution? This includes challenges faced in collection development, outreach, processing collections, providing reference/access services, fundraising, and any other aspects of collection management.

What do you consider to be your [or your institution's] biggest accomplishment(s) in your current position? How was it achieved?

Do you have a sense of what challenges and accomplishments past administrators at your institution may have faced in managing their collections? If so, what are they?

Do you think the experiences of yourself, your predecessors, and your institution are representative of women's collections as a whole? Why or why not?

What can archivists at women's collections today learn from their predecessors' experiences? In other words, how can lessons learned in the past influence collections in the future?

What, in your opinion, does the future of women's collections look like?

Bibliography

- Beattie, Diane L. "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History." *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989-90): 33-50.
- Beattie, Heather. "Where Narratives Meet: Archival Description, Provenance, and Women's Diaries." *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 44, no. 1 (2009): 82-100.
- Buss, Helen M., and Marlene Kadar, eds. *Working in Women's Archives: Researching Women's Private Literature and Archival Documents*. Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001.
- Chaudhuri, Nupur, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds. *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources*. Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2010.
- Crawford, Miriam I. "Women in Archives: The Status of Women in the Academic Professions," *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973): 223-232.
- Crisp, Samantha and Claire Radcliffe. "Did You Find Any Women Today?' Revealing Women's Lives in Archival Description and Research." Paper presented at the annual conference for the Librarians Association at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, March 10, 2014.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Archive Fever : a Freudian Impression*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.
- Deutrich, Mabel E. "Women in Archives: Ms. Vs. Mr. Archivist," *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973): 171-181.
- Eichhorn, Kate. *The Archival Turn in Feminism*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013.
- Flinn, Andrew. "An Attack on Professionalism and Scholarship?: Democratising Archives and the Production of Knowledge," *Ariadne* 62 (2010). Accessed March 23, 2014. <http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue62/flinn>.
- Fox, Melodie J. "Prototype Theory: An Alternative Concept Theory for Categorizing Sex and Gender?" *Knowledge Organization* 38.4 (Oct 2011): 328-334.

- Freivogel, Elsie Frieman. "Women in Archives: A Program for Action." *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973): 183-201.
- Gerrard, Morna. "Hear Them Roar: Challenge and Collaboration in Putting the Georgia Women's Movement Oral History Project on the Web." *Archival Issues: Journal of The Midwest Archives Conference* 31, no. 1 (January 2007): 7-24.
- Hildenbrand, Suzanne. "Information for equality: the Documentation Center of the Women's Institute in Madrid." *Wilson Library Bulletin* 68, no. 7 (1994): 45-47.
- Hildenbrand, Suzanne, ed. *Women's Collections: Libraries, Archives, and Consciousness*. New York: Haworth Press, 1986.
- Lensink, Judy Nolte. "Beyond the Intellectual Meridian: Transdisciplinary Studies of Women." *Pacific Historical Review* 61.4 (1992): 463-80.
- Mayhall, Laura. "Creating the Suffragette Spirit: British Feminism and the Historical Imagination." *Archive Stories: Facts, Fiction, and the Writing of History*, ed. Antoinette Burton. Durham, NC: Duke University Press (2005): 232-247.
- Moseley, Eva. "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America." *American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (April 1973): 215-222.
- Myers, Patricia A. *Preserving Women's History: An Introductory Guide to Preserving the Records of Women's Lives*. Alberta: Alberta Women's Archives Association (2002).
- Novara, Elizabeth A. "Documenting Maryland Women State Legislators: The Politics of Collecting Women's Political Papers." *American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (May, 2013): 196-214.
- Sachs, Honor R. "Reconstructing A Life: The Archival Challenges of Women's History." *Library Trends* 56, no. 3 (Winter 2008): 650-666.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Caroll. "The New Woman and the New History." *Feminist Studies* 3, no. 1/2 (1975): 185-198.
- Society of American Archivists Records. Milwaukee MSS 172/200. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives Department.
- Steedman, Carolyn. *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2002.
- Wieringa, Saskia Eleonora, ed. *Traveling Heritages: New Perspectives on Collecting, Preserving and Sharing Women's History*. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008.

Wooten, Kelly. "Outreach and Instruction at the Sallie Bingham Center." *Make Your Own History : Documenting Feminist and Queer Activism in the 21st Century*, eds. Liz Bly and Kelly Wooten. Los Angeles, CA: Litwin Books, 2012. 39-44.

Zanish-Belcher, Tanya and Anke Voss, eds. *Perspectives on Women's Archives*. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2013.