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# The Small College Special Collection in North Carolina

Edward M. Waller

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The purpose of this study is to take a close look at the status and management of special collections in small college libraries in North Carolina. The *American Library Directory*, 35th edition, lists fifty of these collections, which suggests that they may be a significant part of the state's overall library resources. However, information about them is not easily found or widely distributed.

This study seeks to answer specific questions about small college special collections. How significant are these collections to their college communities and to the state's libraries generally? What is the extent of bibliographic access to these collections, for both local users and other potential users? What resources, in terms of space, staff, and money, are small colleges giving to their special collections? How much use do these collections receive? Are there ways in which small colleges can or should improve the management of special collections?

A questionnaire was mailed to all North Carolina colleges with fewer than fifteen hundred students that are predominantly four-year undergraduate institutions. Enrollment figures were obtained from *Statistics of North Carolina University and College Libraries, July 1, 1980-June 30, 1981*. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: collection development, maintenance, use, and processing. Respondents were asked to complete a separate form for each special collection and use the *ALA Glossary of Library Terms* definition of a special collection, which is, "A collection of material of a certain form, on a certain subject, of a certain period, or gathered together for some particular reason, in a library. . ."

A search was made for sources of information on special collections in North Carolina. The purposes of the search were to find out what information is available and to get a complete list of the collections to be studied. When a collection found in a published source was not listed in a returned survey, additional copies of the survey were sent with a letter inquiring about the discrepancy.

## Use and development

Twenty-six libraries out of thirty queried responded to the survey. Detailed responses to each survey question can be found in Appendix 1. As might be expected, great variability in the use of small college special collections was reported. The range of users reported was zero to fourteen hundred in 1982, with a median of forty. There are a number of factors that would contribute to a low level of use. The majority of collections originated as gifts and, as many librarians can testify, support of curricula is not always the compelling factor in the acceptance of gifts. Also, small colleges provide a relatively small universe of users who would have immediate and easy access to the materials. In addition, the circumscribed subject matter of special collections limits the number of people who need to see the material. The issue of relevance to curricula and faculty research was directly addressed by survey questions 12 and 13. The majority of collections were reported as having some relevance, but less than the general collection. Significant minorities of 35 and 41 percent were reported as having equal or greater relevance to curricula and to faculty interests respectively.

Most libraries are continuing to develop their special collections. Materials are being added and cataloged, and small amounts of staff time are being assigned to the collections. The figure of \$30 as the median spent on acquisitions in question 4 is deceptively low. This figure includes two collections that are complete and fifteen collections of local history or college archives on which acquisition expenditures are unlikely. The median rises from \$30 to \$250 when only libraries reporting expenditures are included. It can be said that small colleges are supporting their special collections on a modest but continuing basis, although there are exceptions.

An interesting finding was that while new special collections were established as recently as 1982, the status of old collections is being reevaluated. Five collections cited in published lists have ceased to exist. Reasons given were that the amount of use did not justify the expense of pro-

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cessing, that a curriculum changed away from the subject of a special collection, and that, in two cases, collections were judged not to be "special" and were integrated into the main collection.

A somewhat different picture arises if one looks at the combined resources of the surveyed collections. Among reporting libraries a total of \$41,205 was spent on acquisitions for special collections in 1982, and 14.1 FTE staff were assigned to the collections. A total of 10,084 users were reported for 1982, not including eight collections for which use data were not kept. The collections include an impressive array of subjects in applied arts and sciences, the humanities and fine arts. Some are the only recorded collections on their subjects in the state, and others undoubtedly contain material not found in the collections on similar subjects in the state's major libraries. The quality of the collections was not directly investigated in the survey, but the data suggest that small college special collections may be a significant part of the state's library resources.

## Bibliographic Access

Bibliographic access to special collections within most small colleges appears to be adequate. Sixty-five percent of the collections have complete card sets in the main catalog, and another 10 percent have separate catalogs. Other satisfactory cataloging practices suitable to special types of materials were used in another 12 percent. On a statewide or higher level, bibliographic access is less satisfactory. Eighty percent of the collections are listed in neither SOLINET nor the North Carolina Union Catalog. One would not expect to find the thirteen reported college history collections in these data bases, but even if they are excluded from the analysis, the unlisted percentage is an unacceptable 44 percent. Limited access is provided by publications which list special collections in North Carolina, but none of these sources is all inclusive. Of the eighty-three collections (seventy-eight extant) found during the study, the following numbers were found in each source:

<i>American Library Directory</i>	50
Howell, <i>Special Collections in Libraries of the Southeast</i>	30
Downs, <i>Resources of North Carolina Libraries</i>	19
Ash, <i>Subject Collections</i>	12
Hamer, <i>Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the U. S.</i>	9
<i>NUC of Manuscript Collections</i>	6
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Survey	43

Subject access through these publications, which is so important to researchers, is limited to Downs and *NUC-Manuscripts*. Just discovering the existence of a special collection can be difficult, because none of the published sources is even close to being complete.

