
Raising the Archival Consciousness: How Women's Archives Challenge Traditional Approaches to Collecting and Use, Or, What's in a Name?

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ABSTRACT

This article examines archival collecting, taking as case studies two women's archives. Drawing on their experiences building the collections of the Archives of Women in Science and Engineering (Iowa State University) and the Iowa Women's Archives (University of Iowa), the authors explore how such efforts challenge traditional approaches to collecting. Proactive collecting, such as oral history projects focused on Latinas or women scientists, helps fill gaps in the historical record by encouraging people who have not traditionally been donors to participate in building and using diverse archival collections.

INTRODUCTION

In 2000, we coauthored "A Room of One's Own: Women's Archives in the Year 2000," an article focused on the growing number of women's archives in the United States and the impetus for their creation (Mason & Zanish-Belcher, 1999). We argued that women's archives were founded on the premise that women's lives and activities were not being adequately documented in traditional repositories and that women's archives turned collection development on its head in the 1970s by insisting that the papers of women be preserved and made accessible to researchers. These early archives, like the incipient field of women's history, focused on the contributions made by women to American society and history, highlighting prominent women with public roles. Like the field of women's history itself, however, women's archives have evolved over the past several decades, gradually broadening their collecting scope to include previously underdocumented groups. Women's archives continue to seek out the

papers of groups and subjects whose histories are not being preserved, in order to document a broad range of women and to build a diverse set of collections. Women's collections archivists work proactively to capture the parts of society so often left out of the mainstream and in so doing give a voice to the disempowered. As a result, women's archives have altered the landscape of archival collecting, improving the overall documentation of culture and society in the United States. This article considers the methods and techniques women's archives utilize to document under-represented groups and the uses that are made of the collections thus acquired.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the early 1970s, there have been occasional articles on the subject of women's archives in the library and archival literature but analyses of the cultural context and impact of women's collections have not kept pace with the establishment of women's archives. For the most part, publications on the subject have been concerned with compiling and disseminating information about women's history resources in archives. It is important, however, to view the articles specifically about women's archives in the context of a larger scholarly literature on the nature of historical documentation of women. Archivists do not work in a vacuum; they interact with scholars and other researchers and respond to and encourage new areas of research.

When Martha Bell's article on women's collections appeared in *College and Research Libraries* in 1959, it focused primarily on collections of published material, reflecting how few women's archives existed at the time. By 1973, the women's movement had sufficient influence on the fields of archives and history to warrant an entire issue of the *American Archivist* devoted to the role of women in the archival profession and to the necessity of rethinking archival collecting and description to include women. Articles by archivist Eva Moseley (1973) and historian Joanna Schneider Zangrando (1973) considered the impact of feminism on history and archives. Moseley's article reflected the uncertainty that surrounded this new field of women's history. She argued that women should be included in history and that archivists had a responsibility to preserve women's papers, but if all archivists did a good job of documenting women there might be no need for separate women's archives in the future.¹ Three women's studies journals founded in the 1970s—*Feminist Studies*, *Signs*, and *Frontiers*—helped solidify the scholarly claims of the field. Each included articles in the field of women's history, and *Signs* had a section entitled "Archives," which printed documents along with introductions by archivists or historians. The archives section underscored the existence of varied, interesting archival sources for women's history. The 1970s also witnessed the publication of a number of guides to women's collections within mainstream

repositories, as well as the mammoth *Women's History Sources* (Hinding, 1979), a compendium of brief descriptions of manuscript collections held by repositories across the country.² The 1970s were, thus, a time of making the case for women's history by demonstrating that there were indeed enough historical resources to support this field of study.

By 1980, the field of women's history was maturing and changing, increasingly influenced by social history. No longer were historians interested solely in "great" women—those active and prominent in the public sphere. Writing history "from the bottom up," social historians brought to the foreground groups that had previously been ignored or forgotten by historians. The underlying philosophy of social history likewise influenced the perspective and functioning of women's history and women's archives. Eva Moseley (1980) explained the changes in women's history to her archival audience and suggested to mainstream archivists how one goes about collecting women's papers. Furthermore, she noted the lack of sources created by groups such as working-class women, but was not yet ready to embrace the concept of an activist archival profession in which archivists would create documentation through means such as oral history in order to fill gaps in the historical record. To her (and to many other archivists), the notion of the *activist archivist* was still a somewhat radical idea. The implication was that *historians* should conduct oral history interviews, not *archivists*.

