

Preserving a Community's Past: Cross-Institutional Collaboration for Outreach to and Training of Citizen Archivists

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Abstract: This poster explores archival outreach, instruction, and collaboration with citizen archivists through a unique community project.

In 2009, Wake Forest University's Z. Smith Reynolds Library and Forsyth County Public Library in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, were awarded an outreach grant by the State Library of North Carolina. The project, entitled "Preserving Forsyth's Past," developed in response to a need that was identified during a collaborative digitization grant. During the digitization grant, representatives from smaller community organizations expressed an interest in digitizing and preserving their heritage materials. These tended to be volunteers responsible for the care of heritage materials for their organization or family.

In response to this need, the two library systems created an archival workshop curriculum to teach small organizations and individuals how to preserve, organize, and digitize their cultural heritage materials. In addition to developing these educational programs, digitization centers were established in five of the county's libraries where citizens would have a place to use equipment and receive digitization assistance. Participants were overwhelmingly interested in and passionate about the care of heritage materials, supporting recent discussion in the archives community about archivists as educators. The grant continues to benefit the citizens of Forsyth County by strengthening and increasing access to local history collections.

Z. Smith Reynolds Library brought its expertise in technology, grant administration, and instruction, while the Forsyth County Public Library provided experience with identifying community organizations and marketing the workshops. Through education and accessible digitization technology, the two libraries have built a reproducible endeavor to support community-based and personal archives.

About the author:

Audra Eagle is Project Archivist at Z. Smith Reynolds Library, Wake Forest University, in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, where she serves as processing archivist and digital projects manager. Audra earned a BA in literature and critical theory from Duke University and a MLIS with a specialization in archival studies from UCLA. She is a member of the Academy of Certified Archivists. Audra blogs at librarchivist.wordpress.com and tweets as @librarchivist.