Chapter 2

Strengthening the Small Library*

Creating Opportunities for Archives Development

Tina Schneider
The Ohio State University at Lima

Calvin Cleary
The Ohio State University at Lima

Introduction

Academic libraries naturally support the people and programs at their home institution. For many libraries, however, another area of that support involves collaboration with and outreach to the general public. There are many ways an academic library can work with local organiza-

* This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial, No Derivatives International 4.0 license. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/.
tions. These partnerships are often referred to as “town-and-gown” relationships, and they can give both communities access to services and materials they may not otherwise be able to afford. Town-and-gown relationships can bring new kinds of patrons and recognition to campus or enable financial support for large, shared projects. In small or rural communities where resources are not necessarily centralized and expanded options for support may be limited, strong town-and-gown relationships can be particularly helpful. Not only do these partnerships increase access for small communities, but they also create new relationships among a network of vital institutions. For an academic library in this setting, these local affiliations can give the flexible library opportunities that may otherwise come with a hefty price tag or time-consuming negotiations.

In 1960, the Ohio State University began offering courses in Lima, Ohio (population approximately 38,000). The courses were intended to serve an area with few nearby options for traditional college at the time, and demand was heavy. The public library accommodated the Ohio State students by housing appropriate materials for their coursework, and Ohio State placed a librarian in the Lima Public Library when courses began in 1960. Though the librarian was under the supervision of the head librarian at the Lima Public Library, she was assigned specifically to work with and support Ohio State students. By the mid-60s, students' need for space had outgrown their Lima Senior High School location, and in 1966, Ohio State opened its own campus in neighboring Bath Township. With its own campus buildings came its own library, and the partnership with the Lima Public Library naturally waned. Today, the Lima Campus Library employs two librarians and one support staff person and holds over 75,000 titles. In addition to serving almost 1,100 students of the Ohio State University at Lima, the library also serves 3,300 students from colocated partner institution Rhodes State College.

In recent years, the Lima Campus Library realized the need for a campus archive. Without one, documentation on campus history was sparse and often disorganized, and the director quickly realized that the campus often relied on hearsay rather than documentation when it came to its own past. However, the campus did not have the dedicated staff or funding to handle such a large undertaking. What it did have
was a strong town-and-gown relationship with the Lima community and public institution partners that could offer invaluable support. With help from community partners and utilizing the flexibility of the small library, the Lima Campus Library was able to build the archive slowly and affordably, inured to issues like budget cuts and staff turnover. That archive then gave the library more opportunities to demonstrate its value to both the academic and the local communities.

**Literature Review**

Library literature covers a wide range of topics regarding small academic libraries and their varying types of partnerships with other libraries and museums, although relatively few focus on long-term relationships. Relationships between libraries within the same community can grow and change over time; of particular interest here is how a community can help an academic library expand its services to new areas, from technical services to special collections to archives. The small academic library faces particular challenges in establishing an archive, but ties to the community can make aspects of it easier, depending on the needs of the library.

Research about academic libraries and community partnerships typically focus on joint-use facilities, and the literature has an abundance of examples of successful ventures in this area. Also, these articles usually focus on how the academic library can benefit the wider community in which it is located. However, partnerships can take many forms and can include more than sharing a physical space. Halverston and Plotas outlined a long-term relationship of more than thirty years between Keene State College, a relatively small school of roughly 5,000 students, and the Keene Public Library, which served the roughly 23,000 people of Keene, New Hampshire. Automating a library catalog was a daunting, expensive project in the late 1980s, but with both institutions splitting the price and sharing the catalog, costs were reduced significantly. In the years since, that partnership has grown in scope. Costs for technical expansions were shared and similarly reduced, open communication between circulation and cataloging made collection development easier, and access to materials was greatly expanded for all patrons.
While many academic libraries and local museums share joint-use buildings as well as local programming, they also partner in projects of local significance that make both rare collections and valuable institutional knowledge accessible to a wider audience. St. Augustine, a small Florida city of more than 13,000 residents, and the St. Augustine Historical Society had access to special collections but lacked the resources to effectively digitize and promote those collections online. By working with the University of Florida, a much larger institution, they were able to affordably expand access and reach a new audience of researchers the world over.

Tapping the resources of a larger local institution to centralize information can be helpful; however, two smaller institutions can also find great success in their partnership by building that relationship up over a period of years. The College of the Holy Cross, a small Massachusetts liberal arts school, was able to partner with the local Worcester Art Museum for a project that would expand access for patrons of both libraries. After receiving a grant, the libraries began constructing shared side-by-side databases of materials, records, and digitized images that would streamline the automation process for the museum and give professors and students classroom access to the museum’s collection. While the focal point of the project was completed by 2001, the bonds created were strong enough that the staff at the two libraries merged, both overseen by the director of the College of the Holy Cross library.