And, in fact, women historians did undertake oral history projects when they were unable to find adequate sources in archives. Most famously, Darlene Clark Hine's (1986) *The Black Women in the Middle West Project* enlisted volunteers to scout their local communities for sources and to capture their community's history through oral history interviews. Moseley's own institution—the Schlesinger Library—likewise undertook an oral history project to record interviews with African American women (Hill, 1991).³

Publications such as *Feminist Collections*, launched in 1980, disseminated information about print and non-print resources, while archivists and historians compiled printed guides to sources on particular topics or geographical areas.⁴ By 1986 the field had developed sufficiently to warrant an issue of *Special Collections* focused on women's collections. While celebrating the emergence of these new women's collections, Editor Suzanne Hildenbrand (1986) expressed an increasing concern among curators of women's collections about the lack of diversity in their holdings. Hildenbrand also warned:

The success of women's collections today should not obscure the limited and fragile nature of that success. There are numerous women for whom there are no adequate research collections and whose past and present suffer accordingly. These include the Hispanic women of the US, Francophone women of Canada, Native American women of both nations, the poor and others. (pp. 6–7)

She worried that the link between feminism and women's collections could be a liability, threatening marginal collections if support for feminism waned. Women's historians likewise questioned the focus on white women and in fact on studying women apart from men. By the end of the 1980s, the field could support a new journal devoted specifically to women's history, *The Journal of Women's History*, which began publication in 1989, as well as the journal *Gender and History* (also begun in 1989), which signaled the rise of gender studies alongside women's history.

The archival literature of the 1990s looked to the past but also to the future.⁵ Voss-Hubbard (1995) explored the emergence of the first women's archives in the 1930s and 1940s, while a 1995 conference hosted by the Schlesinger Library addressed the growing impact of the technological revolution on archives. A selection of papers presented at the conference was published as *Women, Information, and the Future: Collecting and Sharing Resources Worldwide* (Moseley, 1995). This broadened the discussion of women's information sources to include global initiatives and resources outside archival repositories and suggested the possibilities for closer connections among repositories through the World Wide Web. The explosive growth of women's archives in the 1990s revealed a more activist bent among archivists. The literature also reflects a deepened understanding of the need for more diverse collections and the ways to bring that about. Responding to changes within the field of women's history, archivists intensified their efforts to gather the history of underrepresented groups. Neal (2002) and Mason (2002) reflected on the challenges of building archival collections that represented women of diverse backgrounds.

WHO IS MISSING FROM THE HISTORICAL RECORD?

The past four decades have seen an ever-expanding definition of who is to be included in history. However, constantly changing research interests expose deficiencies in our collections, reminding us that we must be ever vigilant about who is represented in our collections and who is not.

As Eva Moseley (1980) argued nearly thirty years ago, race and ethnicity are only part of the equation. It is easier to acquire the papers of educated women of color, than poor, less formally educated women of any race or ethnicity. Educated people not only create more written records but are more comfortable with libraries and with institutions of higher learning and thus more open to donating their papers to an archival repository. Not long ago when scholars spoke of a lack of diversity in our collections they were referring mostly to the lack of sources on African American women. Other groups, however, did not spring so readily to mind: Iowa has many rural women, but their records are not abundant in archives. Domestic or service workers are common in society, but their records are sparse. As research interests have shifted toward new areas such as rural history, Latino studies, and disability studies, we have correspond-

ingly broadened the scope of our collecting to include these and other groups formerly hidden from history. We now recognize that groups underrepresented in society tend to be underrepresented in archives, but that other factors also influence the shaping of the archival record.

Finally, how we define "underrepresented" groups depends upon the context. Well-educated women scientists who are not stars in their field may be as underrepresented in mainstream archives as Latina migrant workers, African-American community activists, or white domestic workers, because their stories have not been valued and thus have not been solicited by archival institutions.

As special subject repositories, women's archives are able to craft our own collection development policies. Unlike state archives and other institutional repositories, we are unhampered by mandates that dictate what must be accepted. Instead, we have a great deal of latitude in our collecting, which enables us to document people and issues that often fall through the cracks of other repositories. But we are not immune from biases that can skew the archival record. Archivists tend to document what they know and archival collections often reflect the interests and identities of their curators. This is not necessarily a bad thing.

