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Saving All the Freaks on the Life Raft: Blending Documentation Strategy with Community Engagement to Build a Local Music Archives

Caroline Daniels, Heather Fox, Sarah-Jane Poindexter,
and Elizabeth Reilly

ABSTRACT

Louisville, Kentucky, has a rich musical heritage, including an underground scene that influenced the sound of not only punk, indie, and hardcore, but also of popular music regionally, nationally, and internationally. In 2013, faced with the loss of several members of this scene over the course of twelve months, archivists in the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections launched a project to document this important slice of Louisville's musical culture. The Louisville Underground Music Archive (LUMA) project successfully applies documentation strategy, paired with a strong community engagement component, to address the gap in the historical record related to this culture.

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KEY WORDS

Local Music, Documentation Strategy, Community Outreach, Underground Music, Advisory Boards, Louisville, Kentucky, Local History Collections

Louisville, Kentucky, has a rich musical past that includes the first jug band, an orchestra renowned in the 1950s for commissioning and performing contemporary classical works, and the Top Hat, a premier jazz club that hosted the likes of Ella Fitzgerald, Cannonball Adderley, and Sarah Vaughn. The Louisville underground music scene represents another facet of this musical heritage that has influenced the sound of not only punk, indie, and hardcore, but also popular music regionally, nationally, and internationally. In 2013, faced with the loss of several members of this scene over the course of twelve months, archivists in the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections (ASC) realized that the history of this community was in danger of being lost. The Louisville Underground Music Archives (LUMA) project was born of the need to document this particular, and important, slice of Louisville's musical culture. As the LUMA project team, we seek to address the gap in the historical record related to this culture by collecting, organizing, preserving, and providing access to a wide variety of materials from a diverse community of bands and musicians, venue and store owners, recording studios and label managers, and fans to maintain the entire story from a broad range of perspectives.

Because the work involves such a variety of potential donors and materials, we identified documentation strategy as a useful framework for approaching this complex task, while also realizing that active community engagement would be a necessary ingredient in the application of this methodology. Community engagement in this context means reaching out to the community through twenty-first-century technology, as well as being integrated into the community in a more traditional sense as participants in the music scene. Documentation strategy has at times been criticized for being cumbersome and difficult to sustain. Our experience has been that, paired with active engagement with the community being documented, it is a highly effective approach for preserving history at risk for loss.

Louisville's Underground Music

Louisville's contemporary contributions to popular music originated during the late 1970s and lay squarely in what is commonly described as "underground." By all accounts, the first punk band in Louisville was No Fun. We contacted the band's guitar player, Tara Key, and asked her to describe the environment that cultivated the early Louisville underground. She emphasized the potency of youthful enthusiasm combined with a yearning for something new in the predigital era:

I think it's important to tune them into a world where the internet did not exist. [A]nd bands of our ilk did not tour—there was no mechanism for it. Where people on what would become the scene, either through their travels

or their love of rock and roll, but not quite satisfied with the norm and looking beyond it (all of us Bowie freaks, Nuggets fans, kids raised on Paul Revere and the Raiders, Monkees, one-hit wonders courtesy of two of the best radio stations in the country, WKLO and WAKY—and me, forever trying to write the song that would be played on drive time WHAS radio) . . . either heard and bought records in other places and brought them back like fresh kill to our friends, or pestered Karma Records to order what we read about in *Creem*. [S]o we did hear Blondie, P. Smith, Wire, Dictators, Ramones, Dead Boys, etc., but without the constant cross-pollination of seeds from all over the country, we sprouted some kinda petri dish mutation that was solely born out of this river valley, this river town, like the special honey made by bees in one special locale.¹

From this bold beginning sprouted bands like the Endtables, the Blinders, and the Babylon Dance Band, to name just a few. Key clearly argues that the isolation of Louisville's punk pioneers laid the groundwork for an emerging, fertile underground scene.



FIGURE 1. Tara Key plays with No Fun at The Old Galt House (Eclectic Party), Louisville, Kentucky, summer 1978. Unidentified photographer.

In 1980, a reporter from the *Village Voice* visited these early new wave punk pioneers, and they landed on the cover of the popular weekly newspaper. The author, Tom Carson, wrote, “I can only say that what I saw in Louisville meant more to me—in terms of pleasure, spontaneity, freedom and also talent—than anything I’ve seen in New York in a year.”²

As time progressed, people from different parts of Louisville and different socio-economic backgrounds coalesced around the scene to create an environment in which arty professors’ kids, suburban middle-class East-Enders, and working-class kids from the South End put together bands and hung out. While, like most indie/punk/hardcore scenes, Louisville’s has been and continues to be predominately Caucasian, heterosexual, and male, people of color, sexual minorities, and women were always prominent participants. The kids intermingled in an environment that accommodated, as Key said, “all the freaks on the life raft.”³

By the late 1980s, many of the first Louisville underground bands had come and gone, but by the early to mid-1990s, a “Louisville Sound” began to be identified by people outside of the city.⁴ Starting with the highly influential band Slint and their landmark 1991 record *Spiderland*, followed by releases from performers like Rodan, June of 44, and Will Oldham, Louisville’s reputation as an incubator for something special spread worldwide. For example, upon the twenty-fifth anniversary re-release of *Spiderland*, the *Guardian* newspaper declared it “the album that reinvented rock” and characterized Slint as “modern rock’s Velvet Underground: a band who created a ripple that kept spreading.”⁵

