

The Politics of Archiving

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Abstract: Archives serve as one of the most important sources of original materials that narrate our collective historical voice. Given this, it is critical to understand what makes up an archival collection and how the items, both present and absent, impact our social consciousness of an event or time period. In 2012, the author conducted a study examining the civil rights archives at two higher education institutions, the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS, and Queens College in Flushing, NY, focusing on the types of materials and donors of items related to the Freedom Summer. The findings conclusively show biases present in both collections, favoring white northerners who volunteered during the Freedom Summer. Discovering and acknowledging these biases has three ramifications: 1) confirming the notion that those who have social and political capital write history; 2) encouraging archivists/curators to broaden the scope of their collections; and 3) informing collection development policies.

Introduction

If libraries suffer from outdated perceptions (enforcing absolute silence through shushing, librarians with buns, collections of physical books), then archives are truly misunderstood. Far from static, unchanging vaults of information, archives are dynamic, interactive storytellers providing an understanding of our past to help us prepare for the future.

Unfortunately, archives do not always comprise the most accurate, complete picture of any particular time or event. Items are carefully selected by archivists who are bound by their institution's collection development policies, the mission of their organization, and the availability of materials.

While these issues limit every archive, they lead to potentially serious consequences. If history has taught us anything, it is that those with social and political capital get to shape the narrative. Indeed, it is considered unique to have first-hand accounts from those who do not have political or social power – how often do we hear from Vietnamese soldiers and civilians affected by the Vietnam War? Or from women – save those few heroines - who fought for the right to vote? While this notion is complicated by the likes of Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, these individuals were not powerful social players in the traditional sense and won the battles they fought for civil rights. It can be argued that, even though these stories of the “minority” are widely accepted and distributed in our social memory, their voices are few.

The American Civil Rights movement shaped the future of this country, and impacted people on a broad scale. Yet, how often do we hear of the struggles of this time period directly from those who lived it? We know what Al Sharpton, John Lewis, and Stokely Carmichael experienced, but what about the thousands of African Americans living in the South who did not have a national platform?

In 2012, the author analyzed two Civil Rights archives to assess the narrative each conveys and how this impacts our understanding of a particular Civil Rights event – the Freedom Summer. The Freedom Summer project was a collaboration of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the Council of Federated Organizations to, among other things, register disenfranchised African Americans in Mississippi to vote. Hundreds of volunteers – mostly white students from the North – traveled to various



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locations in Mississippi in the summer of 1964 to work on the voter registration project, teach in Freedom Schools, start Freedom Libraries, and attempt to integrate buildings and businesses. Many volunteers were beaten or shunned by the white community in the South, but most volunteers stayed to continue the work they believed in so strongly.¹

The results of the Freedom Summer were mixed at best. 50 schools were established to educate children and adults alike; well over 1,000 African Americans were registered to vote; a new political party, the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (consisting largely of local black leaders) was created and candidates elected to represent the party in the 1964 Democratic National Convention. Unfortunately, these achievements were overshadowed by the fact that the 1,200 African Americans registered to vote made up only about 5 percent of the population, hundreds of volunteers had been beaten and several killed for their efforts, and members of the DNC refused to recognize the representatives of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.²⁻³

As the civil rights movement itself was so long and varied, this particular event was selected because of its importance in the progression of the movement, its involvement of people from across the nation, and the existence of several collections on this topic around the country. The archival collections at the University of Southern Mississippi in Hattiesburg, MS, and Queens College in Flushing, NY, were assessed to determine: 1) the types of materials, 2) subject areas, and 3) donor location and role in the Freedom Summer.

Problem Statement

If archivists carefully select which documents will be included in a collection, and which are not fitting for the narrative they are trying to tell, the result is a skewed representation of history. This impacts the narrative of events and, ultimately, our collective understanding of, essentially, ourselves. In her article "A Firm Foundation: Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites," Barnickel addresses why this is problematic in that "archival materials are crucial underpinnings to the public portrayal of history⁴." Original source materials are perhaps the best documentation of our past and can greatly influence the narrative. With the public perception of history essentially in the hands of archives, it is not only important, but ethically imperative to understand what is in an archive and the impact that the presence or absence of materials has on our story.

This study is particularly charged as it lands on significant political and social subject material. With a focus on civil rights collections, which highlight a period that was not only politically significant to the country, but particularly to the politics of the South, analyzing how the events of the time are represented proves significant. As decisions made today are so often informed by experiences of the past, the way we understand the civil rights movement can have an impact on the social and political environment today.

¹ "Civil Rights Movement Veterans," Civil Rights Movement Veterans, accessed 2012, www.crmvet.org.

² *The Reader's Companion to American History*, s.v. "FREEDOM SUMMER," accessed 2012, http://ezproxy.lib.utah.edu/login?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.credoreference.com/entry/rcmh/freedom_summer.

³ R. Spencer, "Freedom Summer," in *Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History, Second Edition* (Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson Gale, 2006): 880-882.

⁴ Linda Barnickel, "A Firm Foundation: Archival Research and Interpretation at Historic Sites." *Archival Issues* 27 (2002): 10.

In his article, “Collection Development and Maintenance across Libraries, Archives and Museums: A Novel Collaborative Approach,” Edwards notes that “librarians deal primarily with providing access to information, while archivists deal with information access and retention of evidence⁵.” Documentation of people and events that shaped the civil rights movement has not always been adequately preserved and, in some cases, has been intentionally destroyed. Since, as Edwards believes, “the archives community has more quickly recognized the significance of meanings conveyed via collection decisions⁶,” a very purposeful examination of archival collection development policies should occur regularly to ensure that a complete narrative is being assembled.

