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The Arizona Summit: Tough Times in a Tough Land

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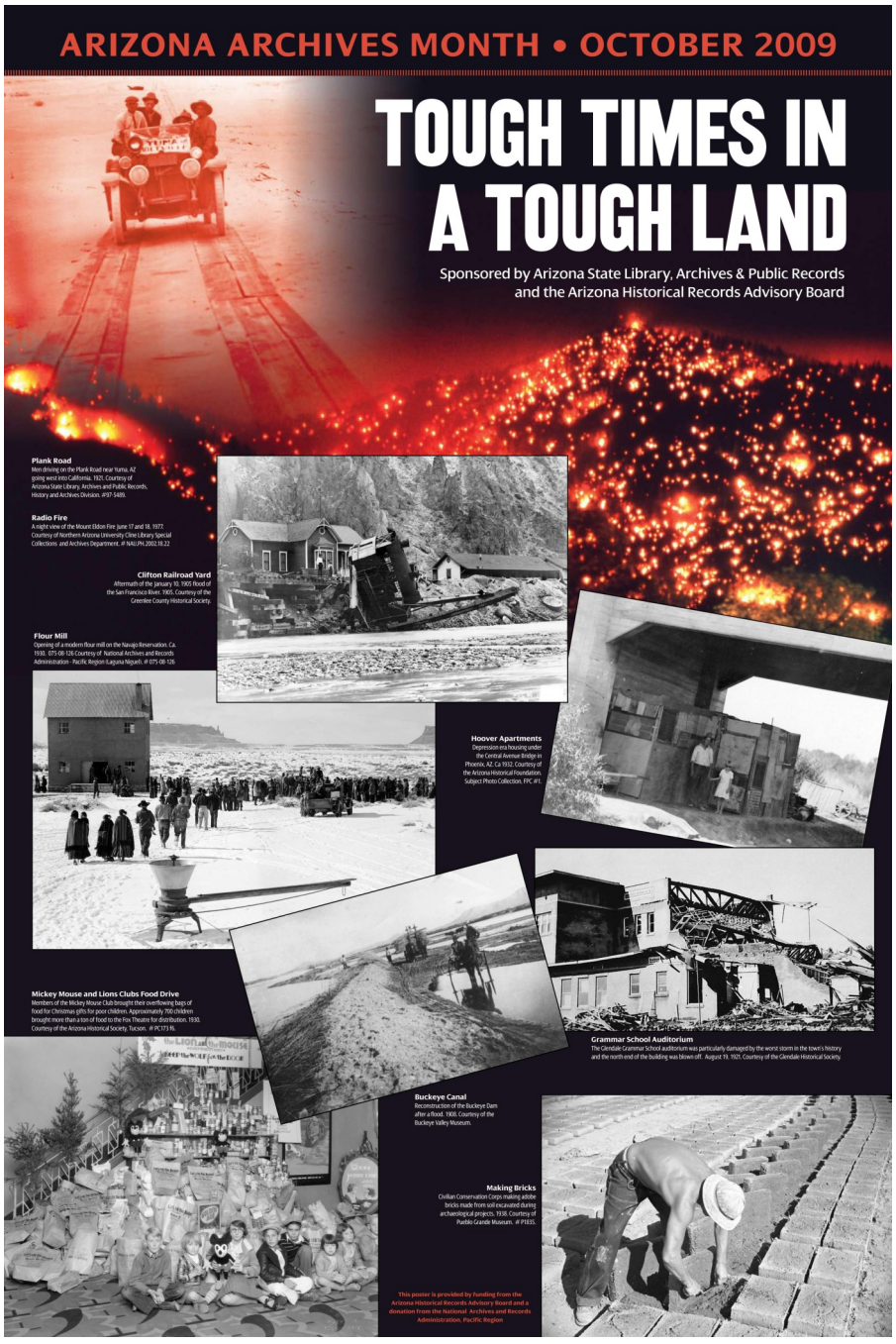
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Source: Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records and the Arizona Historical Records Advisory Board.

The Arizona Summit: Tough Times in a Tough Land

Linda A. Whitaker
Melanie I. Sturgeon

ABSTRACT

Western repositories have much to gain and little to lose from statewide initiatives that promote cooperative collection management policies. The region's topography, demographics, boom-bust cycles, and flood of new residents threaten their missions and their very existence. Add competition, backlogs, duplication, and fragmented collections to this volatile mix and it renders the collecting environment untenable.

> "Arizona ... is just like hell, all it lacks is water and good society."
>
> — Senator Benjamin Wade, 1863, chairman of the Committee On Territories

Introduction

Western repositories have much to gain and little to lose from statewide initiatives that promote cooperative collection management policies. The region's topography, demographics, boom-bust cycles, and flood of new residents threaten their missions and their very existence. Add competition, backlogs, duplication, and fragmented collections to this volatile mix, and it renders the collecting environment untenable. At a time when we can least afford it, the archival conundrum we helped create is costing institutions and researchers time, money, and resources. These factors significantly affect donor relations, frustrate allocators, limit access to collections, and hamstring our abilities to pursue the records of under-documented communities. Nowhere are these frustrations more keenly felt than in Arizona.

This report chronicles Arizona's efforts to develop a statewide collaborative model of collection management practices, funded in part by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) through the Arizona Historical Records Advisory Board (AHRAB). The participants of the Arizona Archives Summit confronted (and continue to confront) the thorny issues of ethics, acquisitions, backlogs, and access for long-term sustainability. To succeed, this initiative demands

that Arizona's archival repositories transcend a culture of individualism and competition.

