Capturing Voices in the Heat of the Moment: Election Reflections 2016

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Capturing Voices in the Heat of the Moment: Election Reflections 2016

Randy Williams
(with contributions from Jennifer Duncan and Liz Woolcott)
Utah State University Libraries
At Utah State University Libraries, we have a tradition of community-driven oral history efforts aimed at bringing the voices of the underserved and underheard communities into our Special Collections & Archives for preservation and presentation. This effort is called Northern Utah Speaks.
Since 2000, we have conducted ten major oral history efforts and advised and/or served as PI on ten others—all the traditional way:
✓ Community collaboration
✓ Fieldwork
✓ Interviewing—face to face
✓ Transcription
✓ Participant transcript review
✓ EAD/Digital guide creation
  ✓ presentation/preservation
✓ Publicity
These efforts take 1-3 years and funding.
Formative Traditions

- Early education (foundation)
  - Cultural competencies
  - Awareness/Unawares
  - Areas of concern
- Academic education
  - Mentors
- Work education
  - Preservation
  - Mentors
- Life education
  - Partnering/collaborations
  - Social justice
  - Social media
RESHAPING

On the morning of 9 November, as my colleagues and I watched our personal social media “blow up” with reactions to the U.S. Presidential Election results, I began to wonder how could we collect these voices (both dismayed and jubilant) of the electorate.

As raw emotions gave way to an urgent professional quest, I began to hatch an idea to ethically collect and preserve and present some of these reactions.
Reworking Traditional Collecting

- Sensitive to “pulse” of people
  - Liminality
- Tradition of collecting
- Point of Discovery
  - Memes
- Social media
  - How to collect
- Qualtrics survey use
- Trust/excellent relationship with colleagues
  - Jennifer Duncan, Sara Skindelien, Liz Woolcott
72 Days: Concept to Completion

Planning & Executing in 5 hours

• Idea (10am)
• Buy in from colleagues (12pm)
  – Dean
  – Department Head
  – Curators
  – Metadata Services
  – Digital Initiatives
  – Graphic Design
  – IRB Colleagues

• Work (next slides)
• **Launch** (5:15pm)
The purpose the project is to gather the reactions and reflections of U.S. citizens and others to the 2016 presidential election as a means of preserving this unique part of national history. The project will be announced through social media. Interested participant will submit their entry via Qualtrics; this document will include and work as an informed consent and release form. The document will ask for information (metadata) to assist USU Librarians when describing each reflection. The information gathered will be presented in a digital collection produced and managed by USU’s Special Collections & Archives.
Releasing the Survey

Reflections on Presidential Election 2016

U.S. Presidential Election Reflections: Social Media Collecting Project

You've been reading them all day. Help us collect them: the stories of the election night. Share your story! Help us gather and preserve the reflections and reactions of U.S. citizens and others to the 2016 presidential election. It is fast, all online, and enhances our national history.
U.S. Presidential Election Reflections: Social Media Collecting Project

You’ve been reading them all day. Help us collect them: the stories of the election night. Share your story! Help us gather and preserve the reflections and reactions of U.S. citizens and others to the 2016 presidential election. It is fast, all online, and enhances our national history.
Project Information: 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Reflections

**Purpose:** Thank you for your willingness to participate in Utah State University’s 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Reflections project. The purpose of the project is to **gather reactions and reflections** of U.S. citizens and others to the 2016 Presidential election and **preserve the reflections** in USU Special Collections & Archives digital collection as a means of enhancing our national history.

**Procedures:** Review this form. If you desire to participate, please complete the fields below, including 1) reflection, 2) metadata (information about you and your submission), 3) release/submit to USU.

**Benefits/Risks:** By collecting and making available the reflections to the 2016 Presidential election, we will add unique and important voices to our national story, now and in the future. There is minimal risk in participating in this project. However, if participation causes any distress we request that you cease participation and do not submit your reflection.
Reflection

Enter your personal reflection here. Please do not defame others. (4000 character maximum)
Demographic Information

- In which state do you currently reside?
- In which county do you currently reside?
- In which city do you currently reside?
- What is your gender identity?
- What is your ethnicity?
- Are you of Hispanic origin?
- Do you identify as LGBT?
- What is your birth year?
- What is your political affiliation?
Other Information

• Self Description (1-2 sentence description of you)
• Please give 3-5 keywords, separated by commas, that you would use to describe your reflection
• Provide any contextual information, if needed (where/when/with whom, and possible definitions of words or terms)
By submitting your reflection and metadata to Utah State University Library's Special Collections & Archives you are releasing the information to be shared in a digital collection and have read and agreed to the informed consent/release information noted at the beginning of the survey.

☐ I consent to release my information

Your name (which will not be used in the collection)


Name you would like associated with your reflection online (you may use an alias but please remain civil)


Post-Election Opinions Could Be Used In The Future

By AIMEE COBABE • NOV 16, 2016

If you’ve been on social media over the past week, chances are you’ve seen a number of posts about the election.

