

Tierra M. Thomas. A Case Study of the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library Conscious Editing Initiative and Steering Committee. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. May 2020. 45 pages. Advisor: Megan Winget

The purpose of this study is to examine the Conscious Editing Initiative and Steering Committee at the UNC Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library. The project spurred from efforts in the library's technical services department to improve inadequate description of materials in finding aids that tended to venerate white supremacists and dehumanize marginalized peoples. The steering committee, while still developing, is broadening and expanding its goals from the original re-description project. By examining the Conscious Editing Initiative and Steering Committee, exploring its development, goals, and current progress, this case study will illuminate a possible solution to addressing problematic archival description. This solution will be revealed through an examination of the literature, interviews with open-ended questions, and materials related to the committee. This study is intended to have an impact on the literature which is slowly developing in this area.

Headings:

Archives

Finding aids (Library Resources)

Archival Materials

Cataloging of archival materials

Technical services (Libraries)

Archival Materials -- Processing

Archives – Processing

Technical processing (Archives)

A CASE STUDY OF THE LOUIS ROUND WILSON SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
LIBRARY

by

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Introduction

On August 21, 2018, the night before the first day of the fall semester, protestors and student activists tied ropes around ‘Silent Sam’ the confederate monument on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill campus and pulled it to the ground successfully toppling the statue after decades of debate not just between students and the university administration but with faculty, staff, the Chapel Hill community, alumni, and North Carolina lawmakers. (James & Blinder, 2018). It seemed almost that the tearing down of the monument would be the endpoint of the decades-long debate, instead it was followed up by multiple failed plans by the administration and more disappointment in their lack of action surrounding the monument. As the administration scrambled to make a decision on what to do with Silent Sam now that it had been pulled down, concern grew in the Louis Round Wilson Special Collections Library, that university officials would create a plan for Silent Sam to be stored there either in the closed stacks or on public display. Librarians and archivists quickly came together to sign a statement that they would not stand for the statue taking up a permanent home in any of the libraries on campus. In the statement, staff agreed that there was an inherent danger in housing the confederate monument; that in housing Silent Sam the library could become a frequently visited place for white supremacist groups and an unwelcome territory for researchers, especially African American researchers. (Forte, 2018).

During this time an increased amount of research about the Confederate Monument occurred. Activist groups, students, professors, and other researchers on campus became interested in the origin of the monument. Groups on Twitter used historical research to illustrate how the monument was steeped in racism and was not aligned with the current values of the university; therefore, its removal was unavoidable. (Silent Sam's Reckoning, 2018). Meanwhile, archivists were having increased conversation about finding aid remediation. Archivists from a number of institutions including Princeton and the University of Texas at Austin presented to the Society of American Archivists a number of case studies from their institution where problematic description, offensive language used to describe something, was used in collection inventories or finding aids and to describe objects. (Tang, Berry, Bolding, et al., 2018). Along with a number of other tumultuous events around the country including the rise in white supremacy and ahistoricism due to the election of Donald Trump to the president of the United States (L. Hart, Interview, 2020), this created the perfect atmosphere for archivists in the Wilson Special Collections Library to begin addressing problematic description in their archival holdings.

To make collections available, archival description is the main way archivists communicate what a collection contains and what it is about. But as language changes and what is considered culturally acceptable changes, archival description presents a problem for the archivists who create it. Description created for finding aids or collection inventories may include the abstract, historical or biographical note, scope and content note, description of individual series or subseries, and the list of materials in the described collection. Description can become problematic for a number of reasons

including, but not limited to, idolizing those who have historically harmed others, homogenize ethnic groups, or contain slurs without warning or context.

Discussions about problematic description had been happening not only in Wilson Library's technical services department, but also in the reading room where archivists' in the research and instruction section were often faced with descriptive issues and concerns from researchers and students. Those concerns were often funneled from research and instruction to technical services where those specific concerns were addressed and remediated (J. Dean, Interview, 2020). While those specific concerns were addressed, members of the technical services department sensed a need for a larger-scale project that would remediate legacy finding aids in their holdings, they did not know where to begin with the hundreds of collections in their possession (J. Dean, Interview, 2020). While they were not sure where to begin, they started a Slack channel where they would trade journal articles, news articles and other relevant resources they came across that could help them begin this undertaking. Once traction picked up on campus with Silent Sam, it seemed like a good time to start engaging more with these issues.

Archivists in technical services knew that many finding aids in the Southern Historical Collection, one collecting unit of the Wilson Library, tended to venerate white supremacists and dehumanize marginalized peoples. Laura Hart looked at the Julian Shakespeare Carr papers, the papers of a white supremacist who spoke at the dedication of Silent Sam. The original abstract of the finding aid venerated him as university official, but after delving deeper into the papers it was revealed he held white supremacist views. She presented this case study to the rest of the Wilson Library departments through a learning forum and this introduced the Conscious Editing Initiative to people

outside of technical services. It was relatively well-received by the library and garnered more interest and discussion. In August 2019, the head of the special collections library, Maria Estorino, established the Conscious Editing Steering Committee and charged them with the task of supporting conscious editing work in technical services and connecting it to larger trends in the profession and expanding it through the library (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2019). There arose a want to make conscious editing an ethos or way of life for the University Libraries, so members were selected across different units in Wilson Library and at least two members were selected from the Davis Library to begin achieving some pan-departmental thought and collaboration. The committee and initiative are ongoing, intertwined projects that are still developing, expanding and broadening its goals from the original re-description work, but in some ways, work has slowed in technical services as members of the department await guidance from the committee and more opportunities for collaboration.

This paper will explore the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Steering Committee exploring its development, goals, and current progress. By examining this specific instance, this study is intended to illuminate a possible solution to addressing problematic archival description. Though problematic description has emerged as an issue for the field of archival studies, only in recent years has much work been released that moves from theoretical to practical application. While this study intends to present solutions, it is in no way exhaustive nor intended to be generalizable in the field but serves as an example to address this issue where a gap in the literature exists.

