

NCHC Report-May 29, 2020

Division of Archives and Records

On behalf of the Division of Archives and Records, I am pleased to highlight a few division activities since the October 30, 2019 report to the Commission. These are some selected highlights of programming, outreach, and other projects from across the division. Included are events and activities conducted prior to the change in operations due to COVID-19, as well as some important work done by the division while staff worked from home.

She Changed the World: The 2020 calendar was full of wonderful plans to focus on the departmental programming theme, "She Changed the World." We developed a "one day wonder" special exhibit that was booked at 14 locations in 2020, along with events in 2019 and 2021. Prior to the pandemic those events included the inaugural event at Mars Hill University in November, Southern Pines Public Library in January, and the Burke County Public Library in February. We just wrapped up the major event in partnership with Alamance Community College when the pandemic restrictions began. In person exhibit events have been cancelled or postponed through July, and we will make determinations on the rest as we see how restrictions on public gatherings are maintained. The in-person events were all we imagined with strong local partnerships with groups such as the League of Women Voters, local libraries, and community colleges. Each event had its own special times from an evening lecture series featuring a presentation on the history of election cakes to story time with a suffragist to an exhibit visitor reading an original poem about the struggle for women's rights. She was about to celebrate her 100th birthday. A few pictures of the exhibit events are included at the back of the report.

Another emphasis area for this programming theme was the collecting of oral histories from women across the state. We are seeking interviews with local leaders in education, government, and the community—those who made a difference and changed the world in which they lived. Prior to the restriction on conducting in-person oral histories, we gathered 10 and 9 have transcriptions nearly completed. We are exploring how to most effectively capture oral histories in an online environment as we do not expect to return to face-to-face interviews soon.

In partnership with the MUSE museum in Winston Salem, I participated in a Facebook Live event last week. This event virtually featured our exhibit, as well as an exhibit at the North Carolina Room in the Forsyth County Public Library. It highlighted the struggle for suffrage and the local League of Women Voters records at the NC Room. An image of the flyer is included at the end of the report.

Outreach programming: Prior to March, a number of other outreach programming was conducted. Our public services staff gave the beginning and introductory genealogy workshops in partnership with Aycock Birthplace State Historic Site. The advanced one was postponed as the pandemic restrictions took effect. They also participated in the Tryon Palace Family Free day by manning a booth, talking with visitors about our collections, and offering two talks about how to research at the Archives. The Outer Banks History Center welcomed a local homeschool group for monthly lessons featuring OBHC collections prior to March. Normally the records analysts from Government Records are out of the office several times a month offering records management training all across the state. With the COVID -19 restrictions they quickly transitioned their workshops and meetings online. Since March they have conducted virtual office hours attended by 142 public records custodians from across the state. They also completed work on a series of YouTube videos about several aspects of public records management in NC.

As other outreach events go virtual, so, too will our participation in an upcoming Masters of Liberal Studies class for NCSU students. It seems like a timely topic to discuss management of archives from the physical to digital, highlighting what programming we have moved to an online environment.

Facilities: Since the last division report there have been a number of facilities projects and issues. In positive news the State Records Center is in the final stages of the building elevator replacement project. While we have been required to keep the building open for construction as that is considered an essential service, it has been a blessing to get the work done without any impact to state agencies

wanting to transfer records or staff needing to move records from one of the 7 stack levels. This project should be done in the next couple of weeks. The Outer Banks History Center received a new HVAC system recently as well. In difficult news about facilities, the basement of the Archives' building flooded again February 6. Water poured along the outer wall that faces Jones Street, as well as through any expansion joint and column along the south side of the building impacting the file room for the SHPO, offices in Archeology, and sending water beneath the stack levels in our basement storage areas that contains compact mobile shelving. After the last flood the wooden decking that supports the basement storage shelving was replaced with marine grade metal so the risk of mold from water below that decking was reduced. In addition, there were small hatches created in the floor in case we ever had to remove water below the decking again. Still, it is a massive job to remove all that water from below the shelves in an efficient way. Heavy floor panels have to be removed and all the water has to be vacuumed out of each track. Then the areas need to be dried out to reduce the humidity in the space. Despite the recent work on the foundation of the building, water challenges continue to crop up with increasing frequency.

Electronic records and online catalog: The Digital Services Section used our annual inventory period to complete a full inventory of our digital repository. Staff in the section have been working on repository documentation while teleworking. In addition, they are continuing work on our grant with UNC Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Sciences to develop tools for the processing of large bodies of email. This grant is funded by the Mellon Foundation. Staff across the division have been hard at work during telework time cleaning up and adding data to our online catalog. This is work we hoped to complete one day, but the pandemic offered an opportunity to focus on getting a major portion of it done while staff could work uninterrupted by other projects. The metadata clean up and additional data on the records in our holdings will enhance the patrons' search results in our online catalog.

