



PAYING ATTENTION TO THAT
ARCHIVIST BEHIND THE CURTAIN:
AN INVESTIGATION OF USER INTEREST

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Archives 2.0

2

- Transparency
- User-centered practices
- Open to new ways of doing things
- Willing to take risks


Research question

3

- How much information about us, and about our decision-making in appraisal and processing, do our researchers really want?

The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile for Angela M. Ossar. The profile is set against a background of archival storage boxes. The Twitter interface includes the logo, navigation links (Home, Profile, Find People, Settings, Help, Sign out), and a bio: "University archivist and records enthusiast. If I had a time machine, I'd visit UTSA in 1973. I'd meet Gil Barrera and tell departments to write file plans." The profile shows 88 following and 56 followers. Three tweets are visible, all from June 2011, discussing archival work and a video tape.

twitter Home Profile Find People Settings Help Sign out

 **angelaossar**


Name Angela M. Ossar
Location San Antonio, TX
Web <http://libtmp.lib...>
Bio University archivist and records enthusiast. If I had a time machine, I'd visit UTSA in 1973. I'd meet Gil Barrera and tell departments to write file plans.

88 following 56 followers

Updates 54

Favorites

Following



@AnAnarchivist I think as long as you stick a "too soon" hashtag after said jokes, you're good.
7:44 AM Jun 26th from web in reply to AnAnarchivist

All collections encoded and cataloged. Outreach and collecting efforts in full swing. Does this mean I have to process now?
10:59 AM Jun 25th from web

"Codebreaking: The UTSA Master Reel" - new blog post about the 2" quad video tape we found, with pics! <http://bit.ly/KlgEf>
2:50 PM Jun 18th from web

Literature in brief

4

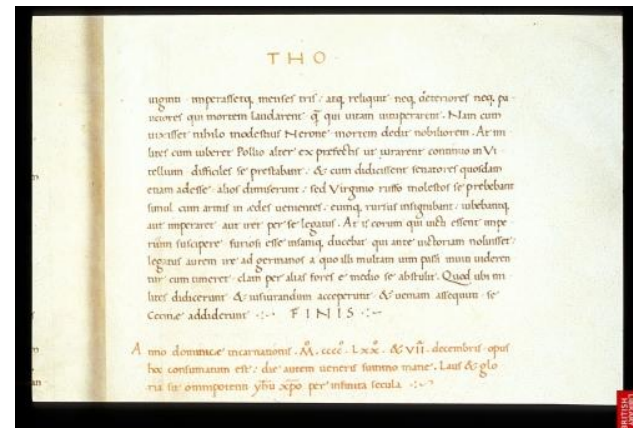
- In appraisal and processing, objectivity is impossible.
- Because we can't be objective, we need to at least be transparent.
- Increasing our transparency might raise our visibility.
- Raising our visibility increases our relevance.

Origins of the study

5

- Hyry and Light's "Colophons and Annotations"
 - ▣ Use the finding aid to tell users more about processing decisions that were made
 - ▣ The "**colophon**": a space to record:
 - what archivists know about the history/ provenance of a collection
 - appraisal/processing decisions
 - biographical information about the processor

Plutarch, *Lives*. "Copied in Florence in 1478 by the 'Omnium rerum' scribe": colophon reads, 'Anno dominicae incarnationis M^oCCCC^oLXX^o & vii^a decembris opus hoc consumatum est: die autum veneris summo mane. Laus & gloria sit omnipotenti yhu xpo per infinita secula (f. 428); 'Omnium rerum vicissitudo est' (f. 428v). Catalogue of Illuminated Manuscripts, British Library. Retrieved 3 July 2009.



Finding aid colophon example

6

Processing Information

Processed and encoded by Angela McClendon Ossar, University Archivist. Angela is a full-time professional employee with a Master of Science in Library Science and certification from the Academy of Certified Archivists. Previous processing projects have chiefly included the official archival records of the University of Texas at San Antonio. Other processing projects have included the personal papers of UTSA faculty, two large collections of female poets, and various organizational records.

