



Preserving a Community's Past

Cross-Institutional Collaboration for Outreach to and Training of Citizen Archivists

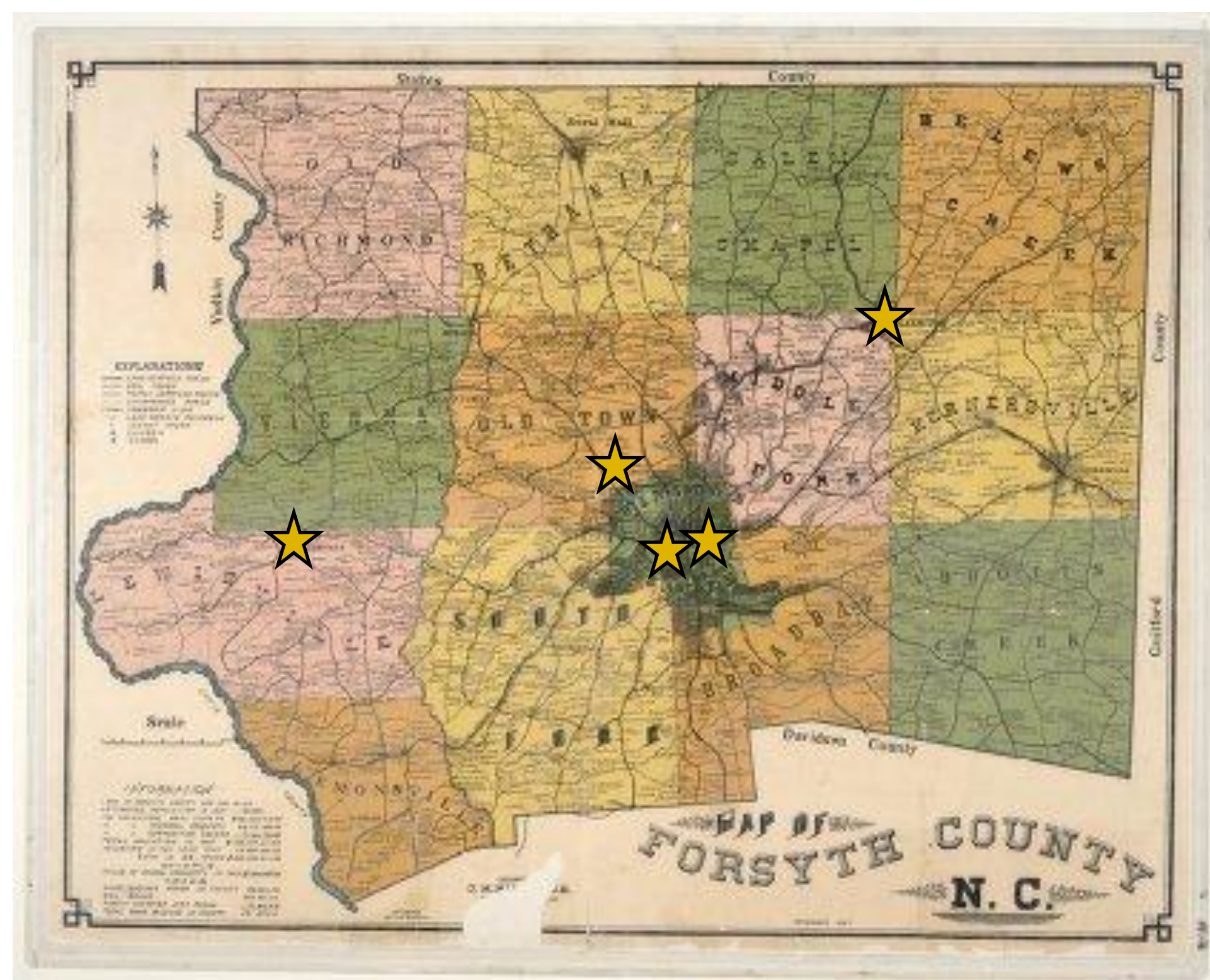


Responding to a Need

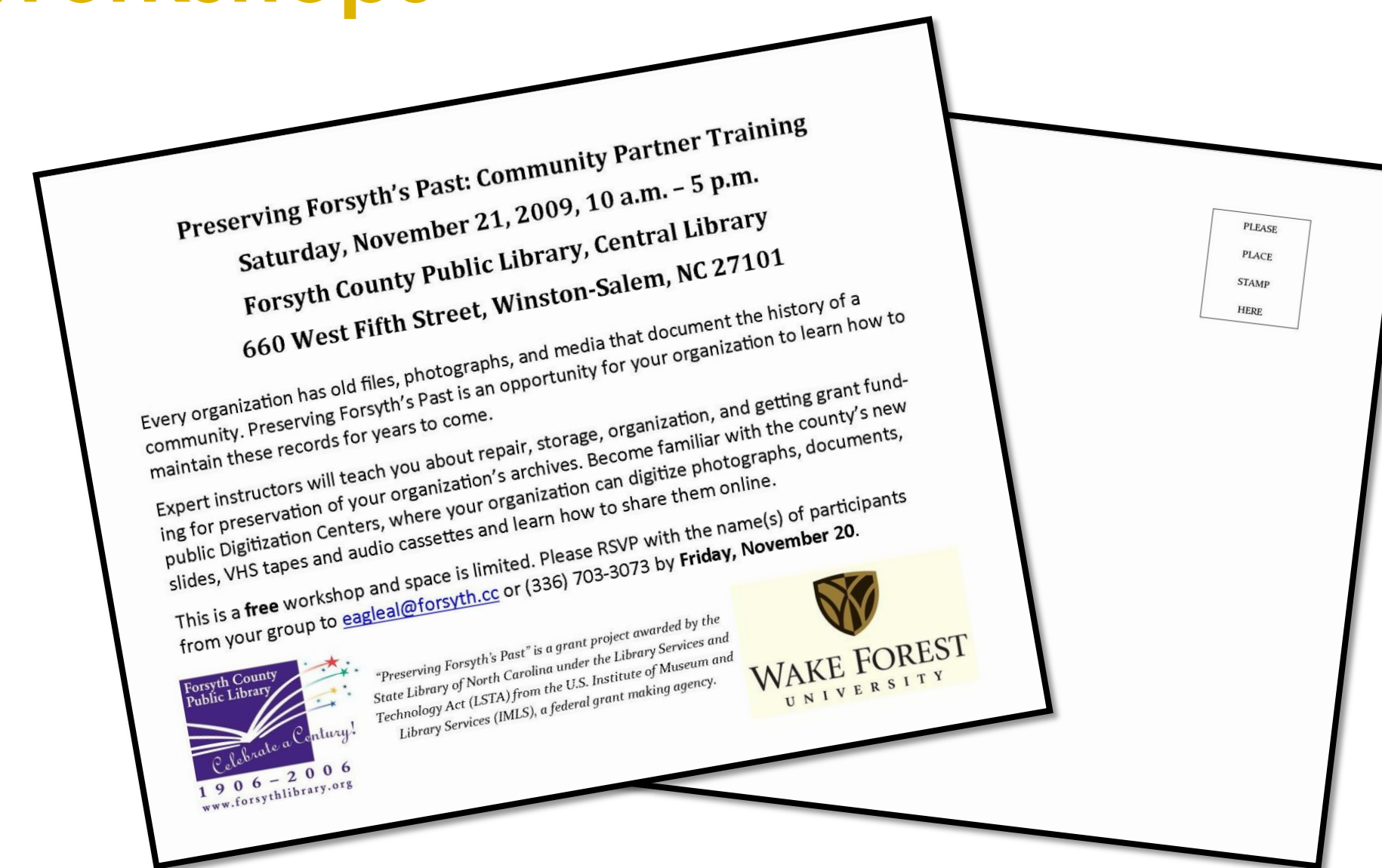
Wake Forest University's Z. Smith Reynolds Library and Forsyth County Public Library in Winston-Salem, North Carolina were awarded an outreach grant using funds from the Institute of Museum and Library Services under the provisions of the federal Library Services and Technology Act as administered by the State Library of North Carolina, a division of the Department of Cultural Resources. The project, entitled "Preserving Forsyth's Past," developed in response to a need that was identified during a collaborative digitization grant, when representatives from smaller community organizations expressed an interest in digitizing and preserving their heritage materials. These "citizen archivists" 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 where citizens would have a place to use equipment and receive digitization assistance.

Digitization Centers

Scanning equipment and computers were installed in five locations in Forsyth County: Z. Smith Reynolds Library at Wake Forest University, Central Library in Winston-Salem, Walkertown Branch Library, East Winston Heritage Center, and Lewisville Branch Library.

