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The University of Southern Mississippi

SPEAKING FOR OTHERS.

A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF CIVIL RIGHTS ARCHIVES

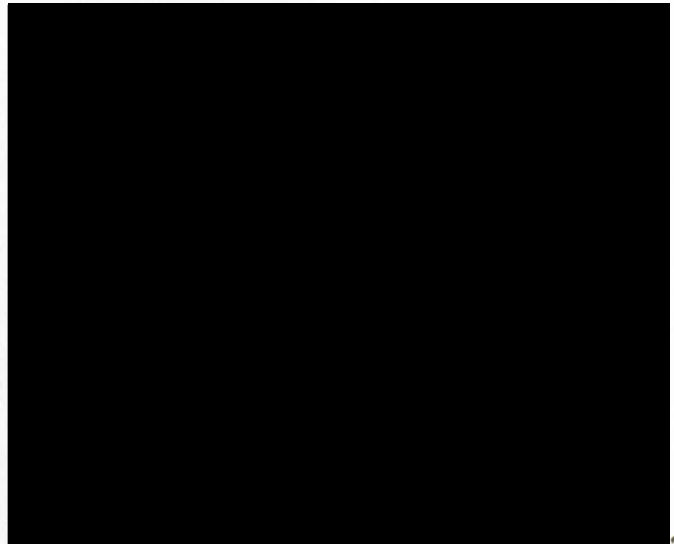
by

Erin Nancy Wimmer

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate School  
of The University of Southern Mississippi  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
for the Degree of Master of Arts

Approved



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ABSTRACT  
SPEAKING FOR OTHERS  
A POLITICAL ANALYSIS OF CIVIL RIGHTS ARCHIVES

by Erin Nancy Wimmer

March 2012

Archival collections are one of the most important sources of original materials that help create the story of our past. Given this, it is critical to understand what makes up a collection and how the items, both present and not, impact our societal conscious regarding an event or time period. This study examines the Civil Rights archives at two institutions, The University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College, focusing specifically on the materials each has related to Freedom Summer. Both of these institutions claim direct ties to Freedom Summer and their collections were analyzed in terms of what kinds of materials are present, who donated them and what biases exist based on the previous factors. The findings of this study conclusively show biases present in both collections. As the majority of both archives represent the experiences of white northerners who volunteered during Freedom Summer, the stories of African Americans and native southerners is essentially rejected. These biases confirm the notion that those who have social and political capital are also the ones who get to write history. Discovering and acknowledging the disparities that exist in these collections will allow researchers to seek out additional perspectives when studying this period, as well as encourage curators to broaden the scope of their collections.

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Special thanks to the curators of the archival collections at both The University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College for the excellent work they do. The tireless efforts and reference services provided by these archivists and their staff members not only work to preserve our history, but also helped make this project possible.

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## CHAPTER I

### DISCOVERING ARCHIVES

#### Introduction

Notions of archives typically conjure up one of two images. either that of a dimly lit room with huge piles of dusty papers stacked to the ceiling, filing cabinets that haven't been opened for centuries, cobwebs covering every corner and an old skeletal librarian in a button-down sweater and bifocals peering out over the rim of her glasses, or one of some hidden document that a super-spy discovers to crack an important case. While both of these would be awesome, they are rather incorrect. Archives are actually far from static, unchanging vaults of information from the days of our oldest ancestors. They tell stories and create dynamic snapshots of what life, politics, and the environment were like at particular times and work to enhance and complete our collective cultural memory. Though the focus and goals of every collection may differ, archivists work diligently to acquire a range of materials appropriate for their annals, bringing in information from news and other media, scholars, organizations, eye-witnesses and participants in events.

Unfortunately, what we find in these places is not necessarily the most accurate or complete record available of any particular time or event. The documents available in any particular archive are carefully selected by curators to support a certain story line that the archivist is looking to create to make their collection just a little different and (theoretically) better than any other in that particular field

There are several versions (from a variety of people including Alex Haley and Winston Churchill) of the old adage *to the victor go the spoils*. So often, this notion worked out well for the victor in every way and extremely poorly for the defeated – not only at the time that any particular event took place, but long into the future. We know that history is written by those who win, by the strong, those with political, financial or social power. Rarely are accounts of Vietnamese soldiers or civilians affected by the Vietnam war told on an international scale; those who protested the women's movement are not proclaimed to be heroes, and no one asks to hear what they went through when women were working for the right to vote, with the exception of the significant political figures who stood in the way of granting this right; and it is not widely told, from their own perspective, the trials those forced into Japanese internment camps in the United States during World War II were subjected to. Yet, these accounts would likely prove just as valuable, if not more so, than those of the dominant forces of history – those who won whichever battle was being fought either on the field, in the government or in society. Unfortunately, this detail is often overlooked in archives, which, despite their best efforts, will inevitably, almost inherently, perpetuate the cycle of winner claim all.

This notion does get complicated when one considers the accounts we have from people like Martin Luther King, Jr., Rosa Parks, and Malcolm X who were certainly not powerful social players in the traditional sense, but won the battles they were fighting for civil rights. How can it be explained that those who lost (i.e., those mostly Southern Whites, who did not support the movement) do

not have their stories as widely known as those who struggled and died for the cause of equality? It can be argued that even though these stories of the *minority* are widely accepted and distributed in our social memory, there are far fewer of their voices than we would receive from other types of narratives. We do not hear their stories alone, but also those of the individuals and groups opposed to civil rights and, though we hold in contempt those who were resistant to the movement, we still know exactly who they were, what they believed and what they did to support their own interests. It is not possible to say the same from the converse side. Other than those few leaders that are highlighted in the history books, we do not know what most individuals really experienced during the Civil Rights Movement.

Archives can help bridge this gap between the stories of the perspective of those who have political, financial or social power and those of the average citizen who experienced or participated in significant and important events in our history. By seeking out newspapers, fliers and pamphlets, recording oral histories, and even researching police files, these institutions can paint a bigger picture of what was happening at any particular time to create not only a more accurate, but also a more interesting understanding. This is important not only for our cultural memory, but will also shape how history is perceived and possibly even alter actions that individuals or groups take in the future. According to the National Archives of Yugoslavia, "archives are one of the products of the human need not to forget the past" (2008, para. 2). This should mean the most

representative past possible, not simply the parts told by a select few who held the most significant power and influence.

### Methodology

This work addresses questions of the political implications in collection development by assessing the Civil Rights archives at the University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College to determine the types of materials and voices being represented therein and, consequently, observing who and what has been left out of the story being told. By similarly examining archives with this focus located in different regions of the country, questions of potential bias, selective histories and, perhaps the necessity of community archiving are brought into focus. These two archives were chosen among the many Civil Rights collections because of their focuses on specific events within the Movement, similarities that each possess in terms of providing access to information and because of their geographic distance from one another. The evaluations and comparisons being conducted allow for suggestions to be made concerning what traditional archives may be able to do to include more voices in their collections or even extend their holdings to community projects, allowing researchers to have a broader base of source materials at their disposal.

To evaluate the political impacts of biased archival collection, the analyses of these two archival collections is set up within a theoretical framework, based on the works of Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, John Searle, and Noam Chomsky. Though the topics these theorists explore are not based specifically in political science, each has an investment in understanding how power, truth and

meaning affect knowledge. As our societal consciousness of any historical period is based on our general notions of truth and meaning, knowing who has the social and political power to define these topics is quite important. In addition, this theoretical framework allows for examination of our current understanding of certain past political events and helps trace whether this has influenced the political culture today.

### Review of Literature

People generally have an understanding of archives, what they are and what they are meant to do. The National Archives, a place in which some of our country's oldest and most important documents are housed, many churches maintain records about the organization's history, birth, death, and wedding certificates, tax, and other important church documentation dated from the founding of the institution, universities archive old yearbooks, papers from past presidents, commencement records, financial, and employment information and many other artifacts deemed significant to the establishment.

Although from an outside perspective it may seem that libraries and archives serve essentially the same purpose, that they are in fact one in the same, the differences between these institutions are significant and warrant some distinction. Edwards provides at least three important differentiations in his article, *Collection Development and Maintenance across Libraries, Archives, and Museums. A Novel Collaborative Approach*. First, "the use patterns for libraries tend to center on content to a greater degree than the book- or text-as-artifact focus often observed in other collecting organizations," (2004, p. 26) such as

archives. In other words, while libraries collect books based on their content or subject, the educational value they could add to the collection, or even their societal popularity, archives will often acquire a book based on its rarity or uniqueness. Archives typically collect items based on their subject matter, but this is meant to support a much narrower collection than traditional libraries, so their selection criteria must be more discerning. Edwards continues, "librarians deal primarily with providing access to information, while archivists deal with information access and retention of evidence" (2004, p 27), which, despite cursory assumptions, are actually significantly different. While both types of institutions focus on access of information to users, archives must work to preserve their materials as well as search out and maintain items that are significant and relevant to a particular subject area or event. Certainly libraries also have materials on various historical moments, however they can add to and remove from their collections much more easily than archives because their focus tends mainly to be on current materials rather than historical documents. The final distinction, and that which is most pertinent to this work, concerns collection development. Again, Edwards states "the archives community has more quickly recognized the significance of meanings conveyed via collection decisions" (2004, p 27). This suggests that archives understand more clearly than libraries the impact of their collection development choices and what it means to have certain materials and, perhaps more importantly, not have other materials. As libraries focus more on having broad collections with a wide variety of information, the message that their acquisitions choices sends may not be as

clear or distinct as that of more specifically directed archival collections. While each of these examples adds a little bit to the explanation of what an archive is really for, one may question the need or importance of having an archive at any level beyond that of the National Archive. Certainly, this particular institution is invaluable on both a social and political scale because it houses the very documents that delineate the principles on which our country was founded. However, at the local or even personal level, it may be a bit more unclear as to the importance of accumulating documents that may or may not mean anything to anyone in the future – that may not ever be looked at or known to exist.

Clearly, the materials donated to a collection – and therefore the people who donate them – help define not only the existence but also direction and focus of a collection. Even those who are traditionally excluded from being a part of a particular subject can inform our historical and cultural knowledge about it by donating relevant materials to libraries and archives. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, women in New Brunswick were disallowed from becoming active members of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick. Though they may have been experts in this field or have acted as docents in museums, they were prevented from taking part in any decision making involving the society or influence any of its policies (McTavish, 2008)

Women quickly found that the best way to impart their knowledge and participate more fully in the academic sphere was by making donations to its collections and museum exhibits. In her article *Strategic Donations. Women and Museums in New Brunswick, 1862-1930*, Lianne McTavish cites a study

conducted by Marcel Mauss which claims that “in several non-Western societies, gift giving is a complex ritual that helps constitute social relationships rather than merely signify them” (2008, p 101) This indicates that donating information or materials goes further than simply suggesting a relationship between the donor and the recipient, and instead creates a firm indication of how things should be seen and understood In the example of archives, donors help define history by bringing the researcher and materials together and broadening the scope of available information on any particular subject. Women were particularly taken with the idea of donating materials to the collections of the Natural History Society of New Brunswick because they saw this as an opportunity to make their mark on history and convey a sense of their own importance and value to those who would not let them participate fully in the society This was a way to exert their own power and make sure they contributed to a fuller and more accurate understanding of history (McTavish, 2008)

Archives serve, first and foremost, as a sort of societal memory that can provide perspective into our past and let us accurately imagine what life was like 500, 100 or even just 10 years ago. This notion is discussed in a more modern and specific way in Dahlerus’ and Davenport’s article *Tracking Down the Empirical Legacy of the Black Panther Party (or Notes on the Perils of Pursuing the Panthers)* In this piece, the two academics are working to create a database of as many Black Panther documents as possible from the party’s newspapers, reports, fliers, FBI and police files. While it may be assumed that these kinds of materials would be easy to come by, given that the Black Panthers were such a



significant part of Black political history and served as an alternative means of promoting Black power during the Civil Rights Movement, Dahlerus and Davenport found both private citizens as well as government agencies not only reluctant, but often completely unwilling to allow them access to any documents they possessed (Dahlerus & Davenport, 1999)

The FBI, local police in Oakland, courts of San Francisco and other law enforcement agencies put endless restrictions on the types of materials that may be viewed by the public, the amount of time documents are allowed to be out and how many documents may be released for examination at any one time. Even if files were considered to be a matter of public record, the hoops that the researchers were forced to jump through to access them made it all but impossible to so much as look at any written material relating to the Black Panthers, let alone make a copy of it for their database. "The police and court agencies effectively exercise power through their control over access to information," note the authors, "thus reducing the various public records acts to little more than the window dressing of democracy," (Dahlerus & Davenport, 1999, p 263) This clearly suggests that, with regard to information of this nature, freedom of information and the underpinnings of democracy came in second to the assumed necessity of keeping these documents undisclosed. Furthermore, those law enforcement officers and institutions that, at first blush seemed supportive of this venture, quickly made the process of accessing materials more difficult by claiming that records of individuals could only be located by birth date, name or other information that was usually not known to

the general public (or, sometimes, even other members of the Black Panthers) (Dahlerus & Davenport, 1999)

These researchers had similar problems with individual donors, but for different reasons. While some former members of the Black Panther Party may have been willing to tell their stories or surrender materials for scanning, others were either reluctant or completely unwilling to discuss their affiliation with the party or the movement more generally. Since one of the core principles of science, including social science, is that studies must be replicable, Dahlerus and Davenport feared that others may not have the same opportunities that they did. "In the case of our investigative effort on the BPP," they claim with regard to individuals who were uncomfortable discussing their time with the party or who were not amenable to working with "white folks", "it is difficult to imagine the same types of access enjoyed by us being provided to other scholars. more likely, demanding such access for others will result in us being precluded from obtaining the information we seek in the first place" (1999, p. 269). With these kinds of limitations being placed on the scholars with regards to potential donors in the first place, the likelihood of collecting a diverse range of materials on the Black Panther Party could only become increasingly slim (Dahlerus & Davenport, 1999)

Finally, and of significance to this work, many law enforcement officials and potential donors questioned why these two individuals, a black man and white woman, would not only be interested in collecting information on the Black Panthers and creating a database that people could use to find out more about

the group, but also why they would be working *together* on such a project. This raised suspicions for many who became increasingly reluctant to work with the scholars and distrusted their motives. These kinds of biases certainly stem from pre-civil rights times and suggest one of two things. 1) Because we have limited perceptions of the movement open to us, we continue to feed into the same misconceptions of individuals that we did 60 years ago, or 2) We as a society have learned from the available information about Black political history, but are either unwilling or unable to change perceptions in our daily lives and interactions. In either case, archives can work to unravel strange notions of race relations through history in an effort to improve them in the present and future

Here is suggested an incredibly significant and widely theorized topic in the literature: that of access. Several authors express great concern regarding the availability of materials (a problem Dahlerus and Davenport clearly faced on multiple occasions) and how this affects the perception of the institution, the understanding of the researcher, and ultimately our greater historical record Carmichael, Jr discusses the creation of libraries in the South from the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, which were largely opposed to being associated with the American Library Association, and therefore limited not only who may access the materials within their institutions, but also what they may have available to them from other libraries. This divide between Southern libraries and the national association was based, largely, on race issues and the desire of the South to remain professionally independent – not having to adhere to any standards set in other parts of the country, particularly those standards related to access.

Carmichael notes "the politics of southern librarianship seemed to mirror the struggles of the national government to come to terms with race," (2005, p 328) meaning acceptance of African American librarians in professional library organizations in the South, as well as access of information to African American patrons, may be unheard of (Carmichael, 2005)

McCartan comes at the issue of access from a slightly different, but equally important, perspective. As the world becomes more reliant on technology and the internet, print materials grow more scarce and give way to electronic documents. While this shift significantly affects the print journal industry – causing many journals and publishers to offer online products or be passed over for another periodical that does – it also allows for greater access of material to a larger audience. "The internet is not simply a distribution channel, or a new way to communicate," claims McCartan, "it is also an information system, a tool for manufacturing goods and services and a market place" (2010, p 238). Perhaps one of the most exciting consequences of this is that archivists are jumping on the electronic access bandwagon and working to digitize collections. Many curators realize that this is the best, and possibly most necessary, way for archives to remain relevant in the age of fully searchable documents that can be accessed from anywhere at any time, and are increasingly making their materials available in just such a manner. According to McCartan, "we have witnessed a huge increase in dissemination, the opening up of archival material and the efficiency gains of searching and linking software,"

(2010, p 240), a trend that is growing critically important to many students and serious researchers alike (McCartan, 2010)

Perhaps one of the most important elements of access and opening up archival materials is helping researchers understand what is in the archive and how to find it. While it may be true that most individuals who use source materials found in archival settings will be scholarly researchers, the pieces they produce have the potential to be used much more widely by students, members of particular academic communities and society more generally. Therefore, the access a scholar has to materials helps to shape our cultural knowledge of particular topics and events. If, as Woodward claims, "local records are the foundation on which social history is constructed," (Woodward, 2008, p 81) it is critical that those records can be found and utilized as easily and accurately as possible.