Marie Bankhead Owen, the second director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, was a formidable force in the state of Alabama, for a number of reasons. Not only was she the widow of the first director, Thomas M. Owen, but she was also the sister of Alabama Senator John H. Bankhead and Speaker of the House William B. Bankhead. Robert J. Jakeman (2003) describes the connections that enabled her to secure WPA funding for the construction of an archives building and how her connections helped in her collecting. During her tenure the department accumulated a wide range of manuscript material relating to women. Although the primary subjects were upper class white women, at that time even their records were rarely included in archival collections. Bankhead Owen likely understood from her own experience that women played significant roles in society and that their papers were worth preserving. As a result of Bankhead Owen's efforts and the force of her personality, the department acquired rich collections, which researchers still appreciate today.

At a time when the history of women was not yet appreciated, it is unlikely that a male department head would have collected women's papers. By contrast, women's archives today may have a feminist bias and may fail to document groups that do not share these values or who actively oppose these values, such as right-wing organizations or right-to-life groups. Archivists must therefore be conscious of and open about their biases, carefully evaluating the decisions they make about collection development.

In order to avoid the omissions of the past, archivists of women's collections must conceive of women's papers broadly and be proactive in

their collection development. Nonetheless, defining a collecting scope presents both challenges and opportunities for women's archives. All individuals have multi-faceted identities;⁶ as a result, their papers and records may fall within the scope of any number of archival repositories—based on geography, education, residence, sexuality, religion, occupation, or avocation. The Iowa Women's Archives (IWA) has a geographic collecting scope; it seeks papers of women identified with the state of Iowa. The collection development policy of the Archives of Women in Science and Engineering focuses on a woman's professional identity, regardless of where she lives or works. This means that collections donated to these repositories could easily go elsewhere. For example, a lesbian engineer born in Iowa who earned degrees at two out-of-state institutions and was employed by a third might choose to donate her papers to any one of the universities where she was educated or employed or to the Lesbian Herstory Archives rather than to either the IWA or the WISE Archives. Cognizant of the overlapping nature of subject collections, we encourage collaboration with other archives to ensure that collections make their way into appropriate repositories.

Oral history is one method of enhancing the historical record for under-documented groups. It is especially critical for groups that do not create written records. Interviews can also provide valuable information and added perspectives concerning those whose papers are in archives (Swain, 2003).

The Iowa Women's Archives has undertaken the *Mujeres Latinas* Project to preserve the history of Latinas in Iowa. Among the women interviewed are migrant workers who traveled to Iowa and other states from Mexico or Texas on a seasonal basis, "following the crops" from place to place in cars or pick-up trucks. These women were, for the most part, unable to create or keep personal papers because of the circumstances of their lives. Many had no more than a grade school education. Those who had the ability to write were unlikely to have the time or inclination to do so after long days working in the fields and preparing meals. The twentieth-century historical record of migrant work in Iowa is mostly limited to occasional newspaper articles about migrant workers and reports of social agencies such as the Migrant Action Program in Mason City, written from the perspective of observers. In general there is little documentation of individual lives and experiences from their own point of view, apart from the occasional memoir. Oral history gives these women an opportunity to relate their experiences in their own words and voices. Oral recordings have the added value of conveying emotion and character in a way that papers cannot. For the researcher, listening to a recording and hearing the manner of speaking—accents, intonation, pauses, laughter, crying—creates a more intimate connection with the speaker and can contribute to a better understanding of her experience.

The Camille and Henry Dreyfus-funded oral history project of the Archives of Women in Science and Engineering seeks to document women at the other end of the class and educational spectrum: women in chemistry.

Approximately fifty-five interviews have been conducted with women chemists from various fields and backgrounds. While these women may have paper collections, they have not necessarily seen their experiences as historically significant and for the most part have not donated their papers to an archival repository. In the past, the women scientists whose lives were well documented were the exceptions—those who achieved great prominence as a result of their work, such as Marie Curie.⁷ The vast majority of women scientists who do research and teach are not stars, but their experience is as valuable to historians as are the exceptional scientists. They may lay the groundwork, conduct research, or teach the next generation. For example, Nellie Naylor, an assistant professor at Iowa State University for nearly fifty years, taught basic chemistry courses. Her teaching inspired student Darleane C. Hoffman to change her major from art to chemistry; Hoffman eventually won the National Medal of Science (1997). As Hoffman noted in a 1998 interview, “[Naylor] was not a mentor in the sense that we usually talk about because I don’t think she even knew who I was . . . It was the way she taught it” (Hoffman, 1998). Both women’s lives are important: without Nellie Naylor, Darleane Hoffman might not have become a chemist. Without Hoffman’s oral history we would not know this story, because it does not appear in either Hoffman or Naylor’s personal papers in the WISE Archives.

