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This study examines the quantity and placement of Ku Klux Klan materials among archival collections in five academic libraries in the United States. I discuss the importance of collecting materials from hate groups in the United States, with the Ku Klux Klan as an example, and explore challenges in outreach and description. A comparison and analysis of Ku Klux Klan holdings in repositories reveals the current status of those materials and provides insight into how repositories and archivists confront controversial research topics.

Headings:

Archival description

Ku Klux Klan (1915-)--United States

Special Collections--case studies

A STUDY IN ARCHIVAL COLLECTING FROM EXTREMIST GROUPS: AN INVESTIGATION
OF KU KLUX KLAN HOLDINGS IN THE UNITED STATES.

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Introduction

In the current “on-line, information, and interactive age” (Cook 8), it is important for academic archives to collect controversial materials, especially those that reflect under-researched, sometimes unpleasant aspects of American history. There is difficulty involved in collecting some types of materials, such as those from and about extremist groups, and special care must be taken with donors, researchers, and other stakeholders. Despite challenges to collecting materials from extremist groups, many such materials have been compiled at academic archives across the United States. The collections vary widely across institutions, and this study will explore how the research significance and inherent difficulties presented by these items comes to bear on how the items are housed, displayed, accessed, and contextualized in their institutions.

Political extremism is a familiar phenomenon in the United States, as much now as at any point in history. Many groups affiliated with different movements and agendas--such as Christian Identity, Ecoterrorism, the Militia Movement, the Sovereign Citizen Movement, and the Tax Protest Movement--have influenced American community and civic life to varying degrees, sometimes using violence and intimidation, sometimes exerting considerable political influence. The Ku Klux Klan (KKK) is one of the most well-known extremist groups in the United States, and one with a history that is both obfuscated and persistently intertwined with mainstream political activity. Because the KKK claims more members throughout the United States than any other type of right-

wing hate group (ADL) and has had a history rife with controversy, they will be the representative group in this study of collecting controversial material.

The most obvious challenge to collecting materials from the Ku Klux Klan is the disorganized nature of local groups and national leadership (SPLC). The Southern Poverty Law Center “estimates that there are between 5,000 and 8,000 Klan members” in the United States today, “split among different--and often warring--organizations that use the Klan name.” Other extremist groups are similarly evasive and difficult to communicate with. For example, in 2003, “five residents of Barnes County, North Dakota” affiliated with the Sovereign Citizens Movement “were arrested after being caught with fake drivers licenses, registrations and insurance cards” (ADL). Another way for members of extremist groups to evade law enforcement and outsider interference is with “a subculture of graffiti, hand signals, tattoos, attire and language” (ADL) meant to confuse outsiders, intimidate enemy groups, and foster intra-group communication.

The archivist or an oral historian’s relationships with donors and interviewees, and with community stakeholders, present another challenge. There are a number of ethical questions that must be addressed when collecting among extremist groups: how to reach consensus with a donor or interviewee about the purpose of the project; how to establish and maintain rapport with extremist parties without sacrificing one’s own beliefs and professional responsibilities; how to communicate with user populations of an archive why collecting controversial materials is important. Outreach and public programming must communicate clearly how controversial materials fit into the mission and collecting foci of an institution. Community support--from students of the institution, faculty, administration, local residents, and other stakeholders--is necessary

for a repository to thrive, and all efforts should be made to address disagreements when they arise and clarify the repository's position.

Although the challenges to collecting materials from extremist groups are significant, many academic repositories throughout the United States have holdings from or related to such groups, including the Ku Klux Klan. The formats, conditions governing use, and descriptions of these holdings represent a wide range of approaches to these materials. For example, at Florida State University, a collection of materials from the career of a KKK infiltrator, including his notes for a KKK plot arc on the *Superman* radio program, is housed in cardboard boxes. At Indiana University Bloomington, several dozen issues of area KKK newsletters from the early 1920s have been digitized and are available for users to download in full, not from the archives but from the library's government resources page. The three other institutions represented in this study have as much variety in their holdings and in how they are placed within collections.

Many competing versions of history exist today, and still the unpleasant realities of the past are in danger of being sanitized or forgotten. To substantiate an account, primary sources are needed, and it is important that they are preserved accessible to researchers. The extent to which archivists are responsible for situating materials within a narrative is under debate. Some archivists and researchers, according to Terry Cook, expect that users will approach archival materials "almost like geologists and fossils in rock sediments, the past as it really happened" (6), with no commentary beyond informational description from the archivist. The task of collecting controversial material is difficult and fraught with challenges. Outreach, establishing trust, public relations, and

ethics should all be considered when collecting these materials. A sample of five institutions in the United States will illustrate how these difficulties are overcome, or not, in their collections.

Terminology Note

Throughout my study, I will use different terms, both my own and in quotations by others, to describe racist and extremist thought, practices, groups, and individuals. “Extremist” is an umbrella term meant to describe the range of violent political fringe organizations, of which the Ku Klux Klan is only a representative group for the purpose of this study. Findings related to acquisition of KKK materials may also apply to other groups promoting extreme agendas and beliefs.

Berbrier (1999) explains at length why he uses “white supremacist” interchangeably with “white separatist” and “white racial activist,” and reflects the political weight of each term. In short, “white separatist” and “white racial activist” are both terms that the groups use to describe themselves, which I have avoided in this study so as not to imply advocacy. Therefore, I will not refer to any groups or individuals by nicknames or other non-official names they use to refer to themselves. “White supremacist” is used occasionally in this study to describe individuals and beliefs. Segregation is a common belief across the spectrum of extremist racism, and “segregationist” is a neutral a term that I use in this study.

Occasionally, the KKK and other groups are referred to as “marginalized.” This means that they exist on the fringes of our culture, that they are encouraged to hide their beliefs, and most importantly, that documenting their histories is not a priority in many research libraries and archival repositories. This is not to say, however, that their marginalized status makes them deserving of advocacy, sympathy, or even encouragement to present their beliefs in public. It simply means that they are unpopular in our culture and potentially underrepresented in historical discourse. Again, this study

is in no way an endorsement of KKK beliefs or activities, nor is it an endorsement of other extremist groups.

About the Ku Klux Klan

The Ku Klux Klan is an American group that was founded at the end of the Civil War, in 1865, in Pulaski, Tennessee, as a social group for former Confederate soldiers. Soon after the group began convening, often after dark, members noticed that “their nightly appearances were causing fear, particularly among former slaves in the area” (ADL), and members, with residual angst and resentment of Northerners and formerly enslaved African Americans after the Civil War, took advantage of this fear. As Reconstruction policies, which would increase some civil rights to African Americans, took effect, the Ku Klux Klan grew significantly and solidified their positions against granting rights to African Americans. From 1866 to 1869, the group instituted “a systematic policy of violence in opposition to the new social order” (ADL), targeting African Americans and any Northerners who had come South to assist in Reconstruction efforts. The Klan disbanded in 1869 after a period of internal conflict, and re-emerged in 1915.

Since 1915, the Klan has reorganized three times, splitting into different factions each using the Klan name or some variation of it. Names of these groups vary, often using some variation of “knighthood”; they include the Brotherhood of Klans Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, the True Invisible Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, and Ku Klux Klan LLC (Southern Poverty Law Center). Leadership of these groups is decentralized and, for the most part, limited to local chapters, although the Knights Party claims propriety over all Ku Klux Klan affiliates (Knights Party).

The original mission of the Ku Klux Klan was to intimidate African Americans with violence during the Reconstruction era. Later, the Ku Klux Klan would use the

same tactics during the civil rights movement; in addition to African Americans, the Klan targets Jews, Catholics, gays and lesbians, and groups they perceive as communist.

Recently, the Klan has included opposition to immigration and same-sex marriage in its campaigns (Simi) (Anti-Defamation League). Although the Klan claims to be a “love group” instead of a hate group, and lists “Loving Our Family!” on a banner at the top of the Knights Party’s home page, some themes of current Klan ideology are revealed in the titles of opinion pieces on the Knights Party website, which include “Aids is a Racial Disease,” “The Coming White Genocide,” “Most Jewish Groups Back Gay Marriage,” and “All About Immigration” (Knights Party).

With “titles (like imperial wizard and exalted cyclops), hooded costumes, [and] violent night rides,” the Ku Klux Klan has historically been a very violent group, with “lynchings, tar-and-featherings, rapes” (SPLC) and other tactics, notably the 1963 bombing of a Baptist church in Birmingham, Alabama, where four African American girls were murdered. Although violence has been a primary strategy of the Klan, Klan groups have used “public rallies and protests, ‘adopt a highway’ programs” (ADL) mass mailings, and other conventional means of gathering attention in recent years. Klan groups also have a large presence on the Internet.