Following the notion that social history is composed through those documents housed in archives, it is necessary to understand such materials in context. Given a set of information about a particular time, event or individual, researchers may not understand the significance of what they are looking at. Woodward states "provenance, the guiding principle in archival theory for the organization of archival materials, states that items in a collection have meaning only within the context of other items within that collection," (2008, p 91) and, therefore, if materials are organized improperly or without the adequate support of other records, they simply do not have the same effect. This is a critical point – without the broadest access to information possible and with a limited number

of voices or accounts on any particular subject, social science researchers will only be getting part of the picture. After all, without the backdrop of the Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks would have just been some lady who sat on the wrong part of the bus (Woodward, 2008)

Many librarians in collection development attempt to focus their work on what materials they believe researchers will be interested in and find most useful as they study a particular subject. While this may seem a great idea, acquisitions based on what the researcher might theoretically need rather than what they will actually use can prove a huge waste of time and money for librarians and frustrating and unfulfilling for researchers. Thies created a handbook of sorts to help guide scholars to which source materials are likely to be most relevant and helpful as they use archival materials. While the focus of this article is on researchers more than librarians, it is imperative for any librarian to know what their patron base finds most appropriate for their scholarly needs on a broad scale.

Interestingly, researchers looking to use source material to avoid the bias that other writers may place on the facts of an event essentially waste their time, claims Thies. As Foucault and others will claim (and as will be expanded upon in Chapter II), facts can be interpreted in several ways for different people. Thies claims that "in our search for facts we must always remember that their meaning is never objectively obvious – facts never speak for themselves" (2002, p. 353) If this statement is accurate, it is difficult to have a completely objective accounting of history. The facts of a time period or event could be interpreted

one way by someone who was there and another by a scholar 20 years later. Therefore, a bias of our understanding of past events is created essentially from the start. For Thies, facts are used to speak for us – to support our notions or refute someone else's story. Researchers select those facts (that is, those documents or source materials) that will work best within their theoretical framework and ignore those that are inconvenient or contrary to the point being asserted. This Orwellian notion can have serious consequences for our perceptions of historical events and individuals (Thies, 2002).

Significant to this work, Thies goes on to discuss that there seems to be no exacting logic determining what materials are preserved for research or historical purposes and which are forgotten and left aside. He suggests that a researcher "may be using sources that have been preserved by some person or organization for some purpose, perhaps as propaganda or as a self-serving account of events. You might be using sources that survived through time quite by accident, while other equally important sources may have perished" (2002, p. 356). This is critically important to remember when thinking about the acquisitions of any archive and what "story" it tells. Just because certain documents are present in an archive does not at all assure that they are the most important, most insightful or even the most accurate tellings of the thing they discuss, and researchers and archivists alike would be wise to remember this as they are performing their respective jobs (Thies, 2002).

In her article, *Theorizing Shiny Things: Archival Labors*, Kathy E. Ferguson (2008) speaks to the concerns Thies articulates and offers some ideas

as to why certain materials are chosen to be included in archives while others are left out. Ferguson is interested in addressing the uncertainties that scholars have when using archives, caused by the reasons Thies outlined. While some scholars are content to use archives as accurate sources of information, others take note of the biases that almost necessarily exist in these collections.

Ferguson explains.

One reason for contemporary archive panic is the anti-foundational turn in theory, which problematizes the production of memory and the systems of discursivity that identify some materials as "in" and others as "out." Yet another is the emergence of critical postcolonial scholarship identifying empire's archive as an instrument for regulating colonial populations and enacting disciplinary power (para. 4)

Typically, archival content has been based on traditional means of collection and identifying only the most "important" materials and sources. The recognition, however, that marginalized groups also contribute significantly to the telling of history not only challenges the methods of archival collection, but also the stories being told. Furthermore, the notion that postcolonial scholarship has identified that colonial powers have been able to use their influence to "enact disciplinary power" indicates that these forces have also changed archival contents. If empirical powers are able to manipulate how history is told by regulating how archives are managed, then it is difficult to know the impact and influence colonized groups had. This can easily be extrapolated to support the idea that any individual or group with social or political power can regulate who gets to talk



about any particular event, thereby ensuring that their story is the only one that is told (or at least the only one considered to be accurate)

Making decisions regarding whether and where to give historically significant materials may be difficult for the donor who is likely protective of his/her items and wants to ensure that they go to the most appropriate collection where their access terms and conditions will be met and where they feel their materials will be handled in the way they see most fit. Furthermore, more than one archivist may be interested in bringing those materials to their collection and trying to subtly encourage the donor that the archive, institution and location he/she represents is the best. How, where and under what conditions donor materials are placed has a significant effect on our understanding of history

Although archives are such an important part of our cultural and societal memory, the literature has not been fully developed to show the political impact they have on how we view history based on the *voices* present in the collection. In addition to the biases curators show when deciding which materials to include in their collections, the options that they are given to choose from also create a partiality of what any particular archive says. Interestingly, the literature does show that, in an effort to create more complete stories about various events, small and sometimes unexpected communities are contributing exponentially to the existence of archives. While communities may not be contributing to institutional archives, but perhaps community archives instead, it is important to archivists to be aware of these groups. Archivists that can identify where their collections are lacking and attempt to connect with individuals involved in those

areas may encourage either contributions to or cooperation between community and institutional archives. Not only would these measures influence how universities approach collection development, such partnerships could prove beneficial to both archives (Washington, 1996)

For every significant movement, historical event, individual or organization widely known on a national or international scale, there are tens that were not given the same attention and therefore not deemed as important. Unfortunately, these stories are often overlooked or not heard at all, despite the fact that they would likely contribute elements to the broader picture of the story being told. While it may not seem important to have the story of every person who participated in a political rally, protest, or sit-in, knowing more than just the authority's version helps present a more accurate view of why the matter was so important to begin with and contributes to our knowledge of the full effects of the unfolding of events. This is certainly significant when considering accounts of the Civil Rights movement. While history does tell the difficult tales of people like Emmett Till, Rosa Parks, young children killed in church fire bombings and the Little Rock Nine, it often leaves out the stories of those living the movement on a daily basis. Through community archiving, the stories of these individuals and groups can be not only told, but highlighted in ways that they couldn't be in more traditional institutional settings. Washington believes that by not having these stories available to the public, "what is at stake is not just the nation's understanding of the civil rights movement, but also – and most important – its attitudes toward the current predicament of black Americans" (1996, p 459)

This sentiment is further discussed in Suzanne M Stauffer's (2007) study of the Ogden Carnegie Free Library, located in Ogden, Utah. Although the original collection for this institution was provided by the Carnegie Library, members of the community continued to donate significant amounts of materials to reflect their personal interests and add to the general education and betterment of society. According to Stauffer, "when the library opened much of the collection consisted of donations from women's organizations, churches and individuals, not materials acquired by the board or the librarian," (2007, p. 389) indicating the significance the community had in developing this repository. Despite the fact that material donations began to taper after the first year, members of the community continued to donate money that allowed the librarian to purchase items based on the library's collection development policy. Though the influence of the donor becomes slightly more peripheral with monetary versus physical item donations, the fact that community members continued to donate shows the importance they placed in the institution and the clear impact they had on the collection. (Stauffer, 2007)

What is most significant about the community having an investment in archiving is it changes not only our understanding of history and cultural attitudes to certain individuals or groups, as Washington suggests, but also the change it necessitates on archiving practices in general. As with Washington, Flinn agrees that "in reality, the mainstream or formal archive sector does not contain and represent the voices of the non-elites, the grassroots, the marginalised. Or at least if it does, the archive rarely allows them to speak with their voice, through

their own records," (2007, p 152) This only emphasizes the importance of the archivist connecting with the community and searching for collection development opportunities in non-traditional places. Locating and acquiring materials from individuals involved at the grassroots level of an event offers an invaluable perspective from the "non-elites" and allows those who are typically marginalized to have a voice (Flinn, 2007)

#### Purpose of This Work

As has been suggested, if archivists carefully select which documents will be included in a collection and which are not fitting for the narrative they are trying to tell, the result is that the representation presented will be skewed. This, in turn, will affect how researchers understand the documented events and assess them in their own work. In her article *A Firm Foundation. Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites*, Linda Barnickel delineates why this is problematic when she states that "archival materials are crucial underpinnings to the public portrayal of history" (2002, p 10). It is critical to understand what materials are present in any archival collection, as well as those that have been left out in order to assess the history being told in an archive.

This project reveals implications both for library science as well as political science in determining our understanding of history and culture. The study focuses on Civil Rights collections which highlight a period that was not only politically significant to the country, but particularly important to the politics of the South. The politics of archival collection, in terms of what is collected, who donates what kinds of materials and even who and what is left out, shape our

understanding of who was involved in the movement, the events that actually took place, and even how local, state and national legislation may have been created based on the outcomes of this era. This, in turn, affects how we read the modern social and political climate and also who and what is valued in the telling of history

Furthermore, students and researchers in political science who are interested in studying the Civil Rights Movement will use these kinds of collections to gain a greater understanding of this era. It is critical to know the strengths, weaknesses and biases present in any repository, not only to resolve these issues, but also to help those using them recognize areas they may not get a full account of from the collection

Since the field of Library Science is concerned with not only gathering information, but also ensuring free access of it to users for research or personal uses, the topic of this thesis is of particular importance. The development and maintenance of archives is key to how they will be used and who will be able to use them. Collection development policies should be frequently reviewed and, when necessary, revised to promote the integrity of the collection in terms of its content and purpose. Furthermore, these practices will expand holdings to include new and different formats and cover subject areas that may add to the understanding of the focus of the archive. Through the assessment and theoretical evaluation of archives and collection development practices, this project will determine if different histories are being told in various places, which voices are present in the collections and the effect that has on what the collection

says, and how a researcher's understanding of the civil rights movement may be formulated or altered by these biases.

## CHAPTER II

### THE POLITICS OF ARCHIVING

As Chapter I recognizes, this work provides an analytic framework to understand the politics of archiving. Most people understand politics in a narrow sense, such as government entities, how policies are formed, and who runs our country. Furthermore, society generally relegates archiving to libraries or to saving online documents for use or viewing at a later time. This work asks the question of whether these two seemingly disparate concepts can intersect, and, if so, how. Do politics have a significant influence on archival collection and our understanding of history and can we fully comprehend that impact? Both political and library theorists strongly suggest the importance of taking into consideration audience, potential donors, and the implications that a body of work can have on our understanding of the topic being discussed, and how such discourse can affect our politics as a society.

In this work, the meaning and implications of the politics of archiving will be discussed in greater depth. Drawing on the works of several theorists, each concerned with how knowledge, truth and meaning interact and inform one another, a context will be presented within which some of the difficulties of archival collection can be processed. While the literature does not broadly cover the topic of archival theory, theoretical perspectives in academic fields may appropriately be applied to archival collection development.

## Definition of Terms

Before establishing a solid theoretical background from which to draw upon, it will be useful to define some key terms. Although many of the following concepts may be interpreted in various ways, they will be used here with the following specific meanings:

- *Politics*: While politics is so frequently thought of merely as the practices of government at the level of a city, state, nation or union of nations, more philosophical and theoretical interpretations of this idea are better suited to this work. Here, it is more useful to conceptualize politics as a combination of principles and consequences, all linked to and influenced by social power structures. As such, politics can generally be understood to refer to the implications of actions taken (or not taken) on the development of a particular thing, in this case an archive, and the effect power had on said development.
- *Discourse*: Here, discourse will refer to the term as discussed by the French theorist Michel Foucault. For Foucault, discourse is simply the collection of information an individual or society has. This information, or discourse, forms the perception of knowledge or truth. However, as will be discussed later, knowledge and truth are rather more complicated matters for Foucault (Rabinow, 2010).
- *Archive*: As established in Chapter I, it is likely obvious to most people what an archive is. For the purpose of this work, an archive will be considered as a collection of materials that have been written,



produced, or gathered from any time period, and which has a specific focus on a particular historical event, topic, or individual. Furthermore, a clear policy regarding the standards for acquisition and mission or goals of the archive must be well established and consistently referred to, as made clear by the materials found in the collection. Without a collection development policy on which to base acquisitions decisions, the archive becomes more an informal collection of materials than a formal repository.

Theorists in virtually every field must grapple with the ideas of truth, meaning and power and discuss how, within their background and according to their training, each of these ideas works individually and in concert with the others. Scholars of political science often study theorists both within and outside their field, and formulate various theories to help understand and bring meaning to sociopolitical issues. This work will discuss several such theorists, who deliberate issues of inequality, power, and truth in terms of their political importance, in order to establish a useful context within which the politics of archival collection can be assessed. Through the use of Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, Michel Foucault's notions about truth and power, John Searle's discussion of the construction of social reality, and Chomsky's analysis of the relationship between audience and meaning, a clearer concept of what exactly the terms truth, power, and meaning denote can be established.

## Jacques Derrida

French philosopher Jacques Derrida was interested, among other topics, in examining the power structures involved within writing. Though certainly not the first to expose power inequities inevitably present within hierarchies, Derrida is largely considered the founder of deconstruction. The process of deconstruction seeks to conceptually dismantle systems or orders that have been socially constructed, in order to question how they were put together in the first place, how power and privilege operate within that system and who wins and loses therefrom. Once this is understood, Derrida is interested in restructuring the system he just dismantled, but doing so in a way that eliminates the seemingly inherent unequal power structure within the system. Furthermore, deconstruction can shed light on truth within the system. In his work *Of Grammatology* (1974), Derrida says

the "rationality" which governs a writing thus enlarged and radicalized, no longer issues from a logos. Further, it inaugurates the destruction, not the demolition but the de-sedimentation, the de-construction, of all the significations that have their source in that of the logos. Particularly the signification of truth. (p. 10)

If logos is a principle of order and knowledge, Derrida argues that when the rationality from which writing is centered within a logos is changed, it is necessarily removed from the logos altogether. This removal from the logos begins the deconstruction (examination of the power structure in the logos) of the

meaning of anything within the system. This is particularly significant for truth (Bradley, 2008)

The system to which Derrida is referring is obviously writing. Certainly there are more systems and orders than just this. However, writing is a fairly universal system and completely applicable to this work. For Derrida, speech is always superior to writing in terms of its authenticity of meaning. He claims "the written signifier is always technical and representative. It has no constitutive meaning" (1974, p. 11). If the written word is always representative and has no inherent meaning, at least not in the same way that speech does, then it is difficult to claim that any writing, or part of a logos, could be considered true. And if writings are not true in a universal sense, the implications of truth and meaning for archives, which are essentially based in written systems, are stark. It is all but impossible for archives to transmit any truth through the written documentation available therein because that information is completely representative and has no established or inherent meaning.

Derrida further places speech over writing, and expresses skepticism of writing's authenticity, in his work *Archive Fever*. In this work, however, his mistrust for meaning and truth, as established in written systems, becomes more specifically directed toward archives. While there are several problems with the archive, Derrida is most significantly concerned with its inherent inaccuracy. He claims that "because the archive, if this word or this figure can be stabilized so as to take on a signification, will never be either memory or anamnesia as spontaneous, alive and internal experience" (1996, p. 11). Even if the concept of

the archive was stable and meaningful, it would not, in practice, function in the same way as memory would. Archives can only exist within themselves – they are completely dependent on context and stagnation. As Derrida further states, “the archive takes place at the place of originary and structural breakdown of the said memory. *There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No archive without outside*” (1996, p. 11). If the archive relies on exteriority, or context, for meaning, then the archive must necessarily become less relevant and truthful as the subject area it highlights grows farther away in time and space. For instance, materials in a Civil War archive may include the journals of soldiers, propaganda sent out by various groups or speeches given by prominent members of society urging support of one side or the other. Without a societal understanding of the Civil War – between the Northern and Southern states, battle over slavery, etc. - these materials hold far less meaning. As society is currently so far removed from this historical event, the materials seem to hold even less truth or meaning because the context in which they were created is both distant from and irrelevant to how the world functions today.