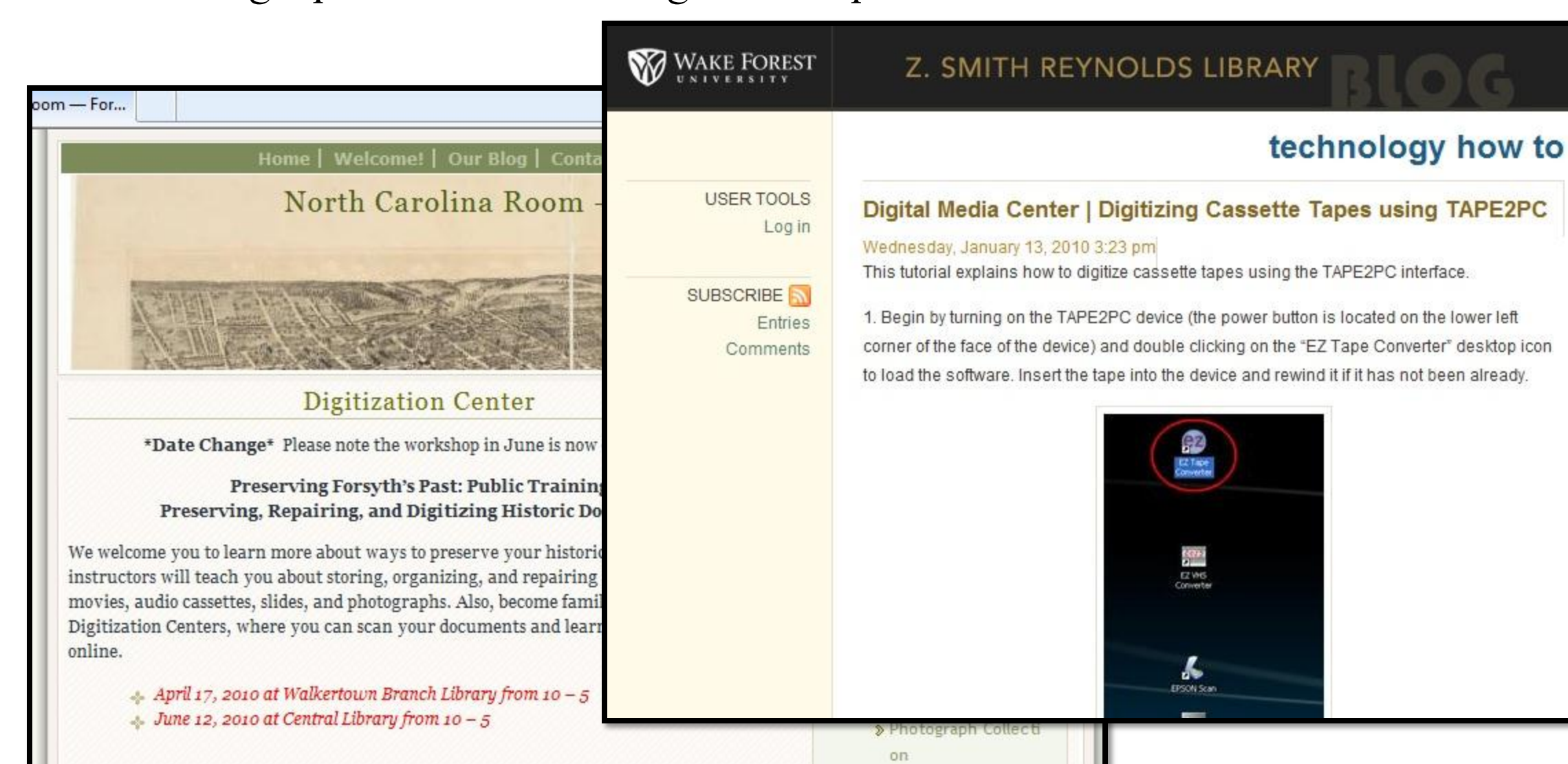


Workshops



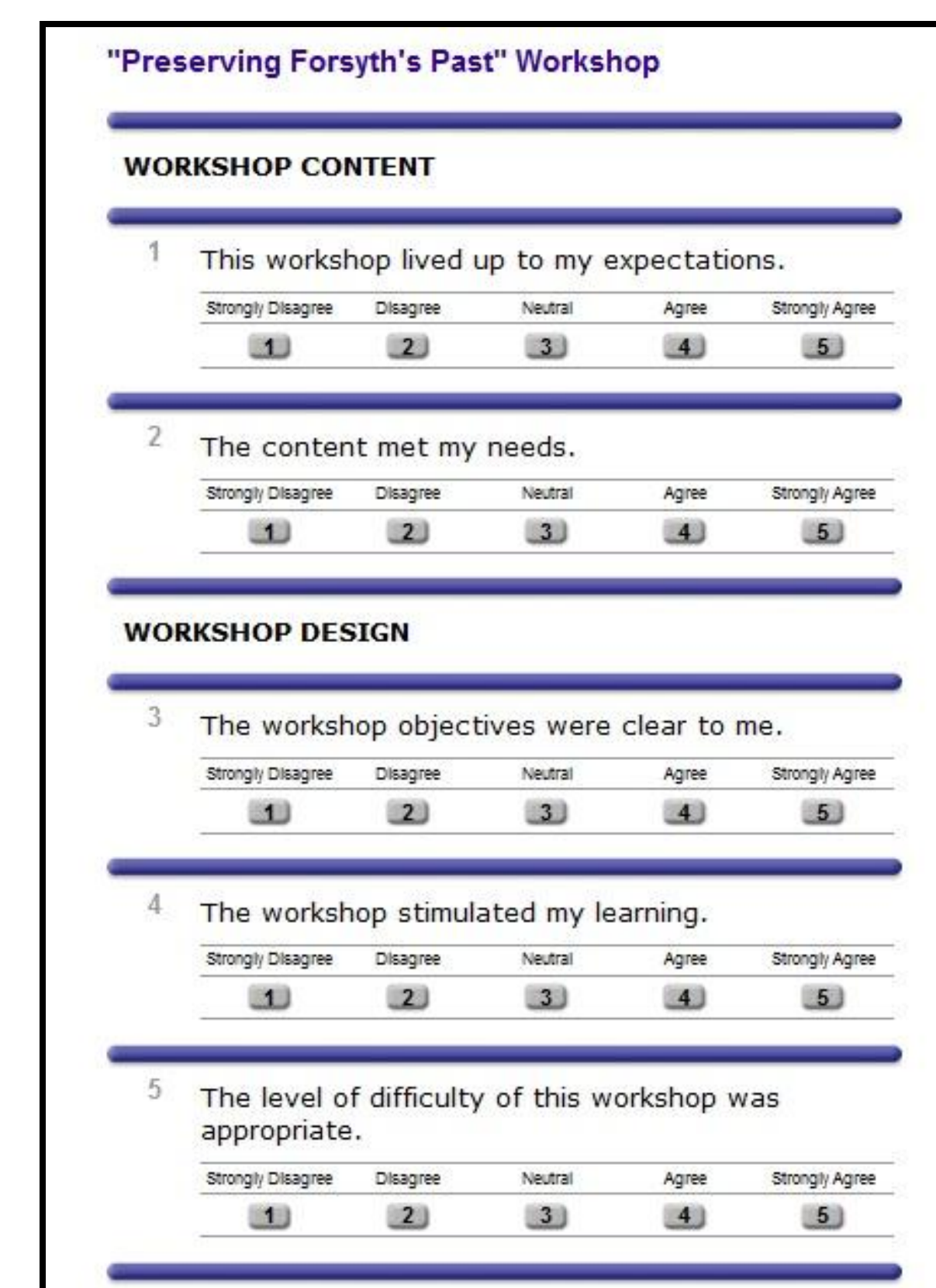
Over 700 postcards were mailed to nonprofit organizations in Forsyth County. Day-long workshops were divided into three segments and taught by WFU and FCPL librarians, archivists, and staff:

- Getting organized and selecting materials to digitize
- Hands-on preservation of books, photographs, audiovisual materials, papers, scrapbooks, et cetera
- Using digitization equipment including flatbed scanner, slide scanner, audio cassette-to-digital converter, and VHS cassette-to-digital converter
- Creating a preservation and digitization plan

