

# SCRAPBOOK DIGITIZATION & COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT

## REFLECTION

It doesn't seem like a casual album of snapshots would be an important historic resource, but in looking through the collection of photos collected by Etta Mae Godwin, I was struck by the way even a series of mostly posed portraits can give insight into life in what was an early example of secondary education for women. The photo on page 19, labeled "The Gang" includes the caption "No Chapel!" which is a fascinating peek into the fact that college students have always been rebellious. On page 26, a photo labeled "Maggie & Tony are Cows" features two women posing with a sign that says "Only cows take this path". We can imagine the sign blocking students from cutting across a lawn and ruining the grass, a perennial concern for university grounds crews, but a solution uniquely designed to deter the female students of the Women's College.

One challenge in this project was understanding the way that fields are mapped both within the collection, with potentially different labels placed on the public-facing digital resources and the internal data, and outside of the collection to standardized schemas like Dublin Core or MODS. One particularly difficult concept was the idea that not all fields in the item record need to be mapped to a standardized schema, and that multiple fields can be mapped to the same metadata element, for example, mapping both "Subject headings" and "Topics" to "Subject".

Similarly, the act of developing the metadata for this scrapbook reinforced the importance of using controlled vocabularies for the content of these mapped fields. For discoverability purposes, these terms are going to be one of the chief ways researchers or other information seekers find these materials, so using predictable and regular terminology is essential. This primarily applies to subject and topic elements, but fields like language and item type are also important, to allow for proper filtering. As part of

the assignment, it was a challenge to try and assign the correct terms, and in a real world project, I hope a cataloging professional would be involved to provide the needed expertise in this component of the digitization process.

## **JUSTIFICATION**

A scrapbook of photos taken by a young member of the Class of 1937 at the Women's College of the University of North Carolina may not seem like a prime candidate to be digitized and made available online, but based on my reading and understanding of the texts we have read and the decisions we haven't had thus far about making collections decisions about digital materials, the Etta Mae Godwin scrapbook, and others like it, should be an important part of UNC Greensboro's digital library.

In the past academic libraries were measured by the size and scope of their collection, but as general collections become more homogeneous, it is a university's special collections that will provide real value (Kaufman, 2007). One unique resource that UNC Greensboro has is its position as an early example of women's post-secondary education in the United States. Digitizing scrapbooks like this one provides invaluable primary source documentation for this important aspect of the history of education. Consider as well the way that the experiences of marginalized communities have been primarily depicted by and for members of the majority (Manžuch, 2017). Women college students have been considered a subsidiary group of "college students" - a group assumed to be male. Consider, for example, the now thankfully archaic colloquial term for a female student, a "co-ed". She is defined strictly in opposition to mainstream education. Digitizing, cataloging, and presenting images created by a woman and telling her story is a critical need that this project fills.

Digitizing these images ensures that their physical form is no longer a barrier to their availability to researchers. Properly storing and maintaining photographs is a complicated and rigorous process (Roosa & Robb, 2002), and by making digital versions available, the physical prints and scrapbook pages can be kept in a more

controlled environment while still allowing researchers to view the materials. Of course, there are preservation issues with digital content as well. Xie and Matusiak note that at least papers and photographs have established best practices for their preservation, while electronic files can still become inaccessible as various forms of software and hardware become obsolete (Xie & Matusiak, 2016).

A further justification for the digitization of this scrapbook is the fact that the materials can reach a far greater audience in their digital, online form. Instead of requiring researchers to be physically in Greensboro, anyone in the world can examine the scrapbook. We can't predict how these resources will be used in the future - maybe they will not be - but it's clear that digitization increases the chances that a researcher or other patron will be able to discover them online, as opposed to in a physical archive.

## REFERENCES

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