When a small academic library attempts to establish an archive on its own, the endeavor is frequently fraught with insufficient space, staffing, and expertise. With a partnership in the community, however, a library can overcome a number of obstacles. St. Mary’s College, a small state college in Maryland, and the municipal offices at St. Mary’s County Records Center were able to build and sustain a shared archives facility such that the needs of both the college and the county were met. After St. Mary’s College’s 150th anniversary, the need for a campus archive became clear with the newly heightened awareness of the college’s history. However, like many small academic libraries, the college could support on its own at most part-time attention to the archive and a space that did not meet archival standards. With limited staffing and few options for physically housing a campus archive, St.
Mary's College entered a partnership with the County Records Center that allowed the college to contract for staffing and storage costs, taking advantage of existing county resources. In return, the county received additional funding for equipment purchases and software needs. In the end, both entities have full-time archival attention and space that is dedicated to appropriate care of archival materials.

In all of these examples, a simple partnership between smaller institutions provided a solid foundation for future growth.

**Establishing the Archive**

The Lima Campus needed an archive to effectively preserve its past. The campus had no real way to store, retrieve, and use information regarding its fifty-year history, from former donors to its athletic programs. This lack of curation created an atmosphere of misinformation. However, the campus was small, and funding for a project of that magnitude was unavailable. Thankfully, the Lima Campus Library had strong community partners with which it could collaborate, which created new opportunities for growth without requiring new sources of income.

The tone of cooperative efforts between an academic institution and its community are often guided by those in positions of leadership. From 1992 to 2003, Violet I. Meek served as the dean of the Ohio State University Lima Campus. She soon became a prominent local figure who appeared in many roles, whether serving as the chair of the Allen County Chamber of Commerce, supporting the development of the Lima Symphony Chorus, or establishing programs encouraging women in the area to earn a degree. Upon her retirement, the Violet I. Meek Town and Gown Award, meant to highlight the hard work done each year to build bridges between the campus and the community, was created in her honor.

The campus library was among the many Ohio State Lima departments to support Meek’s efforts to create more connections with the community, specifically in the development of a physical partnership with the Lima Public Library. As a result, in 2003, after several weeks of negotiations between the two libraries, the Lima Public Library established an “outlet” of approximately 900 items from its materials to be housed within the Lima Campus Library. Installing this collection
and the Lima Public Library's circulation system on campus established a public library presence in rural Bath Township for the first time.

While it is a small circulating collection, it complements the academic holdings of the campus library and provides previously unavailable leisure reading to students and community patrons. Additionally, the collection offers patrons more convenience in where they can return materials and brings new groups of patrons onto campus. This relationship mirrors the one initially created during the 1960s, and while it has been many decades since the original joint-use relationship ended, the new one reopened vital lines of communication between the two libraries that are maintained to this day.

In the years following the implementation of the agreement with the public library, focus moved to other information needs that were unmet on campus. After the retirement of the library’s director, the new director discovered a haphazard collection of a few dozen newspaper clippings relating to the campus's history labeled “archives,” an unfinished project. The need for a true campus archive was already apparent, and while the files found in the director’s office were sporadic in coverage and lacking an index or finding aid, they served as the seedling of a more robust archival collection.

The library staff began scouring storage areas on campus in an effort to round out those initial findings. During this time, they pieced together hundreds of unindexed newspaper clippings that tracked the campus from the 1960s through the 1990s along with keepsakes from the campus’s early years. Some items of local historical interest were able to be donated to the Allen County Museum, but the campus still had a sizable new collection of old material. It quickly became evident, however, that many of the newly found articles were out of order and misdated, and large gaps in coverage clearly remained.

What had started out as a small project to date and expand on a handful of articles soon blossomed into an attempt to build a genuine, comprehensive archive. The need grew exponentially for access to microfilm of local newspapers from the past several decades. Thankfully, the Lima Public Library and the Allen County Museum both had materials and information that would prove invaluable to building the Lima Campus Library archive, a process that would have been considerably more difficult without assistance from the campus’s community partners.
The Lima Public Library had a large microfilm collection of the area's most prominent newspaper, the *Lima News*. The Lima Public Library has a strict rule about keeping microfilm in the library. However, thanks to the campus's partnership with the public library, Lima Campus staff were allowed rare borrowing privileges for the microfilm so that they could rebuild the campus's historical newspaper collection. The ability to bring the needed microfilm to campus sped up the process of verifying dates in the coverage of campus history, filled in gaps in the time line, and gave the archive higher-quality images when replacements were needed. This kind of local trust and flexibility, born from contacts made in their ongoing partnership, aided the Lima Campus Library immeasurably in its efforts to begin learning about and preserving its history.