Arizona's Cultural Environment: Past and Present

> "It seemed as if Arizona was yet too new and raw to be concerned in any higher culture."
>
> — Joseph Amasa Munk, MD, 1927[1]

Then

Arizona, the nation's forty-eighth state, will be one hundred years old on Valentine's Day, February 14, 2012. There is no better time than now to reflect on Arizona's collecting and preservation record. While other western states were building their cultural institutions, the Arizona Territory lived in the moment. There was a frenzy of activity to describe and quantify every asset that could be measured, assayed, analyzed, counted, surveyed, calculated, sampled, or forecast. Historian Howard R. Lamar describes the Arizona Territory as a "hotbed" of development, caught up in dreams of mineral wealth that would rival California's gold rush.[2] Millions of dollars were speculated on this rawest of places in hopes of multiple returns. Promoters, political hacks, and opportunists sowed the seeds of expediency early on as they looked to cash in and move out. "What was hailed in Europe as a glorious swath of unspoiled creation was viewed … as a plunderer's buffet."[3]

Since its earliest territorial days Arizona has lost thousands of linear feet of government documents and private papers. These records chronicled not only change but continuity, significant events and actions as well as the development of agencies and programs, and the activities of individuals. The loss of these records has led to a fractured and incomplete documentation of Arizona's past. Unfortunately, Arizona came to serious archival collecting relatively late — in some cases too late to attract important foundational collections or compete with a booming collectors' market in territorial documents.[4] In contrast, the History Society of New Mexico began

1. J. A. Munk, *The Story of the Munk Library of Arizona* (Los Angeles: The Times-Mirror Press, 1927), 26. At the time Munk donated his collection to the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles in 1908, he could find no fireproof and sufficiently secure building in Arizona to house it. His attempts in 1923 to remove it from the Southwest Museum and transfer it to the University of Arizona were unsuccessful.

2. Howard R. Lamar, *The Far Southwest 1846–1912: A Territorial History* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 372.

3. First Forester of the U.S., Gifford Pinchot, quoted in Timothy Egan, *The Big Burn* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, Harcourt, 2009), 32.

4. John Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records: The Final Report of the Arizona Historical Records Needs and Assessment Project: A Project of the Department of Library, Archives, and Public Records, and the Arizona Historical Records Advisory Board* (Phoenix: Department of Library, Archives, and Public Records, 1983), 53. The Arizona Historical Society, organized in 1884 and headquartered in

"collecting historic artifacts and papers of various periods and ethnic groups" in 1859, making it one of the oldest historical societies west of the Mississippi.[5] New Mexico managed to collect archival materials by involving its citizens early on, as did Utah. The Arizona State Library, the earliest functioning state cultural institution, was created by statute in 1864. While its book collections grew despite the odds, it did not receive funding for preserving the state's unpublished documentary history; nor was there a law requiring government bodies to deposit their publications.[6]

Arizona has been careless with its historical records. The paper exodus began early and continued unabated until 1937, when legislation reorganized the state library and created a Division of Archives and History. David M. Goodman, a longtime proponent of the research value of territorial records, estimates that 1,300 official published documents were produced by Arizona governmental agencies from 1863 to 1912.[7] In the early territorial days a county clerk of the court wrote to the secretary of the territory, asking for funds for a cabinet to hold the county records, which he said were quickly disappearing. In 1936, some sixty years later, Works Progress Administration (WPA) workers inventoried the state and local government records as part of the nationwide Historical Records Survey. The project compiled "inventories of historical materials, particularly unpublished government documents and records . . . which provide invaluable data for students of political, economic, and social history."[8] At that time, the workers were appalled at the number of records that

Tucson, was still relatively "small and local" in the 1950s. The Arizona State Museum (Southwest anthropology and archaeology) was founded in 1893, followed by the Lowell Observatory in 1894, the Museum of Northern Arizona (natural and cultural history of the Colorado Plateau) in 1928, and the Heard Museum (American Indian arts and cultures) in 1929. In Prescott, Sharlot Hall collected valuable territorial records and artifacts; she restored the first territorial governor's residence and offices as a museum in 1928. The Sharlot Hall Museum remained relatively inactive until the 1970s, when an archivist was added to the staff. In 1937 the legislature created the Arizona State Archives. The University of Arizona Library did not have a separate special collections department until 1958. The Arizona Historical Foundation, founded in 1959 by Senator Barry Goldwater, served as the Hayden Library main archival collection at Arizona State University for a number of years until the library organized its own special collections and university archives. Northern Arizona University's Cline Library began collecting in the 1960s and hired its first archivist in 1972.

5. Not only did the citizens of New Mexico actively collect material but they also published accounts of various ethnic groups and historical periods. The territorial government also created the Museum of New Mexico (see Historical Society of New Mexico, "About the Historical Society of New Mexico," Historical Society of New Mexico, http://www.hsnm.org/about_the_historical_society_of.htm (accessed February 20, 2010).

6. Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records*, 14.

7. David M. Goodman, "Empire in Print: Hi-Grading Arizona Territory's Public Documents" (Paper presented at the Arizona/New Mexico Historical Convention, Tucson, Arizona, 13–16 March 1995), 15. This does not include thousands of unpublished documents generated by both the territorial government and counties.

8. Statewide Archival and Records Project, *Historical Records Survey Program, Inventory of the County Archives of Arizona, no. 7, Maricopa County* (Phoenix, 1940), v.

no longer existed in the state. By 1995, barely four hundred of the original published records could be found in the Arizona State Library, and that was largely due to private gifts and the concentrated efforts of the Arizona State Librarian.[9] Many of the only known copies of Arizona's public documents are now held in repositories in Connecticut, Massachusetts, New York, Wisconsin, and California.