Literature Review

Intentional ethical practice in archives is not a relatively new idea. Scholars in the field have been discussing using archives for social justice and thinking about casting out antiquated ideas of neutrality for the last several years. Practical application of these ideas on a large scale is often harder to come by in the literature. A notable amount of work discusses the need for archivists to acknowledge their power in recordkeeping and address the bias they bring to their work. There is also, a body of literature that has begun to question the standards of provenance and respect des fonds and looks into how these two standards of archival description and arrangement can have a negative impact on the often-unseen contributors to archival collections. Increasingly, scholars are exploring cultural theory by applying critical race theory, disability studies, and queer theory to description and arrangement of archival collections. Additionally, the literature focuses on ways that archival institutions should and can build their own codes of ethics and considers how feminist ethics are useful to the profession as a whole. Lastly, a small section of the literature looks at how folks are applying these ideas in their own institutional repositories. Much of the literature points to the foundational principles of archival practice as inadequate for the field's current status; arguably the thoughts expressed throughout point to description remediation as a solution.

Power and Neutrality

To understand why description remediation is necessary it is important to consider the context in which finding aids have been created. The field of archives was established with the need for unbiased professionals who could present the historical facts free of opinion. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). Neutrality requires archivists to be void of opinion and emotion, but this is an impossible feat. People inherently have their own worldview, a conglomerate of biases, ideas, and opinions that are shaped by the way they have experienced the world and it further shapes the way they do anything including organizing and describing information, and deciding what is factual and how to represent it. It has been through the neutral lens that archivists have made decisions about their collections and collecting policies; therefore, making decisions about what neutral even looks like which in itself is not neutral. Historically, archives were set up to represent people in powerful positions (Schwartz and Cook, 2002) and archivists end up upholding those power structures by taking what appears to be a neutral stance. (Wright, 2019). In situations where we do not call out abusers because we intend to maintain neutrality, we end up holding the bad behavior not as good but also not as bad. (Jules, 2016; Poole, 2014). This is where neutrality becomes a myth; by trying to be neutral we actually end up picking a side.

In this section of literature, the authors argue that archivists should stop trying to attain neutrality because it is a truly unattainable standard; instead, they recommend that practitioners employ their biases in their work. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002) Employing bias starts by recognizing that it is there and understanding how it has affected the decisions that have been made. Being transparent with patrons and colleagues about the

decisions that went into collecting, arranging, and describing a collection and allowing oneself to be questioned in those decisions makes for a more inclusive archive. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002). Pointing out when something is harmful and avoiding aggrandizing language (Wright, 2019) is another way archivists can begin to not only cast away the myth of neutrality but also move away from upholding these power structures. But most fundamentally archivists have to begin recognizing their own bias and how it contributes to their work. To truly move away from the myth of neutrality archivists have to be open to being challenged, have their decision transparent and open to questioning. (Schwartz and Cook, 2002).

Some of the literature also focuses on recognizing description and other archival processes as adding layers; that the process itself is storytelling. (Duff and Harris, 2002; Wagner, 2017). This work sees description especially as a rhetorical genre that provides context for the time in which the description is written and that it is an ever-changing body. Authors argue that seeing the finding aid as a tool for storytelling allowing a deeper examination of how they are being used to reach some mean. (Macneil, 2012). There is an inherent need for professionals in the field to reevaluate how they view their work. Cook and Schwartz (2002) namely recommend that professionals see the power their work has over historical memory.

Rethinking archival practice

There is an ever-growing body of literature that generally focuses on throwing out the rule book of archives and reframing it to better serve the standards we have today. As discussed in the earlier section, archives emerged out of a need for a profession that would present the facts of history, it came with two main principles that would, in theory,

keep archivists neutral: respect des fonds, which in the arrangement of a collection honors original order; and provenance, a practice which determines the ownership over records. (Bailey, 2013). The literature increasingly acknowledges these principles as problematic and that some new practice needs to be put into place or rather that multiple practices need to be applied to make archives more open and inclusive of different cultures and collections that have multiple creators.

Provenance requires that archivists accept an individual, family, or organization as the creator of the records and the acceptance of who gets the rights as owner over the collection is typically determined according to the donor's information about the collection. But what of collections that include records created by others but collected or even stolen by the donor? Anne Gilliland (2012) challenges provenance suggesting co-creator rights as a solution to existing silences in the archives that have resulted from following a provenance practice that prioritizes the point of view of a single creator. Looking at three civil rights collections, Nathan Sowry (2014) also suggests a broader descriptive practice that prioritizes multiple versions of the same events instead of accepting a single version as fact. (Sowry, 2014). Lastly, Jarrett M. Drake (2016) argues that as more and more digital records are created provenance becomes an increasingly useless organizing method as it does not account for co-created records made using collaboration tools such as Google Drive (Drake, 2016).

In addition, literature in this section suggests a new goal for archives which is to support social justice work as opposed to being a site for what has been determined factual information. (Cifor et al., 2014) This is not only a suggestion for moving away completely from neutrality, but also as a fundamental rethinking of how archives should

be curated and organized. Authors suggest moving away from provenance and by prioritizing the voices of the marginalized they can begin to repair the years of oppression through silences and upholding of power structures. (Hughes-Watkins, 2018). Caswell and Ghaddar (2019) go even further to suggest a truly decolonial practice that would require multiple frameworks of organization and being more community-inclusive fundamentally changing the role of archivists as guardians over collections to community partners. Douglas, J., Bak, G., McLellan, E., van Hooland, S., and Frogner, R. (2018) suggest linked data as a tool to include the community and create a way for a pluralistic provenance to exist so that moving forward multiple voices get to narrate the story the collection tells.

