Contemporary Collecting to Correct the Exclusive Past
Facilitators: Joe Tropea, Maryland Historical Society
                         Michael Stone, University of Maryland Baltimore County
Discussants:
Natalie Cadranel, OpenArchive
Erin Durham, University of Maryland College Park
Nadia Ghasedi, Washington University St. Louis
Hannah Givens, University of West Georgia
Gregory Rosenthal, Roanoke College
Bethany Serafine, National Park Service

In the midst of uprisings responding to economic inequality, systemic racism, and police violence, what are the roles of public historians and archivists? Public history professionals and institutions occupy a space on the front lines of events that have recognizable historical significance. They also understand all too well—based on the gaps in their own material culture and archival collections—how the absence of evidence can erase voices and hide experiences that do not fit the dominant narrative. Rather than face a future in which historians must scour archives for traces of subaltern narratives, public historians have taken it upon themselves to preserve the voices of contemporary protest before they can be silenced. This project is challenging and imperfect. Public historians can encounter ethical and practical dilemmas that are hard to overcome, with little guidance through the moral terrain.

In particular, this working group is interested in the following questions:

·   When is it ethical to begin collecting and interpreting sources and stories?

·   What is the project's responsibility to the causes of participants?

·   What are the best practice guidelines for collecting materials relating to minors?

·   Is it important to know who is served by the project before it begins?

·   What does it look like to share authority in a project so embroiled in the passions and politics of the moment?

·   Are all voices considered equal?

·   How are contributed items preserved digitally?

·   How do we ensure the project is sustainable?

This working group will begin to answer these questions surrounding the ethics and best practices of collecting contemporary history and histories of violence. We seek partners from projects that have begun collecting stories, photographs, and other primary sources while events are ongoing or shortly after they have passed. We will share our struggles, concerns, and successes in this largely uncharted territory, and we will produce a document to help guide our colleagues and peers in similar efforts.

Opening the Archive: A Participatory Approach to Collecting, Preserving, and Amplifying Mobilized Media

Natalie Cadranel, OpenArchive

Citizens, worldwide, armed with mobile devices are becoming history's first responders, amassing rich, contextualized, and crucial records of their movements. However, most of these recordings presently reside on social media platforms that can chill free speech and are subject to government censorship, privacy breaches, and data loss. While social media is an acceptable distribution platform, it does not provide sufficient privacy protections or archival preservation of this vital media.

Audiovisual recordings made on mobile phones are increasingly ubiquitous as sousveillance or, the recording of an activity by a participant in the activity, becomes ever more prevalent. The abundance of this media provides an opportunity for public historians and preservationists to work with documentarians to create an archive of mobile media that is by and for the public it serves. Building on extensive feedback and user testing from archivists, activists, and journalists over the past 6 years, we have built and tested a mobile application that securely archives citizen media at the Internet Archive, offers creative commons licensing options, and preserves metadata needed for authentication, thus avoiding link rot and making it easier to reuse, remix, and transform the media once shared. It address four key concerns for these groups: privacy, provenance, authenticity, and long-term preservation and access by routing mobile media to user-created collections in an accessible public trust committed to long term preservation and access.

OpenArchive is a free, open-source mobile application that simplifies media sharing and preservation for citizen journalists by uniting the efforts of public-interest archives, mobile security experts, and free press advocates. It fosters a virtual commons where civil liberties are protected, in the process affording marginalized communities the narrative agency they have historically been denied.

Currently available in beta for Android, it preserves, amplifies, and routes mobile media to user-created collections in an accessible public trust, outside the corporate walled gardens currently dominating the online media ecosystem. Users can add metadata and Creative Commons licensing to their audiovisual mobile media and send it to the Internet Archive over Tor.

While this project primarily focuses on activist media during social movements, its goals echo key points of our discussion:

> Q: When is it ethical to begin collecting and interpreting sources and stories?
> A: This is a challenge as much of the media may potentially expose the identities of the activists involved in the movements they document. Discretion on how to collect, preserve, and make this media accessible is crucial and must be a collaboration between the activist documentarians and the preservationists. The goal of this tool is to allow users to contribute their own media to the archive and

manage their collections on the backend so that they have full control of their narrative.

Q: What is the project's responsibility to the causes of participants?
A: To protect the privacy and provenance of the documentarians' mobile media. We offer a free tool that affords, pseudonymity, ease of use, while being open-source so that it can be modified by the communities it serves.