The group remains one of the most well-known white supremacist groups in the United States, boasting affiliations with other extremist groups, such as neo-Nazi Christian Identity groups and Aryan Brotherhood prison gangs (ADL). Its role in politics and current events is significantly diminished from the influence Klan members enjoyed in the 1920s and 1960s (SPLC), but “violence associated with white supremacist groups in the United States represents the most sustained form of terrorism in this country” (Simi

252) and groups that affiliate with the Ku Klux Klan remain major sources of domestic terrorism, hate crime, and extremist political ideology in the United States today (SPLC).

Literature review

The writings here represent a range of scholarship that I hope will provide historical and sociological context for the materials housed at the repositories in question, as well as challenges involved in archival collecting of controversial materials. The first group of writings deals with white supremacy in the civil rights era in the 1950s and 60s, specifically with contemporary studies that seek to uncover truths about segregationist logic and beliefs during that the period surrounding the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. These writings are important in understanding the importance of scholarship on segregationist individuals and extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan in a historical context. The second group visits sociology and political science scholarship on present-day white supremacy, analyzing the tactics and goals of contemporary extremist groups, including those affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan. A third group of writings explores archives and oral history collecting in difficult situations of all kinds which I found to be instructive in navigating such issues. Finally, as a bookend to the first section wherein the growing interest in research on extremism is described by Webb and Campney, there is a group of writings addressing the role of archives in shaping history and collective memory, as well as archives' roles in the transparency and accountability of institutions. Two cases of egregious injustice by state apparatuses, and the processes through which victims make peace, illustrate the importance of accessible archives.

Segregationism in the Civil Rights Era

Massive Resistance (2005) is a collection of writings on the experiences of white southerners during the “Second Reconstruction,” or the period of integration following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Its introduction and bibliographical essays, written by editor Clive Webb, offer insight into the availability and types of primary and secondary sources used in the book, as well as the need for research on segregationism. “Although much of the literature on the civil rights struggle has focused on the activists who pushed for racial reform,” Webb writes, “there are a number of important published works on southern segregationists” (221). The fact that most of them have been published only recently is a “clear indication of increased scholarly interest in the subject” (221). Still, “the comparative lack of attention bestowed on segregationists has stripped the story of civil rights protest of its proper historical context” (8). Webb adds that “only by understanding the nature of the opposition can scholars accurately assess the accomplishments of the civil rights movement” (8).

Some of the “more extremist groups such as the National States Rights’ Party and the National Association for the Advancement of White People have suffered relative neglect” (226) in comparison to studies of ““respectable resistance,”” (226), or moderate, more politically palatable shows of racial discrimination by ordinary citizens and families. There are also surprises to be uncovered in studies of extreme groups; Webb cites David Chalmers’ *Backfire: How the Ku Klux Klan Helped the Civil Rights Movement* as a work that “demonstrates how Klan violence against civil rights activists proved counterproductive to the segregationist cause” (226), highlighting idiosyncrasies in American thinking and behavior towards race. The importance of collecting primary sources for scholarly use is reiterated by Webb, as “there are [currently] only a limited

number of accessible works written in defense of southern segregation” (224). Webb recommends a small selection of “the most thorough and lucid arguments in defense of the racial status quo” (224).

Echoing many of Webb’s statements in favor of research on segregationism is Jason Sokol, who writes in *There Goes My Everything: White Southerners in the Age of Civil Rights, 1945-1965* that “historians have yet to capture those narratives of white southerners during the age of civil rights in all their complexity” (8), even now that “historians have the benefit of four decades” (9) to help us understand that history in a wider context. Sokol uses books written during the 1960s and articles and letters to the editors of local newspapers throughout the South in order to illustrate the “abyss” that “separated white racial attitudes from reality” (56) during the period of upheaval following the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Sokol’s work is notable mostly for its emphasis on “the populace that buys the papers, and casts the votes,” rather than on studies of “prominent figures” such as Strom Thurmond and George Wallace (9), which he argues are already well-known.

Webb’s and Sokol’s descriptions of the scarcity of segregationist voices in the historical record is bolstered by Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, founder of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In an essay titled “The Long Civil Rights Movement and the political uses of the past,” Hall describes the necessity of gathering a wider scope of information about the civil rights era, beyond the 1950s and 60s and the iconic speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr. Instead of the simple version, she writes, we must understand the complexity of the movement, including unpleasant realities and facts that can confuse perceptions of right and wrong. Therefore,

the Long Civil Rights Movement aims for a broader and more holistic view of the civil rights movement than what is popularly known and taught in schools. Hall's essay provides a useful overview of contexts surrounding civil rights events and sheds light on the mission and institutional memory of the Southern Oral History Program, one of the sample collections (at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Southern Historical Collection) in this study.

A recent article from the journal *Kansas History* seeks to fill another gap in existing research about race relations and the civil rights movement: documenting the movement outside the South. Brent Campney and his colleagues endeavor to show the civil rights movement as something that "also shaped small towns and suburbs [outside the South]--part of the northern story that has been almost completely overlooked" (40). Campney relies largely on local newspapers and campus publications around Lawrence, Kansas for this study, looking particularly at letters to the editor from area citizens. Campney ultimately found that the stories from Lawrence were representative of many white Americans' experiences at the time.

Quotations from newspaper articles interspersed with editorial letters typifying public opinion of the day show a range of reactions to integration in Lawrence. White Lawrencians argued variously for their supremacy over black neighbors; some of the arguments mentioned in Campney's article include that civil rights legislation served only "to foist social change upon a resistant population" (25), going against "the will of the people," and that "white supremacy was ordained by [God]," (30). Snippets of commentary by white citizens reveal startling ideas about race in Lawrence, as in one

man's remark: "Hell, I don't even know what a racist is...I do a lot of business with niggers" (30).

What results from Campney's study is a portrait both of racism outside the South and a cross-section of white attitudes from individuals who were and were not associated with the KKK, over a span of sixteen years, from 1945 to 1961. That many of the writers and commentators in the Lawrence news, as viciously prejudiced as they seemed, were not members of the KKK may help explain how that group and other extremists found support, however passive, in communities across the United States. The passionate, focused nature of commentary published in the local presses is valuable in many ways to understanding the misconceptions, naiveties, and opinions of segregationists. Moreover, surveys of this type act as practical examples of the type of research encouraged by Webb and Hall, and are helpful in assessing the range and depth of existing works and interest on the topic.

Present-Day Extremism: Attitudes and Political Significance

To further establish the need for archival collecting and conducting oral histories on controversial subjects, in particular segregationism and the Ku Klux Klan, I draw from sources in the fields of sociology, political science, and journalism to gather a picture of current segregationist attitudes and activities.

In "Confounding Fathers: The Tea Party's Cold War Roots," Sean Wilentz shares a history of conservatism and far-right political tactics since the Cold War, looking closely at Glenn Beck and recent "Tea Party" phenomena as a continuation of longstanding white supremacist traditions. Wilentz compares red-scare tactics used

during the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 60s with similar strategies today, particularly with regard to the Obama Administration, used to provoke fear among the right wing. Wilentz cites “the warnings on Fox News about the terrible dangers posed by the minuscule New Black Panther Party” (37) as part of the ways racial tension is exaggerated and fear is provoked by television hosts and right-wing media executives. Wilentz also presents a detailed history, with commentary on some of the coded language embedded, of past and present conservatives’ idealizing of a “small government.”

In “Impression Management for the Thinking Racist,” Mitch Berbrier (7) presents a case study of intellectualizing racism in the white supremacist magazine *Instauration* and in the statements of *Instauration*’s editor, Wilmot Robertson. Berbrier addresses how Robertson and his writing staff rationalized their racism, and encouraged others’, by redefining terms--such as “racism” itself--and evading confrontation. Berbrier also explores the elements of this “new racism” and its adherents’ techniques for winning new converts and defending themselves against charges of bigotry. For example, Wilmot Robertson attempted to establish himself as a legitimate intellectual, noting in his publications that he attended an Ivy League school and enjoyed a successful career “in a Madison Avenue advertising agency” before retiring early to “[study] physics at Berkeley” (416). These, with other notes, are plainly “rhetorical devices used to culturally situate the author and confer estimable status upon him,” (416) in an attempted departure from media portrayals of white supremacists as “uneducated southern ‘redneck[s]’” (420).

Berbrier draws parallels to Wilentz’s account of Tea Party politics and coded language; for example, in Robertson’s book *The Ethnostate*, Robertson writes that “the

prop on which [the ethnostate] succeeds or fails is racial and cultural homogeneity...[But] a second prop, almost as basic, is smallness” (416), echoing the popular right-wing wish for states’ rights and a small federal government. This is both a distrust of “big government” shared honestly by many non-racists, and also a recruitment tactic by Robertson, attempting to draw mainstream conservatives into the white supremacist fold while “carefully avoiding the racial factor,” (417) at least initially.