Unfortunately, some archivists push back against having a social justice framework or even supporting social justice work in archival practice. Archivists like Mark Greene (2013) and more recently Frank Boles (2019) argue against the utility of having a social justice imperative as a part of the archival practice. Boles largely argues against social justice as an archival imperative because he believes it to be unsustainable financially. (Boles, 2019, p. 10.). He also argues that the social justice imperative forces archivists to choose a side which might not be favorable with the general public such as the very divisive topic of abortion. (Boles, 2019, p. 10.). However, I believe he misses the point that the point of the social justice imperative is to pick a side and address that archivists do not exist in the middle of the road or neutrally.

Cultural studies

Ways to improve archival work is largely interdisciplinary; authors in the field have begun to look to various cultural studies to provide a framework for improvement to

the field. These theories include critical race theory, critical disability studies, and queer theory. These works examine how archival processing including collecting, arranging and describing uphold structures that further marginalize historically marginalized groups. In these works, authors use theory to suggest improvements to the field, typically from a user standpoint but also, they illuminate possible frameworks for practice. Using models in disability studies Sara White suggests a framework outside of provenance that better presents collections about or created by disabled people. (White, 2012). Brilmeyer (2018), through a critical disability studies lens, returns to discussions of how archival practice has inherent power and that the decisions of curators from appraisal to finding aid creation are politicized. Finally, through critical queer theory authors discuss the lack of queer voices in archives hold up traditional power structures but through queer theory, collections benefit from elevated description that provides new meaning. (Rawson, 2009; Baucom, 2018; Cifor, 2016; Zepeda, 2018).

Ethics

In this section of the literature, the authors propose different codes of ethics as a way to make improvements to archival work. Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor explore relationships that arise between archivists, donors, creators, users and subjects and how through feminist theory and affect theory archivists play a role that puts them in a powerful position requiring them to make empathetic considerations in acquiring and processing collections (Caswell and Cifor, 2016; Cifor, 2016). Empathy requires that archivists attempt to view how their work impacts everyone involved in the process and that they see themselves as caregivers for the records and those involved. One related work analyzes professional codes of ethics themselves. (Da Silva et al., 2015). This study

reveals that most archival codes of ethics deal with ethical issues at every step of collections processing. Finally, some of the literature examines the ethicality of digital archives and uses of information technology but for the purposes of this work, it has been excluded. In this relatively vast body, little work focuses on the use of Encoded Archival Description (EAD). Jane Zhang (2012) discussed the ethics of digital representation and description questioning the authenticity of separated systems and digital description.

Case studies

There is little published work on the large-scale re-description projects other institutions are taking, but practical applications of the theory and description remediation is happening. Most recently archivists at the UCLA Special Collections started a project auditing euphemistic description of collections on the experiences of Japanese Americans during World War II (Dean, 2019). Arizona State University took up a project describing six collections in Spanish and English in order to make them more accessible to their community. (Dunham and Flores, 2014). The University of Alberta Libraries have launched a full-scale decolonial project to fix colonial description in their holdings. (Farnel et al., 2018). As mentioned, there are few practical applications of the theory in the field but institutions are implementing their own projects with goals to improve their collections and better represent their collections. There are many different ways these goals are being met. Even re-description projects have an array of modes of tackling these issues including decolonization of language, bilingual descriptions, and reconsidering the voice used in creating description, but these studies point to a need for further research in this area.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Problematic description, that being description that tends to be offensive in nature, has emerged as an issue in the field of archival studies. While archivists have been addressing this issue, not much work in the literature has moved from the theoretical to practical solutions to large-scale problematic description. This paper will explore the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Initiative and Steering Committee exploring its development, goals, and current progress. By examining this specific instance, this study is intended to illuminate possible solutions to problematic archival description. These solutions could include a number of different smaller projects such as editing finding aids, using subject headings creatively, engaging more with local communities, or supporting activist work. In presenting solutions this study is in no way exhaustive nor intended to be generalizable in the field, but it serves as an example to address this issue where a gap in the literature exists.

A number of terms are key to this study; these include access, archival description, conscious, inclusive or ethical language, description remediation, decolonization, provenance, and respect des fonds. The most fundamental goal of archivists is to make the materials they collect accessible. Access can be defined as being able to successfully find information through the use of finding aids or other tools (Pearce-Moses, 2005). Throughout this study, access will be the driving force of why this work is being done. Archival description, the collection of information about a record or

group of records typically shared in the finding aid (Pearce-Moses, 2005), is used to convey what is in a collection to people who want access to it. Archival description is the main form in which archivists make materials accessible in their reading rooms. Sometimes that description can be inadequate or even problematic especially as language changes and evolves. Description remediation is the process where archivists change the old language used. Conscious, ethical, or inclusive language is the solution. It is language that recognizes the experiences of people especially those who have been historically excluded or marginalized. (Lexico, 2019). Using language consciously means to carefully select it especially considering the context in which it is being used. (Conscious Style Guide, 2019).

Aside from the language, it is key to understand the foundations of archival practice, those being provenance and respect des fonds. Provenance refers to the individual, family or organization that created, received, or collected the items in a collection. (Pearce-Moses, 2005). Respect des fonds is another foundational principle that says collections should stay arranged in the original order or an order that reflects the individual, family, or organization that created the materials. (Daniels, 1984). Also, relevant here is the concept of decolonization which in this context refers to the nature of archives as a colonial practice. (Caswell and Ghaddar, 2019). To decolonize this practice is to challenge these practices by better representing Indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups.

