

BRINGING COLLECTIONS TO LIGHT, PROJECT #RB-50072-09
INTERIM REPORT TO THE
NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS COMMISSION
FOR THE PERIOD
SEPTEMBER 1, 2010 – FEBRUARY 28, 2011

PROJECT STAFF

Laurel Rozema continued to work on the project both in her half-time NHPRC-funded position, as well as in her permanent Briscoe Center-funded half-time position, where she spends 10% of her time assisting Registrar, Evan Hocker, with basic processing of incoming archival collections.

Megan Mummey left the project at the beginning of September to move out of state, marking the first major staff change for the project. After the recruiting and hiring process was completed in September, three new staff members and one new graduate student intern joined the Archives Unit and the project on October 1, 2010. Bethany Anderson was hired to fill the half-time NHPRC-funded position, and Evan Usler was hired to fill the permanent Briscoe Center-funded half-time Archives Assistant position, both previously held by Megan Mummey. In addition, we were fortunate to be able to add an additional permanent Briscoe Center-funded half-time Archives Assistant to the Archives Unit, and hired Lauren Algee for that position. Both Lauren Algee and Evan Usler contribute at least 10% of their time assisting Registrar, Evan Hocker, with basic processing of incoming archival collections as well as creating EAD and MARC records for our “hidden collections.”

Evan Hocker supervises Laurel Rozema, Bethany Anderson, Lauren Algee, and Evan Usler, and accessions all incoming archival collections. He oversees the processing workflow, and ensures that all incoming collections receive basic processing so that our backlog of hidden collections does not continue to grow.

Stephanie Malmros continues to manage the Collection Survey Database, and supervises Mr. Hocker and new graduate student intern Ryder Kouba, who contributes 50% of his time to the project. She works closely with the project team to address any issues that arise during basic processing, and is working with Lauren Algee on the creation of a Preservation Assessment Database.

Linda Peterson, the Briscoe Center’s Photographs Archivist, who retired in January 2011, spent at least 25% of her time incorporating basic processing practices into the photo archives unit. Between September 1, 2010 and January 30, 2011 Linda and her graduate student intern, Halley Grogan, created 25 EAD records and 29 MARC records for existing “hidden” photograph collections.

The Briscoe Center is fortunate to have access to the talents of graduate students in the School of Information at the University of Texas at Austin. Between September 2010 and February 2011 graduate student volunteers Sarah Sokolow, Brooke Everett, Stacey Helmerich, and Jocelyn Petyak contributed to the project via the creation of EAD and/or MARC records under the supervision of Stephanie Malmros and Laurel Rozema.

Objective 1. Timely submission of complete reports and three copies of grant products as specified in NHRPC guidelines and the grant notification letter.

Second interim report will be submitted on or before March 31, 2011. This report covers grant activities for September 1, 2010 – February 28, 2011.

Objective 2. To manage new accessions more efficiently and prevent future backlog, prepare and make available A Guide for Donors to instruct donors of the Center's needs with regards to donated collections.

We began by implementing a completely revised accession database system. We modified our accession database fields to include language and data relevant to MARC cataloging and EAD mark-up. The goal was to capture MARC and EAD-relevant data in the very first assessment of an incoming collection, thus streamlining the process and eliminating duplication of work. Thus far the system is working effectively. We have made some minor changes to the database fields and nomenclature based on feedback from our processing and cataloging staff. One of the great lessons of this project is the need to change and be flexible to meet the goal of leaving no collections behind.

In addition we made a strong commitment to creating basic MARC and EAD records for every new accession. To ensure compliance with this new mandate we altered our workflow so that new materials cannot physically be moved from the new accession receiving area to a permanent archives shelf location *until* basic MARC and EAD records are complete. By implementing this physical barrier we have had remarkable results. Since adopting our new workflow in September 2009 we have achieved a 90% completion rate for creating MARC and EAD records for new accessions. The remaining 10% represent collections with special considerations that are being held temporarily while we resolve issues relating to deeds of gift, appraisals, special donor requirements, or environmental quarantine for mold or insects. The strict space limitation in our receiving area is such that all new acquisitions, even those with special problems, will not languish for an extended period because the space simply will not accommodate them. Moreover, we are currently in the midst of moving several recently acquired collections to new off-site storage facilities, and they are scheduled to be checklisted and given MARC/EAD records in the next few months as they are prepped for their new storage locations. It should be re-emphasized that all collections falling within the 10% are physically situated in spaces that cannot serve as long-term storage areas, thus ensuring that they will move into the workflow in the coming months.