Other glimpses of Robertson’s rationalizations include portraying whites as victims (419), asking students to complain about the absence of racist literature in libraries as “evidence of censorship” (419), even advising that “college professors can...be labeled as biased censors when they do not say negative things about minorities” (419). According to Berbrier, Robertson and colleagues’ strategies rely on “context-less social science and a vulgar sociobiology” (419) in order to “repeatedly trumpet the advantages of appearing intellectual (as opposed to just being so)” (420). Although Robertson might realize his ideas lack intellectual rigor, he seems to exploit his followers’ trust and ignorance intentionally. Another interesting note is that contributors to *Instauration* do not use their real names, but are assigned numerical pseudonyms (e.g. “300”). Here is yet another example of the difficulty inherent in tracking down individual participants in hate groups and further evidence of such groups’ suspicion of society at large.

Finally, a more serious warning emerges from Berbrier’s research. Robertson condemns violent skinhead organizations and the Ku Klux Klan, but counsels against violence (Robertson 50-51) until the intellectual groundwork for white reign is laid and “the situation reaches a sufficiently ‘intolerable’ stage,” (Berbrier 418) at which point

Robertson will presumably begin to encourage violence against minorities and their allies. Berbrier closes in reiterating that some “elements of the new racist rhetoric align very well with some of the political themes of serial presidential candidate Pat Buchanan” (428), among other politicians who have enjoyed mainstream respect and voter support, such as former Louisiana Congressman David Duke. The result of Robertson’s efforts may not be violence, but rather that “an impression-managed far right might have [influence] upon what passes as mainstream conservative politics and academics,” (428). Berbrier’s research is helpful to understanding one influential racist mind and the culture of white supremacy promoted by movement pillars such as Wilmot Robertson. With regard to archival collecting among similar populations, these insights are invaluable in understanding the vocabularies and logic systems of some potential donors and interviewees.

Pete Simi asks “Why Study White Supremacist Terror?” in his 2010 article of the same name (8). Simi discusses a “current neglect of white supremacist violence” which “impedes development of terrorism scholarship” (251), from researching extremist attitudes toward the perceived threats of immigration and affirmative action in the United States. However, Simi’s concern lies more with violence and terrorism than with politics; he is specifically interested in the post-9/11 fiction that all terrorists are Muslim. In reality, he writes, “violence associated with white supremacist groups in the United States represents the most sustained form of terrorism in this country” (252); significantly, there is also an “underestimation of the actual occurrence of this type of violence” (252). The current neglect of white supremacist terror also “undermines theoretical development” (252) for long-term understanding of terrorism phenomena.

Simi draws clear connections between terror, extremism, and hate crime, as well as linking these with “deteriorating economic conditions” (263) such as what we have seen in the past few years. This, taken with Wilentz’s survey of Tea Party politics, offers a statement of need in undertaking the study of these movements.

The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) offer comprehensive portraits of extremist groups in the United States, and both note that the Ku Klux Klan has enjoyed a resurgence of activity and membership in recent years. From the ADL’s page about the Ku Klux Klan, “immigration and other issues have allowed these longstanding Klan groups to increase their activities in areas where the Klan has traditionally been strong, such as the eastern Midwest and the South, and to expand into some parts of the country where the Klan did not have a particularly strong presence in the early 2000s, including the Great Plains and Mid-Atlantic states” (ADL). In these profiles of the KKK, some themes emerge that echo Berbrier and Simi’s research with similar groups. The leader of the Empire Knights of the Ku Klux Klan Pennsylvania, Mike Busch, told a news reporter in 2006 that “our messages are about immigration, same-sex marriages, and other topics that are killing our society today” (ADL). Taking on issues outside of segregation and anti-semitism seems to be how many Klan affiliates describe their relevance today.

Practical Implications for Collecting Materials

In an essay titled “Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan,” Kathleen Blee recalls her experience collecting oral histories from a group of current and former Klan members in Indiana. Finding difficulty in her communications

with interviewees, Blee writes that this was a “scenario in which it was virtually impossible for a researcher to reach mutual agreement with her interviewees about the interpretation of their memories,” (596). Also worth considering is the assumption of good faith when an interviewee agrees to speak about her or his life, hoping to establish common ground with their interviewer, or at least have an agreeable interaction. In the course of conducting these interviews, Blee felt that she was encouraged to agree with her interviewees, or that there was an implicit acknowledgment that she was “like them.” There was “tension in the role of the oral historian, between responsibility to the interviewee and responsibility to society and history” (596). Seeking to explain how oral historians may best approach “politically abhorrent” subjects, Blee discusses the complexities of empathizing and establishing rapport with interviewees without betraying one’s personal and professional principles. Blee closes with some thoughts on how archivists and interviewers may handle similar situations.

Frank Boles’ 1994 “‘Just a Bunch of Bigots’: A Case Study in the Acquisition of Controversial Material” deals not with difficulties in collecting materials--the membership records in question were bought at auction--but with public reactions to the acquisition of Ku Klux Klan materials. The Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan already held related items, and Boles notes that “the Klan material was an almost perfect match with the CHL’s mission” (54). At interviews with the media “both during and after the auction, CHL staff made clear that their interest in the material was based upon the historical significance of the Klan in Michigan” (55) and that “the acquisition of the material in no way implied an endorsement of the Klan’s views” (56).

Confusion and protests from students and faculty of Central Michigan University continued, and CHL staff issued a statement, in an effort to situate the KKK materials within the university's curriculum, that "in order to understand the historical development of racism in America it was important that scholars have access to documents created by racism's advocates" (56).

Despite the statements issued by library staff, students still "expressed the concern that 'CMU was seeming to support the KKK' through the purchase" of these materials. One student wrote "I am deeply disgusted and concerned" (57) about the acquisition, and many letters to the editor of CMU's campus newspaper echoed that sentiment. In the end, the Klan materials were successfully added to the collection (Ku Klux Klan, Miscellaneous Collection, 1924, 1929), and archivists made efforts to promote compromise and understanding among university administration, faculty, students, and other stakeholders. Boles' case serves as a reminder of how volatile public relations can be, and how misunderstandings can be effectively addressed.

Lenore Layman, an Australian oral historian, takes on the issue of reticence--or withholding information, showing discomfort, or deflecting questions--in oral history interviews. In a 2009 article from the *Oral History Review*, Layman examines how reticent behavior characterizes many oral histories and other primary accounts of sensitive or historically delicate topics. Layman relates her own experiences in the field and ways to deal with reluctance, as well as giving a more theoretical look at the issue. Reluctance to share a memory can be a response to trauma; further, Layman writes, reluctance is part of the mechanics of losing memory--both individually and in terms of

the historical record. Many members of hate and extremist groups feel mistrust for some institutions interested in collecting their materials, and may even wish to wipe their actions from historical records they see as biased or incomplete--or in any way not told from their point of view. As for the relative scarcity of these groups' holdings in the historical record, archivists should not let such materials go uncollected or lost to reticence, lest we lose the memory of what these groups have wrought. Layman notes that when interviewees do not display reticence, but feel free to speak openly, individuals are empowered to give their own version of events, "[exercising] their authority to shape the history by redirecting the conversational narrative" (409), either toward a different, more comfortable topic, or to reframe the argument in their favor. Anticipating this possibility, oral historians and archivists much take special care in interpreting and contextualizing the memories of interviewees and donors.

While Tracy K'Meyer and A. Glenn Crothers were conducting a difficult series of interviews with Marguerite Davis Stewart, whose racial identity has been in flux since her childhood, they were able to insist on their "responsibility as researchers" (73) in getting their subject to speak on difficult subjects. Once that challenge was overcome, discussing difficult subjects provoked a revelation in Stewart: "the interview became an opportunity for her to struggle with, and in the end express, her own understanding of her life and...identity" (73). This outcome is certainly possible with other difficult narrators and subjects. To maintain courtesy and respect in working relationships, oral historians and archivists should look for cues from the interviewee that it is time to stop. K'Meyer and Crothers detail the language that Stewart used to shut down undesirable topics: "I

can't help you much'... 'I get tired of talking about that. If you are going to ask me all these questions, I'm going to shut up,'" Stewart said, "and then changed the subject" (80). At other points, the interviewers concluded that Stewart's comments and subsequent "decision to continue were signs that she was simply getting used to being recorded" (81). Patience and deference should be used when distinguishing whether an interviewee is ready to share, and K'Meyer and Crothers detail excellently the nuances that an oral historian must be aware of when asking interviewees to speak about difficult subjects.

