

Mini Internship at Georgia Tech Archives working with visual materials archivist: Mandi Johnson-

Day 1, March 3, 2008. 9am to 1pm (4 hours)

On my first day on the internship, I signed in as a researcher and gave my personal information for security purposes. Then Mandi showed me how researchers use the finding aids to locate information and the form used to request these items for viewing. She wanted me to see how the online system appeared to public and how it was searchable. Then we moved on to her office where she told me about the project she had planned for me. She wanted to give me experience in organizing a collection that had a good deal of visual material and would hold some interest for me. The collection she chose was that of Young Frank Freeman. Mr. Freeman is a Georgia Tech alum and this collection contains images of Mr. Freeman with noted celebrities.

Mandi gave me a processing form for the collection, a guide she has been working with for handling visual collections, and the official guide for how processing is done at the GA Tech archive. The processing form had the accessioning number of VAM003 for this particular collection. To find the collection in the closed stacks, Mandi opened up Archivist Tool Kit (ATK) and showed me a little of the makeup. She noted that they had just switched to an updated version of ATK and that she was not familiar with all the changes yet. There were about five or six tabs that allowed various meta data to be entered, with the ability to make archive specific fields as needed. Mandi pointed out that many of the information fields were blank because ATK was mainly used (at GA Tech) for accessioning and not for EAD or finding aids (which it can be). Using ATK, she located the Y. Frank Freeman collection and asked me to note the location in the stacks for later. ATK showed several boxes, but Mandi just wanted me to deal with the photographic aspect of this collection. Of this part we noted that there were two boxes and a framed image.

Next Mandi showed me the software they use to make the finding aids which actually makes the web page at the same time. The program is called xMetaL and allows input in html code or in an authoring mode and allows live preview of web pages before adding to the main site.

To start with this collection, Mandi led me to the donor files and pulled out two overstuffed folders that encompassed the donor files for this particular collection. As I held them she pointed out that most donor files are not that big and at most may only contain three sheets of paper (she showed me one such file). Then we went into the processing room where she had prepared a table for me to work at and I set the donor files on this table and we went into the closed stacks.

As we entered the closed stacks Mandi pointed out that the pipes that run over the stacks that she had said did not contain water in the vulnerability assessment had actually sprung a leak recently. The ceiling tile near the HVAC unit was missing and there was a blotter on the floor nearby. She said that maintenance is just as baffled about where the water came from, since the pipes were supposed to be very empty and unused. She also showed me the sprinkler system that emits a chemical that is like a gas that sucks up oxygen. The 'sprinkler' heads for this chemical were only located in the center of the room and not over the stacks. Mandi said that when triggered the stacks automatically adjust to give room for the chemical system to clear the stacks of oxygen. Then she showed me the alarm box and the

shut off valve. She said they were told to not hang out in the room when the system was firing due to needing to breath and all. Next to this alarm box was the automated humidity recorder and a back up battery powered one. Mandi went on to open up a back door on the closed stacks that led to an outer warehouse type area. This area had skylights and a rollup door. Mandi pointed out the skylights as being the ones mentioned in the VA and how they had actually leaked recently onto some of the storage supplies that are kept in this area. We both thought it a little strange that the archival boxes and papers were being stored in this area which was not climate controlled. Her point in showing me this area was so that I could see the tanks that hold the chemical suppression system. Going back into the closed stacks, I asked her about the other spaces she had not shown me during my first visit (I found these on a map), who they belonged to, and what the security risk was. She said those areas are part of the library and that library staff use the elevator to come down from upstairs, but that only some staff have access to the elevator (it is security card accessed) or this part of the library's holdings. Later on she showed me the science fiction (pulp) collection that is housed in a joint stack with the library (one long stack with full bays on both sides, small shelf spacing with the books laid on their spines; tiny pieces of paper stuck out from the middle of each one and displayed the call number only-a disaster waiting for a cyclone flashed through my head). I was reminded of our preservation reading and I thought of all the acid migration and future deterioration that this collection would and probably is facing right now.

