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Acquiring Unique Collections: Collaborative Approaches to Metadata

Kira Homo, Electronic Records Archivist, University of Oregon

Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) at the University of Oregon (UO) is increasingly taking in born-digital, student-generated content. Much of the content documents areas we have not documented in the past or documents underrepresented or minority populations. Therefore, it is crucial to our mission that we collect this material; however, it is also crucial to access that the collections be properly described. An undescribed collection might as well not even be in a repository since it is undiscoverable.

When SCUA started partnering with classes to create and ingest born-digital content, we developed a workflow and procedures that would help ensure that these important collections both came to SCUA and came with adequate documentation to allow for easy researcher access almost immediately. I would like to describe our experiences with two ongoing classes to show how a program like this can succeed. Each of these classes has been through two complete creation/description/deposit phases as of this writing. This article will look at the two projects and describe the workflows we used the first time around, what we learned during the first cycle, and the improvements we made for the second cycle. We anticipate that we will continue to make improvements in future class cycles.

Our major collaborative projects include Latino Roots and the UO Veterans' Oral History Project. Both are classes offered regularly by UO professors, with the end product of the class being deposited in Special Collections and University Archives.

Latino Roots is a two-course sequence (Latino Roots I and Latino Roots II) taught by Lynn Stephen, Professor in the Department of Anthropology, and Gabriela Martínez, Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Communication. The Latino Roots course sequence seeks to "broaden the historical narrative of the state of Oregon through studying, theorizing, and documenting the depth and

breadth of Latino and Latin America immigration, settlement, social movements, and civic and political integration in Oregon during the 20th century."¹ Each student in the course produces a roughly ten-minute documentary based on oral history interviews with immigrant families. The students deposit their final documentaries with SCUA; in addition, they may deposit raw footage of the oral history interviews, photographs, b-roll footage, interview transcripts, and other materials.

The UO Veterans' Oral History Project is a joint effort between Alex Dracoby, Senior Instructor in the Department of History, and Special Collections and University Archives. The project has the "aim of documenting the military experiences of men and women associated with the University of Oregon and the wider Oregon community. The project understands military experience broadly to include not just combat but all aspects of military service."² During the term-long class, students conduct oral history interviews with veterans and active-duty servicemen and women, transcribe the interviews, and deposit both the interviews and transcriptions with SCUA at the conclusion of the course.

Step 1: Metadata Schema

Before ingesting any digital material, we create an individual metadata schema for each new digital collection coming into our repository. We use Dublin Core metadata elements, customized for the individual collection. Dublin Core is flexible enough to allow us to include things like branch of service and highest rank for the UO Veterans' oral histories and very specific geographic information for both Latino Roots and UO Vets. The digital objects and metadata are uploaded to our CONTENTdm instance, publicly accessible at

¹ Latino Roots in Oregon. (n.d.). *Our Course*. Retrieved from <http://latinoroots.uoregon.edu/our-course/>

² UO Veterans' Oral History Project. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from http://uovetsoralhistory.uoregon.edu/?page_id=13

www.oregondigital.org. For these classes, we worked with the instructors to identify the most useful metadata elements for the collections. We rely on the students themselves to supply the metadata for the digital objects as part of the transfer process.

Step 2: Education

Our next step in ensuring an excellent, accessible digital collection involves outreach and education with the classes. Each time the Latino Roots or UO Vets class is taught, the library team prepares information for the students and delivers that information both in person and via written documentation. While the end goal for the library is to acquire the oral history or documentary, we also have a major educational mission: part of our educational efforts include instruction to students about copyright, open access, file management, and student privacy. Depending on the class we may also briefly touch on human subjects research laws.

The library team has developed a student-specific Deed of Gift form that complies with FERPA (since the materials being deposited are private student records) and meets our legal needs for “physical” ownership and rights transfer (see Appendix A). We encourage students and interview subjects to select a Creative Commons license under which their work will be published by UO. Students may also elect to place an embargo of up to five years on their final product. In cases where the end product included oral history interviews, the interview subject/informant may also choose to place an embargo of up to five years on the material. For the Latino Roots class, Deed of Gift and interviewee consent forms are available in both Spanish and English since many of the subjects are native Spanish speakers.

During our in-class session, the library team also introduces the students to the metadata schema created for the project. We supply an Excel spreadsheet template that students fill out for each digital object being submitted; the columns of the spreadsheet correspond to the metadata fields being used for the collection (see Appendix B). We do our best to use nontechnical language both in our presentation and in the spreadsheet

to make it as easy as possible for students to provide good descriptive information for their materials. We work from the assumption that the content creator is in the best position to provide descriptive metadata for the digital objects; in addition to creating a more accessible and discoverable collection, this approach also reduces the amount of time it takes library staff to make the collection publicly available.

We also teach the classes basic file naming and file management techniques; we also supply basic information about file formats. The UO Libraries have developed a set of file-naming conventions that we require the students to use for the files they are depositing. In addition, we have a standard set of file types we accept into our repository, based on the long-term viability of the file type.

Step 3: Material Transfer

The final step for the students is the file transfer process. In the first year of the project, the library team scheduled office hours during the last week of term as during final exam week students were required to come to the office hours to transfer their files to Special Collections and University Archives.

Cycle 1 Lessons

The first cycle of any project usefully identifies potential and actual problem areas; since both these projects are ongoing, we were able to refine our workflows for the second cycle. During the first cycle of both projects, we identified the following as areas of concern and made the changes listed during the second cycle:

- Metadata provided by students incomplete or missing. Solution: course instructors required students to submit Excel spreadsheet with metadata in order to receive a grade in the course. Library team did not accept file transfers unless Excel spreadsheet was included as one of the files.
- Not all students submitted complete rights/permissions/Deed of Gift paperwork. Solution: Again, instructors

required all paperwork to be submitted before issuing a grade to the student.

