The Evergreen State College Malcom Stilson Archives and Special Collections

Capstone for the University of Washington, 2018

By Mark Offtermatt

Top: The Evergreen State College Archives, and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Archive.

The Problems

The Evergreen State College's Malcom Stilson Archives and Special Collections contains a tremendous amount of information on the Evergreen State College.

The Archives hold the history of The Evergreen State College. This includes a hierarchical order from within the organization (provenance).

Everything from the Board of Trustees to presidents, provosts, and student affairs is housed in the archives.

The archives retain the records for most of the administrative offices on campus, including:

• Admissions files
• Student evaluations
• Faculty evaluations
• Medical records
• Media loan receipts

The Archive is responsible for all of this, and has been attempting to get by with one staff member to oversee all of these obligations, for 20 hours each week.

Other archival responsibilities include:
• Digitizing of theses
• Updating finding aids
• Campus-wide retention schedules

The Media Room at The Evergreen State College, prepped for interior storms, and overflowing with materials.

Archives are always dealing with the issue of space, and so the sooner the College can complete the digitization process, the sooner the space can be utilized for records keeping, or other archival duties.

The Process

In order to fully ascertain a problem area that could be focused upon for improvement, it was necessary to consult with Evergreen State College library staff. I reached out to Randolph Stilson, the Archivist at The Evergreen State College.

The process of digitizing is time consuming and expensive. Storage for digitized items, especially audio and video, can reach capacity very quickly. To that end, we discussed what is archivable in the media room.

We established:
• Limitations on the amount of items per format
• What is archival, what is not
• A directory for files and metadata
• A process for uploading finding aids

Finally, we made a decision upon the file name and file formats, choosing mp4 to retain some quality, and because it is the dominant online format.

Audio cassettes, Hi8, VHS, and reel-to-reel formats all require different programs for digitization, and each one requires its own program for enhancing or trimming.

Right: Reading Room digitization equipment, from the top left clockwise: Hi8 cassette player, Betamax player, Super Avilyn Master Cassette player, and VHS VCR. The small device in the middle is a Panasonic AV-DG2500.

We use Audacity for the digitization of audio, it has an easy-to-use interface for cleaning up poor audio quality.

Arcsoft Showbiz is used for VHS and Hi8, while Adobe Media Encoder is used on the reel-to-reel stations.

Finally, I ascertained the needs of the Archives and Records going forward, and examined how I could contribute to the facilitation of a smoother operation.

• Completed a purchase request for several pieces of digitizing equipment
• Speeds up the process of manuscript digitization
• More space for archival materials

The Final Outcome

This Capstone project was intended to be an opportunity for The Evergreen State College to springboard into a new era of archiving, with new solutions to a new century of information needs.

There is a lot of value in this drive to digitize our media collection.
• It frees up valuable space
• More space for oversize artifacts
• Materials are more widely accessible to the public

Audio cassettes, VHS, and Hi8 tapes now have an updated standardized process of digitization to assist future students and staff working in the college archives.

The document contains information on metadata, and how to record it.

Completing digitization also allows the college to free up valuable physical space for other materials in the future. Currently, we are examining the media room as a potential space for oversize materials

We have established a system to prevent duplicate digitizations from being uploaded.

I have also worked closely with OrbisCascade to implement more NWDA use in archiving at The Evergreen State College. There are a number of benefits:
• Archival materials will reach a larger user group
• Compliance with NWDA will save the college money
• Closer compliance with other institutions within the consortium

I have examined the DACS and EAD, and provided a deliverable to my sponsor, outlining their strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges they bring to institutions.

Right: Exterior, The Evergreen State College Library Building, housing The Malcom Stilson Archives and Special Collections.