Q: Is it important to know who is served by the project before it begins?
A: OpenArchive was designed based on specific users' needs. Input from activists, journalists, and archivists is core to the usability and functionality of the application.

Q: Are all voices considered equal?
A: The idea is to bring archival technology to where people are. We aim to make sharing media with public repositories that respect civil liberties as easy as uploading a photo to any number of social media platforms.

Q: How are contributed items preserved digitally?
A: they are stored at the Internet Archive

Documentation of human rights abuses, inequality, and government corruption, among other offenses, is as prevalent as it is marginalized. Because the media is so sensitive, the collection and preservation of it must be more nuanced and historians and archivists must work closely with the documentarians recordings it to illuminate the darker side of history in real time, which historically was not exposed for decades. Building tools, communities, and safe spaces to collaborate is essential in order to proactively address both community and preservationists' needs.

Out of the Closets, Into the Archives? The Prospect of Collecting LGBTQ+ History in Southwest Virginia

Gregory Rosenthal, Roanoke College

On September 20, 2015, I held a workshop and organizational meeting at the Roanoke Diversity Center to discuss the prospect of starting up a queer community history project in Roanoke, Virginia. Eighteen members of the LGBTQ+ community gathered, and after two hours of lecture, group work, collective brainstorming, and filling up seven sheets of poster paper with our ideas, we adjourned. That night we founded the [Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project](#).
Project participants determined two priorities for our first year: 1) to collect oral histories; and 2) to create an archive of LGBTQ+ historical materials from the things we have in our homes and in local organizations' file cabinets. Here I discuss our effort—still underway—to create a regional archive of LGBTQ+ history.
Roanoke is a city of roughly 100,000 residents in the Appalachian western part of the state of Virginia. This region is known as Southwest Virginia. As the largest metropolitan area within a hundred-mile radius, Roanoke has long been a hub for LGBTQ+ community organizing, socializing, sexual liaisons, and political activism. The region's first LGBTQ+ community center, the Roanoke Diversity Center, was founded in 2012. The Roanoke Public Library, which dates back nearly a century, houses the Virginia Room, an archives dedicated to Southwest Virginia history. Roanoke College (my

employer) is a small private Lutheran college in Salem, Virginia, about eight miles from Roanoke. By December 2015 these three organizations had all become project partners in our LGBTQ+ archives initiative.

At monthly meetings of the Southwest Virginia LGBTQ+ History Project, project participants raised concerns about partnering with the Roanoke Public Library, which was initially my idea. When I suggested that we kick off the project by hosting a "document drop-off" event at the library—an event at which LGBTQ+ folks would come in with their materials and make a donation to our collection—a young cisgender gay man questioned whether the library was really a "safe space," and suggested that we should hold the "drop-off" event at a more LGBTQ+ friendly location. Several older cisgender gay men involved with the project questioned whether the Virginia Room at the Roanoke Public Library would adequately care for our materials. Would they be "squirreled away" from public view? And, echoing the younger man's question, would the LGBTQ+ community find their stuff more "accessible" if archived at the library, or would they rather, more likely, feel as if it has been taken away from them?

It was out of these conversations that we decided to partner with the Roanoke Diversity Center as an alternate "drop-off" location for archival materials. Interested participants would be asked to bring their items to the Diversity Center where student volunteers could "accession" them, then transport them to their final destination at the Virginia Room. We reached agreement—among History Project members, Roanoke Public Library staff, and the Board of Directors of the Roanoke Diversity Center—by November 2015, and we were able to schedule our first "Archives Collection Event" for December 7, 2015. (N.B.: I also joined the Board of Directors of the Diversity Center on November 7, 2015.)

That evening, three people came to the Roanoke Diversity Center to drop off historical materials. They were the founding donors to what is now the LGBTQ History Collection at the Virginia Room, Roanoke Public Library. The Roanoke Diversity Center also made a substantial donation of materials—our first institutional donor. One individual donor, an older white cisgender gay man, donated a full run of the first two years of Southwest Virginia's oldest LGBTQ+ publication, *The Big Lick Gayzette* (1971-1972). We knew of the existence of this publication, but had not seen it. This was an incredible donation. Another donor, a white transgender woman, donated materials from the Backstreet Café, site of a 2000 hate crime shooting. The third donor, an older white transgender woman, donated materials from Ladies and Gents of the Blue Ridge, Southwest Virginia's only transgender advocacy organization. The items donated by the Roanoke Diversity Center included a box full of materials from the Roanoke chapter of PFLAG from the 1990s. All told, our first Archives Collection Event was a great success.