That being said, one musician who came up during the 1980s and still plays today argues that, for those who created it, the Louisville Sound was more of an ethos than a particular style of music. It echoes what Carson wrote in 1980 and could be characterized as “the easy expressiveness/creativity of Kentucky—enhanced by Louisville’s uniqueness as a city: east/west; south/Midwest, southern but progressive.”⁶ Another local musician once credited Louisville’s “cultural exceptionalism to ‘something in the water.’”⁷ Cotten Seiler contended that “[t]he city’s distinctive scene produced a unique aesthetic, which I will call the Louisville Sound that developed as a geographically and historically singular product of the subcultural impulse, a site-specific example of the indie ethic expressed musically.”⁸

Literature Review

The LUMA project builds on and weaves together work in two areas of archival thought: the professional discussion around documentation strategy, and concerns with community archives and the appropriate role of institutions in efforts to preserve community history. Other institutions and individuals

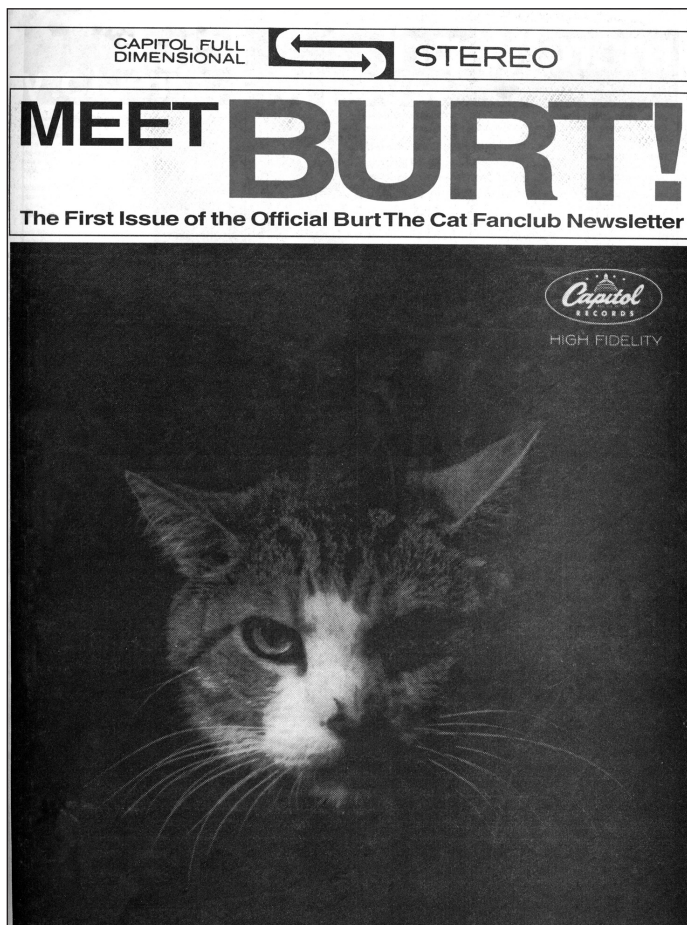


FIGURE 2. “The First Issue of the Official Burt the Cat Fanclub Newsletter,” 1995. This music-oriented ‘zine was published in Louisville from 1995 to 2002 by Paul Curry (editor) and Black Dog Publishing Co.

have sought to preserve and make available collections documenting popular culture in general, particular musical genres, or the music of specific geographical areas. The LUMA project owes a debt to these projects, even as it differs in some essential ways. Numerous individuals and groups have created online “archives” of local or regional music. Websites such as the Flint Underground Music Archive, Louisville Hardcore, and Dischord’s Fugazi Live Series provide a wealth of information about particular geographical areas, genres, and bands.⁹ The LUMA project, with its institutional setting, is able to offer more permanence than most Web-based efforts can provide. In addition, ASC’s other collections provide a broader context for LUMA materials.

Other academic institutions, including Bowling Green State University and the University of California, Santa Cruz, provide helpful examples of archiving

popular culture. Bowling Green State University was a pioneer in making a case for the preservation and presentation of “low” culture materials in an academic setting. While its holdings are much broader in genre and geographical orientation than the LUMA project, it advanced the argument that materials that are “intended to be used and discarded” in fact contain useful historical information.¹⁰ UC Santa Cruz’s work with the Grateful Dead Archives serves as a more immediate example for the LUMA project to build on, as it deals with a similar community that has grown up around music (albeit a single band). Nicholas Meriwether, in describing the value of the Grateful Dead Archives, noted the importance of documenting cultural dissent. Political dissent, he argued, is readily preserved in materials traditionally held by archives; cultural dissent is more likely to be absent.¹¹ While the Grateful Dead represent a community, it is a community without geographical boundaries, and the national cultural impact of the band and associated countercultural phenomena is well known. The LUMA project takes this idea one step further, arguing that *local* materials documenting cultural dissent, even if made to be discarded, are also worthy of preservation as part of the community’s historical record.

A number of projects collect popular music and related materials from a particular region or country. For example, John Vallier and Santie de Jongh described projects that preserve and disseminate recorded music from the Puget Sound region and South African punk, respectively.¹² The University of California, Los Angeles, works with the community to preserve Los Angeles gospel music, as well as Filipino music.¹³ Others, including Edward Hathaway and Jim Chang, argued for the importance of documenting local music and that collecting should go beyond sound recordings.¹⁴ Hathaway, for example, urged archives to collect ephemera, photographs, interviews, moving image materials, and organizational records, as well. The LUMA project follows a similar collecting policy for its own geographic setting.