Methodology

Drawing on the works of several theorists, each concerned with how knowledge, truth, and meaning interact and inform one another, a context will be created within which some of the difficulties of archival collection development can be contextualized. As our social understanding of historical events is based on our notions of truth and meaning, knowing who has the social and political power to define these topics is important. Jacques Derrida’s theory of deconstruction, Michel Foucault’s notions about truth and power, John Searle’s discussion of the construction of social reality, and Noam Chomsky’s analysis of the relationship between audience and meaning, create a clearer concept of what exactly the terms truth, power, and meaning denote.

The archives at the University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College were selected from among the many civil rights collections because of their focus on specific events within the movement, similarities in terms of providing access to information, and geographic distance from one another. By examining archives with collections focused on the Freedom Summer, but located in different regions of the country, questions of potential bias, selective histories, and perhaps the necessity of community archiving are brought into focus.

Additionally, these archives both have online components, making them more easily accessible to a greater range of users. Digitization and open access of items helps spread the power of knowledge and information, making this key to any successful archive. Through these electronic records, those who are unable to travel great distances to conduct their research are not, necessarily, left with significant gaps in information because they cannot access physical items.

Results

The University of Southern Mississippi

Although the University of Southern Mississippi was in the metaphorical eye of the Freedom Summer storm, it does not hold a monopoly on materials relating to the event. Universities, community archives, state and city-run historical libraries and private institutions across the country maintain collections on this topic, making it even more important to have an understanding of what is available and who has access to information. This is especially true for archivists, as they should know the strengths of their holdings as well as the areas more thoroughly covered by other collections.

^{5,6} Phillip M. Edwards, “Collection Development and Maintenance across Libraries, Archives and Museums: A Novel Collaborative Approach,” *Library Resources & Technical Services* 48 (2004): 27.

Overview of the Collection

As an initial analysis of the civil rights collection, sub-collections were assessed as to their content. The finding aids available via the University's Special Collections website were used for brief records and descriptions of the contents of each sub-collection, information about the donor and size of the donation. After each sub-collection was reviewed, it was placed into a category (designated by the author) that most accurately reflected the contents of the materials included therein. Figure 1 shows a breakdown of the categories most commonly found within the collection, as well as the number of sub-collections associated with each.

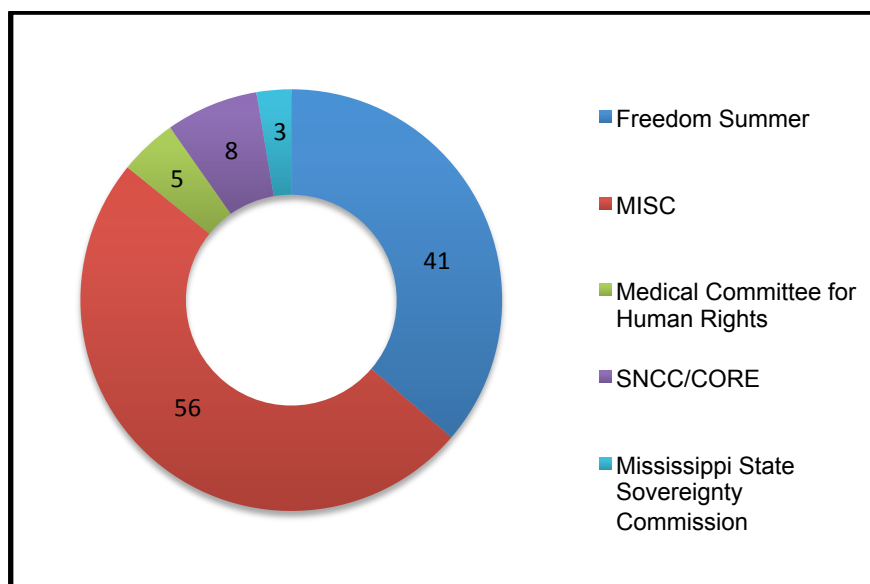


Figure 1. Sub-collection categories with Total Number of Items in Each. These categories represent a breakdown of the types of materials found within the civil rights collection. Abbreviations: Misc=Miscellaneous, SNCC=Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, CORE=Congress of Racial Equality.

While it may seem most significant that 50 percent of the collection could not be categorized, the civil rights movement was so wide-ranging and had such a broad swath of people participating in it (both in support of and opposition to), that this discovery is neither surprising nor warrants attention for the purpose of this research. That 36 percent of the collection is focused directly on Freedom Summer, however, is significant and suggests that some emphasis has been put on building this particular part of the collection. Due to its considerable presence within the civil rights collection, the remainder of the research presented will focus on Freedom Summer.