We have also created a digital archive. This has gotten off the ground more slowly. I wanted to use Omeka as a platform, but my college could not afford to host an Omeka site. Therefore, we went with Shared Shelf Commons instead, for which the college has a four-year grant-funded trial. It took several months this fall, working with members of the Roanoke College library staff and IT departments, to design an upload form for the crowdsourcing of historical materials, and to design the Shared Shelf site itself. History Project members also had many hesitations about the digital platform. Early on, many participants—particularly transgender folks—questioned the ethics of posting photographs of LGBTQ+ subjects online. We had many conversations about how to protect the rights of "third party" subjects who are depicted in historical media and yet unable to consent to their inclusion in the archive. Out of these conversations came our Policy on Protecting the Privacy of Third Parties. We have not yet had to apply the policy, however, because in over one month since launching the crowdsourcing platform, we have not received any submissions! Instead, at our most recent History Project

meeting (December 2015), we decided to prioritize digitizing and uploading materials from the Physical Archives for inclusion in the Digital Archives, rather than seeking crowdsourced content.

As we move forward in 2016, questions remain:

1) How do we continue to grow the Physical Archives collection? (We plan to hold our next "Archives Collection Event" at The Park, Roanoke's historic gay nightclub [founded in 1978], but those plans are still in the works. Are there other ways, besides holding collection events such as these, to get community members to donate their materials to our archive? How can we convince LGBTQ+ institutions to also donate their materials to the archives?)

2) How do we improve access to the Physical Archives? (Besides digitizing and uploading materials to the Digital Archives platform, we have discussed the possibility of organizing an exhibit inside the Virginia Room, but what other ideas exist?)

3) Is the concept of the crowdsourced Digital Archives a dud? Should we, as many Project participants argue, focus solely on collecting physical materials and use the digital platform exclusively for improving public access to these "hard copy" materials?

4) The question has come up about what to do with materials that the Virginia Room will not take, such as non-archival objects like drag queen costumes and other large items?

5) Finally, there is the question of representation. Nearly all Project participants are white, and most are cisgender gay men. Interest in this project comes mostly from the older white gay community, with some support from the transgender community, but we woefully lack participation from cisgender lesbian and queer women, as well as queer people of color. What is success in terms of this project? How much of a "curatorial" hand should my students and I play in this project, or should we allow the most engaged community members to lead the way, even if they are white cisgender men? Is our primary audience the LGBTQ+ community? Or does success mean reaching out to the straight community? Also, there's the question of chronological representation. Most project participants want to collect and interpret more recent 21st-century materials, from their own adult lives, whereas I and my students are more interested in the deeper past: uncovering the 1980s, 1970s, and earlier narratives.

Documenting Ferguson

http://digital.wustl.edu/ferguson/
Nadia Ghasedi - Washington University Libraries

Washington University in St. Louis is located just 15 minutes south of Ferguson, MO. The August 9th shooting of Michael Brown became a defining moment: not only for our region and our country, but also for our institutions of higher learning. As protests occurred throughout the city, it became clear that the Washington University Libraries must respond in a way that challenged the conceptions of the traditional university library role. These eruptions of discontent were a call for us to push back against ideas of library neutrality and seize this opportunity to engage with our community.

On August 21, 2014, our University Librarian, Jeffrey Trzeciak, tasked a team of us with creating a digital archive to document the events happening in Ferguson and across our city. As a result, Documenting Ferguson was established to preserve and make accessible content created by the community and in response to Michael Brown¹s death. In accepting the broadest variety of material, such as images, audio, video, text, and web content, we aim to provide unprecedented access to a diversity of experiences and

perspectives in order to enrich teaching, learning, research, and scholarship for years to come.

Documenting Ferguson is comprised of 3 components: an online interface, a partnership with Archive-It, and the acquisition of physical materials.
The online interface is served using the digital exhibition platform, Omeka, which enables the community to contribute and view a variety of digital content. It also serves as a means to provide searchable metadata related to the contributed content. Archive-It is a service of the Internet Archive project, which solicits web content, news stories, blog posts, and social media. Archive-It solicits web content, news stories, blog posts, and social media. In this collaboration, our digital archivist sends links to Archive-It, which are then searchable through Internet Archive. Also, anyone can submit links to Archive-it using a Google form accessible through the Documenting Ferguson portal. Lastly, Documenting Ferguson includes the collecting of physical materials. This includes content created by and for our immediate campus community, such as protest signs made by student groups. These materials are part of our University Archives collection.

