



Volume 62 | Issue 2

Article 9

12-1-2019

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Recommended Citation

Coates, Joseph (2019) ""When Good Intentions Aren't Good Enough: Signs of Successful Archives", *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 62 : Iss. 2 , Article 9.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol62/iss2/9>

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Cover Page Footnote

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When Good Intentions Aren't Good Enough: Signs of Successful Archives



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ABSTRACT

In 2007, Calumet College of Saint Joseph decided to start a University Archives with the intention of preserving their institutional history. In 2009, they added the Bishop Andrew Grutka papers, with the intention of using this collection as the keystone for the archives. While this project had plenty of spiritual support, the institution failed to realize a few key concepts, such as funding, staffing, and what an archive does for a university. They also failed to see what makes an archive an archive. In the end, the archives were only around for about 5 years before being packed into the basement.

In 2014, I left for another institution. While the university had a manned archive on and off since the 1970s, no one knew how an archive was supposed to work. In spite of this, I was able to implement the same rules and concepts I used before, and it has been successful.

This article will look at successes and failures of the Bishop Andrew Grutka Archives. It will discuss what it takes to establish an archive where one previously did not exist, how to establish best practices for starting an archive, and how to best make sure your project will be successful. You do not need a large budget or expensive equipment to be successful, but you do need policies, procedures and buy in from your institution.

Introduction and History

In 2007, Calumet College of Saint Joseph received a \$25,000 grant to establish an archive from the Legacy Foundation, a local foundation that supplies grants to improve Lake County, Indiana. The college's expanded concept was to not only create a University Archive but also to create a historic center and archives for the Diocese of Gary. While this project had very good intentions, it was flawed from the beginning. This article will identify the flaws to see if they are indeed fatal, or if the failure was due to other influences. While there are many ways to run an institutional archive, we want to identify and minimize habits and procedures that will doom your project.

To give a quick history of Calumet College of Saint Joseph and the Diocese of Gary, we need to go back to the 1950s. The now defunct Saint Joseph College located in Rensselaer, Indiana started to hold classes in Northwest Indiana to serve the areas outside of the steel mills and refineries. This was a good move on their part because they were able to tap into the large Catholic population in the northwest corner of the state. These classes were held in what was known as the Calumet Center and the courses, usually offered as night classes, were held in Bishop Noll High School and Saint John the Baptist Church in Whiting. In 1960, they expanded this center from a two-year center to a four-year institution, offering bachelor's degrees and holding classes in a former furniture store and numerous old store fronts in East Chicago, Indiana. This campus went through a dramatic change in 1973.

In 1973 the Saint Joseph Calumet College officially separated from Saint Joseph's College and later that year were deeded a research and development building located in Whiting, Indiana. This research and development building complex includes over two hundred acres and numerous buildings, all formerly owned by American Oil Corporation. The college sold off much of the property to finance the renovations for the main building and changed their name to Calumet College. Later, they changed their name again to Calumet College of Saint Joseph to reflect both their beginnings at Saint Joseph College and the Calumet region they serve. CCSJ currently has over 20 programs and enrolls a little over 1000 students. Calumet College of Saint Joseph is the only Catholic university located in the Diocese of Gary

The Diocese of Gary was established in 1956 in order to serve Lake, Porter, LaPorte, and Starke counties in Northwest Indiana. This diocese was created when they split off from the Diocese of Fort Wayne to better serve the growing Catholic population of the region. This area has traditionally had a large Catholic population due to immigrants from Eastern Europe and Mexico who came to work in the steel industry. This is still a very Catholic dominated area. As of 2012, masses are still held in Polish, Croatian, Hungarian, and Lithuanian. One location still offers the Extraordinary Form of mass and 14 parishes offer mass in Spanish.

The first Bishop of the new Diocese of Gary was Andrew Grutka. He served as the Bishop of the diocese from 1956 until 1984 and was chosen in part because he was from neighboring Joliet, IL and had worked in the steel mills in his youth. His speaking skills, large frame, good looks, and a Slovakian background also helped immensely. Bishop Grutka crossed interreligious, interracial and civic boundaries to address religious, social, and civic affairs. He was especially interested in racial justice and charity. His Episcopal motto, "Where there is charity, there is God," reflected his belief that dealing with our neighbors with dignity and respect is a cornerstone of Christianity. His address at Vatican II was on racism and he was active with correctional chaplains. He was very much the right man at the right time for the diocese. It was claimed that the reason Gary did not burn like Detroit did during

numerous race riots in this country is because Bishop Grutka reached out to all the people of Gary, no matter the color or religious background, and was able to get everyone to work together. Even after Bishop Grutka's retirement, he continued his ministry until 1993 when he passed away.