At the heart of the LUMA project is the concept that Terry Abraham and Scott Cline identified as the genesis of documentation strategy: that passive collecting had resulted in holdings disproportionately representative of the elites.¹⁵ They related this idea to one expressed by Howard Zinn at the 1970 meeting of the Society of American Archivists where he “pleaded with archivists to ‘take the trouble’ to document ‘the lives, desires, needs of ordinary people.’”¹⁶

Similarly, Helen Samuels’s seminal 1986 article outlined an approach that sought to rectify the problem of underdocumentation of nonelites as well as to address the overwhelming abundance of twentieth-century records by consulting experts in a field to identify records of certain groups and institutions that would partner to preserve these records.¹⁷

Despite initial excitement about the possibilities it promised, documentation strategy has been criticized for a variety of reasons. Abraham and Cline,

for example, declared that the resources needed to implement documentation strategy fully consign it to being a “Holy Grail” and “an illusion,” practically speaking.¹⁸ Jennifer Marshall reviewed the impact of documentation strategy on archival practices in 1998 and discovered that it provided a “valuable conceptual framework” noting the efficacy with which the strategy engages nonarchivists.¹⁹ However, documentation strategy as prescribed by Samuels proved to be “not viable within the context of present archival reality.”²⁰ It should be re-emphasized that as proposed by Samuels, documentation strategy requires interinstitutional cooperation, a feature that the LUMA team opted not to implement. Ultimately, Marshall argued, the effectiveness of past or future documentation strategies “is ultimately of less significance than the professional dialogue that this approach has generated.”²¹

More recently, Doris Malkmus offered a positive, albeit nuanced, assessment of documentation strategy.²² She agreed with previous criticism of this approach that took issue with its limited time frame and intensive, unsustainable preliminary planning. Nonetheless, she argued that this method has proven effective when planned with an ongoing time frame and when it integrates the power of online access and collaboration. Malkmus analyzed five projects using the steps of documentation strategy as described by Samuels and came to several conclusions. She found that “ongoing documentation strategy projects offer many advantages, but require committed and competent host institutions whose mission aligns with that of the project.”²³ Furthermore, involving “community experts” contributes to a project’s success, and such involvement positions this technique as particularly effective in “documenting social movements.”²⁴

While Malkmus argued that, in the case of the LGBTRAN project, the Internet enhances access and collaboration, most of her discussion focuses on online access rather than on communication via social media and websites. She also identified documentation strategy as “an effective outreach and public relations tool,” without providing details on how this is achieved, or what the value of these activities is to the project itself.²⁵ Thus, the experience of the LUMA project team extends Malkmus’s understanding of how to enhance the efficacy of documentation strategy projects by demonstrating the value of community engagement, both online and “in the flesh.”

This project also builds on similar documentation strategy projects that incorporate newer technology and an emphasis on access to collections. For example, Lynne Thomas reported on her implementation of a “modified version of the ‘documentation strategy’ method” with the science fiction/fantasy community.²⁶ Thomas, a member of this “self-selected community,” leveraged social media to cultivate relationships with young authors who primarily create their work digitally. She used these tools to promote self-archiving, preserving, and donating to archives, noting “curatorial and collection visibility on social

media tools such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs can reinforce brief and fleeting connections and begin the process of donor development.”²⁷ The Downtown Collection at New York University’s Fales Library similarly used its website and other programming to “spread the influence of the collection and help create an audience, maintain contact with downtown artists, and attract new donors.”²⁸ However, LUMA’s use of Facebook and email, along with its institutionally based Web page, has been more extensive than has been reported in the literature relating to documentation strategy. The use of these technologies has facilitated our engagement and relationship building with potential donors and researchers.

The LUMA project also draws significantly on the notion and question of community. While the concepts of community and community archives most often arise in the context of ethnic and racial minorities, the LGBT community, and similar groups that have suffered as a result of their identities, it is salient within this project as well.²⁹ As Andrew Flinn noted, groups traditionally underrepresented in the archives, or whose stories have not been part of the official narrative, may be reluctant to give their materials to “mainstream” archives.³⁰ This distrust of external institutions sometimes lies behind the numerous community-driven efforts to preserve and disseminate musical history, and Sarah Baker and Alison Huber placed “DIY” (“do-it-yourself”) music archives within the scope of Flinn’s discussions of community.³¹ Ken Garner described an Internet-based community of fans of British broadcaster John Peel who have pieced together a shared archives of his recordings. While the content arguably belongs to the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), which produced his broadcasts, the community did not trust that the BBC would be able to preserve it over the long haul. And, in fact, the BBC does not have a complete archives of his work—hence the community’s need to reconstruct full shows from personal recordings.³² Similarly, the ARChive of Contemporary Music, which collects and preserves global popular music from 1950 to the present, was established after its founder was unable to convince any of the numerous archives in New York City to take his collection of 50,000 records.³³ Flinn argued for a “post-custodial” solution—at least for the time-being—where a “formal” repository could work with a community archives to support its work.³⁴

Members of the independent music community often have strong DIY principles and so share a similar hesitation to embrace the notion of giving up their materials to an archives in an academic institution, which they may perceive as being outside their community. Certainly, other repositories have faced the question. For example, Jim Chang noted a need to build relationships with donors of local music collections in Hong Kong to help them overcome a reluctance to donate to the Hong Kong Central Library: musical knowledge is shared with protégés, not with strangers.³⁵ Birgitta Johnson similarly identified distrust on the part of members of Los Angeles’s gospel community toward the

KINGHORSE
ERCHINT
CINDERBLOCK

JULY
24

ALL
AGES

doors open at
7PM
\$5

THE ENTERPRISE
 formerly known as C. D. Graffiti's, Kixx, The Maze, Laser Chase, Photon, etc.
4121 SHELBYVILLE ROAD, St. Matthews
 1992 Abrupt Graphics

FIGURE 3. This show flier advertises Kinghorse, Erchint, and Cinderblock at The Enterprise, Louisville, Kentucky, July 24, 1992. Artwork by Abrupt Graphics.