A primary challenge of Documenting Ferguson is the nature of the desired collection content, which is often organized, captured, and shared through the use of smartphone technology and social media accounts. How do we build awareness and engender trust in order to compel the community to contribute their content before it is lost? How do we begin to capture social media in an incisive way that will allow for robust data analysis? And lastly, how do we overcome the passive "field of dreams" approach? If we build it, will they come?

We are addressing these issues through a strategy that includes outreach to local communities and a national collaboration. Our outreach initiative is an awareness campaign of "Don't Let These Images Be Lost to History" and ³Share Your Story. Share Your Photos." These sentiments seek to target both organizations that want to ensure their involvement in the movement is part of the historic record and individuals who have video and images, sitting on their smartphones, that are in danger of being lost if not backed up. Also, by drawing parallels between existing collection strengths, such as the Henry Hampton Collection, which includes all materials gathered and created for the seminal documentary series, Eyes on the Prize, the community sees the historical impact and importance of their seemingly insignificant smartphone photos, videos, and the like.

The challenge of creating sustainable processes for capturing historically significant content created within a fleeting moment and using impermanent platforms is complex. However, we were recently awarded a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for the project, Documenting the Now. This project aims to produce a tool that will enable the harnessing of millions of tweets, including videos and images, that feature specific hashtags. In partnership with faculty at Maryland Institute of Technology and Humanities and the University of California, Riverside, this project will produce, preserve, and make accessible Ferguson-related data sets for research.

In order to ensure that Documenting Ferguson continues to grow, we need to assume the role of content creators. Student activism is at an all-time high; faculty is creating courses that deal with Ferguson-related issues; there are potentially hundreds of first-hand accounts from campus employees that live in and around Ferguson waiting to be told. With these factors at play, in spring 2014, we created an oral history pilot project

using students enrolled in an African American history course. We trained the students to conduct the interviews and upon completion they were added to Documenting Ferguson. Building upon this model, similar projects are in the works.

We are hopeful that the work of Documenting Ferguson will be a vital component to future understanding of contemporary community organizing against state violence and institutional oppression.

Presenting Gay Pulp: The Work of Carl Corley

Hannah Givens, University of West Georgia

As a new public history graduate student at the University of West Georgia, I spent last semester looking for a thesis project. Ideally, I wanted my project to touch the fields of queer, Southern, and literary history, plus incorporate both physical objects and digital history. By sheer luck, I discovered the work of Carl Corley, a gay pulp artist and novelist from the 1960s. A Mississippi native, he published more than twenty books, all under his own name. Duke University holds a complete collection of his art, books, and papers, and I realized making those materials available to the public online (with interpretation, of course) would be my ideal project. While this website is a comparatively small undertaking, it does touch on several of the issues presented for our discussion:

1)   As items intended for public consumption, novels and novel covers don't present major problems for collection ethics and privacy. However, bringing the books out of the collection and into the public eye is definitely an issue, depending on how much of the actual text I offer. To me, the best value for the website is to offer full text, and as of this writing the project is contingent on copyright permission that may or may not appear.

2)   As pulp novels the Corley books raise questions about how to find and collect "low" entertainment. Duke's collection was obtained from the author, facilitated by a historian interested in his work. Other authors may be overlooked, especially if they used pseudonyms. The more time that passes, the more difficult it will be to make use of pulp novels. Further, how do we determine what's important enough to preserve from the modern day? Where are the sites of queer expression aside from politics and "high" culture, and how do we preserve those things? Location is one issue, but preservation is another, with even-more-complex copyright issues and many sources buried in the internet where they are semi-public, but thought of as private.

3)   As a writer, Corley is an exceptional example, not the "average" gay man of the Sixties. How can his work be expanded to have wider significance? How do you locate average people who read gay pulp novels in the Sixties and can speak to that part of the history, for instance? Then, how do you balance the authority-sharing between historian(s), writer(s), and reader(s), when each person may have a very different interpretation of each book? My initial impression is that as the historian, my concern is to accurately represent what I discover, not to make sure exhibit visitors have the appropriate opinion about it, but this will continue to be a delicate issue as the project expands.

