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Unboxing Time Capsules: Managing and Using Time Capsules in Your Archive

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Recommended Citation

Anderson-Zorn, April K., "Unboxing Time Capsules: Managing and Using Time Capsules in Your Archive" (2021). *Faculty and Staff Publications – Milner Library*. 130.

<https://ir.library.illinoisstate.edu/fpml/130>

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Unboxing Time Capsules:

*Managing and Using Time
Capsules in your Archive*



The Call

- Foreman from dorm demolition, 2016



The Call



The Call

- Foreman from dorm demolition, 2016
- Never worked with a 'fresh' time capsule
- Word got out before we had it in hand
- Second time capsule?
- Broken seal



The Call



The Call



History of Time Capsules

- World's Fair exhibitions
- “Time Vessel”, Nick Yablon
- “Time Bomb”, William Jarvis
- Oglethorpe University – Crypt of Civilization
- crypt.oglethorpe.edu



Collective Memory

- How are these object perceived?
- Maurice Halbwachs, *La Memoire Collective*
- Enola Gay controversy
- When in doubt, Knope it



Collective Memory



Collective Memory



Collective Memory



Capsule 1 vs 2

- | | | | |
|----|--|--|---|
| 1. | Don't tip it!
We did. | Open carefully
We used an angle grinder. | Inventory
Kept most but had to toss some. |
| 2. | Don't tip it!
We did. Again. | Open carefully
Scraped off seal. | Inventory
Kept all. |

Lesson: time capsules should be handled on a case-by-case basis



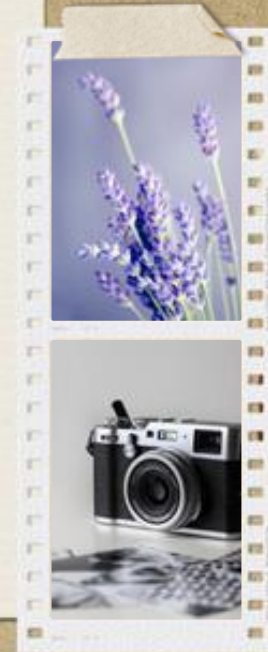
Using Time Capsules in Outreach

Long-term Exhibits

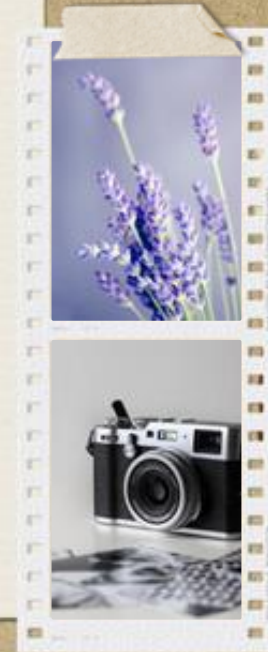
- Closed cases
- Tight narrative control
- Wide range of demographic outreach

One-off Events

- Alumni; community
- Know your group and cater to them
- One-on-one and unique experience



Using Time Capsules in Outreach



Using Time Capsules in Outreach



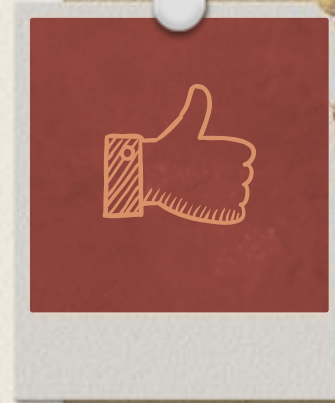
Get Others in on the Action

- Media LOVE time capsules!
- [ISU News on time capsule](#)
- Do you know when buildings are slated for demolition? Which have time capsules?
- Facilities folks want to know this info!
- An opening to contact units in a particular building



Notes

- April Karlene Anderson-Zorn, "Digging Up the Past: Archival Issues with Found Time Capsules at Illinois State University," *American Archivist* 82, no 2 (Fall/Winter 2019): 348-565.
- Nick Yablon, "Encapsulating the Present Material Decay, Labor Unrest, and the Prehistory of the Time Capsule, 1876-1914," *Winterthur Portfolio* 45, no. 1 (2011): 4, <http://doi.org/10.1086/658932>
- William E. Jarvis, *Time Capsules: A Cultural History* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003), 52.
- Will Jarvis, "Time Capsule Secrets," interview by Stewart Brand, The Long Now Foundation, Seminars about Long-term Thinking, May 13, 2005, <http://longnow.org/seminars/02005/may/13/time-capsule-behavior>.
- Crypt of Civilization," Oglethorpe University, <https://crypt.oglethorpe.edu/inventory>
- "Time Capsules," Smithsonian Institution, Museum Conservation Institute, https://www.si.edu/mci/english/learn_more/taking_care/timecaps.html
- Robert L. Barclay, *Time Capsules* (Ottawa: Canadian Conservation Institute, Notes 1/6, 1995), 2, <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/cci-icc/documents/services/conservation-preservationpublications/canadian-conservation-institute-notes/1-6-eng.pdf>.
- Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter Jr. and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 25-26.
- Richard H. Kohn, "History and the Culture Wars: The Case of the Smithsonian Institution's Enola Gay Exhibition," *Journal of American History* 82, no. 3 (1995): 1036-63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2945111>. See also Elizabeth Yakel, "Museums, Management, Media, and Memory: Lessons from the Enola Gay Exhibition," *Libraries & Culture* 35, no. 2 (2000): 278-310.



Thank You!

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