Finally, Derrida argues that archives are both unclear and problematic. In *Archive Fever* (1996), he continues

Nothing is less reliable, nothing less clear today than the word “archive”...nothing more troubled and more troubling. The trouble with what is troubling here is undoubtedly what troubles and muddles our vision...the trouble of half-private, half-public conjurations, always at the

unstable limit between public and private, between the family, the society, and the State, between the family and an intimacy even more private than the family, between oneself and oneself (p. 90)

Derrida portrays an incredibly unstable system in the archive. In addition to the inability to glean any sense of truth or meaning from the archive, because it relies on the external (or on context), the nature of the archive is so unstable, so fraught with trouble, that it must be looked upon with suspicion. The fine balance between public and private, between the individual and the state, the potential for secrets and the possibility that our vision could be "muddled," all suggest that archives are not reliable sources of truth or meaning. This is easily noted with the idea that archives are only able to collect the information that is available to them at the time collection development is active (which could, theoretically, be ongoing, but may end if the archive no longer has room to collect or if the focus of the archivist shifts to another project). If the only materials present in a collection are state sanctioned and from the perspective of highly publicized individuals, then the potential for "conveniently" excluding certain information from the historical record is increased.

#### Michel Foucault

Michel Foucault's theoretical writings on discourse and meaning cover significant territory with regards to how knowledge affects our understanding of truth. Discourse functions like a bubble. We as a society live in that bubble and there are particular words and ideas that have been deemed acceptable to float around in the bubble with us. If something from the outside comes in contact

with or tries to penetrate the bubble, it must either be viewed with mistrust as there is no foundational knowledge or background within the bubble that can be used to understand it or assess its truth, or it must be ignored. For Foucault, discourse is essentially the foundation of everything that can be identified as knowledge and, therefore, truth. As discourses construct our fundamental sense of knowledge and truth, we can only know about things found within the particular discourse of which we are a part. This then affects the ideas that are formed within a discourse and, in turn, who has the power or authority to speak about those ideas and, more indirectly, truth. We, therefore, make assumptions about truth based on the objects in our discourse. If something unknown enters the discourse (i.e., if there is no background knowledge by which to ascertain the nature of the thing and therefore its meaning), it must necessarily be dismissed as meaningless and untrue, or at least misappropriated and misunderstood (Foucault, 2010).

Clearly, this theoretical model gives a significant amount of import to discourse and who or what controls it. Foucault claims "discourses are objects of appropriation," (Rabinow, p. 108, 2010) meaning that they are essentially owned by those who write them. Thus, any documents written about history or considered to be historically telling or significant are owned by their authors. Foucault takes issue with the term *author*, however, that term is appropriate for our purposes here. The notion that the author has ownership not only over his or her work in the typical way society would consider ownership (this thing is mine, it belongs to me), but rather that the authors of these works have ownership over

what history is being told. The author's experiences will dictate a particular point of view to be expressed and will minimize or exclude all others. If a person's concept of knowledge, meaning and truth is based on the discourse surrounding them, then the discourse in turn owns their experiences, and even their authorship. This is critically important to archives because the documents selected for a collection are based on the mutual discourses of the donor and the curator, thereby, making history owned by those persons, or rather, their discourses.

This relationship between truth and power is a critically important one. Clearly, if those in power, even simply those who control communications, control discourse, they also control what is perceived as meaningful and true. For Foucault, this relationship between power and truth extends even beyond those in power controlling what is perceived to be true, and seeps into the "politics of truth." In an interview entitled *Truth and Power*, which was originally published in his work *Power/Knowledge* and reprinted in the *The Foucault Reader* (2010), Foucault notes

Each society has its regime of truth, its "general politics" of truth. that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned, the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth, the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true (p 73)

Here, Foucault speaks directly to the necessity of understanding the relationship between truth and power. If different societies (or segments within a society) have varied discourses, each will hold different truths based on who controls each discourse. This means that the same piece of information may be regarded differently in each discourse and, therefore, be simultaneously regarded as true and meaningful for one segment of society yet false and meaningless in another. That these potential discrepancies are, essentially, all based on the experiences of those "charged with saying what counts as true" necessarily means that not all viewpoints or pieces of information will be considered equally within a given discourse.

The political construction of knowledge and truth has dramatic implications for archival collection. Conceptions of knowledge and truth are based on discourses. Discourses are based on the experiences of those in positions of power. Therefore, truth is completely subjective and determined by very limited viewpoints. If materials written either during or about historical events are the product of those who control communication, then their experiences will be recorded as historical fact. This, in turn, excludes the perceptions of those who belong to the discourse but do not control it, as well as those entirely outside the discourse. The Discourse essentially writes them out of history despite their actual interactions with the events of the time. Archivists must pay particular attention to those materials that they include in their collections to be aware of these inherent biases. Awareness of bias would make it possible to collect materials from the perspective of those belonging to the discourse but without the



power to determine what is considered true, or those outside the discourse entirely. However, such an undertaking would likely require a conscious and conscientious effort by the archivist, due to the fact that he/she belongs to a discourse of his/her own. Acknowledgement of that discourse and an attempt to accept materials that are external to it would be necessary. The challenge an archivist would face in completing such a task would undoubtedly more accurately represent historical events, impart a broader and more complete understanding of those involved and communicate the impact felt by the efforts made.

#### John Searle

While Derrida believes that there is nothing outside of the text (either a small piece of it or the larger context), John Searle holds the diametrically opposing view. This American philosopher and political activist is a strong proponent of the notion of "external realism," or the concept that a real world exists completely independent of human consciousness. Most of society functions on the presupposition that a world exists beyond our own thoughts and ideas. This means that things like mountains, trees, and atoms exist completely autonomously from human consciousness. If we were not here to know or imagine that these things were around, they would still be present. This, then leads to the notion that statements can be true or false, depending on how accurately they represent the world. According to Searle, this means "that statements are true if they correspond to, or describe, or fit, how things really are in the world, and false if they do not" (1998, p. 13) *The correspondence theory*

*of truth*, then, is accounting of truth that relies on the relationship of a statement to external reality. For Searle, external realism and the correspondence theory of truth, not only rely on one another, but also outweigh the conflicting view of idealism. (Searle, 1998)

Searle classifies philosophers such as Derrida (though not Derrida by name) as idealists or antirealists. Although very few would claim that there is absolutely no world that exists independently of thought, Searle proposes that some philosophers will postulate the world as we know it is simply a social construct. We cannot know anything about the *real world*, either because there is no such thing as the real world outside of our thoughts or, according to Kant, we are just unable to even access what that reality is. The rejection of external realism stems from the idealist's skepticism that, even if all possible evidence was available for a claim, we could still come to a completely inaccurate conclusion about the *reality* of that claim. It is, therefore, easier to believe that *reality* simply consists of ideas and that there is nothing capable of existing or being inherently true outside of our thoughts.

Although Searle admits that this is not a novel claim to make, antirealism is increasingly popular in the twentieth century. He refers to Derrida's theory of deconstruction as being the most "intellectually respectable" contemporary version of this ideal (1998, p. 18). Yet, antirealism can no longer persist simply on the notion that it is undesirable for there to be a gulf between reality and our perceptions. Thus enters perspectivism. This theory suggests that "our knowledge of reality is never 'unmediated,' that it is always mediated by a point

of view, by a particular set of predilections, or, worse yet, by sinister political motives" (1998, p. 18). Regardless of the perspective driving this idea for any individual, the effects of such a theory have significant consequences.

The political repercussions of perspectivism and idealism, as compared to external realism, are apparent. Perspectivism provides that all meaning is completely dependent on perspective and that nothing is inherently truthful. Truth and meaning cannot, therefore, be objective, but rather may vary depending on the perspective of the individual or group assigning meaning to a particular statement. If our collective knowledge of reality is always channeled through a third party, or guided by the political motives of a particular individual or group, then it is essentially impossible to have access to accurate information about the world. Clearly, this would benefit those controlling how knowledge is obtained and perceived as they could shape information in such a way as to promote their own interests.

George Orwell's novel *Nineteen Eighty Four* provides a powerful example. In this work, there exist several organizations charged with controlling the information that is available to the society of Oceania. The Ministry of Truth *adjusts* information, both current and historical, to fit with the message of *The Party* (the dictatorship that rules Oceania). Records are erased, recreated, or otherwise adapted as the goals and mission of The Party change. Because information is altered on a daily basis, the collective knowledge of society must also adjust. Under the dictatorship, individuals are not allowed to think or remember events in contradiction to how The Party claims they happened and

those who do not coalesce to the message of The Party are severely punished.

(Orwell, 1992)

*Nineteen Eighty Four* provides a rather extreme illustration of perspectivism, but it serves as a warning of the trouble created by putting the theory into practice. If information is controlled by an individual or group that has political motivation to ensure that certain ideas are perceived as true, then it is impossible for society to have an accurate understanding of reality. Without external realism, our collective knowledge could be shaped by any party or individual in a position of power and altered at their whim. For Searle, this is why external realism is not only the superior theory to perspectivism or idealism, but necessary for a true grasp of how the world is.

Further, external realism has important implications for archival collection. The notion that a reality exists outside of human consciousness suggests that, despite what information is portrayed as historically accurate, the truth of any event is out there and has the potential to be known. Therefore, if an archive shows a bias toward a particular perspective, alternative views are viable and available for those willing to seek them out. This limits the power that any individual or group can have in the telling of history and helps ensure that the experiences of a wide range of society are told and valued.

#### Noam Chomsky

Political activist and theorist, Noam Chomsky, has been analyzing topics of knowledge, truth and power for decades in literally dozens of works. Concerned largely with US foreign policy, social justice and exposing

humanitarian crimes that are often not acknowledged in popular society, Chomsky is renowned both academically and geopolitically. Given the breadth of his research interests, it is necessary to narrow the focus for this work to his writings on power and truth. While these topics are very frequently positioned in terms of governments or other political entities exercising undue power over their citizenry, the essential principles Chomsky details apply to a broader scope of issues.

Although Chomsky places expectations on society in general, he holds writers in particular responsible to discover and report on the truth. In his work *Powers and Prospects*, he notes that while this task, in theory, seems simple enough, there are always difficulties that arise and muddy the waters. For example, it is not merely enough to tell the truth, but rather, "it is a moral imperative to find out and tell the truth *as best one can*, about things *that matter, to the right audience*" (1996, p. 55). The truth, important though it may be, only seems to have significance when it regards a subject that is important and when that truth is conveyed to those who are actually invested in learning it.

(Chomsky, 1996)

To Chomsky, the responsibility of individuals to learn and tell the truth is difficult and may often come at great personal cost. If it is necessary for society, and specifically writers, to seek out the truth, then it is critical to document events in as factual a manner as possible. Not only does this include recording information about specific occurrences with accuracy, but also getting that information from a wide variety of sources to verify the story being told

Individuals, even journalists who are trained to neutrally report on facts, have biases that may be displayed in different ways. While this is not necessarily problematic (so long as the information being conveyed is correct in the view of the speaker), it emphasizes the importance of gathering facts from different sources to put together as accurate a picture as possible.

Regarding the discovery of truth about things that matter and presenting them to the right audience, Chomsky claims that "the responsibility of the writer as a *moral agent* is to try to bring the truth about *matters of human significance* to an audience that can do something about them" (1996, p. 56). Chomsky's concern with writers as moral agents (or at least as individuals with a shred of decency) is focused more directly on instances of human injustices and, therefore, not as relevant to the politics of archives. However, taking the responsibility of the moral agent, in ensuring that truth is discovered to benefit those who are being marginalized in some way, is quite relevant. It is not sufficient to search for the truth of issues that are not relevant to the audience being addressed. Nor is it appropriate to direct these matters to an audience that is not invested in the truth being discussed. These three aspects (truth, meaning and audience) must all be in alignment for the real work of truth and knowledge to be accomplished.

Perhaps the most critical element of this three-part equation is audience. Truth and meaning are important, but their importance diminishes significantly if not presented to those who are in some way invested in their discovery. Chomsky uses the example of speaking truth to power. He claims that this

action, presenting truth to those who wield the power in any particular situation, is senseless because it is not targeting the right audience. Those who exercise power in institutions already know the truth, and, if they are not acknowledging it, are doing so willingly. Taken out of their roles in "coercive institutions" (1996, p 61), however, these same individuals could become a more appropriate audience. "Insofar as such people dissociate themselves from their institutional setting and become human beings, moral agents, then they join everyone else," Chomsky says. "But in their institutional roles, as people who wield power, they are hardly worth addressing" (1996, p. 61). So, if those in power are not those who should be informed of truth, that begs the question of who is.

For the purpose of creating an accurate portrayal of history, and with the understanding, as stated previously, that those in power typically are responsible for writing it, then the answer to this question is the average individual. If speaking truth to power cannot accomplish any change with regard to acknowledging truth and having it be meaningful, then those who are not considered to be in power are the target audience for presenting this kind of information. In terms of archival collection, this means seeking out those who participated in events at the grassroots level, those who were directly affected by an event, those who lived it, and collecting their stories. While it is the responsibility of the writer to seek and convey truth, it must, in the case of recounting history, also be assumed that the writer wields power. And if the writer does not portray an accurate history to begin with, then he is not likely to be influenced by the presentation of meaning and truth.

Archivists and individual donors must collaborate in this effort to uncover the truth about history. Using Chomsky's notion of speaking truth to those who can do something about it, donors can present information about their experiences during these historical events and archivists, in turn, can make note of how this information compares to that already held in the collection. Each of these entities plays a role in recounting history and ensuring that as much of its truth is available to as wide an audience as possible.

### Conclusion

Each of these disparate theorists analyzes the notions of truth, meaning and power in varied ways. To be sure, they do not all even agree on what the impacts of issues are. Derrida and Foucault are perspectivists and believe that knowledge is based on the idea that truth is completely dependent on the perspective of either the individual seeking truth/knowledge or the party in power. In opposition, Searle and Chomsky are in favor of external realism and indicate that there is truth that is objective and does not depend on circumstance. Though the fundamental concepts of how truth and knowledge are created directly conflict between these two groups, where they end up is essentially the same. They each acknowledge that the topics of truth, meaning and knowledge are inextricably linked to one another.

The influence of power on truth and meaning cannot be mistaken and must be accounted for when considering questions of historical records, political developments, and archival collection. What each of these theorists has shown is that it is critical to develop an understanding of what is being said, by whom,



and how this impacts societal knowledge of a subject. Without taking these issues into account, the perspectives of the few will often create the reality of the many. At the core of each of these theorists perspectives is an attempt to either avoid or correct this from happening. What seems to be most important is for truth, meaning and knowledge to be relevant to "the people," and not only to those who have social or political power.

Despite this, however, the question remains whether archives are actually capable of cultivating and telling the truth". Certainly the perspectivists and realists would have very different things to say on this topic, which should be predictable given the assessments of the four theorists studied above. It is, then, perhaps more useful to draw from both of these groups to determine what archives can do to bring the truth to light. It is not unreasonable to believe that there is an objective truth as to the events of Freedom Summer. Certain things happened during that time period and have been recorded (or at least experienced by) the individuals who were there. However, without collecting every story from every person present and every scrap of memorabilia related to the event, it would be impossible to portray the actual "truth" of it. Given that each individuals notion of truth is influenced by his or her experiences and perspective, it would be necessary to collect the stories of everybody involved to even attempt to recreate what might be considered a truthful representation. While it is impossible for archives to take on such an unwieldy task, it is reasonable for curators to ensure that as many points of view are represented within their collection as possible. This will allow the archive to represent a close

version of the truth – at least as near as the perspectivists and realists could rightly hope for

## CHAPTER III

### THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MISSISSIPPI

The theoretical background established in Chapter II suggests a methodology that the remainder of this work will use to assess the materials found in two archival collections, those found at The University of Southern Mississippi and at Queens College. This analysis is meant to determine whether biases are present in these collections and, if so, what they are and how this may affect our social understanding of the Civil Rights Movement. Questions about those who donated materials (e.g. where the donor is from, what their role in the Civil Rights Movement was, the race of the donor) and which topics are included in the archive will be examined. While simply gathering this information is interesting, it is not particularly useful in addressing any shortcomings found within the collections. An analysis of what is found in each archive will be presented, and will aid in establishing what kind of historical "truths" are portrayed from the available materials. The ultimate goal of such an analysis is to gain a thorough understanding of the materials already in the collections and, even more importantly, to suggest what kinds of materials the collections need in order to tell an accurate history.

