Introduction

In June 2013, the University Archives concluded an analysis of our current university records holdings to determine which areas of the University had good representation in the Archives and in which areas we needed to improve our collection development efforts. Based on this analysis\(^1\), discussions with key University stakeholders, and our own observations of the University’s recordkeeping culture, we have prepared a plan to improve our institutional documentation in key areas. This plan is a strategy to develop our collection in aspects of University life that are currently under-documented. Ensuring that records of enduring value across the University are well-preserved supports the Archives’ role of preserving a comprehensive perspective on institutional memory that can be used and learned from by the University community and the public.

We should emphasize that the following priorities identify areas in which the Archives will collect materials proactively. However, we will continue to respond to offices across the University not maintaining materials that necessarily fall under the following priorities. With these offices, as before, the Archives will continue to identify and preserve records that merit long-term retention.

Action items

Primary Priorities

*Maintain relationship with Offices of Board of Trustees, President, and Provost*

These three offices in particular represent key clearinghouses of information about a variety of important activities being undertaken across the University. It is vital to the preservation of institutional memory for the Archives to continue to work with the these offices to ensure that its records are well-maintained and transferred to the University Archives’ care if they are no longer of ongoing business use to the office.

*Collect the records of task forces, committees, and other groups that cut across the University*

The President and Provost often convene groups of students, faculty, and staff across the University to perform time-bound and ongoing work that addresses emergent needs. Recent examples include the Task Force on Academic Freedom and the Sexual Violence Advisory Committee. The work of these

\(^1\) Please see the Archives’ “University Records Collections Analysis” report from June 2013 for more information about the findings in our collections survey.
groups represents important moments in the history of the University where Hopkins leaders have marshalled resources in response to an emerging issue. The University Archives will reach out to leaders of these groups to develop workflows that transfer to the Archives records that reflect the substantive work of these groups. We will also create documentation about good recordkeeping to present to these groups when they are established.

Collect the email accounts of University leadership

Email represents an essential record of documentation of major decisions and provides important context about the conversations that led to those decisions. While Hopkins is like any modern institution in that major decision-making is distributed across the University and at all levels of its reporting structure, it is impractical to consider preserving in perpetuity the email accounts of every decision-maker. Item-level appraisal is also not practical given the volume of email generated daily. Therefore, we will adopt a method of email collection, also implemented by the National Archives and Records Administration, which captures the entire email accounts of senior University leadership. We define senior leaders as Deans and Directors appointed by the Board of Trustees, Senior Vice Presidents, the Provost, the President, the Secretary of the Board of Trustees, and the Chair of the Board of Trustees. We have already begun to perform this activity, and our future goal is to establish guidelines for good recordkeeping for these accounts that we can share with any incoming senior leader. (Note: this policy does not apply to faculty. We will evaluate whether or not to capture faculty email accounts on a case-by-case basis in the process of appraising faculty papers for inclusion in the Archives.)

Develop guidelines for collecting student organizational records

The Archiving Student Life Project in 2013-2014 revealed that many student organizations are eager to transfer their paper and electronic records to the Archives in order to preserve the history of their activities. However, we found that the Archives is not resourced to meet one-on-one with each organization. Therefore, we have resolved to create standard guidelines to provide to student organizations to help their leaders better create, organize, and transfer to the Archives important organizational records. In most cases we will use web archiving software to capture the organizations’ homepages, a source of good information about student organizational activities. Web archiving can also obviate the need for students to proactively transfer materials to the Archives.

Archive institutional web content

The websites maintained by the University—including official jhu.edu sites as well as social media accounts—contain a wealth of information about the functions of University offices and academic departments, faculty research interests, curriculum, student life, and other important University activity. We have the tools to perform web archiving. However, we need to develop a strategy for archiving these sites that works within existing resources but also provides a faithful snapshot of University life.
Collect University publications

University publications often include critical information about University activities, events, and initiatives launched in a timely manner in response to contemporary issues. Publications cut across many University functions, including student life, curriculum development, administration, and governance. We hope to leverage our existing web archiving technology to acquire publications that are posted to the Web; however we will also reach out to offices to determine the most efficient means of capturing publications. Special attention will be paid to course catalogs, student handbooks, and student-run publications.

Improve collection of School of Engineering records across all functions, emphasizing governance, curriculum and public affairs

We do not currently have a strong relationship with the offices and departments in the School of Engineering. As a corrective, we will actively reach out to the School of Engineering to improve our records collection across all functions, in particular records reflecting governance, curriculum, and public affairs. We argue that the first two functions are the University’s most important, as they reflect the establishment and execution of the institution’s administrative and educational missions. Reference data suggests that our users frequently request materials related to the third function, public affairs.

Secondary Priorities

The following collection development priorities will be considered as resources allow.

Visually document routine University life

Most conventional institutional documentation activities involve collecting the records of senior administration. In this process, the record of the quotidian experience as a Hopkins faculty, staff, or student is sometimes lost. This experience may seem insignificant in the present, but gaining perspective on the past often demands a window into what it was like to be a member of the University community at a given moment. In support of this future demand, we will enlist our campus photography office to spend a bounded period of time to photograph “a week in the life” of the Hopkins community, with the hope that in the future, the collections that generate from documenting this seemingly normal experience will prove important to users interested in examining a period of time in Hopkins history.

Target curriculum and public affairs records for School of Arts and Sciences

We will improve our collection of records in the School of Arts and Sciences that reflect the curriculum and public affairs functions. This effort will involve contacting offices and departments that likely maintain these records to share lists of common record types we are seeking.

Target evaluation and planning records across the University
To improve our documentation of evaluation and planning functions, we will work with the Vice Provost for Institutional Research to identify possible record types and their potential locations within the University where such records might exist.

Create list of research institutes and centers

We will create a list of all the research centers and institutes under our jurisdiction as a first step of determining which of these entities we have collected records from in the past, and to what extent. Some of the most important and interesting research produced by the University originates from such centers.

Leverage the Hopkins Retrospective project to continue to collect alumni’s record of the student experience

In an effort to continue to augment our collections that relate to the function of student life, we will work with the Hopkins Retrospective to determine ways to collect materials from alumni that document their student experience.

Assessment

At the end of each fiscal year, we will evaluate our progress in these areas using a number of measures, including:

- Guidelines created
- Contacts established
- Record series scheduled
- Collections accessioned

At the end of FY 2017, we will reflect on the overall progress we have made in improving our holdings in the aforementioned under-documented areas and determine what adjustments, if any, need to be made to continue our efforts to provide a comprehensive perspective on University life.

Conclusion

The above initiatives suggest that in order to document the University experience comprehensively, the Archives must undertake a mixture of conventional and unconventional activities. In three years, however, we hope to provide evidence of having positioned ourselves better to document the history of the University in a more systematic, inclusive manner.