The Allen County Museum held a different set of historical local newspapers and gave the campus library staff extended access to its materials by allowing Lima Campus librarians to work in its library beyond its typical afternoon hours. This expanded access to materials resulted in the archive growing faster than anticipated. Perhaps even more valuable was the perspective the Allen County Museum librarian was able to provide about local history, the differences among the newspapers and their philosophies, and how those philosophies accounted for the often significant difference in coverage of events having to do with Ohio State Lima. With the mentorship of the Allen County Museum staff, the Lima Campus librarians gained a better understanding of how local politics affected campus coverage.

**Growing the Archive**

As the library staff filled in and organized the newspaper files, word spread around campus. It quickly became clear that many more items awaited archival attention as additional materials were discovered. Departments sent over materials that had been sitting in corners for years, and more items were discovered in the same basement room that housed many of the newspaper clippings. The archive slowly expanded to over 54 linear feet and included photos, newsletters, correspondence, floor plans, maps, rosters, student handbooks, brochures, and programs for a number of performing arts events. Some documents
held valuable and unique information about the growth of the campus and changes to the physical facility over the years. Likewise, these materials shed light on the development of relationships with Ohio State's central campus in Columbus in addition to local relationships with supporters of the Lima Campus. 

Most notable among the newly found archival material were the campus newsletters. Some were found in boxes that had long been discarded and forgotten; others were delivered by the student activities office, labeled and organized, to the library. Soon, a nearly complete set of 982 newsletters from 1960 to 2009 could be strung together, and campus library staff made plans to digitize them for the Ohio State University's digital repository, the Knowledge Bank. Placement in the Knowledge Bank ensured that the newsletters would migrate to new digital platforms as needed and that they would be findable in a Google search.

While about 90 percent of the newsletters could be digitized on the small scanner already available in the library, roughly ten percent had to be outsourced because they were simply too large. Ohio State University has a digital processing unit in Columbus that was able to do this work for the Lima Campus, and this service ensured the inclusion of all of the newsletters in the Knowledge Bank.

The expansion of the archive, both in amount of materials and in their reach, was invaluable. In addition to preserving local history, it also gave the library many opportunities to use the new materials to support the campus.

Promoting the Archive

Taking a cue from the Lima Campus's undergraduate research program, which has long featured a poster session to discuss student research projects, one librarian saw an opportunity to combine the popular

*While the Lima Campus was able to draw on the resources of Ohio State's central campus, smaller libraries without such a connection could possibly partner with library consortia or libraries at the state or regional level for comparable assistance. Even if the Lima Campus Library had not had access to assistance from Columbus, there were grant opportunities that could have helped address the problems of digitization. For example, the CLIR "Hidden Collection" grants provide funding for digitizing special collections, and they particularly support projects that partner with other institutions in the community.*
postercall format, materials, and space with the newfound archival
targeted material to promote both what the archive could do for campus and
the campus’s place in the wider Lima community. The earliest years of
the campus were very well-documented, with frequent updates about
local campus life from both major local papers. The materials even cov-
ered student culture before there was a campus, including events such as
dances, record hops, and pool parties. The librarians realized that,
combined with yearbooks, newsletters, and other ephemera, they had a
wealth of visual material that lent itself to large poster displays.

Each poster was designed to tell a story and prioritize the archival
material of most immediate visual interest. The librarian creating the
posters chose images based on their physical clarity and their ability
to tell a story with minimal explanation. The first poster chronicled
the Ohio State Lima experience from 1960 to 1964 and was debuted
in the library at the start of the 2014 academic year. It featured ads
for the campus (complete with $400 yearly tuition), articles about the
first fundraising campaign, and lighter material like student body polls
on whether it was appropriate for female students to wear slacks. In
2015, two new posters were commissioned by the library director: one
on overall student social life in the 1960s, and another on the con-
struction of the campus. The librarian creating the poster usually has
a long-term deadline and sets aside time as available to work on it. Of
all of the challenges in creating a poster, learning how to effectively and
beautifully manipulate images has perhaps been the hardest. A small
library often lacks the comfort of expertise and requires librarians to
wear many hats as they pursue training independently. Despite lacking
a background in graphic design, a single librarian put together these
posters. Thankfully, he was able to solicit feedback from designers, par-
ticipate in workshops and online tutorials, and more in order to create
an effective, attractive aesthetic for the series.