As the interviews with Marguerite Stewart went on, K'Meyer and Crothers realized that they "certainly had discordant ideas about what were legitimate or historically valuable subjects to discuss, record, and include in any final products" (81) and, importantly, "Was it ethical to probe on issues about which [Stewart] was reluctant?" (81). Practically speaking, "what was [their] responsibility as scholars of race relations in documenting the impact of this taboo" (81) on which Stewart was so evasive regarding her own racial identity? The personal taboos of Stewart's life could serve as analogies to cultural taboos against hate group activity and beliefs, where scholars' responsibility and subjects' discomforts intersect.

K'Meyer and Crothers argue that feminist scholarship has addressed these questions to a degree, and some scholars have concluded that "all ethnographic or oral history-based research, particularly with narrators who are in some way disempowered," as well as socially marginalized, "is potentially unethical" (82) because the disempowered or marginalized narrator lacks the authority to tell, and contextualize, her or his own story. Another possibility, which relies heavily on an interviewee's trust in

the oral historian, is that “narrators understand the historical research process and the value of their story, and rather than feel they are losing something, they appreciate the chance to contribute” (82). This contribution may--depending on the research questions at the focus of the interview and the goals of the oral historian--take the form of “shared authority,” where “the interview [is] a negotiated, co-created document” (84) between interviewer and interviewee. Perhaps shared authority is a more viable option in its original use in feminist scholarship, but it may work as a solution in projects documenting political extremists, especially if the informant has left the group in question and finds himself or herself “on the same page” as the interviewer. K’Meyer and Crothers finally conclude that “historians who use the transcript” of any oral history “have the right and responsibility to bring it to their own interpretive skills” (92). Further, that scholars “must use their skills...to create as complete a document as possible, they should confront taboo topics and address them with open dialogue, and...interpret the resulting information to the best of their abilities” (93).

The Role of Archives in Justice and History

Archives perform a role in society that is unmatched by any other institution. Without physical artifacts, documents, and original audio and video recordings, primary-source, evidence-based research is impossible. What follows is that the advances in knowledge and understanding of the past are also impossible without archives to facilitate research.

Randall Jimerson writes in *Archives Power* about discourse on “archival ethics, memory construction, and social justice” (344) and “archivists as power brokers who can

limit or expand accessibility of the records,” a task that comes with hefty “social responsibility” (345). *Archives Power* is an expansive work that discusses facets of an archivist’s responsibility in detail and across many settings and types of repositories. One of the most important points Jimerson makes, which can impede collection of controversial materials, is that “many archivists remain constrained by external forces, including their employers, resource allocators, donors, researchers, and cultural expectations” (297). Nonetheless, archivists “should seek opportunities to preserve records of those often overlooked by their collecting strategies...including those groups often marginalized or silenced in archival collecting policies and appraisal guidelines” (300).

Terry Cook, in a 2008 address to the Philosophy of the Archive conference, calls for changes to archives operating by “classic archival theory,” which archives usually “reflect the state...that called [them] into existence and continues to pay the bills” (8). Unifaceted description of materials, “passive and unimaginative” public programming, and failure to embrace technology are all aspects of the “old” archives that should be changed in favor of a more vibrant, participatory archives where primary sources are available and accessible (8). Cook’s vision of a “dialogue, not denial” (11) of the shifting landscape of archival practice would indeed open the doors to more comprehensive collecting policies and, it is hoped, an embrace of challenging and uncomfortable collecting situations.

Two cases of racism-fueled injustice--the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the Greensboro Massacre, as they are commonly known--highlight the importance of

institutional transparency and collective memory that archives are charged with maintaining. In these cases, researchers document how communities and victims came to understanding and resolution with public dialogue and access to records of the past.

Tywanna Whorley writes about “The Tuskegee Syphilis Study and the Politics of Memory” in her article of the same name. In the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, 600 African American sharecroppers, 399 of whom had previously become infected with syphilis, participated in a study in which they were promised free medical care, meals, and funeral expenses, but were not treated for their disease. Without knowing that they were infected with syphilis, much less that they were not being treated properly, the men in the study watched their health--and that of their wives and children who were also infected with syphilis--deteriorate over forty years, from 1932 to 1972. The “study”--often referred to as the Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment--victimized hundreds of individuals and their families at the hands of physicians who knowingly withheld treatment for the disease. Those physicians, working for the United States Public Health Service, carried out an egregious breach of patient rights and the healing process for victims and their families has been rocky.

Whorley emphasizes that healing could only begin in victims and their families when institutional transparency is granted--here, with the United States Federal government--and the scope of the study’s horrors are fully understood. “Archival records...serve as instruments of accountability and building blocks of collective memory” (168), Whorley writes. There are some access restrictions in records of the Tuskegee Study at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), and in fact the “accessibility of the patient records continues to perpetuate myths” (170)

surrounding the study. No one can make evidence-based claims about the study or the patients involved without evidence, or records, that have been accessioned and preserved by NARA but remain unavailable to researchers.

Accessibility is a key element in the value of an archives. Use and access restrictions have an important function in protecting creators and other persons involved or mentioned in a record, and they play an important role in establishing and maintaining trust with donors as well. In every case, archivists must weigh the importance of individual protection with the imperative to provide access, and often there are no clear answers. As of 2002, “access to all the Tuskegee records is a hotly contested issue amongst the National Archives, researchers, and African Americans. For many African Americans there will continue to be distrust until the government grants access to all the information it has on the study” (170).

Another tragedy in America’s race relations history is the 1979 shootings of communist demonstrators by members of the American Nazi Party and Ku Klux Klan, in Greensboro, North Carolina. This event, also known as the Greensboro Massacre, seemed to take place with the cooperation of local law enforcement, and records would later show that this was the case. One officer was on-site, and after the shooters opened fire, “he did not intervene, or radio for help, or trip a siren, or pursue the killers as nine of their vehicles got away” (Wypijewski). Justice was not served, and the shooters were acquitted of murder. “City officials and the white press...[regarded] the attack as a thing apart from Greensboro’s race history,” and “any competing narrative was erased” (Wypijewski) that might foster discussion or questioning about the event.

Encouraged by the success of truth and reconciliation commissions (TRCs) in re-opening similar cases and facilitating dialogue in South Africa and Chile, a TRC was opened in Greensboro by survivors and allies interested in bringing about justice and transparency at a local level. The Commission's final report, issued in March 2006, depended heavily on primary sources such as court transcripts, discovery, testimonies, and video footage of the actual attack. Without access to these materials, a TRC's findings would have less significance, resting mostly on verbal testimony. "Now," Wypijewski writes, "when survivors...talk of reconciliation, it's in terms of following the full skein of Greensboro's experience to arrive at what [survivor] Joyce [Johnson] calls 'an authentic language' for addressing past and future."

The problem of archival collecting the records of controversial groups is one with many facets. Most existing literature on archival theory and collection development does not address the possibility of antagonistic donor parties or related ethical issues; there is, on the other hand, a large amount of published research by historians who use primary-source material to document segregationist perspectives during the civil rights era. There is also, to a smaller extent, published research on the nature and scope of violent and otherwise radical racist activity in the present day. These and similar studies serve as a powerful reminder of the saying that those who fail to remember the past are doomed to repeat it; in these accounts of current "Racist Right" ideology and activities, Pete Simi and Sean Wilentz draw startling parallels between mainstream political language of recent years and themes from segregationist rhetoric of the Jim Crow years. There is

some writing from oral historians that can be instructive to conducting future research with adversarial parties. From Kathleen Blee and Tracy K'Meyer in particular, we can learn a lot about potential obstacles and issues likely to arise, as well as how best to handle them, and a reminder of the role and responsibilities of the oral historian. Finally, the importance and responsibilities of archives in ensuring the accurate representation of society and events for posterity is explored.

Methodology

To find institutions in the United States with holdings from or related to the Ku Klux Klan, I began with several general criteria: that the institutions be academic, not state or federal archives, and that they represent a diversity of regions and populations where KKK activity has been noted. According to the Anti-Defamation League, “the Klan is strongest in the South and in the Midwest.” The Southern Poverty Law Center’s list of active Ku Klux Klan groups corroborated that Southern and Midwestern states are home to more active groups than other regions of the United States. Those reports, prior knowledge of collections containing Ku Klux Klan materials, and the Google search engine were my primary tools in finding institutions and collections for my sample.

The first institution I examined was the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, a prominent collecting archives in the Southeast. As a student at UNC-Chapel Hill and a graduate assistant in Wilson Library, I am personally familiar with the SHC’s collection. For the next two institutions in my sample, I looked to Frank Boles and Kathleen Blee, who have both written about collecting KKK materials for their home institutions. In his 1994 case study of “the acquisition of controversial material,” Frank Boles recalls issues surrounding the accessioning of Klan materials at Central Michigan University’s Clarke Historical Library. As Central Michigan University is located in the Upper Midwest, it represents a region of the United States from which I wanted to draw a sample. Other clues from my literature review were Kathleen Blee’s writing on conducting oral histories with KKK members in Indiana. With corroboration from the ADL’s and SPLC’s informational

pages on extremist groups, I knew that Indiana had an array of extremist activity and decided to search for institutions there.

