**BRINGING COLLECTIONS TO LIGHT, PROJECT #RB-50072-09**
**INTERIM REPORT TO THE**
**NATIONAL HISTORICAL PUBLICATIONS AND RECORDS COMMISSION**
**FOR THE PERIOD**
**MARCH 1, 2011 TO AUGUST 31, 2011**

## PROJECT STAFF

During this reporting period we experienced a significant turnover within our archives assistant ranks, which caused a critical slowdown in our march to completion. Laurel Rozema, Lauren Algee and Evan Usler all vacated their Archives Assistant positions during this reporting period. Happily for all three, they have moved on to full-time, permanent or longer-term project work.

In anticipation that our efforts to fill these positions would be delayed by the university's summer break, we requested, and were granted, a six-month extension by the NHPRC to allow for a recruitment period that might extend into September at which time the fall semester will have commenced and the student pool will be replenished (nearly all of these positions have been filled by current or recently-graduated students from UT's School of Information).

Bethany Anderson was hired to fill the half-time Briscoe Center funded Archives Assistant position vacated by Lauren Algee. Intern, Ryder Kouba, was hired to fill the Briscoe Center funded Archives Assistant position vacated by Laurel Rozema, and Maria Soscia was hired to fill the NHPRC funded Archives Assistant position vacated by Laurel Rozema. The Archives Intern position vacated by Ryder Kouba and the Briscoe Center funded Archives Assistant position vacated by Evan Usler remain vacant as of August 31, 2011, but recruiting for those two positions will commence in September 2011.

Evan Hocker continues to supervise all of the Archives Assistants, 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, until he accepted an Archives Assistant position, graduate student intern Ryder Kouba, who contributed 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 on the creation of a Preservation Assessment Database.

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 March 2011 and August 2011 graduate student volunteers Stacey Helmerich, and Jocelyn Petyak

contributed to the project via the creation of EAD and/or MARC records under the supervision of 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.**

This report covers grant activities for March 1, 2011 to August 31, 2011. A final report will be submitted on or before March 31, 2012.

**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 have 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. Since adopting our new workflow in September 2009 we have achieved an 88.3% completion rate for creating MARC and EAD records for new accessions. The remaining 11.7% 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 11.7% 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.

Guide for Donors

The *Guide for Donors* was completed in December 2010. *(see September 1, 2010 – February 28, 2011 Interim Report)*

Staff started using the *Guide for Donors* this past spring, and the results, so far, have been mixed. The goal of the *Guide* was to serve two main functions: 1) to serve as a tool that staff could use to educate donors, and 2) to serve as a vehicle for gathering information about collections from the donors, who are often the most knowledgeable about their collection, in order to expedite processing and provide richer collection descriptions for researchers.

As a tool that staff can use to educate donors, the *Guide* has been very successful. The creation process provided an opportunity for our archivists and librarian, to come together and discuss their needs, wants and challenges with regard to the donation and

acquisition process and to share and brainstorm about solutions.  As a result of that process, and the further efforts of graduate student April Sullivan, our staff now have a consolidated up to date framework to use when communicating with donors or prospective donors, and they are able to follow up a conversation by providing the donor with a copy of the *Guide* itself.

As a tool for gathering information from donors the *Guide* hasn't worked out quite as well as we hoped it would.  We've given the *Guide for Donors,* which includes the Archives Donation Information Form, to both prospective donors and those in the process of actually donating their papers.   Our archivists report that the donors usually do actually want guidance, and seem receptive and willing when asked to complete the donation information form.  However, we have gotten very few completed forms back from donors so far.

In order for the Archives Donation Information form to function as fully as intended we need to revisit and review the way we are using it. For example, rather than the passive use we have made of the form so far by just handing off the form to the donor, we can take a much more active approach. One way we can do that is to arrange a time to sit down with the donor either in person or by phone and interview them about their collection with the Donation Information Form in hand, perhaps on an iPad or laptop, and enter their information into the form ourselves.

Over the next few months we'll try out the more active approach to gathering the descriptive information we're seeking from our donors.  And we'll take another look at the *Guide for Donors*, and particularly the Donation Information Form, and perhaps make some revisions.  We'll also send the *Guide* out for an external review by our peers to take advantage of fresh eyes and fresh perspectives.


**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, 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, the bulk of the project staff's efforts this reporting period remained focused on the creation of collection level EAD records. Nonetheless, project staff created 321 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 649.

While the bulk of our EAD records this reporting period were completed between March and June, while we were fully staffed, the significant staffing turnover experienced during the summer months most significantly impacted our MARC record creation process. However, during the month of September 2011, between the end of the reporting period and the submission of this report, archives staff created 183 new MARC records. Between October 2011 and February 2012 a rate of only 134 new MARC records per month will ensure that we reach our project goal of 1500 new MARC records.

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

Project staff created 583 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. The total number of EAD records created since the project's inception on September 1, 2009 is 1,609, surpassing our project goal 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.**

In April 2011 members of UT Quest, a self-directed, membership organization for life long learning that is a part of UT Austin's Division of Continuing Education (CE), Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at UT, visited the Briscoe Center and, as part of a behind the scenes tour, Evan Hocker and Stephanie Malmros discussed with them the "Bringing Collections to Light" project and our efforts to increase accessibility to the Briscoe Center's rich collections.

Stephanie Malmros presented 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.  Her presentation was entitled "*A Guide for Donors: Bringing Donors to the Fore.*"