The processing of this collection revealed some materials that were determined to be unfit for long-term preservation. Ephemeral financial records such as purchase vouchers, telephone bills, and receipts were destroyed in accordance with the university's records retention schedule. Personnel records such as time sheets and job search records for non-hired applicants were also destroyed per the RRS. Course-instructor surveys were also destroyed, as the Office of Institutional Effectiveness has been designated by the university as the office of record for those records. Research reports of individual faculty members were separated from the collection to be cataloged individually and placed in the Library's Special Collections stacks.

Transparent. But user-centered?

The study

7

- Users: current UNC faculty in 11 departments with experience conducting primary source research
- Method: online survey

The respondents

8

- **28 respondents:** Classics, Communication Studies, English/Rhetoric, Geography, History, Journalism and Mass Communication, Music, Political Studies, Sociology, Linguistics, Applied Physics, Interdisciplinary Philosophy
- Proficient and experienced in archival research
- Frequent users of finding aids
- Wide range of uses
- Some experience requesting control files, asking to speak to the processing archivist

Requesting administrative records

9

“In the process of doing research, have you ever requested to see any of the following materials?”

25% or more requested:

- ▣ Notes regarding the collection's acquisition
- ▣ Records of materials transferred to other repositories
- ▣ Records of books removed and cataloged separately
- ▣ Appraisal criteria
- ▣ Notes re: the original organization

Interest in collection control files

10

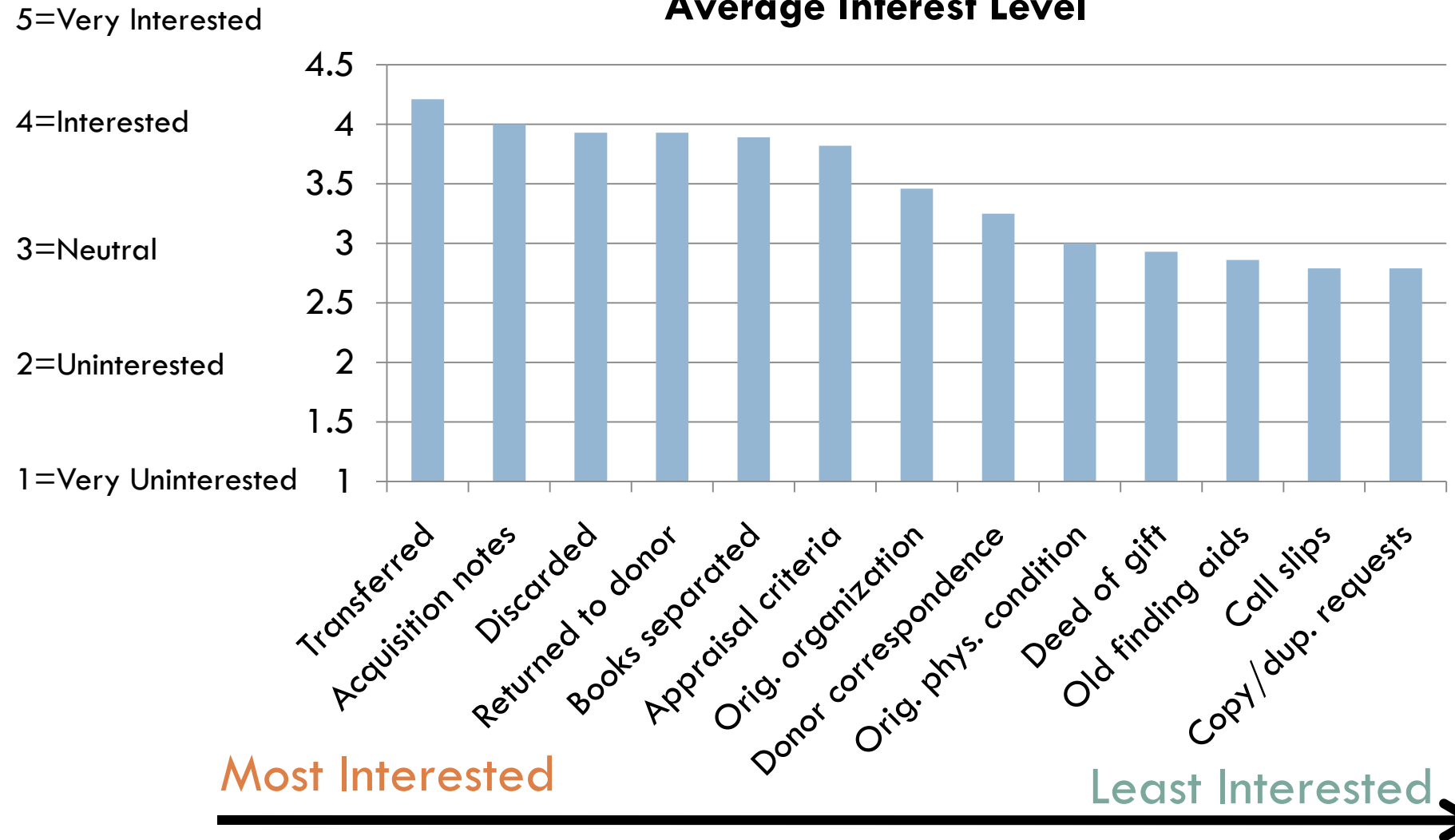
- “The following are examples of information about a collection that most archives keep apart from a collection, sometimes inaccessible to researchers. If these materials were made available to you, how interested would you be in seeing them?”



