

Creative Collaboration for Collection Building: University of Tennessee's Special Collections and Center for the Study of War and Society

Introduction

To effectively build collections related to a community, engagement and integration in the community are crucial. Many institutions deal with stagnant, even dwindling, resources while trying to juggle more tasks. At the same time, passive collecting often results in unrepresentative holdings. How can we continue to successfully, and proactively, build collections that document various communities? While the concept of collection building through partnerships is not new, many institutions focus on building relationships directly with entities creating their own records in hopes of one day acquiring those records. This poster takes a close look at a creative path for collection building between a special collections department and a campus center with established community relationships.



Benefits

Collection Building

This collaboration increases the scope and diversity of our collections. We are able to consciously document a community of people with a shared experience by utilizing the expertise of each organization. So far our partnership has resulted in:

-  265 linear feet of material,
-  300 oral history interviews,
-  900 individual veterans documented,
-  And growing!

Collaborative Outreach

Our partnership enhances the profile of both organizations as we can pull together resources for exciting outreach projects. Through joint outreach initiatives, we enhance the visibility of each group to our established, represented communities as well as to new, potential users and donors. Successful outreach initiatives thus far have included an event, exhibit, and a grant-funded digital collection.

Methods for Success

Working together has been beneficial to both organizations, but it has not been easy. Two ways we have overcome hurdles in order to maximize our success include:

Formalizing our relationship on paper

Our original partnership was simply a verbal agreement. Over time, it became a necessity to formalize that agreement on paper in order to document the terms and details of each group's responsibilities as well as to inform future decisions.

Fine-tuning collection priorities, workflows

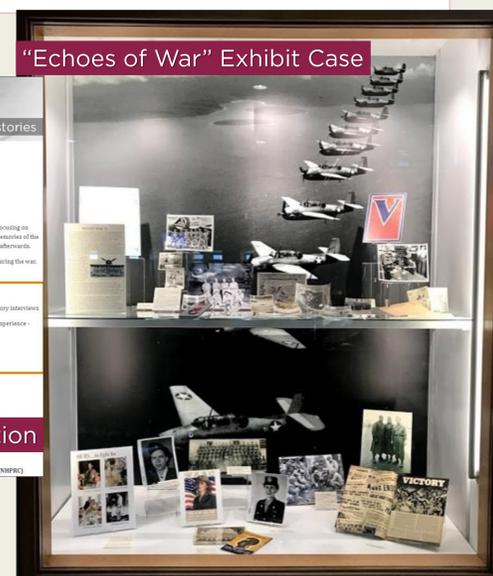
We have worked together to adjust collecting priorities and workflows in order to maximize each group's potential, while also aligning our work to our individual institutional missions.

Our Partnership

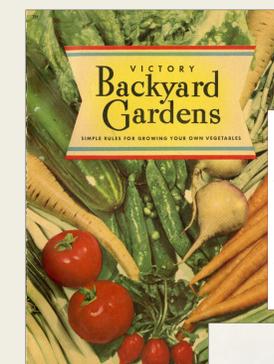
The University of Tennessee Libraries Special Collections department has partnered with a campus center outside of the library, The Center for the Study of War and Society (CSWS), for over 25 years to acquire material from veterans of modern wars. CSWS networks with veterans and solicits material, while Special Collections processes, houses, and makes the collections available for research. This relationship is a way to address our needs beyond the existing resources of individual organizations.



Oral Histories Digital Collection



"Echoes of War" Exhibit Case



Items from veteran-donated CSWS collections including a guide to growing a Victory Garden (left); a photograph of Torpedo Squadron Ten (below); and a flyer for the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (right).



Next Steps

- How can we continue to amplify our work?
- How can we improve on our collection strategies and workflows?
- Are there other organizations we can partner with in a similar way?