University of California, Los Angeles. In this case, distrust grew out of a perception that UCLA researchers conducted “drive-by” research, taking cultural information from the community without giving anything back. Johnson credited her “dual affiliation” in both the gospel community and the academic community with building trust.³⁶ Meriwether similarly found that he needed to belong to both the community that grew up around the Grateful Dead and to academia. Interestingly, he found that he gained credibility among academics through his

status as a fan of the Dead, and vice versa.³⁷ Thomas also found that her identity as a fan of science fiction/fantasy helped “develop trust and rapport with potential donors.”³⁸ The LUMA project is situated in an institution with strong ties to its locality and staffed by individuals with personal links to the underground music scene, but questions of community, belonging, and boundaries arose repeatedly in the course of the project’s first year.

Overview of the LUMA Project

The LUMA team initiated the project in spring 2013 with a straightforward mission: to document and preserve the history and culture of the Louisville underground music scene and make it freely available to the public. This goal fit nicely with those of the University of Louisville Archives and Special Collections (ASC). ASC collects, preserves, and makes available rare books, photographs, manuscript collections, oral histories, and other materials, with a focus on documenting the greater Louisville area. This, in turn, reflects the University of Louisville’s commitment to its community; community engagement is a key facet of the university’s identity. The director’s involvement, as well as its community orientation, may have prevented pushback from our institution; the dean of University Libraries fully backed the endeavor from its inception.

As the LUMA team met to talk about how to approach this undertaking, it became clear that documentation strategy would be appropriate, and we adopted many features of this methodology. For instance, we gathered an advisory board to guide us, provide advice, and use their positions within the community to advocate for the project. We invited local musicians, record store and record label owners, and other integral members of the Louisville music scene to join the board. We also sought academics and those outside academia with experience and interest in the study of music as a cultural and historical phenomenon. While the roles of musicians and those in the local “industry” are somewhat obvious, we were also concerned with collecting materials that would be useful to historians and ethnomusicologists and were aware that these groups’ needs might overlap without being completely congruent. These different constituencies would also allow us to reach into different disciplines for the sake of sharing information about our holdings. The first advisory board meeting was held on July 22, 2013, and meetings have been held every six months since then.

The advisory board has provided concrete assistance to the project in several ways. The project team brought a proposed name for the effort to the first board meeting: “Louisville Independent Music Preservation Project,” or LIMPP. This acronym did not appeal to some members of the board, and the name

“Louisville Underground Music Archive,” or “LUMA project,” was suggested and approved unanimously.

The board has also helped us identify the parameters of what the project aims to collect. Initially, the chronological scope spanned the 1980s and 1990s. The board argued in favor of expanding our scope to Louisville underground music from the late 1970s to the present, to encompass the punk scene as well as current bands and events. The early punk bands planted the seeds of the later, more widely known Louisville Sound, and many of the musicians who were active in the 1980s and 1990s are still playing today, even as their earlier work influences a new generation. The board also helped shape the types of materials we sought. For example, they confirmed that business records, whether of bands, record labels, record stores, or venues, would be helpful to academic historians in the future, even if they are of low value to community members who might be more interested in materials relating to events and performances. The board has also helped to finalize the project logo and assists with making potential donor contacts. Some board members have already donated their own materials.

DONORS AND OUTREACH

Within a few months after the first advisory board meeting, the LUMA project had received a small number of donations, the most substantial being the personal papers of the late musician Jon Cook (1972–2013), which totals 1.75 linear feet. We had begun to contact other individuals, but our outreach efforts up to that point were minimal.

In the fall of 2013, Louisville artist and curator Aron Conaway contacted the LUMA team to discuss his personal effort to create a museum of local music materials he had collected from other participants over the years. After discussion, Conaway determined that ASC was the best place for his collection because of the LUMA project’s institutional resources, including facilities and staff expertise. As he relinquished his collection, Conaway posed for one last picture with his donation to honor the release of his distinct project. Later that evening, he posted the photo to Facebook and announced his contribution to the LUMA project. His post quickly attracted many positive comments. People were excited to hear about the project and wanted to know more. While the team had been planning to create Facebook and institutional Web presences for the project, we had not yet finalized the work. This event made it clear that to capitalize on this opportunity to connect with the community, we had to complete these tasks immediately. People were eager to learn more, and they needed a place to find information.



FIGURE 4. This show flier advertises Crain, Royal Trux, and Stepdown at Tewligans, Louisville, Kentucky, October 25, ca. 1994. Designed by an unidentified artist.

The next morning we created a Facebook page and watched excitedly as the “likes” for the page grew by the hour. At the end of the day, we had nearly 400 likes and, within a week, over 700. All of this positive support confirmed that the community saw a need for the LUMA project and that people were excited about it. Today, the LUMA Facebook page is still the primary vehicle for LUMA outreach, with over 1,200 likes. We work to keep it dynamic by regularly adding links, posting calls for donations, announcing events, and adding images from the collections. Judging from comments and Facebook messages, as well as the continually growing number of likes, we are confident that word is spreading through this forum.