In 1983, the NHPRC funded a comprehensive assessment of Arizona's historical records — the last inclusive examination of the state's collecting status.[10] The findings were at once informative and prophetic: the amount and quality of space, storage conditions, coordination and communication, retention of contemporary records, and professional training were all inadequate, not to mention the duplicate and overlapping collections and the need for a graduate-level archival studies program. The descriptions used in this report are stark: the repositories were underfunded, understaffed, fragile, mismanaged, neglected, undertrained, and underdeveloped. No repository came close to reaching its potential.[11]

The 1983 survey of the state's archivists noted topical areas that were "sufficiently represented" (see Table 1). Those collecting patterns reflect a preoccupation with the Old West to the exclusion of contemporary records. At the time these data were reported, only 17 percent of Arizona's repositories actively collected historical documents that were twenty-five years old or less.[12]

9. Goodman, "Empire in Print," 15.

10. As reported in Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records*, 15, a survey of the District Courts of the Territory of Arizona 1864–1912 was completed in 1939 and published in 1941. This was part of a larger survey funded by the WPA that resulted in six publications on county records, an inventory of Arizona imprints, a directory of churches and religious organizations, and the journal of George Whitwell Parsons. This is an interesting but quirky list, far from comprehensive.

11. The authors wish to thank John Irwin for his thoughtful comments, fact-checking, and additions to the bibliography for this article. As the archival consultant hired for the 1983 survey, John served (and continues to serve) as eyewitness, reporter, and analyst of the status and evolution of libraries and archives in Arizona. His knowledge of collections, repositories, the evolution of libraries and archives, rare books, newspapers, territorial documents, standards for archives facilities, and obscure reference materials pertaining to Arizona is encyclopedic. His contributions to the library-archival community for the past forty years can be felt (if not seen) throughout Arizona, especially his grantsmanship, which has brought thousands of dollars into the state. He was one of the first certified archivists in Arizona and in the United States. The staff and researchers at the Arizona Historical Foundation have greatly benefited from his wisdom, experience, and willingness to test ideas.

12. Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records*, 58.

Table 1. Sufficiently documented topics in Arizona, 1983

Anglo Pioneers, Reminiscences
Arizona History before 1919
Business Records
Crime and Notorious Personages of the Territorial Period
Geronimo
Indians
Military
Mining
Tombstone — Wyatt Earp
Traditional Methods of Viewing Arizona History (the Old West)

Source: Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records*.

Now

> "You know you're an Arizona native, when . . . you thought the Legislative trade of the Insane Asylum for Phoenix and the University of Arizona for Tucson was a good deal."
>
> — Governor Jack Williams, 1993[13]

Arizona actively cultivates an image that has come to symbolize the West — a land filled with riches that reward rugged individualism, self-reliance, and the entrepreneurial spirit. It is a place that promises fresh starts and new beginnings. Arizona is also a study of contrasts and contradictions — mountains and deserts, droughts and floods, urban sprawl and wilderness — a Mecca for affluent retirees, yet one of the youngest states in the nation with a median age of 34.2 years.[14]

For decades Arizona has ridden a wave of population growth at a cost that is insidious and far more difficult to address than the visible ecological impacts on a fragile desert. Studies show that the majority of "new" residents do not think of themselves as Arizonans, even after they have lived in the state for twenty years or more. As a result they do not feel invested in the state's culture, history, or politics. Arizona is also home to many high-technology companies — industries that have

13. Don Dedera and Randy Irvine, *You Know You're an Arizona Native, When ...* . (Payson, Arizona: The Prickly Pear Press, 1993), 52.

14. IDcide: Local Information Data Server. "Arizona Profile." IDcide. http://www.idcide.com/ _citydata/ az/index/htm (accessed March 3, 2010).

fostered a transient population graphically described by Peter T. Kilborn in *Next Stop, Reloville: Life Inside America's New Rootless Professional Class*.[15] These individuals meet all the requirements for an informed citizenry (education and earning capacity) save one — commitment to place.

This indifference has often been reflected in the state's lack of leadership, resulting in a scattered, decentralized pattern of collecting where each repository functions in relative isolation. The "every repository for itself" mentality has undermined the capacity to collect, preserve, and disseminate Arizona's history. As stated previously, the preoccupation with the Old West comes at a cost. Arizona promotes a mythical, romantic past at the expense of archival documentation of the New West. As a consequence we have failed to demonstrate that what has happened (and is happening) here has national and international significance. How does a Western repository make its case with East Coast funders? If you want to understand post–World War II urban growth and development, the environment and natural resources, the military-industrial complex, labor and immigration, and the origins of contemporary political conservatism, look no further than the state of Arizona — provided, of course, that you can locate the records.

Despite contemporary retention guidelines, the destruction of Arizona's records continues to this day. Tales of counties dumping documents into mine shafts, judges leaving records on abandoned courthouse floors, city departments tossing files into alleyways, and agencies routinely deleting permanent emails reflect persistent ignorance and indifference.[16] The high-minded notion that select inactive records (government, corporate, or private) may have a utility beyond their immediate use always takes a backseat to the pressures of the workplace. Although most Arizona cities and counties have adopted basic records management guidelines, compliance, oversight, and a sense of responsibility to preserve the historical record are often lax or missing altogether. This carelessness has carried over to personal and corporate records as well.

The library-archival community in Arizona can claim steady progress through the years, despite the obstacles. There were a few intrepid pioneers who refused to be bound by institutional barriers and used their positions to advance a vision of the possible.[17] Luttrell, Cronin, Kitt, Winsor and others took great risks. They actively and creatively collected archival material when others did not; they fought governors and legislators for buildings and resources; they conducted studies and increased public awareness by publishing the results in newspapers; and they

15. New York: Times Books, Henry Hold and Company LLC, 2009.

16. Irwin, Preserving Arizona's Historical Records; Ronald J. Hansen, "Cities' Timetables Vary Saving Public Records," *Arizona Republic*, March 20, 2010, http://www.azcentral.com/12news/news/articles/2010/03/20/ 20100320arizona-saving-public-records-CP.html (accessed March 20, 2010).

organized and aligned themselves with other professionals both inside and outside the state. We are pleased to report that this pattern continues today.

In the late 1990s the state's three universities began meeting and developing projects together. One of the most significant and enduring outcomes of this academic collaboration is Arizona Archives Online.[18] Under the auspices of the state archives, the Arizona Archivist Roundtable began meeting annually in 2005. The idea was to bring together a broad spectrum of repositories to discuss issues of mutual interest and establish common ground. This forum began to capture information that provided a more complete picture of the collecting activities around the state.