Freedom Summer

As analysis shifted from an overview of the collection to a focus on Freedom Summer, some of the categories listed in Figure 1 were grouped back together so that all materials related to this event would be reviewed. When considering materials relevant to the Freedom Summer, a relatively wide definition was applied. Clearly, any materials related directly to the event, its volunteers or projects were considered – including scholarly writings and documentaries about the time period, whether or not the author or director participated in the Freedom Summer. Any materials donated by a person involved in Freedom Summer, whether or not the donation was directly related to Freedom Summer, were counted within this subject area. Material on initiatives that took place during, or were in some way related to, Freedom Summer (such as the Medical Committee for Human Rights or the White Folks Project) were included,

whether or not the items were specifically about their connection to or use during this time period. Sub-collections designated as part of the Freedom Summer include Freedom Summer, MCHR and SNCC/CORE. Given the new definition of Freedom Summer, a secondary analysis of the total number of sub-collections related to this topic jumps from 41 to 54 of a total of 113 sub-collections, or 48 percent. This comparison can be seen in Figure 2.

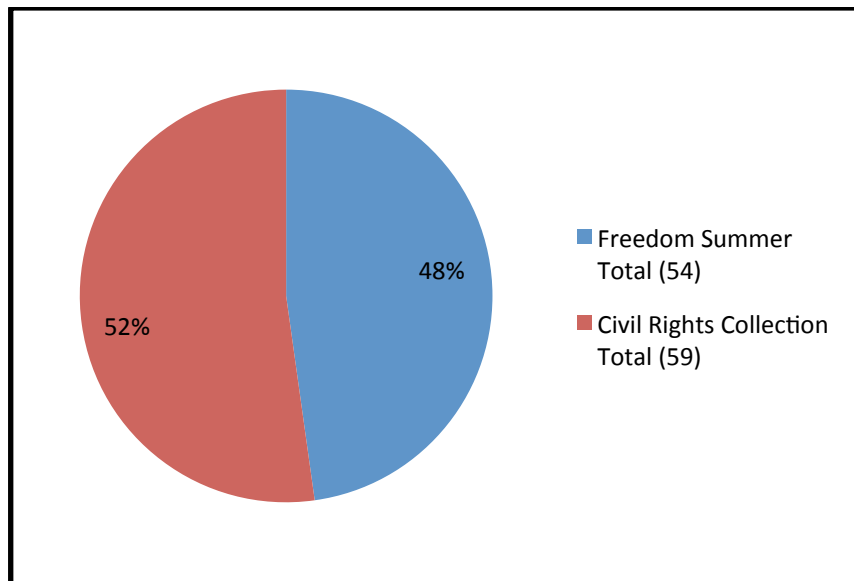


Figure 2. Percentage of Freedom Summer sub-collections. This chart shows the percentage of sub-collections related to Freedom Summer, as compared to the total number of sub-collections found within the civil rights collection.

That the percentage of Freedom Summer sub-collections, as compared to the entire civil rights collection, is so large might seem to reflect a significant bias. Given that this event was significant not only to the movement, but to Hattiesburg in particular, it is neither surprising nor inappropriate to have so many materials on this topic. Rather, the concern is whether the makeup of the existing collection is broad in scope and accurately reflects as many aspects of the event as possible. The archivist should be very conscious that the materials in and donors to a collection create an inclusive narrative.

Race

Despite potential problems in collecting materials (availability of items, willingness of individuals to donate, “competition” with other archives), it is critical for archivists to maintain an understanding of who is donating to their collections and to bring in new types of donors to correct an unbalanced narrative. Analysis of the Freedom Summer sub-collections shows a strong bias in terms of the race of individuals donating to the archive. As Figure 3 shows, of 51 donors, 24 are non-African American, 18 are unidentifiable in this manner, five are not applicable as the donor was an organization or group, and only four were donated by African Americans.

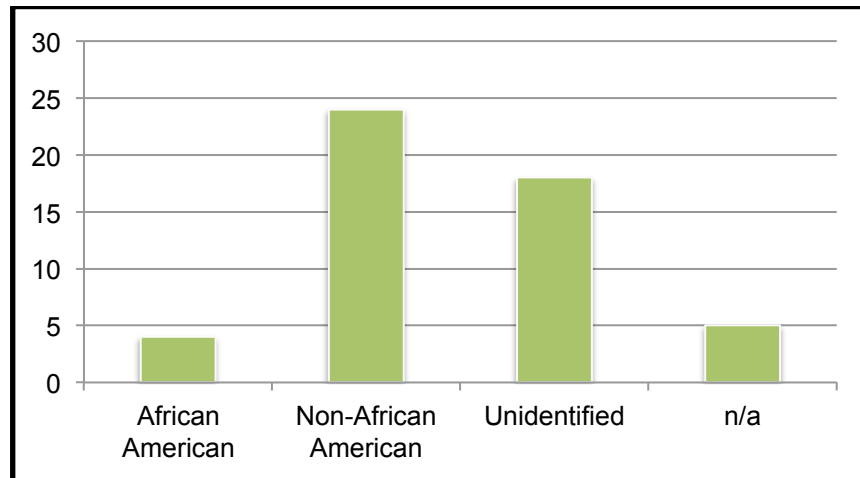


Figure 3. Who is Donating to the Freedom Summer Collection? This chart represents who has donated materials to the Freedom Summer sub-collection, according to race, in raw numbers.

Certainly, the materials donated by each of these individuals are valuable to the overall understanding of Freedom Summer and provide perspective as to their experiences during the project. However, a very strong bias becomes clear as the voices of African Americans are all but lost. Even if all of the individuals in the “unidentified” category were African American, which is unlikely given the data pattern displayed by those donors who were identifiable, the narrative would still be skewed as the greatest majority of the collection would be from non-African Americans.