We have also promoted LUMA through other Web outlets such as the University Libraries blog and Twitter accounts, as well as traditional media like newspapers and radio. Perhaps more important, we have received great support from other local organizations with related interests in Louisville music. Web publications *Louisville MusiCulture*, *Louisville Hardcore*, and *Insider Louisville* have all endorsed the LUMA project, thereby sharing their established audiences with it.³⁹

However, we actively sought other means to publicize the project and solicit donations. We presented the idea of a community donation day to the advisory board. They recommended that we hold it off campus at a location more accessible to the public. The “Flea Off Market”—referred to simply as “the

Flea”—was an obvious choice. Held one weekend a month, the Flea is a popular event frequented by a wide range of people. In addition to used clothing and books, the Flea features live music, beverages and food trucks, and art. To provide advance notice of our presence at the Flea, we sent out a press release to local media outlets and announced the “LUMA Donation Days” on our Facebook page. For the two days of the March 2014 Flea, we set up a booth to receive donations and provide information to interested community members. We brought a supply of buttons, stickers, and postcards as takeaways to help keep the project on people’s minds, as well as to spread the word. We also brought a supply of deeds of gift and archival boxes and folders to aid in the temporary storage of the materials donated during our hours of operation. We received a variety of materials from nine donors, which constitutes nearly a third of the collections received to date, and we spoke about the project to many others. We also met with a few people who, knowing that we would be at the event, visited us particularly to learn more about the project and ask specific questions concerning making donations to LUMA. LUMA’s presence at the Flea gave potential donors the opportunity to meet us face-to-face and evaluate for themselves whether we could be entrusted with their materials and to do so on neutral, communal ground, rather than in our institutional space. The impact of easy, free parking—as opposed to locating parking on a busy college campus—cannot be underestimated.

Taking ourselves and the LUMA project out of the library and into the community allowed us to interact directly with the public, promote the project beyond social and traditional media, and make ourselves more accessible to receive donations; we will be doing this again.

We have plans for building on this community involvement. Once we have received and processed a significant number of donations, we will invite the community to provide information that we may not have. For example, most show fliers do not include a year, so we will ask others to provide that information. They can also help us identify people or bands in photographs and recordings.

We also hope to extend this community involvement into financial support, as mixed media collections like this require expensive processing. Despite our acceptance within the community, we have learned from discussions about fund-raising with potential donors and our advisory board that the public perceives that the university already has a great deal of money. A recent, widely publicized capital campaign that brought in over a billion dollars in donations supports this image. The fact that the library’s portion of this largesse was primarily gifts in kind is not always a persuasive argument to those outside the university. When we do attempt to raise funds, we will need to illustrate clearly the costs involved in maintaining this archives, primarily converting analog



FIGURE 5. This poster advertises performances by Fugazi, June of 44, and Elliott at Highland Hall, Louisville, Kentucky, November 27, 1998. Poster artwork by Jason Noble.

media to digital. We think a benefit concert of Louisville bands would be a fitting fund-raiser.

Additionally, we plan for an oral history component to the project, to preserve memories and observations of past events of key members of the scene. Interviews like these can provide information that may not be reflected in the physical items of the collection, or at least fill gaps in the historical record from various perspectives.

The wide variety of aurally and visually exciting materials we have already collected for the project promises to make great exhibitions. We will use our capabilities and gallery spaces to mount regular exhibitions of materials from the collections, as well as develop programming such as presentations and panel discussions featuring members of the local music community.

Evaluating the LUMA project

THE VALUE OF AN ADVISORY BOARD

This combination of documentation strategy with community engagement has been successful. The advisory board has played a significant role in the achievements of the project, although its members' contributions have been different than the team originally anticipated. For example, they have been invaluable in providing feedback about "public-facing" content, from the acronym to handouts. Similarly, at the most recent meeting, the board members confirmed the value of LUMA business cards that can be shared with potential donors and urged the team to create fliers to post in various venues' green rooms, where bands wait before playing. This may result in donations from band members from outside Louisville, in addition to reminding local musicians of the project's presence.

The advisory board has also been instrumental in helping the LUMA team reach out to the academic community, as well as to the music community. One board member asked the team to speak about the project at an academic conference focused on the study of popular music; other members recruited representatives of the LUMA team to be a presence at events such as a local record convention called VinylFest; and another connected LUMA with an instructor in a state program for gifted and talented high school students.

However, the advisory board has, at times, gone beyond these idea-vetting and connecting roles. They are often better able to represent the project in the community than team members can. While most of the LUMA team members also participate in the music scene (including one member who has played in a local band since 1992), advisory board members may be seen as more objective or more legitimate members of that community. For example, in February 2014, the project was "flamed" on a local music discussion board.⁴⁰ A member of the public argued that the university could not be trusted to deal appropriately with the community's materials. He claimed that the university had never supported the scene and implied that the project team was neither knowledgeable enough of the local scene nor technologically savvy enough to deal with the variety of obsolete formats that would be received from donors. In addition, he essentially described the team as posers—inauthentic in a community in which authenticity is paramount.⁴¹ This commenter argued that the community's history would be better served in the private collection of a knowledgeable individual who had been collecting materials for over twenty years. The public—including members of the advisory board—rose to the project's defense, asserting that the university was a good place for this archives to reside and that the team itself was knowledgeable. In the words of one post, "They're real, trained, experienced

archivists who are good people to boot. They're not just some dude." This discussion mirrored the experiences reported by Thomas, Johnson, and Meriwether that acceptance by the community plays a significant role in efforts to acquire materials from groups not used to seeing their history in a traditional archival setting.⁴² They may not trust that archives with other collecting areas set in a larger institution will appreciate or understand the full value of their history. While "underground musicians" in the United States have never been persecuted in any real sense, they often share a distrust of dominant powers, even if those powers take the shape of a major recording label or a university archives.