In 2006 AHRAB initiated a survey to assess the progress and status of under-documented areas. An assessment of this issue had also been done as part of the 1983 study. Results of both studies are listed in the tables below.

Table 2. Under-documented topics in Arizona, 2006

African Americans	Healthcare/ Medicine	Professional organizations
Asian Americans	Labor	Ranching/Farming
Blue collar workers	Legislators	Religion
Construction	Local politics	Sports
Communication industry	Minorities/ Immigrants	Tourism
Celebrations/ Festivals	Native Americans	Universities
Chambers of Commerce	Natural resources	Veterans
Economics/Business	Law enforcement/ Legal	Water
Environment	Political movements	Women
Entertainment	Protests	Youth

Source: Arizona Historical Records Advisory Board.

17. In an informal straw poll, Con Cronin, Sharlot Hall, Estelle Lutrell, Edith Kitt, Donald Powell, and (arguably) Mulford Winsor were identified as (pre-1960s) library-archives pioneers.

18. "Arizona Archives Online," http://www.azarchivesonline.org/ (accessed March 20, 2010).

Table 3. Under-documented topics in Arizona, 1983

Agriculture	Education	Political history after 1912
Architecture	Energy issues	Ranching
Arizona since World War II	Federal/State regulations	Tourism
Arts/Arts practitioners	Hispanics	Transportation
Blacks	Industry	Urban development
Business in the twentieth century	Local community history	Water/Irrigation
City/County records	Manufacturing	Women
Criminal justice	Minorities	
Demography	Native American tribal records	

Source: Irwin, *Preserving Arizona's Historical Records*.

Though the studies were conducted twenty-three years apart and the sampling methods differ, the findings are at once striking and disturbing. In 1983 the total repository holdings (processed and unprocessed) in Arizona was an estimated forty thousand cubic feet accumulated by 130 agencies and organizations. In 2009 twelve major Arizona repositories (of the six hundred entities that now collect cultural material) reported a total of 26,125 linear feet of unprocessed collections.[19] In a more recent follow-up survey, six of these repositories reported a total of 48,084 linear feet of processed collections.

Although the amount of linear feet of records had jumped significantly since 1983, the topical categories in both tables largely appeared to be variations of the same themes. What did this mean? Had we establish more enduring subject areas to collect? Did the data indicate that little or no progress had been made? Were we unsuccessful in locating key collections and potential donors? Did we collect in these

19. Unpublished backlog survey conducted for Arizona Archives Summit I. The six hundred cultural institutions in Arizona are listed on the Cultural Inventory Project (see Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, "Cultural Heritage Project," Arizona State Library, http://cip.lib.az.us/ (accessed September 14, 2010).

areas but the materials were buried in the backlogs? How could we measure progress with so many unprocessed collections? What did we really know about our backlogs?

In 2007 backlogs were on the Arizona Archivist Roundtable agenda. A simple exercise was planned — "come prepared to talk about your most significant hidden collections." Members were stunned to learn about the sheer volume and range of topics represented in unprocessed repository holdings. Time and again attendees stated that researchers had been looking for that very topic. If archives staff had only known, they would have made a referral. All agreed that Arizona's backlog was indefensible but noted that shrinking budgets, staffs, and resources made progress extremely difficult.

The impetus for repositories to band together was fueled by the financial crisis and a concern about the impact of backlogs on researchers. Over time, conversations with patrons revealed persistent and worrisome complaints, which included but were not limited to repository closures, split collections, redundancies, searching across repositories, access to hidden collections, and the inability to find primary sources on a certain topic.



Senator Barry M. Goldwater in the Library of Congress reading room, 1960s

Source: Arizona Historical Foundation.

Those affected the most by the lack of access had the most to lose — graduate students, post–doctorate fellows, faculty seeking tenure, faculty with publication deadlines, visiting faculty, freelance historians on grants or deadlines, foreign scholars on Fulbright scholarships, tribal lawyers, and archaeological firms contracted by state, county, and municipal governments as part of their infrastructure development. These "high-end" researchers shared deadline and funding pressures. They also tended to stay in reading rooms longer, mine collections deeply, use multiple collections in multiple repositories, travel long distances, and publish materials that documented collection and repository worth. Our practices were hurting the very individuals who were our *raison d'être*. How could we promote "Arizona as a research destination" if we could not provide basic access?[20]

The tipping point came when researchers were urged to document their data -collecting situations. Their vulnerability was painfully obvious. One after another felt they couldn't complain formally without jeopardizing their work. In their view, writing letters to administrators or legislators meant "going public," which would put them potentially at odds with repository staff. Further, many were not Arizona residents and did not pay taxes. Who would listen? In-state researchers who did pay taxes were also frustrated but reluctant to act because of a persistent idea that written complaints would result in subtle reprisals in the reading room. What was this perception based on? No one could point to anything specific. It was "just a feeling," despite reassurances that repository staff members would support their grounds for complaints.

Here we had evidence of archives as an essential service, yet we failed to (1) advocate on our patrons' behalf; (2) advocate on our collections' behalf; (3) recognize that our own practices accounted for most of the patrons' problems; and (4) understand how we as stewards of the historical record were perceived as potential threats to access. Somehow we had to turn this failure around.

In order to do this, Arizona archivists had to wrestle with controversies that have dominated the professional literature for years — issues that lie at the heart of archival practice and are largely unresolved. These include acquisitions and collection development (non-competing, narrow focus, more depth, less width), appraisal (before, during, after), access (unprocessed, online descriptions at collection level), backlogs (transparency, topical analysis, shared data), and reference (referrals across repositories, connecting researchers to sources beyond manuscripts).

