

North Carolina Special Collections: From Print to the Web

by Joan Ferguson and Eileen McGrath

It is common now in academia to wax nostalgically about the "golden era" of American higher education. From the early 1960s to the 1980s, student enrollment skyrocketed and faculties and campuses grew at tremendous rates as the federal government pumped great amounts of money into universities for research and facilities.¹ Those years were good ones for libraries, too, and library holdings increased at a terrific rate. For example, UNC-Chapel Hill began the 1960s with one million library volumes. By 1974, the library had two million volumes. The third million came in 1983, the fourth in 1992, and this year we celebrated the addition of the five millionth volume. Down the road at Duke University, the pattern was very similar. At the end of World War II the Duke Library had less than one million volumes, but by 1981 it had three million volumes and in 1992 it celebrated the acquisition of the four millionth volume.

Early in this period of great growth, libraries advertised their holdings through a variety of printed forms. Large research libraries issued printed and microform catalogs, subject bibliographies, collection descriptions, annual reports, newsletters, exhibit catalogs, and brochures. Smaller libraries published many of these same types of materials, and libraries large and small joined in cooperative projects such as regional or national union catalogs and union lists.

When the lean years came, libraries responded by cutting back on their publications. Fortunately, technology provided new ways for libraries to announce their holdings and services. These new ways supplemented, and in some cases replaced, printed materials. By the mid-eighties, the widespread use of OCLC and RLIN and the development of online public access catalogs eliminated the need for printed union lists and library catalogs. In the nineties, the World Wide Web supplanted printed collection descriptions and subject bibliographies. Libraries still produce newsletters for supporters, an occasional exhibit catalog, and flyers announcing hours and services, but the World Wide Web houses the most useful guides to the holdings of American libraries.

The Web is now *the* place to look for information on special collections in academic and public libraries. Not all Web sites are created equal, however. As in the print era when libraries published both scholarly bibliographies of collections and small brochures, some Web sites are more substantial than others. Some sites are inviting multimedia presentations of

collections, while other sites are the electronic equivalent of a single-sheet brochure. As in the pre-electronic era, staff size, equipment, and funding often make the difference in how a collection is presented to the public.

Many North Carolina libraries, large and small, have a presence on the Web. When those libraries have special collections, the Web site usually mentions them. Listing all these special collections would require more space than the editors have allotted for this column, so we have selected a group of Web sites that show a range of presentations. Some sites are the electronic equivalent of a trifold brochure, others function as exhibit catalogs, and some use the potential of the Internet to create multifaceted sites that go beyond the forms of the print era.

Appalachian State University:

<<http://www.library.appstate.edu/home/speccolindex.html>>

Describes the W.L. Eury Appalachian Collection and related regional materials.

Craven-Pamlico-Carteret Regional Library:

<http://www4.coastalnet.com/community_orgs/cpclibrary/kellrm.html>

Brief description of the Kellenberger Room.

Davidson College:

<<http://www.davidson.edu/administrative/library/archives/archive.html>>

The Davidson College Archives focuses on college and town history.

Duke University:

<<http://scriptorium.lib.duke.edu/>>

The Rare Book, Manuscript and Special Collections Library Web site has detailed collection guides, virtual exhibitions, and digitized collections.

Durham County Library:

Durham County Library has two special collection sites. The North Carolina Collection housed at the main library is on the Web at

<<http://dbserv.ils.unc.edu/projects/reavis/>>.

The Stanford L. Warren Branch is home to the Selena Warren Wheeler Collection of African Americana. The Web address for this collection is

<<http://ils.unc.edu/nclibs/durham/wheeler.htm>>

East Carolina University:

<<http://www.lib.ecu.edu/SpclColl/special.html>>
Showcases the East Carolina Manuscript Collection, the North Carolina Collection, and the University Archives.

Forsyth County Public Library:

<<http://www.co.forsyth.nc.us/LIBRARY/ncroom.htm>>
Description of the North Carolina Room.

Gaston-Lincoln Regional Library System:

<<http://www.grl.lib.nc.us/glrlncc.htm>>
Describes the holdings of the North Carolina Rooms, found in both the Gaston County Public Library and the Lincoln County Public Library locations.

High Point Public Library:

<<http://www.high-point.net/dept/library/ncroom.htm>>
Online home of the North Carolina Room, and one of the best organized North Carolina special collections Web sites.