To find the remaining repositories, I reviewed the Anti-Defamation League's page on extremism and the Southern Poverty Law Center's list of active Ku Klux Klan groups to find areas of the United States with Klan activity. Florida and Texas were both populous states with high numbers of active hate groups, although Florida currently hosts fewer groups specifically affiliated with Ku Klux Klan ideology. The search terms "Ku Klux Klan archives Florida" and "Ku Klux Klan archives Texas" were helpful in finding institutions in those states.

In parsing through the results listed by Google for each search phrase, I looked first at the uniform resource locator (URL) for each site to get a sense for the sites' creators. I limited the scope of my search to results in the .edu top-level domain in order to ensure I was searching only within academic repositories. Other clues provided insight as to the type of materials I was likely to find at a site; for example, at Indiana University at Bloomington, the descriptor on Google's results page said "Collection: Digital Archive," indicating that materials had likely been digitized from their original formats. Digitized materials are a point of interest in this study, so that repository was valuable to the sample.

Often, sites would appear on the Google results page that appeared to be administered by a Klan organization, or a group otherwise sympathetic to white supremacist ideology. I would not use such sites in my sample, both because they fall outside the realm of academic research libraries and because my study did not focus on how these groups portray themselves. The KKK has quite a large web presence and

many regional groups seem to keep an “archive” of their own. This fact highlights one more aspect of the need for academic collecting of controversial material: it would be unfortunate if the only historical records of Klan activities were maintained by the Klan itself. Without academic context and impartial collection guidelines, it would be more difficult for historians to make evidence-based claims in their scholarship, or for students to do the same as they learn about American history and race relations.

The “archives” that Ku Klux Klan groups maintain for themselves are valuable in one respect, though: in perusing some of these pages, I was reminded of the wariness, bordering on paranoia, displayed by contributors in *Instauration*. According to Berbrier’s study on the white supremacist magazine and its founder, many adherents to that ideology subscribe to mythologies and theories about history that contradict mainstream accounts. This is also evident in the names of some extremist groups, such as American Renaissance and the Institute for Historical Review, which position themselves as besieged minorities, upholding “truths” (such as Holocaust denial) that have been rejected by the mainstream culture. It is not necessary for users of archives to be experts on hate groups, but it is important that they are aware of the alternate narratives such groups construct of their own histories.

To analyze findings from the institutions I sampled, I first had to identify any Klan-related holdings displayed or listed on the institutions’ Web sites, finding aids, and online library catalogs. Often, the link provided from the Google results page would not lead directly to the collection I had hoped to find, so I searched across alphabetical browsing indexes (as in the case of the Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin) and with the Library of Congress subject heading “Ku

Klux Klan (1915-)” to find relevant materials. From there, I worked from a series of questions designed to describe the materials, their quantities, and their placement in the collections.

The questions I asked are listed briefly in the table below and, in more detail, as follows:

- What is the nature of the materials collected? Format? Relationship to Ku Klux Klan?
- Are the materials digitized or displayed in a blog or other online instrument?
- How are the materials situated within the rest of the institution’s collections? Where do they fit into the institution’s mission?
- To what extent are they described in finding aids or other tools?

These questions allowed me to apply a standard set of criteria to diverse institutions and provided an effective basis on which to compare them. Using these questions, I was able to uphold a consistent inquiry into KKK materials and repositories housing them.

Findings

Website	Are Klan-related materials present?	What formats?	Are they digitized?	Context notes?	Depth of description
http://www.lib.unc.edu/mss/shc/	Yes	Manuscripts	No	No	Abstracts
http://www.sohp.org/	Yes	Oral histories	Yes, some	Klan topics described as incidental to interview foci.	Abstracts
http://clarke.cmich.edu/	Yes	Manuscripts	No	No	Detailed abstracts
http://www.indiana.edu/~liblilly/index.php	Yes	Manuscripts; Digitized periodicals	No; Yes	"This site was created to support cour	Brief abstracts
http://www.lib.fsu.edu/	Yes	Manuscripts, audiovisual	No	Source materials for a fictional radio program.	Brief abstracts; detailed box list.
http://www.cah.utexas.edu/index.php	Yes	Manuscripts, oral histories	No	No.	Abstracts and box lists.

Figure 1: Table of Findings

The Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has materials from the Ku Klux Klan and from groups and individuals who refer to the Klan in their own papers. From the collection's main page, I clicked "Online Finding Aids." After navigating to K, I clicked the entry "Ku Klux Klan." That link leads to the "Ku Klux Klan Records (#4921) 1960s-1970s" collection, which comprises "About 70 items (0.5 linear feet)."

The collection's abstract describes the materials as follows, detailing the names and materials from regional groups (UNC: SHC):

Primarily published and ephemeral items collected from Ku Klux Klan organizations active in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, and North Carolina, 1960s-1970s. Included are flyers; application forms, meeting guidelines, periodicals, cartoons, and other items from the Confederate Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Greensboro, N.C.), the Knights of the Green Forest (Tupelo, Miss.), the United Klans of America (Tuscaloosa, Ala.), the White Knights of the Ku Klux Klan (Miss.), and the National States Rights Party (Savannah, Ga.). Among the periodicals is one issue of the "Thunderbolt" of Birmingham, Ala.

The contents list on the finding aid is detailed, enabling researchers to quickly locate items needed for research. There are no restrictions in place, but there is a

statement that the collection contains more materials that are not processed, and that the unprocessed items are not available to research. There is no word on when those materials will be processed, or if that decision is pending the expiration of a restriction statement. The Ku Klux Klan Records' finding aid also includes a sensitive materials statement that is applied to all finding aids in the SHC.

To find related materials in the Southern Historical Collection, I clicked on the Library of Congress subject heading "Ku Klux Klan (1915-)--History" from an access point on the Ku Klux Klan Records' finding aid. That link took me to UNC's online catalog to display everything in UNC libraries' holdings described with that term. I limited my search results to show only archival materials and only items from the Southern Historical Collection. Of the eleven results, eight are collections of papers from individuals. As with other institutions' collections, the type of Klan involvement from these individuals ranges from judicial investigation records (James Robert Hamilton Papers, 1828-1927), to correspondence wherein the Klan's role in local politics is discussed (Braxton Bragg Comer Papers, 1905-1940), to "the business activities and political views" of Klan members (Bryan Family Papers, 1704-1940). Some of these items are digitized, but the majority of digitized material does not relate directly to the Ku Klux Klan; rather, it seems the Ku Klux Klan is only incidentally mentioned in the description of these items.

Another collection within the SHC is the Southern Oral History Program, which collects over 4,000 oral history interviews relating to the history of the Southeast. A subject search for "Ku Klux Klan (1915-)" in that collection's database (SOHP) shows only five results. Not all interviews in the SOHP database have LCSH access points, and

it is possible that there are interviews in the collection that were not found in this search. One of the results is an interview with Stetson Kennedy, an activist and journalist whose papers are collected at Florida State University's library (see below). The audio track of Kennedy's interview has been digitized but is not available for download from the results site. It is placed in a series called "Southern Politics: Southern Liberalism."

Other interviews from the results include one from the series on "Southern Women: Women's Leadership and Grassroots Activism." The interviewee's occupation is listed with "Communists; Political Activists," and subject terms mention both the Greensboro Massacre and the Ku Klux Klan, as well as lesbian activism. It is safe to say that this individual was not personally affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan--although her interview is likely illuminating in many respects. Another interview, one found in the Piedmont Industrialization series, with is described as follows (UNC: SOHP):

Most of this interview focuses on Little's life as a factory owner and his observations about work in his mill. He describes a relatively unchanging industry, where work methods and the young, mostly female workforce have evolved little over the course of decades. Little disapproves of unions and government spending, which may reflect his struggles during the Great Depression and his hard-earned financial success. He sees the role of the Ku Klux Klan in the aftermath of the Civil War positively, however--a view that perhaps reflects the beliefs of many of his generation in the rural South.

Based on this description, interviewee Arthur Little seems to represent conservative views which, indeed, "perhaps [reflect] the beliefs of many of his generation in the rural South." The interview has been digitized as part of the Documenting the American South project, and users can listen to the audio track of the interview while a transcript scrolls automatically. Users also have the option to download the digitized audio or transcripts separately. The interview is also handily divided into excerpts, which

works both to highlight topics of interest in the interview and expedite user access to specific sections.

