Juggling priorities: lessons learned during a community documentation project

How does a University Special Collections effectively implement a short term community engagement and documentation effort?

Conclusions

- Gauge community interest and enthusiasm prior to planning
- Identify and document desired outcomes, specific goals, and how to measure them
- Identify and secure resources (equipment, financial, staffing)
- Clearly define and document priorities, procedures, and staff roles in the beginning
- Competing priorities: relationship-building vs. archival standards
- Plan community documentation projects in phases:
  - Survey materials already in repository
  - Identify gaps
  - Collect and process
  - Digitize and create metadata
  - Put online
  - Don’t do everything at once! 😊

Further Research

Measuring the value of community documentation projects:

- Do they result in more/more diverse collections?
- Do they result in more community support for the institution/profession?
- Do they result in more/more users/use of the archives?

Assessment:

- Surveys, interviews, focus groups
- Compile statistics on collecting, use, donations, supporters
- Compare within an institution, before and after
- Compare between institutions

Desired outcomes | Goals for year 1 | Strategies | Challenges | End of year 1 (grant funded period) | End of year 3 (numbers include year 1)
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Increased availability of original materials online | Digitize 25 oral histories and videos. Digitize 500+ documents and photos. Investigate future Jewish newspaper digitization | Outsource audio, video, newspaper digitization. Compound digital objects + less description needed | Expectations of immediate online access. Diverse materials. Limited existing description. Inconsistent staffing | 322 total digital objects (est. 9,100 digital items). 43 legacy oral histories digitized. 24 videos digitized, 4 online. Newspaper inventory created | 2,114 total digital objects (est. 22,836 digital items). 123 oral histories online. 43 videos online. 1,037 issues of Las Vegas Israelite online

Community interest in the online portal | Build web portal with contextual info | Web portal = more attractive, user friendly, and context-rich front door to CONTENTdm | Website not formally launched yet. 125 biographies, 6 theme essays, and 1 timeline. 700+ page views of project blog | Ununderstood web dept. Creating content for web portal was very time consuming | 15,609 page views of web portal. 49,381 page views of digital objects (CDM). 300 biographies, 9 theme essays

Community participation in helping the UNLV Libraries preserve this history | Promote project & UNLV Libraries. Engage community members | Oral history interviews. Loans & donations. Advisory Board. Promotion, events, & presentations | Busy schedules. Vague understanding of archives from donors. Inconsistent staffing | 70+ oral history interviews. 22 archival donors. 5 advisory board meetings, 50+ participants. 300+ people met with project staff. 4 presentations. 7 promotional videos. 1 magazine ad. Bookmarks & brochures | 163 oral history interviews. 46 archival donors. 2 articles in David Magazine. 1 blog post by Las Vegas Weekly


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