Not only do oral histories document the past, but the process of gathering them helps convince women about the significance of their role in history. Recording an oral history is an interactive experience, a collaboration between the archivist and the narrator (the person being interviewed). Archivists select interviewees, do background research, write questions, and conduct the interviews. They may steer an interview toward important subjects or events about which they wish to learn more. But more often than not, the narrator will take an interview in a different direction, providing rich but unexpected information. Participating in an oral history project helps the women interviewed see the value of their life stories and can also raise the consciousness of any community about the value of its history. For the narrator, oral history is an intensely personal experience; it offers women the opportunity to speak in their own voices and reflect upon their lives. The act of telling one’s life story often creates a bond between narrator and interviewer. In some cases this leads to the donation of papers, when they exist. In other cases the oral histories complement existing collections at other repositories. Or they may be the only evidence of a particular life story, as is the case with some of the migrant workers interviewed. Providing a copy of the interview to these individuals is a way that archives can give back to the community and the individual. The trust that often develops between interviewer and participant can foster good will within the community toward the archives and its parent institution.

In framing our oral history projects, we attempt to be inclusive. Thus, the IWA promotes its *Mujeres Latinas* Project as a project to preserve community and family history, so that we can include some interviews with men, even while the focus remains on women. Likewise, the WISE Archives has at times interviewed spouses, family members, colleagues, and mentors in order to provide additional context on the work and lives of women scientists. Oral histories can also provide differing perspectives, especially when interviewing several people about the same event. However, it is not simply an individual's participation in a historical event that is of interest. Rather, their experience can provide significant insights about society and culture. Oral histories are especially helpful in providing a holistic view of women's lives and their multiple roles and responsibilities. The interviews often include discussions of family and home life, as well as career. It is difficult if not impossible to understand a woman's career without the context of her home and family, and vice versa. Conversely, women's experiences and perspectives shed light on the institutions of which they are a part, providing insight and perhaps a gendered perspective absent from other sources.

OUTREACH

Because women's archives document groups in the past that have been invisible to history, we must use a variety of methods to reach potential donors. Traditionally, archivists have identified individuals or organizations whose papers they wished to acquire and contacted them to solicit their papers. Such solicitations might include a letter introducing the repository and its goals to the potential donor and suggesting a meeting to discuss the repository's interest in her papers. A tour of the archives or a meeting in the donor's home or place of work might ensue. This approach assumes, first, that there is an identifiable group of individuals whose papers one wants to acquire (in essence, a list of people that one should document) and second, that these people are prominent in some way) they are community leaders, elected officials, power brokers, scholars, celebrities. They hold some status that brings them to public attention and thus makes them candidates for this imagined list of potential or desired donors. Such an approach has limited applications to social history. If we are to document history fully, we must be interested in the broad spectrum of society—not only leaders, but also people who are not known outside their families or communities. We want to document how "ordinary" people lived their lives and how their everyday actions affected and were affected by the world around them. Like other archivists interested in preserving social history, women's archives have developed a variety of techniques to broaden the scope of our collections beyond those with a public role. These techniques include publicizing our activities and

goals in print and broadcast media, hosting events in the archives, giving presentations in a variety of venues, attending community celebrations, creating tabletop displays, and distributing printed material such as bookmarks and brochures.

At the Iowa Women's Archives, early efforts to solicit collections by writing letters to potential donors met with mixed results. The jargon we unconsciously used in our letters and the fact that most women had little or no knowledge of archives meant that few responded to these solicitations unless they were already aware of the Iowa Women's Archives. Such an approach works better for those who are well educated, understand the purpose of archives, and recognize their own place in history. Therefore, it has been more effective for the WISE Archives, because the women contacted are highly educated and may already know about the archives through their involvement in professional organizations. It is not an effective means of reaching the poor, working people who have less formal education, and those who for one reason or another are outside the mainstream of society—in short, the people who make up the majority of society.