Methodology

This research study will use the qualitative method of a case study to explore the work of the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Steering Committee. This approach is being used because the study is contingent on examining one specific instance in order to propose one possible way of addressing problematic description, practices, and enacting a large-scale project to address the issues. The literature pointed to a lack of large-scale ethical re-description projects happening in the field and being reported back although in recent months since the beginning of this research project many have joined the effort in looking at the legacy finding aids in their collections and trying their hand at redescription. To explore the development, goals, and current progress of the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Steering Committee interviews of three members will be conducted to gain background information and gauge the status of the committee. Analysis of these interviews and documents related to the committee will illuminate a possible solution to addressing problematic archival description. While this study intends to present solutions, it is in no way exhaustive nor intended to be generalizable in the field but serves as an example to address this issue where a gap in the literature exists.

Positionality and Researcher Role

In this study, as the researcher, my role is to collect vital information from interviews with steering committee members and other information related to the project such as edited finding aids, documentation, and presentations relevant to the project.

Combined with literature in the field I will discuss the goals and current progress of the Conscious Editing Steering Committee as a possible solution for starting a large-scale project to address problematic archival description. As an employee of the Louis Round Wilson Library and a member of the Conscious Editing Steering Committee, I must recognize my own bias in this study. Even before engaging more fully with the materials, I already have my own assumptions about the work of the committee and the people doing this work. In this study, I will be transparent about those biases and how they shape the conclusions I will draw.

Context and Research Participants

To understand the context in which the Conscious Editing Committee has emerged it is important to look back at the history of Wilson Library. In the 1930s and 1940s “J. G. de Roulhac Hamilton roamed the South... scooping up the papers hidden away in attics and decaying mansions and saving them from the ever-present threat of rats and fire.” (Dowd Hall, 2005, p. 2). In his quest he was seen as a radical, people said essentially, he was stealing these records as most archives were state-run. (Dowd Hall, 2005, p. 3). What is most important about these origins of the library is the time period in which they happened. The United States had dealt with the civil war and the period of Reconstruction which to a lot of white southern men, this felt like a time of complete unrest. Hamilton was among this group, and when order restored with the establishment of Jim Crow laws he set out to create “the Southern Historical Collection—a specifically southern archive—as Hamilton explained it, was to ‘make possible [a] fresh interpretation of the nation’s history.’” (Dowd Hall, 2005, p. 5). This was a version that obscured the past and privileged the wealthy white southerners he set out to serve.

While the Wilson Library was built in 1929 to replace the original Carnegie Library, it contains materials that date back to the establishment of the University of North Carolina in 1789 (Hewitt, 2004). Today archivists of the library-maintained collections far beyond Hamilton's original vision and provide access to hundreds of collections and take in thousands of new items each year. The collections document not only the university but also the major historical movements happening in the south and the United States since the late eighteenth century. Due to the controversial nature of many of the events that make up those movements, archivists at the Wilson Library are presented with the challenge to best represent those materials with respect to all the people represented within. The participants of this study all have experience dealing with this challenge.

The participants of the study will be three members of the Conscious Editing Steering Committee at the Wilson Library. The committee is made up of two co-chairs and six other members. To explore the development, goals, and current progress of the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Steering Committee interviews of three members were conducted to gain background information and gauge the status of the committee. These three members were chosen because of their roles in the committee and connections with the Conscious Editing Initiative. All interviewees were chosen because they have been on the committee since it first began and at least two of those interviewed had also been involved in the beginning of the Conscious Editing Initiative in technical services. The researcher decided these members might have more first-hand experience with the beginnings of the committee since they participated in the projects from the beginning. Secondly, two of the interviewees were acting co-chairs of the committee and may have

some extra information from planning meeting agendas. The third interviewee was interviewed because they were also the active Head of Archival Processing Section, a subsection of the technical services department, in addition to being a member of the committee.

Data Collection Methods

Conducting Interviews. In order to gain an understanding of the Conscious Editing Steering Committee's background, goals, and current progress, the researcher will conduct interviews with three members of the committee. These three members were chosen because of their roles in the committee and connections with the Conscious Editing Initiative. All interviewees were chosen because they have been on the committee since its inception and might have more first-hand experience with the beginnings of the committee. Secondly, two of the interviewees were acting co-chairs of the committee and may have some extra information from planning meeting agendas. The third interviewee was interviewed because they were also the active Head of Archival Processing Section, a subsection of the technical services department, in addition to being a member of the committee.

Participants were invited to one-hour time slots for a one-on-one interview session with the researcher. In the interview, interviewees were asked background information about the committee and initiative, about the goals of the committee, ways in which those goals are being worked towards, and what ideal outcomes look like. The interviews consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the interviewee to give more detail and examples as they needed. Throughout the interview, the interviewer was responsive and requested more detail where needed. Though this contradicts the question

and answer sequence of interviews defined by Wang and Yan (2012) in their discussion of the interview question in *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft*; it is in line with Pirjo Nikander's discussion of the interview as discourse data.

In the chapter "Interviews as Discourse Data," Nikander (2012) discusses the debate between researchers of whether or not qualitative interviews produce useful data. (p. 397). In this chapter, they say, "In recent years, however, the status of qualitative interviews as a means of data generation has been a topic of live debate, and the discursive social-scientific field is of two minds when it comes to using research interviews and their relative advantages and disadvantages. The key question in this debate, raised particularly within discursive psychology, is this: Does rendering a topic analyzable necessarily require interview data, or should researchers increasingly or perhaps solely turn to naturally occurring data?" (Nikander, 2012, p. 397). Interviews were chosen as a mode of data collection for this study as a supplement to committee meeting minutes, publications, and presentation materials because this written textual data does not always include the thought process and decision-making behind it. Having the opportunity to ask those questions first-hand proved to be useful in this case. Nikander (2012) goes on to discuss this usefulness of interviews saying, "Interviews remain an economic and efficient means of eliciting 'talk on topic,' and open-ended interviews can topicalize past, current, and future perspectives on virtually any issue. Participants produce talk from their own perspective: They describe events experienced and witnessed, account for their personal actions and opinions, express past and current feelings, and do so within a limited time-space. These, of course, are key reasons for the

continued popularity of interviewing.” (p. 400). Through this lens interviews were conducted to hear the perspectives behind the decisions illustrated in other existing data produced by the committee.

