

FROM THE CHAIR

Martha Bace



I don't know about you, but this year seems to be flying by! Our meeting in DC is just around the corner, and I'm really looking forward to seeing as many of you as I can as I hand off the leadership of this section to incoming chair Elizabeth Wilkinson (University of Virginia). I'm also pleased to announce our incoming officers at this time: Cyndi Shein (UNLV University Libraries) was elected Vice-Chair/Chair-Elect, and Sarah Jones (UNLV

University Libraries) and Katy Rawdon (Temple University Libraries) were elected to the position of Secretary and Member-at-Large respectively. I'm sure you will all congratulate and welcome them as they take on their roles in the section.

We have three very interesting presentations lined up for our meeting next month.

"Enhanced Data for Enhanced Access: Managing Agents and Subjects in

ArchivesSpace," presented by Alicia Detelich, will look at Yale's

work to standardize and enhance existing and new records for

agents and subjects in ArchivesSpace. Annie Tummino (SUNY

Maritime College) will present "Records of a School at Sea,"

describing her process for taming a 300+ page finding aid into more

manageable unit—each with their own finding aid. Sarit Hand and

Francesca Pitaro will describe their efforts to gain intellectual and

physical control over the artifacts in the Associated Press Corporate

Archives in "When Archives Have Artifacts: 250+ Objects/100+

Years of AP History—Describe THAT!" I'm looking forward to

each of these presentations and I'm sure I'll learn something from

each one. I do hope you can join us on Wednesday, August 15,

2018, from 4:00-5:15 pm for our 2018 Description Section meeting.

It's been a real pleasure to serve as the Chair of the Description Section this year. Thank you for all the help and support!

See you in DC!

- *Martha*

DESCRIPTION SECTION LEADERSHIP

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Vice-Chair/Chair Elect

Cyndi Shein

Immediate Past Chair

Martha Bace

Council Liaison

Audra Yun

Secretary

Sarah Jones

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Rachel Searcy

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Ashley Toutain

Newsletter Editor

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FEATURE ARTICLES

15 Tons of Posters

Rachel Parker

In 2011, Harvard acquired the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library Collection on altered states. The 50,000-item collection is the largest private collection of material on “sex, drugs, and rock n’ roll” in the world. Since then, Houghton Library has published a number of finding aids for portions of the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library Collection including the [pulp fiction collection](#), [French hardbound comics collection](#), [photographs of drugs and drug use](#), and [film posters](#) to name just a few.

I had the opportunity to catalog a part of the LSD Library Collection, almost 800 posters dating from 1804 to 2011. The three-month project was funded by the Ruth Miller Foundation, under the direction of Leslie Morris, Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts, and supervised by Irina Klyagin, Manuscript Cataloger, and Adrien Hilton, Head of the Manuscript Section.

What was originally 15 tons of posters, artwork, and ephemera—framed, rolled up and in shipping boxes—has been processed, photographed, and described. When rolled posters could fit into one of our standard box sizes, they were flattened upside-down in folders and stored flat. The largest posters were stored in custom tube boxes which allowed 8-10 posters to be rolled onto a tube and stored suspended in a long, thin box. The tube boxes made it possible to safely store posters that measured 8 feet long and 5 feet wide.



Presented in San Francisco by Bill Graham Young Rascals, Sopwith Camel, The Doors, Fillmore Auditorium. Artwork by Wes Wilson: lithograph poster.

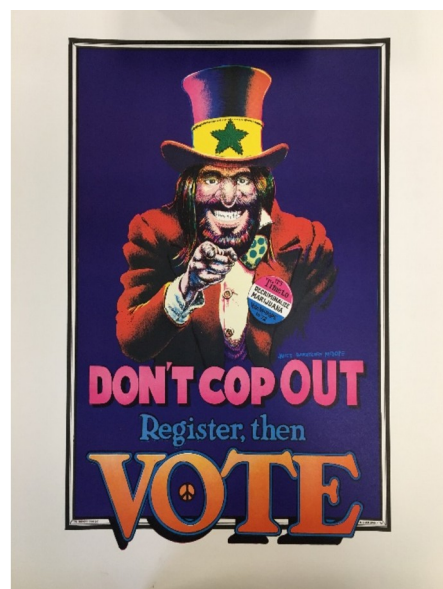
The posters were cataloged at the item level using an ArchivesSpace import template of an Excel spreadsheet and sorted into ten series: Pro-drugs; Anti-drugs; Sex; Musical Performances; Literary Events; Theatrical Performances; Art Exhibitions; Political Propaganda; Advertisements; and Miscellaneous. The bulk of the collection dates

between the 1960s and 1980s. Reflecting the changing times, a large portion of the poster art is indicative of the peace and sexual liberation movements. However, the collection as a whole is very eclectic, with posters in 14 languages, many of which I did not have a reading knowledge of. I used Google Translate for basic understanding and language specific translation websites that had pop-up keyboards and spell-checkers to help with spelling in Cyrillic, Greek, and Japanese.