20. The Arizona Historical Foundation staff uses the concept of "Arizona as a Research Destination" and "Arizona State University as a Research Destination" in memos, newsletters, panel presentations, communications with scholars, and grant applications. Arizona's archival repositories are largely absent from cultural tourism promotions. The list of topics on the state's cultural tourism Web site is both revealing and frustrating: American Indians, archaeology, architecture, astronomy, Hispanic culture, military, mining, Mormon pioneers, Old West, ranching, scoundrels-adventurers-colorful characters, transportation, and water (see Arizona Humanities Council, and Arizona Office of Tourism, "Arizona Heritage Traveler," Arizona Humanities Council, and Arizona Office of Tourism, http://www.arizonaheritagetraveler.org/templates/index.php (accessed September 14, 2010).

These issues are neither unique to the West nor more important in Arizona than anywhere else. When considered in aggregate, however, they are a constant drain on everyone's (researchers, archivists, donors, administrators) energy, money, time, and goodwill. Seen less often in the literature but closer to the bone are ethics and collaboration. One cannot address this minefield without considering the philosophical and emotional aspects of doing something for the greater good and pulling together toward a common goal.

Archival Collaboration: The Human Factor

> "In the long history of humankind … those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively have prevailed."
>
> — Charles Darwin
>
> "Cooperation develops at its own pace, building on previous endeavors."
>
> — John A. Fleckner[21]

For nearly a hundred years leaders in the archival community have called for cooperation among repositories. Collaboration has confounded archivists generally. With a few notable exceptions for statewide collaboration such as in Minnesota and Wisconsin, archivists have been unable to sustain it.[22] In 1976 John Fleckner pointed to librarians as models for developing cooperative networks that pool resources to buy books, loan materials, raise funds, share data, establish standards, connect technologies, develop collections, apply for grants, and plan for the future. At the time of his article, librarians had already established a forty-year track record of cooperation that dramatically reversed professional behaviors previously focused

21. John A. Fleckner, "Cooperation as a Strategy for Archival Institutions," *American Archivist* 39 (October 1976): 451.

22. Gabriele Carey, "Envisioning Oregon: Planning toward Cooperative Collection Development in Oregon's Historical Repositories," funded by the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services through the Oregon State Library, 2009, https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/1794/9792/LSTA%20Envisioning%20Oregon%20Final%20Report-1-1.pdf?sequence=1 (accessed March 10, 2010), 1–2. Something is happening in the West. Archivists in Oregon have also been exploring statewide collaboration. Their colleagues in Utah and Nevada have expressed interest in similar pursuits (look for their panel, Western Trailblazing: The Movement Toward State and Regional Collaboration, at the Society of American Archivists 2010 meeting). Like Arizona, Oregon archivists were contemplating a statehood milestone. In early 2009, they published a persuasive fact-finding report in time for Oregon's 150th birthday. The narrative could have come from the Arizona playbook: an important repository (part of the problem, part of the solution) that could not fully participate; large, urban, academic, professional and small, rural, part-time volunteers seeking common ground; unfocused collecting patterns; competing interests; uneven representation in the historical record; closures and access issues; and backlogs that were black holes. The methodologies differ, but as long as Arizona and Oregon reach their goals, it matters little what paths they take. The authors thank James Fox and Gabriele Carey for their candor and for sharing insights along the way. Their experience confirms our own: this is hard work; the progress is incremental; there cannot be a price tag placed on communication, cooperation, and collaboration towards mutual goals.

inward on an institution. This change in attitude was attributed to a "widely held critical assumption by librarians often stated as unquestioned fact and a guiding ideology, that every individual has a right of equal access to all necessary information."[23] It was a sense of mission, zeal, and unquestioned belief in the single principle of access that bound libraries together.

When participants of the study were asked why archivists rarely collaborated, the reasons given were indistinguishable from the list of impediments for writing collection development policies. These include a lack of resources, a lack of administrative support, and a feeling that the endeavor itself is bound by politics, is not useful or practical, will not result in cost savings, is too restrictive, or is not worth the effort. Archivists appear overwhelmed by the present situation and are resigned to accept the status quo because "it is more a fact of life than a critical problem that needs addressing."[24]

Archival collaboration these days is largely contractual in nature. Online consortia, inter-repository agreements, and large-scale digital projects, while measurable and visible, require a commitment to software and output of products. They do not require a deeper examination of practice, an airing of the relativity of archival ethics, a change in professional behaviors, or a re-evaluation of collection development policies. When archivists come together as a consortium, they usually perform a task, share a resource, and move on. Fleckner describes this as "functionally simple and aimed at immediate goals."[25] The Arizona planners were after something more. They also had a track record for developing a statewide archival infrastructure.[26] Embedded there were various projects that resulted in tangible archival assets. These could be leveraged for funding.

23. Fleckner, "Cooperation as a Strategy," 450.

24. Cynthia K. Sauer, "Doing the Best We Can? The Use of Collection Development Policies and Cooperative Collecting Activities at Manuscript Repositories," *American Archivist* 64, no. 2 (Fall/ Winter 2001): 331.

25. Fleckner, "Cooperation as a Strategy," 452.

26. A foundation for collaboration in Arizona has been built over the years and has its roots in the Arizona Library Association's dogged advocacy for (hard-won) legislative support of libraries statewide. Many of the more recent initiatives have come from the Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, under the able leadership and active support of director and state librarian Gladys Ann Wells: The Arizona Historical Records Advisory Board (AHRAB) founded in the 1980s has become more proactive; The Arizona Convocation (http://www.lib.az.us/convocations/ conv2008.cfm), first held in 1999, brings library, archives and museum staffs together; the Arizona Cultural Inventory Project (http://cip.lib.az.us/) was developed in 1999; Arizona Archives Online (http://www.azarchivesonline.org/) is a statewide consortia initiated by Rob Spindler in 2001; the Arizona Archivists Roundtable was created in 2005 along with a companion listserv (AZArchives@lists.lib.az.us); the Arizona Memory Project (http://azmemory.lib.az.us/) was initiated in 2005. In 1997, Friends of the Arizona Archives (FAzA) (http://faza.org/) united grassroots efforts for a new state archives building. The Polly Rosenbaum State Archives and History building opened October 2008 and was formally dedicated on January 15, 2009. The first Arizona Archives Summit met there two weeks later. One month after the dedication, the new building was closed to the public due to budget cuts. It reopened with limited hours in July 2009.