Interest in collection control files

11

Average Interest Level



Interest in the processing archivist

12

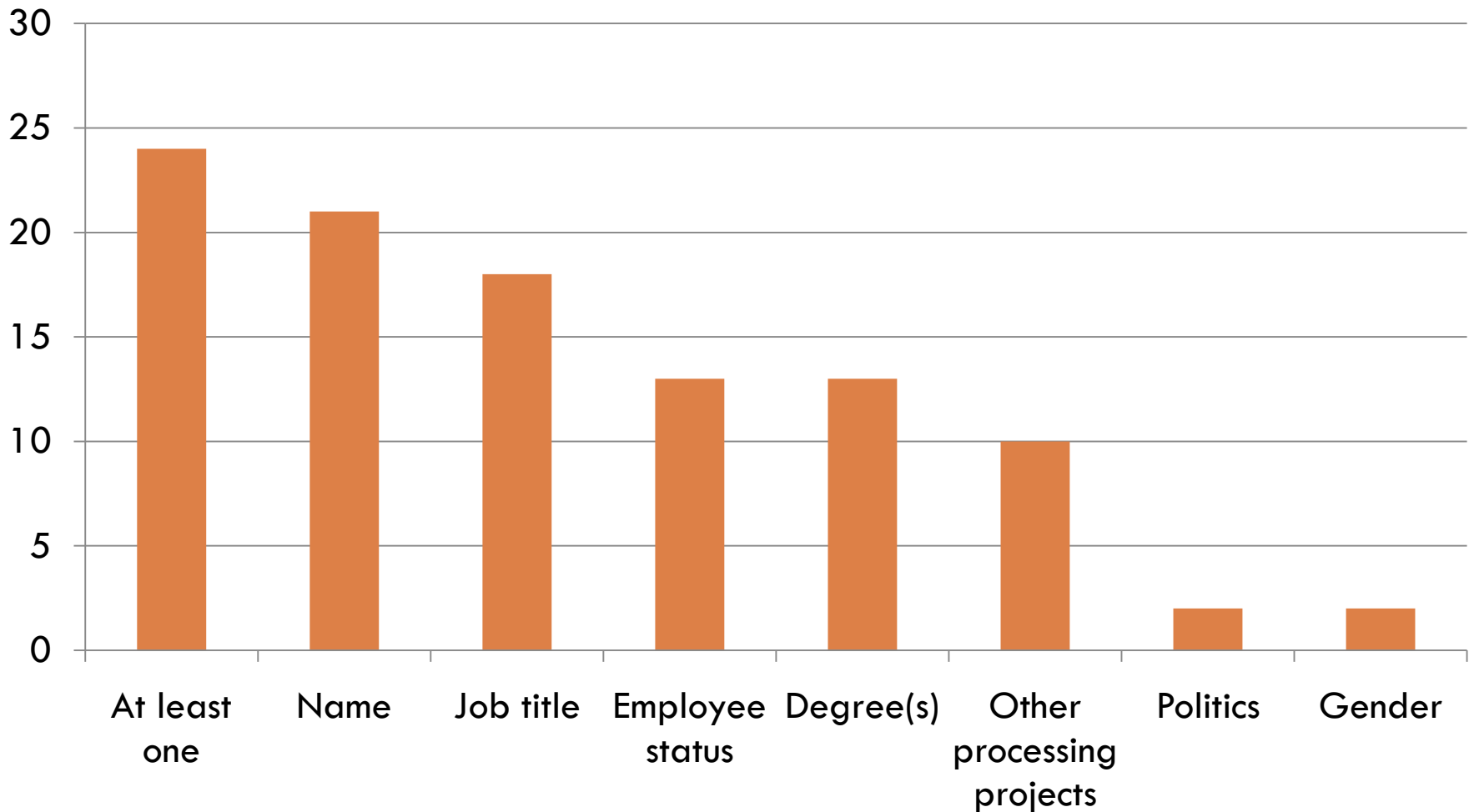
- “What information about the archivist who organized or wrote the descriptions (e.g., the finding aid) for a collection would you like to have?”