In many ways, the Documenting the American South's display (Appendix A)--detailed description, context, and user-friendly digital access--represents an ideal use of resources at an archival repository. Many other collections, within the Southern Historical Collection and in other institutions, lack the luxury of funding and time that made the Documenting the American South project possible. The Ku Klux Klan is itself not a collecting focus for the SHC, but Ku Klux Klan topics may fit into general collecting areas, such as "African American life and culture" and "Sectional Crisis, the Civil War, and Reconstruction," identified in the SHC's collection development policy (SHC). The quantity and variety of materials related to the Ku Klux Klan in the SHC reflects the repository's recognition of those materials' value to researchers.

At Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library, I knew from Frank Boles' writing that there would be Klan membership records as well as other related materials. To find such materials, I first searched for the term "Ku Klux Klan" across the library's finding aids. One of the few results was the Blass Family Papers collection, made of 7.5 cubic feet (in 8 boxes), arranged chronologically. The abstract for the collection is brief, and reads as follows: "Collection includes love letters, postcards, notes, and telegrams sent between Kenneth Blass and his future wife Marie F. Kleiner, 1922-1927. Kenneth's letters document his membership in and activities with the Ku Klux Klan" (CHL). It is also noted, charmingly, that the focus of this collection is to "provide a view of courtship, life, one-room schoolhouses, teaching, the daily struggles

of a working man, and love in the 1920s.” Kenneth Blass was a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and the scope and content note describes interesting content among his papers: “His letters notes his attitudes about and various social activities of the Ku Klux Klan in Michigan in the 1920s. He wanted to be married in a Ku Klux Klan ceremony, but Marie declined this idea” (CHL). Additionally, the LCSH “Klux Klan (1915-)--Michigan.” is the first in a list of twelve access points, highlighting the archivist’s intention to place the collection as a source of Klan research. There are no use or access restrictions, and the collection is open for research.

In absence of other manuscripts materials in the meager search results in the finding aid, I searched from the library’s home page for “Newaygo County’ Klan,” referring to the local records Boles described. There were only two results, and I clicked on the second, which took me to an index page of African American History manuscripts. Because there was so much content on the page, the most efficient way to find Ku Klux Klan materials was to hit the Control + F keys on my keyboard and type “Klan” into the search box that appeared at the bottom of the page.

There were five results from that search within the African American History collection. A 1962 student term paper on local Michigan press coverage of Klan activities is listed, with four manuscripts collections. Two of the manuscripts collections, relating to an individual researcher of Michigan Klan activity and to criminal charges brought against a faction of the Michigan Klan, respectively, are described in abstracts with biographical and historic notes, while the other two, a collection of records and photographs from the Mecosta County Klan and a Ku Klux Klan “Miscellaneous Collection,” are described only in abstracts. The Newaygo County materials whose

accessioning Frank Boles described appear to have been added as part of the miscellaneous collection. It is also noted that “a finding aid is available to researchers” (CHL) for the Mecosta County materials. No links to that finding aid are visible on the page; presumably, the finding aid is only available in paper form on-site. See Appendix B for full texts of these abstracts.

No materials appear to be digitized, nor described at box- or item-level. The Clarke Library’s blog, “Michigan in Letters” (<http://www.michiganinletters.org/>), which features “edited and transcribed documents from the collections of the Clarke Historical Library, each chosen for its interesting character and the particular light it shines on Michigan history,” features no items from any Klan-related collections. Tags on the blog that have been used most frequently reveal institutional interest in the Civil War and in the life of Orlando Poe, a Civil War veteran and land surveyor.

The home page of the Clarke Historical Library does offer a mission statement, which sheds light on their collecting foci: “The Clarke Library exists to document and promote public awareness in three main areas: The history of Michigan and the Old Northwest Territory; Published works that shape the minds of young children, including both educational texts and children’s fiction; The history of Central Michigan University.” As Klan activity fits into only one of three categories, the moderate amount of material that the Clarke Library holds on the Klan is consistent with their mission statement. Furthermore, the range of descriptive depth in these six manuscripts collections is indicative both of the information available to archivists at the time of accession and of the level of detail intended to provide access to users.

The Special Collections at Indiana University Bloomington hold very little material related to the Klan, but what is housed there is of high value for researchers. First, I clicked a hyperlinked subject heading from the Indiana History manuscripts collection for “Ku Klux Klan (1915-) Indiana” and was taken to Indiana University’s Online Library Catalog. On the catalog, results listed included books, video recordings, and manuscripts materials from the “Indiana History mss., 1725-1973” collection that I had just seen. The scope and content note to that collection says that it “covers the history of Indiana from 1725-1973” and “consists of correspondence, diaries, minutes, financial records, memoirs, articles about specific areas of the state, and legal documents.” None of those materials were digitized nor described in depth, and a box or contents list was not available.

I had chosen Indiana University Bloomington’s special collections because of a result from my initial Google search showing “Collection: Digital Archive: Fiery Cross” at the university. A search for “fiery cross” in the keyword/title field in IUB’s online library catalog was not exclusive enough to be helpful, so I returned to <http://google.com> and tried “‘fiery cross’ Indiana” to find the digital archive page. The digital archive did not appear to be linked to IUB’s online catalog, but instead, to my surprise, is linked within the Government Information & Kent Cooper Services library. From there, I clicked “Digital Collection,” and scrolled down to find the *Fiery Cross*, located amid topics such as field guides and the “Final Report of the Indiana Works Progress Administration.”

The *Fiery Cross* was a periodical published by the Ku Klux Klan between 1922 and 1925. A few dozen editions of the newsletter had been digitized from microfilm as

coursework, and are available for users to download in full from the Indiana University Bloomington's digital collections page. The uniform title includes all related and alternate titles of the publication, which could be useful to scholars researching the history of these publications. There is a note that "This site was created to support course study at IU Bloomington." Interestingly, the collection is catalogued with Library of Congress subject headings "White supremacy movements--United States--Newspapers" and "Race discrimination--United States--Newspapers," with no mention of the Ku Klux Klan specifically or use of the LCSH term "Ku Klux Klan (1915-)." Titles of each issue are listed in detail (see Appendix C), which is of potential use both in locating specific issues of the newsletter and in providing a glimpse of the overall tone of the content in the *Fiery Cross*. Although Ku Klux Klan activity is evidently not a collecting focus for the special collections at Bloomington, including within Government Services, the digital editions of the *Fiery Cross* are included as microforms, which are listed as the specific responsibility of the Government Information and Kent Cooper Services.

The Stetson Kennedy Collection at Florida State University's Special Collections Library comprises one videocassette and eight folders of material relating to Stetson Kennedy's work as a journalist and an activist. According to the collection's contextual notes, "After World War II, Kennedy infiltrated the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and other white supremacist groups. While working undercover in the Klan, he provided information--including secret code words and details of Klan rituals--to the writers of the Superman radio program. This activity resulted in a series of four episodes in which Superman battled the KKK." Further, "Kennedy has written extensively and has been the

subject of numerous articles by authors, young scholars, academics, filmmakers, and journalists. In addition to the works cited above, he wrote *I Rode With the Ku Klux Klan*; *Southern Exposure*; *The Jim Crow Guide*; *The Way it Was*; *South Florida Folklife* (co-authored with Peggy A. Bulger and Tina Bucuvalas); *After Appomattox*, and *Grits and Grunts: Folkloric Key West*." Although Kennedy was not ideologically affiliated with the KKK, his observations and experiences--especially with Kennedy's added perspective as a trained folklorist--are potentially valuable to researchers.

There are no restrictions on access or use of this collection, but the collection has not been digitized and must be viewed in person. Provenance notes say that in 2001, the Stetson Kennedy collection was given to FSU libraries as a gift. The only materials listed as pertaining specifically to the KKK are in one box, as follows: "Contents marked on tape box: Stetson Kennedy on KKK, CBS "Nightwatch" (6/20/91); CNBC "Talk Live" (11-9/91, 07:23); Tony Brown's Journal (17:39); Ballad of Stetson Kennedy (18:25)." Subject terms used to describe the collection would seem to ensure frequent access to these materials: many well-known individuals and popular subjects, such as "Buck, Pearl S. (Pearl Sydenstricker) 1892-1973," "King, Martin Luther Jr. 1929-1968," and "Folklore--Florida" are linked to this collection, and users are likely to come across these materials in browsing.

The Briscoe Center for American History at the University of Texas at Austin has a variety of Klan materials, but the overall volume is sparse. From the option to search "subject guides" on the Briscoe Center's site, I selected "Southern History Resources" to see if any KKK material was represented or displayed as a topic relevant to southern

history. There were no Klan-related materials from the list of resources that resulted. I did, however, find relevant results from an alphabetical index page for the Briscoe Center, where I clicked the letter K. Then, I scrolled down until “Ku Klux Klan” appeared, with seven collections listed, as follows:

The Albert Sidney Burleson Papers, 1841-1946 comprise 4 feet, 7 inches and 9 reels of microfilm. The KKK is not mentioned in the biographical note, nor the scope and content note. There are no use or access restrictions. Index terms slightly more local, and obscure, but do include some United States presidents’ names. In fact, the KKK is not listed at all in this finding aid, nor is it mentioned under “separated material.” Without viewing the collection--which is impossible to do remotely, as materials are not digitized--it is unclear why this collection was indexed under KKK.