Collection of materials

In addition to conducting interviews the researcher collected materials created by the committee and analyzed them to gauge progression or current focus, relevant discussions, and goals. Agendas and meeting minutes were determined to be the main materials created by the committee to be used for the analysis. These were accessed via a Microsoft Teams notebook and were organized into themes according to what agenda was discussed for that meeting. In the final analysis, mainly just committee agenda items were included as they revealed the most about progression. It was also determined that case studies were very important to the committee’s background and current status. Materials from those presentations, PowerPoints, were included in the analysis. Finally, relevant research articles were also included. One member of the committee, Jackie Dean, published work about the committee during the duration of this study. It was included in the final product.

Qualitative Data Analysis Method

The analysis used in this study follows the one of the three qualitative data analysis processes for case studies defined by Robert Yin. “Yin stands firmly in the empirical–analytical tradition, with a strong emphasis on testing hypotheses. He prefers constructing theoretical propositions and testing them in the analysis... According to Yin, theoretical propositions about causal relations (“how” and “why” questions) help to organize the entire case study, focusing attention on certain data and ignoring other data.”

(Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 752) In this analysis of data, the researcher discovered relevant pieces of data and deduced them to be most relevant to the hypothesis of the study. And the data was used to build an explanation of the committee's work. While Yin sees it as problematic, "building an explanation is often done in narrative form." (Evers & van Staa 2010, p. 752). The following analysis according to him and The Miles and Huberman Tradition (Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 752) the researcher inserted relevant pieces of data into a datasheet organizing them into categories for the final explanatory narrative. According to Yin, this multi-source triangulation is "more convincing [because] it is based on several different sources of information." (Evers & van Staa 2010, p. 749).

It is important to note that time constraints present themselves as an impediment to the study. At the time of the study, the Conscious Editing Steering Committee is still very new and is just beginning to scrape the surface of its goals. Norman Denzin, in talking about different types of multiple triangulation discusses data source triangulation in which "data are gathered through several sampling strategies, at different moments in time, in different social situations (space), and with a variety of persons." (Evers & van Staa, 2010, p. 750). As the committee grows, changes, and begins to accomplish and create new goals, new solutions to descriptive issues will make themselves known as the process of trial and error will also become important in determining how the committee proceeds into the future.

Results

After conducting interviews with three of the Conscious Editing Committee members and looking over materials related to the committee and initiative, I was able to find the goal of both projects, how they are working together, and workflows in place to facilitate the work. The goals of the committee are far-reaching and long term, but immediate goals focus on creating a style guide of principles providing reasoning for decisions, focus groups, and case studies. Long-term goals include transparency and creating a space for interdepartmental involvement on conscious editing. The current progress of the committee and its current workflow focus on accomplishing these goals and facilitating the work of technical services.

Goals

In talking about the goals of the committee all three of those interviewed discussed how the goals of the committee are a long list and far-reaching. When asked, Sonoe Nakasone even discussed how those goals are relatively fluid:

But my understanding of the main goals for the committee on an abstract level is to really take the opportunity to look at description of special collections materials at at our library holistically, like we have an opportunity to really just like look at it systemically, holistically and figure out, you know, how we can describe these collections, either legacy stuff or new stuff that comes. And in a way that matches all the values that we had talked about in the committee. And then on a practical level. I think the goal is to come up with something tangible like the style guide or the guidelines for conscious editing so that people don't always feel like they're guessing when they make decisions about the descriptive cataloging so that they feel like they can at least turn to a resource that has consulted theory and

colleagues and local practices and values in order to help them make those decisions. (S. Nakasone, interview, 2020).

Those goals can be organized into two distinct categories: abstract and practical. Some of the goals of the committee exist on a more abstract plane because they are not immediately tangible due to the size of the projects or tasks it would take to complete the projects. Some abstract goals have the ability to move into the practical plane but doing so would require resources not currently available. Some goals may only exist abstractly due to the nature of outside forces that might keep those goals from being attainable, but the committee will continue to pursue projects or undertake tasks that could contribute to the ethos of achieving that abstract goal. Other goals of the committee exist practically because they, in the more immediate future, are achievable, or steps have already taken place to achieve them.

In naming the goals, it is also important to note that each member of the committee, as they work in different areas and have different interests unique to them all have their own goals they would like to achieve at the library. Those individual goals have shaped how the main goals of the committee were formed. In the interview session, Laura Hart discussed the future of the committee and the initiative “recognizing that this [work] shouldn't be just like one person thinking about it and trying to do it. And not in [just the technical services] department.” She also recognized that there are “folks who are thinking like this and engaging with it and asking questions and making recommendations and innovating in their own right.” (L. Hart, interview, 2020). So it is

important to note that as the goals of the committee stand now may be skewed toward the vision of the members and what they have gleaned is important to their colleagues, those goals will evolve as more people have their voices heard and get involved with the committee through various projects and events such as focus groups and case studies.

As mentioned, the practical goals of the Conscious Editing Committee revolve around projects and tasks with more immediate deadlines. These projects and tasks involve tangible list items that can be planned out and completed in the near future. They may be steppingstones for abstract goals or final goals themselves. Committee notes and interviewees revealed writing a vision and values statement, library focus groups, and the creation of a guide to conscious editing as more immediate outcomes of the committee.