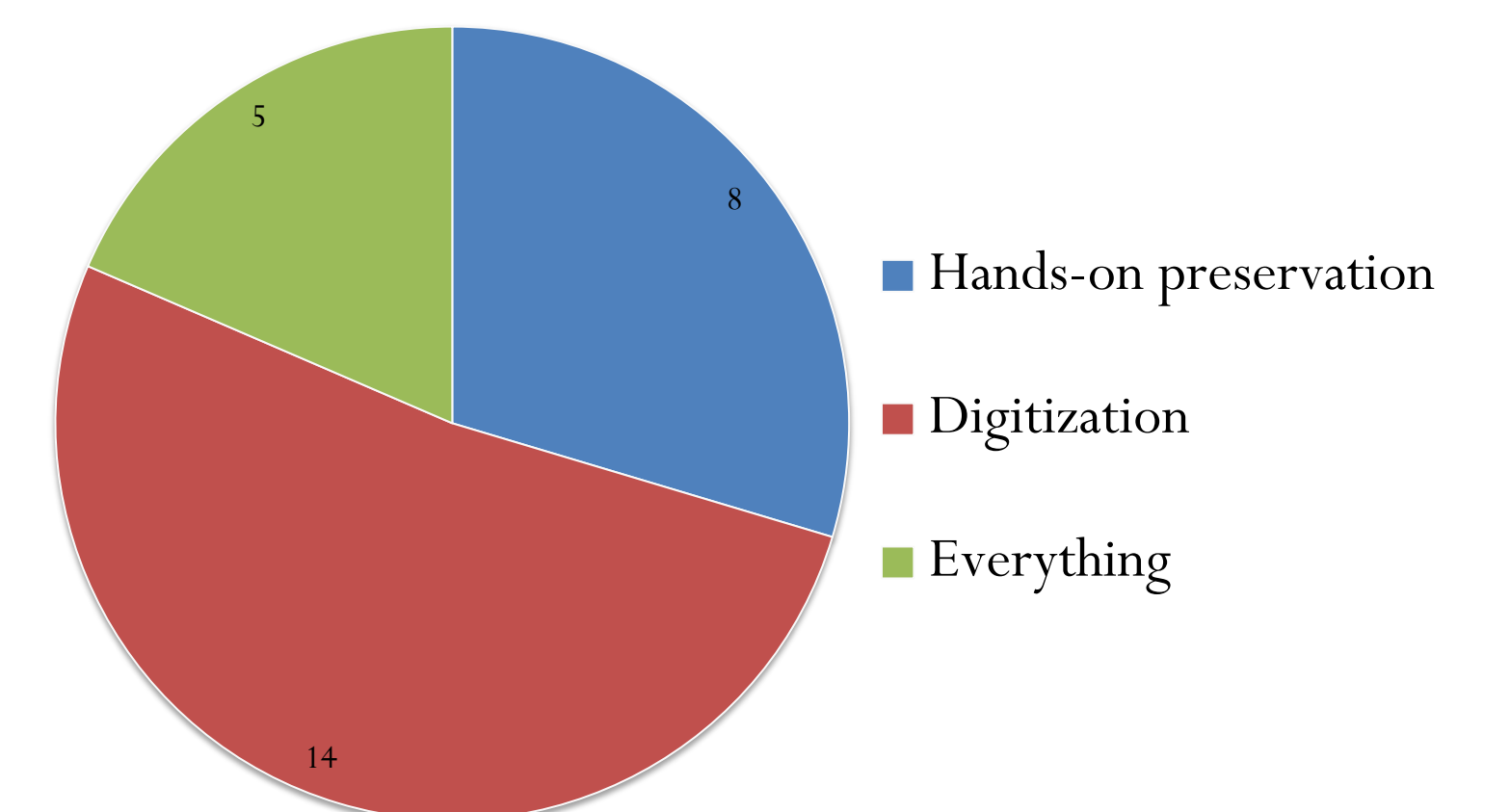


Feedback

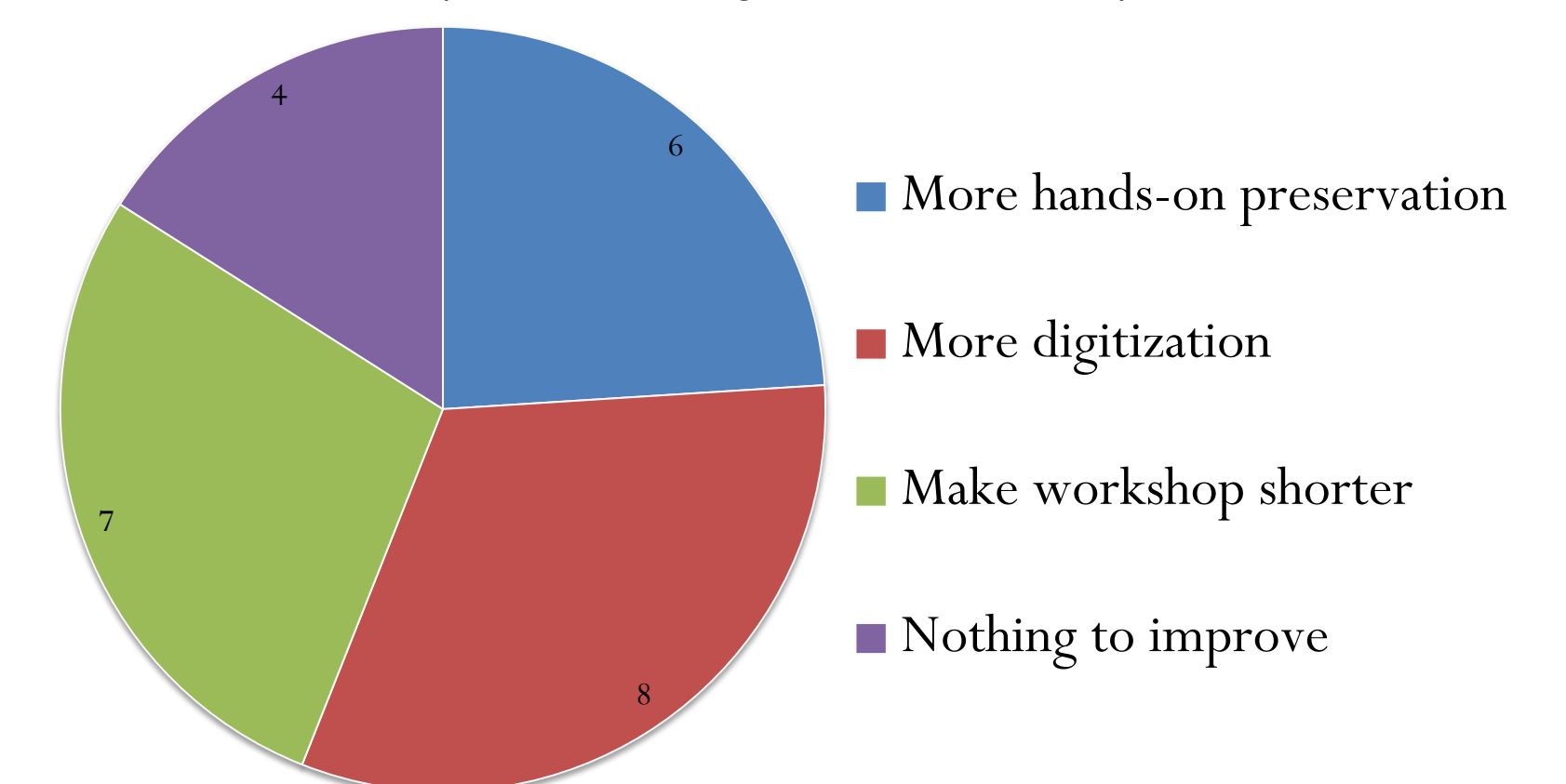
Open-ended questions were added to the end of participant surveys in order to understand whether participant needs were being met. A total of 36 surveys were completed over the course of the project, from November 2009 through June 2010.



What was the most useful part of the workshop?
(N = 27 including multiple responses)



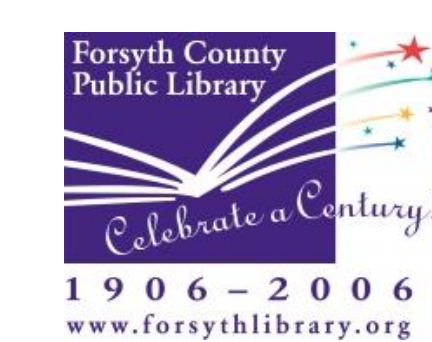
How would you improve the workshop?
(N = 25 including multiple responses)



Outcomes

As a result of survey feedback, later workshops were shorter and had greater emphasis on digitization. Participants were overwhelmingly interested in and passionate about the care of heritage materials. Many were enthusiastic about learning from professional archivists and preservation librarians, supporting discussion in the archives community about archivists as educators. The grant continues to benefit the citizens of Forsyth County by empowering citizen archivists to increase access to local history collections. Through education and accessible digitization technology, the two libraries have built a reproducible endeavor to support community-based and personal archives.

"There is [...] a role on the local level to be played out by archivists and records managers serving as resources to help private citizens, amateur historians, and the interested public solve the digital preservation problems posed by the proliferations of Web sites and the increasing digitization of documentary sources." Richard Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling* (288)



Audra Eagle
Z. Smith Reynolds Library
Wake Forest University
eaglea@wfu.edu