The Oscar Branch Colquitt Papers, 1873-1941, consist of 45 feet, 6 inches of manuscripts material. As with the Albert Sidney Burleson Papers, the KKK is not mentioned in this biographical note, nor is the KKK mentioned in the scope and content note. There are no restriction statements. Library of Congress subject headings include “Ku Klux Klan (1915-),” but no other access points with wide appeal. The only unit with Klan content listed is Box 2E196, which contains “political scrapbooks” labeled “1914 (Ku Klux Klan) 1916-1930.” Nothing in the collection is digitized.

The Crane (Martin McNulty) Papers, 1834-1973, relate to the life of former Texas attorney general who “led the opposition to the Ku Klux Klan in Texas in the 1920s.” Description of this collection is sparse, with no mention of the papers’ extent nor any detail about their content.

The Ferguson (James Edward) Collection, 1911-1936, does not mention the KKK in its scope note but does list “Ku Klux Klan” as an index term internal to the library’s catalog. This collection, like others at the Briscoe Center, may well contain information about history and activities of the KKK that would be valuable to researchers in the reading room at the Briscoe Center, but because they are not digitized or described in depth this is not known.

There is a “Ku Klux Klan Scrapbook” listed in the alphabetical index but not hyperlinked. Pasting the term into the catalog search engine yielded no useful results.

The Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry Collection, 1952-1958, lists several interviews---none of which are digitized--relating to the different topics concerning Ku Klux Klan. Given the wide range of topics discussed with Klan relevance, one would assume that researchers able to visit the Briscoe Center would find many useful transcripts and recordings. Because none of these materials are digitized, though, researchers cannot access them remotely nor determine their worth or relevance to particular projects. Topics in the index stemming from the term “Ku Klux Klan” are varied and seem to elucidate specific aspects of Klan history in Texas (UT: A Guide to the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry Collection, 1952-1958):

and Baptists, T217:31
 in Batson, T24:21-22
 in Baytown, T213:4-5; T217:22-25,26-31
 and Blacks, T211:33; T217:24
 and Catholics, T217:24
 condemned by churches, T217:31
 cut off women's hair, T213:5
 emasculation, T217:29
 in Goose Creek, T2:6-8; T153:40-44
 in Houston, T217:25
 intolerance of, T217:24-27

and Jews, T217:23,24,28
 origins of, T86:8
 in Ranger, T38:22-23
 in Sour Lake, T22:33-35; T29:31-33
 tarring and feathering, T217:22-24,27-28
 and women, T217:23,29

Finally, The Quinn (Frank David) Papers, 1913-1971, includes “personal reminiscences and memorabilia of Quinn (1894-1971), Mississippi cotton plantation manager, Texas businessman, and executive director of the Texas State Parks Board,” according to the scope note. No Klan affiliation or interest is mentioned, aside from the “Ku Klux Klan” index term. Again, because none of the materials have been digitized, one must wonder what would be available to researchers able to visit the center in person.

Despite description and access points that are not conclusively related to Klan materials--search results indexed under “Ku Klux Klan” without any indication of actual Klan material therein--the Briscoe Center does hold some items of interest, particularly in the Oral History of the Texas Oil Industry Collection, for researchers seeking information about the Ku Klux Klan.

A clear picture of the state of collecting from extremist groups, particularly from the Ku Klux Klan, cannot be drawn from the five disparate repositories examined in this study. But there is evidence that those institutions have accessioned materials related to the Ku Klux Klan. That the materials are accessioned and placed within collections shows that institutions place value on their role in history, however large or small an institution judges that role to be.

I was not surprised at how few of the materials had been digitized, and that none of the Klan-related materials I identified as these institutions were featured on

institutions' blogs or other publicity tools. This fact calls into question the amount of public support, or scorn, such institutions can expect when publicizing such acquisitions or highlighting such materials in physical or digital exhibits. As Frank Boles observed, "A significant portion of the general public had not the faintest clue why an archives would want records of a controversial organization" (58), and if such a portion of the public includes fundraising entities or donors, it is clear how that misunderstanding might cripple the ability of an institution to collect controversial materials.

An important sign of public support for a cultural institution is its ability to raise funds. Fundraising for archives and their projects--public programming, digitization efforts, purchasing materials--comes largely from foundations and charitable trusts, government agencies, and private donors with an interest in a particular collection or mission. Unless those responsible for funding archives understand the importance of keeping and making available materials that show an uglier side of American history, "the archivist's ability to collect such material will be compromised" (Boles 59).

Other challenges to collecting this type of material may explain their scarcity in academic institutions. As noted by the Southern Poverty Law Center, Klan organizations have been weakened by "internal conflicts, court cases, a seemingly endless series of splits and government infiltration." Those splits and conflicts pose difficulties to locating and communicating with the Klan and other extremist groups. Once an archivist or oral historian finds members of these groups, it is not guaranteed that she or he will be able to collect, or interview, as planned. As K'Meyer and Crothers describe from their interviews with a "narrator [who] disagreed over the range of topics to be covered" (71), "the oral historian must balance sensitivity to the interviewee with the professional

responsibility to preserve history.” Additional care must be taken to avoid “abdicating the role of trained interpreter of the past” (K’Meyer and Crothers 71). Misunderstandings about the goals of an interview or collection can certainly obstruct an archives’ accessioning of controversial materials, but those misunderstandings can also encourage discourse about the past, the role of archives, and professional responsibility for archivists.

Limitations and Implications For Future Research

With the time and space limitations of this study, it was not possible to explore every topical or thematic avenue that presented itself during the course of my investigation. Future research could examine how a variety of hate and extremist groups are treated by archival collecting institutions. I would have also been interested to explore Ku Klux Klan-related collections in more detail and at a greater number of institutions. Possible research may find an interesting comparison in how other types of extremist groups--for example, "ecoterrorism" groups such as the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), prison gangs, such as the Aryan Brotherhood, and "sovereign citizen" groups such as the Little Shell Pembina Band--are dealt with in academic collections.

An obvious limitation to the study of contemporary extremist activity is the absence of a historical legacy beyond, at most, a few decades. Groups that are relatively new and still active, such as Westboro Baptist Church, are not likely to donate their papers at any point in the near future, nor to make arrangements for their donation after the deaths of its leaders. It will be interesting to see how the next generation of researchers and archivists approach the papers, publications, realia, and audiovisual materials of today's extremists.

Conclusion

Collecting material from extremist groups such as the Ku Klux Klan and other controversial subjects may be difficult and unpleasant, but it is crucial to document the activities of such people to fully understand historical events. As Randall Jimerson writes in *Archives Power*, “active engagement with the ideas and arguments of opposing perspectives becomes critical to the concept of objectivity” (293). Objectivity, for archivists, is as ethical an imperative as proper care of materials is a practical one. The active work of “defining, choosing, constructing...representing and re-presenting” (Cook 2) materials and narratives is crucially important, especially with subject matter as fraught with pain and misunderstanding as race relations in the United States. It is important for archives to collect material regardless of how unpleasant or difficult some topics, donors, or interview subjects may be.

Such difficulty is well documented in the work of Frank Boles and Kathleen Blee, in addition to that of other researchers who encountered problems both with the public and with interviewees in an oral history setting. For archivists and donors--or oral historians and interviewees--it is both practically and ethically important to reach mutual understanding about the context and importance of their materials. An effort must be made in outreach to plan interesting, engaging programs with the public and create exhibits and virtual displays that show these materials and contextualize them so that their value to history is made clear.

In five sample institutions, the variety of holdings related to the Ku Klux Klan shows how these challenges come to bear on an archivist's decisions to collect and

describe materials, and on a budget determined by the institution, state, and other stakeholders who allocate funding. While one institution, such as the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, might have an entire, un-digitized collection devoted to the Ku Klux Klan, another, such as the University of Indiana Bloomington, may have only one collection related to the Klan, but that collection would be digitized, accessible, and densely rich with research value. The span of materials collected, their formats, the depth of their description, and their accessibility indicates that there is no consensus, yet, as to the best approach to these topics.