Over the years the Iowa Women's Archives and the WISE Archives have adapted their methods of soliciting collections, attempting to make appeals more inclusive and less intimidating. For its *Mujeres Latinas* Project, the IWA designed colorful brochures depicting women in everyday settings—sitting around a kitchen table, standing on a front porch, leaning against a car, riding a bike. The text was kept to a minimum and was consciously jargon-free, geared to people unfamiliar with archives. We also created bookmarks with the tag line, "Every woman has a story—tell us yours" superimposed over photographs of Iowa Latinas from the 1920s and 1960s. The only text besides the tag line was contact information and the URL of the *Mujeres Latinas* Web site printed on the back of the bookmark. We have likewise printed bookmarks reiterating our interest in African American women's papers. These bookmarks contain a photograph, a simple statement about the importance of preserving African American women's history, a list of types of materials collected, and contact information. Bookmarks are especially practical because they can be inexpensively produced and therefore easily modified for a particular group, they find their way into unexpected places, and they are accessible to a broad audience.⁸

Our goal is to widely broadcast our interest so that others can help identify potential donors and interview subjects. Presentations at public libraries, community centers, historical societies, conferences, and meetings of women's organizations have also been effective. The value of these is reaching a large audience that can then spread the word to friends, family, acquaintances, and colleagues. Word of mouth is in fact our best tool for acquiring collections: it is much more effective for a woman to hear from a family member or colleague that we might be interested in her letters or photo albums than for us to contact her out of the blue. In

these days of never-ending phone and mail solicitations and spam, people are suspicious of solicitations from unknown sources and are likely to ignore or dismiss them out of hand.

Special events can also be an effective method of publicizing an archives and its work. The WISE Archives has sponsored lectures by women scientists, class tours, open houses, and national exhibits from the Beckman Center for the History of Chemistry and the Society of Women in Engineering. Both the IWA and the WISE Archives have hosted receptions for organizations to get people in the door, illustrate what an archive is, and demonstrate the archives' interest in preserving their history. In 2001, the IWA hosted an open house for the University of Iowa's Latino-Native American Cultural Center, which was celebrating its thirtieth anniversary. This event helped the IWA lay the groundwork for the Mujeres Latinas Project and make contact with potential donors. It also showed people what the archives collects, what it does with the material it acquires, and let people know about our interest in gathering and preserving Latina history in Iowa. Traveling exhibits are also a good way to publicize and promote women's archives. Inexpensive tabletop displays have been a great boon to the IWA because they can be taken to talks, conferences, and events, and can be modified to appeal to particular audiences. The WISE Archives for example, produced a traveling exhibit on women nutritionists, which was displayed as part of a collaborative arrangement at community colleges throughout the state of Iowa.

Working with organizations to publicize what we wish to collect has also been of great value. The WISE Archives has placed items in the newsletters of women scientists' organizations and sent e-mail messages to members. A good example is the archives' collaboration with Iota Sigma Pi, the nationwide women's chemistry honorary group. Working closely with the Iota Sigma Pi historian, the WISE curator made presentations at the group's centennial event and to local chapters. In turn, the chapters provided WISE with the names of potential interviewees for the Women in Chemistry Oral History Project. These groups are inclined to be receptive because they are already organized to support each other as women in the profession, and therefore value and appreciate the idea of a women's archives. This feeling of deep connection to the archives can inspire a woman to donate her own papers and then share her positive experience with friends and family.

In 1995 Fann Harding, a senior administrator at the National Institutes of Health (NIH), donated her papers to the WISE Archives.⁹ Harding was the founding president in 1970 of the NIH Organization for Women (now known as SHER: Self Help for Equal Rights), and was a founding member of both the Association for Women in Science (organized in 1971) and the Federation of Organizations for Professional Women (established in 1972). In the early 1970s, Harding filed the first sex discrimination com-

plaint against NIH, winning her case in 1974. After a 2005 reunion of the founding members of SHER, several additional collections were sent to the WISE Archives by NIH scientists. In 2006, Fann Harding hosted a reception in Washington, D.C., so that the WISE curator could meet with these women scientists as well as the incoming director of the Association of Women in Science. Women engineers and scientists often have nationwide networks of colleagues and friends, who may connect with a women's archives such as the WISE Archives and encourage each other to donate their papers, as did participants in the World War II Curtiss-Wright Engineering Cadettes Program. Such existing networks provide connections for women's archivists and can directly contribute to their success, resulting in the donation of personal papers, organizational records, or financial contributions, often years after the initial contact.