These current main goals center around the establishment of the committee as it is still relatively new. The committee in the weeks since its inception has focused on getting to know each other. Members have joined together to share their own philosophies and ways in which they have come to be interested in conscious editing. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2019). As the members established a rapport with each other, they built up a series of shared understandings. These shared understandings include a definition of conscious editing, a loose list of values and goals, and its responsibilities as a committee. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2019) Through this exercise, members of the committee are able to ensure that discussions going forward are grounded in similar understandings and philosophies that will create productive and empathetic discussions.

Beyond establishing a vision and values statement, three items have been presented as more immediate goals of the committee. These are accomplishable within the next couple of semesters. These include focus groups, a style guide, and case studies. These have emerged as immediate goals to share the work of the community and technical services while also creating a network through which the committee members can communicate with their colleagues within Wilson Library. The three items create an opportunity for feedback that is expected to lead to new goals and avenues as the committee further assesses the wants and needs of the greater library.

Focus groups emerged quickly as a goal for the committee. Members agreed early on that they wanted to engage with their colleagues beyond survey or case study models. Conducting focus groups would allow them to potentially have conversations with other folks whose voices had not been heard in the conscious editing discussion and to bring back in people who were involved early on in the initiative but no longer had as much as an active role in the committee or recent projects.

Creating a style guide also has been a goal for the committee since its inception. Usually, a style guide, used by writers, journalists, and academic fields, is a set of standards that guides the practices of that field's writers. Members of the committee vocalized a need for style guide as a way to guide practices in the technical services section of the Wilson Library where the push for editing legacy finding aids was happening, but they also decided there was a need for these principles to be communicated to other sections throughout the library who might be working with

description. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2019). As the planning of the guide came to fruition it was decided that the committee did not want to create a restrictive set of rules in which writers of description had to abide by, but that the guide would become more suggestive and example based. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2020). By doing so the guide would be more of a set of guiding principles rather than a set of standards.

The guide to conscious editing would include a number of entries that could be update on an ongoing basis. The guide, itself, would act more as a living document as new entries would also be added to it going into the future. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2020). As a starting document the guide would include discussion of current practices put into place by the technical services initiative. One already live solution in finding aids is calling out racial identity; which is where in writing abstracts archivist make sure to call out the racial identity of white collection subjects just as they would in the past with an African American or Latinx person. The guide would potentially include a written reason for this solution and literature that justifies it. Going forward all of these principles would be defined and justified using literature from the field.

Along with the guide the committee planned to create a bibliographic resource that would provide reasoning for decisions and guiding principles. The resource would act as a companion to the guide that provides where these ideas expressed in the guide came from. It would even serve to show that these seemingly new practices were not just

created but thoughtful and well-researched decisions. The bibliographic resource includes academically published work from professionals in the field but also presented work from conferences and webinars, web articles, and relevant theses. Also, the bibliographic resource looks to fields outside of library science such as museums and journalists. In fact, style guides published by different journalist groups such as the National Association of Black Journalists (NABJ Style Guide A), inspired early conscious editing work in technical services and were included in the bibliographic resource. Another big inspiration for conscious editing included in the bibliographic resource is The Conscious Style Guide, a large, collaborative resource dedicated to helping writers think critically about their writing. (About Conscious Style Guide). Sharing the inspirations for the thought process behind the conscious editing decisions made also increases the transparency of the process.

Case studies were the initial modes through which work in technical services was introduced to the rest of Wilson Library, but reintroducing them as modes to communicate new projects and work of the committee has become a goal of the committee. Because the Conscious Editing Initiative began as a relatively grassroots project in the technical services section of the Wilson Library, finding a way to gain traction and gauge interest was to share specific collection finding aids that had undergone some conscious editing. Two collections that became case studies to share are the Paul Cuadros Photographic Collection and Julian Shakespeare Carr Papers. I will

briefly describe these collections to illustrate how they were instrumental in furthering the initiative and why additional case studies are intended to further current work.

With the fall of Silent Sam in 2018, interest in the history of the Confederate Monument saw an increase. Although in the past students and activists had been interested in the monument's inception, archivists in technical services, primarily Laura Hart, saw this radical time period as a good time to review the Julian Shakespeare Carr Papers, as it was known that he had spoken at the opening ceremony of the monument but this was not noted in the original description of the finding aid. It was uncovered that Carr's speech at the opening ceremony was horribly racist including his description of whipping an enslaved woman on campus. This resource, directly exhibiting Carr's racism validated the racialized and violent history of Silent Sam. With this, Laura Hart moved forward with editing the collection's abstract to better represent the contents in a way that removed the veneration of Carr and better warned patrons of what they would be getting into when viewing this collection's materials. (Hart, 2018).

The Paul Cuadros Photographic Collection was another unique conscious editing endeavor to be shared with the larger Wilson Library body. This was a case where cataloging standards became a barrier for a more inclusive and conscious description. The collection included a number of subject headings compliant with the Library of Congress Subject Headings including the term "illegal aliens." The subject heading was included to communicate that the workers were not necessarily born in the United States but working in the country and that might be helpful in finding the collection. However,

the term illegal aliens have been determined problematic and has been contested with the Library of Congress. (Aguilera, 2016). Soon after the failed attempt to change the heading legislation was created to block the changing of headings without approval. After determining that this heading was not ideal for use in the finding aid and unnecessary as immigration status was not totally relevant to the collection, the archivists in the special collections technical services collaborated on removing the problematic heading and using alternative headings creatively to make the collection findable. (Hart, 2018

Case studies like the Julian Shakespeare Carr Papers finding aid and Paul Cuadros Photographic Collection finding aid help to illustrate the importance of this work. These two case studies specifically link to larger conversations happening campus-wide and even nationwide. Bringing them out of technical services ethos and onto the larger Wilson Library stage raises awareness of this work's importance. While these two specifically introduced the Conscious Editing Initiative, sharing new work through case studies shows that this work is still happening in the technical services section. New case studies also open the floor for feedback and discussion. Not only does this help the committee gauge their colleagues' interest but also opens avenues where folks in other sections might see a possibility in how they might implement some of these practices in their section and individual work. Lastly, these case studies allow for more transparency between the committee, technical services, and the rest of the Wilson Library because although the committee is still in progress of creating public-facing products, these case studies give a window into the work that is not necessarily being seen by everyone.