Once back in the closed stacks, Mandi gave a more thorough explanation of how the closed stacks are organized by stack, bay, shelf, and boxes. The boxes of the visual files are labeled: there are VACs, VAMs, VAs, VAU, and others that she feels need to be looked at and possibly reworked for better finding/organization. The VAs are the older visual files, the VACs are photo collection, the VAMs are photo collections that are part of manuscript collections, the VAUs are specific to the University; there was also a VAH but she was not sure what that one was yet. *She mentioned at this point that the archive was heading toward a day when university specific stuff would be separated out and handled by another archivist (I thought this was funny, based on the university starting the archive for their own records and as the archive grew the collections became more than just those of the university, and now the archive is looking for a separation from those records...food for thought).* With that out of the way, it was time for me to find my collection: first part to collect was the two boxes from the top shelf of the C bay in stack 29. Mandi brought over a step ladder and helped as I handed the boxes down to her. She promptly placed the boxes on a cart and we then wheeled the cart to the other side of the stacks and found the remaining item on the third shelf in bay A of stack 25, it was a framed image of Mr. Freeman and was missing the glass. I placed this item on the cart and navigated to the door using a cart with directional castors on one side only. Mandi agreed that she preferred directional castors on both sides of the carts.

Once back at the processing room, Mandi said she would leave me for awhile so that I could read the visual materials guidelines and the processing procedure manual. She also wanted me to go through the donor files and take a glance at the contents of the boxes. So I sat down to read. The information in the manuals was very interesting and I would like to ask Mandi to provide a digital copy so that I may share it with the class. The donor files were like a mini collection on their own, they included letters between donor and college over a good span of time and with other heirs of donor, exhibition images (both in 1-

hour pack and in acid-free envelopes), an exhibition brochure, a contact sheet in need of buffering, duplicate copies of items, exhibition cards, a business card, a written account of Mr. Freeman's life, copies of his bio, handwritten inventories of the entire collection (22 linear feet and then some), typed inventories, accessioning paperwork, and notes concerning missing parts of the collection (a sword). What I learned by reviewing the donor files was this: Mr. Freeman was a very noteworthy man and his collection was acquired with strings that it would be displayed in a room and it was as evidenced in the photographs. Due to a need for space, it was moved to a new location and then vandalized and put in storage. The collection is not just about Mr. Freeman, it also covers his son Y. Frank Freeman, Jr. who was also active in the film industry. Two Oscars and numerous awards are also part of this collection.

In reviewing the inventories of the images, I noted that there are many images that are autographed by famous individuals such as JFK, and Ronald Regan and that part of this collection would have value to more than one institution. In reading over the correspondence I found that the early letters from the college were very friendly and genuinely interested in the affairs of the donor, but that later correspondence was very short and impersonal.

At this point, I decided to forego exploration of the actual boxes and talk to Mandi about what I had found in the donor files. She was surprised by some of the things I had found and I went on to talk about the condition of the donor files and I asked about the numbers of plastic paper clips that I found in the files and what the view was on them. I had approached the donor file as part of the collection and Mandi agreed that there were parts of it that broached further investigation. After showing her the more interesting parts of the donor files, we decided to put the collection items back in the closed stacks for storage and we replaced the donor files to their home to wait my return next week.

Day 2, Monday, March 10, 2008, 9:30am to 2:30pm (5 hours)

I must note that today I noticed an oversight in my preservation report that needs to be corrected. I had mentioned that the reception desk was too high for the archive staff to monitor patrons in the reading room effectively. I resend this statement as I got a better look at the reception desk area and noted that the wall was indeed shorter to allow for better monitoring of the reading room. I also must admit that in my handling of the photographs today, I forgot what I had recently learned and found myself holding a folder in my lap propped up against the edge of the table as I flipped through the images with my gloved left hand. After noting this, I tried to be more aware of my actions in relation to the material.

Today I started by getting the donor files and actually going through the boxes to see what was there. There was an original inventory that helped in indentifying items. What I found was that there was no original order in the boxes due to the inclusion of items in two separate exhibitions; there were many duplicates and a few strange items as well. In discussing the arrangement with Mandi, she suggested that I create a series order and separate the items as such. I came up with an order that breaks the collection into three main series: Young Frank Freeman youth, Young Frank Freeman at Paramount, and Frank Freeman Jr. Frank Freeman Jr. is then divided into Navy years and Producer years. The bulk of this collection lies in the Paramount years for Young Frank Freeman and in the Producer years of Frank Freeman Jr. Items of note today were the script of Samson and Delilah by Cecil B. de Mille that had

individual movie frames taped throughout the script (several on every page), the photograph of a strange island covered in Bird feces, the signed portrait of a Japanese Prince, an Arnold Newman photograph of Lyndon B. Johnson, and close ups of the freakily grotesque film festival trophy awarded to Frank Freeman Jr. for the production of Omar Khayyam that is supposed to be part of this collection but housed elsewhere.