The collection development methods discussed above are not unique to women's archives; they have been used in a variety of settings by archivists who wish to reach out to groups that are underrepresented in archives. However, women's archives have a particular stake in developing or refining innovative techniques so that they may rectify the omission of women from the historical record in the past and avoid making the mistake of preserving a historical record skewed by the absence of particular groups in the future. Targeted collecting initiatives, oral history projects, and outreach strategies that encourage a broad spectrum of women to donate their papers and records to archives have resulted in collections that have value to groups well outside traditional researchers.

RESEARCHERS AND USE: WHO ARE OUR USERS?

Women's archives serve a wide range of clients and users. Because many women's archives are located on university or college campuses, students and scholars are often the largest clientele. Women's archives also have the opportunity to promote use of their collections through class orientations, tours, and connections with faculty members, with the result that students may be given class assignments or other projects in the archives. The WISE Archives has hosted national exhibits about women in chemistry and engineering that have brought alumnae groups, student organizations, and even potential future students into the reading room.

But online finding aids and Web sites are attracting a much broader range of researchers, as the ever widening access to the Internet has made archival collections more accessible to the ordinary person than ever imagined. Digital content not only dissolves the walls of the archives, it also expands the very concept of use. People who in the past would never have set foot in a university library or an archive are discovering collections relevant to their interests by simply typing keywords into a Google search engine. Genealogists searching for an ancestor, women looking for a recipe their mother baked, and people trying to reconnect with old

friends or extended family members have been delighted to find all of these things through our Web sites. They contact the archives by e-mail or phone to request photocopies or scans; some ultimately visit the archives. The result is more use by casual researchers, as well as journalists, writers, and other professionals. Online access democratizes the process of locating archival sources; the materials in women's archives are now available to all, not just to a select group of informed scholars. But online finding aids also make women's archives more transparent to traditional researchers, such as historians and other scholars, including those who might previously have dismissed women's archives as irrelevant to their field of study. This undercuts any argument that women's archives marginalize the history of women. Online access has also increased at the macro level, thanks to dedicated individuals and organizations that gather information about women's collections nationwide and worldwide, such as the International Information Centre and Archives for the Women's Movement (the Netherlands) Mapping the World project, the Society of American Archivists Women's Collections Roundtable Directory, and the University of Texas-San Antonio's Guide to Women's Collections. These have proved to be a rich and valuable resource for users.¹⁰

Yet women's archives reach even farther beyond traditional researchers and scholars to a broader public of users. They connect with activists and community groups within and outside the local community. The open houses held by the Iowa Women's Archives for community groups are not intended simply to encourage collection development; by educating the public about the archives, these events encourage public use of the archives. Likewise, open houses and exhibits featuring a group's records can validate the history and memory of that group. When alumnae of two programs no longer in existence at the University of Iowa—Dental Hygiene and the Department of Physical Education for Women—attended receptions in the IWA during their reunions, the knowledge that their records were being preserved was particularly meaningful to them. Founding members of a women's health collective started in 1973 gathered at the IWA during the clinic's thirtieth anniversary. In all three cases, the archives not only preserved the history of the groups, but also provided a physical space in which women could recall their shared history. More recently, community activists have used the archives to learn about local history, examining IWA collections on second-wave feminism to create a timeline of local GLBT history for Pride Week.

Intent on creating archives that are inclusive in their holdings, women's archives strive to be welcoming to diverse users. To accomplish this, they actively encourage various educational activities as part of their mission, both within and beyond the walls of the archives. Hosting a county-wide reading event, speaking to an American Association of University Women chapter about the impact of Iowa women in science, and talking

about Latina history to a group of third and fourth graders involved in a mentoring project in a neighboring town are collaborative efforts that bring the archives closer to the public. By working with such diverse groups, we create partnerships and foster connections as well as fulfill our educational mission. One result of this outward-looking educational impetus is evident in the rapidly increasing use of our collections by K-12 students. The willingness of archivists to host educational sessions for K-12 students opens the archives and brings into the reading room groups not normally part of our regular clientele. Online access to topical lists and finding aids has facilitated K-12 use of our collections through remote reference, especially by junior and senior high students working on History Day projects. Other K-12 users include high school interns working on summer research projects with professors at Iowa State University who have utilized the papers of previous interns in the WISE Archives as models and inspiration. The WISE Archives' holistic approach to collection development—documenting family and personal life as well as career—has been important in demonstrating the discrimination women scientists have faced, the patchwork nature of their careers, particularly if they were married, and what they have achieved despite these barriers. Thus WISE archives show high school and college students these role models of successful women scientists and engineers but also provide cautionary tales about the obstacles that women faced and may continue to face in pursuing non-traditional careers.