This defense of the LUMA project and staff was welcomed but not anticipated; other contributions were expected but not forthcoming. Chief among these was the hope that the advisory board would be actively engaged in advising and decision making in the six-month intervals between meetings and that they would provide the primary contacts with potential donors. Like many other people, the board seems somewhat reluctant to actually make an "ask." They are comfortable sharing information, whether verbally or by "sharing" on Facebook. In addition, they are often slow to respond to email requests for their opinions, even when the request concerns scheduling the next board meeting. This is not unexpected, given that LUMA is not their "day jobs"—they have been asked to provide support and advice, but they can only do so within the context of their own complex lives. While the LUMA team has looked at the advisory boards of other projects such as the ARChive of Contemporary Music with envy, we also suspect that this is a common feature of advisory boards and that David Bowie is probably as occupied with his own life as LUMA's advisors are.⁴³

MODES OF OUTREACH AND DONOR RELATIONS

Documentation strategy is an activist approach: it goes beyond a passive collecting policy. The LUMA team finds several particular outreach activities productive, and chief among these is Facebook. The referential nature of Facebook, which tells users what pages their friends like, allows LUMA's supporters to suggest and endorse LUMA's Facebook page without taking any positive steps to do so. While 400 likes in one day may not be "going viral," in the context of a relatively small city, this is arguably rapid growth. It also provides an easily accessible way for the public, including potential donors, to learn more about the project and then to contact members of the team. We received one of our largest collections after communication via Facebook; the donor lived on the West Coast at the time. This mirrors Thomas's experience with science fiction/fantasy authors. She found that she was able to build on brief, in-person encounters through social media; one Facebook message would reach many authors, while

individual conversations and emails were less efficient.⁴⁴ This also differs from the direct-mail approach taken by other documentation strategy projects.⁴⁵

While less efficient than the mass appeal of Facebook, the team views the Flea Off Market experiment to be an important success, and one to replicate. At the Flea, the team literally stepped off campus and into the community, and just as literally reached out to collect materials. We were able to speak with people who might not have reached the critical point of contacting us via email or Facebook, or who had simply not gotten the message yet. That nearly a third of the collection received thus far was donated during the two days at the Flea speaks to the value of the effort. Thomas and Johnson noted the value of attending community events related to each of their projects for different reasons. The LUMA team's experience indicates that providing an off-site location for donations may enhance the success of acquisition projects.

This active collecting effort resulted in donations that did not all fall into the LUMA project itself, a fact that underscores the difficulty of defining *community*. The team worked carefully to describe the scene we are trying to document: the time period was defined and redefined, and we thought carefully about how to describe the genre(s) of music involved. For example, punk and hardcore are related but different. While all of the music contemplated in the LUMA project falls under the rock-and-roll umbrella, that term is simply too broad. Nonetheless, self-described folk and hip hop musicians, fans of progressive rock, and a gospel/hip hop/funk producer approached the team. Archives and Special Collections welcomed all of these materials, to the extent that they related to the Louisville area, into the broader archives, rather than the LUMA project per se. This was somewhat confusing to the donors, at least at the outset, but did not seem to disappoint them greatly. And ASC was very glad to have the collections. In fact, discussions with a local hip hop artist have led to interest in a separate project to document that community, which is doubly underserved in archives—as a musical genre and as a part of the African American community.⁴⁶ While Malkmus identified a clear, concrete topical focus as a feature of successful documentation strategy projects, the LUMA project's success signals that the boundaries can be fuzzy—as long as they are still clear enough to guide archivists as they approach donors, or respond to offers of materials.⁴⁷

The activist collecting approach requires reconsidering our traditional, more organic time-line when contacting potential donors. The LUMA team is more accustomed to contacting individuals after the loss of a family member or as their business or organization shuts its doors. Many donors make the first move, contacting ASC as they downsize their homes or as they realize they no longer have space (or appropriate space) for their noncurrent, permanent records. It is less common, although not completely unheard of, for ASC staff to contact potential donors in the prime of life; in those cases, we often seek only

a promise of a donation in the future. In the case of the LUMA project, the team hoped to receive materials in relatively short order. However, like other donors, potential LUMA donors (including advisory board members), want time to go through their materials to put them in order, to make sure there is nothing out of scope or too personal, and to take a trip down memory lane before letting the materials pass out of their possession. Even board members are unaware of the enduring value of the materials they have collected over the course of their lifetimes in the scene; many had not interacted with archives before and were not aware that we would be interested in preserving and providing access to this history. This experience echoes those of Keough and Schindler, and Thomas, who acknowledged that “popular cultural materials are particularly vulnerable to loss, as many creators assume that their work is not ‘important’ enough (or too commercial) to be archived in the first place.”⁴⁸

Numerous donors have been concerned about the handling, use, and reproduction of their collection materials, as well as how researchers will access them. We mitigated these concerns extensively explaining archival stewardship, reference room procedures, and reproduction policies. Furthermore, many of the potential donors are still active in the scene and reference their personal collections in the course of creating new materials. We have come to appreciate that we must operate on donors’ time-lines. We are also considering a temporary noncustodial approach, that is, working with hesitant donors to ensure the preservation of their collections, with the promise that they will donate these materials to ASC upon their deaths, if not sooner.⁴⁹

Additionally, people ready to donate their collections have not necessarily been willing to relinquish intellectual control over the items. That occasionally donors opt not to transfer copyright of their creative materials or to restrict reproductions is not surprising, but some want to weigh-in on the collection arrangement and description, particularly out of concern that researchers will misinterpret collection items. In this case, we have invited the collection donors to supply information and to be involved during the collection processing.

