Organizing Your Personal and Family Archives
Today's presenter

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Women & Leadership Archives

Collects and makes available permanently valuable records of women and women’s organizations, which document women’s lives, roles, and contributions.

Serves a wide variety of users ranging from students and scholars to the general public.
Women & Leadership Archives

- Established in 1994
- Beginnings with Mundelein College
- Piper Hall - Once Mundelein College Library
- Gannon Center and University Libraries
WLA Collecting Subject Areas

- Activism and Women’s Issues
- Athletics
- Civic and Cultural Engagement
- Education
- Environment
- Mundelein College
- Public Service and Politics
- Science, Technology, and Engineering
- Social Justice
- Visual, Performing, and Fine Arts
- Women Religious
Share Your Story:
Student Life at Mundelein

• Seeking Mundelein College Class of 1970 participants
• Brief interviews with WLA on student life
• Interviews to occur summer-fall via Zoom
• For more information: wlarchives@luc.edu
Defining Archives

• Main takeaway: Archives are collections of items that have enduring value
• Archives (noun): materials, division within an organization, organization, professional discipline, building itself; various formats, topics, and creation dates
• Archive (verb): computing term for storing data
• Archivist: individual responsible for entire range of activity related to managing archives
Working with an Archivist

• Main takeaway: Never too soon to start a conversation
• ArchiveGrid
  • https://researchworks.oclc.org/archivegrid/
• Donating items to WLA
  • wlarchives@luc.edu
• Donating items to University Archives
  • http://www.luc.edu/archives
  • http://www.lib.luc.edu/specialcollections/exhibits/show/covid-19
• Donating Personal and Family Papers Brochure
  • https://www2.archivists.org/publications/brochures/donating-familyrecs
Determining Value

• Main takeaway: Enduring value > other value
• Monetary Value
• Sentimental value
• Archival items are unique and often one of a kind
• Items should tell your story
• Item doesn’t have to be a certain age to be archival
• Rarity and uniqueness > age
Questioning Use

• **Main takeaway: Items are for use**
• Consider the reasons for saving an item
• Use of object and wear of object is part of its story
• Communication with family or others receiving items
• Different items have different sentimental value to different people
Preserving
Preserving Items (Part 1)

• **Main Takeaway:** Preservation is an ongoing act

• **Preservation:** preventative measures taken to minimize deterioration due to use or inherent vice (often collection level – before)

• **Conversation:** individual treatments to repair damage (item level - after)

• **Restoration:** individual treatments to repair item back to original condition (item level - after)
Preserving Items (Part 2)

• Main Takeaway: Imagine your items as a house guest
• Temperature
• Humidity
• (Sun)light
• Water
• Pests
• Mold
• Smoke
• Dust
• Handling
Preserving Items (Part 3)

- Main Takeaway: Anything done to object should be reversible
- Frequent handwashing > gloves
- Clean area free of food and drink
- Avoid using tape to repair
- Avoid household cleaners
- Store on interior walls, at least 3 inches from ground
Preserving Items (Part 4)

• Main Takeaway: Consider the condition and composition of your items
  • Paper
  • Books
  • Clothing and Textiles
  • Photos
  • Audiovisual items
  • Art
  • Scrapbooks
  • 3-D objects and furniture
  • Potentially hazardous items
Organizing and Labeling
Buying Archival Supplies

- **Main takeaway:** “Archival” is not regulated or defined
- **Photo:** PAT designation
- **Paper:** Acid free, lignin free
- **Plastic:** polyethylene, polypropylene, polyester, mylar
- **Writing:** Pencil, PAT marker
- **Buy directly from archival suppliers, art supply stores**
Buying Archival Supplies: Starter Kit

• Main Takeaway: Supplies will vary depending on what items you have
• Pencil
• Photo marker (IDentipen)
• Acid-free boxes and folders
• Acid-free tissue paper
• Safe plastic binders
• Polyester mounts for albums
• Safe plastic sleeves for photos and paper
• Gloves*
Buying Archival Supplies: Resources

- Hobby and Fabric Stores
- Art Supply Stores
- Home Organization Stores
- Professional Framers/Art Restorers/Conservator
- Directly from Manufacturer
- Local Photo Studio
- Big Box Online Retailers
- Archival Suppliers (Hollinger, Gaylord)
Organizing Your Items

• Main takeaway: Maintain original order
• Vital to know what you have and where it is
• Store like with like
• Follow your own logic – clearly explain to others
• Continue checking in with family – what has value to them
• Keep old formats– there’s hope for them yet!
• Consider working with vendors
Labeling Your Items

• **Main takeaway:** Label what you can
• Label photos with names – retain unique nicknames, etc.
• Label on back or on corners
• Write lightly
• Avoid sticky notes, labels, tape, metal fasteners
Digital and Sharing
Managing Digital Items (Part 1)

- Main takeaway: Digital doesn’t last forever
- More records being created now than any other point in history
- Previously limited by technology
- Planned obsolescence
- More and more affordable digital storage costs
- Check items on regular basis and move to new formats as they become available
- Assess newest technology first
Managing Digital Items (Part 2)

- Main takeaway: Start good data steward practices today
- Cloud based backup
- Manage passwords and keep track of accounts
- Use widely supported software, formats, and file extensions
- Establish file name protocols that make sense to you and adhere to them
- Go through items at least annually
Sharing Items with Friends and Family

• Main takeaway: Access is not preservation
• Consider what would like happen to online accounts
• Multiple ways to provide access
• Use what you have
• Consider cost and effort
• Printing copies of things for posterity
Disposing of Unwanted Items

• Main takeaway: Consider lifecycle of your items
• Learn about local recycling practices
  • [http://www.earth911.com](http://www.earth911.com)
• Paper shredding: Annually by banks or community centers
• Clothing: Retailers offering “give back” bags
• Electronics, denim, textiles, shoes: manufacturers/retailers
• Household cleaners and medication: local municipalities
• General: Pickup of items from charities, resale shops, parishes, animal shelters
• General: Online resale or giveaway
Additional Resources (Part 1)

• AIC Find A Conservator
  •  https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/find-a-conservator

• Conservation OnLine
  •  https://cool.culturalheritage.org/

• Connecting to Collections Care
  •  https://www.connectingtocollections.org/

• Cornell University- Copyright Information Center
  •  https://copyright.cornell.edu/publicdomain

• International Society of Appraisers
  •  https://www.isa-appraisers.org/

• Library of Congress – Personal Archiving
  •  http://digitalpreservation.gov/personalarchiving/
Additional Resources (Part 2)

- National Park Service Conserve - o - Grams
- NEDCC Preservation Leaflets
  - https://www.nedcc.org/free-resources/preservation-leaflets/overview
- Society of American Archivists
  - https://www2.archivists.org/about-archives
- Local genealogy groups
- Local public library
- Creating Family Archives: A Step-by-Step Guide to Saving Your Memories for Future Generations by Margot Note
Questions?

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