A Conceptual Framework for Action

The four planners of the Arizona Archives Summit represented a spectrum of repositories and experience. They included Robert Spindler, university archivist and head, Archives and Special Collections, Hayden Library at Arizona State University; Karen Underhill, coordinator, Archives and Special Collections, Cline Library at Northern Arizona University; Melanie Sturgeon, State Archivist of Arizona; Linda Whitaker, archivist and librarian for the Arizona Historical Foundation. While Arizona's university system, the State Archives, and the private, non-profits were represented, a potential partner was missing. The Arizona Historical Society declined the invitation to join the group citing staff reductions, branch closures, and certain collection management policies that precluded their full participation in the planning process. Their absence at the planning table remains the single greatest obstacle to statewide collaboration.

The planners saw the need to go beyond the rhetoric to collaborate. First, they had to establish common philosophical ground and discuss issues they had never raised with each other. Second, they had to determine the collective interest in implementing specific strategies for backlogs, some of which were required by the NHPRC. Last but not least, the organizers had to agree on a process that placed the participants on equal footing.

E-mails flew before the first conference call was arranged. Discussions were not divisive, despite the probing questions on the table. Since access and backlogs were such critical issues, one of the first questions addressed was about access to unprocessed collections: Did the planners have policies regarding access to unprocessed collections? The answers were affirmative. Policies were in place that allowed researchers access to unprocessed collections under certain conditions. The need for a common vocabulary was soon apparent, since the interpretation of "unprocessed" varied. After much discussion, the planners reached consensus: an unprocessed collection was one that had no inventory or finding aid. They also had to reach agreement about disclosing backlogs by posting a list or descriptions of unprocessed collections online. It made no sense to have policies about access if only repository staff knew what was in the backlog. Logic prevailed. We would post unprocessed collections to a Web site hosted by the Arizona State Archives.

NHPRC provides a way for repositories to diminish their backlogs through a Basic Processing grant. However, to qualify, institutions must use Greene and Meissner's "More Product Less Processing" (MPLP) — an alternative to traditional processing introduced in 2005 that is aimed at sparing resources and accelerating the rate of accessibility.[27] The methods are not without controversy and come with certain cautions. Though the planners understood the arguments against MPLP, none had serious reservations about implementing it. One repository used minimal

27. Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2005): 208–63.

processing routinely, one was considering MPLP, one used MPLP for many photo collections, and the other had a minimal backlog.

Initially there was no agreement about making the Summit process transparent by posting proposed survey results, collection policies, and proceedings to the Web. Planners expressed concerns about internal collection development policies that might need to be modified for external use and questioned posting backlogs that might have untoward consequences. The planners finally agreed that the backlogs would be posted in aggregate. The idea of including patrons as participants in the Summit was controversial as well. There was a perception that frank backlog discussions would potentially hurt repository relationships with patrons. There were also concerns that the presence of patrons would impede discussion. The planners finally agreed to include certain constituencies as observers.[28]

The planners took stock of the state's archival infrastructure and capacity to collaborate. They plotted a strategy and proposed a set of Rules of Engagement. To attend the Summit, participants had to (1) report the repository backlog data; (2) submit a copy of the collection development policy; (3) review selected articles from a reading list; (4) commit to update policies based on consultant feedback; and (5) accept that the proceedings would be posted on the Web. In return, participants could attend a two-day workshop free of charge, featuring nationally recognized archivists, learn new ways to think about old problems, and establish common ground with colleagues from across the state. Invitations went out to twenty-six repositories. Thirty-one individuals representing eighteen repositories attended the first Arizona Archives Summit in 2009.

Process

Although the four planners had reached consensus, could they persuade other archivists to help build a culture of cooperation and collaboration? Could the group share information, address the 2006 study of under-documented topics, and improve access to hidden collections? In January of 2008, only one of the state's archival institutions had posted its unprocessed collections online. Would the rest of the participants be willing to make their backlogs accessible? Would they be willing to initiate conversations about transferring split, out-of-scope, or unprocessed collections to a more appropriate institution? Could they have a conversation about

28. In deference to other colleagues, one planner who favored a role for researchers did not press the issue. Her view was (and remains) that we would be revealing what most researchers already knew. Further, we needed patron feedback to support statewide policy changes. In the end, an historian sat in as an observer, recorder, and reporter of the proceedings. Later she shared her personal observations: (1) she didn't realize how much donors have influenced split collections; (2) she found the exchange between participants refreshing and engaging; and (3) she was unfamiliar with MPLP (and so had no opinion) but welcomed access to unprocessed collections.

the ethics of collecting without providing access?[29] Although aware that not all goals could be accomplished in one meeting, the planners agreed that taking incremental steps forward was an improvement over the status quo. Who could lead the group through this thicket?

Three individuals came to mind: Mark Greene (director, American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming) for his experience and methodologies for managing backlogs and improving access; Tim Ericson (retired professor of archival studies, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee) for his experience and methodologies in collection development and formal collaborative networks; and Greg Thompson (associate director, Marriott Library Special Collections, University of Utah) for his experience and methodologies in field collecting, consensus building, and informal networks. All three consultants agreed to lead the way. It was important that the consultants understood the collecting environment. This grassroots initiative now had the imprimatur of experts, two of whom lived in the West.[30] The prospect of Arizona's Centennial in 2012 provided an added impetus. The keepers of Arizona's historical record were poised to make their own history.