The types of materials that ASC has received as part of the LUMA project are limited to more “public” materials. That is, the bulk of the collections received to date consist of fliers, posters, recordings, and ‘zines/fanzines. LUMA has received a limited amount of correspondence (and the bulk of this has come from the estate of a central, but deceased, community member), and surprisingly few photographs. Business records, whether from bands, record labels, or stores and performance venues, appear to be nearly nonexistent. In some cases, the businesses closed and any records were discarded. In other cases, the donors simply are not ready—emotionally, or from a business perspective—to release them. The relative lack of photographs in the collections is somewhat mystifying, given how many photographs the team knows of from personal experience

or word of mouth. In some cases, the photographers with extensive collections have yet to be persuaded to weed out the relevant images from the larger mass. In other cases, the owners are reluctant to give up originals, a reluctance that often extends to giving ASC a broad license to use and re-use the images and to allow others to do the same.

TEAMWORK

While members of the LUMA team obviously all come from the same institution, we encountered some of the same challenges on which multi-institution documentation strategy projects have run aground.⁵⁰ On the one hand, as a team, we are able to tap a variety of strengths, just as a group of institutions may include one that is more experienced in conducting oral histories and another that is better situated to harvest and preserve Web pages. The LUMA project benefits from being able to call on graphic design skills, deep knowledge of the scene, and other skills from different members of the team.

At the same time, all four members of the team have other responsibilities that constitute the majority of our job duties. In addition, because there is no formally identified team leader, confusion can arise over who is responsible for a given task. While the archives' director is a member of the team, most decisions are typically made by consensus. When the local media first began covering the project, the team was inundated with email and Facebook messages. It was not always clear who had responded—if anyone—to a given message. The team decided to divide the days of the week, so that each member has a day (or two) when he or she is responsible for responding to email and Facebook inquiries. We set up an Excel spreadsheet to help track inquiries and responses, although this proved too cumbersome to continue.

The culture of decision-by-consensus dictates that the team must meet often. While some decisions can be made by email, many others require discussion that is more easily conducted in person. The team meets biweekly, usually for an hour or less. Since we are all from the same library, this is not as resource intensive as it could be. It is not, however, an approach that is well suited for those who have a low tolerance for “process.”

Conclusion

Much of the LUMA team's experience can be relevant to others attempting to document the history of subcultures and communities, particularly subcultures built around the arts. Documentation strategy involves working with underdocumented groups, and, unsurprisingly, members of such groups can be wary of the kind of established institutions that historically excluded

them. While the positive reputation of our institution as a member of the larger Louisville community is helpful, it is critical to engage in an authentic way with band members, record store owners, and the like. The involvement of three of the team members in the local music scene enabled us to recruit advisory board members who are leaders in this cultural scene. Not every institution can count on such personal representation in the groups and movements it seeks to document. This underscores the importance of an involved and representative advisory board that not only provides “authority” but ensures donors that materials will be handled with respect, appreciation, and expertise. Understandably, donors want to feel that the archivists who are receiving their artistic products comprehend their significance and cultural context, and a well-appointed advisory board helps to provide such assurance.

Outreach into the community, both physical and virtual, is also essential. In the twenty-first century, the use of social media may seem obvious. Nonetheless, we were struck by how powerful it is and how immediately we felt the impact of Facebook posts. Our experience with Facebook at the repository level had been uninspiring; our Photographic Archives Facebook page has only 188 followers. Perhaps the difference is that we are not trying to convince people that they need this information; they are already seeking it. Or perhaps this community is already attuned to seeking information on Facebook in particular. Other groups might find other social media more significant, depending on their modes of communication. Some groups, for example, might use Twitter more heavily than others.

The power of virtual outreach does not overshadow the value of physically going out into the community. For academic archives in particular, this is a significant point, since parking is notoriously difficult at many colleges and universities. It is one thing to schedule a pickup of donated materials, though, and it is another to find a way to visit myriad donors of small collections. While inviting people into the archives can be a wonderful teaching tool—and often people do want to see where their collection will “live”—we find it essential to meet the community where they are, or at least where they want to be on a Saturday afternoon. Particularly for projects that involve smaller donations from a large number of people and/or organizations, we recommend conducting “donation days” out in the community, perhaps as part of another community-organized event. Even museums, historical societies, and public libraries physically situated in the heart of town may find this useful. The community may perceive barriers invisible to archivists or be unaware of the institution’s mission.

