

PARADIGMS & POSSIBILITIES OF INCARCERATION-RELATED RECORDS

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How can archivists resist replicating oppressive structures of power in the stewardship of incarceration-related records?

How can these records serve and engage their communities of origin?

Incarceration-related records: documents; letters; photographs; recordings; meeting minutes; and other material that may specify or allude to subjects'/creators' corrections & criminal justice backgrounds



CHALLENGES & CONSIDERATIONS

Official records legally have clearer guidelines/call for less discretion; how do we navigate materials that fall in the grey area?

Tensions: original intention; consent of creators; means of provenance, confidentiality; research value; ethical use; contemporary/recent records

Goals:

- Means of access that are **sustainable** for staff, **effective** for researchers, and **respectful** of subjects
- To include these narratives in the archival record while at the same time honoring agency and privacy in their preservation and accessibility

ACCESS & REDACTION OPTIONS



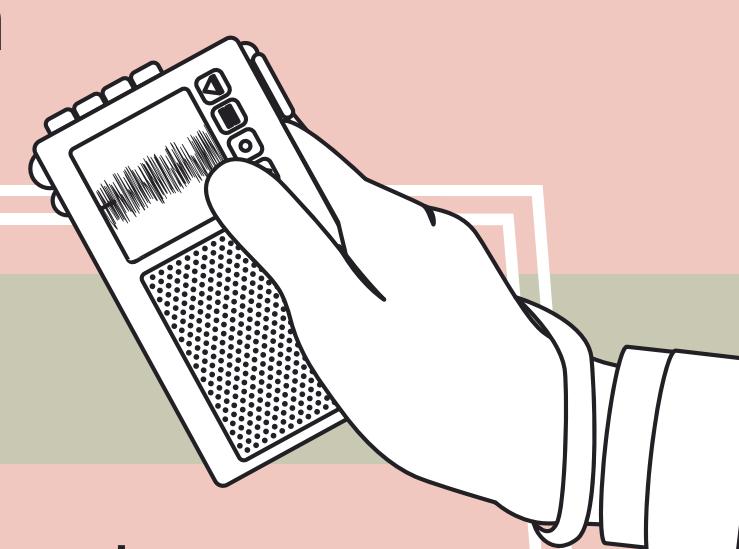
Policies for incarceration/criminality-related collections at other institutions:

- Researchers must present/submit research intentions
- Consent forms and identification required for access
- Redaction is conducted as individual documents are requested, sometimes at cost to the researcher; digitization is limited; on-site appointments required

While these policies are in place to protect identifying information, in their rigid requirements and institutional nature they may discourage and prevent access by some of the very communities we aim to reach.

Critiques of redaction: subjective; difficult, esp. with inconsistent records; hinders statistical/genealogical research

ORAL ADDITIONS



First-person retrospectives build upon physical materials to present a more complete historical record, function to locate subjectivities as valid and integral sources of knowledge, and serve to include impacted and represented community members in the archival process.

We are exploring ways to encourage participation through avenues of self-submission and options for anonymity in recordings and transcripts.

This project has depended on promotion and volunteerism by former clients and staff that are passionate about this collection.

REFERENCES/RECOMMENDED READING

Laura Farley and Eric Willey (2015) Wisconsin School for Girls Inmate Record Books: A Case Study of Redacted Digitization. *The American Archivist*. Fall/Winter 2015, Vol. 78, No. 2, pp. 452-469.

Diane Kaplan (1996) The Stanley Milgram Papers: A Case Study on Appraisal of and Access to Confidential Data Files. *The American Archivist*. Summer 1996, Vol. 59, No. 3, pp. 288-297.



THE CAROLE POPE & OUR NEW BEGINNINGS COLLECTION

Founded and directed by activist Carole Pope (1944-2013), Our New Beginnings was a non-profit residential transitional and alternative sentencing program for women navigating corrections and criminal justice in Portland, Oregon that operated from 1980 to 1992. During this time, the program served over 3,000 women and their children at a non-recidivism rate of 84%.

Recently donated to Portland State, this collection of personal papers and organizational records has inspired discussion and research of best practices in navigating and fostering creative and dynamic use of these kinds of records.

From a grassroots organization grown from experiences of inequity and sustained by the work of previously incarcerated/convicted women, we seek to ensure that communities represented in these records have opportunities to contribute and be reciprocally served by this collection.

CONCLUSIONS

Sections of the collection remain closed prior to being reviewed for best options for redaction, if possible. Sensitive photographs weeded upon accession.

Presents opportunities to engage with researchers and students about archival ethics and methods

We can continue to learn from invested community members as we work to process and accurately contextualize the collection and oral history project and enhance its accessibility.



LOOKING FORWARD

How can this collection serve incarcerated individuals?
Archival instruction & "Inside Out" teaching programs?

Students, service providers, and former clients/staff referring to resources and information in the collection in plans to develop a revisioning and reopening of the organization



Photos from the Carole Pope & ONB Collection



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