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Wild Bill Hickok Gets His Kicks: Expanding Collection Development through Intentional Collaboration

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Wild Bill Hickok Gets His Kicks:

Expanding Collection Development through Intentional Collaboration.

Abstract: Various cultural memory institutions (academic libraries, history museums, public libraries, art museums, state agencies, even theme parks) in the metropolitan area around Springfield, Missouri, have been partnering and collaborating for decades in many ways. The collaboration was primarily intentional but at times organic or opportunistic, and revolved around a local history collection strategy. The collaborative efforts expanded geographically beginning with a local history museum and culminating with a partnership to document a legendary national highway from Chicago, Illinois, to Santa Monica, California. A shared central premise based on preserving and providing access to a city's unique history and place has fostered enduring collaborative relationships.

Since 1997, the Special Collections and Archives (SCA) unit at Missouri State University's (MSU) Duane G. Meyer Library has successfully fostered collaborative relationships with a variety of cultural memory institutions (CMIs) to strengthen and expand its local history collections.¹ Begun in the late-1990s, the unit intentionally crafted a collaborative collection development strategy that identified and targeted under-documented cultural segments of the Ozarks, stressed collaboration in lieu of competitiveness with other local CMIs, and leveraged the unit's state-of-the-art archives storage facility completed in 2001.² The collection development policy was created with a holistic view of MSU's local history collecting efforts. Over the years, MSU's collecting efforts expanded locally, then regionally, and ultimately

nationally, with the abiding focus being the Ozarks region, where Springfield, Missouri, is the largest urban area.³

MSU had special collections materials as early as the 1960s, but a formal, organized, and staffed department had not existed until 1997 when the first of two FTEs were hired. In addition to establishing departmental guidelines regarding processing, cataloging, preservation, and access of archival and local history materials, the nascent unit carefully crafted its first collection development policy. It was clear that MSU had arrived late in the game in regards to documenting Missouri and the regional Ozarks. One of the main players in the manuscript collecting business was the well-known Western Historical Manuscripts Collection, which was later incorporated into the State Historical Society of Missouri (founded in 1898). Additionally, the region was served by the Missouri State Archives (a division under the Missouri Secretary of State), dozens of local history societies and museums, and several smaller regional colleges and universities with established special collections units.

The SCA unit made the decision to look at under-represented groups and under-documented people, places, and themes. The state's other CMIs had records and manuscripts covering "dead white males," the early explorers, pioneers, governors, big businesses, and the Civil War. MSU would focus elsewhere, specifically on diversity.⁴ Part of this decision had to do with two early acquisitions: the Ozarks Labor Union Archives (OLUA) and the Katherine Lederer Ozarks African American History Collection (known simply within the Springfield community as the Lederer Collection). OLUA was established in the 1980s by an MSU economics professor, Dr. David Lages, and a retired union printer, Neal Moore. The substantial collection (including records of dozens of local labor unions) covered organized labor and working class history in and around Springfield, Missouri, and was brought under the wing of

Duane G. Meyer Library in 1996, one year before the establishment of the SCA unit. Some materials dated back to the 1870s and OLUA's collections were unique enough to merit a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in 1998.⁵

The Lederer Collection was established by Dr. Katherine G. Lederer of the MSU English department in the 1980s. The collection focused on the region's African American community and served as primary source material for her book, Many Thousand Gone: Springfield's Lost Black History, published in 1986. Consisting of over 7,500 documents, including 2,500 rare photographs of African American families, businesses, and social events, the collection provided MSU with a running start in forming a collections policy around minority communities.⁶

The concerted effort to focus on under-documented groups was successful due to a willingness to reach out to various constituencies, engaging with their communities (often using advisory boards consisting of members from the community being documented), and letting members from the communities serve as "honorary field archivists" to seek out and bring in new materials. Following OLUA, the MSU Libraries worked with the gay and lesbian community of Springfield to establish the Ozarks Lesbian and Gay Archives (OLGA) in 2003. The establishment of an advisory board assisted collecting efforts and the collection ended up having the fastest growing oral history collection within special collections.

In the same year, Dr. Mark Stauter, associate director of what was then known as the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection – Rolla, Missouri (WHMC), contacted the MSU special collections and archives unit to gauge MSU's interest in accepting approximately three tons of records documenting the fabled Frisco Railroad. Although WHMC had the region's largest collection of Frisco holdings, the organization (headquartered in Columbia, Missouri, with branch offices in St. Louis, Rolla, and Kansas City) was interested in having MSU accept

the voluminous collection due to its size. Essentially, WHMC did not have the available space to accession the massive Frisco collection. By 2003, MSU's collaborative stance with other CMIs and its new state-of-the-art facility had caught the attention of the state's archivists, curators, and librarians, including WHMC's staff. On May 26, 2004, the first shipment of 3,000 pounds of Frisco related records were transferred to the MSU archives. The Frisco accession benefitted both MSU and WHMC. In fact, the successful cooperative acquisition would later lead to WHMC's successor, the State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO), to establish a joint research center within MSU's Duane G. Meyer Library.⁷

In 2005, Dr. Mara Cohen Ioannides, an instructor in the MSU English department, approached the special collections team to determine their interest in documenting the region's Jewish history. Shortly thereafter the Ozarks Jewish Archives (OJA) was established with materials dating back to 1924. Like organized labor and the materials in OLUA, the local press and outsiders were often surprised to learn that the Ozarks region had labor unions, an LGBTQ community, and a thriving Jewish community.