Preserving cultural resources for this and future generations

Bethany Serafine, National Park Service, Northeast Region History Program
The National Park Service's mission is to "preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations." On paper, that sounds great, but in modern practice, that can be very difficult. As a historian in the cultural resource management side of the National Park System, I am often faced with the challenge of documenting and transmitting stories of all Americans based on the cultural remains and archival materials available. While documenting these cultural resources through the National Register of Historic Places, I strive to look beyond the physical evidence of often "dead white man's" history to find the stories of marginalized or overlooked people and communities whose stories are still sorely under told within the National Park System. There were more than just the successful magnates or plantation owners living and working the land and structures that the NPS preserves. Some of these histories stretch into NPS's history itself--including segregation in government programs (CCC) and within National Park visitor services. These histories are often difficult to accurately document because so little evidence exists in the public record.

Watching the controversy over the Confederate Flag unfold, I could not help but wonder how were we, the Nation Park Service, going to capture this moment in history. Civil War battlefields within the National Park System are some of the most visited parks. Rallies were held at and near parks—as these events were occurring, they were becoming a crucial record of that park unit's history. The recent Confederate flag issue is only one of many difficult and culturally sensitive issues the National Park Services is struggling to reconcile and eventually interpret to the American public—either at current sites or as it considers new sites for inclusion in the National Park System. I found the following questions raised in this working group particularly compelling: *Are all voices considered equal? When is it ethical to begin collecting and interpreting sources and stories? What is the project's responsibility to the causes of participants?*

I'd like to gain from this working group the start of what may become something of a Standard Operating Procedure to "preserve the voices of contemporary protest." When should park rangers embark on oral histories? Should best practices capturing the oral histories surrounding contemporary protest be added to the current oral history training that NPS offers to its employees? What other primary source materials should we be collecting to ensure that these stories will remain part of the public record for "this and future generations?"

"Preserve the Baltimore Uprising": Documenting Oral History In a Challenging Present

Erin Durham, University of Maryland, College Park

        Historians and researchers who design oral history projects articulate the importance of documenting history from a wide range of perspectives and experiences. This understanding is important for the success of any oral history project, but especially when documenting events of a divisive and controversial nature. With recent events highlighting racial tensions and police violence in Baltimore, Preserve the Baltimore Uprising 2015 project was launched as an online public archive of media, materials, and oral histories relating to the Baltimore protests and unrest. The project's reception revealed a high level of support and engagement for a public repository regarding the protests. Hundreds of personal photographs and material connected with racial tensions and riots in Baltimore from April to May 2015 were contributed. It was evident that

"Preserve the Baltimore Uprising" project fulfilled a community need to have a more permanent, public repository of memory materials, and it highlighted the significance and relevance of public history projects.

As a graduate student at the University of Maryland, College Park, I am interested in conducting oral histories with Baltimore citizens who participated in or observed the events in the spring of 2015. These oral histories will be made available on the "Preserve the Baltimore Uprising" website. Oral historian Paul Thomson has written, "All history depends ultimately upon its social purpose." During the planning and organizing phase of this project, several questions about social purpose and community processing are essential to consider.

In the case of divisive and controversial events such as in Baltimore, does an oral history project tend to exacerbate tensions or provide a space for processing and closure for the individuals who participate? How are these findings significant to future projects in which oral historians, community activists and archivists seek to engage the community in participatory documentation? How do participants describe the value and significance of oral history projects in their individual lives and for the community?

These questions align with those raised in our working group, such as:

·   What is the project's responsibility to the causes of participants?

·   What does it look like to share authority in a project so embroiled in the passions and politics of the moment?

·   Are all voices considered equal?

When conducting oral histories that promote best practices and provide support to the participants, it is vital that interviewers seek to understand the perspective of the participants who provide testimony. Allowing participants to share their experience, expectations, and motivations during an oral history project can lead to greater collaboration and shared authority between interviewer and interviewee, and expand the significance oral history projects can have upon a community. The Preserve the Baltimore Uprising oral history project allows for an examination of how the practice of history intersects with the present, and the possibility of oral history projects becoming a space for individual and community healing and transformation. Thinking about the impact of public history projects is vital when working in the recent aftermath of divisive and controversial events.