

Using CIRCA for Special Collections: a Scalable solution

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Abstract: Circa is a browser-based application for managing requests for materials in the NC State University Libraries' Special Collections Research Center (SCRC). Even though Circa was developed specifically for use by the SCRC, it was designed with sufficient flexibility to be useful to other libraries and archives with similar needs. The application is open source and the code is available on Github. Circa simplifies the SCRC internal workflows by providing a single system for creating requests; tracking movement of materials from storage locations to our Reading Room or other access points; controlling and recording access to materials by researchers; and providing extensive usage data to give insight into how and by whom our collections are used, which assists in planning and resource allocation. Circa integrates with ArchivesSpace, the de facto standard, open source archival collections management system. Container and location data stored in ArchivesSpace can be easily imported into Circa when items are requested and updated when the source data changes. In addition to requests for on-site access to materials, Circa also aids in managing workflows for duplication requests from remote researchers, and for reproductions for publication. Circa's back end is a Ruby on Rails application that utilizes Apache Solr and MySQL for data storage. The front end was built using the Angular.js framework. The purpose of our research forum presentation is not to focus on the technical components of Circa; rather, we aim to discuss its benefits for medium or smaller Special Collections in the spirit of collaboration.

About the Authors:

Eleanor Brown is currently the Interim Associate Director for Collections and Research Services at NC State University Libraries. Prior to this she was the Head of the Special Collections Research Center at the Libraries. Before coming to NC State she was Assistant Director for Programs and Services and Curator of Media and Digital Collections in the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University Library. Brown has also worked as an archivist at the National Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada). Her research interests include the use of primary source materials in the curriculum and intersection of physical and digital access to special collections and their presentation on the web as research tools.

Gwynn Thayer is the Acting Department Head at the Special Collections Research Center at NC State University Libraries. One of her responsibilities is to oversee the public services operations in Special Collections. Along with Eli Brown and other colleagues she worked with the Digital Library Initiatives Department at NC State University Libraries to determine the structural needs for CIRCA and helped

analyze various use cases. In her curatorial role Thayer works to build collections of key importance to the Libraries, which include animal rights/animal welfare as well as architecture and design collections, among numerous other collecting areas that intersect with areas of strength for NC State.