The woeful state of outside access to the contents of these eighty collections could be attenuated by the development of a comprehensive list of special collections in small colleges. (A brief listing of the small college collections found in the survey or in published sources is found in Appendix 2.) A list arranged by subject would be particularly useful and would be a great improvement over the fragmented and incomplete information now available. Additional improvement in access could be accomplished by conscientious effort on the part of librarians to include their special collections in SOLINET or the North Carolina Union Catalog. This would contribute to the current trend towards resource sharing. While there is little reason to include some material, such as vertical files or college archives, there is a great deal of material hidden in small college special collections that could be of use to scholars, students, and other citizens.

## APPENDIX 1

### Summary of Survey Results

- What year was the collection started?  
Range: 1895-1982      Median: 1966
- How many items were added in 1982?  
Range: 0 - 2600      Median: 40      Total: 4825
- How many items were added in 1981?  
Range: 0 - 3500      Median: 33      Total: 6237
- How many dollars were spent on acquisitions in 1982?  
Range: 0-26000      Median: 30      Total: 41,205
- What are the sources of funds for future acquisitions?  
General budget, 22; endowed or other special fund, 9; other, 8 (7 gifts); none, 7; none because collection is complete, 2
- How did the collection originate?  
Gift, 24; planned acquisitions, 15; other, 8 (church deposit collections, college related material, etc.)
- How many full time staff are assigned to the collection?  
Range: 0 - 3      Median: 0      Total: 9
- How many FTE staff are assigned to the collection?  
Range: 0 - 4      Median: .2      Total: 14.1
- Is the collection physically separate from the regular collection?  
Separate room, 15; locked area, 12; not separate, 8
- How many people used the collection in 1982?  
Range: 0 - 1400      Median: 40      Total: 10,084
- What percentage of use was by faculty?  
Range: 0 - 95      Median: 10
- What percentage of use was by students?  
Range: 0 - 100      Median: 50
- What percentage of use was by other persons?  
Range: 0 - 100      Median: 10
- What degree of relevance does this collection have for the college curriculum, compared to the general collection?  
None, 4; less, 20; the same, 12; more, 1

13. What degree of relevance does this collection have for faculty research interests, compared to the general collection?  
None, 1; less, 20; the same, 8; more, 7
14. Is your collection listed in NCUC?  
No, 25; yes, 10.
15. Are cataloging procedures different from the rest of your collection?  
No, 20; yes, 9 (special class. system, shelf list only, Dewey instead of L.C., not cataloged, etc.)
16. Are items in the collection listed in your general card catalog?  
No, 10; yes, 25

