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How to Have a Successful Archives Crawl on a Shoestring Budget

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NEVER-BUILT PORTLAND



"Meier and Frank Parking looking toward Pioneer Courthouse" photograph, 1982, City of Portland Archives and Records Center. Story on page 6.

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How to Have a Successful Archives Crawl on a Shoestring Budget

by Maurice R. Blackson, Carlos Pelley, and Julia Stringfellow

In honor of October being [American Archives Month](#), the second annual Ellensburg Archives and Museums Crawl took place Saturday, October 8. It was a success despite having a next-to-nothing budget and a small staff (2–3 maximum) at each of the repositories visited on the Crawl. This article describes how the event was created and hopefully serves as an inspiration to repositories with similar staff and financial situations that want to provide programming during the month of October and throughout the year.

The Central Washington University Archives and Special Collections (CWUASC) document the history of the university, which has an enrollment of nearly 12,000. The archives was officially established in 2005 despite the university being founded in 1891. The university is located in Ellensburg, a small town with a population of 18,000.

Though the town is small, it hosts six archives and museums: the Ellensburg Public Library and Archives, the Kittitas County Historical Museum, the Kittitas County Genealogical Society, the regional branch of the Washington State Archives, the Museum of Culture and Environment located at Central Washington University (CWU), and the CWUASC. These six repositories, described in detail later in this article, have a strong working relationship and communicate well with each other. The institutions also share a common thread of extremely limited budgets.

At the time of the creation of the Ellensburg Archives and Museums Crawl in August 2015, the CWUASC had a staff of two archivists: a university archivist/department head who started in July 2015 and an archivist/faculty lecturer who had been there since March 2014. A third staff member started in October 2015. The staff wanted to provide programming for American Archives Month, and looked at the successful [Oregon Archives Crawl](#) as a programming example.

The five local repositories graciously agreed to be part of the Crawl taking place



Second Annual Ellensburg Archives and Museums Crawl

Saturday, October 8
9am - 12:30pm

Ellensburg Public Library Archives - Kittitas County Historical Museum - Kittitas County Genealogy Society - CWU Museum of Culture and Environment - Washington State Archives - Central Washington University Archives and Special Collections

The tour will meet at the Brooks Library at Central Washington University to board the shuttle. The tour is free, but reservations are required as space is limited. To reserve your spot, email archive@cwu.edu or call 509-963-1717.



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on a Saturday morning. Event promotion was done through a Facebook event, distribution of flyers throughout the university and town, and word of mouth. Attendees RSVP'd for the free tour so a head count was known ahead of time, since space in the smaller venues is limited. A university van provided the transportation from repository to repository.

The six institutions that participated in the Crawl possess unique and interesting histories. Each destination provided not only a stop, but a chance to connect with the community's rich history.

The first stop was the Ellensburg Public Library and Archives. Despite being an integral cultural and educational destination since 1933, the Ellensburg Public Library's Archives program was initiated in the 1970s when their basement space was revamped to house rare and unique documents. The current director of the library, Josephine Camarillo, gave attendees the unique opportunity to visit the library's basement and local history room to peek at the collections. The Ellensburg Public Library Archives collections have extensive family histories and information about historic buildings in town.



Sadie Thayer, Director of Kittitas County Historic Museum, explains details of cataloging and digitizing their extensive photograph collection.

The next stop was the Kittitas County Historical Museum. Director Sadie Thayer provided a tour of the current exhibits and reported on the progress and efforts to document the county's history. She shared her gratitude for not only her employees but also her volunteers for all of their time and assistance at the nonprofit institution.

The museum, also known as the Cadwell Building, possesses a unique history itself. It has been owned and operated by several different organizations and entities throughout the last 127 years. The building's name originated from its first owners, who partnered in 1889 to build the Lloyd-Cadwell building in downtown Ellensburg. The property changed hands throughout the early 1900s. For many years, it was an automobile dealership. It wasn't until 1974 when the current owners, the Kittitas County Historical Society, purchased it. In 1975, after months of hard work and countless volunteer hours, the museum opened. It has since successfully purchased the adjoining buildings, further expanding the space to 9,000 square feet.

The Kittitas County Genealogical Society was the third stop on the Crawl. It provides visitors a chance to reconnect with their roots and heritage. Originally established in 1983, the Genealogical

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Society has extensive files of county obituaries, marriage announcements, and a variety of local history books chronicling the history of Kittitas County. They have both online and print resources for researching family history.

The fourth stop was the Central Washington Branch of the State Archives, housed in the Bledsoe building. The regional archives provides archival and records management services to local government agencies throughout Benton, Chelan, Douglas, Franklin, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Okanogan, and Yakima counties. It also houses the archives of The Ellensburg Rodeo board. The archives building opened in 1995.

The fifth stop was the CWUASC, located in the university's James E. Brooks Library. The archives was established as the repository for official and unofficial records that document the history of the university. It serves as a regional repository to house, preserve, and promote the unique cultural history of central Washington.

The last location on the Crawl was CWU's Museum of Culture and Environment. Officially named in 2008, the museum is located in Dean Hall on the university campus. An anthropological approach is followed in the curation of exhibits done by students. Travelling exhibits are often featured. The

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State Archivist Brigid Clift shows recent acquisitions at the Central Branch of the Washington State Archives.



Julia Stringfellow, University Archivist, explains how collections housed in the Central Washington University Archives and Special Collections document university and regional history.

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museum connects the small local community with the larger world community, demonstrating how much people share culturally worldwide.

The Crawl helped connect the local repositories in a fun way. They had worked previously with each other on a professional level by sharing information about potential collections that fit the different collecting scopes, or sharing reference information. But, this event was a chance to see one another's collections during a fun event without the pressure of answering a reference question or finding a home for a collection.

The Crawl provided networking opportunities between the CWUASC staff and tour attendees. One participant shared his enthusiasm with local history and as a member of the local newspaper's editorial board, encouraged the newspaper to visit the archives and write an article on its collections. This same individual was later contacted to serve on the Friends of the Library Board and now serves as its secretary.

The event also increased the visibility of the CWUASC and brought more patron usage of the collection. After the inaugural Crawl in October 2015, there were 36 in-person visitors and 19 reference questions, and in November there were 22 in-person visits and 14 reference questions. The previous month of September 2015 had only nine visitors and six reference requests.

Adding to the trend of increased traffic, the archives' online content also showed increased usage after the first event. [ScholarWorks](#) is the institutional repository of CWU. It houses faculty and student scholarship as well as digitized archival content from both University Archives and Community Projects.

In September of 2015, there were 7,920 page views on the online archival content. In October 2015, there were 12,281 page views and in November of that year there were 13,607 page views. It is spurious to think an event of less than 15 participants drove all this traffic, but it shows how the Archives Crawl, combined with other outreach activities, draws attention to the archives and its mission. Online content provides access that promotes the archives 24 hours a day around the world.

Conclusion

Despite having barely a budget and a small staff, the CWU Archives successfully planned and implemented an annual Archives and Museums Crawl that provided collaborations with the other repositories in the small town of Ellensburg. Visiting other repositories and talking to staff face-to-face strengthened an already good working relationship and encouraged other collaborations between repositories. The same was true with attendees of the Crawl and resulted in new advocates of the area museums and archives. This annual event will continue to be held for future American Archives Months.