I quickly found myself mired in the eccentricities of psychedelic rock poster art, which often paired incongruous images and event information dominated by wacky fonts and vibrant colors—often making it difficult simply to read poster titles. Fortunately, a great deal of information can be found in online blogs by psychedelic art enthusiasts, collectors, and art dealers including title language where it could hardly be deciphered. (Amusingly, one poster in the collection provided a translation for the “myopic and unhip.”)

There are a number of duplicate posters, reprints, and re-licensed images in the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library poster collection. Many early Underground Comix posters became popular and were turned into blacklight posters and velvet posters (on flock paper), were printed by different distribution companies, and were different sizes and colors. R. Crumb posters and Gilbert Shelton posters of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers are good examples of underground culture in the 1960s which featured on the walls of many dorm rooms in the 1980s. Many duplicates were consolidated into one line; however, when title information, distribution, or physical details were substantially different, the posters were not consolidated.

The Political Propaganda series presented unique issues in cataloging. The series included small artists’ collectives creating anonymous artwork on political and social issues, obscure re-printings of French governmental notices during the Second World War, and bizarre (and possibly satirical) political campaigns for office in the U.S. during the 60s (the Platypus Party in San Francisco is actually real). There were also a few posters in the collection with entirely different posters drawn or painted on the verso. How to give title information and assign them to series could be



Don't cop out register, then vote. It's time to decriminalize marijuana, vote McDope. Design by D. Sheridan: lithograph poster.

challenging for double-sided posters. In these cases, title prominence was given to the poster that most aligned with the LSD Library Collection, and the verso poster was captured in a Scope and Contents note.

A final challenge came during the process of subject analysis. Although much of the counterculture would eventually become mainstream and I was pleasantly surprised to find terms for Cocawine and Psychedelic Rock posters, AAT and LCSH tended to fall short when describing the content of the poster collection. Terms like blotter art (art on acid blotter paper) were absent, and the heading for recreational drug use is “drug abuse”—a connotation that is ill-fitting for a collection prominently featuring legalization rally and Timothy Leary event posters.

Given the particular challenges of titling posters, which have no standard for title creation, and my own inexperience with cataloging posters, we were happy to find that there are a number of logical steps that can be taken when deciding on title information. I found it was often possible to include all of the poster language, but when it wasn't, making decisions about the most important text



Freewheelin' Franklin sez: "Dope will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no dope." Artwork by Gilbert Shelton: blacklight poster.



An evening with Dr. Timothy Leary stand-up philosopher with Charlie Remer. Photo: Bill Weiner, design by Chamberlin: poster.

always came back to a question of context. I often found myself asking: Does the title effectively convey the entire message of the poster even if some text is not recorded? And if the answer was no: Is there information in another field that fills the gap or is there some way I can add information to the title that is not directly quoted from the poster? Understanding the context in which posters were created was key, particularly when choosing title words for a poster that did not give visual importance to lettering, or when the boldest words were a joke or a quote.

The finding aid for the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library poster collection, now online

(<http://id.lib.harvard.edu/ead/hou02925/catalog>), will

soon feature thumbnail images for almost every single poster in the collection.

Houghton's end-processing librarian, Vicki Denby, has also put together a step-by-step

guide to preparing posters for rolling on the Houghton Manuscript Section End-Processing wiki with lots of videos and images.

Although there were many physical, spatial, and descriptive challenges, the project was a tremendous team effort and great success, in large part because so many people gave their time and energy to problem-solving and jumped in to help out. It was truly exciting to learn so much about poster art and the counterculture, and to have the time and resources to catalog the Ludlow-Santo Domingo Library poster collection.



Vin de Incas pour les convalescents, divinite Incas refusant la coca à son peuple. Artwork by Mucha: lithograph poster.

