

Bridges Not Walls: Connecting Community Archives with Cultural Institutions

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Abstract: The overall objective of this project is to explore how bridges can be constructed between existing cultural institutions and community archives (or community groups wanting to develop archives). Researchers have recognized the importance and impact of community archives; connecting people with their history and heritage, engaging community in social activities, and contributing to democratic heritage from participatory collecting. Despite the importance of community archives and their contribution to social justice through the recovery of hidden and marginalized stories, community archives face many challenges. For example, community experts often lack of expertise in and capacity for preservation, as well as the technical and financial sustainability needed for long term use. Bringing cultural institutions and community archives together would be a mutually beneficial solution for both sectors: cultural institutions can be exposed to an increasingly broader scope of topics to build more inclusive and culturally relevant collections; community archives can rely on mainstream cultural institutions' professional expertise and existing preservation infrastructure.

This poster will present the first phase of this project, discovering the methods and strategies used in successful collaboration projects between existing community archives and cultural institutions. In-depth semi-structured interviews with community members who have successfully created links between community heritages and a preservation and access infrastructure will be utilized to collect data. The interviews will explore recommendations of methods for creating connections between communities and heritage organizations and how those methods move archival memory to social action.

About the Authors:

Andrea Copeland is an Associate Professor in the Department of Library and Information Science in the School of Informatics and Computing at Indiana University in Indianapolis. For the past decade, she has researched public libraries and their relationship with communities. Her current research projects focus on connecting the cultural outputs of individuals and community groups to a sustainable preservation infrastructure. In particular, the potential for public libraries to develop the theoretical, technical and practical framework necessary to create such an infrastructure in support of preserving digital representations of community-based heritage. She is currently coediting a volume entitled, *Participatory Heritage*, which presents global perspectives on the ways in which individuals participate in community-based heritage.

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