

From Reading Rooms to Virtual Hubs: Supporting Emerging Technology Research in the Archives

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Abstract: As universities embrace more collaborative models of digital scholarship, archives must adapt to changing research needs, especially when working with team-based digital projects that use augmented and virtual reality. This presentation explores the creation of a flexible virtual research environment at Miami University to support archival research for a year-long augmented reality project on student protests. The *Rowan Hall Takeover at 50* project was a collaboration between faculty from the Media, Journalism & Film and the Emerging Technology in Business + Design departments to create a place-based, augmented reality reenactment of an anti-war student protest held on April 15, 1970. Staff from the Walter Havighurst Special Collections & University Archives supported a full range of research activities, including archival research on student protests, virtual modeling of a historical site, and intellectual property rights.

An expansive shared project space was created in Google Drive to provide flexible access to archival materials. Used by three classes over two semesters, the shared drive served as a digital repository for over 990 documents and a collaborative research space that ensured continuity across courses. The adoption of a virtual hub model also allowed special collections staff to leverage relationships with other university units to digitize additional material. Ultimately, the virtual research hub supported student and faculty research by providing full access to archival materials and facilitating the easy remediation of digitized materials within virtual modeling software. This presentation will help archivists develop research strategies to support collaborative, archival-based digital projects that use emerging technology.

About the author:

Alia Levar Wegner is the Digital Collections Librarian at the Walter Havighurst Special Collections and University Archives at Miami University, Ohio. She is responsible for coordinating the digitization of special collections materials, developing digital collections, and consulting on digital humanities projects. She holds a BA in History from Clemson University, an MS in Information from Florida State University, and a MSc in Book History and Material Cultures from the University of Edinburgh. Her research interests include machine learning in digital collections, and inclusive metadata description.