That’s exactly what Randy Williams is seeing. She’s a folklore curator and oral history specialist at Utah
USU project collects presidential election reactions

By Kevin Opsahl staff writer  Nov 11, 2016  (0)

Utah State University Special Collections and Archives wants to put your reactions to the presidential election via social media into a digital collection.

The 2016 U.S. Presidential Election Reflections Project aims to take people’s opinions from Nov. 8 and beyond from Facebook, Twitter and other prominent social media sites.
Publicity for the Project: USU Today

U.S. Presidential Election Reflections: Social Media Collecting Project

Thursday, Nov. 10, 2016

You've been reading them all day. Now, you can help Utah State University Special Collections and Archives gather and preserve the reflections and reactions of U.S. citizens and others to the 2016 presidential election.

Share your story!

Randy Williams, folklorist and curator in USU's Special Collections and Archives, coordinates this project.

"Whether you are encouraged or discouraged by the election results, we want to collect your reflection of this momentous national event," Williams said. "It is important for our children and future generations to know what we were thinking and feeling. Like tiles in a mosaic, each voice adds shape and dimension to our national identity."

The project is fast (under 20 minutes) and all online. Those interested can copy and paste something they've already shared on social media or, participants can
Have thoughts on the election and want to share them? You can preserve your perspective on this moment in history in USU's Special Collections and Archives! Please share the link, too!

U.S. Presidential Election Reflections: Social Media Collecting Project

Qualtrics sophisticated online survey software solutions make creating online surveys easy. Learn more about Research Suite and get a free account today.

USE THIS LINK: http://tinyurl.com/electionreflections

Ever wanted to be a part of the archives? Now's your chance!

No matter whose side you were on, this year's election was a big deal. Special Collections and Archives wants to capture your reaction (right now while it's still fresh!) so we can preserve it for those looking back on this transformative event in American history. We know you have thoughts (we've been looking a social media today, too) so fill out our brief survey, and who knows, maybe your reaction will make it in a research paper one day!

I have been hearing lots of amazing heartfelt stories of how folks are feeling after the election. I would like to encourage you to let your voice be heard for generations to come. If you don't think you have a story, or the time to write it please take these words from Winston Churchill to heart, "History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it."
And To All The Little Girls

The morning after the election my daughter asked me “Dad, do people just not like girls?”

This was originally written for the “U.S. Presidential Election Reflections: Social Media Collecting Project” and they want to hear from you too!
The 5 Step Program

1. Data Cleanup
2. Data Converted to Metadata
3. Data Converted to PDFs
4. Load into CONTENTdm
5. Convert into Finding Aid
Cleaning the Data

- Qualtrics -> CSV file
- CSV file -> Excel spreadsheet
- Reviewed entries for cleanup
  - De-identification
  - "Copy/Paste" errors
  - Strange characters
  - Fix paragraph/line breaks
  - Standardized some free text fields (location, etc.)
- Added "Not supplied" to blank fields
- Reviewed entries for red flags
  - Threats of harm
  - Threats of self-harm

What I can do:
- Breathe in
- Breathe out
- Pet the dog
- Listen to music
- Read mindless mystery novels
- Listen to my son's wise counsel
- Remember to be good
- Hope
- Care
- Work
- Love

What I cannot do:
- Watch TV news
- Look at Facebook
- Read the newspaper
- Talk about it yet
- Give up
Data converted to Metadata

✓ Concatenate to form new fields:
  ✓ “Reflection on the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election submitted by____.”

✓ De-dupe entries

✓ Convert dates to ISO/DAC standards
Data converted to PDF

Name: Hannah
Self-Description: I am a white, female young adult that is growing her interest in American politics.
Keywords: interesting, reflective, generational
Context: Not supplied

Date and time of submission: 12/9/16 18:31
Country: United States
State: Utah
County: Cache
City: Logan
Political Affiliation: Republican
Birth Year: 1998
Gender: Female
Ethnicity: White
Hispanic: No
LGBT: No

Reflection:
It was interesting to see history in the making. This was the first time that I was able to vote and when the time came, I didn’t really want to. Don’t worry, I still did but there wasn’t such a clear-cut choice as I feel there has been in the past. It was interesting watching the buildup throughout the campaigns. I feel like I am at such an optimal age to vote but unfortunately so many people my age don’t take advantage of this freedom we get to enjoy. This election taught me to educate myself in future elections and be more involved in these campaigns.
Loaded into CONTENTdm

Batch load Spreadsheet + PDF
Curator develops "front matter"

- Historical Note
- Content Description
- Use information
Converted into EAD

Metadata team:
✓ Assign ARK identifiers
✓ Record information in CONTENTdm
✓ Export from CONTENTdm
✓ Convert to <c> container list for EAD guide
✓ Linked at the item level to Digital Collection

You can see them now!