The theme most prevalent through each of these goals is a want and need to work together. All of the members interviewed expressed a want for conscious editing to become a way of life. Right now, conscious editing is siloed in technical services where much work is focused on editing legacy finding aids, but there is a want to spread this idea of conscious editing through the library as not just something committee does or technical services, but something that Wilson Library does. There is a real want from committee members for conscious editing to include conscious collecting, the idea that the actual accepting of collections would include a compassionate, thoughtful decision process before being collected. This would include transforming the intake process and the way in which collections are processed altogether. This would not eliminate the need for future conscious editing as language is always changing and evolving; instead, it might present a better record lifecycle that reduces the harm archives can do.

Finally, in this section of more immediate goals, there is a need and want to create a stronger connection between technical services and the Conscious Editing Steering Committee. Committee members expressed a want for interdepartmental collaboration. Although the two are separate entities there is a want for the two to have more discussion about the principles that guide the ongoing efforts in technical services and the committee respectively. These collaborations could look like discussions or presentations about the literature relevant to conscious editing, and/or case studies. “They are intertwined. And I think we're still trying to figure out how that works with. I think that that sort of long term is. Is sort of the crux of why we need a steering committee and why it needs to be

intertwined with technical services from where it grew. But not silo.” (L. Hart, interview, 2020). There is an effort going into figuring out how to make interdepartmental collaboration work especially to avoid conscious editing becoming the work of just a few.

While there are a number of immediate goals that the committee is in the process of attaining, has already attained, or will very soon there are a number of goals which I have defined as abstract because they are more long term goals with less exact end dates and in some way may not be attainable by the committee as it exists now but maybe by future library initiatives. These goals may also be considered abstract because they are not in progress right now but will be better mapped out in the future. There is really just one main goal considered abstract that I will discuss here.

When interviewed all three interviewees expressed different wants for the ideal outcome of the committee. This ideal outcome is seen as an overall goal or final wish for the accomplishments of the committee. Keeping in mind that the committee is still very new themes of responses include a want to recenter all finding aids in the repository, a want to get everyone on board with conscious editing, having clear guidelines for describing plantation collections and that overall the collections would have fewer barriers and be more accessible to all patrons and not just those researching for academic purposes. While all those interviewed did not share the same exact vision there is obvious overlap in their ideals. The committee was able to come together to draft a currently unpublished mission and vision in which they were able to agree that the vision is a long-term goal of removing the barriers to accessing the collections. These barriers are not just

the ones that exist physically but that exist in the description of collections; those of racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, or any exclusionary practices that would make people feel unwelcome in using the collections.

Current Progress and Workflows

The current progress of the committee is that most of its early goals are still in progress. The committee has been a fully realized entity for two semesters and has spent time establishing itself in the Wilson Library and allowing room for inter-member communication. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee fall progress report, 2019) The early days of the committee have been spent getting to know other members of the committee, their work, and personal goals, and why they care about conscious editing. Through getting to know one and another the committee has been able to devise what is important to each of their colleagues. Because each committee member is engaged in a different type of work it was deemed important to glean that and move forward with ideas that each member is interested in carrying out as a committee or championing for other departments in the libraries to undertake (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2019).

As mentioned in the goals section of this paper, the steering committee has a long list of goals it wishes to accomplish. More immediate goals are their current focus, and where the most progress is focused. Those main goals being the style guide, focus groups, and case studies require a more thorough amount of work with measured

decisions. And while they all require a lot of thought and have to go through long processes of creation, they are also cyclical in that they will be ongoing or repeated as needed. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2020) The style guide is one project that will be ongoing as new principles arise and change. There is an intention for it to be added to and needed as necessary much like the finding aids and descriptive texts it will supplement. (Conscious Editing Steering Committee, meeting minutes, 2020). Case studies will be cyclical and arranged as needed. Sharing this work is one main way to get people throughout the library to care and it is also a necessary proponent in making the committee and initiative's work transparent.

How work is getting done in the committee in conversation with the committee, is an important question for this study. How can these two separate entities work in tandem and what workflows are they implementing in order to get the work done? However, this is just beginning to make itself clearer as the committee begins to share what it has been working on. It is important to note how workflows the Conscious Editing Initiative implemented in technical services are influencing the committee and making room for the committee to join in.

When asked about what work is happening and how it is happening, Head of Archival Processing Jackie Dean remarked:

Well, I think in some ways... we are a little bit in a paused state. Wait. I'm kind of waiting to see what the steering committee is going to come up with. Before we do a systematic kind of proactive project... We're mostly reacting right now and figuring out how to react. And then I think the archivists write a new description

are writing it from this perspective. And I think that's great. But I want to start articulating what this perspective is... And we're trying things and experimenting with different language... I think every time people write stuff now, they're doing it that way. They're doing it with these guidelines and principles and approaches in mind. But I think we need to, but we haven't really done the work to articulate what they are. (J. Dean, interview, 2020).

A stagnation is happening that prevents the work from happening on a transformative scale as more thorough work is done by the committee to give guidance and further collaborate with technical services; however, this work is still happening. Some examples given of what work is happening actively include calling out racial identity in all collection finding aids and not just one's where the collection centers on a person of color and tackling specific cases especially those brought to the attention of technical services by colleagues throughout the library.

