May 5, 2014

Jump In, Too/Two Project Essay

Steve Lutz Collection of Utah Fire and Rescue Academy (UFRA) Materials

Prior to participating in the Jump In Too/Two project, we dealt with born digital media in one of two ways—we either went and ahead and processed it as part of the collection it came with, making a note of the media type with the intent to go back and do something with it later, or, in the rare occasion, we transferred it to another medium and then processed it as part of the collection. My assistant had a computer saved at her mother's home that still has the ability to read 3 ½" Floppy disks, so she had that delivered to her (from Maine to Utah) and we have used it with a portion of the disks that are part of this collection to help us transfer them to a shared external drive for now.

I chose to survey the Steve Lutz Collection of Utah Fire and Rescue (UFRA) Materials for several reasons. The Utah Fire and Rescue Academy celebrated its 50th Anniversary in 2010. It is a very unique program at Utah Valley University, but also in Utah, and so I feel that it is important to preserve the materials as well as make as much of it accessible as possible. The Utah Fire and Rescue Academy has been publishing a magazine for quite some time, and the Sutherland Archives has been archiving the print and online versions of that magazine. Further, we have had a great relationship with Steve Lutz of the Academy, who has served informally as their historian and has gone to great lengths to preserve the history of the program, as well as to record their current and ongoing activities and accomplishments. The Academy is nationally recognized, but also, it graduates people who are essential to our everyday lives—firefighters, paramedics, and other emergency responders. What a great opportunity to preserve and present their hard work to the public through our Archive and our digitization program!

Getting started with the survey has been very therapeutic in a way. The collection was actually processed by a graduate school intern, and so I didn't have direct physical contact with the collection beyond the quick initial survey when the collection came in a multitude of bankers boxes. I knew there were lots of "tricky" materials in it, and our intern was often a bit overwhelmed with what to do with some types of items and how to deal with them. So in my mind the collection had loomed large as a difficult one full of beasts that I didn't have the time to deal with. Actually writing up what was there helps me realize that there are not as many difficult items as I had remembered, and that this will make an important, worthwhile project because so many of these items hold unique materials!

I started the process two months ago, in terms of identifying where the born-digital materials were in the collection, and thinking of how to get started. Unfortunately, I did not get started soon enough, and let conference presentations and other pressing tasks take precedence. So, a week ago today I set out the boxes with the born-digital materials in them, and then this morning, starting following the sample inventory template, which worked well and was very helpful. So in all I think that the survey for this collection has taken ten actual work hours, not counting lots of unquantifiable thinking time!

As I suspected there are mostly compact disks in the collection, with a number of DVDs that captured fire training games and contests that the graduating students participate in each semester. Most of the

digital content ranges from 2000-2004, and is on cds that are around 700 megabytes each. Many of the items don't have years labeled on them, so I've had to play them to see what years the images were created. I have also found that the content in the materials is much more varied than what the given labels indicate—for example, there might be a disk named "Paramedic Graduation," but when I look at it to get the dates, there are also images of firefighters who have been out fighting a wildfire returning home exhausted and worn out. So I can see that the proper treatment of what is on these materials will entail more than just converting them to a stable medium, but also detailed metadata assignment.

Thus, to prioritize our first steps, we will copy what is on the compact disks and DVDs to external hard drives, where the contents can be analyzed and compared with the collection of physical photographs that came with the collection. There may be some overlap and duplication of content.

We will convert the rest of the material on the 3 ½" Floppy disks to digital and store it on a shared external drive. We do not have a zip drive to open the zip disks, so we are probably going to have to look on e-bay or somewhere like that to see if we can purchase one. The videos on DVD will be saved to the Digitation Technician's archival drives.

This project has been a great way to make a start on a very intimidating process. By providing guidelines and encouraging us to take a bite and at least establish some control over the born-digital items in one collection, and to think of what we will do next, this project has gotten me further with these materials than I ever anticipated back in 2010!!

Sincerely,

Catherine McIntyre, Archivist & Digitization Librarian
Utah Valley University Library and George Sutherland Archives
801-863-8821
mcintyca@uvu.edu