Launched 20 January 2017: Inauguration Day

Digital Collection (CONTENTdm)

Archives West (Finding Aid)
http://bit.ly/2sIgN0N
Demographics of the Collection: Who completed the survey?

- 233 usable responses
- 152 identified as women
- 193 identified as white and 15 as multiracial
- 13 identified as being of Hispanic origin
- 16 identified as LGBTQIA+ and 3 questioning
- The average birth year was 1981, with a median of 1985
Demographics of the Collection
State of Origin

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<th>State</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
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<td>Texas</td>
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<td>California</td>
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<td>Idaho</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Oregon</td>
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<td>Washington</td>
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<td>Arizona</td>
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<td>Massachusetts</td>
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<td>Georgia</td>
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<td>Louisiana</td>
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<td>New York</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Wyoming</td>
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<td>Hungary</td>
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<td>Illinois</td>
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<td>Japan</td>
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<td>Kansas</td>
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<td>Kentucky</td>
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<td>Maryland</td>
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<td>Nebraska</td>
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<td>Nevada</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Hampshire</td>
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<td>North Dakota</td>
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<td>Not supplied</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ontario</td>
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<td>Pakistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Carolina</td>
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<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>West Virginia</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disgrace</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Roman Empire</td>
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## Demographics of the Collection

### Party Affiliation

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<td>Conservative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conservative independent</td>
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<tr>
<td>CORRECT</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Democrat/Progressive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Democratic Socialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demokratisch</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Don’t Have One</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green, Voted Democrat</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Independent Conservative</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent, Dem leaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lean Democrat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Left-leaning Dem (former Green)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal Democrat</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberal/Progressive</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libertarian</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>LOVE</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mid-right</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate-Liberal</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly Republican</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mostly Democrat</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Democratic Party—Canada</td>
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<td>No Answer/Left Blank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Passionate Democrat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previously Independent, Now Dem</td>
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<tr>
<td>Progressive</td>
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<td>Registered Dem, Really Independent</td>
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<td>Republican/Voted Obama-Clinton</td>
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<td>Republican</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republican (for now)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Republican, might become Indep</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technically Republican</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaffiliated, Left Leaning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• Dustin, male, white, Republican, Self-description: “Grew up in rural Wyoming on a ranch,” Logan UT; submitted: 12/12/2016 10:44

• I thought the election as a whole was totally different than past elections. It seemed as if the tactics changed from fighting to be the most notable candidate to how can I downgrade the other. The debates couldn't really be called debates, rather arguing and changing questions to pin other candidates down. I'm sure debate teams in high schools across the country were watching in perplexity. Media has so much influence upon a people also. Wether good or bad media, media puts candidates in the spotlight. I noticed everyday there was something on the news about Trump. This is one of the first times in history where we couldn't really tell either of the candidates true plans for the country, seemed as if instead of giving out what they were trying to accomplish for the country they would think of what can we say that might intrigue or rial up people to pay attention to my campaign. We'll see how the future turns out with the election. Always hope for the best for this great country!
Collection Voices

• Julia, female, white, Democratic, Self-description: “I am a professor at Utah State University and a HRC supporter,” North Logan, Utah; submitted: 11/9/2016 20:25

• After Clinton's campaign advisor came out to tell the crowd to go home for the evening, 8 thought I should turn in too. It wasn't over - Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota were still out. I went upstairs to sleep and my boyfriend came in about 20 minutes later. He said in hushed tones "so you've seen." I had no idea what he meant - I had turned on an episode of "Chopped." He realized this and said "she called him to concede." I couldn't understand what he was saying. I snapped back, "No she didn't. You're kidding me. No. Why would she do this? This is a bad joke! This isn't funny." I turned on CNN to see the headline and Mike Pence introducing Donald Trump. For the rest of the night we just laid in silence, sporadically telling each other it would be okay.
• Amy Odum, female, white, Independent, self-description: “I am a mom, and a professor and a successful academic,” Logan, Utah; submitted: 11/9/2016 21:19

• My husband and our daughter went to a friend's house to have a taco dinner and celebrate Hillary's win. As the returns came in, we all got quieter and quieter, and at some point I realized there was a good chance she could lose. I realized that I had never seriously considered that she could lose against Trump. It was staggering and appalling. I felt sick. Some time after 10 p.m. we walked home quietly and sadly, still in shock at how things were going. We all went to bed not knowing the final outcome. I had a hard time getting to sleep and tossed and turned as I finally fell into a fitful sleep. At 3:45 a.m., I woke to the sight of my husband looking at his phone. He was looking at the election results. I asked who won and he said Trump and I could still barely even believe it. We held each other, unable to sleep, for what seemed like a very long time. All of the ramifications of the results ran through my head. My husband gave me the sweetest most tender kiss that I will always remember from that dark night and I finally fell asleep again.
Emma Wright, female, white, Republican, Self-description: “I am a 23 year old senior undergraduate student at Utah State University. I am studying Liberal Arts and Philosophy. I identify as a nondenominational Christian. I enjoy reading, dancing, swimming, and spending as much time outdoors as is physically possible;” submitted: 11/10/2017 20:33