Although MSU had materials that documented regions outside the Ozarks within the labor archives and with the records from the Frisco Railroad, the broadest and most notable collecting effort would cover a topic of international repute. In 2007, Kaisa Barthuli with the National Park Service (NPS) and Dr. David Dunaway of the University of New Mexico brought together an alliance of librarians and archivists to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to look into strategically documenting Route 66, also known as the Mother Road. Archivists from each of the eight states which Route 66 bisects were convened to preserve and provide access to the road's history by archiving business records, photographs, personal papers, and by conducting oral history interviews. MSU jumped at the chance to join the collaborative effort and the connection

was extraordinarily relevant as Springfield was the birthplace of Route 66 in April of 1926. MSU became a founding member of the Route 66 Archives Research Collaborative (Route 66 ARC) after signing a memorandum of understanding in 2008 with the NPS and a half-dozen other institutions including the University of New Mexico's Center for Southwest Studies, the Autry Museum of the American West, Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, the Oklahoma Historical Society, and the Panhandle-Plains Historical Museum near Amarillo, Texas.⁸ The popularity of Route 66, its international following, its resurgence after the success of Disney's *Cars* film, and its centrality to the history of Missouri and the city of Springfield made joining the collaborative an obvious choice. The collaboration continues: MSU hosted the annual meeting of the Route 66 ARC in 2015 and is looking into developing a national Route 66 research center.

One relationship which grew over the years within the local community was the university's connection with the local history museum. Although the name has changed over the years, one of its earlier names was the most descriptive in terms of its mission: The History Museum for Springfield-Greene County. Since the early 2000s, MSU's archives unit had maintained ties with the local history museum. The MSU university archivist has served as a museum volunteer since the late 1990s. The special collections and archives unit head served on the history museum's board of directors from 2002 to 2005, taking a turn as president of the board in 2005. Being active on the board and serving on the museum's collections committee, he was aware of their valuable archival materials including documentation on the Frisco Railroad, the Springfield Wagon Company, Route 66, materials on the Wild Bill Hickok – Davis Tutt shootout of 1865, the cobra scare of 1953, records from dozens of businesses and important

families from Springfield, and the city's largest photograph collection.⁹ He was also aware of the museum's unfortunate storage situation.

The museum's environmental control for their archives storage space was less than ideal. Knowing that the museum's archives would deteriorate over time and realizing that MSU had the space and the desire to preserve the city and county's local history, a deal was brokered that would benefit both the history museum and the university's students and faculty. The museum agreed to loan the archival collection to MSU and allowed the university to have full access to the materials for research purposes. In July 2010, the first batch of materials relating to the early history of Springfield and Greene County were transported to MSU's archival storage area. Again, MSU's leverage was its surplus of environmentally controlled archival storage space and its willingness to craft a long term loan via an MOU to benefit both parties. Within a few weeks that summer, MSU had access to the local region's most valuable photograph collection and to a core archival collection that had been accumulating since 1976. The loan would last until the museum had upgraded their archival storage space or until they constructed a new museum facility. In the interim, the museum's collections were safe, the university and general public had access to the materials, and the museum could focus their resources on fundraising and other areas of the museum's mission. In this case, volunteering with the organization (by serving on the board or the museum's collections committee), building up a relationship over time, and offering to assist with archival storage and support, resulted in a successful partnership. The partnership continues today with the dean of the MSU libraries serving on the museum's board of directors. The museum is now known as the History Museum on the Square and is undergoing a major renovation and expansion project.¹⁰