College students visiting the archives to learn about primary sources may experience a more personal connection to history. When an introductory Latino studies class visited the Iowa Women Archives, students read oral history excerpts and newspaper clippings about migrant workers in Iowa in the 1960s. They also examined photographs of the boxcar houses in which early twentieth-century Mexican workers lived with their families. Both Latina and non-Latina students were deeply affected by the experience. They were exposed to a history that had been omitted from textbooks and the history they learned in school.

CONCLUSION

Women's archives are both physical and symbolic spaces where women's experiences are valued and preserved. The fact that our repositories include "women" in the name is important and has deep symbolic meaning for donors and users alike. The existence of women's archives can be an impetus to people outside the institution to create and collect historical documentation with the knowledge that it will be preserved and made available to a broad audience. The connection women feel to women's archives has led them to undertake oral history projects of their own and donate the completed tapes and transcripts. Two examples are the Iowa Women Artists Oral History Project and the Oral Histories of Iowa Women

Police, which were donated to the Iowa Women's Archives. Similar projects are underway for the WISE Archives. Dedication to the mission of each archive along with a commitment to ensure that women's experiences are not forgotten has spurred individuals to document groups that are not included in the historical record. For these people, the fact that there are archives dedicated to women is critical.

Archivists of women's collections understand that a lack of knowledge of one's history has implications for any group's identity.¹¹ Recalling the long-standing omission of women from the historical record, these archivists now actively seek to document groups that have been denied their history. As archivist Mark Greene (2003/2004) states, "Our work [as archivists] is about providing the building blocks and tools for assembling and interpreting the past—history and/or memory." Women's collections archivists preserve the history of women and help women create, re-create, and own their memories.

NOTES

1. Over the years, the concerns of women's collections archivists have often been conflated with issues pertaining to the status of female archivists. Thus, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) suggested in the late 1990s that the Women's Collections Roundtable and the Women Archivists Roundtable be combined, although the former was specifically geared to archivists who worked with women's collections while the latter was a roundtable devoted to issues concerning the status of women in archives.
2. When the project began it was assumed that it would be a modest effort. The tens of thousands of collections by or about women included in the guide—merely the tip of the iceberg—effectively silenced the argument that there were not enough sources to support the study of women's history.
3. Sometimes such sources existed but were hidden in collections, undescribed in card catalogs or finding aids. The Schlesinger Library surveyed its holdings in order to uncover sources on African American women hidden within larger collections (Von Salis, 1993).
4. Published guides, such as the *Southern Research Report* (Faculty Working Group in Southern Studies, 1991), were standard practice for disseminating information about archival sources until the mid-1990s. By the late 1990s, however, such printed guides were outmoded, as archivists increasingly placed collection descriptions, finding aids, and subject guides on their Web sites or in collaborative online databases. The SAA Women's Collections Roundtable created a directory of women's collections archivists with descriptions of the collections they administered in the 1990s, updating it several times; it was available online until recently.
5. Also see Micham (1997).
6. For a discussion of the complex issues related to identity-based collecting, see Kaplan (2000).
7. Marie Curie's papers are located in France at the Salle des manuscrits of the Bibliothèque nationale as well as the archive of the Institut Curie.
8. The IWA received a call from a woman in Muscatine, Iowa, who had found a brochure in a pew at her church. She became a key contact for that area. She agreed to an oral history interview and suggested the names of several other Latinas who were also interviewed for the project. A woman in northwest Iowa called the archives offering to participate in the project after finding a *Mujeres Latinas* bookmark in a book lent to her by a friend.
9. Fann Harding Papers, MS-320, Archives of Women in Science and Engineering (Iowa State University).
10. Mapping the World: <http://www.iiav.nl/mapping-the-world/>; SAA Women's Collections Roundtable: <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/womenscoll/index.asp>; University of Texas-San Antonio Guide to Women's Collections: <http://www.lib.utsa.edu/Archives/WomenGender/links.html>.
11. See Wurl (2005) and Bastian (2001) for discussion.

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