After all the items were checked off against the inventory, I was able to then determine what items may be missing or have been miss filed. I found many folders that had unmarked images in them and were themselves unmarked. At the conclusion I realized that some of these unmarked images were actually part of the original inventory and had a number that has since been lost. I then sorted items into their new series and packed everything neatly away for tomorrow when I will start weeding out the duplicates, organizing the images by order, and matching up orphans to the inventory.

I must say that going into today, I had my doubts about library or archival work. With all the interviews going on in my teaching career for possible full time employment, I have been at a loss as to where I should place my 'ducks'. As I was walking to my car after working in the archive, I realized how utterly peaceful the work had been. How interesting it was to learn what I did, and how satisfying it was to make some progress with the collection. I compared this experience to teaching and came to the conclusion that I could enjoy a couple of years in a library or in an archive.

Day 3, Tuesday March 11, 2008, 10:30pm to 2:30pm (4 hours)

Today I started working on the order of the Young Frank Freeman materials. Before placing anything in folders or any order I needed to remove several items from their frames first. There was a large portrait of YFF that was missing the glass, three small items with frames that were splintering, and a few that were causing the images to buckle. I asked Mandi for tools and she brought me the archivists' tool box. It included some larger spatulas, x-acto knives, tweezers and more. I used the x-acto to cut the paper off the back of the frames and the tweezers to pull out the metal stops and rusted nails. This process made quite a mess. After all the images had been removed from the frames, I had to stop and clean up the workspace before proceeding. Then I matched them up on the inventory and started to work with the main bulk of the collection. As I worked I found that I had to break the first series categories down into more parts than I originally started with and I ended up with YFF at Georgia Tech, YFF playing baseball, YFF with celebrities, YFF family, YFF at Social Events/Dinners, Celebrities without YFF and more. I even found that I had to break YFF at Social Events down into sub-series based on the actual events. I was able to get a very good idea on how everything was starting to connect and I was able to match items together per series. As I placed items together I put archival paper sheets between images and I started making lists of each series and what items were placed where with reference back to their original inventory numbers. All original notes were recorded as well as new measurements and any changes since original accession (like no longer in frame, date corrections, and spelling errors with names).

I was able to match up many of the orphans with the inventory and I was also able to figure out exactly what was missing from the items directly in front of me. Missing items were all over sized and I let

Mandi know to be on the lookout for them. I made good headway with the YFF production years, but even then I had to leave about half way through. So I let Mandi know I was starting to pack up and she brought me an archival box to store the folders I had been organizing. The box was not full yet, so we placed a sealed box of plastic paper clips inside as a space absorber. It fit perfectly for now. Everything was put back into in the original boxes, but this time I had a Young Frank Freeman box and a Frank Freeman Jr. box.

Day 4, Thursday, March 12, 2008, 11:00am to 5:00pm (6 hours)

The wonders of the archive never cease. When I came in today, Mandi had a surprise. She had found the missing oversized items, apparently by accident. She was looking for something else and not able to find it, but on turning around was face to face with very large boxes sporting the YFF accession numbers.

So first thing out, we went and procured 4 very large boxes from the closed stacks and brought them into the processing room. I was not ready to start on them yet, so I unpacked the smaller boxes and informed Mandi that I had searched for information about the "Sampson and Delilah" script and the film stock to no avail. We pulled out the script and in discussing options for getting copies of the images made; I noticed the word 'nitrate' along the edge of one of the frames. As I pointed this out, Mandi got a look on her face that reminded me of trouble, and I suggested getting a box to house this particular item by itself. Mandi was able to find a perfect little archival box to place the script until we were ready to deal with it.