Interest in the processing archivist

13

Number of Respondents Interested (n=28)



Experience talking to the archivist

14

- “Have you ever requested to speak to the [processing archivist]?”
 - Yes: 46%
 - Specialized reference assistance
 - Finding information in a collection that would not come up in a finding aid.
 - Input on the researcher’s chances of finding materials on a particular subject or particular type
 - Correcting bad information in the finding aid
 - Help locating uncataloged materials
 - No: 50%

Future research

15

- Expand the participant pool—more user types
- Give to known users of archives (e.g., our patrons)
- Do researchers even look at the Administrative Info?

Transparency today

16

Processing blogs

A VIEW TO HUGH

Processing the Hugh Morton Photographs and Films

Ashes of Waco

A blog about the digitization and online presentation of archival materials in the Dick J. Reavis Papers that are related to his book, *The Ashes of Waco: An Investigation*, about the 1993 raid, siege and burning of the Mt. Carmel Center near Waco, Texas.

The Wittliff Collections, Albert B. Alkek Library, Texas State University-San Marcos



CMC ARCHIVES PROCESSING

TAPE REELS, DOCUMENTS, EPHEMERA, AND PAPER ROLLS TO FEED THE RCA MK II SYNTHESIZER
- PROCESSING THE ARCHIVES OF THE COMPUTER MUSIC CENTER AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2009

Migrating the card file index to the Composers Forum recordings



It's been a while since

RECENT COMMENTS

SLIDESHOW



RECENT POSTS

[4/19 Memorial Service](#)

[Goodbye, Kurt & Hello, Aniket](#)

[Sarah Bain's Memo to the Senate Judiciary Committee](#)

[Failure Analysis and an Interview with Dick J. Reavis](#)

[Miles and Miles of Texas](#)

[A Slice of Life Inside Mt. Carmel](#)

[The Lonely Man](#)

[Very Sad News](#)

al memorial
until 2005, I
1994 service
rles Pace in
eir friends
ed almost
up-to-date

Transparency today

17

□ Archives and Archivists on Twitter

while processing, I just found out we do in fact have the very first Family Circus strip from Feb. 29, 1960.