#### The University of Southern Mississippi Civil Rights Collections

##### *History and Background of the Collection*

In the late 1980's, the curator of the archive library at the University of Southern Mississippi began collecting materials on the civil rights movement, perhaps because she recognized the importance of the civil rights movement and

the role Mississippi had to play in it. Although this project began as the small effort of a single curator, there is no mistaking the importance of the work involved or the impact it might have. Considering the role Hattiesburg, Mississippi had to play in the Civil Rights Movement, the fact that this institution created such a collection makes a great deal of sense. According to the McCain Archive Library, "Mississippi was the focal point in the struggle for civil rights in America, and Hattiesburg, home of the University of Southern Mississippi, had the largest and most successful Freedom Summer project in 1964," (University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, 2010, para. 1). As such, it warrants as much attention in an archive collection as any other topic. Indeed, archives that focus on topics of local significance not only pay homage to those important events in the community, but they often have a significant advantage with regards to access to donors willing to give relevant materials to the collection (University of Southern Mississippi Special Collections, 2010).

Perhaps the most critical element to the success of this collection is its focus on Freedom Summer. The Freedom Summer project was a collaboration of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Council of Federated Organizations to, among other things, register disenfranchised African Americans in Mississippi to vote. Hundreds of volunteers – mostly white students from the North – came to various locations in Mississippi, including Hattiesburg, in the summer of 1964 to work on the voter registration project, teach in Freedom Schools, start Freedom Libraries and attempt to integrate buildings and businesses that were still segregated. Many volunteers were beaten or shunned

by the white community in the South. However, most volunteers stayed to continue the work they believed in so strongly (Civil Rights Movement Veterans, 2012).

The results of Freedom Summer were mixed at best. It seemed as though every triumph made by the project was met in quick succession with either disappointment or failure. In terms of the successes of Freedom Summer, fifty schools were established that could carry on the work of educating children and adults alike in ways that they would not have been otherwise; well over 1,000 African Americans were registered to vote; a new political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (made up mostly of local black leaders), was created and candidates elected to represent the party at the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Unfortunately, these achievements were overshadowed by the fact that the 1,200 African Americans registered to vote made up only approximately 5 percent of the population, hundreds of volunteers had been beaten and several killed for their efforts and that members of the DNC, many of whom even left the floor, refused to recognize the representatives of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (Freedom Summer, 1991; Spencer, 2006).

As the collection continued to grow through involvement in community events such as the *Faces of Freedom Summer* exhibit at the 1999 Freedom Summer reunion, it became clear that there was value in digitizing certain items. The archivists began writing and applying for grant money to aid in the process as buying the equipment and funding staff hours to digitize materials can quickly become costly. It made sense to digitize this particular collection because the

content has particular historical significance on a grand scale and is likely to be of interest to a very broad range of scholars and other patrons. Luckily, the grant writing paid off and work began on digitizing and cataloging portions of the collection in 2000.

One of the most challenging parts of the process was figuring out how to properly catalog the items once they had been digitized. In their article, *Metadata and Authority Control in the Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive*, Suzanne R. Graham and Diane DeCesare Ross (current curator of the collection), claim "for example, a single bibliometric MARC record described the Herbert Randall Freedom Summer collection, which contains approximately 1,800 original photographs and negatives," (2003, p. 34). This created a significant problem with regards to access of these materials. The contents of 1,800 different items were lumped into one record, one description, rather than being individually cataloged, described and accounted for. In his book, *The Management of Information from Archives*, Michael Cook suggests "by comparison with other information services, archives have sometimes tended not to give much emphasis to the study of user needs," (1999, p. 235) a concept that may not be true with regards to the entirety of the collection, but is certainly the case with regards to providing clear explanations of what is available and how easily it can be accessed.

Librarians decided to "use a controlled vocabulary, provide the user with access via the collection hierarchy, and allow full text searching," (Graham & Ross, 2003, p. 34) a decision based on the basic procedures that were set up as

these digital materials were being cataloged. This created the greatest ease of searching while still providing significant amounts of data relevant to the contents of the items. As a result, a much more user-friendly version of the Civil Rights collection holdings came into being. In contrast with the previous catalog that had one record for 1,800 different items, now “much of the information that users encounter in the database is descriptive metadata. It describes what a particular item *is* and what it is *about* to help users retrieve it online,” (Graham & Ross, 2003, p. 35) in its digitized format. Although not all of the items available in the collection are digitized, the online finding aids provide detailed enough descriptions to allow the user to easily locate something in the physical collection that they are interested in researching further – a resource that proves invaluable as the archive is not open for browsing and has well over 100 collections in the subject area to choose from!

#### *What Subject Areas are Present in the Civil Rights Collection?*

To this point, this paper has only focused on a brief history of the Civil Rights Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi; but a collection is only as good as what it contains. As Edwards states, “selection processes dictate that some materials are included at the expense of others. The very fact that one object enters into a collection rather than another conveys additional meaning regarding the perceived historical importance of both items,” (2004, p. 28) so the collection is just as notable for the materials it holds as those that it does not. This speaks to what Foucault says about those who have the power and authority to speak. In *The Foucault Reader* (2010), Foucault says “posing for

discourse the question of power means basically to ask who does the discourse serve?" (p. 57). Or, given that discourse is controlled by those who have social or political influence, which individual or group is being served by any particular discourse. In this case, the items selected to be in the archive give voice to the donors or parties with which they are concerned, while those that are rejected (or not even submitted for consideration) are necessarily denying those voices the power that comes with being recognized. The discourse being served is that of the individuals who are allowed into the collection. With this in mind, it is not only helpful, but even critical to perform a periodic evaluation of any subject specialized archival collection to assess exactly what kinds of materials are held (what physical format they come in), what they are about within the context of the larger collection, how the items were acquired (purchase, donation, etc.), and who donated them. Collecting and understanding this information helps the archivist have a well-rounded idea of what items are held and creates the potential for careful and planned acquisition of materials in the future to address any potential biases that have occurred over time. While it is true that certain types of materials or particular view points may accumulate more frequently in a collection, it is the duty of the archivist to ensure that a balance is created and that patrons have access to as broad a scope of information as possible. As the needs of scholars change and interests in civil rights studies shift, curators should be at the forefront of providing primary source information for emerging research topics. It is important to remember that "over time, data archives evolved from passive repositories to active distributors of social science data,



which flexibly serve social scientists' changing data requirements," (Tanenbaum & Taylor, 1991, p. 225) and as the requirements of social science researchers change, so must the data that are represented in the collection.

One way to determine the quality (a relative term, but in this case referring to the size of the archive and what it holds) of an archival collection is by comparing it to other collections. Certainly every archivist wants their collection to have the best materials possible not only for the notoriety of the archive, but also to provide as much information on the subject area to patrons as possible. Accordingly, the journal, *Reference & User Services Quarterly*, a publication focused in the field of Library and Information Science, reviews "numerous bibliographies, indexes, and websites to offer our recommendations of English-language resources," (RUSA, 2009, p. 49) in a variety of categories including history. Excitingly, the RUSA History Section Historical Materials Committee selected the *Civil Rights in Mississippi Digital Archive* as one of its "Best Historical Materials" online references of 2009. A short write-up about the collection and its contents was printed alongside information about other distinguished reference collections. It is important to keep in mind that the Digital Archive is separate from other archival materials housed in the Civil Rights collection, however, with additional time and funding it could certainly be possible for all items in this collection to be scanned and added to the Digital Archive. Regardless of the format, it is significant that this collection was featured as one of the top in its category. This may indicate the hard work of the archivist, the desire of donors to give their materials or the regional or national notoriety of the

archive. Guides such as these allow archivists and users to compare their resources to model examples of what is available and determine what areas they may need to improve in or what areas they may want to focus on that aren't being thoroughly covered in other archives. Furthermore, "being subject to peer review, archives ha[ve] to be sure their peers spoke well of them when asked," (Tanenbaum & Taylor, 1991, p. 25) giving archivists motivation to have the most thorough and relevant holdings possible for their subject collection for situations such as this when they're collections are reviewed by both national institutions and peers as to their quality and value (RUSA, 2009, p. 49).

With the acknowledgement of the *RUSA* as strong initial support of the remarkable work that has been done in creating the Civil Rights collection, an analysis of the actual contents of the collection should be completed to determine what is included in the holdings, where the items came from, whether there are biases in the collection and what they are, and how the scope of the materials can best be used and advertised on the campus of the University and in the community at large.

#### *Definition of Terms*

As new materials are being added to the Civil Rights archive every day, the researcher noted all collections that had been added to the University of Southern Mississippi's special collections website under the link for this particular collection as of September 28, 2011 and worked only with these items. It is interesting to note, however, that while an initial analysis was done of the collection in late September 2009, a return to these materials for more in-depth

research two years later showed that only one more collection had been added. The significance of this will be discussed later. A total of 113 collections were available as of this date and all were examined and included in the study without exception. Any materials added after this date were not considered in this analysis.

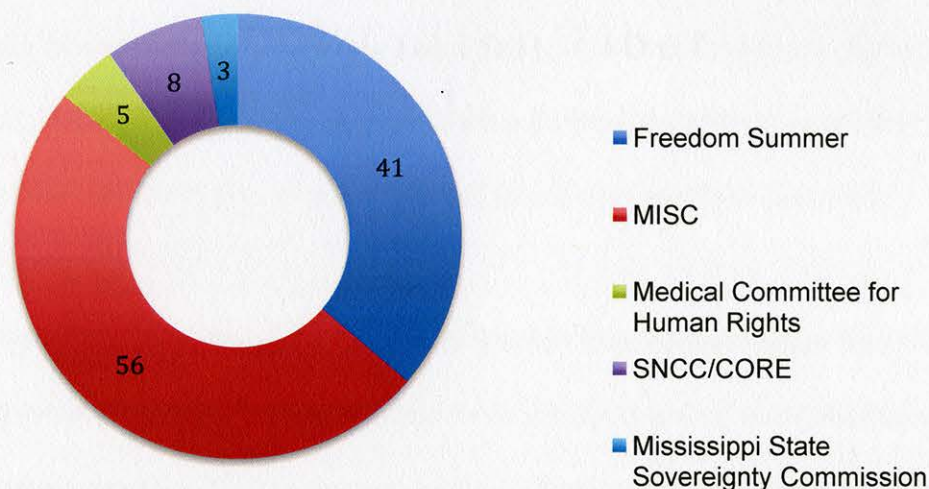
It is important to note that the Civil Rights collection is really an umbrella term. Each time new items are donated to this collection, they are placed in their own separate collection under the broader scope of civil rights and named for the person (or, less frequently, the organization or location) from which they were donated. For purposes of clarity, the researcher will refer to these individual compilations as sub-collections to distinguish them from the broader Civil Rights collection as a whole.

Finally, this collection is driven by the use of finding aides. These are essentially indexes to the content found within each sub-collection, and can include a list of all materials found therein, biographic information about the donor or individual about which the material is concerned and the dates the sub-collection covers. This kind of information can be particularly helpful for collections that are closed stacks (not available for public browsing) as the finding aide will assist the researcher in locating exactly what items he/she may be looking for despite the inability to browse through the materials.

#### *Overview of the Collection*

Upon initial analysis of the collection, sub-collections were reviewed for a basic assessment of their content. The finding aids available via the University's

Special Collections website were used for brief records and descriptions of the contents of each of the sub-collections, superficial information about their donors and size of the donation. Once each sub-collection was reviewed, it was placed into a category that most accurately reflected the contents of the materials included therein. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the categories most commonly found within the collection, along with the number of items associated with each.



*Figure 1.* Sub-Collection Categories with Total Number of Items in Each. These sub-categories represent a break-down of the types of materials found within the Civil Rights Collection. Abbreviations: Misc=Miscellaneous, SNCC=Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, CORE=Congress of Racial Equality.

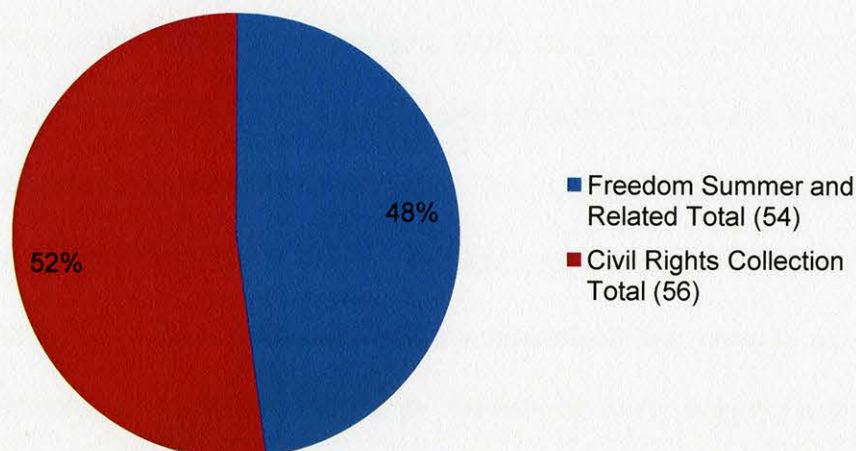
Fully 56 (50%), of the sub-collections within the Civil Rights collection fell into the miscellaneous category. These sub-collections included materials about a wide range of topics and could not be easily classified and grouped together. A significant number of sub-collections, 41 (36%), were classified as being related to Freedom Summer, while 8 (7%) concerned the Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and/or the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), 5 (4%) were about the Medical Committee for Human Rights (MCHR),

and just 3 (3%) on the Mississippi State Sovereignty Commission. While it may seem most significant that 50 percent of the collection could not be categorized as anything other than miscellaneous, the Civil Rights Movement was so wide ranging and had such a broad swath of people participating in it (either in support of or in opposition to), that this discovery is neither surprising nor warrants attention for the purposes of this project. The fact that 36 percent of the collection is focused directly on Freedom Summer, however, is quite impressive and suggests that some emphasis has been put on building this particular part of the collection. Due to its considerable presence in the Civil Rights collection, the remainder of the research presented here will focus on Freedom Summer.

#### *Freedom Summer*

As Figure 1 shows, the Civil Rights collection was broken down into five different categories. Once analysis shifted from an overview of the collection to a more direct focus on Freedom Summer, some of these categories were grouped back together so that all materials related to this project would be included. When considering materials relevant to the Freedom Summer, a relatively wide definition of the topic was applied. Clearly, any materials related directly to Freedom Summer, its volunteers or projects were considered to be part of this category. This includes scholarly writings and documentaries created about this time period, whether or not the author or director participated or had any direct connection to the project. Any materials donated by a person involved in Freedom Summer, whether or not the donation was directly related to Freedom Summer, were counted within this subject area. Furthermore, any material on

any initiatives that took place during or were in some way related to Freedom Summer (such as the Medical Committee for Human Rights or the White Folks Project) were included, whether or not the items were specifically about their connection to or use during this time period. Sub-collections designated as part of Freedom Summer include Freedom Summer, MCHR and SNCC/CORE. Given the new definition of Freedom Summer, a secondary analysis of the total number of Civil Rights collections, 113, as compared to those relevant to this topic jumps from 41 to 54, or 48 percent as Figure 2, below, shows.



*Figure 2.* Percentage of Freedom Summer Sub-Collections. This chart shows the percentage of sub-collections related to Freedom Summer as compared to the total number of sub-collections found within the Civil Rights Collection.