Archives at Calumet College of Saint Joseph

The idea behind the archives at Calumet College of Saint Joseph was well meaning from the beginning. The goals of this project were multifaceted, complex, but also achievable if they were done in small phases.

- The first goal was to develop an archive to record the history of the institution.
- The second goal was to receive the Bishop Grutka papers and start processing them. They had been kept in the main diocese office and in his home since his death. To tie his work into the archives, the university implemented a social justice mission as part of the curriculum. This curriculum would involve working in the archives, working at local churches, working for local charities, and in general trying to live the motto of "Where there is charity, there is God."
- The third goal was to eventually develop an archive for the Diocese of Gary within the college. This archive would be run by an archivist, a team of students and volunteers. These students would be getting college credit from both theology and religion courses as experiential learning, plus they would get real world experience working in the field of history and librarianship.
- Code of Canon 491 states that bishops must make sure all documents are preserved for the future. We were going to do that work for the diocese.

Phase 1

Phase One started in May of 2007. As stated earlier, the university had received a grant of \$25,000 to start an archive. The university provided a large space to house the archives and reading room, some basic office equipment, but they needed an archivist. I was hired to work one day a week until the money was spent or the project was completed, whichever came first. At the time, I was applying to graduate school and had completed an internship at the Calumet Regional Archives located at Indiana University Northwest. This was my first archives job, so I decided to try to set ground rules and best practices from the beginning.

I started by gathering documentation for the archives which were spread throughout offices and storerooms across the University. I also created a collection development policy, user policies, and ground rules for the university archive and its reading room. Once this was completed, I started making a rudimentary inventory of everything that we had, then we started processing. All the processing was done by hand, in Microsoft Word, then printed and placed in a large binder kept in the archive office. A back up was saved in both Microsoft Word and as a PDF and stored on an external

500 GB drive. As time went by, we received a scanner and started digitizing some of the more interesting and fragile items in the collection. Although our paper finding aids, folder level collections, and lack of office hours were not ideal, we did have a working archive.

In 2009, we received the gift of the Grutka papers. His papers had already been somewhat organized by his former secretary, which we knew could have happened and may have led to his papers being “sanitized.” However, everything seemed to be intact. This collection also came with a lot of ephemera which we were not expecting. Gifts from parishioners, visitors from foreign countries, all his vestments, and in general, all his belongings that nobody wanted, came with the collection. We found another large space and started cataloging all these items. Luckily this collection of ephemera came with very detailed notes regarding where everything came from. This became a benefit to the University since we had the intent of setting up a small museum to house his works and papers that would be both a conference room and the headquarters for the social justice program.

One of the problems I encountered from the very beginning was a lack of understanding of what the archives were. I had laid a good foundation by establishing a collection development policy, a user policy, and information on what an archive was, however it was treated more like a local historical society where everything was there for anyone at any time. We started to become the “old stuff repository.” We would regularly get donations of just old items such as glassware, newspapers, magazines, old office furniture, etc. And we were discouraged from weeding. Part of this had to do with the culture of the college. Since it had moved so frequently and was always on a shoestring budget the idea of weeding was very painful to many. Also, many of the people who worked there were alumni or longtime supporters. Because it was so small and everybody kind of did everything, the idea that I was only there one day a week and you would have to wait to be helped wasn't something they were used to. Only being there once a week, then even twice a week wasn't enough. It became somewhere for show and tell, items would frequently disappear, either sold for money or gifted to donors. It was not ideal.

Phase 2

Finally, the Grutka Center was opened, and we had our displays up and ready to go. A lot of time was taken to order special cases, think through displays, and make sure everything was where it was supposed to be and in general stored in a safe manner. The center was consecrated by the current Bishop of Gary, and we had an open house to kick off the new Bishop Andrew Grutka Social Justice Center. While it looked fantastic it became little more than a conference room for administration and was frequently locked, not usable for students or other organizations. Finally, it became a place for the Board of Trustees and senior leadership to meet.

In 2013, CCSJ felt a growing need for a tutoring and writing center. I had already been the full-time archivist and reference librarian for four years. Changes in administration and changes in the university, resulted in shifting priorities. Everything except the Grutka papers were packed up and put into the basement, and the Grutka papers were put into filing cabinets in the center. Half of the center remained a Conference Center the other half became a classroom for the theology department and the university archives ceased to exist.