2 minutes ago from TwitHive.com



kitschqueen

Susan

Today a man will appear with a van to take us to a mystery warehouse in South Philly where we are told we have 'stuff' to make decisions on.

8:47 AM Jun 25th from TwitterFox



lisagrimm

Action Archivist

@russelljames For a 20 yr old accession of university recs I'm fully deaccessioning regardless of the vocab term, need to track decisions!

7:42 PM Jun 2nd from web in reply to russelljames



dailyarchivist

Lindsey Loeper

Our new site search is up! Search across full text of all finding aids and collection descriptions. Check it out:

<http://is.gd/MmPB>

10:50 AM Jun 2nd from web



drexelarchives

Drexel Archives

Transparency today

18

Archives and Archivists on Facebook

facebook

Home Profile Friends Inbox

Angela McClendon Ossar Settings Log out

 Get Tom Hry on Facebook!

Global

Basic Info

Type: Just for Fun - Fan Clubs
Description: You know him, you love him, let's get him to join Facebook! If you don't know him, join because you want to get at least one of member of the SAA Council to be aware of Facebook's potential for sharing information

Contact Details

Email: info@archivesnext.com

Members

facebook

Home Profile Friends Inbox

Angela McClendon Ossar Settings Log out



View Photos of Me (17)

Edit My Profile

It really bothers me when people say "chipoltay." Otherwise I like everything.

Angela McClendon Ossar is taking a screenshot. a moment ago clear

Wall Info Photos Boxes Notes +

Attach 

Share

Angela and Friends Just Angela Just Friends

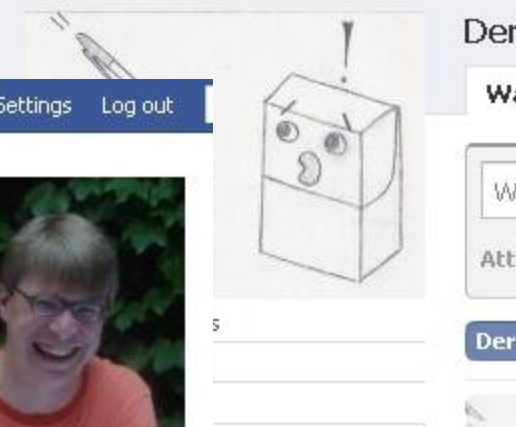
Settings



Angela McClendon Ossar is taking a screenshot. 2 seconds ago · Comment · Like

facebook

Home Profile Friends




facebook

Home Profile Friends Inbox

Southern Historical Collection

Wall Info Photos My Flickr Events

Write something...

Attach 

Southern Historical Collection Just Fans



Southern Historical Collection

New Finding Aid Design

You might have noticed that some of the finding aid has a new look. Thanks to the hard work of Special Collections Assistant Chapman, the finding aid re-design has been implemented.

Colophons: No?

19

- Archives 2.0: “Willing to take risks”
 - Offending donors?
 - Cluttering up the finding aid?
 - Wasting time?

Processing Information

The collection is in 2 accessions, 1998-029b and 2002-034, and has been encoded by Angela McClendon Ossar, University Archivist. More detailed processing is not anticipated at this time.



Colophons: Yes

20

- Include in a colophon:
 - ▣ The name and title of the processor (with link to more information on website or blog?)
 - ▣ Documentation of destruction, separation, deaccessioning, and returns; with appraisal criteria
 - ▣ Significant rearrangements of the collection
 - ▣ Whether a collection was processed minimally.
- Why?
 - ▣ Users
 - ▣ Donors
 - ▣ Your successors
 - ▣ Other archivists
 - ▣ You

Thank you!

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