#### APPENDIX 2

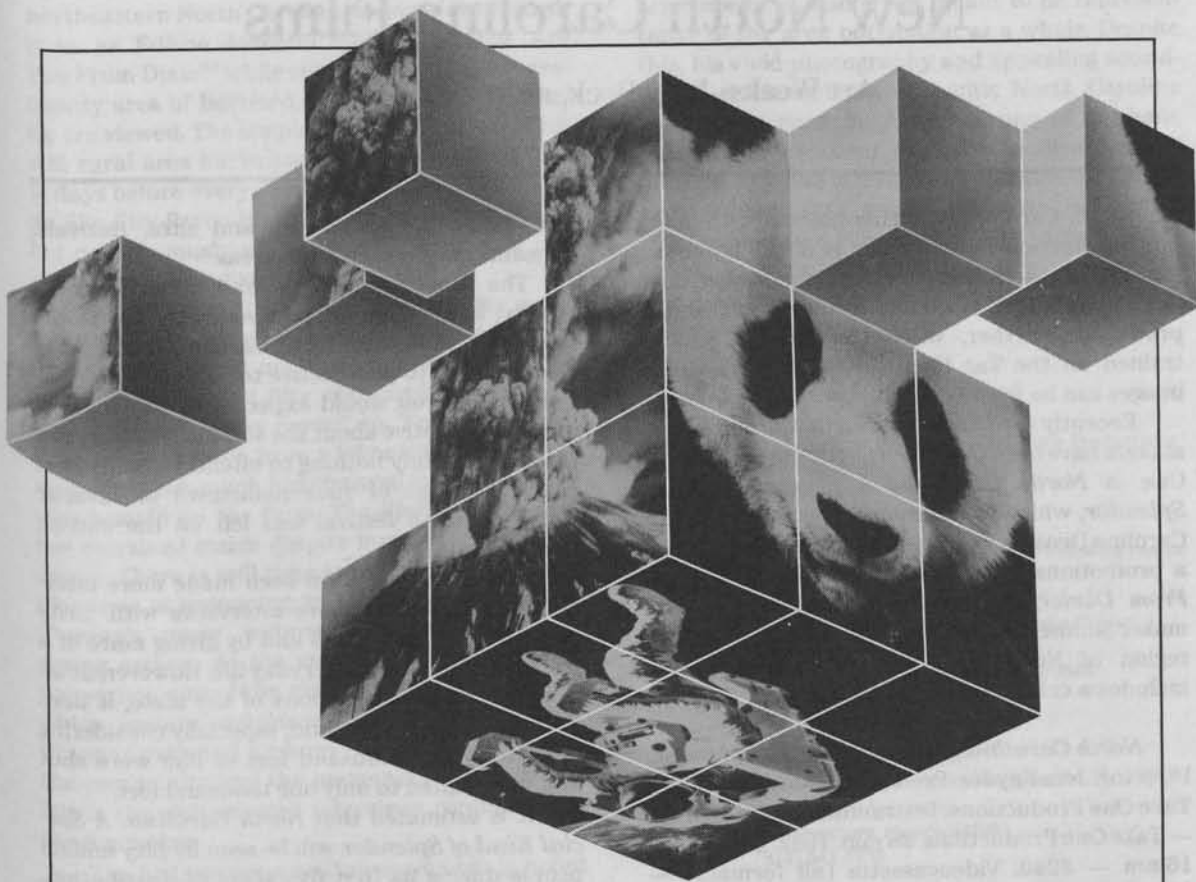
#### Small College Special Collections Found in the Survey or Published Sources

Atlantic Christian College — Disciples of Christ, North Carolina  
 Barber Scotia College — black studies  
 Belmont Abbey College — Benedictine Order, North Carolina, valuable books, autographed books  
 Bennett College — Afro-American women, Norris Wright Cuney (black statesman), Bennett College archives, art  
 Catawba College — Evangelical Reformed Church, North Carolina poetry, Catawba College history  
 Davidson — Woodrow Wilson, Peter Stuart Ney (French aristocrat), Robert Burns, Mecklenburg Declaration of Independence, Davidsoniana, rare books, Bruce Rogers (printer)  
 Gardner-Webb College — North Carolina Baptist history, Washburn Baptist Curriculum, Gardner-Webb College archives, Gardner and Webb families, Thomas Dixon (author)  
 Greensboro College — Napoleon, juvenile literature, music  
 Guilford College — Society of Friends (Quakers), Quaker leaders  
 High Point College — furniture, North Carolina, Methodist Church  
 John Wesley College — John Wesley  
 Johnson C. Smith University — black life and literature  
 Lenoir-Rhyne College — Lutheran theology, Lenoir-Rhyne College archives, Catawba County genealogy  
 Livingstone College — black studies, rare books, John Dancy (civil rights leader)  
 Mars Hill College — Appalachian rural life, Baptist history, Cherokee Indians, folk music, James Long (religious leader), Bascom Lamar Lunsford (folk song expert), Richard Barnhill (photographer)

Meredith College — United States history, anthropology  
 Methodist College — Marquis de Lafayette, North Carolina  
 North Carolina School of the Arts — performing arts, music  
 North Carolina Wesleyan College — United Methodist Church, North Carolina, North Carolina Wesleyan archives  
 Pfeiffer College — United Methodist Church, North Carolina, Pfeiffer College archives  
 Queens College — Queens College archives, North Carolina, Charlottiana  
 Roanoke Bible College — deaf education  
 Sacred Heart College — Christian Reid (author)  
 St. Andrews College — rare books, Scottish history and literature, St. Andrews College  
 Salem College — Moravian Church, Salem Academy and College archives  
 Shaw University — Africa and Afro-Americans, North American Indians, Shaw University archives, oral history  
 Warren Wilson College — mountain music, Warren Wilsoniana, rare and unusual books  
 Wingate College — Wingatiana

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