Social Media: Earlier this year our staff working on social media programming organized a steering committee with several subcommittees to focus attention on analytics, content development, and community engagement. A highlight of their recent work included the production of a podcast series called "Connecting the Docs." This first season focused on topics of murder, mystery and mayhem in NC. The 10 episodes featured stories about Frankie Silver, Nell Cropsy and the Carroll A. Deering ghost ship, along with some lighter topics including funny animal stories. Each episode told stories using our original records. Our military historian started a podcast for the "Stories of Service" departmental program. He also writes a regular blog for this program that features highlights from our military collections.

Since the pandemic, the division social media steering committee has identified several areas of consistent original content with which to engage our social media audiences. To this end, members of the committee have created jigsaw puzzles using images from State Archives collections; coloring activity pages in partnership with the State Library of North Carolina; and trivia questions. The State Archives social media accounts have taken part in a National Archives-led Twitter hashtag party highlighting a different theme each month. The division social media also participated in image or text-based content sharing led by the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources such as the #NCEarthDay50 photo challenge to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. As a result of the division's renewed social media content push, we've gained a new following and a more engaged audience. Users regularly comment how much they enjoy solving our 36-piece jigsaw puzzles and completing our coloring activities, while our hashtag parties usually earn numerous likes and retweets. Since much of the state has been homebound, the division has seen a 75.5% increase in profile visits on Twitter, a 70% increase in page views on Facebook, and an average of 1,963 views on History for All the People, the division's blog. Seven videos have been added to the division's YouTube account since March and there has been a total of 8,682 views of State Archives YouTube content in the last 90 days. Additional original content, including a coming "behind the scenes" tour video, are being calendared for production and release throughout the summer.

TranscribeNC: In 2019 we subscribed to an online, crowdsourcing transcription platform called From the Page. It is used by numerous archives, libraries, and museums for this kind of work. After the stay-at-home orders took effect, the TranscribeNC project was highlighted in press releases, blog posts

and media stories. TranscribeNC gained 100 volunteers who have completed 2,400 page edits in 1,300 hours since widespread work-from-home efforts were taken in March. Two new collections have been added – the African American Education and WWII Letters collections, which have gained the most popularity along with the pre-existing WWI Letters collection. TranscribeNC has a total of 230 volunteers who have completed 3,000 hours of work and 7,000 page edits over its 14 month lifespan. We anticipate continuing to promote the project, as well as regularly add new content. Once transcribed, the data will be linked to the images in our digital collections providing full text searchability for those documents.

Your Story is North Carolina's Story: One of the earliest activities of the Commission was to collect records documenting the history of our state during World War I. While the Archives normally works with patrons wanting to donate collections of family papers and military service from many years before, actively collecting records that document major turning points in history is as important as it was immediately after World War I. Because the Museum of History has a similar collecting mission, just with artifacts instead of documentary materials, we teamed up to develop a unified promotion of our work in this area. The “Your Story is North Carolina’s Story” marketing push included media spots and social media promotions. Each division has a separate webpage detailing our work collecting the history of the pandemic and its impacts on our citizens. In addition, the department developed a webpage to introduce this work and point potential donors to the appropriate division. We are pushing for as many online donations as possible, working out a method to take digital images and videos without having to see a donor in person. To date we are working on suggested donations of digital images, personal accounts, artwork, poems, songs and posters. We anticipate continuing to promote this collecting initiative, as well as highlight some of the donations to encourage more like it.

I close by stating how incredibly proud I am of our division staff who worked quickly to develop and support projects that staff could complete at home. We adopted web conferencing technology to reach our stakeholders virtually. We are maintaining essential remote reference services for patrons and state and local agencies. We are developing new online content to educate and entertain citizens at home. We stood up a new online collecting initiative while working remotely. I am very pleased with all the work that has been completed while we worked from 68 different locations. As we plan for a day when we return to in-person services with new safety considerations, we will continue to pursue ways to deliver content and services to our stakeholders remotely.

Respectfully submitted, Sarah E. Koonts

She Changed the World images and Your Story flyer below





WOMEN & THE VOTE



**MUSE
WINSTON
SALEM**

**debating the 19th amendment & fighting for the ballot
in Winston-Salem and the Tarheel state**

featuring artifacts and interpretation by Sarah Koonts, State Archivist of North Carolina,
and Karen Feeney, Head of the North Carolina Collection at Forsyth County Public Library



livestream on Facebook
Thursday, May 21, 7:00PM EST



SARAH KOONTS
State Archivist
of North Carolina



KAREN FEENEY
Head, NC Collection
Forsyth County Public Library

Presented in partnership with:



and
moderated
by



MIKE WAKEFORD
Executive Director (interim)
MUSE Winston-Salem



LIVESTREAM URL will be posted here prior to event: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1301241806933003/>

YOUR STORY

IS NORTH CAROLINA'S STORY

Preserving the state's history during this worldwide crisis.

Since 1903, collecting the documents and objects that tell the dynamic stories of our state and its citizens has served as a key mission of the State Archives and Museum of History.

The State Archives and the Museum of History are now working to document the current pandemic's impact upon citizens, businesses, and government agencies across the state.

Examples of what we're collecting include personal accounts, photographs, recordings, oral histories, journals and diaries.

Please help us! Contribute your materials to help future generations remember.



archives.ncdcr.gov | ncmuseumofhistory.org | ncdcr.gov