The Arizona Archives Summit

The consultants struck a tone early on that was both instructional and conversational. The fact that they easily shared their "hard lessons learned along the way" provided both humor and perspective. They were also unequivocal about their views on sustainability, access to collections, the costs of backlogs and smart collecting. These two approaches were models for the behaviors required for collaboration: candor and a willingness to share information. Embedded within their collegiality were four stark messages: (1) The broader the collecting scope of a repository, the more it over-reaches and the more unsustainable it becomes. (2) It is unethical to acquire collections when there are no resources to support them or make them available to the public. (3) Ignore backlogs at your own peril. Sooner or later, unprocessed collections will alienate researchers and erode donor trust. (4) Narrowing the scope of collecting spares resources and allows a repository to collect smarter. Focus the collecting policy, make it public, and then adhere to it.

Greene, Thompson, and Ericson analyzed participants' collection policies for their depth, breadth, and overlap. Then they shared their insights. With one

29. Deep budget cuts forced some repositories to cut their hours to such an extent that they were unable to provide researchers access to their collections, yet they continued to accept materials knowing that they could not process them.

30. We have a geographical bias that runs deep. Lamar's view of the western states as colonies is persuasive. Arizona archives were conceived in colonial governance—an environment of exploitation and subjection to the whims of political appointees with no personal commitment to the territory. Patricia Nelson Limerick is unequivocal: "The events of the nineteenth century shaped every dimension of Western life in the twentieth [and twenty-first] century." *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1987), 6–7.

exception, the collection development policies were deemed redundant, too vague, and in need of considerable work. Thompson reminded the attendees that representation of the historical record begins with collection development policies. He also suggested soliciting patron input when updating policies in order to achieve two goals: (1) solicit information about primary sources they could not find but were essential for their research and (2) validate that the changes in policy resulted in improved reference services and access.

No one can make the case for new thinking about backlogs more effectively than Mark Greene. Surprisingly he did not have to make the case at all. The backlog discussion turned out to be less painful than expected. Most of the summit participants had heard about MPLP, but few had applied the technique. Greene demonstrated convincingly that when MPLP was coupled with reappraisal and deaccessioning, institutions could significantly decrease their backlogs. He cautioned that institutions needed to apply MPLP guidelines judiciously. Much discussion ensued and, in the end, the group generally regarded the MPLP recommendations as flexible, practical, and producing measurable results.

As mentioned earlier, in order to participate in the summit, each repository had to list its total linear feet of unprocessed collections and identify its top five unprocessed collections. Photograph collections were listed in every backlog, and all but one repository had significant backlogs. Greene, Thompson, and Ericson evaluated the backlog lists and found that the average backlog was 42 percent of the total holdings. The mean backlog of 40 percent was close to the national average. A surprising discovery was that there were a number of unprocessed science and technology collections — one of Arizona's under-documented topics. Some institutions had unprocessed collections that they had held for thirty years or more. Archivists related stories about the fallout in donor relationships and the negative impact hidden collections had on researchers.

Few of Arizona's repositories allowed researchers access to unprocessed collections, and even fewer provided lists of these collections — a result of official and unofficial policies. When the attendees examined their institutions' rationales, some agreed to allow access to unprocessed collections if the deed of gift allowed it; others decided to allow researchers access without a specific reference in the deed of gift. Each institution agreed to develop guidelines regarding access over the coming year. Many stated that they would post a list of their unprocessed collections online.

During the access discussion, the group discovered that processed collections could also be hidden. Although all the repositories represented at the Summit had Web sites, a number of them did not post their processed collections. Discovery was gained through word of mouth, a personal visit to the reading room, or by telephone call and letter. This had less to do with repository policies and than with lingering traditions from a bygone era.

The most difficult conversations revolved around transferring split, out-of-scope, or unprocessed collections to a more appropriate institution. Attendees

expressed their concerns about getting buy-in from their administration. They worried that administrators would: (1) consider transfers a threat to their authority; (2) limit their ability to respond to political pressures; or (3) see it as a move that would alienate donors. Greene, Thompson, and Ericson shared their experiences with the group, stressing the importance of collection policies, cost-benefit analyses, and contacts with donors prior to and during the transfer to another repository. The experts expressed the belief that most administrators would agree to deaccession if a case could be made. In addition, several Arizona repositories had openly exercised the transfer option and reported the support of their administrations and the positive results of the transfers.

With the Arizona Centennial Celebration approaching, we wanted to examine under-documented communities and topics. This could not be done in a cohesive manner if repository holdings were largely unknown. During discussions, it was suggested that a statewide matrix be developed to record repository collections (processed and unprocessed) so that data could be compared with the 2006 under-documented study. This matrix could be posted on the Web to facilitate referrals, avoid duplication, inform researchers, and track progress in under-collected areas. Participants agreed to help create a matrix and to contribute to the collection data.

At the end of the summit, attendees were asked about their perceptions of the obstacles to collaboration, costs for non-cooperation, and benefits of working together. Everyone agreed that the chief obstacle was a lack of knowledge about one another's collections. They also cited other contributing factors: (1) distance and geography; (2) money, staff, and time limits; (3) legacy and politics; (4) egos and territorialism; (5) the need for approval of higher-level administration and boards; (6) legal issues with deeds of gift and donors' wishes; (7) patrons' patterns of use; and (8) staff turnover.

The costs of not cooperating were candidly discussed. Continued fragmentation of collections, poor access to collections, gaps in the historical record, increased backlogs, a culture of disunity, missed opportunities, and a poor professional image were generally recognized as unacceptable. Finally, the benefits of working together encompassed better communication, a stronger professional community, a willingness to take risks, the fostering of respect and trust, and the ability to compromise. A list of the more tangible benefits follows.

Outcomes: Progress and Unexpected Dividends

The authors report the following outcomes — some serendipitous — made possible by the groundbreaking work of the first Arizona Archives Summit in 2009:

- 2009 SAA panel presentation: *Statewide Sustainability: Arizona's Experiment in Collaborative Collection Management*, featuring three Arizona Summit participants, one consultant, and the funder.