Also, because there is no mechanism to print posters on the Lima
Campus and local printing options are expensive, the posters are print-
ed in a computer lab on Ohio State’s Columbus campus and then trans-
ported back to Lima. To make the project less expensive, the librarians
typically endeavor to work far in advance of deadlines and then wait
to print the posters until a regularly scheduled meeting in Columbus
makes the trip more cost-effective. While time-consuming, with a wait
that can sometimes last weeks, it is a cost-effective way to create this very popular product.

These posters allow the Lima Campus Library to help foster a sense of campus history with the students, staff, and faculty. Equally important is the way they reinforce the university's long-standing role in Lima, providing a concrete reminder of what has been accomplished through many years of community building.

The posters also presented opportunities beyond the library. The dean and director of the Lima Campus has placed one poster in the meeting room in the dean's suite, allowing her to remind community leaders and campus administrators of the many long and fruitful relationships between the two. These reminders can be particularly beneficial in small towns and cities, where there is often longer tenure in the city's power structure and generations of graduates may remain geographically close to the college in question compared to larger cities. Having more than one poster to choose from also gives the dean the opportunity to cycle them and for the library to use them in displays, keeping them fresh for all visitors to campus.

As more departments contributed to the archival files, the needs of the campus community quickly became more apparent. The development officer, for example, requested information about early donors to the campus; while she had some information, there were also gaps. To fill this need, a student completed an independent study with the library director that focused on the organizational principles of archives. The final project created a file meeting the informational needs of the development officer. Thanks to recent contributions, the library was able to provide copies of brochures, letters, and newspaper articles that all assisted her in understanding the long-term relationships many local families had with the Lima Campus.

The development office was similarly interested in the newsletters. Once the digitization of the newsletters was complete, it was easy to track a wide variety of statistics. In addition to a high number of downloads, over 4,000 in the first year, it was possible to see which issues were getting attention and where that attention was coming from. While most readers are from Ohio, there have been downloads from all corners of the United States, and the development office quickly realized the potential to use these sorts of materials to reach out to alumni across the country.
These numbers also came to the attention of other campus administrators and proved to be an excellent way to provide concrete value to library services; reliable statistics can be difficult to provide, so a quantifiable outcome was a welcome development. While the digitization project was intended to be a simple way to maintain a rare collection of locally made material, it ended up widening the archive's reach considerably and illustrating the diversity of services possible with a thriving archival collection.

**Best Practices**

For the small library, a large-scale project like creating an archive from scratch can be fairly daunting. A small campus likely will not have the funding, staffing, or space necessary to effectively plan, build, and staff a whole new facility. Instead, it is helpful to start small, tackling things one tiny piece at a time. It is critical to identify a need on campus and then find a way to fill that need. Often, doing so will identify another need, and then another, but by focusing on projects that can be completed with the resources at hand, it is possible to climb up that ladder of needs. When the Lima Campus Library archival project was started, the librarians were not even aware of what they did not know, but moving slowly can help mitigate mistakes while revealing new areas for growth. By definition, incremental progress is not a quick fix, but it is an affordable one.

There are some issues that cannot easily be overcome by taking a project piecemeal. While the Lima Campus Library was able to make room for an archival area in its library, many libraries simply do not have the space necessary in the facility to house the materials. Even if such a space is available, it may lack archival safety standards that are essential to effective long-term storage. It is unlikely, for example, that a "found" archival space (rather than a constructed one) will be appropriately temperature-controlled, for example. The Lima Campus Library does not have separate temperature or humidity controls for its archival space. Similarly, flame-resistant storage is expensive and unlikely to be readily available without some budgetary planning. The important thing to remember when constructing an impromptu archival space is that it may not be perfect, but that it is an improvement over what is
currently in use. A non-temperature-controlled room in a dry space is better than a non-temperature-controlled room in a leak-prone space, for example, and appropriate storage can be acquired slowly over the years without breaking the budget. Taking a step in the right direction is better than standing still.

In order to work piecemeal, it is vital to use whatever resources are currently available. As the larger projects take shape, however, they become yet more resources to be used to meet future needs. At times, either to ask for assistance or to offer it, understanding how to speak to administrators about these projects is vital to making the projects useful and successful. Oftentimes, the best people to use the new resource may not immediately see how the library can work with them. Simply telling them about archival material in broad strokes—for instance, saying, "We have an archive stretching back over the campus history that you are free to use"—can be vague for departments that do not understand how archives can be used to their benefit. A concrete demonstration of the resource and how it meets a campus need is often far more helpful, particularly since the varying areas of expertise of different departments and administrators can offer unexpected new uses for your tools and illustrate unseen needs.