From Hidden to Revealed: How UNC Charlotte's University Archives is Tackling Descriptive Backlog

Olivia Eanes, Reading Room and Archives Assistant, Special Collections and University Archives, J. Murrey Atkins Library, UNC Charlotte

The University of North Carolina at Charlotte boasts a fascinating history that is no less remarkable for its youth. What began in 1946 as a night-school college center created to meet the educational needs of returning World War II veterans became Charlotte College in 1949 under the tireless and passionate leadership of its president, Bonnie Cone, and grew into a four-year college on its way to becoming the fourth campus of the University of North Carolina System in 1965. In the intervening half-century, UNC Charlotte has grown to serve over 29,000 students a year on its 1,000-acre campus.

This extraordinary trajectory is documented in the university's archives housed in J. Murrey Atkins Library. Until recently, however, these archives were completely undiscoverable to anyone except through direct contact with Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) staff. Our website mentioned that the archives existed, but no specific description of any kind was publicly available. More than that, not much description existed, period.

When I began working as an archives assistant in SCUA in 2016, the descriptive resources in existence for University Archives consisted of a location list, listing (almost) every accession with its location; a record group list that included numbered

series to which accessions had been assigned; and a handful of Word document “inventories” that actually consisted of the number of boxes, a scope and contents note, and some administrative history of the office of origin, if we were lucky.

Given the knowledge that for 20-some years prior to 2016 (i.e., most of its existence) University Archives was single-handedly managed by the university archivist who was also tasked with being the university’s records manager, the lack of description was understandable. It was not, however, tenable for a unit that values increasing access to materials. This need for archival description was one impetus behind the creation of my current position shortly after a new university archivist was hired. Thus, I began work with the daunting but exciting goal of making UNC Charlotte’s university archives more readily accessible to the campus community and the general public.

I quickly discovered that this task would involve a great deal of “grunt work”—both mental and physical—before finding aids could be produced and published. The most significant issue was that as long as University Archives had existed, each new accession received from an office had been treated as a separate collection. For example, twelve discrete “collections” existed from the Dean of Students, each with its own collection-level record in the original Access database, which was migrated to Archivists’ Toolkit, and then to ArchivesSpace.

This meant all of these “collections” would need to be merged into a single collection that could then be described. Thus began what has come to be known as the “merge project.” An explanation of the many steps that go into creating each merged collection is better left to another forum, but the final step in the process is producing a DACS-compliant finding aid complete with folder-level inventory and administrative history, scope and contents, and related materials notes, among others. Our ArchivesSpace public interface that originally housed zero University Archives finding aids in 2016 now holds 46 and counting. At face value, that might not seem like much in a two-year period, but these 46 collections encompass what was originally 179 “collections” (or over 257 accessions).

All of this descriptive work has made our collections not only more discoverable and thus accessible, but also more manageable for our reference staff, who no longer need to funnel all university archives requests through a single gatekeeper. It has also created opportunities for on-campus outreach as we contact offices and student organizations to let them know when the finding aids for their records are available. We still have a

long way to go, but the work that has been done so far is helping to ensure that the exceptional history of UNC Charlotte can be more readily explored by present and future generations.

The Biggest Show in the World on the Biggest Stage in the World in the Biggest Little City in the World

Jessica Maddox, University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections and University Archives

Although not known for spectacular stage extravaganzas like its sister to the south, Reno, Nevada, has a rich history of casino entertainment. The University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) recently acquired and processed a small collection of conductor's scores and programs that document the largest stage show to appear in Reno: *Hello Hollywood, Hello!* Created by Las Vegas producer Donn Arden, this MGM Grand production was performed 6,941 times from June 1978 to April 1989. It employed more than 100 dancers and a host of musicians. Probably the most impressive and remembered set piece of the show took the form of an airplane on the one-acre stage.



The acquisition of this collection marks one of the first of its kind for SCUA. Until recently, SCUA has faced challenges in acquiring collections that document casino entertainment. Photography of casino interiors, unless taken for publicity by the casinos, has historically been frowned upon. There are also challenges in reaching many of the non-celebrity performers. A common

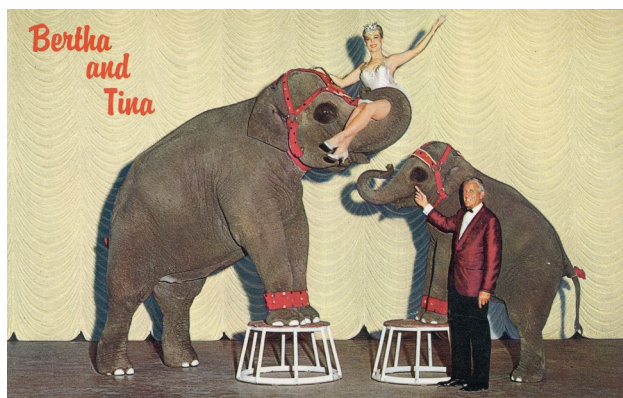
theme I have personally heard from individuals who played in house bands or pit orchestras at casinos such as Harrah's is that they didn't realize until talking to me that what they had might be important to keep. As everyone knows, this isn't a unique struggle facing acquisition, but it is unfortunate nonetheless.