Location

In addition to a bias in *who* donates to the collection, a further imbalance is apparent in terms of *where* donors are from. The map in Figure 4 below highlights the states from which donors reported to be from. It is important to note that this information could not be found for all donors. Additionally, more than one donor may be from the same highlighted state. The multiplicity of donors is not indicated in this map. It is simply an identification of their locations.

Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Home States

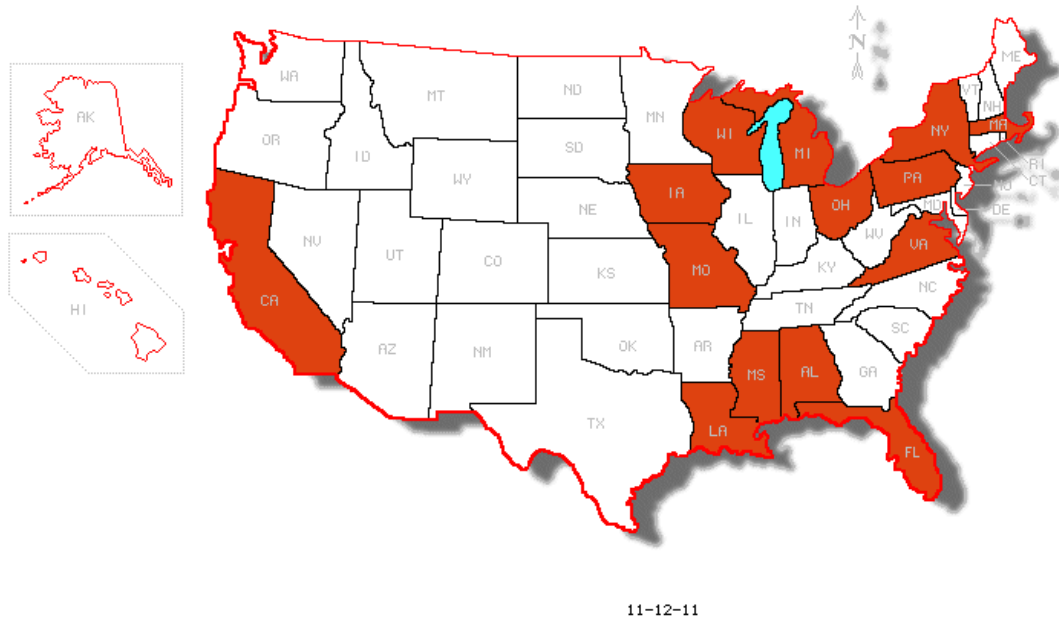


Figure 4. Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Homes States. This map indicates the states from which volunteers indicated they came from. It does not indicate the number of people from each state, but only the presence of individuals who participated in Freedom Summer.

As this map reveals, there is a fairly even representation of donors from the North, South, and Midwest, with less representation in the West. Keeping in mind that five sub-collections were donated by organizations or groups, of the 51 donors, fewer than ten reported to be from one of the four southern states indicated on the map. While the materials donated by Northerners are likely representative of their time in the South, the lack of representation from native Southerners skews the narrative of the collection. Trials and victories experienced by Northerners were just as valid as those experienced by Southerners. However, their reporting of these events may be described differently and put in a different context than those same experiences depicted by someone who lived in the South.

Role of the Donor

People from across the country participated in the Freedom Summer in several different ways. Knowing how donors of these sub-collections were involved in the event helps to further clarify the narrative and identify any gaps regarding who is sharing their experience. Of the 51 donors, 15 were “unidentified volunteers,” meaning that the events in which the donor participated during Freedom Summer were not identified. Nine participants volunteered in the voter registration project, six donors were scholars and did not actually participate at all. The categories of freedom school teacher, MCHR, and n/a (donor was an organization, etc.), have five donors each. Three people volunteered in community centers, two worked on the White Folks Project (an effort much like the Freedom Summer, but focused on poor White voters

instead of African Americans) and only one donor was a student in a freedom school. These results are displayed in Figure 5, below.

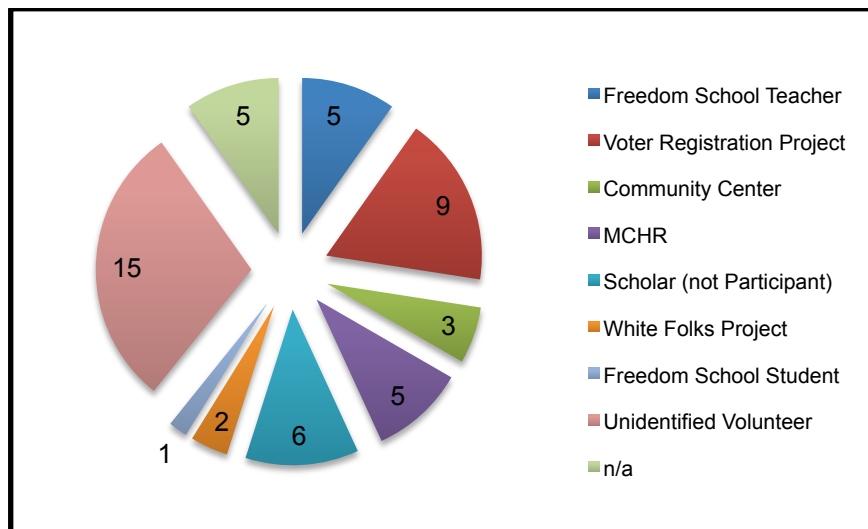


Figure 5. Role Donor Played in Freedom Summer. This chart indicates how the individuals who participated in Freedom Summer were involved. Abbreviations: MCHR=Medical Committee for Human Rights.