While it may seem that the Civil Rights collection has a significant bias because 54 out of its 113 sub-collections are related in some way to Freedom Summer, this is an acceptable partiality to have. Freedom Summer was a major event in Mississippi history, was incredibly significant to Hattiesburg in particular, and the initiatives it strove to undertake brought together a large group of people

that may not have otherwise been involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Showing particular favor to a certain event within the broader context of the archive's subject area is not necessarily inappropriate, however having an unbalanced perspective within the collection is arguably problematic. In other words, an archival collection may have materials on a wide variety of subjects but invest more heavily in certain topics that are particularly relevant to the geographical location in which the collection is located, an event of particular historical significance or even an individual who made a great contribution to the region. Alternatively, a considerable amount of materials could have been donated to the archive with a focus that is in no way related to the institution or area, but that are distinctly interesting or cover a subject that isn't thoroughly developed in other collections in the region. The curator could rightfully concentrate a great deal of attention and resources to obtaining additional materials on this topic in order to expand the collection and provide as broad a range of information about it as possible. Where the potential problem lies is in the perspectives that are available in the collection. While it is the duty of the curator to gather relevant and rare materials to expand their archives, they must be especially careful to recognize who or what is being represented and what is being said with these acquisitions. In terms of Civil Rights archives, for example, curators should be keenly aware of who donated which materials, who or what they are about, and what they say – both literally and in terms of our understanding of history. If an archive only has resources about the experiences of white volunteers or protestors from the Midwest that participated in the Civil

Rights movement, there will be huge gaps in the story being told. What about the stories of African Americans and other minority groups? What about native Southerners? How was the movement different in the West and for people of all races who benefitted from the results of Civil Rights efforts? Each of these pieces helps give a more complete and accurate account of what really happened during those turbulent times in our nation's history. Without them, all we have is a one-sided story of what the majority – or at least those with power and therefore a voice – experienced.

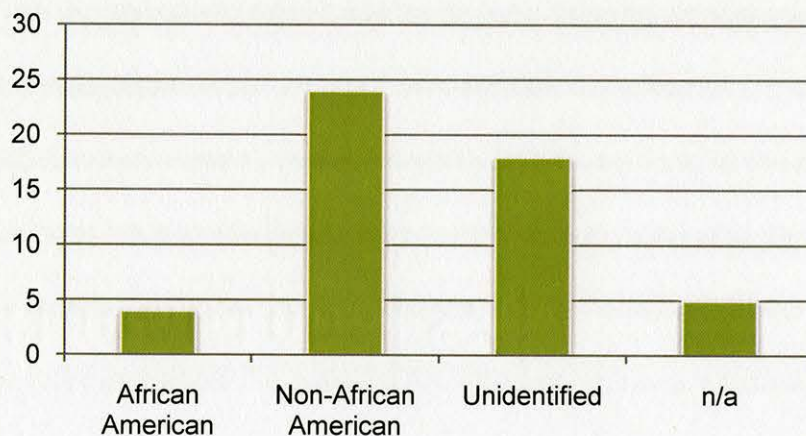
The majority of the materials held in the Civil Rights collection are gifts donated by volunteers, scholars and other participants in Freedom Summer. This is a very typical type of acquisition, according to Menzi L. Behrnd-Klot in her book entitled *Navigating Legal Issues in Archives*. She claims, "archives generally acquire records via outright gifts, or occasionally by bequests, which are a form of a gift, or through exchange or trade with other archives, and rarely by purchase" (2008, p. 41). As such, many archives are limited in the scope of their content by what people are willing to give. Sometimes, donors are reluctant to give to an archive because they do not trust how their items may be used in an archive or because they simply don't want anyone to know the details included in their materials. While most archives promote a policy of open access, meaning no restrictions will be placed on the materials in the collection and they will be made available for public viewing, it is possible to place some limitation on the use of particular items. For example, materials in a given collection could be ineligible for public use until after the subject or donor has died, or for a certain



number of years after the donation was made, or available only to researchers physically present at the archive (i.e. – not digitized and posted online). Still other potential donors may be hesitant to donate materials because they think that no one would actually care about the information they have, and they would rather keep it for themselves. Society does tend to shift its focus on a relatively regular basis and, “for archivists, the changing interest by the public in its memory explains why they and their repositories can slip in and out of fashion,” claims Richard Cox in his book, *Managing Records as Evidence and Information* (2001, p. 131). This puts the responsibility on archivists to not only advertise their archive through community events, featuring parts of the collection on their website or at the institution, or submitting write-ups about exciting acquisitions to relevant journals, but also actively seek out new donors.

### *Race*

Despite these potential problems in collecting materials, it is critical for archivists to maintain an understanding of who is donating to their collections and try to bring in new types of donors when an unbalanced perspective arises. Analysis of the Freedom Summer collection shows a strong bias in terms of race in the donors providing the materials found therein. As Figure 3 shows, of the 51 donors of materials, 24 of them are non-African American, 18 are unidentifiable in this manner, five are not applicable as they were donated by organizations or are small groupings of materials without a singular donor, and only four were donated by African Americans.



*Figure 3. Who is Donating to the Freedom Summer Collection?* This chart represents (in raw numbers) who, according to race, has donated materials to the Freedom Summer sub-collection.

Some of the materials donated by the five entities listed as n/a could be considered to have affiliations with African Americans (such as the *Civil Rights in the South Collection*). However, these materials are just as easily associated with the white volunteers that participated in Freedom Summer or scholars that have an interest in the time period (such as the *Student Research Papers* collection containing undergraduate papers on the subject of Civil Rights). Given that no singular donor is clear for most of these five and that they are not attributed to a person or group of people, n/a is the most appropriate notation.

Certainly the materials donated by each of these individuals are valuable to the overall understanding of Freedom Summer and provide a thorough perspective of their experiences during the project. However, a very strong bias becomes clear as the voices of the African Americans is all but lost. Even if the majority of the donors in the unidentified category were African American, which seems highly unlikely given the data pattern displayed by those donors who were

identifiable, the perspectives would still be slightly skewed as the greatest majority of the collection would be from non-African Americans.

The US Census Bureau reported enormous disparities in the Black and White populations, both in the South and nationwide in 1960 and 1970, as shown in Table 1. Though the percentages changed slightly between these two decades, the ratio remained the same with reporting Whites outnumbering Blacks four to one in the South and eight to one in the general populace. Clearly, the White majority had statistical power that translated into social power and, arguably, brought about the need for a Civil Rights movement to happen in the first place. This power differential can further be seen in the archival collection as so few materials from African American donors, from the South or elsewhere in the country, are present. The voices of this population are not being represented in a manner fitting the theme of the collection, resulting in a skewed account of these events and an incomplete historical perspective.

Table 1

<i>Southern Region</i>			<i>Nationwide</i>		
	White	Black		White	Black
1960	79.1%	20.6%	1960	88.6%	10.5%
1970	80.3%	19.1%	1970	87.5%	11.1%

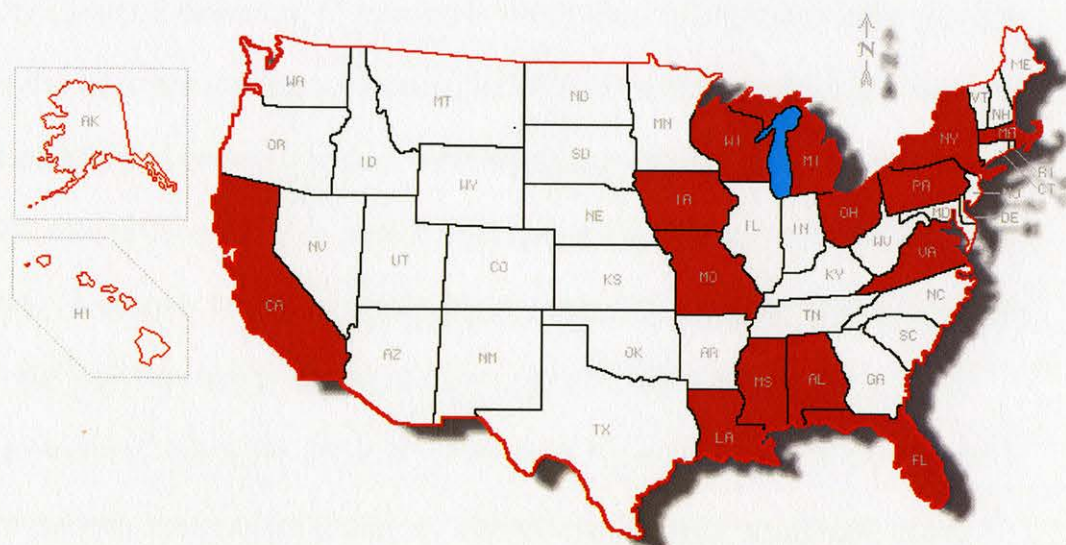
Note. Data gathered from US Census Bureau, Sept. 2002

#### *Location*

In addition to the bias found in *who* is donating to the collection, a further unbalance can be seen in terms of *where* the donors are from. The map below

highlights the states from which donors reported to be from originally. It is important to note that this information could not be found for all donors and more than one donor may be from the same state. The multiplicity of donors is not indicated in this map, simply an identification of their locatio

#### Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Home States



11-12-11

*Figure 4.* Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Home States. This map indicates the states from which volunteers indicated they came from. It does not indicate the number of people from each state, but only the presence of an individual who participated in Freedom Summer.

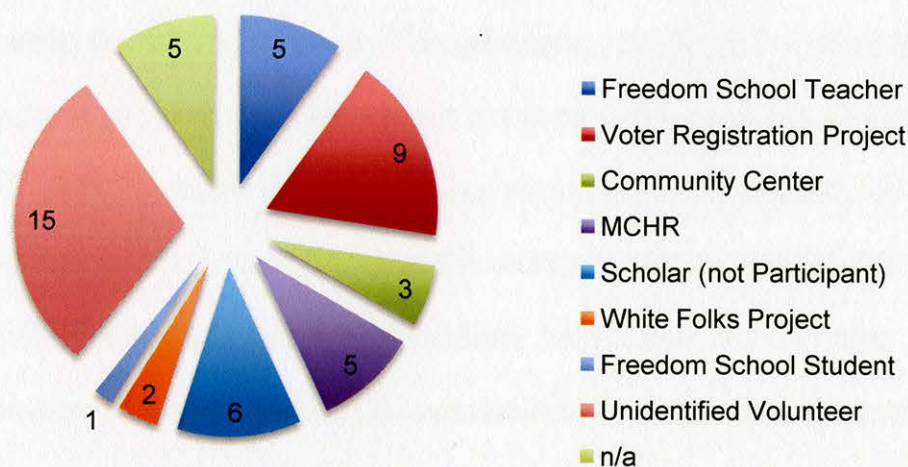
As the map reveals, there is a fairly even representation of donors from the North and the South, although no donors claimed to be from the Midwest and very few from the West. Keeping in mind that five sub-collections were donated by organizations or other non-individual entities, of the 51 donors less than 10

donors reported to be from one of the four southern states indicated on the map. Certainly, the life experiences of native Northerners would have been different from those of native Southerners, especially with regards to the Civil Rights Movement and Freedom Summer. These disparities make it significantly important that the perspectives available in this collection are so unbalanced. What the Northerners may have seen as epic failures could have constituted great successes to natives of Mississippi. While the beatings and other dangers faced by the northern participants were certainly as real to them as to those who likely faced this behavior every day, their reportings of these events may be described differently and put in a different context than those same happenings depicted by someone else. Having multiple voices and perspectives is critical to creating the most complete and accurate record of this historical period and, while the materials available regarding Freedom Summer certainly come from a variety of people, it is clear that certain viewpoints are less prominent than others.

#### *Role of the Donor*

The final element reviewed in the assessment of the collection was what role the donor of each sub-collection played in Freedom Summer. Again, this information is important to understanding who is saying what about the events of Freedom Summer and allows the user of the sub-collections to come to the information with a certain understanding of what he/she may find. Of 51 sub-collections, 15 were donated by an "unidentified volunteer." This simply means that the duties in which the donor participated during Freedom Summer were not

identified. Nine participants volunteered in the voter registration project, 6 donors were scholars of this event and did not actually participate at all. The categories of Freedom School teacher, MCHR and n/a (donor was organization, etc.) had 5 donors each. Three people came to volunteer in community centers, 2 to work in the White Folks Project (an effort essentially like Freedom Summer, but focused on poor White voters instead of African Americans) and only one donor was a student in a Freedom School. These results are displayed below in Figure 5.



*Figure 5.* Role Donor Played in Freedom Summer. This chart indicates how the individuals who participated in Freedom Summer were involved. Abbreviations: MCHR=Medical Committee for Human Rights.

Fortunately, there are wide and relatively balanced viewpoints being represented in terms of materials donated by people who played varying roles in Freedom Summer. What is clearly lacking is, again, the perspective of the native Southerner who would have been on the receiving end of the Freedom Summer efforts. The efforts of the volunteers and results of their projects played just as big a role – if not greater – in the lives of the students attending Freedom

Schools, of members of the community who were allowed to use the Freedom Libraries, and of those who were able to register to vote and have their voting rights taught to them as these events. Materials of local Mississippians who were the beneficiaries of Freedom Summer and its endeavors would prove to be infinitely valuable additions to the Freedom Summer collections and would help balance out the voices heard on the subject.

### *Analysis*

As the research above clearly shows, there are some significant biases present within the Civil Rights collection generally, and in the Freedom Summer sub-collections in particular. While each of the sections (race, location, role of donor) contained some discussion of these partialities with regard to that particular area, it is important to recognize and understand what this really means in the greater context of the collection. In addition, this can help determine how, if at all, the materials both present and absent in the archive effect our understanding of the Civil Rights movement and Freedom Summer in Mississippi. By looking at each of these sections together, rather than piecing them out as was done for their individual analyses, it will be possible to get a clear picture of what exactly this archive says and what, in turn, that does.

The vast majority of materials held in the Freedom Summer sub-collections were donated by non-African American volunteers from the northern United States. Even without knowing the details of the material content, this fact alone should send a signal to any researcher that there is a skewed perspective in the sub-collections and that the broadest and most accurate account of this

historical event is not being represented. What is clearly lacking are the voices of African Americans, and even other minority groups, native Southerners (or at least those who had spent a significant amount of time in the South BEFORE 1964) of any racial group, and those who benefitted directly from the efforts of the project, rather than donors or organizations involved in making it possible. In other words, what embodies the account of history being told in these Freedom Summer sub-collections are the experiences of those who held the power and lived, for all intents and purposes, outside of the reasons the project originated.

Some may not believe that there is a problem with this accounting. As was mentioned in chapter one, those with power, or the winners, tend to be the authors of history and society as a whole may believe that this is an entirely fair way to document these events. However, historians, political scientists, archeologists, sociologists and librarians and archivists especially should not only realize the inherent flaw with this line of thinking, but also work to correct the problems it creates. By essentially ignoring the record of the losing side, those without power, information, perspective and a complete telling of our social and cultural story are lost. It is the responsibility of the aforementioned groups of professionals to ensure that these accounts do not vanish, but rather that they are represented alongside those who have been given a voice.

In the case of the library archive, this can be a difficult task, however, certainly not impossible. Primarily, it is the responsibility of the curator to have a foundational understanding of his or her collection, to know its strengths and weaknesses, and to both think and work creatively to improve its holdings. For



particularly large archival collections, this may seem a daunting task, but one which will serve as a fundamental tool for staff and researchers alike. Once the collection has been assessed, it is critical for the curator to go out into the community, which can be defined geographically or in terms of subject or event, and identify perspective donors, either with in-kind materials gifts or those willing to contribute financially to the collection, allowing items to be purchased.

Individuals will be far less likely to contribute their materials to an institution they are not familiar with or to a curator that has not made an effort to acquire their materials and express how valuable and worthwhile they are. Certainly there may be other factors that influence whether and where an individual donates their collections, as mentioned in chapter one, however, the initiative and efforts of the archivist can prove invaluable in terms of acquiring significant donations.

It is interesting, then, to come back to the note made earlier in this chapter regarding the fact that in the two years since the initial research of this project was started, only one sub-collection has been added to the entire Civil Rights collection at Southern Miss. While it is possible that existing sub-collections were added to during this time, it is significant that seemingly no effort has been made to continue expanding this renowned collection. This could be the result of several different factors – unwillingness of individuals to donate to this particular collection, lack of legitimate leads for potential donors, or even neglect on the part of the curator to actively seek out new donations. It stands to reason that not every collection can continue to expand on an ongoing basis, however, given

the biases that were so clearly found within the collection, it seems problematic that the development of this archive is static.