- NHPRC formally announced at SAA that funding was available for more statewide collaborative initiatives during that panel presentation. Other states have now expressed interest.
- 2010 SAA panel presentation: *Western Trailblazing: The Movement Toward State and Regional Collaboration*. Utah, Oregon, Nevada, and Arizona will be represented. During the planning phase, representatives from two states had in-depth discussions about mutually important collections that were inaccessible due to repository closures. Strategies for transfer to other repositories are underway.
- Grant submitted but not awarded. The first collaborative, multi-institutional processing grant from Arizona was submitted for hidden collections. Though not awarded, personal conversations with the funder provided valuable insights: more must be discovered and known about Arizona's hidden collections so that wider connections to subjects of national interest can be made.
- Arizona Archives Summit II (2010), funded by NHPRC. No consultants, no intermediaries — the archivists and librarians were on their own.
- Prior to Summit II, participants were surveyed and 64 percent responded, reporting the following:
    - Four institutions were continuing or had implemented MPLP practices.
    - Two institutions were actively planning MPLP projects.
    - One repository had received a basic NHPRC grant resulting in forty-eight collections processed to MPLP guidelines.
    - One institution was adapting processing procedures for an MPLP pilot project.
    - One institution had adapted accession records to Encoded Archival Description for all unprocessed collections for posting on Arizona Archives Online.
    - Seven repositories had transferred materials to other institutions.
    - One institution with reappraisal and deaccessioning policies in place had deaccessioned several large collections (more than 150 linear feet) and transferred them to more appropriate repositories by making the case with the donors and its board.
    - Two repositories were in the process of relocating six collections.
    - One repository was appraising materials in its backlog for possible deaccessioning.
- An MPLP photo workshop was embedded in Summit II in response to the backlog survey. Nearly every repository reported losing photographic specialists or curator positions in the previous 18–24 months. Rebekah Tabah, photo preservationist for the Arizona Historical Foundation, demonstrated that MPLP could be applied to photos safely and effectively — one did not have to be a specialist to do it. Another workshop soon followed, as described below.

- 2010 Western Roundup, a regional meeting of archivists from western states held every five years. Panel presentation: *MPLP for Photographs: A Marriage Made in Heaven or a Pathway to Hell?* Standing room only. The panel (two from Arizona, one from Alaska) offered guidelines for when to and when not to use MPLP for photographic collections.[31]
- Representatives from the University of Arizona School of Information Resources and Library Science and the Arizona State University Public History graduate degree program were among the Summit II attendees. This connection led to discussions about both programs sharing and collaborating on archival coursework. Starting the fall of 2010, students in both programs should find it easier to enroll in graduate-level archival classes from either university.
- The following goals and activities were initiated during and after Summit II:
    - Peter Runge at Northern Arizona University drafted a matrix that was reviewed and accepted. Participating repositories will have entered 50 percent of their holdings by August 2010, beginning with their unprocessed collections. This matrix will be posted on the Arizona Summit Web site.
    - The Arizona Cultural Inventory Project was reviewed and recommendations were made regarding updates for Web content and future directions.[32]
    - Web content and various internal/external uses for an Arizona Archives Summit Web site were discussed. These will be implemented pending Web site changes at the State Archives.
    - Regional networks were identified to maintain networking. Brown bag gatherings will be hosted by the three universities during the next year.
    - Arizona Archives Summit hosted a display table at the joint 2010 Arizona-Nevada History Convention. It was an opportunity to inform researchers about statewide collaborative collecting.
    - At least one MPLP photo workshop is planned in response to repository requests.
    - Two tribal archivists attended Summit II. They expressed the need for tribal archivists to establish lines of communication, share common problems, identify resources, and strengthen

31. The vast majority of photos in repository backlogs are well suited for MPLP. The exceptions are photographic art collections and specialized formats, such as glass or lantern slides.

32. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, "Cultural Heritage Project," Arizona State Library, http://cip.lib.az.us/ (accessed September 14, 2010).

programs.[33] Partnerships have been identified and plans are underway for an Arizona Tribal Archives Summit.
    - The Arizona Archives listserv will be the conduit for sharing information.
    - Six institutions stated that they are working on collection development policies.
    - Six institutions are prepared to transfer at least one collection in 2010.
    - Two repositories are considering the Arizona Memory Project to digitally unite split collections.[34]
- NHPRC awarded funding for Summit III in 2011.
- The planning process led to an important discovery: the next generation of archivists. These emerging leaders share characteristics that bode well for the future:
    - They are looking for practical solutions.
    - They are unencumbered by territoriality.
    - They do not accept the status quo.
    - They are not reluctant to contact each other.
    - They are willing to take risks and look for reasons to act.
    - They see through excuses.
    - They worry about ethics.
    - They practice accountability and expect it in return.

Conclusion

Western repositories have much to gain and little to lose from statewide initiatives that promote cooperative collection management policies. This is a process that looks outward and seeks common ground. This report is less a case study than it is a continuing work in progress. Our efforts are fueled by the belief that we can do better and rise above the most trying conditions. The Arizona experience clearly demonstrates that even incremental changes have the potential to reap significant benefits.

33. According to the 2000 Census, Arizona is home to 250,000 Native Americans and 21 federally recognized tribes. Arizona has been a leader in tribal libraries, archives, and museums. Karen Underhill, an Arizona Summit planner, was instrumental in assisting the development of protocols for Native American archival materials (see First Archives Circle, "Protocols for Native American Archival Materials," First Archives Circle, 2007, http://www2.nau.edu/libnap-p/protocols.html (accessed February 25, 2010)).

34. Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records, "Arizona Memory Project," Arizona State Library, http://azmemory.lib.az.us/ (accessed September 14, 2010).

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No one can approach statewide collaboration without considering the critical elements of archival practice: ethics, appraisal, access, and collection development. The headings illustrate how we dissected the issues. The sources listed are not exhaustive but rather a representative mix of the classics, giving differing views on key issues and offering some new perspectives.

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