Donors of these sub-collections played a wide range of roles during the Freedom Summer. What is clearly lacking, however, is the perspective of the native Southerner benefitting from the efforts of the project. With materials from just one freedom school student, it is hard to measure the impact freedom school teachers had. Similarly, items from volunteers for the voter registration project are invaluable. However, without complimentary information from those who were registered to vote, it is difficult to assess whether the project was truly successful.

Queens College

The civil rights collection at Queens College was selected for comparative analysis of both complimentary and contrasting features. Both are higher education institutions and offer graduate degrees. However, one is part of a significant and well-known statewide system and the other is a stand-alone campus. One is located in the North and the other in the South. One has only a remote connection to the Freedom Summer, while the other is located at its epicenter. Taking these factors into consideration may account for differences found within the substance of materials in the collections and the types of donors.

Overview of the Collection⁷

The number of sub-collections present in the civil rights movement archives at Queens College is relatively few. This, in addition to the fact that finding aids were not available for the sub-collections, made the initial analysis of the collection relatively simple. The sub-collections are searchable in several different ways, including by date, location, subject, and type. Further, information about each of the sub-collections, based on the donor or its major focus is available and easily searchable. Despite the fact that

⁷ Note: Since the completion of this research, the Queens College Civil Rights archive has changed. Additional sub-collections are present, more items have been digitized, searching is available by browsing items or collections, and the website has been updated. As such, while the results reported here were accurate at the time the research was conducted, the archive should be reassessed to determine how each of these areas is currently represented.

much less information is provided by these search filters than with a finding aid, the options make locating materials relevant to particular search topics much easier.

Each sub-collection was placed into one of the six subject areas identified as a “browsing” option. These included CORE, Mississippi Freedom Project, Queens College, Student Help Project, James Forman Library, and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Figure 6 shows the total number of sub-collections found in each of these categories. It is important to note that some sub-collections could have been identified with more than one category. However, those with some ambiguity or overlap were categorized with the subject that was most relevant or present in the sub-collection.

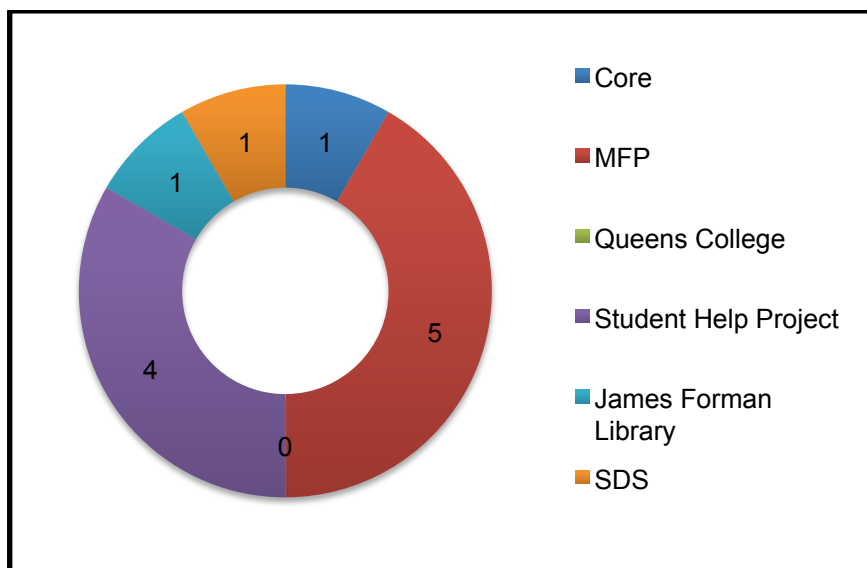


Figure 6. Sub-Collection Categories with Total Number of Items in Each. These sub-categories represent a breakdown of the types of materials found within the Civil Rights Movement Archives. Abbreviations: CORE=Congress of Racial Equality, MFP=Mississippi Freedom Project, SDS=Students for a Democratic Society.

The majority of the sub-collections were associated with either the Mississippi Freedom Project or the Student Help Project. However, the low number of sub-collections present at the time of this research skews the significance of the presence or absence of items in any category.

Freedom Summer

As with the collection at the University of Southern Mississippi, the six categories of sub-collections within the civil rights archive were analyzed as to their connection to Freedom Summer. Some overlap occurs between sub-collections. For instance, photographs of students from the Queens College chapter of CORE marching on Washington are included in both the CORE and Queens College sub-collections. This overlap helps ensure that all relevant materials will be included in the analysis, as they may be present in sub-collections. Given the overlap, five of the six categories of sub-collections contain materials related to Freedom Summer, as shown in Figure 7.