CHAPTER IV  
QUEENS COLLEGE

To be sure, though the University of Southern Mississippi found itself in the metaphorical eye of the Freedom Summer storm, it is not the only place in which the Civil Rights movement had an impact, nor does it hold exclusive holdings of materials either related to or directly from this era. Indeed, several organizations, including universities, community archives, city or state run historical libraries and even private institutions of various sorts collect and maintain materials related to Freedom Summer and, like Southern Miss, attract different kinds of donors. From such sources as the Civil Rights Digital Library (a collaborative effort maintained by the Digital Library of Georgia); The Western College Archive at Miami University of Ohio; the Ruth Schein/1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project Collection at the New York Public Library; and even the *Remembering Freedom Summer* post of the Archives of American Art Blog, it is made clear that this subject matter is not only significant, but has a widespread presence in academia and societies' historical conscious as well.

The more collections that exist on a particular topic, the more important it is to not only be aware, but also have a great understanding of, what is located in each. This is especially true for curators as they should know what the strengths of their holdings are as well as what areas are thoroughly covered in other collections. They should also be familiar with subjects on which they may be able to expand, and who has donated materials where and for what purpose. While each of these points is important to the development of a good archive,

gathering information about donors can be critical. More likely than not, donors who wish to give their materials will seek out particular collections for very specific reasons. Motivations guiding where their materials are placed may include notoriety of the organization, personal affiliation with the institution, or even mistrust of other archives. Alternatively, curators may actively court donors and advocate that their collection would be the most proper place for that individual's items. In either case, it significantly behooves archivists to investigate who has donated where and what major players in an event or subject area might still have materials that they could donate. The giving history of any donor may provide helpful evidence as to the likelihood of that individual donating materials to another institution, either because they are willing to do so (i.e., not tied to a particular collection for any of the reasons afore mentioned) or because they have additional information to give. Furthermore, knowing donors can prove fruitful in that they can refer the curator to other individuals they know who may have materials on the same or similar subjects. This can lead to additional donations and furthering the size and scope of the collection.

Given this, it becomes clear that in order to have a thorough understanding of any particular collection, it is essential to look also at others in an attempt to best analyze the strengths and weakness of either. Chapter III analyzed the contents of the Freedom Summer Civil Rights collection at the University of Southern Mississippi and provided some very clear facts and statistics of its holdings. However, without having similar information in reference to another collection, the value of this information is rather limited. In other

words, while the assets and biases of the archive may be inherently apparent within the framework of the collection, analyzing similar types of information from other collections can provide clearer insight as to how our socio-historical consciousness may be affected by the kinds of information that are accessible.

The remainder of this chapter will focus on conducting a similar analysis on the Civil Rights, and specifically Freedom Summer, archival collection found at the City University of New York in Flushing (Queens College). This investigation should help put both this collection and that at Southern Miss into context, thereby lending greater comprehension of what each truly has to offer.

With all of the Freedom Summer collections available to use for comparative analysis, the one located at Queens College was selected due to a very particular set of conditions being either similar to or different from those at Southern Miss. For example, both are institutions of higher education and offer graduate level degrees. However, one is part of a significant and well known statewide system and the other, though it has satellite campuses, is a relatively independent institution. One is located in the North and the other in the South. One has only a slight connection to the Freedom Summer, while the other is located at its epicenter. These factors should create interesting and opposing circumstances that may account for any differences found within the substance of materials in the collection and who those materials were donated by.

## City University of New York (Queens College) Civil Rights Collections

### *History and Background of the Collection*

Though efforts were always made to gather and store certain kinds of information, the Queens College Special Collections and Archives did not begin formally collecting materials until the late 1960's. Although the Archive has many focuses, including that of capturing the history of Queens, it is particularly strong in certain areas including Civil Rights and Politics. Within these archival subjects there are nine separate collections (what were referred to as sub-collections at Southern Miss and will be called the same here for purposes of clarity and consistency) consisting of nearly 100 separate items that have been digitized. To be sure, there may be a greater number of items in each of these collections that have not yet been digitized, however, the path taken to make these materials so accessible is an interesting one.

Beginning in the Spring of 2010, the Head of Special Collections at Queens College, Dr. Ben Alexander, partnered with a colleague in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies, Dr. Kwong Bor Ng, to "discuss a mutually beneficial way to begin the process of building a digital presence," (Chen, Feng, & Schlottmann, 2010, p. 25) both on campus and in the greater community. It was decided that a project should be undertaken in which the Special Collections Fellowship program would take on Library Science graduate students and charge them with digitizing materials from Special Collections and creating a presentation website (Cheng et al., 2010).

Initially, it was unclear which of the archival collections should be selected for this pilot project. As stated earlier, the Queens College Special Collections department has several very strong collections of varying subjects. According to Cheng et al., however, "it quickly became clear that the civil rights materials were best suited for this pilot project, for reasons such as mission of engaging with the broader community, copyright status of the materials, and the attraction of having students continue to work with the material" (2010, p. 26). Furthermore, since this particular collection was not officially founded until late 2008, it may have contained fewer items than some of the others housed in the archive (Cheng et al., 2010).

Two teams of graduate students and supervisors (Drs. Alexander and Ng) were created for the project, one of which was responsible for selection, digitization and creation of metadata of items while the other managed creation of the presentation website. The teams held biweekly meetings to discuss their progress, troubleshoot issues that had arisen, and discuss the future of the project. One of the more interesting difficulties faced by the teams was one that the digitization team at Southern Miss also faced, that being what vocabulary to use when creating metadata records to describe the objects being digitized. After much discussion and review of other archives, the teams at Queens College decided to use a combination of officially recognized vocabulary (taken from Library of Congress Subject Headings, etc) as well as informal vocabulary to be provided by users via tagging of the items. This choice was significant for two reasons: 1) it creates greater access to material by allowing users to find

items using more familiar search terms, and 2) it allows users to add their own terms, making the research process both interactive and democratic (Cheng et al., 2010).

By the end of the semester, many items had been digitized, however, there was still much of the collection that needed to be added. In addition, the next phase of the project (updating and refinement of techniques used in digitization and creation of metadata) was being discussed.

Perhaps the most interesting note made regarding this archive is the fact that it “seeks to provide evidences of the under-documented Northern involvement in the civil rights movement” and that it was created “around an estimable collection of personal papers donated by alumnus Mark Levy” (Cheng et al., 2010, p. 24). While geographic locations like Birmingham, Montgomery and Memphis may immediately jump to mind at the mention of the Civil Rights movement, it seems implausible to believe that the Northern point of view in this matter is under-represented. This is especially true given the fact that the movement was an international phenomenon and that hundreds if not thousands of individuals from the North came in buses to participate in events (sit-ins, voter registration projects, protests, etc) that happened in the South. Furthermore, that players such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Stokely Carmichael are at the forefront of our collective consciousness with regards to the Civil Rights movement, it stands to reason that the voice of the white Northerner may go unheard with regards to this event. It is interesting, then, that



this collection was founded with the papers of a white Northerner. This certainly speaks to the declared mission of the archive to show a different perspective.

As in Chapter III, the remainder of this chapter will focus on analyzing the Civil Rights Archival collection at Queens College. Key factors similar to those studied in the collection at Southern Miss will be reviewed in order to determine whether biases exist and, if so, what they are. Furthermore, it is necessary to analyze whether, as Cheng claimed, the existing biases provide a perspective of the movement that is not found elsewhere. Finally, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, conducting such an analysis will not only prove valuable in understanding the story being told in this collection, but can help provide insights into the strengths and weaknesses of this archive as compared to others based in the same field.

#### *What Subject Areas are Present in the Civil Rights Collection?*

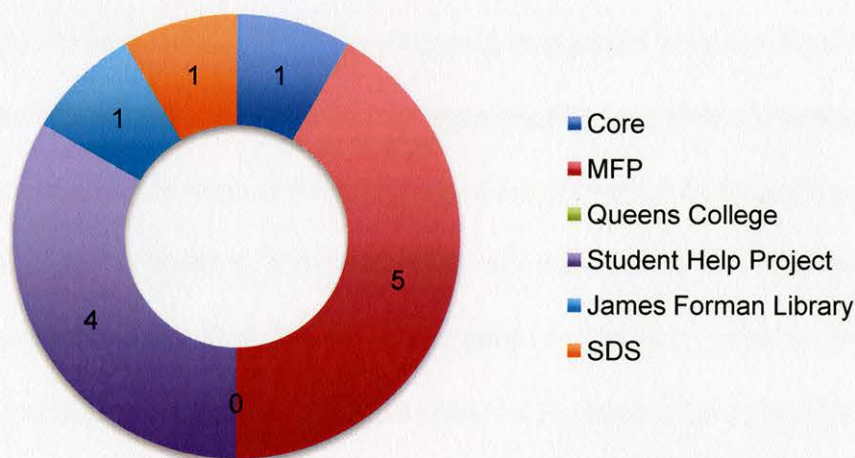
As with many archival collections, several different types and subject areas are present within this collection. The subject areas will be expanded upon later in this chapter. This collection is interesting in that, as previously discussed, it has focused on digitizing much of its civil rights collection, therefore making everything from photographs, license plates, pamphlets and fliers, letters and maps available for viewing electronically. Unlike some other collections that offer only finding aides with relatively limited information and few or no items that can be viewed without being at the physical location of the archive, the Queens College Special Collections department is clearly interested both in collecting and

preserving materials, as well as making them as accessible as possible to students and researchers alike.

### *Overview of the Collection*

The number of sub-collections present in the Civil Rights Movement Archives at Queens College is relatively few. This, in addition to the fact that finding aides are not available for the sub-collections, made the initial analysis of the collection relatively simple. The sub-collections are searchable in several different ways, including by date, location, subject and type. In addition, information about each of the sub-collections based on the donor or main subject of the sub-collection is available and easily searchable. For example, the Civil Rights Movement Archives may be searched by three different dates, five locations, six subjects, three types or nine different donors/individuals. Despite the fact that far less information is provided in this manner than in a finding aide, this plethora of searching options makes locating materials relevant to particular research topics exponentially easier.

Each sub-collection can be placed into one of the six subjects identified as a browsing option. These include CORE, Mississippi Freedom Project, Queens College, Student Help Project, James Forman Library and SDS (Students for a Democratic Society). Figure 6 shows each of these categories and the total number of sub-collections found in each. It is important to note that some sub-collections could have been identified with more than one category. However, those with some ambiguity or overlap were categorized with that subject which seemed most overwhelmingly relevant or present.



*Figure 6.* Sub-Collection Categories with Total Number of Items in Each. These sub-categories represent a break-down of the types of materials found within the Civil Rights Movement Archives. Abbreviations: CORE=Congress of Racial Equality, MFP=Mississippi Freedom Project, SDS=Students for a Democratic Society.

The vast majority, five (42%), of sub-collections can be categorized as being related to the Mississippi Freedom Project, while the Student Help Project holds four (34%) and CORE, the James Forman Library and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) a mere one (8%) each. These percentages may seem more significant than they truly are, simply because there are so few sub-collections to work with. Interestingly, none of the collections was readily identified with Queens College, despite the fact that that is the institution at which these materials are held. Certainly some of the sub-collections overlap with this subject. For instance, students of Queens College participated in projects organized by SDS and there was an SDS chapter at the institution. However, the influence of the College seems less important in the analysis of the materials than the subject itself.

The majority of the remaining analysis of this collection will focus on the Freedom Summer Project sub-collections to provide an analytical context for understanding both its contents and that of other archival collections. However, because materials related to the Student Help Project hold such a significant presence in this archive, it is worthwhile to understand what this project was and how it related to the Civil Rights Movement. In the early 1960's, the Student Help Project was organized as a way for Queens College students to provide tutoring to children in the borough of Queens, New York as well as in Price Edward County, Virginia. Many of these students were underprivileged, and as such, the tutoring provided by Queens College students was free. In the summer of 1963, in response to Virginia's resistance to integration and attempts to shut African American students out of the public school system, 16 Queens College students traveled to Price Edward County, "lived with African American families in Farmville, Virginia and tutored throughout Prince Edward County" (Tummino, A., 2011, para. 1). This project has very interesting similarities to that of Freedom Summer, as one of its main goals was also to provide opportunities to children who had been denied a reasonable education due to resistance to integration. Although the Student Help Project will not be the major focus of the remainder of this analysis, a brief overview of the contents of this collection will put into perspective whether collection development patterns are any different for this topic than Freedom Summer.

The Student Help Project archival collection at Queens College contains only 15 items. Of those, 12 are photographs of various individuals that

volunteered for the project, students being tutored, and images of the location in Virginia and some events that took place there during the project. In addition, there are three written documents. One, called *Our Daily Log*, is a school assignment that was given by a Queens College volunteer to a student in Virginia. The second is a *Chart of Administrative Structure of Virginia Student Help Project*, which indicates who held which administrative positions during the project. The third is a report summarizing a telephone conversation between Dr. Rachel Weddington of Queens College and Reverend Griffin, as the two prepared for the work that was to be undertaken for the project. Most of these items were donated by just a few of the Queens College volunteers who took part in the Student Help Project, however, given the very small scale of the collection, the scope is fairly impressive. Considering that the Freedom Summer sub-collection at Southern Miss contains significantly more items than the Student Help Project, it is interesting to note that they both contain one item directly related to a school student that benefited from the respective events. While there are too few items from this group in either collection, the percentage that this group makes up is far greater in the Queens College collection. Unfortunately, the remaining items do not provide a significant amount of substance in terms of truly understanding the Student Help Project. The photographs and administrative chat, while interesting, do not tell a complete story of the event. The summary of a phone conversation between Dr. Weddington, an African American professor, and Rev. Griffin does provide somewhat more useful information, but mainly in regards to what volunteers would need to prepare for

the project, not what they did while in Virginia. Furthermore, the Student Help Project took place both in Virginia and in a neighborhood in Queens, New York. There are, however, no items in this collection that refer to the Queens branch of the project. Certainly the volunteers and students there did equally important work as those in Virginia, so it is problematic that their stories are not represented. Despite this, knowing that Queens College organized and maintained such a program for several years helps establish the institution's relationship to the Civil Rights Movement. Given that the number of sub-collections related directly to the Freedom Summer project are relatively few at Queens College, it is helpful to note a connection of the institution to the project to help ascertain why any materials may be present here at all.

Perhaps the most noteworthy event of the entirety of Freedom Summer was the murder of three volunteers by Southern whites who opposed the work they were there to do. Shortly after the first wave of volunteers arrived in Mississippi, two white students from the North, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, as well as an African American from the South, James Chaney, went missing. They were found several weeks later buried under an earthen dam. According to Linda Reed, "the search for them made clear that whites in Mississippi held no regard for the safety – and the lives – of Blacks and sympathetic whites who interfered with the status quo" (Reed, 1998, para. 3). This event was significant to Queens College in particular as Andrew Goodman had been a student there before he was killed. In addition, the brother of Michael Schwerner, who was not reported to have participated in Freedom Summer,

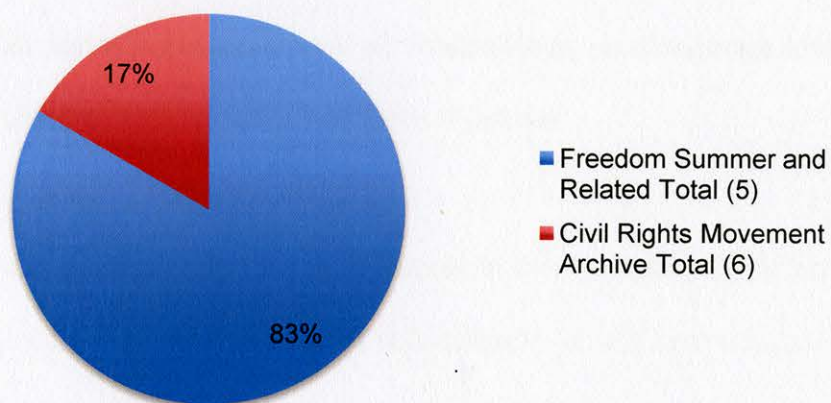
attended Queens College. In an article exploring the College's relationship to the Civil Rights movement for Black History month in 2011, Michael Rehak relates the story of Martin Luther King, Jr. speaking "in front of a packed auditorium on campus and, according to one history professor who attended the event, King received a standing ovation" (2011, para. 5). These events clearly link Queens College with the efforts of the Freedom Summer Project, making it a bit more clear as to why this institution may collect materials on this subject.

