SOUTHERN HISTORICAL COLLECTION
Modern Collecting & Community-Driven, Participatory Archives
At the Southern Historical Collection (SHC), we have developed a fresh approach to the academic archive that prioritizes collaboration with community partners.

We believe that an archive must serve the needs of the community that built it in order to thrive. That is why we are developing the concept and practice of “community archives.”

Community archives come into being through active partnerships. Rather than simply identifying collections that could be of use for research, we work hand-in-hand with communities, helping members tell their own history in ways that are meaningful, authentic, and engaging.

In the process, we and our partners build lasting relationships, develop unique exhibits, and build an archive of original documentation.

What if a community could build its own archive, tell its own story, in a way that would help scholars understand its true history as lived by community members?
COMMUNITY ARCHIVES PILOT PROJECTS

Appalachian Student Health Coalition (ASHC)

StudentHealthCoalition.web.unc.edu

ASHC, a Vanderbilt University student group founded in the 1960s, provided healthcare services to rural Appalachian communities. In partnership with early ASHC members, we are developing an active alumni network and are crafting a sustainable, long-term home for their organization’s materials. This will enable greater research into rural health initiatives, student organizations, and related areas of politics and the environment.

Eastern Kentucky African American Migration Project (EKAAMP)

EKAAMP.web.unc.edu

EKAAMP is a public humanities project documenting and preserving the history of a twentieth-century African American diaspora from eastern Kentucky. Working closely with an established network of residents, EKAAMP honors the place of African Americans in Appalachia and assures that their stories are available for scholars. This includes a traveling exhibition, Gone Home: Race and Roots through Appalachia.

Historic Black Towns and Settlements Alliance (HBTSA)

HBTSA.web.unc.edu

HBTSA grew from a town partnership, to a mayors’ conference, into a regional initiative promoting historic preservation in Southern black communities. We are tapping into our rich UNC networks to help these towns develop sustainable, digital archives, and using these projects to promote tourism and economic growth. Together we are developing a federally recognized cultural corridor as new towns join the alliance.
ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Distinctive Communities
We listen, recognize, and respond to each group’s specific circumstances, goals, and resources.

Shared Responsibilities
We respect that each partnership must bend and flex to create a best, most sustainable fit.

Timely Relevance
We promote a deeper, contextualized understanding of history and how we see its ripples in the present.

Big-Picture View
We identify components necessary to make the model work for any partnership, refining long-term relationships alongside fruitful new ones.

The Next Generation
We nurture future archivists by working with them on their own terms, in their own communities.
THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Other institutions are showing interest in this model of community collaboration, but the path to success is largely uncharted. The SHC is defining a cutting-edge field in academic archives.

Community-Driven Modes of Gathering Input

Each group communicates and organizes themselves differently. By identifying community champions early in the process, we help our partners establish committees and liaisons that can collect and reflect the community’s desires.

A Progressive Process

Distinct objectives and identified benchmarks are essential to maintaining momentum. By planning our projects in stair-step phases with clearly assigned duties, we are able to manage a regular rotation of community partners.

Hands-On History with Digital Tools

These partnerships provide unique opportunities for our campus partners. We tap into our rich student networks to create projects that benefit their learning environment while producing valuable tools for the communities.

Sharing Successes In Our Professional Community

Communicating our experiences to other academic institutions assures broader use of community-based archives. This helps grow our own network of colleagues, who can in turn share their own strategies for success.
WHERE YOU WILL SEE US NEXT

Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)

After assessing areas of acute need in many HBCU archives, we began a campaign of support for the research value of these collections. Our next steps involve holding joint sessions with institutions, identifying common goals, and developing a collaborative work plan.

History Harvest Days

Taking the library out into the community, we are developing “History Harvest Days.” These public programs will help community members preserve their personal materials and record oral histories. This allows the public to see us in action and have direct and meaningful involvement with our mission.

Archive in a Suitcase

We are developing a comprehensive manual that will guide patrons and partners in the formation of their own archives, from blueprints to best practices. These layperson-friendly materials are the ultimate donor education tool to support the formation of new, grassroots community archives.
We are pursuing an ambitious, five-year strategic plan that ensures our collections reflect the changing region and field. You can help us get there by offering support to:

**SUPPORT A TRANSFORMATIVE COLLECTION**

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**Take Community Archives to the Next Level**

- Build out the community-driven model and share it freely
- Endow the African American Collections & Outreach Archivist position
- Build up the Historic Black Towns Digital Heritage Center with basic infrastructure and a full-time staff person

**Usher in a New Era of Collection Building**

- Purchase collections related to under-archived groups, including Latinos, American Indians, and Asian Americans in the South
- Acquire scarce and developing media in expanding subject areas, notably the environment, food, modern Southern business, and social movements
- Begin a film collection

**Revamp Our Online Presence and Premier Digital Collections**

- Expand our online materials and prepare to receive digital collections
- Renovate our popular DocSouth: Documenting the American South digital archive, making more of its titles available as inexpensive reprints

**Continue Traditions of Hospitality and Generosity**

- Underwrite HBCU fellowships
- Name the SHC Directorship
- Establish a postdoctoral program and visiting fellowships
- Renovate our reading room

For more information, visit: library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/support
To learn more about how you can help, visit:
library.unc.edu/wilson/shc/support