New Archives

In 2014, I took a position as the University Archivist for Purdue University Northwest. Although the archives had numerous starts and stops throughout the years, the library staff and administration had decided an archive at the institution should be a permanent fixture. While even to this day my budget is not very large, we are able to accomplish quite a bit with our limited budget and limited resources. We have begun partnerships with both the History Department and the Communications Department and are working on worthwhile, student-based programs which benefit both the students and the university. For example, we are currently offering a course in oral history where both history students and communication students can learn interviewing skills, the importance of oral history and when the course is concluded they will be writing papers about the process as well as the subject matter. We also have another group of students who are using the archive collections to write a concise history of Purdue University North Central, an extension campus of Purdue that as of 2016, became part of what is now Purdue University Northwest

Speaking of 2016, Purdue University Calumet and Purdue University North Central combined to create Purdue University Northwest. One of the campuses is in Hammond, Indiana which shares a border with the city of Chicago, while the North Central campus is about 40 miles east and surrounded by cornfields. One of the issues that arose was that the Calumet campus had an archive whereas the North Central campus never had an archive. I ended up, yet again, starting an archive from scratch. One of the main differences was that although there were differing opinions of how the archive should look and operate it was left up to me to do the ground work. Instead of reinventing the wheel, what we did was take all the collections as they came and processed them independently. I did not worry too much about consistency since they were going to be in two different repositories. We made the decision to have two different locations for three different repositories, all using one catalog. This is due to the merger of two campuses, so we needed to keep all the old institutional records separate, while storing the records of the new institution.

When I started as the archivist, we set new user policies, donor policies, workflows, and most importantly, a collection development policy. We have standard finding aids, use controlled vocabulary, and use outside vendors to host both Archon and

Omeka. From my initial interview, one of the tasks I was given was to digitize assets for the University. I spent a few years doing research and planning and looking for funding. In late 2018, we partnered with the Internet Archive in order to digitize all our student newspapers, course catalogs, literary journals, self-studies, and assorted other faculty and student works. In the end we had almost 1300 individual items and over 35,000 pages of historical text available online, hosted, and ADA compliant. By March of 2019, our new digital collections had over 5,600 views.

Reflection

Why did one location fail, and another location succeed? I had the same vision, the same planning methods, and the same policies overall for both institutions. Neither institution had a large budget, fancy equipment, or a lot of technical support, yet one succeeded and another failed. I think there are multiple reasons, and the issue is more than budget, staffing, technology, or even having a full-time archivist.

- Motivation – I believe the motivation of keeping an archive is one of the main differences between the institutions. I think at the time Calumet College of Saint Joseph was looking at grant opportunities, found money, and formed an idea around the grant. Once the money disappeared, a lot of the ambition behind the project disappeared and once the project was not manned permanently, the archive disappeared. On the other hand, Purdue University Northwest is much more interested in keeping its institutional history alive and less interested in the financial side of it, knowing that this is not a financial endeavor.
- Professionalism – one of the issues that we had at Calumet College was that no one and everyone wanted a say. The library director was not overly enthusiastic about the project and felt the resources could be going elsewhere, while the administration viewed the archive as something that they could exploit for marketing, but no one, in the end, was terribly interested in the material itself. There was also no real chain of command for the archive due to the part-time nature of the position. I was never listened to or treated as a professional and everybody wanted to have a say in the archive, as long as it benefited them or their department and no one was willing to step aside and let somebody else be in charge. At Purdue University Northwest, there is a clear chain from archivist to library director to vice chancellor to chancellor. I am able to set policy, create projects, and do work with the approval of the library director. In other words, everybody understands the rules.
- Culture of the College – one of the issues at Calumet College was a lack of a definable culture. The institution had changed its name, location and mission so many times that its only permanent culture was being Catholic. While this is great for academics and marketing, this is not enough. At Purdue University

Northwest, we have a history. Although we have changed locations and names numerous times, we still were and are part of the Purdue system and identify with Purdue.

While it is sometimes hard to find reasons why projects in libraries fail, in my experience at two different institutions it did not have as much to do with the archives, but with the institution. If you do not have clear rules, clear leadership, clear goals, and the support of the institution overall, your chances of success will not be as great once the money or interest runs out and the program is doomed to fail. However, if you establish the culture of the archive as something that is beneficial to the University, it does not matter if it is hi tech and permanently manned. The institution needs to buy into itself, its own past, and its own future. They look at the archive as an asset and an investment in themselves. †

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