Strategies for Investigating the Modern Era at UK Archives

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Strategies for Investigating the Modern Era at UK Archives

The Campus of the Future: Modernism at the University of Kentucky, 1963-1970
College of Design, University of Kentucky
Ruth E. Bryan, CA
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They are all historical information resources that are held in the Special Collections Research Center that, used with a lot of other pieces of information, can tell us something about the Kirwan-Blanding dormitory complex.

Clockwise from top left: BOT meeting minutes, yearbooks, course catalogs, student newspaper, student radio recordings (UK Events Collection), dedication program, transcript of Nunn’s dedication speech, box of buildings and grounds general reference files, photograph of dormitory model, ground breaking photographs, President Office records

Notice no plans or drawings: most are not held in archives.
They are different formats; come from different collections; have more or less metadata which allows them to be more or less discoverable. Can be used to help answer different kinds of questions. Illustrate the joys and frustrations of primary source materials found in archives and special collections.
Archives are made up of lots of different physical and digital formats

But what makes them all archives is they are created or received by a person, family, or organization as they conduct their affairs in the world. This makes them primary sources and invaluable for studying history and culture.
Archival collections are acquired by the archival repository in a variety of ways.

University records are usually transferred, while other university-related collections (such as from faculty or alumni) are donated to the repository or are very occasionally purchased.

Archives are never complete
1. They are sources that document the past; can never be the past as experienced
2. The archives only houses the collections that have been saved and have been offered to the archives. The vast majority of documents (especially born-digital ones) are either not saved or are not offered. This includes university records.

However, we are always acquiring more, either as more individuals and families donate more collections, or as more units at the university continue to transfer records. So the overall holdings in archives are always expanding.
Separated into collections by provenance, or by who created or accumulated the documents.

All archival collections have some minimal description, which we call the accession record, which includes the following elements: a title that includes the name of the creator and a format name. In this case, “papers” indicates that the documents in the collection are personal papers in multiple formats. “Records” indicates the documents in the collection are institutional records in multiple formats.

We need to know in which boxes, folders, or server and file locations the archival collection can be located.

We also estimate the size or extent of the collection based on a formula.

We use cubic feet to measure the size.
A small number of collections/accessions are more fully arranged and described beyond the accession record. This might be because they are so voluminous they need additional description for basic research access. Or they are a high priority for more description because they meet a current research need or the donor gave money for processing and description.

So, they must be described in groupings of increasing granularity, similar to an outline. Most collections will not include item-level description. However, usually audiovisual materials do eventually need to be listed item by item.
Because the collection title just indicates the creator and the overall format of the collection, we also supply a Scope and content and Biographical or Historical notes that are narrative summaries of the context of the collection and of what it documents.
Searching

• Maybe 30% of university records are searchable online
• ExploreUK.uky.edu

✓ Board of Trustees meeting minutes
✓ Yearbooks
✓ Course catalogs
✓ Kentucky Kernel
✓ Public Relations and other University images
✓ Collection Guides/Finding Aids

All are OCR'd, although not quality controlled

Although that 30% comprises some crucial resources
These are examples of what digitized images look like and what collection guides look like online.

Left: Example of digitized image from the Clay Lancaster Slide Collection. A native Kentuckian, Lancaster was an author of various books on architecture, design, and was a children’s book author and illustrator. In addition to the Slide Collection, SCRC also holds his architectural photograph reference collection, the contents of which is also digitized.

Right: Example of digitized image from the Ernst Johnson student drawings, transferred from the UK Design Library to SCRC. There are 14, large drawings dating from 1929-1935 when he was a student at Yale University. Johnson was the university architect at UK from 1935-1945.
On the left is the front part of the collection guide for the Blue Grass Trust for Historic Preservation records dated from 1920-2006 and encompassing 49.72 cubic feet or 65 boxes of different sizes and 20 tubes of drawings documenting the Trust’s operations plus its property records and photographs. The collection documents the Trust’s activities in historic property preservation; historic neighborhood and historic building preservation advocacy; historic zoning lobbying; and the Hunt-Morgan House museum, events, programs, and membership operations.