The way that a small library pursues creating town-and-gown relationships will of course be heavily influenced by the policies and needs of administrators. That said, there are certain things a librarian can always do to create and improve those relationships without large, formal agreements. Even something as simple as meeting for coffee once every couple of months or being active in local professional organizations can build a foundation for future growth.

Future Plans

As the archive grows, so too do opportunities for further exposure, although due to constraints of time, budget, and staffing, these opportunities are more discrete than ongoing.

For example, the Lima Campus Library recently inherited a pair of large glass display cases. The cases provide an opportunity to highlight some of the archive's most notable collections, including donated items focusing on people who played a major role on the campus. They also
give the library an opportunity to work with other departments on campus to construct displays, bringing in people who may not typically partner with the library otherwise.

The next major project for the archive lies in creating the leave-behinds, small postcards or fliers that make affordable marketing materials that can be spread through the city for marketing use; a current draft is shown in figure 2.1. The posters have been put to excellent use on campus, but, because they are four feet by three feet, taking them out into the community can be difficult. Thankfully, the archive provides a great deal of material that the campus owns that could be used to create campaigns on campus history. For instance, the fiftieth anniversary of the construction of the first campus building will happen in 2016, and the archive has a strong selection of materials chronicling the idea and the construction and opening of that building.

![Image of a sample postcard with an image from the Lima Campus Library archive.](image)

**FIGURE 2.1**
A sample postcard with an image from the Lima Campus Library archive.

In addition to her idea to create the leave-behinds, the director of marketing has asked for images to be used on the campus Twitter account to better expose our history to our students in a venue they
use. These items will also serve as effective marketing for the archive itself, giving campus administration a simple visual demonstration of the potential benefits of having and maintaining an archive. Using the archive to create affordable promotional materials and build a student community can be an easy way to assist the administration in making and reinforcing long-standing relationships in the community.

The archive also has many administrative and environmental needs in order to function more efficiently. While basic finding aids have been completed for a handful of collections, so many materials were donated so quickly that most lack even basic finding aids. While the library staff knows what it has, there is no way to promote it to the campus or the local community until a comprehensive finding aid project is launched. The library has reached out to local institutions, particularly those offering an MLS, to try to find a student interested in the basics of archival organization for another independent study project.

It is also important to note that the growth of the archive necessitated the repurposing of the defunct audiovisual room and surplus shelving from elsewhere in the library. The microfilm reader remains in this "new" archive room, but the rest of the room was emptied of obsolete technology to make room for the archive. The library director also had to consider how best to preserve the materials once they were in there and purchased fire-resistant cabinets because there was no fire suppression system in the library. When these cabinets (about 48 feet) became full, shelving from a reference collection downsizing project was relocated to the archive room to hold archival boxes of overflow material. A remaining concern is the protection of the materials housed only in these boxes in the event of a fire.

The archive is maintained by the library director as part of the regular responsibilities of the position. There is no full-time staff person devoted just to the archives, which limits the progress that can be made. While help is readily available from the archival community in the state of Ohio, and workshops have been of great benefit, the library staff are still learning as a part-time endeavor how to maintain an archival collection. In addition, supplies must be purchased out of the existing operating budget for the library, which requires occasional reprioritization of spending decisions.

*Some technology equipment was simply put into a storage area for the rare occasions it might be put to use.
Conclusion

Small libraries in rural areas often deal with smaller budgets, fewer staff members, and fewer local business options than their big-city counterparts, but they must still meet the needs not only of their core academic community, but also of the public. Working slowly and being flexible can help the small library overcome many of these issues, but that is only part of the solution. Partnerships with local institutions, whether they be full joint-use collaborations or casual friendships between staff, are another vital tool that can help both institutions meet the needs of their patrons. The key is in identifying your campus needs and then breaking them down into manageable component parts.

Ten years ago, the Lima Campus Library did not have an archive. The years it took to create the functional beginnings of one saw staff turnover within the library, a new director, multiple new deans of the campus, heavy budget cuts, and many more issues that could have easily derailed the long-term project. Despite all that, the library’s policy of persistent flexibility and community collaboration kept the archive moving forward. Friendships within the local public library, relationships with the county museum, and collaboration with other departments on campus all play a role in the small library’s long-term success.

Notes


