

Think Outside the Box: “Unboxing” Special Collections Materials Online

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Abstract

Our presentation includes a behind-the-scenes look at the Special Collections Research Center at NC State University Libraries' livestream events, known as “unboxings.” Unboxing is a live-streamed presentation of exciting and unique collections of archival materials. These events serve our department's outreach goals of widening the collection's reach to the public, disseminating information about accessing archives, collaborating with campus partners, and enhancing learning services. In this presentation, we will discuss the roles and responsibilities of staff and how staff collaborate with partners to host YouTube Live "unboxings" of archival collections. Additionally, our talk will discuss the reasons behind the selection of the live-stream format and present statistics showing that audiences today vastly prefer video content instead of reading text. We will further explain the planning process and how to curate materials, research, promote the event, set up the livestream, and encourage feedback and interaction from the audience. We hope sharing our process will encourage similar institutions to think "outside the box" about how they can promote their materials to broader audiences.

About the authors:

Phillip MacDonald is an Association of Research Libraries' Kaleidoscope Diversity Scholar and holds an M.S. in Library Science and M.A. in Folklore from UNC-Chapel Hill, where he focused on archives and makerspaces; while working at NC State University Libraries. He created “Modern Raleigh: An Architecture Exhibit,” a virtual reality exhibit, and continues to work to integrate hands-on making as a tool for public outreach and instruction for archives.

Taylor Wolford is a Special Collections Librarian at NC State University Libraries. She works in the realm of archival education and outreach and is dedicated to making collections accessible and engaging to a wide range of audiences. She holds a M.S. in Library Science from UNC-Chapel Hill and a M.A. in Public History from NC State University.