On the right is the front part of the collection guide for the Richard B. Isenhour architectural drawings, (dated 1952-1989; 1.5 cubic feet; 10 folders) comprise construction drawings for homes built in Lexington, Kentucky, by architect Richard B. Isenhour, who heavily used the mid-century modern architectural style.

At the bottom is what a hit list on exploreuk looks like, showing three of the neighborhood association records we hold: North Side, Bell Court, and South Hill.
Searching

- Housing
  - Residence Halls
    - Complex
      - Dormitory complex

- More Broad, More General
  - Looking Portail, Looking Specific

Keyword

Zoom Out +

Keyword

Zoom In -
A team of archivists fields our reference questions, although I generally answer all the university-related ones.
Either with online finding aids or with digitized content;

We can search our collections management system, ArchivesSpace

Lexington native Byron Romanowitz worked with former UK architect Ernst Johnson in the firm JRA, designed the POT and White Hall, and was a staunch opponent of downtown historic preservationists. The collection doesn’t include drawings, but does include photographs and many of JRA’s foundational documents and correspondence.

Hans Gesund is a civil engineering professor with a joint appointment in the College of Engineering and the College of Design. His papers include tons of information over decades about various structural materials used in building construction.
Other Resources

Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History
Doug Boyd, Director

Facilities Library
Gretchen Tucker, Manager

kentuckyoralhistory.org  www.uky.edu/facilities/
Other Resources: Design Library
Faith Harders, Head

libraries.uky.edu/Design
Example question and response

- “I am giving a lecture at UK in Feb. on Edward Durell Stone, architect of the Blanding/Kirwan residential complex. I am looking for early conversations with the Stone office and am hoping you might hold the papers for Mr. Coleman in planning and design? Thank you.”

- What offices, collections, or resources are likely to have records about university buildings, especially planning?
- Starting keywords: Edward Durell Stone, complex, Coleman, planning
- Searching: 1. ExploreUK BOT meeting minutes; 2. ArchivesSpace
- Probable collections: BOT meeting minutes; Frank Dickey and John Oswald papers; ask Facilities Library
Response:

1. In the Frank Dickey papers
   “Campus planning” in box 5.

2. In the John W. Oswald papers
   Three folders titled “Dormitory complex:”
   - box 3A in the 1963-1968 Subject Files
   - box 3 in the 1967-1968 Personal Files
   - box 3 in the 1968-1969 General Files

   One folder titled “Campus planner” in box 5 of the 1963-1968 General Files.

   Three folders titled “Building and campus development:”
   - box 4 in 1963-1967 General Files
   - box 1 in 1967-1968 General Files
   - box 1 in 1968-1969 General Files
Example research topic

• How student and administration expectations and changes in student gender and racial identities played out in the design and construction of Kirwan-Blanding.

• Took place over period of increasing change

9/16/1964
“Escaping the overcrowdedness of the dormitories, Melinda took advantage of the new ruling allowing women to live off campus... Finances played an important part in her decision... Privacy, freedom, and independence are other advantages of apartment living... She said she also enjoyed freedom to plan her own study schedule.”

Thanks to Jennifer McCabe, 2017 “Women at UK: Leaders in Time” exhibit research and planning
Herald, 2-26-57 Dean Homes to Retire July 1 if Replacement Can Be Hired “Mrs. [Sarah] Holmes is proud of the quietness with which integration has been carried out at the University. She attributes this success to the degree of gradualness beginning with the admittance of Negro graduate students in 1948. No Negro girls have applied for housing...these girls should be encouraged...to go to...Kentucky State College...”
Residence Halls for Women
Cost for men: $295/sem
Cost for women: $365/sem

Residence Halls for Men

Single Student Residence Halls
Regulations for Housing of Single Students
Cost: $380/sem
“Because of the recent growth of the University and the consequent shortage of residence hall facilities, more students find it necessary to rent rooms and apartments off campus every year....Begun in earnest during the 1964-1965 school year, the council hopes to improve town housing conditions and the academic atmosphere there and to involve ‘town students’ in campus social, athletic, and leadership activities.”

BOT 1/29/1969: need to keep full occupancy while at same time minimize compulsory housing above first year level.
1969 yearbook: “Two men and a woman studying in the graduate co-ed dorms in K-D complex”
What are your topics/questions?

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