The year 2015 saw the development of the latest collaboration, one which has an international reach. In 2014, the head of special collections met Dr. Mark McMeley, a specialist in the history of the Waldensians, who grew up in the Waldensian community near Monett, Missouri. The Waldensians are a pre-Reformation protestant group founded around 1170 by a merchant named Vaudes (known in English as Peter Waldo) who resided in Lyon, France. The movement broke from the Catholic church and by the 1550s was scattered across Europe by the Inquisition. The movement survived in the shadows over the centuries until the 1800s when certain itinerant groups immigrated to Argentina, Uruguay, and the United States.¹¹ Within the United States some Waldensians settled in New York, Utah, and North Carolina, and, in southwest Missouri, the town of Monett. Being less than an hour drive from Springfield, Missouri, the Waldensian story was easily within the collecting area of MSU. After discussing the possibilities of establishing a Waldensian archive, the SCA unit teamed up with the Waldensian Foundation headed by Dr. McMeley and offered to serve as the organization's home archive. The collaboration preserved and provided access to the Waldensian story of the Ozarks, but also the story of the communities in South America and Europe. Again, the initial focus was local, the willingness to collaborate was in place, and MSU's archival storage facility, conservation lab, and reading room attracted the attention of the Waldensian Foundation board members. To assist the newly chartered foundation, the head of the SCA even volunteered to serve as secretary to the board. The mission of the Waldensian Foundation includes documenting the history of foreign immigration into Barry and Lawrence counties in southwest Missouri, from the Waldensians, Germans, and Poles who came here in the 19th century, to the Hmong, Hispanic, Vietnamese, Filipinos, and other groups who have come to the region in the last fifty years.¹²

These half-dozen examples listed above, spread across nearly two decades, illustrate some of the key components of successful, strategic collaboration. First, focus on local history. MSU made a clear decision to deemphasize European rare books. There was less emphasis on “dead white males” and more focus on under-represented groups and people (labor/working class history, women’s history, African Americans, the Jewish experience, etc.). The common thread was the university’s own backyard, the Ozarks region.

Another factor of the unit’s success was the initial “non-compete clause” within the collection development policy. This led to collaboration, engagement, and relationships, not competitive collection building. Study the mission and vision statements of other CMIs in your region. Brainstorm possible areas of mutual interest and needs. Volunteer your time and talent: get on boards, show up for the meetings, attend as many events sponsored or co-sponsored by other CMIs as possible. Think of your institution as part of a larger, holistic collective effort to preserve and provide access to the region’s documentary heritage. Lead the effort: collaboration is not about empire building or who owns what or who has the biggest collection. It is about working together with partners to preserve local history for future generations.

CMI collaborative efforts at the regional level also benefit from expansive, creative thinking about formats and types of materials. MSU has emphasized locally created audio and video collections, a rapidly expanding oral history collection with several areas of focus (OLGA, the African American Experience of Route 66, Ozarks Voices, and Memories of the Ozark Jubilee), glass plate photographic negatives, and courtship letters. MSU also benefitted from having an open mind, albeit selectively so, when it came to accepting materials on loan (such as the History Museum’s archive). Be flexible.

MSU's late entry into the special collections area was a selling point. The institution was new and not a threat to the larger established CMIs and the library had a newer state-of-the-art archives vault and a conservation lab. The expansive new addition to Duane G. Meyer Library in 2001 gave MSU more environmentally sound archival storage space than any academic library, historical association, state agency, or museum in the Springfield metropolitan area. This "surplus" of space provided leverage to foster win-win collaborative efforts with various CMIs within the region.

The key was to carefully parcel out the space for acquisitions strategically and intentionally. MSU was not eager to ingest too much, too soon. Space is a valuable commodity in an academic library and its value increases over time as collections expand and other CMIs fill up their storage facilities. Fifteen years have passed since the addition in 2001, and MSU has yet to overextend its capacity to store archival materials. The space was filled up incrementally. But the milestone acquisitions (the History Museum's collection, the Frisco Railroad collection, and the OLGA and OJA collecting initiatives) were important collaborative decisions benefitting the region. Knowing the back story and future plans of the local CMIs and local communities allowed MSU to play the long game in terms of strategically planning out space needs.

MSU's collaborative collection development policy or strategy assisted the local community. The environmental space was used to preserve outstanding regional collections. The skills and talent of MSU's personnel were offered to the community and the local CMI's by assisting with oral history projects, preservation assistance, and access and digitization projects. MSU approached potential projects and collecting initiatives with a win-win perspective and collaborations were meant to benefit MSU, the partners, and the users.

Efforts to foster, facilitate, and expand collaboration among CMIs in the Ozarks continue. For example, many CMIs are collaborating to plan a regional celebration during the fall of 2018 of the bicentennial of Henry Rowe Schoolcraft's exploration of the Ozarks region. MSU is also working with many organizations and individuals in the region, as well as with the UCLA Film and Television Archive, to digitize and provide free online access to dozens of kinescopes of the Ozark Jubilee, a nationally broadcast live television country and western variety show that originated in Springfield in the 1950s and early 1960s. The MSU Libraries also is in the process of receiving a massive, world-class collection of military insignia and patches. The local connection? Pete Morgan, the collection's creator, is an MSU alum and lived for decades in southwest Missouri. The Morgan Collection already has the potential to result in fruitful collaborations with various museums in the region. Potential collaborations are everywhere. Collaboration should be intentional and perpetual, and it benefits everyone.