After that I started to work on getting the YFF at Georgia Tech and the YFF baseball images sorted out so that I could have a small part of the order completed. In working with these items I found several very old images in tissue paper and I asked Mandi about whether or not they were archival. She said probably not and to discard them. One of the original folders was a larger folder for holding bulk items and when I was done sorting it was no longer needed. It didn't look like any of the other archival folders so I asked Mandi what I should do with it. She said that we should test it first. Then she proceeded to show me how to use the Ph pen and where to put any extra folders if they test 'purple'. Then I started in on the oversized boxes. The first box contained many of the missing items from the inventory list and I had to make larger folders for the series categories to handle the oversize items. I asked Mandi about this and how it was necessary for the order (and listing in the finding aid), but then the items would be returned to oversize storage for actual housing. She said, "yep".

In this box I found several items coming loose from their mattes or with paper half glued on the back. Mandi had showed me how to use the spatula tool to get paper off items gently and I had fun using this special tool. To help protect the larger items I searched for and found several large pieces of green archival folder material and was able to cut them to size. I got through the first box and ended up having to use the box as temporary series folders since the items got way too big to house in the original folders.

In the second box I discovered that there were parts of other accessions sharing the box and that most of the YFF items in the box were not numbered. I found all but one item in the inventory and was able to determine that they were mostly manuscript items and not photo items (newspaper clippings and

what not's). I asked Mandi to take a look and I am glad I did. She found other items in the box that were not numbered but were part of the YFF collection. Two of the items I missed were a magazine with a cartoon image of Hitler that I had actually been looking for based on the information in the inventory list. It said this item had an article on another person in the collection. Unfortunately the article was not printed in English. The other item was a newspaper from Los Angeles dated December 8, 1941. Upon asking, Mandi suggested that I move the YFF material into the first box so that the collection can stay together. At this point I realized the time and I packed up and left for the day. I must note that even though I enjoyed my day, I did not enjoy the hour and half un-adventure through Atlanta traffic that ensued thereafter. Note to self, must leave before 3pm.

Day 4, Monday, March 17, 2008, 11:30 to 2:00pm (2.5 hours)

I had a late start today and I wanted to leave with enough time to avoid traffic, so I kept it short with my goal being to finish inspecting the oversized boxes for missing photographs. I did not find any. The items in the boxes were mainly the manuscript documents, so I double checked them against the inventory, made corrections as needed, packed them back up and sent them back to the vault. At this point I reviewed the inventory of missing items and determined that all very oversized items had been found. The items still marked as missing must be unmarked and most likely in the "to be sorted" pile. So my next visit will hopefully find these items and get the 'original' order back in line; then I can start with the finding aid, I hope. I spoke with Mandi about the fire suppression system and she said she had actually researched the current system and found that the security personnel informed her badly. The system is an FM-200 and is much safer and better at protecting the collection.

Day 5, Wednesday, March 19, 2008, 9:30am to 3:30pm (6 hours)

Today I made real headway with getting the images separated into series and documented. I worked with a yellow legal pad, and found that I was going through the pages rather quickly. I had to stop several times to search Google for name verification and image verification. Even then, some people are just lost to history. The most interesting find of the day came at the very end when I found a discrepancy in a set of images. The result was to learn that the people were actually the First Prime Minister of Pakistan and his wife; he was later assassinated and she went on to advocate for women's rights in Pakistan.

Day 6, Thursday, March 20, 2008, 11:00am to 3:00pm (4 hours)

Today I was able to almost finish sorting the images of Y. Frank Freeman. It is a good feeling to get things back in order. I am far from done and I still need to sort the Y. Frank Freeman Jr. images into some sort of order. I am looking forward to getting everything typed up while things are still fresh in my head (and on paper). It does feel strange to only be working with a small part of the collection, the other archivist, Christine, said she would be working with the manuscript (non-image based) parts of the collection soon. I talked with Mandi some more about the script with the nitrate images and she said they had been discussing it in their meetings as well. She said most likely it will be boxed up for a long while since the money and manpower to deal with it is not readily available. I think it would be a great project to use for a grant application.

Day 7, Friday, March 21, 2008, 10:00am to 3:00pm (5 hours)

Today I finished the sorting of the images for the Y. Frank Freeman collection. This left me with one pile of what I had dubbed the "odd" pile. For this pile I needed Mandi's assistance. I knew some of the pile would be placed into the celebrity series, but the other items I had no idea how they fit into the original collection. The items themselves were what you would expect in an "odd" pile: two printed posters of the North and the South in caricature, a printed poster of a painting of George Washington, a photo of an island covered in bird poop, a photo of an outdoor luncheon in Atlanta with very unknown people, a few Christmas cards from Governors of California, an empty envelop to Mr. Freeman from the White House, and a joke card about running with the bulls in Spain. With Mandi's help we were able to make a miscellaneous pile and a pile to be handed off to the person doing the manuscript part of this collection. So the next order of business will be to simply record the additional celebrity photos, and add a miscellaneous serious to the index. Then I will be able to start typing up the finding aid.