Acquired in 2014, the John Ascuaga Nugget records were a huge boon to our collection. Ascuaga helped open the Nugget in Sparks, Nevada, in March 1955 as the

general manager. Ascuaga eventually bought out the original owner, Dick Graves, for a sum of \$3.75 million over 12 years. The Ascuaga family sold the casino in late 2013, marking the end of an era for family-owned casinos in Sparks.

During its years of operation, the Nugget brought in many well-known stars to its “Circus Room,” including Jimmy Durante, Dinah Shore, and Liberace. Red Skelton was a regular at the Nugget as well. In 1962, though, Ascuaga began the construction of the pachyderm palace, the home for Bertha the Elephant. Bertha, and eventually her companions Tina and Angel, were favorites in northern Nevada. Many who grew up in the area from the 1960s to 1990s fondly remember the elephants, including me (I was a member of the Bertha and Angel Fan Club in the early 1990s).

Because of the importance of this collection, description was challenging. Not only did it physically contain a multitude of material types (photographs, oversize scrapbooks, etc.), it intellectually covered a number of aspects related to the casino business as well as the extensive community support extended by the family. The Ascuagas gave back to the community as often as possible, setting up a scholarship fund for local high school graduates and often hosting school district events for next to nothing. Edan Strekal, our processing archivist, worked diligently to adequately describe the collection. We published the completed finding aid in September 2016 and installed an exhibit, “Elephants in the Casino,” that was incredibly well received by the public.



For more information about University of Nevada, Reno Special Collections and University Archives and to see the collection finding aids, please visit: <https://archive.library.unr.edu/public>

GRANTS & PROJECT UPDATES

World Taking Advantage of the Newcomers: Reconsidering Finding Aid Practices

Rosalie Gartner and Laura Sullivan

After investigating and acquiring an archives management system (AMS), the Iowa State University Library received a National Historical Publications & Records Commission (NHRPC) grant in 2017. Titled *Modern Tools for Modern Research: Migrating Old Finding Aids to a New AMS*, the project has allowed the Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) to improve its finding aid practices in addition to migrating finding aids to an AMS. Before the grant project began, archives staff assessed the current state of finding aid description and incorporated many of the changes into the project. In addition to the grant project, a newcomer was added to the staff (Lead Processing Archivist and co-author of this article) who came with additional ideas for changes. Enhancements included aligning older finding aids with current standards, reconfiguring the structure of finding aids for the university archives, and updating the content of particular fields.

The finding aid template was updated over ten years ago in anticipation of eventually migrating to an AMS, but possibilities for improvement were still to be had, some fairly simple. The migration process allowed for an easy way to ensure these were done. One change was eliminating the use of abbreviations—such as “n.d.”—that had been commonly used in the past. In addition, not all finding aids had been updated to include the required DACS fields for single- or multi-level descriptions. Another opportunity was changing outdated information in the front matter, such as the department’s name.

A major change was how university archives records are described within the finding aids. Formerly, separate subseries often had an individual finding aid (biographical files, annual reports, etc.), providing a variety of difficulties for both archivists and researchers. Keeping the historical notes could be a monumental task, and navigating the multiple finding aids when the answer might be in any of the subseries added time to the search effort. Both the new AMS and NHRPC grant-funded project provided an opportunity to simplify this system, combining many of the records within a series into one finding aid.

Another decision was to change the way collection titles were structured. Prior to the migration project, the collection title had been based on the former practice of using just “papers” or “records.” It was decided early on to follow the current DACS practice of having a more complete title indicative of the collection’s contents.

Another opportunity the migration project afforded was the addition of local thesaurus terms to finding aids, an endeavor that coincided with the library’s new metadata librarian spearheading a project to create a local thesaurus. Part of the grant project involved assessing the subject headings when they were imported into the AMS, making sure they were not so specific that they excluded the chance of collocating collections with common subject areas. Although a few challenges have slowed down the thesaurus implementation, we hope that applying the terms can be integrated into the current project.