Endnotes

¹ Cultural memory institutions, or CMIs, include libraries, archives, museums, and galleries. Missouri State University is located in Springfield, Missouri, and is the state's second largest university with an enrollment of over 22,700 students in 2015. See "About Missouri State," Missouri State University, accessed July 16, 2016, <http://www.missouristate.edu/about/>.

² Collaboration and cooperation were the key components of MSU's fledgling department's collection development strategy. Working with the long established, reputable archives and libraries of the Missouri Ozarks was crucial to building up trust. Additionally sharing information about MSU's relatively new department and reaching out to other CMIs followed the growing literature and trends in academic librarianship. See: Deborah Lynn Jakubs, "Trust Me: The Keys to Success in Cooperative Collections Ventures," *Library Management* 36 (8/9) (2015): 653-662; Ivan Gaetz, "Collaborative Librarianship: New Light on a Brilliant Concept," *Collaborative Librarianship* 1(1) (2009): 1-12; Charlotte Priddle, "Bridging the Internal Gap: Special Collections and *In-Reach*," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Cultural Heritage* 16 (1) (2015): 35-47; Jennifer Novia, "Library, Archival and Museum (LAM) Collaboration: Driving Forces and Recent Trends," *Endnotes: The Journal of the New*

Members Round Table 3 (1) (2012): 1-10; Patrick Lo, Kitty But, Robert Trio, "Links Between Libraries and Museums: A Case Study of Library-Museum Collaboration at the Hong Kong Maritime Museum," *Italian Journal of Library & Information Science* 5 (1) (2014): 103-120. Although this article focuses on analog collections, the digital age has accentuated the collaborative spirit. See: Amy Williams, "Participation, Collaboration, and Community Building in Digital Repositories," *The Canadian Journal of Information and Library Science* 39 (3-4) 2015: 368-376. In some library environments, collaboration is an absolute necessity, see Yetunde A. Zaid and Olatokunbo Christopher Okiki, "Building Collaboration for an Institutional Repository in Africa: Transcending Barriers, Creating Opportunities," *Journal of Interlibrary Loan, Document Delivery & Electronic Reserve* 24 (2014): 103-111.

³ The Ozarks region is often defined as Southwest Missouri (the region south of the Osage River and west of the Current River) and the border areas of southeastern Kansas, northeastern Oklahoma, and northern Arkansas. See Milton Rafferty, *The Ozarks: Land and Life* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), 3-6.

⁴ This collecting focus is not new, see: Joan D. Krizack, "Preserving the History of Diversity: One University's Efforts to Make Boston's History More Inclusive," *RBM: A Journal of Rare Books, Manuscripts, & Cultural Heritage* 8 (2) (2007): 125-132.

⁵ David Richards, "Documenting Labor in the Ozarks," *Annotation* 28 (March 2000): 14-15.

⁶ "Katherine Lederer Collection," Missouri State University Libraries, accessed July 8, 2016, <https://libraries.missouristate.edu/Katherine-Lederer-Collection.htm>; "Katherine Lederer Ozarks African American History Collection," Digital Collections, Missouri State University Libraries, accessed July 9, 2016, <http://digitalcollections.missouristate.edu/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=/Lederer>. For information on OLU, see David Lages and Neal Moore, "The Ozarks Labor Union Archives at Southwest Missouri State University," *Labor History* 31 (1990): 163-167.

⁷ "About SHSMO," State Historical Society of Missouri, accessed July 17, 2016, <http://shsmo.org/about/>.

⁸ "Route 66 Archives & Research Collaboration," National Park Service Route 66 Corridor Preservation Program, accessed July 15, 2016, <https://www.ncptt.nps.gov/rt66archive/archives-and-research/>.

⁹ "Route 66: Shootouts & Snakes," Andrew Evans, National Geographic Traveler, National Geographic, accessed July 1, 2016, <http://digitalnomad.nationalgeographic.com/2014/04/28/route-66-snakes-shootouts/>.

¹⁰ "Museum Information," History Museum on the Square, accessed July 18, 2016, <http://historymuseumonthesquare.org/>.

¹¹ Gabriel Audisio, translated by Claire Davison, *The Waldensian Dissent: Persecution and Survival, c.1170-c.1570* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); Giorgio Tourn, *You Are My Witnesses :*

The Waldensians Across 800 Years, (Friendship Press, 1989); Paul Tice, History of the Waldenses from the Earliest Period to the Present Time. (Book Tree, 2003).

¹² Mary Bishoff, “Waldensian Foundation Launches Immigrant Research,” *The Monett Times* (Saturday, November 28, 2015): 1-2, see also weblink to article accessed July 29, 2016, <http://www.monett-times.com/story/2254476.html>.