Meredith College:

<<http://152.35.128.16/library/archives.htm>>
The Meredith College Archives has an online Photo Album depicting scenes of the college throughout the years.

Methodist College:

<<http://www.methodist.edu/library/speccol.htm>>
The Special Collections Web site includes descriptions of the Lafayette Collection and Audubon's Birds of America volumes.

New Hanover County Public Library:

<<http://www.co.new-hanover.nc.us/lib/pages/localhistory.htm>>
The online Local History Room builds on library's dynamic local history program.

North Carolina School of the Arts:

<<http://www.ncarts.edu/library/archives/>>
The Semans Library Archives has an online Image Gallery.

North Carolina State University:

<<http://www.lib.ncsu.edu/archives/>>
The Special Collections and University Archives online collection programs include the Archives of Architecture and Design and NC State University History.

North Carolina Wesleyan College:

<<http://annex.ncwc.edu/Library/collections.htm>>
The Elizabeth Braswell Pearsall Library showcases the Tar Heel Maps Collection and the Black Mountain Collection online.

Public Library of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County:

The site for the Robinson-Spangler Carolina Room at the Main Library is on the Web at
<<http://www.plcmc.lib.nc.us/branch/main/NCR/carolina.htm>>
but the riches of the collection are best seen at library's Charlotte-Mecklenburg Story site
<<http://www.cmstory.org/>>.

Queens College of Charlotte:

<<http://www.queens.edu/library/info/barton.html>>
The Web site for the Barton Jackson Cathay Archives includes the Queens College and the Chicora College online collections.

Rowan Public Library:

<<http://www.lib.co.rowan.nc.us/HistoryRoom/default.htm>>
The Edith M. Clark History Room online collections include six digital archives collections and descriptions of online local history collections and online collections specializing in North Caroliniana.

Union County Public Library:

<<http://www.union.lib.nc.us/genealogy.htm>>
The Genealogy and Local History site houses the digitized scrapbook "Heroic Sons of the Gold Star Mothers."

University of North Carolina at Asheville:

<<http://bullpup.lib.unca.edu/specialcoll/>>
The online Special Collections and University Archives includes books, manuscripts, photographs, and oral histories.

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:

All the special collections at UNC-Chapel Hill (Manuscripts Department, Maps Collection, North Carolina Collection, and Rare Book Collection) can be located from
<<http://www.lib.unc.edu/wilson/index.html>>,
but the University's digitized library, *Documenting the American South*, is found at
<<http://metalab.unc.edu/docsouth/index.html>>.

University of North Carolina at Charlotte:

<<http://libweb.uncc.edu/archives/>>
Online access to the four main collecting areas of the Special Collections: rare books, manuscripts, University Archives, and local documents, as well as links to digital resources and exhibits.

University of North Carolina at Greensboro:

<<http://library.uncg.edu/depts/speccoll/>>
There are twelve online collections at the Special Collections and Rare Books Division Web site, ranging from cello music to information about authors George Herbert, Lois Lenski, and Randall Jarrell.

University of North Carolina at Wilmington:

<<http://library.uncwil.edu/special.html>>
This site offers a brief introduction to the Special Collections as well as several online finding aids. A brief description of the University Archives is located at
<<http://library.uncwil.edu/librarytour/archives.htm>>.

Wake County Public Library:

<<http://www.co.wake.nc.us/library/locations/orl/default.htm>>
The Olivia Raney Local History Library online collections include the Watson Photographic Collection, a large collection of images from all areas of North Carolina.

Wake Forest University:

<<http://www.wfu.edu/Library/spcolls.htm>>
The Special Collections Web site provides access to the four main online collections: the North Carolina Baptist Historical Collection, Rare Books and Manuscripts, the University Archives, and the Video Collection.

Western Carolina University:

<<http://www.wcu.edu/library/about/speccoll/index.htm>>
The Special Collections Web site serves as a brief introduction to the University Archives and the library's manuscripts collections and limited access book collections.

Winston-Salem State University:

<<http://wsssumits.wssu.edu/archives/Default.htm>>
The Archives Web site provides access to online print and photographic resources and University Records and Manuscript Collections.

Reference

¹ For an interesting and readable examination of how universities have tried to make the transition from the golden era to leaner economic times, see Stuart Rojstaczer, *Gone for Good: Tales of University Life after the Golden Age* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).