**La Salle University Archives’ *Jump In* Survey**

Rebecca Goldman and Brother Joe Grabenstein

**Background**

Brother Joe began his archives career at age 42, in a time when computers were not essential to a modern archives. He worked for his predecessor at La Salle University as assistant archivist from 1992 to early January 1994, and he was not even allowed to use the only computer in the archives. When Brother Joe took over as University Archivist, he gladly purchased two computers, began using a database for collections information, and recruited student workers to perform data entry. Over the next 17 years, Brother Joe was content to work with e-mail and a very limited number of computer applications. Digitization, social media, born-digital records weren’t on his radar.

There were a few reasons for this. Brother Joe spent so much time helping researchers that there was little time left over for creating finding aids, actively acquiring new collections, or learning new skills—even with a 70-hour work week. In addition, the archives was seen not as a repository for records, but as a collection of information. With an archivist who performed most of the research himself, it made sense for that information to be in a format with which he was comfortable, and that format was paper. Documents like Word files, e-mails, or even websites could always be printed out. Digital technology was for others to perform for him, or independently of him, not *by* him. And his supervisors and colleagues at La Salle’s Connelly Library agreed. In late 2011, the Library hired a digital librarian to work on initiatives like digitization and digital preservation. When she arrived on campus, this librarian was not even aware that the University had its own archives.

As luck would have it, this new librarian was Rebecca Goldman, an experienced archivist making the switch to digital libraries. Within a few weeks of her arrival, her supervisor asked her to work with Brother Joe on a digitization project, with the caveat that Brother Joe was a digital skeptic. But after a few meetings, it became clear to Rebecca that this was not the case at all. Brother Joe was not comfortable with computers, but he was excited about the possibilities they offered, and was willing to learn. Soon Rebecca posed a simple question which became music to Brother Joe’s ears: Would he mind if she became his new supervisor? He readily agreed. And since then, Rebecca has encouraged—or more precisely, cajoled—Brother Joe into taking a refresher computer course, attending computer skills workshops at local public libraries, and working through computer tutorials with help from tech-savvy student workers.

Together, we’ve made great strides on digital projects in the last 2.5 years. La Salle now has an Archives Facebook page, and Brother Joe is responsible for keeping it updated. Yearbooks and various university publications are online through the Library’s institutional repository. Digital files are backed up locally to external drives and online through DuraCloud. We have even started acquiring fully born-digital collections, using Duke DataAccessioner to save the files to Library storage, and preserving La Salle websites with Archive-It. But our legacy born-digital files have, until now, remained unaddressed.

Brother Joe still has plenty of “techy” hills to climb. Rebecca started out from a more advanced place, but is still working on building her digital skills to support the Archives. We believe that any archivist willing to learn new things—even the 60-somethings out there!—can play a role in managing born-digital records.

**The survey process**

Soon after she became Brother Joe’s supervisor, Rebecca observed that it was a priority to establish control over the un-inventoried contents of roughly 500 linear feet of records in the La Salle Archives. From summer 2012 to summer 2013, we worked on a folder-level survey of the archives, identifying provenance-based and artificial collections. As part of this process, any box containing audiovisual or digital materials received a “Contains Media” flag. This saved us a lot of time during our Jump-In inventory. New deposits received since 2012 were not part of this survey, and we will make a note of any digital media when they are accessioned.

During the Jump In survey, Brother Joe and Rebecca worked together to locate digital media within the flagged boxes, identify formats, and enter data into the inventory spreadsheet. We also located some digital media that had been missed during our initial collection-wide survey. In many cases, both team members were needed to examine individual digital items: Rebecca was more familiar with the physical media, and Brother Joe remembered the context of who created the materials and how they ended up in the Archives. Excluding our year-long collection survey, we spent roughly 7 or 8 hours on our Jump In inventory.

Our inventory process was uniquely challenging because none of our archival collections have been processed yet. Although processing is an eventual goal, we don’t want to wait for collections to be full-processed before addressing our born-digital media.

**What we found, and what we learned**

We were pleased to discover that most of the media are in physical formats that are relatively easy to recover, such as CDs, DVDs, and 3.5” floppy disks. However, in most cases, we don’t know much about the operating systems that created the files on those media, so accessing the files may be more difficult. And we don’t yet have the equipment we need to read all the media we discovered, like 5.25” floppy disks.

The total estimated storage for all materials is 370.87 GB. In order to store two offline and two online copies of all the files we found, we will need a total of 1.449 TB of storage space. Based on existing storage space and expected budgets, backing up all this digital content is feasible.

During our collection-wide survey, we encountered many, many duplicates of paper materials, so we probably shouldn’t have been surprised to find duplicates during our Jump In survey. However, while we were able to quickly examine and weed many of our paper duplicates, the digital duplicates will be more complicated.

We should have more digital media than we were able to locate during the inventory. We will need to step up our outreach to University departments and student groups to avoid future gaps in the archives.