The use of an AMS like Star Knowledge Center for Archives (SKCA) has allowed SCUA to make additional small changes to our descriptive practices and “behind-the-scenes” management that we wouldn’t otherwise be able to do. Since Fall 2017, SCUA has begun tracking who processes each collection, as well as each accrual to a collection. This is not public data, but it has been useful for the Lead Processing Archivist to know who processed what and when. Tracking statistics using SKCA has also become easier, with the ability to run a report of collections with a status of “processed” rather than trying to remember to enter each processed accession into a spreadsheet.

Star Knowledge Center for Archives also allows us to intellectually re-unite some of the materials that have been removed and cataloged in a separate system. Currently, any artifacts donated with a collection are cataloged in PastPerfect (not publicly searchable) but mention of that artifact hasn’t always been included in the finding aid. The only way to discover an artifact is by searching a 750-page PDF on the SCUA website, which is not easy to use and lacks provenance information. The goal is to reunite artifacts with the original collection by adding artifact descriptions and images to the appropriate finding aid in SKCA. The same will happen with books that were separated from a donation in order to be cataloged in the library catalog, Alma.

The Special Collections and University Archives has begun creating very basic top-level records in SKCA for unprocessed collections, which was an unsustainable practice in the past. A basic collection-level record is created when a new collection is accessioned

that includes donor information, existing descriptive information, and a note that the collection is unprocessed but open for research. We are only able to do this for collections for which we don't anticipate any restrictions, or that contain sensitive materials. Once SKCA has its "soft launch" to the public in November 2018, any requests for unprocessed materials with SKCA records will be used to guide processing priorities.

The improvement process is almost always a never-ending pursuit, and this case is no different. There is still work to be done. However, the NHPRC grant project and AMS has allowed us to make significant steps forward in improving access.

Telling the Story of Historic Preservation in St. Augustine, Florida

Laura Douglass Marion, Project Archivist, University of Florida

Founded in 1565, St. Augustine, Florida, is probably most well known for being the oldest continuously occupied European settlement in the United States. In the center of this historic town sits Governor's House Library, managed by the University of Florida. Now-defunct state agency Historic Saint Augustine Preservation Board created the research library to support their mission to preserve, restore, and reconstruct significant historic structures in the city. The collections contain unique and rare archival material documenting the city's built environment over time and demonstrating how structures have changed to more accurately reflect its historic past. Although the Governor's House Library collections contain valuable information for the Saint Augustine community and beyond, they have remained relatively unknown and underused due to a lack of description and discoverability.

The Historic St. Augustine Preservation Board was sundowned by the state in 1997, at which time its records were transferred to the care of the City of St. Augustine. The University of Florida became the stewards of the library in 2008, and received an Access to Historical Records grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 2016 to arrange and describe approximately 23,000 photographs, 2,400 maps, and 1,150 architectural drawings. Work on the grant began in May 2017; we recently approached the halfway point in our grant funding, and I'm pleased to say that we have passed a few major milestones. The map and architectural drawings collections have been processed and rehoused, and finding aids will be available online shortly.

In terms of arrangement and description, the map collection has thus far been the most challenging. The primary obstacle I faced was determining a logical and appropriate arrangement. The Preservation Board created their own system for the maps, a number that seemed to be arbitrarily assigned. Upon further investigation, we believe that these numbers were selected based on the order of acquisition. Additionally, the Preservation Board members consistently used the collection and did not always return items to the correct location, causing further confusion. I briefly considered preserving the original order, but after discussion with the project team, I determined that it was in the best interest of the library and its future patrons for the maps to be arranged more logically.

Ultimately, the maps were arranged in topical series and organized chronologically within each series, but the original map numbers are referenced in the finding aid to preserve some of the Preservation Board's work and to help us locate them for patrons. Many of our current patrons are former board members, so this decision strikes a balance between archival best practices and user accessibility. We also chose to treat the maps as archival records over using traditional map description. The Preservation Board closely associated the maps with their archival research and cross-referenced these materials; we agreed that it was best to not disrupt precedent. However, we also plan to create individual catalog records for the maps to ensure access in the future.

In the second year of the grant project, I am focusing on description of the photograph collection, which I am certain will bring new challenges in telling St. Augustine's story due to a lack of identifying information available. However, I am hopeful that this project will allow for increased access to the collections at Governor's House Library and a greater understanding of the history of "The Oldest City."

For more information about Governor's House Library and this grant project, please visit governorshouselibrary.wordpress.com and <http://cms.uflib.ufl.edu/GovHouse/Support>.

Do you have a photo, article, project update,
or announcement to share?

Contact the newsletter editor:

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