April Sullivan, a masters degree candidate in the School of Information, created the Guide for Donors during this past fall semester as her capstone project, a professional capping experience required of all School of Information students. April met regularly with Stephanie Malmros, Evan Hocker, and other Briscoe Center staff to learn our archival processes and workflows, and our needs with regard to Donor participation in the donation and description process. With this knowledge in hand she drafted the Guide for Donors and an Archives Donation Information Form to collect information about donated collections from the donors in order to assist archives staff with preparing the collections for research and completing basic processing in an even more timely and well informed manner. The Guide for Donors, Archives Donation Information Form, and April's capstone presentation poster are all posted on the "History Revealed" project page on the Briscoe Center's website.

Objective 3. Prioritize which 1500 of the estimated 4,500 hidden collections held by the Center will receive basic processing through the use of a collections survey and newly developed Preservation Assessment tool.

Survey

The collections survey was completed in early April 2010. (*see March 1, 2010 – August 31, 2010 Interim Report*)

Preservation Assessment Tool

Lauren Algee, who recently received her Masters of Science in Information Studies with a Certificate of Advanced Studies in Preservation Administration, surveyed existing preservation survey tools, including the Columbia Mellon Survey, CALIPR, Archivist's Toolkit Assessments Module, and other preservation survey documentation such as the Smithsonian Institution's Preservation Assessments Worksheet, and a report on the Manuscripts Archives and Special Collections preservation survey at Washington State University. After noting the pros and cons of each tool/project and discussing the Briscoe Center's particular goals for a preservation assessment tool with Stephanie Malmros, Lauren drafted a design document for a custom Preservation Assessment Tool, which will be a FileMaker Pro database. The database, which is being built by Stephanie Malmros, and will be completed early in the next reporting period, will feature four levels of entries: collection, container, material and item. The database will support assessments at any point in the life cycle of the collection, at the collection or item level, and conservation requests and work records will be incorporated into the database to serve as a log of work needed and completed.

Objective 4. Prepare MARC records for the 1,500 collections and contribute these to OCLC and UT Libraries local online catalog.

We are using the open source application MarcEdit to convert files from EAD to MARC, and then uploading to and editing the MARC records in OCLC Connexion. Because we

are able to quickly and efficiently convert EAD records to MARC in batches, the bulk of the project staff's efforts this reporting period remained focused on the creation of collection level EAD records. Even so, project staff created 74 new MARC records this reporting period. This raises the total number of MARC records created since the project's inception on September 1, 2009 to 328.

Objective 5. Prepare EAD records for the 1,500 processed collections and contribute these to the Texas Archival Resources Online (TARO).

Project staff created 432 EAD records during this reporting period. In order to promote consistency among the records created, we continued to utilize a peer review process and project staff reviewed and edited each other's records, with a final review by Stephanie Malmros. Despite a large turnover in project staff, one month of reduced staffing (September), and time spent training new staff, the rate of EAD production has increased steadily between September and February. The total number of EAD records created since the project's inception on September 1, 2009 is 1,026.

To meet the project objectives, our goal was to meet a target of approximately 76 new EAD records per month between September 2010 and August 2011. We came in slightly below that goal, completing an average of 72 EAD records per month, primarily due to decreased staffing during the first month of the reporting period. However, monthly totals increased steadily, culminating with 111 EAD records created in February. At the current pace, we are on target to meet or surpass our new goal of 79 EAD records per month, and to meet the project goal of creating a total of 1,500 new EAD records.

Objective 6. Promote the use of the project's method by posting the Guide for Donors, the grant's interim narrative and other relevant reports and updates on the Center's website.

Stephanie Malmros continues to work with the Briscoe Center's website administrator to update the webpage devoted to the "History Revealed: Bringing Collections to Light at the Briscoe Center for American History" project. The website includes a general description of the project, interim reports submitted, the Guide for Donors, Donation Information Form, and a listing of newly uncovered collections, with links to their EAD records. The webpage may be accessed at <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/nhprc/index.php>

Objective 7. Promote the availability of the collections through an announcement on the Center's website, press release in a newsletter, at least two presentations made to a local community organizations, professional groups, or schools, and messages posted to at least three list-servs.

Stephanie Malmros will present on the newly created Guide for Donors and its use as part of the session "The Giver that Keeps on Giving: Donor-Assisted Appraisal and Description" at the Society of American Archivists annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois in August 2011.