University Library-Community Partnership: The Basic Archives Workshop as a Joint Community Support and Collection Development Initiative

Ruth E. Bryan  
*University of Kentucky*, ruth.bryan@uky.edu

Sarah Dorpinghaus  
*University of Kentucky*, sarah.dorpinghaus@uky.edu

Yvonne Giles  
*First African Foundation*

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University Library-Community Partnership

The Basic Archives Workshop as a Joint Community Support and Collection Development Initiative

Ruth Bryan | Sarah Dorpinghaus | Yvonne Giles
Welcome and Introduction

- 3 workshops, 25 participants, 6 archivists
- Aimed at community organizations and organizational records
Guiding Questions

• Why hold a community archives workshop?
• What does a community archives workshop look like?
• How did the workshop go?
• What are the short term and long term effects?
Archives are mostly embedded in institutions that are traditionally white, patriarchal, and relatively rich. Archival collecting and description practices have also not been inclusive and have many gaps or silences.

I jumped at the opportunity Yvonne presented to work with secretaries and clerks from African American churches in Lexington:

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In order to provide assistance to them in preserving and managing their valuable (and often very old) records that help tell the story of their communities as well as of Lexington and central Kentucky,

--To start conversations about the role that Special Collections can play in being a partner with them in that preservation and management

--To start to do something concrete that might respond to three interlinked movements happening in the archives profession right now, especially in response to the BlackLivesMatter movement, to marriage equality, and to transgender awareness and equality:

--The development of independent (non-institutional) community archives, often virtual (usually based in personal papers or personal recollections)

--Attempts to make space in archival repositories for the records of people and communities who haven’t had a place there before: validation of the importance and value of those lives

--Questions about who is qualified to be an archivist/what training and expertise do you need
- All require development of relationships of mutual confidence, which is a long-term commitment.
- Also means allowing community members to direct what they need while archivists provide support.
What does a community archives workshop look like?

Objectives

• Understand the historical value of church and organizational records

• Understand basic selection, preservation, inventory, access, and outreach activities on historical records

6 archivists from SCRC organize and present
  • University archivist and records manager
  • Education and outreach archivists
  • Digital Archivist/Director of Digital Services
  • African American curator archivist
What does a community archives workshop look like?

1. Historical value/appraisal (selection)

Schedule/major sections
Presenting the segments in “archival” order
What does a community archives workshop look like?

2. Inventory

Levels of inventory

Smaller groups or files or items:
What does a community archives workshop look like?

3. Preservation

Where to store paper records?

- Air conditioned and heated atmosphere
- Purchase humidity temperature sensor
- 35-50% RH; 35-65°F
- Avoid direct sun or light exposure
- Employ fire resistant environment
- Provide a secure and clean area
- Utilize metal cabinets or sturdy shelving
What does a community archives workshop look like?

4. Research access

Environment
What does a community archives workshop look like?

5. Digitization/online access

How? | Format
---|---
TIFF | Preserve
JPEG | Share
PDF  | Search
What does a community archives workshop look like?

6. Outreach/exhibits
What does a community archives workshop look like?

- **Selecting what to keep and what to discard**
  - Value of content
  - Costs of keeping and providing access
  - Primary value: administrative, fiscal, legal (historical)
  - Secondary value: strategic, cultural, and historical (existential)

- **Where not to store records?**
  - Damp and dirty basements
  - Hot attics
  - Warehouses without climate control
  - Near water pipes
  - Pest infected areas
  - Nowhere that a human wouldn’t feel comfortable

- **Environment**

- **LOCKSS**
  - Dropbox
  - Google Drive
Tour of Special Collections

Handouts

- SAA handout
- Tips for digitization and working with digital files
- SCRC resources
- Inventory examples
- Supplies com
- Preservation tips
Attendees
Numbers have varied from 4 to 15. Total = 25. Best attendance, March 2016
Attendees

- Churches
- Cultural/historical organizations
- Economic/social development organizations
- School/Education organizations
- Genealogy groups

Expanded from Lexington African American church clerks to broader participation (one individual sometimes represented multiple organizations)

- First African Baptist, Main Street Baptist, Shilo Missionary Baptist, Episcopal Diocese of Lexington, First Baptist Church of Berea
- Lyric Theatre, Isaac Scott Hathaway Museum/Robert H. Williams Cultural Center, Mary Todd Lincoln House
- Plantory, Lexington Fairness campaign
- Lincoln Foundation, Henry Clay High School, Tates Creek Public Library
- African American Genealogical Group of KY, KY Genealogical Society, UID you Identify local African American Friends and Family Facebook page
How did the workshop go?
Assessment

I have a basic knowledge of:

- Value
- Selection
- Inventory
- Preservation
- Digital archiving
- Provide access
- Digitization
- Share on Web
- Promotion/exhibits and outreach
Assessment

2016 March Basic Archives Workshop survey results (average)
Assessment

June 2016 Basic Archives Workshop survey results (average)
Things we learned

Logistics and communication

Timing

Workshop content

Things learned about conducting the workshop in general and how content/structure changed

- Attendee registration and communication; marketing/word of mouth
- Time frame (content vs questions vs break/networking vs tour)
- People are interested in appraisal/selection and inventory
- Added sections on outreach, exhibits, and fundraising

People are very interested digital

- Both complex and simple questions (How to preserve a digital photograph to how to preserve email and websites)
- People are interested in digitization
- People are interested in providing limited access (posting to Facebook) and full access to digital materials (creating Flickr site)
- People want to do interactive things with digital materials
  - Social media
  - Crowdsourcing (gathering and sharing)
  - Transcriptions and identifications (of people in photos)
How attendees felt

“Good networking opportunities.”

“Thanks for all the information.”

“Good workshop. Fast-paced. Lots of info to take in. Now need to put into action.”

“I can take this information back to my organization with confidence.”

“Very well done event. Organized and concise. Information provided with expertise but in layman’s terms.”

“Excellent overview of archival process.”
What are the short-term and long-term results so far?
--responses of attendees
--reaching out to other organizations
--building relationships
--education/community support
--consider UK as repository
--collection development