### *Freedom Summer*

As with the Southern Miss collection, the six categories of sub-collections within the Civil Rights Archive at Queens College were analyzed as to their connection to Freedom Summer. In this case, only the Freedom Summer and CORE collections were appropriately related, so they were grouped together for further study. Although the Student Help Project had a similar mission to Freedom Summer, the two did not share a direct enough relationship for materials in this sub-collection to be included. Additionally, some overlap is present in items included in different sub-collections. For instance, photographs of students in the Queens College chapter of CORE marching on Washington are included in both the CORE and Queens College sub-collections. That this overlap exists creates greater assurance that all materials relevant to Freedom Summer will be included in this sub-collection.

Due to the method of organizing materials in these sub-collections, the overall percentage of sub-collections within the greater Civil Rights Movement Archive is relatively small. As Figure 7 below shows, a total of five out of the

present six sub-collections, or 83%, are found within the larger collection when accounting for all sub-collections related to Freedom Summer.



*Figure 7. Percentage of Freedom Summer Sub-Collections.* This chart shows the percentage of sub-collections related to Freedom Summer as compared to the total number of sub-collections found within the Civil Rights Movement Archive.

In terms of actual percentage, this number seems quite high. However, due to the small number of total collections found within the Civil Rights Movement Archive, the percentage that each sub-collection makes up takes on a more significant weight than it would if more sub-collections were added. It is possible that the Queens College Special Collections department will continue to expand its holdings on this subject, especially given the recent digitization efforts made to make materials more accessible. However, given that the number of sub-collections found within the Civil Rights Movement Archive is relatively small, it is significant that sub-collections relating to Freedom Summer make up such a significant percentage of the Archive. Finally, it is of interest to note that, of the sub-collections found within the Archive, Freedom Summer contains the greatest

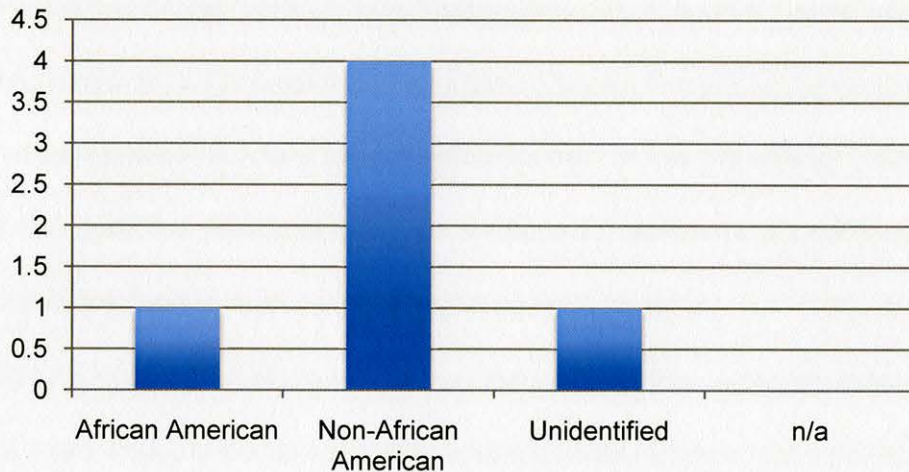


number of materials by a significant margin. Sixty-three items have been digitized in this sub-collection with the next greatest number of materials in a sub-collection being 15, or nearly four times fewer items. Interestingly, the sub-collection with 15 items is the Student Help Project that, as discussed earlier, had a very similar mission and vision as Freedom Summer.

### *Race*

Information about the donors of materials in the Freedom Summer sub-collections was not very clear. Since the sub-collections are broken up in several different searchable ways, inferences about donor identity and race had to be made by referencing individual donors' collections (i.e., by conducting a search using the browse collections function). In addition, information about what they donated as expressed in their biographical descriptions provided some clues as to what kinds of materials each individual donated. This information was not made clear by searching in the Freedom Summer sub-collection itself. Items in this sub-collection are tagged with descriptive information that may or may not include the name of the donor. Some inferences could be made through pictures in various collections with the individuals' names included.

Figure 8 below clearly displays that, of the six individual donor collections that comprise the Freedom Summer sub-collection, four of the donors are non-African American, one is African American and the sixth is not identifiable.



*Figure 8. Who is Donating to the Freedom Summer Collection?* This chart represents (in raw numbers) who, according to race, has donated materials to the Freedom Summer sub-collection.

There are several possible reasons why these numbers could be skewed in this way. First, as the Queens College Special Collections department claimed that one of the primary aims of this Civil Rights Movement Archive is to portray the voice of the Northerner in the events of the Movement, it could be that the Northerners that participated in this project were predominantly white. Alternatively, it could stand to reason that African Americans did contribute more to the Civil Rights Movement Archive as a whole, but the materials donated did not fall into this category. This, however, seems unlikely as African American donors are not present in any greater numbers in any of the other sub-collections at the Queens College Civil Rights Movement Archive). Furthermore, it is possible that the significant disparity between African American and non-African American donors is simply exacerbated by the lack of total donors. Since only six individual donors contributed to the collections being classified as Freedom

Summer, any fewer than one or two African American donors would give the appearance of a bias skewed in favor of non-African American perspectives.

A final possibility could be analyzed thusly: If it is the mission of the Queens College Civil Rights Movement Archive to represent the experiences of Northerners involved in events during this period of history, and if there were fewer African Americans living in the northern part of the United States during that time, then it would be conceivable that materials from African American donors would not be represented in this collection. Table 2 below shows a comparison of population statistics, as collected by the Census Bureau, between the Northeast region and the United States as a whole in both 1960 and 1970. It is clear that the percentage of African Americans in the Northeast region of the United States is relatively insignificant as compared to the country as a whole both in 1960 and 1970. Though the percentage increases approximately two percentage points, perhaps due to a migration of African Americans to the North from the South during this decade of the Civil Rights era, the total percentage of this population remains fairly small.

Table 2

<i>Northeast Region</i>			<i>Nationwide</i>		
	White	Black		White	Black
1960	92.9%	6.8%	1960	88.6%	10.5%
1970	90.4%	8.9%	1970	87.5%	11.1%

Note. Data gathered from US Census Bureau, Sept. 2002

It is possible that the disparity in the percentage of these two groups explains why there are no materials donated by African Americans in the Civil Rights Movement Archive at Queens College. However, given the increase in population of African Americans by nearly two percent between 1960 and 1970, it would seem that there would be a greater likelihood of African American donors to the collection. Especially taking into consideration that the growth of the African American population in the Northeast corresponds with the decreased population of this group in the South during this time period, it would seem probable that individuals with materials relating to the events of the Civil Rights Movement in general, and Freedom Summer in particular, would be interested in donating their materials to institutions outside the South. Apparently, at least with this collection, that is not the case. As was true at Southern Miss, this may be because African Americans either did not have materials to donate to a collection, did have materials but did not think that anyone else would be interested in them, or they had materials but were untrusting of publicly funded institutions and what might happen to the items they donated.

#### *Location*

In addition to understanding the race of individuals who donated to the Civil Rights Movement Archive, it is helpful to know which part of the country they came from. While this information could not be easily assessed for all donors, it was clear for many of them through the biographic information available in their individual collections. Furthermore, given the fact that Special Collections has made special efforts to represent the perspective of the Northerner during the

Civil Rights Movement, it is fairly safe to assume that all donors to this collection are from the northern part of the country. The map below represents the states from which the three donors to the Freedom Summer sub-collection reported to be from.

Freedom Summer Donors' Reported Home States



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*Figure 9.* Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Home States. This map indicates the states from which volunteers indicated they came from. It does not indicate the number of people from each state, but only the presence of an individual who participated in Freedom Summer.

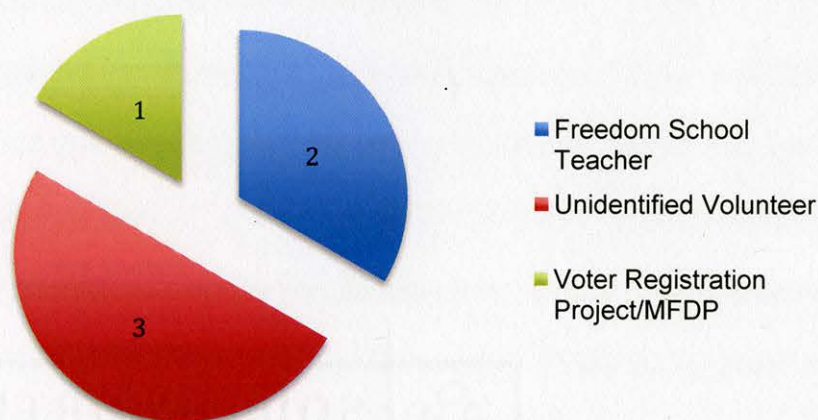
Based on information provided in the biographies of the individual donors, such as the fact that each of them attended Queens College, it is clear that the three donors who provided material to the Freedom Summer sub-collection are each from New York. This goes beyond ensuring that the perspective of

Northerners involved in the Civil Rights Movement is heard and clearly creates a bias in which only the voices of New Yorkers who attended Queens College are valued enough to be included in the collection. Again, while it is perfectly reasonable, and perhaps even expected, for collections to show some bias in terms of strength in a particular subject area, significant numbers of a particular kind of donor, etc., the lack of varied perspectives in this sub-collection is problematic. Essentially, the sample provided here for understanding Freedom Summer is so limited in size and scope that it is impossible to even come close to an accurate telling of this historical event. Any researcher who came to this collection looking for information about Freedom Summer would undoubtedly need to do further searching to gain a broader, more accurate perspective on the people and places involved and the ultimate effects the effort had.

#### *Role of the Donor*

Given the significantly limited availability of varied voices present in the Freedom Summer sub-collection, in terms of race and location of donor, it is valuable to assess the role these donors played in the event to determine whether any diversity is available in this aspect of the collection. This information will help the researcher further understand the perspective being given in the collection and why the events being relayed therein are expressed as they are. Of the six collections that make up the Freedom Summer sub-collection, two (33%) are from Freedom School Teachers, three (50%) from "unidentified volunteers," meaning simply that the activities in which the donor participated were not clearly indicated, and the last one (17%) worked on the Voter

Registration Project and canvassed for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Figure 10, below, shows a chart of these results. Unlike the race and location of donors of Freedom Summer materials, the role of these donors covers a relatively wide spectrum. Given the limited number of donors to this sub-collection, there are several different areas represented in terms of how the individuals actually participated in this event and, therefore, what the impact it had on them was.



*Figure 10.* Role Donor Played in Freedom Summer. This chart indicates how the individuals who participated in Freedom Summer were involved. Abbreviations: MFDP=Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Again, despite the fact that there is more diversity in the role of the donor than in race or location, there is still not a broad perspective available in this sub-collection. Perhaps the most significant voices, those of the students and voters who benefitted (theoretically) from the efforts of these volunteers, are not present. It could not be expected that materials from native Southerners would be found in this sub-collection as its focus is on the perspective of the Northerner. It is rather surprising, however, that so few viewpoints are actually

represented here. The addition of even one of these types of donors (in terms of the role they played) would help make the sub-collection much more information rich, more expansive and assuredly more relevant and reliable.

### *Analysis*

As with the Freedom Summer materials at Southern Miss, it is valuable to transition from focusing on the disparate parts within the sub-collection (race, location and role of donor) to determining what the collection as a whole is saying. By bringing what has been discovered about each aspect together within the greater context of the sub-collection as a whole, any biases, short-comings or great strengths of the corpus can be identified and an evaluation on how to improve its quality can be conducted. Finally, reviewing each piece of the sub-collection as it relates to all others puts together the story that the materials are telling about Freedom Summer and identifies which voices are present and which are either limited or altogether absent.

From the outset of the investigation into the Civil Rights Movement Archive at Queens College, it was obvious that a strong bias would be present due to the fact that one of the main goals of the archive is to present the perspective of the Northerner involved in events of this time period. This kind of collection development inherently excludes the voices of Southerners (and Westerners and Midwesterners for that matter). In addition, it severely limits the variety of materials available (according to the role of the donor) and quite likely reduces the diversity of the race of donors giving to this collection. It could be argued that these kinds of biases are not problematic as they are the result of the



stated goal of the archive. However, an acceptance of this kind of partiality is unfair as it does harm to the greater understanding of this time period and the events and individuals that were involved. Essentially one kind of person is describing Freedom Summer in this sub-collection: the White, Northern volunteer. Certainly the type of work each donor participated in varied, but not to such an extent that significantly different perspectives are available for consideration.

It can be supposed that the details of history available in archives, textbooks, etc. are true, and therefore meaningful with regard to accurately portraying events or time periods. As has been discussed, however, Foucault believes that truth is completely subjective and the perception of such is often dictated by those who hold power. In an interview entitled *Truth and Power* which is recorded in *The Foucault Reader* (2010), Foucault states that history is accounted for on the basis of power rather than that of meaning. He claims that

the history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. History has no 'meaning,' though this is not to say that it is absurd or incoherent. On the contrary, it is intelligible and should be susceptible to analysis down to the smallest detail. (p. 56)

History is not written to be meaningful for the sake of correctly depicting its events or effects. Rather, it is constructed based on relationships of power – the power of the winners versus the losers, those who have a voice versus those who do not. As Foucault points out, however, it is not sufficient to take

representations of history at face value, simply because they are not inherently bound with meaning. Analyzing accounts of historical events is necessary both to give meaning to what took place, and also to assess the accuracy of the depiction and what it means for society in the present. Furthermore, If truth is subjective because it is based on power relations, it is critical to understand who is telling the story and what is being said in order to assess which version of the truth is being told and how the power dynamic behind it influences the perception of truth and history.

Despite the fact that this archive is attempting to show an “alternative perspective” by focusing on the efforts of Northerners in the Civil Rights movement, there is a very evident power structure and bias in place here. The archivist may not have been fully cognizant of the implications such a focus would have on our collective understanding of history as written by those who hold the most power. Certainly the group that holds power, and therefore has a voice, may change according to differing circumstances and events throughout history. However, it is rare that a group not made up of, or at least lead by, those who are traditionally the most powerful have the most prominent voice and therefore get to shape how history is recorded and understood. In the case of the Freedom Summer sub-collection, the significant presence of the white Northern male perspective devalues the viewpoint of any other participant in this event and bolsters the notion that this particular perception of history is not only the most accurate, but also the most important.

## CHAPTER V

### THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ARCHIVING

As indicated in Chapter I, the literature concerning the politics of archiving is scant at best. Clearly, there exists plenty of literature in the corpus providing implications toward the affects archiving choices have on our understanding of history. However, direct studies and explorations on the subject do not seem to be a dominant subject. This study adds directly to our understanding of the political implications of archive development, specifically in terms of our societal understanding of Freedom Summer. In discovering and analyzing what kinds of materials exists in these archives, who donated to them and the role they played in the event, we are better equipped to determine what biases exist in the telling of history.

Conducting a scholarly analysis that identifies how our understanding of Freedom Summer is created and who is telling the story is necessary for fleshing out the most accurate version of available information. This study has illustrated that significant biases in archival collection development exist and impact how we come to explain the events of Freedom Summer. The implications for these findings are significant and should suggest to archivists that collection development policies need to be adjusted. In addition, these findings should serve as a warning to scholars that the politics of archiving have influenced what materials may be found in any collection and that they should proceed with caution as they conduct original research. Stories of these events often come from the works of researchers who study original materials and analyze them

according to their background and interests (already setting a bias for how we see Freedom Summer). Therefore, it is necessary to make these individuals aware that they may need to visit several different collections, and possibly even seek out non-traditional collections and sources, to develop the most accurate picture of the time period.

The question of why a particular donor gave his or her materials to one collection and not another is certainly interesting and not entirely outside the scope of this work. In fact, an understanding of how collections became what they are may help archivists understand both the politics associated with their collection methods as well as how they should focus their acquisition efforts in the future. However, having conducted the analyses outlined in Chapters III and IV, the question of what these collections mean, and what they can or will do in the future, is much more pertinent. The essential aim of this work is not so much to understand how archives became what they are, but where they are going, the effects that the politics of archiving have on what is being added to the collection, and how our social consciousness regarding the Civil Rights Movement, and Freedom Summer in particular, is shaped by the information available in these collections. In order to find the most accurate and complete answers to these questions, it is necessary to put the collections in conversation with one another. This will more clearly develop the perspective of each archive, bring to light biases that may otherwise be obscured and, perhaps, help bridge some of the gaps left by the other collection.