- File formats submitted were not all standard. Solution: Better education by the library team. Reworked class presentations to include more information about file formats, and updated course documentation to include link the library “acceptable file formats” page.
- Some students did not submit any materials, even though it was ostensibly required. Solution: submitting materials to SCUA was required in order to receive a grade in Cycle 2. Members of the library team came to the final course sessions to make file transfers rather than requiring students to make appointments or come by the library during office hours.
- Formatting for transcripts (UO Vets) was not uniform. Solution: Template for transcriptions created. Course instructor received funding for a Graduate Teaching Fellow who was able to ensure that transcriptions were uniform.
- The Final Cut Pro X problem—when Apple released Final Cut Pro X, it did not open

- the raw files created by earlier versions of Final Cut. During Cycle 1, the library ingested the raw footage of the Latino Roots oral history interviews, most of which were created with earlier versions of Final Cut. Solution: Library team maintains version of Final Cut 7 on a single workstation. Students are encouraged to submit both the raw footage and either a QuickTime movie (.mov) or .mp4 of the complete oral history interview.

Some of these problems were easy to fix, others were more complicated.

The end result of both these collaborations are highly used digital collections that increase the library’s visibility, provide valuable experience for students, increase the diversity of UO’s Special Collections and University Archives holdings, and document underrepresented populations. The collections are available to the public: the UO Veterans’ Oral History Project has a stand-alone web site that links out to the digital objects in the CONTENTdm system (<http://uovetsoralhistory.uoregon.edu>), while the Latino Roots materials are part of the larger Oregon Latino Heritage digital collection (<http://oregondigital.org/digcol/latinoherit/>).

Appendix A: Student Deed of Gift

Student Submission to Special Collections & University Archives

Deed of Gift

I, _____, am a student enrolled in the _____ course, during term _____ year _____. I choose to submit _____ coursework to the University of Oregon Special Collections & University Archives (SCUA).

I acknowledge my informed consent to donate my student materials to the University of Oregon Libraries, for the use of SCUA, including any future additions I may make. I assign physical property rights of these materials to the University of Oregon Libraries.

COPYRIGHT:

Any transfer of copyrights that I possess is governed by the following declaration:

Retain Copyright to all materials.

Retain Copyright to all materials and release under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share Alike License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/us/>)

Retain Copyright to all materials and release under a Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial No Derivatives (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/us/>)

Retain Copyright to all materials and release under a Creative Commons Attribution Share-Alike License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)

Waive Copyright to all materials.

PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY:

SCUA provides access to its holdings to all researchers on an equal basis. Researchers may have full access either in person in the Paulson Reading Room, or online via the UO institutional repository, Scholars' Bank or equivalent system in the future to the materials stated above, at the date declared below:

Open immediately.

Open at end of the academic year from date of deposit

Open 5 academic years from date of deposit

PRESERVATION:

In order for SCUA to fulfill its mission to preserve the permanent records of the University of Oregon in perpetuity, your signature below grants to the University of Oregon (UO) the nonexclusive right to reproduce and without changing the content, convert the submission to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation. You also agree that the UO Libraries may keep more than one copy for the purposes of security, back-up, and preservation.

Signature

Date

Appendix B: Excel Spreadsheet Template for Submissions

Latino Roots **Winter-Spring 2011**

Name: Karen Estlund

Date: 2/18/2011

File Name	Type	Creator	Title	Date Created (YYYY-MM-DD)	Place	Time Period	Source	Subject(s)	Description
estlund_pt01_v01.mp4	raw video footage	Estlund, Karen	My Video Raw Footage	2011-02-16	Corvallis, Oregon	1960-1980		Labor; Latinos; Oregon;	Video footage interviewing two latino families from Corvallis, Oregon about their experiences
estlund_fern_01.tif	photograph	Estlund, Karen	Fernandez Family Photos (1-4)	2011-02-01	Corvallis, Oregon	1960-1965	Fernandez Family	Family Portraits; Quinceañera ; Latinos; Oregon	Set of family Portraits depicting Fernandez family at home
estlund_fern_02.tif	photograph	Estlund, Karen	Fernandez Family Photos (1-4)	2011-02-01	Corvallis, Oregon	1960-1965	Fernandez Family	Family Portraits; Quinceañera ; Latinos; Oregon	Set of family Portraits depicting Fernandez family at home
estlund_fern_03.tif	photograph	Estlund, Karen	Fernandez Family Photos (1-4)	2011-02-01	Corvallis, Oregon	1960-1965	Fernandez Family	Family Portraits; Quinceañera ; Latinos; Oregon	Set of family Portraits depicting Fernandez family at home
estlund_fern_04.tif	photograph	Estlund, Karen	Fernandez Family Photos (1-4)	2011-02-01	Corvallis, Oregon	1960-1965	Fernandez Family	Family Portraits; Quinceañera ; Latinos; Oregon	Set of family Portraits depicting Fernandez family at home
estlund_diaz_mur_01.tif	photograph of mural	Gonzalez, José (painter); Estlund, Karen (photographer)	The Mural	2011-02-14 (photograph); 1998-06 (mural)	Woodburn, Oregon	1998		Labor; Farmworkers ; Latinos; Oregon	Depiction of early farm labor in Oreogn