Next steps for the LUMA project relate to further collection development and processing. It is important to our ongoing relationship with the community that we process the materials and make them available relatively quickly. This may even convince our few naysayers that we can, in fact, be trusted to make

this content available to the community, as well as to preserve it. This will also enable us to see more clearly the gaps in the records we have received thus far. We plan to conduct select oral histories to fill in some of these gaps. For example, we are quickly learning that business records, particularly those relating to local labels, stores, and performing venues, have not survived. In addition, we have received little documentation of the scene from the 1970s and early 1980s. We will seek the personal narratives and memories of club owners, promoters, musicians, record store owners, and fans to learn more about this era of Louisville's underground music history. Additionally, we hope to identify digital preservation funding to reformat collection materials on outdated formats such as U-matic tape, reel-to-reel, and high-8 tape.

The LUMA project employs documentation strategy to preserve a distinctive music culture that has been widely influential and yet remains decidedly local. Our efforts to document a music scene largely overlooked by mainstream media and academia—despite its influence on musicians—have been greatly enhanced by our emphasis on active community engagement. From the start, not only have we sought broad participation through our advisory board, outreach events, and social media, but we have also played to the strengths of our individual team members to establish a diversity of channels between the archives and the public. Through this blended approach, we have been able to draw on the community to enhance a local music documentation strategy project and thus save as many of the “freaks on the life raft” as possible.

NOTES

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- ² Tom Carson, “Stop ‘n Rock,” *The Village Voice*, December 3–9, 1980, 43–49.
- ³ Key to Fox.
- ⁴ Cotton Seiler, “‘Have You Ever Been to the Pleasure Inn?': The Transformation of Indie Rock in Louisville, Kentucky,” *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 13, no. 2 (2001): 189–205. This is the first published use of the term “the Louisville Sound,” coined by Seiler.
- ⁵ Dave Simpson, “Spiderland by Slint: The Album that Reinvented Rock,” *The Guardian*, May 1, 2014, <http://www.theguardian.com/music/2014/may/01/spiderland-slint-album-reinvented-rock>.
- ⁶ Brett Ralph, text message to Heather Fox, March 18, 2014.
- ⁷ Seiler, “Pleasure Inn?,” 190.
- ⁸ Seiler, “Pleasure Inn?,” 190.
- ⁹ Flint Underground Music Archive, <http://www.takenoprisoners.info>; Louisville Hardcore Dot Com, <http://louisvillehardcore.com>; Fugazi Live Series, http://www.dischord.com/fugazi_live_series.
- ¹⁰ Bonna J. Boettcher and William L. Schurk, “From Games to Grunge: Popular Culture Research Collections at Bowling Green State University,” *Notes* 54, no. 4 (1998): 581.
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- ¹⁵ Terry Abraham and Scott Cline, "Literature Survey: Collection Policy or Documentation Strategy: Theory and Practice," *The American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 45.
- ¹⁶ Abraham and Cline, "Literature Survey," 46.
- ¹⁷ Helen Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?," *The American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 109–24.
- ¹⁸ Abraham and Cline, "Literature Survey," 52. They do, however, argue that "the several steps taken in that direction will be of benefit: an analysis of institutional holdings, a carefully written collection development plan, an appraisal policy, knowledge of—if not full cooperation with—other repositories in the region."
- ¹⁹ Jennifer Marshall, "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-first Century?: Rethinking Institutional Priorities and Professional Limitations," *Archival Issues* 23, no. 1 (1998): 59–74.
- ²⁰ Marshall, "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-first Century?," 68.
- ²¹ Marshall, "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-first Century?," 70.
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- ²⁴ Malkmus, "Documentation Strategy," 408.
- ²⁵ Malkmus, "Documentation Strategy," 385.
- ²⁶ Lynn M. Thomas, "The Embedded Curator: Reexamining the Documentation Strategy of Archival Acquisitions in a Web 2.0 Environment," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 13, no. 1 (2012): 38.
- ²⁷ Thomas, "Embedded Curator," 42.
- ²⁸ René Boatman, "A New Archival Model?," *Journal of Archival Organization* 1, no. 2 (2002): 45.
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- ³⁵ Chang, "Saving Local Music," 495–511.
- ³⁶ Johnson, "Gospel Archiving," 221–42.
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- ⁴⁰ For the full discussion, see “Louisville Music Archive?,” *Louisvillehardcore Dot Com*, “Parking Lot Forum,” <http://forums.louisvillehardcore.com/viewtopic.php?f=1&t=17311>.
- ⁴¹ Ryan Hibbett, “What Is Indie Rock?,” *Popular Music and Society* 28, no. 1 (2005): 55–77. Hibbett discusses the notion of authenticity and community.
- ⁴² Thomas, “Embedded Curator,” 38–48; Johnson, “Gospel Archiving,” 221–42; Meriwether, “Who Owns Community?”
- ⁴³ The ARChive of Contemporary Music, “Board of Advisors,” <http://arcmusic.org/about/who-we-are/board-of-advisors/>. The ARChive of Contemporary Music’s advisory board comprises notable figures from the entertainment industry, such as David Bowie, Martin Scorsese, Paul Simon, and Keith Richards.
- ⁴⁴ Thomas, “Embedded Curator,” 38–48.
- ⁴⁵ Brian Keough and Amy C. Schindler, “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: Documenting Environmental Activism in New York State,” *Archival Issues* 28, no. 2 (2003–2004): 121–35. This project took on the onus of collection solicitation by way of letters of introduction and direct asks. It was, however, before widespread use of social media.
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- ⁴⁷ Malkmus, “Documentation Strategy,” 394.
- ⁴⁸ Thomas, “Embedded Curator,” 40; Keough and Schindler, “Thinking Globally, Acting Locally,” 121–35.
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