## Similarities

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Freedom Summer sub-collections at Southern Miss and Queens College share several important similarities, though the aspects that these collections have in common are significantly fewer than those on which they differ.

### *Digitization*

First, and most unexpectedly, is the way in which these collections were selected for digitization. Of all the special collections that the archives departments of these two institutions have, the Civil Rights collections at both were selected for early digitization projects. At Southern Miss, the curators realized the significance of their materials on a broad scope and wanted to provide greater access to these items. Certainly this time period is particularly important to the South, and the events of Freedom Summer took place on a very local scale. Because of these factors, it made perfect sense to digitize this collection and make it available to a wider community.

For Queens College, it was not immediately clear that the Civil Rights Collection was the ideal place for the archive to start its digitization efforts. However, after a fairly cursory analysis, it became clear that this was exactly what should be done. Not only would this make the Civil Rights (and Freedom Summer) materials easily accessible, it would also help the archive fulfill its mission of engaging the community with the items found in the collection. These complimentary goals shared by Southern Miss and Queens College also suggest the significance in the politics of archiving. As Derrida theorized, the archive

exists at the original place of memory (where the structural breakdown begins). Given this, providing fairly open access to original documents concerned with this time period allows better insight not only into the event, but also into the archive. Referring directly to source materials leaves out interpretation by a third (or fourth or fifth) party and allows the researcher to draw conclusions based on what was actually documented. As discussed before, this does not necessarily ensure that the researcher will be presented with completely unbiased materials that accurately represent the events. However, this does provide greater opportunity for discovering the truth.

Finally, as each archive continues its collection development efforts and receives new materials, there will be items that are present in the collection but have not yet been digitized. For studies concerning digitized materials, or for scholars that are unable to travel to the collections, but rather rely on what they can find online, this will influence how each collection is perceived. For instance, if the curators of each of these collections made efforts to increase materials from African American donors, but were unable to digitize these materials for several months, researchers would likely assume that such items simply aren't present. This would then influence the picture the individual creates of the event (as presented by the collection) and ultimately affect how the historical story is written. Each archive would be wise to note whether digitization efforts are still in progress and should certainly provide finding aides with information about what is in the collection, regardless of whether it is available electronically.

### *Native Southerner Donors*

The next similarity between these two archives is the overall lack of donations either institution received from native Southerners. In a reference question directed to the curator of the archive at Southern Miss concerning this issue, it was indicated that one possible reason that African Americans have not donated materials to that collection is because they have mistrust for institutions receiving government funding (D. Ross, personal communication, 2009). Given the general attitude of mistrust held by those who participated in the Civil Rights Movement and Freedom Summer in the South, it seemed reasonable that more materials concerning this era might be found at locations in the North. With the worry that items donated to an institution that received state funding may "disappear" if they reflected poorly on the government, it is not surprising that so few native Southerners donated these items to Southern Miss. The assistant curator also indicated that, perhaps as a result of this mistrust, it is possible that many potential donors are holding their materials until they can be donated to the Civil Rights museum that is currently being built in Hattiesburg (C. Lawler, personal communication, March 20, 2012).

If the collections at Queens College are any indication, however, it would appear that there was no greater comfort in donating materials to either location. However, in answer to a reference question regarding the lack of donations from African Americans at Queens College, the project manager for the Civil Rights archive indicated a possible explanation for the disparity, as well as a working plan to correct the issue. As the collection is relatively new and the collection

development strategies not yet clearly defined. At present, donations are largely solicited by other donors who participated in Freedom Summer and have already given their materials to the collection. As collection development continues to grow, the project manager is working with other campus groups to acquire collections from the point of view of students of color who led diversity initiatives on campus during the Civil Rights movement. (A. Tummino, personal communication, March 14, 2012)

#### *African American Donors*

Analogously, these collections have surprisingly few donations from African Americans (from the South or elsewhere), with only four donating to Southern Miss and one to Queens College. Chomsky might identify this as the futility of "speaking truth to power," in that African Americans might have felt that their contributions would not have been accepted or appreciated by those creating the historical record. This, despite the fact that by the end of the Civil Rights Movement, that group probably exercised more power and authority than ever before in this country. Beyond this, it is difficult to imagine why so few materials on this topic were provided by African Americans to either collection. It is certainly possible that there are copious amounts of items at other institutions that were not examined in this work. It could be that African Americans have tried to donate materials that have been rejected for various reasons. Or perhaps members of this group have not realized the significance their items have in terms of telling this history, and therefore, collection development from



this population has been scarce. In any case, it is the obligation of the archivist to ensure that a comprehensive accounting of history is available.

### Differences

#### *Mission of the Collection*

To be sure, the missions of the archives at Southern Miss and Queens College are both quite narrowly focused. However, their disparate goals have drastically dissimilar effects on the potential collection development policies of each. According to the Historical Manuscript Collections division at Southern Miss, the mission is to “document the history of the state of Mississippi by acquiring, preserving and providing access to primary source materials” (2010, para. 1) - a general enough statement that could ring true for any historical archive. That the focus is on Mississippi history, though this is not uncommon, does drastically limit the types of materials that might be accepted. Mission statements such as this provide very little direction in terms of adopting a collection development policy. This may cause such policies to change from one curator to the next without much formal revision, thereby shifting the focus of the collection as well as the types of materials gathered.

The collection at Queens College faces rather the opposite problem. As Drs. Alexander and Ng explained, the objective they were largely focused on, when building the institutional Civil Rights collection, was the perspective of Northerners who participated in the movement. While this does not necessarily influence the donor base in terms of race or the role played in the Freedom Summer, it absolutely limits who can or will donate and makes the viewpoint

available in the collection essentially one dimensional. Despite this significant limitation, however, there is still very little direction provided in terms of a collection development policy. Does the Northerner only include those who were born and raised in the northern part of the United States, or would the materials of someone who was born in the North but moved to the South as a teenager be accepted? Certainly these are the kinds of questions the archivists need to address as they develop a collection development policy, while taking into consideration the mission of the Civil Rights collection.

#### *Location of the Archives*

It goes without saying that New York and Mississippi are quite distant in nearly every way, including geographically. The two locations also differed dramatically in their direct relationship to Freedom Summer. While this event was based in Mississippi and the citizens of the towns in which volunteers focused their work were (hopefully) the recipients of these efforts, it was from New York that a large number of volunteers, for which records are available in these archives, came. It is not particularly surprising that so many of the Freedom Summer volunteers came from the North, since they were likely not directly involved in the Civil Rights struggle on the same level that individuals in the South may have been. In this respect, it may have been easier for them to attempt to change the environment. Given this, it is appropriate to have a Civil Rights Archive, and also Freedom Summer materials, located at Queens College as well as at Southern Miss.

What makes this particularly interesting is analyzing the differences in the materials found at each collection and considering what the correlation to its location might be. It may be expected that more non-African Americans would donate to the archive at Queens College because so many Freedom Summer volunteers were from that area. However, this does not resolve the question of why there were no African American donors to the sub-collection at all. The mission of the archive to support the Northern perspective of the Civil Rights Movement does not inherently negate the viewpoint of the African American.

Analogously, the location of the collection at Southern Miss may presuppose the presence of certain kinds of materials from particular groups. Given the population statistics provided in Chapters Three and Four, it could be assumed that there would be a greater number of African American donors to the Southern Miss Freedom Summer sub-collection than was found at Queens College. It is surprising, then, that despite the fact that approximately one-fifth of the population of the southern region in the 1960s was African American, there are so few materials from donors of this group in the Southern Miss collection. Instead, the presence of materials from white donors from the North who volunteered during Freedom Summer dominates this archive. It is certainly true that more African American donors gave materials to the Southern Miss collection, however, the differential in percentage between the two archives is relatively slight. While this lack of African American representation in and of itself is akin to the Queens College collection, the fact that the locations of the archives

are so disparate still does supposed that different populations would be represented in each.

#### *Overall Size and Scope of the Collection*

While both of the collections and sub-collections analyzed contained similarities in terms of content, the size and scope of each is dramatically different. The Freedom Summer sub-collection at Southern Miss contains thousands of individual items on topics that range from photos of volunteers and Freedom School students to brochures and fliers printed by COFO and CORE to information about the Medical Committee for Human Rights. Despite the fact that the donor base and perspective is quite limited, the overall size and scope of these materials is impressive. Additionally, the percentage of Freedom Summer materials within the Civil Rights collection generally is quite significant. Again referring back to Chapter III, items related to Freedom Summer make up 48 percent of the entire Civil Rights collection. Clearly this event plays a significant role in the general structure of the collection.

The Freedom Summer sub-collection at Queens College is significantly smaller and more narrowly focused. There are even fewer subject areas from which to draw materials for the sub-collection, such as CORE and the Mississippi Freedom Project, and the types of materials found in each of these is not considerable in terms of quantity. In total there are far fewer items in the Queens College Freedom Summer sub-collection, with only about 100. This sub-collection in its entirety makes up only about 10% of the total number of items found in that of Southern Miss. Furthermore, the sub-collection only makes up

33 percent of the total Civil Rights Movement Archive at Queens College. While this is certainly a substantial portion of the larger collection and should be noted as a topic of major interest, the overall quantity of Freedom Summer materials is less significant here than at Southern Miss.

#### *Sustainability of Digitization Efforts*

Digitization of the materials in each of these collections is not only exciting, but important in terms of creating access for the greatest number of users. The respective methods by which Southern Miss and Queens College completed these projects, however, are quite different and impact the sustainability of continuing digitization efforts. At Southern Miss, the archivist depended on grant funding to begin processing the collection in this way. There is no indication additional support staff were hired to aid in the project, so the digitization and creating of metadata for these items would have to be completed as current staff is able to make time to do so. Due to these limitations, as well as the considerable size of the collection, complete digitization of all Civil Rights collection materials generally, and Freedom Summer sub-collection materials in particular, is potentially unsustainable.

Queens College, however, is taking a very different approach to the digitization of their Civil Rights collection. Working together with the Graduate School for Library and Information Science, the Special Collections department created internship opportunities for students to work on digitizing these materials. Not only do students scan items and create metadata, they also maintain the website used to access items once they have been digitized. By pooling

resources, using a relatively limitless labor pool and not relying heavily on external funding, the potential for ongoing digitization of the Freedom Summer and Civil Rights collections is much greater. This gives Queens College much greater potential for quickly expanding their holdings on these subjects and making them accessible to users more quickly and effectively.

### Political Implications

While analysis has been completed for each of these sub-collections, it is useful to understand the political implications, both individually and together, of the materials contained within them. That is, politically speaking, how does each archive impact our social consciousness with regard to the Civil Rights Movement and Freedom Summer, and what do the two sub-collections together say? Unfortunately, the sub-collections at both Southern Miss and Queens College present very biased viewpoints that do not provide a broad (and potentially not an accurate) representation of Freedom Summer. Since each of these sub-collections is made up primarily of materials from white Northerners who participated as volunteers during Freedom Summer, they all but disregard the perspective of other groups and individuals involved in this event. If we knew nothing to the contrary, we could almost assume that the donor groups represented were the only ones involved in Freedom Summer at all.

The political implications of this, especially when taken in the context of the theorists discussed in Chapter II, are significant. While African Americans may have made up the majority in terms of which groups were in some way participants in Freedom Summer, it is those with the greatest amount of political

capital that have created the story of this event. It is true that many African Americans gained social and political power during the Civil Rights movement and, within the context of the time period, could even have been considered in the majority. However, the lack of materials available either from or about African Americans involved in Freedom Summer denies that group the opportunity to tell their experiences in their own words, thereby disallowing them from cultivating political power.

This is not to say that the perspectives made available through the materials donated by white Northern volunteers is inaccurate. It simply is not complete. For Foucault, this is significant in terms of the idea that discourses are owned by those who write them. If the discourse of Freedom Summer is written by those who volunteered to try and change the social environment in the South, then those groups own how the history of that event is told. This necessitates that those who were supposed to be benefitting from the changes, i.e. the native Southerner and African American, are excluded from contributing to the discourse. The result is that their stories will either remain entirely untold, or that those who are able to contribute to the discourse will do so at the pleasure of those who own it.

Furthermore, Derrida's belief that archives are inherently inaccurate and devoid of lasting meaning is upheld due to the existence of these biases. Perhaps, for Derrida, these biases should not matter if archives are inherently unreliable in terms of creating meaning and cannot serve as lasting memory. And, to be sure, any memory, even temporarily created from a biased

perspective, would be unstable as it attempted to apply meaning to the subject of the archive. However, this does not necessarily mean that an attempt should not be made to accurately establish the context of the event (another important factor for Derrida), so those who do look on it as memory will be misled as little as possible.

#### Adaptation of Collection Development

In order to assuage the potential effects that the currently skewed perspective of these sub-collections presents, redefined collection development policies should be implemented and followed. Although members of the Political Science field may not be familiar with library goals and strategies in terms of determining how collections will be defined, collaboration between the two entities could prove very valuable in appropriately expanding the available perspectives. Political Scientists familiar with Freedom Summer may not only be able to advocate areas that would be particularly interesting or relevant to members of this subject area, but may also have contacts in the community that could readily provide materials to the collection. Since it is the responsibility of the archive not only to accumulate information and attempt to create an institutional memory (as much as an archive can do this), but also to serve the patrons who will be utilizing the collection, creating this kind of relationship would likely prove incredibly valuable.

Similarly, archivists could benefit from identifying and working with community archives that have significant Freedom Summer collections. Individuals that may have been hesitant to donate materials to an institutional



archive may have sought alternatives, such as community archives. These collections are far less likely to receive government funding or be subject to the disappearance of materials that do not reflect well on those in power. Curators working in community archives may have much closer relationships with their donors, and the collections are likely to be fairly small and well focused. While community archives would be unlikely to give their materials to institutions such as Southern Miss or Queens College, a working relationship could certainly be formed in which patrons of either archive could be referred to the other for additional information. Each could benefit from an expanded patron base, potential new donors and the support and advice of archivists collecting materials in the same area. This kind of collaborative effort could further result in the ability to collect an even broader range of materials, as each archive could focus on particular areas rather than duplicating efforts or pursuing the same donors.

Creating opportunities for the curator to go out into the community and cultivate relationships with individuals who are connected to Freedom Summer would prove invaluable in increasing both the number and types of donors to the sub-collection. Participation in Civil Rights movement celebrations, creation of Freedom Summer exhibits and even sponsorship of events related to this era would attract members of the community and potential donors, as well as show the commitment of the archive to this subject. In addition, creating a space in which individuals could share their stories, without having to make a special trip to the library, could encourage people to participate in creating the history of Freedom Summer when they would not have otherwise.

### Opportunities for Further Study

The scope of this project necessitates limiting the breadth of areas covered. However, there are additional areas that should be explored for additional understanding of the politics of archiving. More extensive studies may well include an expansion of the types of donor groups. In addition to race, location and role of donor, analysis could include gender, religious affiliation, education level and area of employment for donors. Each of these factors could impact the importance individuals place on preserving materials, thereby illuminating the question of who donates to archives.

Next, collection analysis should be extended to additional institutions. The comparison here of two institutions is useful and provides a good baseline with which to draw initial conclusions about the materials in and implications of Freedom Summer sub-collections. However, including several institutions from the North and South, and even looking to archives in the Midwest and West, would create a more complete understanding of who donates items and where they are placed. Similarly, broadening the materials analyzed to include more events related to the Civil Rights movement might completely change the composition of history being told.

A comparison of community archives, academic archives and local or state archives would identify whether certain kinds of materials or donors are more likely to be found in a particular organization. Perhaps the native Southerners give to community archives, while volunteers during Freedom Summer give to academic archives and scholars give to state archives. Even the

discovery that a particular group was not donating to any of these areas would be valuable information that a curator could use moving forward with their collection development.

Additional research could be conducted concerned with the factors that caused individuals to donate (or not) to a particular archive. This would likely require identifying members of the community who were involved in Freedom Summer and discussing their experiences during the event, their feelings about archives and what, if anything, would contribute to their decision about donating. While this work emphasized the implications of what is present in collections currently, rather than trying to determine the factors that influenced how collections were created, this kind of information would be valuable in navigating any political barriers to collection development.

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