Outreach to affiliates of hate groups such as the Ku Klux Klan is a largely unexplored challenge, but as Angela DiVeglia notes in a study of LGBT archives, archivists can “create a sense of value by conveying to members of the LGBT community that their papers can and often should be saved,” (57); an important part of establishing trust with potential donors and interviewees involves value creation, and this principle can extend to members of extremist and hate groups. This concept requires somewhat of a suspension of judgment on the part of the archivist, and it is here that the challenges come to life. During challenging situations such as these, one must keep in mind that “archives can, and often do, produce radical shifts in the concept of intellectual value” (DiVeglia 58), and that the information collected today can have value for researchers of tomorrow.

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Appendix A

Display page of oral history interview with Arthur Little in Documenting the American South (UNC, SHC: Oral Histories of the American South).

Oral History Interview with Arthur Little, December 14, 1979. Interview H-0132. Southern Oral History Program Collection (#4007).

Audio with Transcript

- [Listen Online with Text Transcript](#) (Requires QuickTime and JavaScript)

Transcript Only (52 p.)

- [HTML file](#)
- [XML/TEI source file](#)

Download Complete Audio File (MP3 format / ca. 200 MB, 01:49:31)

- [MP3](#)

Abstract

Milk delivery boy Arthur Little hated getting up early to deliver milk and dreamed of owning a glove factory instead. In this interview he describes realizing that dream and details the glove making industry in Newton, North Carolina. Most of this interview focuses on Little's life as a factory owner and his observations about work in his mill. He describes a relatively unchanging industry, where work methods and the young, mostly female workforce have evolved little over the course of decades. Little disapproves of unions and government spending, which may reflect his struggles during the Great Depression and his hard-earned financial success. He sees the role of the Ku Klux Klan in the aftermath of the Civil War positively, however—a view that perhaps reflects the beliefs of many of his generation in the rural South. This interview will offer researchers a useful top-down look at the glove making industry in North Carolina.

Excerpts

- [Reflecting on the Populist Party and the need for the Klan after the Civil War](#)
- [Community and personal impacts of the Great Depression](#)
- [From dreams of glove factory ownership to their realization](#)
- [Small changes in the technology of making gloves](#)

Appendix B

Full texts of abstracts listed under results for “Klan” in African American history collection. (CMU: Clarke Historical Library)

Brumels, Bruce, "Activities of the Ku Klux Klan, and the Reporting of Them in Two Michigan Newspapers."

CMU Student Term Paper, 1962. Mss. 401a-e

Enders, Calvin W., Michigan Ku Klux Klan Research Papers, 1917, 1997.

The collection, 1917-1997 and undated, includes Enders' research papers documenting the Ku Klux Klan, mostly about the Michigan Klan. The papers include: demographics; articles Enders wrote to be published; articles copied from other sources including books, magazines, and newspapers; membership cards, photographic materials; and memorabilia. Membership cards may contain census or local election notes of Enders' or marital status, type of employment, children, and address information on individual Klan members. Various types of photographic images include Michigan Klan parades, meetings, a funeral, and the Chicora KKK quilt with members' names embroidered on it. The collection also includes a sheeted figurine, Klan songbooks and copied articles from Klan newspapers. The collection is very valuable in documenting individual Klan members, both men and women, in Michigan prior to 1924. There is also substantial documentation of the activities of local Michigan Klans. The attempts to elect a Detroit Klan mayor in 1924 and ban private Michigan schools are well documented, as are the financial problems and the high profile murders committed by Klan officials that led to the Klan's fall from political power in 1924.

Enders was born April 20, 1926 in Adrian, Michigan. He married Betty Hilts in Adrian in 1946. He served in World War II and later earned a B.A. from Adrian College (1949), a M.A. from the University of Michigan (1952), and a Ph.D from Michigan State University (1970). In 1965, "Cal" Enders joined the Central Michigan University history department, teaching military history and surveys in American and Michigan history until his retirement in 1993. Dr. Enders' "Roaring Twenties" course was well known at CMU. He was co-founder and sponsor of the Phi Alpha Theta CMU chapter with Prof. Dennis Thavenet. Towards the end of his life he began to research the KKK in Michigan. He published an article on the Mecosta County Klan entitled "White Sheets in Mecosta: The Anatomy of a Michigan Klan". He was writing a book on the Klan when he died on Aug. 21, 1997.

A finding aid is available to assist researchers. Mss.

Ku Klux Klan, Black Legion, Collection, 1936, 1945, and Undated.

Materials related to the trial and dismissal of four policemen, three firemen, and a city councilman from Highland Park, Michigan, who were involved with the murder of

Charles "Chap" Poole on Detroit's west side in May 1936. Included are: trial testimony, sworn statements, correspondence, photographs of the house where the murder was committed, and other materials. The councilman's appeal eventually went as high as the Michigan Supreme Court, which upheld the lower courts' "guilty" convictions. The collection, mostly copies, was apparently collected by Earl Young, Detroit's City Attorney, who was involved with the case, in the 1930s and early 1940s.

The Black Legion, also known as the "Wolverine Republican League," was a radical branch of the Michigan Ku Klux Klan. Its members were pro-white, native-born Protestants who were against Jews, Blacks, Communists, Anarchists, and Catholics. At one point there were an estimated 200,000 members in Michigan. They were organized and led by "Colonel" Harvey Davis. Among their goals were the takeover of Michigan government and killing a mayor.

A finding aid is available to assist researchers. Mss.

Ku Klux Klan (Mecosta County, Mich.), Collection, 1916-1974.

Collection of papers and photographic materials documenting the Mecosta County, Michigan, Ku Klux Klan, 1916-1974 and undated, mostly 1920-1939. Included are: organizational correspondence, membership cards, publications, forms, and photographs and a glass plate negative. The collection was created by Lewis D. Capen, who served as the Exalted Cyclops of the Mecosta Klan No. 28, 1926-1929. He then became Great Kaliff or Grand Titan, a leadership position over all the klans of Ionia and Mecosta counties and the towns of Petoskey, East Jordan, Hart, Manistee, Portland, and Muskegon, Michigan, during the 1930s. A finding aid is available to assist researchers. Mss.

Ku Klux Klan, Miscellaneous Collection, 1924, 1929.

Membership cards from Belding, Michigan, 1927, 1929?, from Kalamazoo, Michigan, 1928, and Isabella County, undated; pamphlet entitled "The Spirit of the Crusades as Interpreted and Revived by the American Crusaders," published in Arkansas, undated; membership certificate from Newaygo County, 1924; four pages of general operational instructions for Klan meetings, undated; and a five-page speech about the Klan as a movement, undated. This artificial collection has been compiled from various sources. The Klan attained political and social power in Michigan and nationally in the early 1920s. Following political defeats in the 1924 election and financial and criminal investigations, the power and membership of the Klan decreased rapidly after 1924. (For additional information see other related Klan collections at the Clarke Historical Library.) Mss.

Appendix C

Selection of *Fiery Cross* issues (IUB, Collection: Digital Archive: Fiery Cross)

December 29 1922 Indianapolis Klan Brings Christmas Cheer

January 5 1923 Fiery Cross Representative Offered One Insult too Many - The Famous Muncie Klan Band - White Robed Klan Visits Church at Marion on Sunday

January 19 1923 1,500 Klan's Guests in Meeting in H.S.; Show Regalia, Cross - It shall come to Pass - Klansmen Pay Flying Visit to Rootstown - Speaker Extols the Ku Klux Klan

February 2 1923 Ku Klux out in Large Numbers Saturday Night - Southern Ohio is Welcoming Klanism - Portland Indiana, Mayor Fails to Stope Parade of Patriotic American Citizens

February 9 1923 "Tolerance" Hooks a Bear; Wrigley Hits Back Hard - Pastor is Given \$112.00 by Klan - Seat of THE Scornful - Klan Strikes South Bend; Cleanup of City Starts

February 16 1923 Plan to Throttle Indianapolis Schools Conclusively Shown - The Palladium Hires Attorney - Silently the Hooded Hordes Came and as Silently Departed

February 23 1923 Klan is Fighting to Clean up Springfield, Ohio

March 2 1923 Another Frame-Up at Springfield to Show "Kidnapping" of "Star Witness" by Klan, Backfires - Second Act of Mer Bouge Drama Opened in Chicago Last Monday Night

March 9 1923 The Imperial Wizard Answers Rabbi - Tolerance Takes the Count Again!

March 16 1923 Cleveland Mayor has Backbone Where Backbone Ought To Be - Manslaughter and Other Crimes Go Unpunished in Peru, Indiana

March 23 1923 Chief of Police O'Brien Frames the Frames that Always Fail - Klan Denied Privilege of Producing "Murdered" Man in the Living Flesh

March 30 1923 People of Muncie Look Askance at Investigation - Secret of "The Women's Organization" is Out - Klan Persecution Comes High; \$50,000 Demanded

April 2 1923 Lyons Betrays Klan Oath

April 6 1923 Candidate for Attorney General of Indiana Banished from Klan - \$50,000.00 Challenge to the American Unity League