Bringing issues to the attention of technical services is one way in which the committee is getting involved. As cases are identified for Sonoe Nakasone said:

And so, we sketched out this workflow that is very new - like two weeks ago where, you know, a request will come in and TS, if they could offer any kind of temporary solution, would just do that. And then it would go into a queue for the steering committee to have a broader conversation about. And that's already kind of played out in two different ways, like one request that came in recently was able to be handled by TS temporarily and it can go on... I do really like this idea that there's a place where concerns can be raised. And it's not just one person who's making the decision about what happens, you know, and not in a policing way, just kind of in a brain trust way, but also as a coordinating body, because it's hard like it's hard on TS. (S. Nakasone, interview, 2020).

While the committee is making much progress toward meeting its goals, much of its work is still insular and being crafted for sharing with the general public. The

Conscious Editing Steering Committee currently has a public-facing section on the IDEA council homepage, where it is listed as a project of the council. This public-facing page shares recently published work, committee membership, and a description of the committee with a promise of more to come. It will be interesting to see what the committee shares in the coming semesters and it is sure to garner attention as more and more institutions attempt to take up similar work.

Discussion and Conclusions

In exploring the Wilson Library Conscious Editing Steering Committee and its development, goals, and current progress, this study found that the committee has three main goals to create a style guide, conduct focus groups, and increase transparency by introducing more case studies. By examining this specific instance, this study is intended to illuminate a possible solution to addressing problematic archival description. Though problematic description has emerged as an issue for the field of archival studies, only in recent years has much work been released that moves from theoretical to practical application. While this study intends to present solutions, it is in no way exhaustive nor intended to be generalizable in the field but serves as an example to address this issue where a gap in the literature exists.

In this study, three members of the Conscious Editing Steering Committee were interviewed. In each interview, they were asked a series of open-ended interview questions about the background, goals, workflow, and current progress of the committee. Information was also collected from committee meeting minutes and other presentation materials. This collection of data and analysis revealed three current main goals of the committee and that there is at least one long term goal among many others. Finally, the study also revealed the current progress of the committee, mostly surrounding its current workflow with the technical services department.

Three immediate goals are in the process of being worked on and established by the committee. Those goals include focus groups, a style guide, and case studies. The

committee also has the goals of engaging with their colleagues and getting everyone caring about and doing conscious editing. These goals are specific to the current time period and the committee's current context. In a different context these goals might be totally irrelevant. The goals of the committee directly relate to the context of Wilson Library and even the larger UNC-Chapel Hill community. Getting people to care and see this as a part of their work is directly linked to the sectioning off of the library. Due to the library's large size, collecting areas are broken into large sizes where in other libraries one collecting area could be managed by a single person. Because different departments have different roles in the library and it can be difficult to get that many people, all with different agendas to care about or even see what is happening in technical services as a part of their everyday work. That is not to say that people have been resistant to the efforts of the committee, but time will tell how others in the library begin to get more involved or integrate conscious editing into their day.

Transparency is a major and important theme throughout the results of this study. The goals of the study all seem to have some piece that would greatly expand their transparency not only with colleagues but with researchers and other stakeholders connected with Wilson Library. In their work Shwartz and Cook (2002) talk about being transparent with patrons and colleagues about the decisions that went into collecting, arranging, and describing a collection and allowing oneself to be questioned in those decisions makes for a more inclusive archive. The projects and the work the committee is undertaking really play into this philosophy of transparency. The plan for focus groups and case studies are especially good forums in which open discussion and question

asking will allow for people to provide feedback and feel heard in the decisions the committee is making.

The other important, overarching goal of the committee is to discover opportunities to reframe the collections of the Wilson Library to better represent a truer version of history than what has been represented previously. I think this approach is going to require an entire rethinking of archival practice as it is currently known. As discussed in the literature, provenance is the main block on which archival practice is built on and yet it frequently results in problematic collections. Yet, provenance, determining who has ownership over the records, is not so easily thrown out. As the committee establishes new principles, it will be increasingly important that they address this building block of practice especially for collections representing Antebellum plantations. Records where enslaved persons deserve ownership over records they helped create.

The intended impact of this study is to make an impression on the field of the importance of recognizing the need for change in the way archivists have curated collections. This study is intended to suggest one solution of many therefore impressing a need for multiplicity in the way that issues in the field are approached. This study is intended to propose a need for diligence in examining and finding solutions to problematic archival practice from many resources. It is also important to impress that these projects will be large scale and slow-moving especially in repositories where holdings are massive. These impressions will be made through an examination of one specific instance.

This study has many stakeholders including archivists, patrons, people described in collections, and donors. This study aims to make a suggestion for future work and

archivists can benefit from a clearer plan of action especially in creating their own guidelines for description in order to better serve their ethical values. With this elevated description, patrons can benefit from a better understanding of the materials. Also, with ethical values more clearly presented through the collections, patrons can aim to gain an improved relationship with the institution itself. Subjects or people described in collections have a stake in how they are portrayed and, in some cases, how their abusers are portrayed. They aim to benefit from studies of this kind that generate new ways to improve collections to better represent their experiences. Finally, donors and creators have a stake in this as well; the way their collections are represented impacts the way their experience is seen.

It is important to recognize this study is limited by time and number of instances. Firstly, the Conscious Editing Steering Committee is an ongoing project that will not be finished by the conclusion of this study. Due to the time constraints, this research will not be able to measure the impact of the project on the institution. Secondly, this study is limited in that this is an example of one specific instance with little to compare, but its success will be largely determined by these specific circumstances. Readers may expect some generalizations about the field, but this study will use this very specific instance to describe one plan of action but will not attempt to solve all issues which are currently being faced as this study is very reliant on the context it exists in. While seeing these limitations is important it is also important to see how ethical redescription is moving the field of archives forward. Description is a vital resource for researchers in their accessing of collections. Providing them with description that is clear and humane is the basic

function of the field, so this work will continue to prove to be important as it grows in the coming years.

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