Day 8, Wednesday, March 26, 2008, 10:30am to 3:30 (5 hours)

Today I brought in a surprise for Mandi. The current issue of Smithsonian Magazine had an image of Lyndon B. Johnson. It was an almost identical image to the one that was in the YFF collection. I say almost because there was more headroom and the colors were different (photo shopped); the pose and expression were identical. The colors in the image in the YFF collection showed a black suit, normal skin tone and well exposed background. The color in the Smithsonian image showed a blue suit, tanned skin, and the background was blown out and part of his face was blown out. The YFF image has the name of the photographer embedded in the print (Arnold Newman); the Smithsonian image did not give a photo credit. Weird huh? But cool that my experiences have farther reach than just the archive.

So what I did I do today? I finished all the sorting and indexing of the YFF part of this collection. With my notes in hand I then sat down in front of the computer and started typing up the finding aid in Microsoft word. I typed the name of the collection and the series heading and then listed all my folder names. At this point I got stuck. I asked Mandi to help me out and I showed her what I had done. We discussed how to set up the series and folders to make more sense. This worked well and I was able to get the main structure of the finding aid set up. Then I needed Mandi's help again to figure out what sort of numbering structure she wanted me to use. We came up with VAM 003-1-01-001 (acquisition #, box #, folder #, item #) and I got to work. I was in the same room as Mandi and this was nice since as I worked through the different items I was able to ask her questions about using duplicates, noting oversize materials, setting up a separate oversized list and box, how much info was too much, what info should be included, whether or not to use Mrs. YFF or her real name, should I use dates when able, and on and on. It was a great experience and I was able to catch on quickly. I worked on the finding aid and I added the new numbers to my inventory list as I went. I did not finish today and I have actually finished my 40 hours, but I spoke with Mandi about continuing to volunteer to finish the work and get more experience with archives. I am thinking about a graded internship as well but I think volunteering might look better on my resume.

Day 8, Monday, April 14, 2008, 10:30am to 6:00 (7.5 hours)

Today I went back to finish up the finding aid or at least the inventory part of it. I was able to finish the typed list and with Mandi's help we went to the collection and pulled all the oversize images from their categories and placed them in their final order within an oversized box. Mandi showed me how to label the folders and place them in the right direction, how to deal with duplicates and how to label each image. Then we started on the letter size folders and started labeling them as we put them in the box. I quickly realized that even though I thought I had done a 'perfect' job of arranging the items in the folders; I found that I had made mistakes. Items in some of the folders were not in the order I had them on the inventory. Fortunately, I was able to quickly find out where the correct order was and put everything back in place. I was a little hard on myself, but Mandi said that she has had the same thing happen to her at one time or another. (As an aside in the larger context of this semester's learning, I am more aware that being perfect isn't always best for being human; and that I should not take myself so seriously since to err is human.) The main goal was not so much to label everything today as it was getting pretty late, but to figure out where to divide folders and boxes so I could make corrections to the inventory/finding aid. We ended up with several of the larger series being divided into 2 or 3 folders due to quantity and overall fitting everything in just 2 letter boxes. It was a long day, but I wanted to get that much accomplished. Now I should only have one more day where the rest of the images can be labeled. I spoke with Mandi about the bio and scope note today. She said I could write them if I wanted to but I am not sure if I have the time to write it. Considering that the images are only part of a larger collection, I don't feel as prepared to cover the entire bio and scope. I will have to think about it and see how my time is working out.

Wednesday, April 16

Today I received an email from Mandi. She said that she has been working on putting the collection into EAD and that she went ahead and made the box changes we had noted earlier. She has also put the work I did on the arrangement up on the web. Please note that Mandi wrote the bio, the part I am responsible for is at the bottom of the finding aid listed below and is called the: Image List

<http://www.library.gatech.edu/archives/finding-aids/display/xsl/VAM003>

I really enjoyed this experience and I hope to continue to build on it in the future.

Denise A. Wallace