

Integrated Organization: Processing 500 feet of special collection materials in under 18 months

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Abstract: The Champaign County Historical Archives (CCHA) holds approximately 1,000 linear feet of special collections materials related to county history. In November 2017, over 650 linear feet remained unprocessed and inaccessible to the public. This session highlights how archives staff and graduate students established a workflow and physically organized, inventoried, and cataloged over 500 feet of materials in under 18 months.

Finding staff time to alleviate a backlog of special collections materials can seem daunting, but is not impossible if realistic goals and timelines are established early on. The planning phase for CCHA's project lasted six months and included attending an SAA reappraisal workshop, generating statistical reports, developing a project proposal, obtaining administrative support, and physically assessing collections.

To undertake a project of this magnitude, CCHA staff needed additional help. CCHA developed a practicum project in which a student from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's (UIUC) MLIS program inventoried and updated box logs for 550 linear feet of materials. Over the summer, librarians evaluated the new logs and reappraised collections to establish processing priorities. In fall 2018, CCHA and UIUC partnered to instate a new apprenticeship program. The apprentice used box logs as a guide to generate 175 new finding aids and to physically reorganize special collections boxes in the library's annex facility.

About the Authors:

Donica Martin is an Archives Librarian at the Champaign County Historical Archives of The Urbana Free Library in Urbana, Illinois. In the archives, Donica manages print collection development, maintains the Local History Online catalog, and supervises graduate student workers and volunteers. Additionally, she has taken on the challenge of reassessing and reorganizing the library's 4,000+ linear feet of special collection materials. She holds an MLS from the University of Kentucky and an MA in English Literature from Eastern Illinois University.

Angela Solis is a Graduate Student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). She is a second year library master's student focusing on archives. As the first Archives Apprentice at The Urbana Free Library, she worked on the reappraisal project (poster presentation) and provided reference services. Angela is also a Graduate Assistant in the Research and Information Services Department at UIUC working at the main information desk and teaching workshops on library resources and services. She holds a BA in History from the University of Dayton.