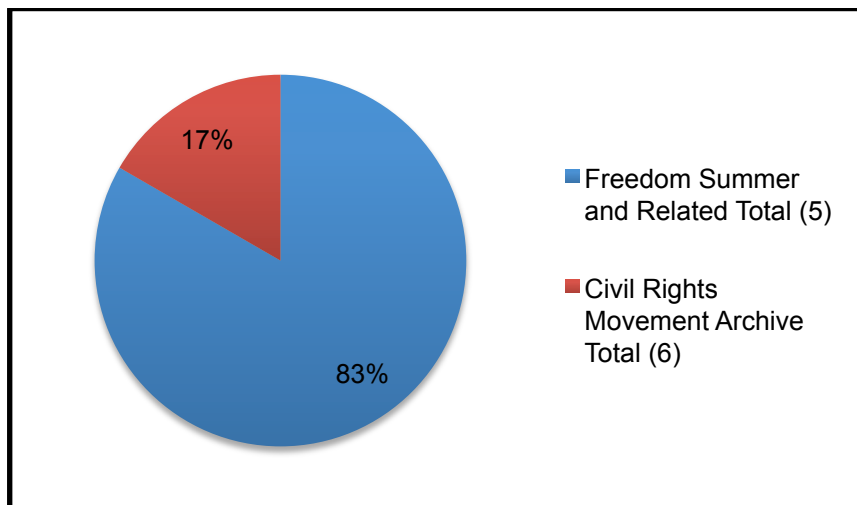


Figure 7. Percentage of Freedom Summer Sub-collections. This chart shows the percentage of sub-collections related to Freedom Summer, as compared to the total number of sub-collections found within the Civil Rights Movement Archive.

This percentage seems quite high. But as discussed earlier, the relatively small number of sub-collections increases the weight given to each one. Given that the number of sub-collections present within the Civil Rights Movement Archive is relatively small, it is significant that those relating to Freedom Summer make up such a large percentage of the archive.

Race

Information about the donors of these sub-collections was not readily available. Since the sub-collections were broken up in several different ways, inferences about donor identity and race had to be made by referencing individual donors' collections (i.e., by conducting a search using the "browse collections" function). Additionally, items in the sub-collections were tagged with information that may or may not have included the name of the donor. Some inferences could be made through pictures in sub-collections that did include the names of those in the photographs.

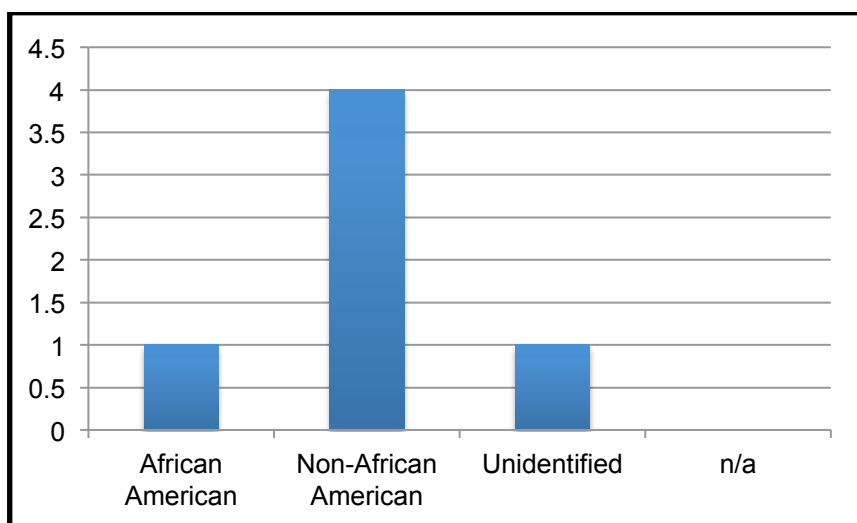


Figure 8. Who is Donating to the Freedom Summer Collection? This chart represents who has donated materials to the Freedom Summer sub-collection, according to race, in raw numbers.

Figure 8 shows that, of the six Freedom Summer sub-collections, four of the donors are non-African American, one is African American and one is not identifiable. There are several possible explanations for this. First, as the Queens College Special Collections department claimed that one of the primary aims of the archive is to portray the voice of the Northerner in the events of the Movement⁸. It could be that the Northerners who participated in the project (and donated their materials) were predominantly white. Alternatively, African Americans may have contributed more to the collection as a whole, but the materials donated did not fall into the Freedom Summer sub-collections. It could also be that the significant disparity between African American and non-African American donors is simply exacerbated by the lack of total donors.

Location

Information about where donors claimed to be from originally was also not easily identifiable, though the biographic information associated with sub-collections did make this information apparent for some individuals. Also, that the Special Collections department made special efforts to represent the perspective of the Northerner during the civil rights movement makes it fairly safe to assume that all donors to this collection were from the northern part of the country. The map in Figure 9 represents the states from which three donors of Freedom Summer sub-collections claimed to be from.

⁸ Valery Chen, Jing Si Feng and Kevin Schlottmann, “Digitizing Civil Rights: An Omeka-based Pilot Digital Presence for the Queens College Civil Rights Archive,” in *Digitization in the Real World*, ed. Kwong Bor Ng and Jason Kucsma (New York: Metropolitan New York Library Council, 2010), 24.

