



## University of Richmond Digital Archive Use Report

Dear Julieanna,

First and foremost, let me say a tremendous thank you to you and your team for all of your assistance with this classroom project. Your ongoing support, including late-night last-minute technical assistance, helped make this an exceptionally meaningful project for the graduate students enrolled in PHIS 523U, the Management of Historical Collections, in UR's new Public History program through the School of Professional and Continuing Studies.

As future curators and archivists, the students were challenged with a real-life situation, in that oftentimes in museums and archives, there are oral history projects where the work of the project (the collection of the stories) has been completed, and the products afterwards are often left behind. Oftentimes they may not be transcribed or described, both of which hamper any useful research potential. In this case, their challenge was find ways to bring research potential to collections by choosing between two projects, the work of which they will most certainly face once on the job: 1) transcribe an older UR oral history dating from the 1970s/1980s; or, 2) curate stories from the HistoryMakers database into either a thematic story, a lesson plan, or a subject guide that provides research value. In all cases, the task included developing relevant metadata to facilitate research access to the materials. I very much appreciated Dan Johnson's gracious assistance and fine ideas with the HistoryMakers portion!

Of our 14 students, 6 chose the HistoryMakers option. Although that number may seem small, the products of those six students were absolutely outstanding:

- 1) Two students opted to do a thematic approach, where out of the immense amount of information in the HistoryMakers, they selected a theme and explored that theme with around 20 clips to illustrate how this theme can be explored. After listening to many clips, the first student decided to focus her narrative on community based service among nurses, selecting stories from nurses who went on to find great success in the areas of philanthropy, politics, education, and entrepreneurial work. The second student, who plans to eventually work in a fashion archive/museum (and is currently a costumer for the AMC series Turn), not surprisingly selected fashion as her theme, exploring the Fashion Fair, the evolution of Ebony and Essence, and the role of black fashion designers and models.
- 2) Three students elected to do lesson plans as they were or are currently educators. The first student chose the topic "Reading & Storytelling: How Reading can Illuminate your life." Beginning with Lt. Col. Joe Ballard's clip about teaching his father to read, she curated a wonderful list of 20 items, including UR's own Col. Porcher Taylor, Jr., on the important role reading meant in their life and planned an assignment based on those clips. The second student created not just a lesson plan but essentially an entire course plan she called "The Beautiful Ones: The Black Arts/Black Power Movement as the Predecessor to Black Lives Matter," which used literature and oral histories from the HistoryMakers to trace the historical connections. The third student selected a very personal topic: Civil Rights and Education in Virginia. Her father was a new teacher, just three weeks into his job, when Barbara Johns led the walk-out at Moton High School, so she chose to explore the role of Richmond attorneys in the long fight for desegregated schools in Virginia. In this effort, she also connect the project to our archival collection of the papers of UR alum and Congressman Watkins Abbitt, who as a Congressman from Virginia represented districts that were heavily involved in this struggle, including Prince Edward

County. She was able to pull items from our digital archive (<http://abbitt.richmond.edu/>) to tie the oral histories with historical documents.

- 3) The final student selected the third option, which was to create a subject guide for use by researchers on a particular topic. As this student is also one of our amazing liaison librarians here in Boatwright Library, she developed a research subject guide on Rev. and Mrs. Wyatt Tee Walker that brings together disparate sources about their lives and work that will, eventually, be incorporated into the library website when the Walker collection opens to the public. She incorporated not only Rev. Walker's interviews but others who spoke of his work and contributions as well.

As you can see, the students chose meaningful and diverse topics to explore and, I believe, did excellent work in thinking and researching on the topics. From their comments in class, those choosing to do this assignment utilizing the HistoryMakers will remember their work well past the end of the course.

Again, my deepest thanks to you and your team for such a wonderful collaboration and all of your assistance in making it possible.

Best regards,

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