PHOTO SYNTHESIS: COLLABORATION AND COMPROMISE ON A HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH DIGITIZATION PROJECT

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Nouveaux librarians

Soon to be Digital Projects Coordinator and Photo Archivist at UNCG
The photo collection

As Kathelene found it:

- Artificial collection
- Dates ranged from 1892-2008
- Includes prints, slides, negatives, and digital photos
- Unprocessed, no collection/folder numbers or series assigned
- Arranged alphabetically
- Many duplicates
- Buildings organized by current name
- Not a priority
The photo collection

As David found it:

- Random scans from multiple projects in multiple server locations
- No relationship to the physical collection
- No real organization
- No distinction between slides, prints, and negatives
- Inconsistent metadata
- CONTENTdm “experiment”
Main Building and Brick Dormitory

Title: Main Building and Brick Dormitory
Date: 1892
Circa?: yes
Subject-LCSH: University of North Carolina at Greensboro
Subject-Local: Foust (Julius I.) Building
Place: Greensboro (N.C.)
Description: Photograph of the Main Building circa 1892. The Brick Dormitory can be seen to the right. The Main building, designed by Epps & Hackett of Greensboro, North Carolina, was opened in 1892. Two flanking wings were added in 1895. From 1892 to 1908, the building was called Main Building and from 1908 to 1960 it was called Administration Building. In 1960, the building was named in honor of Julius Isaac Foust, president of College from 1906 to 1934. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980. Brick Dormitory, designed by Epps & Hackett of Greensboro, North Carolina, opened in 1892 and was one of the original buildings and primary dormitory. It was expanded in 1895 and included a kitchen, an infirmary room, and a dining hall. The dormitory was destroyed by fire on January 20, 1904, with all of the residents escaping unharmed. This photo is part of the Campus Views online exhibit.

Collection: UA104 Photographic Prints Collection
Series: 3 Buildings, Grounds, and Views
Folder: UA Main Building - Exterior (1892-1893)
Object ID: ua104.2.201.003
How the project began

- Inherited project
- Not considered an “official” digital project
- David’s first CONTENTdm assignment
Overall challenges and issues

- No specific goals (initially, at least...)
- No sustainable framework: “Project” orientation rather than “workflow” orientation
Overall challenges and issues

- Understanding each other’s terminology
- Communication and lack of physical proximity
Overall challenges and issues

- Inaccurate and incomplete metadata
- No consistent plan for item selection
- No planning for non-print formats
- No structure to establish context across formats
IT challenges

- Create a framework for ongoing digitization
- Match digital surrogates to physical collection (archival hierarchy, dark archive storage, etc.)
- Rooting out duplicates
- Assessing metadata/discovery needs
- Lack of familiarity with CONTENTdm platform
Archival challenges

- Unprocessed collection
- Unconfirmed/erroneous information written on
- Numerous duplicates
- Arbitrary item number assignments
Whose project was it, anyway?

- IT-driven
- No collaborative input or communication with archives
- “Our stuff, your platform”
So whose project did it become?

It became a true interdepartmental project.
And how did that happen?

Implementing a strategy for reclaiming the project:

- Designated as an official digital project
- Interdepartmental project team assembled
- Collaborative workflow and communication plan developed
- Created master metadata document and controlled vocabulary
- Began reprocessing print collection
Designated as an official digital project:

- Assessed and approved by representatives of IT, archives, and cataloging.
- Specific resources assigned to project.
Strategy: Part 2

Interdepartmental project team assembled:

- Archivist
- IT librarian
- Cataloger
Collaborative workflow and communication plan:

- Google Docs Spreadsheet
- Shared network drive
- Verbal communication between David and Kathelene
Master metadata document and controlled vocabulary:

- Detailed research on each campus building
- Controlled vocabulary for CONTENTdm based on current (or final) building name
Strategy: Part 5

Began reprocessing print collection:

- Created series:
  - Academic Units, Departments, and University Offices
  - Athletics and Sports
  - Buildings, Grounds, and Views
  - Campus Live
  - Concerts, Plays, and Productions
  - Events
  - Groups, Associations, and Clubs
  - Objects
  - Portraits and Biographical Images
Strategy: Part 5

Began reprocessing print collection:

- Prioritized processing of Buildings, Grounds, and Views series
- Assigned collection, folder, and photo numbers
What we learned

- Collaborate at the BEGINNING
- Understand and respect departmental (and colleague) priorities
- Avoid digitizing unprocessed collections
- Understand each other’s terminology
- Communicate at all stages
How did it change our lives?

- Metadata document as archival resource
- Facilitated research, reference, and instruction
- Established framework for large-scale digitization
- Enabled integration of future library (and community) projects
Future steps

- Complete reprocessing of print collection
- Plan for reprocessing of slide and negative collections within the same structure
- Incorporate existing and new born-digital materials
- Geolocation component
- Using framework to include new projects
  - Processing
  - Digitization
Thanks!

All photos taken from the University Archives Collections:
http://libcdm1.uncg.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/ui
Contact us

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