Freedom Summer Donors' Reported Home States

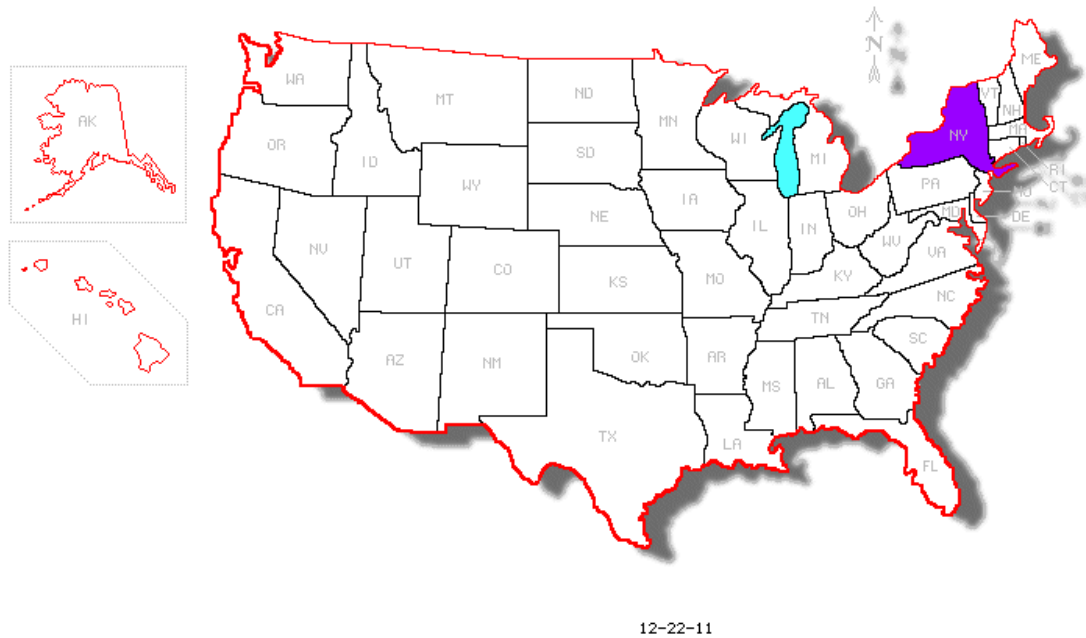


Figure 9. Freedom Summer Volunteers Reported Home States. This map indicates the states from which volunteers indicated they came from. It does not indicate the number of people from each state, but rather the presence of an individual who participated in Freedom Summer.

This goes beyond ensuring that the voices of Northerners involved in the movement are heard, and creates a bias in which only the voice of *New Yorkers* who attended Queens College are present in the collection. Again, while it is reasonable for collections to show bias for a particular event, the lack of varied perspectives in these sub-collections is problematic. The narrative told by these sub-collections negates any possibility of an accurate representation of the event.

Role of the Donor

Of the six sub-collections representing Freedom Summer, two are from freedom school teachers, three from “unidentified volunteers,” meaning that the activities in which the donor participated were not clearly indicated, and one worked on the voter registration project and canvassed for the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. Figure 10 charts these results. Given the limited number of donors, there is a relatively broad range of roles included in the sub-collections.

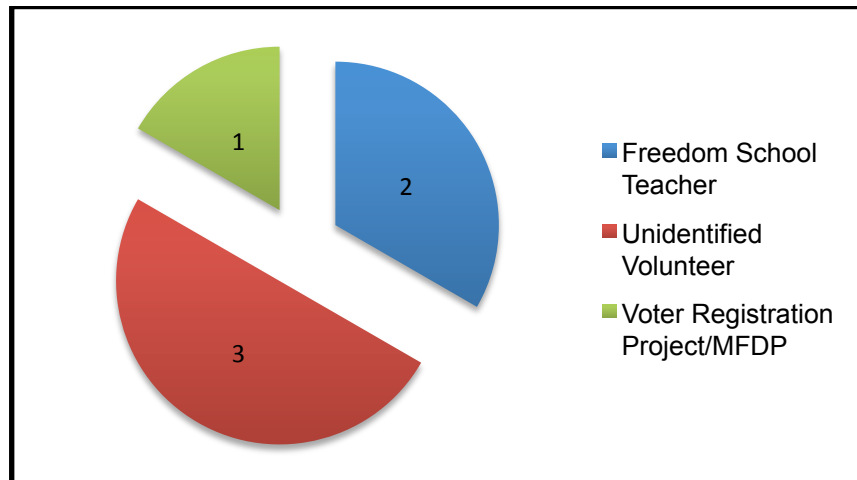


Figure 10. Role Donor Played in Freedom Summer. This chart indicates how the individuals who participated in the Freedom Summer were involved. Abbreviations: MFDP=Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party.

Again, despite the fact that there is more diversity in the role the donor played, there is still not a broad perspective found in these sub-collections. Perhaps the most significant voices, those of the students and voters who benefitted from the efforts of these volunteers, are not present. Admittedly, it may be outside the scope of this archive to include materials from freedom school students or those who were registered to vote through the voter registration project. However, by including materials from even one donor who played a different role in the Freedom Summer, the entire collection would become much richer.

Findings

This study indicates that significant biases in archival collection development exist and impact how we come to explain the events of Freedom Summer. The implications of these findings are significant and should suggest to archivists that collection development policies need to be revisited. The question of why a donor gave his or her materials to a particular collection is an interesting one. But coming to understand how a collection came to be what it is remains outside the scope of this work. Rather, the aim was to analyze existing collections and make recommendations for addressing gaps in the collections moving forward.

Similarities between the University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Freedom Summer sub-collections at the University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College share many similarities. In both collections, there is a significant lack of materials from native Southerners. While it may be possible to explain this dearth in the South through a conjecture that publicly funded institutions in the South cannot be trusted to maintain materials that reflect negatively on the state, this does not explain why so few donated to an institution in the North. At the time this research was conducted, the archive at Queens College was relatively new and collection development strategies had not been clearly defined. However, given the focus of the collection on the perspective of the Northerner, it might be expected that materials from native Southerners would not be included. In any event, the purpose of the study is not to examine the motives of the archivists, but simply to examine the end result – the story being told by the archive.