This is a recounting of my thoughts and feelings on Election Day and the day after. The day of the election, I was feeling really ready to be done with all the bullshit and hyperbole. However, Tuesday is the busiest day of my week, and I spent most of the day either in classes or studying for class, so I was mostly able to keep my mind off of the election. I didn't really hear anything about the election until about 8:30pm, when a friend started giving updates to a group of us that were hanging out. Leading up to the election, I believed the pollsters, just like everyone else, and was fully expecting a Clinton victory. This was rather disheartening to me because I feel that she really is not the best person to be running our country, for a variety of reasons. However, I got home from school around 9:30pm to find my dad avidly watching the vote counting on several different websites, and I was quite surprised to see that Trump was up by several percentage points. As the night went on and my dad continued to give me updates, I started to wonder, "Is Trump really going to beat Hillary??" By the time I went to bed, it was pretty obvious that Trump had won the election. When I woke up the next morning, the first thing I did was reach for my phone and get on Facebook. I could tell from all of the doomsday-type comments that Trump was our new president. I was honestly quite shocked. All day Wednesday, I went through a range of emotions: incredulous because he won; concern because of the way the public is reacting; relief that the Supreme Court will not have another liberal to tip the vote for the next 40+ years; trepidation over the future of our nation; and disgust because of all the people to represent the Republican party, Trump should’ve been the very last. The worst part of this whole thing has been seeing the outpouring of hateful and vicious comments from everyone who expected Hillary to win, as well as the petty & vengeful people among the Trump supporters; I wish people could be more objective and less emotional about the whole thing. I myself was pretty resigned to the prospect of a Clinton presidency, but did not think it was worth losing friends over; obviously the other side simply does not feel the same way. It’s been hurtful to be treated like I am not an intelligent or caring person because I did not support Hillary. However, I did not support Trump either. Any time I’ve come across a genuine discussion that has promoted understanding and love, even in the midst of disagreements, it’s been such a breath of fresh air, and a sign that there is some hope for this country yet.
The Election Reflections Project was the first social media collecting project for USU Libraries Special Collections & Archives.
Takeaways

• Continue collecting using social media
  – Presidential elections
  – Mid-term elections
  – Other dramatic event(s) that affect our community

• Create protocol for social media efforts
  – Calendaring: plan ahead, more lead time
  – Promote ahead of time (with contingencies for “heat of the moment” collection)
  – Potential for doing a pre- and post- election survey

• Networking
  – Establishing a network to “get the word out”
  – Networking with potential researchers, social scientists, journalists
  – Do a better job getting a cross section of the communities
    • Involve community activists across the spectrum

• Instrument
  – Streamline questions
  – Refine the survey instrument, while trying to keep as much as possible extant for longitudinal collecting
  – Provide drop down menus for some fields to streamline clean up time
Musings

• Be aware of your own interests/biases when you are envisioning/building a collection
• Anecdotally, many people seemed to really appreciate being able to document how they were feeling in the moment.
• Future researchers will seek to understand the diversity of the political culture of Utah and require more than vote counts.
• Grateful we documented “heat of the moment” voices, coming across public and private social media channels in rural Utah.
• Surprised by some of the national/international exposure.
• Work to get more local (Cache Valley) focus remains distinctively Northern Utah.
Election Reflections 2016

About this collection

The U.S. Presidential Election Reflections collection launched on 20 January 2017, just in time for the United States presidential inauguration. This social media collecting project boasts 233 reflections about the 2016 presidential election results. The collection project began the day after the election and ran for one month. The respondents are from 27 U.S. states and four foreign countries.

The 2016 presidential election exposed the depths of a political divide for much of the country and the world was watching. Whether people were encouraged or discouraged by the election results, USU Special Collections (SCA) curators wanted to collect the reflections of this momentous national event. It is important for future generations to know what people were thinking and feeling.

The social media collecting project is a first for the USU Library. It was conceived and created the day after the election as the world watched social media "blow up" with personal reflections on the election results. It seemed important to collect and preserve these reflections, and fast.

Using social media to promote the project, SCA curators and USU librarians used Qualtrics software to create a survey that would allow interested participants to add their social media reflection to the project. The survey was open from 9 November to 9 December 2016. Those who contributed to the project were able to do so quickly and all online. Survey respondents were asked to share their thoughts on the election and had the option to provide additional information about themselves.
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?