Further, both archives contain very few collections from African Americans, with only four donating to the University of Southern Mississippi and one to Queens College. It is difficult to imagine why so few

items on this topic have been donated to either archive by African Americans. It could be that African Americans have tried to donate materials, but that they have been rejected for various reasons as defined by the archives' collection development policies. Perhaps members of this group have not realized the significance their items have in terms of telling this history and, therefore, donations have been scarce. It is also possible that far more items donated by African Americans are present in collections not analyzed in this research.

Differences between the University of Southern Mississippi and Queens College

These institutions have very dissimilar missions for their collections. According to the Historical Manuscript Collections division at the University of Southern Mississippi, the mission of that archive is to “document the history of the state of Mississippi by acquiring, preserving, and providing access to primary source materials⁹.” This is a very broad mission that could be applied to nearly any historical archive. That the focus is on Mississippi history, though, does drastically limit the materials that may be included in the archive. The mission of the Queens College archive is similar, but with an opposed viewpoint. As Drs. Alexander and Ng explained, the objective they focused on when building the institutional Civil Rights collection was documenting the perspective of Northerners who participated in the movement¹⁰. While this does not necessarily influence the donor base in terms of race or the role the donor played in the Freedom Summer, it absolutely limits who can or will donate and makes the narrative of the collection very one-dimensional.

At the time this research was conducted, the overall size and scope of the collections were also very dissimilar. The Freedom Summer sub-collections at the University of Southern Mississippi contain thousands of individual items, ranging from photos of volunteers and freedom school students, to brochures and fliers crated by COFO and CORE, to information about the Medical Committee for Human Rights. Despite the fact that the donor base and perspective present are fairly limited, the overall size and scope of the collection is impressive. The archive at Queens College has grown since this research was conducted. But there are still relatively few collections that have been digitized. The aspects of the Freedom Summer addressed in these sub-collections are limited in scope, and the number of materials contained in each is slight. As of the time of this research, there were only around 100 items in the Freedom Summer sub-collections.

One of the factors considered when selecting these archives was the availability of digitized materials. At the University of Southern Mississippi, the archivist depended on grant funding to begin digitizing materials in the civil rights collection. There is no indication that additional support staff were hired to aid in the project, so the digitization and creation of metadata for additional items would have to be completed by existing staff as they are available. Due to these limitations, as well as the considerable size of the collection, complete digitization of the collection is unlikely, thereby rendering digitization efforts unsustainable. Queens College, however, has a very different approach to digitizing their materials. Working with the Graduate School for Library and Information Science, the Special Collections department created internship opportunities for students to digitize materials. Not only do students scan items and create metadata, they also maintain the website used to access items once they have been

⁹ “Historical Manuscript Collections,” University of Southern Mississippi, last modified May 25, 2010, <http://www.lib.usm.edu/spcol/collections/manuscripts>.

¹⁰ Valery Chen, Jing Si Feng and Kevin Schlottmann, “Digitizing Civil Rights: An Omeka-based Pilot Digital Presence for the Queens College Civil Rights Archive,” in *Digitization in the Real World*, ed. Kwong Bor Ng and Jason Kucsma (New York: Metropolitan New York Library Council, 2010), 24.

digitized. By pooling resources, using a relatively unlimited source of labor, and not relying heavily on external funding, the potential for ongoing digitization of this collection is much greater.

Conclusion

Archives can help bridge the gap between those shaping the narrative and those living an event each day. By including materials that may fit into the traditional collection development model of an institution, archives can broaden the available perspective and contribute to our full understanding of history in significant ways. This may require archivists to become more present and active in their communities – making sure that community members know that the archive exists, what it is for, and how it can benefit them and their community. Creating opportunities for archivists to go out into the community and cultivate relationships with individuals connected to the Freedom Summer would prove invaluable in increasing both the number and type of donors to these collections. Participation in civil rights movement celebrations, creation of Freedom Summer exhibits, and even sponsorship of events related to this era would attract members of the community and potential donors and show the commitment of the archive to the subject.

Further, creating a space in which individuals can share their stories, without having to make a special trip to the library, could encourage people to participate in developing the narrative around Freedom Summer when they may not have otherwise. Working with small libraries, community organizations, historical foundations, and the like can easily expand the collections of both institutions by sharing the materials held at each. Holding “scanning fairs,” at which people can go to their local library, have their materials digitized and then immediately returned, could also provide a point of contact for individuals who may not have thought to donate, or who were unwilling to part with their items permanently.

The scope of this project necessitates limiting the breadth of areas covered. However, more extensive research can easily be conducted to further understand the politics of archiving. Additional studies may include an expansion of the types of donor groups, or analyze the gender, religious affiliation, education level and type of employment for donors. Collection analysis could also be extended to other institutions. The comparison of two institutions is useful and provides a baseline from which to draw initial conclusions about the factors examined. Expanding the geographical scope, including different types of institutions, looking at other events in the movement, and analyzing additional material types (such as oral histories), would further increase our understanding of the politics of archiving. Further, qualitative analyses of these collections could be conducted, including performing textual analysis. This would determine the actual narrative being told in the archives and how the Freedom Summer is represented, in addition to who is telling the story.

Resources

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