Preservation Through Partnership: Managing the Minneapolis Archives

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Agenda

• History of City Hall and the Archives

• Overview of the Materials

• Development of an Archives Program

• Partnership Development

• Future projects and Lessons Learned
Overview of the Archives
Minneapolis History

• City incorporated in 1867 – Annexed City of St. Anthony in 1872

• Current City Hall Constructed between 1887-1906

• Space shared by Hennepin County & City of Minneapolis – various iterations of use

• State legislation in 1887 & 1904 formed the Municipal Building Commission to manage the building
Minneapolis Archives - Overview

- Housed in the clock tower of City Hall

- Space formerly utilized as the Hennepin County Vital Records Vault

- Municipal Information Library lost funding in 2003

- Library/Archives no longer open to the general public
Minneapolis Archives - Overview

• Hundreds of thousands of items to be cataloged

• Collection consists of documents, maps, drawings, photographs, burial records, annual reports, various media types

• No funding is specifically appropriated for the management of the archives
Minneapolis Archives - Then
Minneapolis Archives - Then
Minneapolis Archives - Now
Minneapolis Archives - Now
Minneapolis Archives - Now
Minneapolis Archives - Now
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What are our Main Issues?

• This is not a proper archival storage space!

• Last inventoried in 2007 – no actions taken based on the recommendations at that time

• No system of order or finding

• Materials are not readily accessible to researchers and the public

• Many items in a state of disrepair/decay
Minneapolis Archives
Minneapolis Archives
Minneapolis Archives
Minneapolis Archives
Archival Issues

• Lack of security and organization means items can move in and out without proper record keeping

• Storage methods and methodologies are outdated and don’t adhere to archival standards

• Lack of proper climate control in space

• Lack of knowledge about what the Archives has means we don’t know what gems are in the collection (unless we find them by accident)
Goals for the Archives

• Materials are assessed and cataloged
• Materials are properly preserved
• Materials are available to the public
• Materials are housed in proper storage facilities
Moving Forward

- Decision to address the materials by collection

- Realized the need for external resources and support

- Moving toward digitized holdings

- Deciding to transfer items to more appropriate repositories
External Partnerships - St. Kate’s

- First approached St. Kate’s MLIS Program in 2014

- Spring Semester Archival Management II class conducted collection assessments

- Students spent at least 21 hours in the archives to produce a collection inventory and preservation needs assessment
External Partnerships – St. Kate’s

• Student experiences were generally positive

• Inventories produced allowed us to carry out other digitizing projects

• Work has helped us to begin planning future efforts
External Partnerships – St. Kate’s

- Capstone Project – Spring 2016
- Development of a volunteer and internship program for the Archives
- Established standard position description, guides, and processing instructions
- Take advantage of community assets
External Partnerships – Hennepin County Library

• The Special Collections division at the Library already has a large Minneapolis Collection

• Library staff have assisted with the digitization and preservation of historic films from the archives

• Currently working with HCL on a grant project related to City Planning images

• Digitization of earliest hand-written council proceedings – Crowdsourced transcription
External Partnerships – Borchert Map Library

• Borchert previously digitized and took custody of approximately 4,145 aerial photos

• Photos ranged from 1938 to 1983

• The library has made the photos available online for the public

• Currently working to transfer a large collection of maps and drawings
External Partnerships – Hennepin History Museum

• Working to bring historic exhibits to City Hall

• Work is coordinated with the Municipal Building Commission

• HHM and the City conducting joint events in City Hall

• Developed an exhibit for 125th anniversary of the laying of the cornerstone
Internal Partnerships – Urban Scholars / Step-Up

• Program sponsored by the City’s Civil Rights Department and Achieve Minneapolis

• RIM Division hosting six students for a paid summer internship focused on archival assessment & digitization

• City launched its [Flickr page](#) in 2015
  - [MPR Story](#)
  - [Star Tribune Story](#)
  - [CBS Local](#)
Internal Partnerships

• Minneapolis IT – Collaboration and Open Data Teams

• Communications Department

• Document Solutions Center

• City Council
Future Projects

• **NARA Citizen Archivist Model**

• Capturing history as it happens

• Borchert Map Library 2016 Transfer

• HCL Grant Project – City Planning images

• City Hall Audio Tours
Looking Forward

• **Lessons learned**
  • Take advantage of the resources available
  • Let people work where their skills are
  • Focus on what we can do well
  • Set realistic expectations
  • Have a willingness to make changes/move forward with a new model
  • Be focused and specific with project plans
  • Share your successes
Looking Forward

• Next Steps
  • Continue to seek out new partnerships
  • Develop in-house resources/expertise
  • Seek grant-funding
  • Continue to make materials available to the public
  • Develop new models for capturing and sharing information – Find our space in the archival world
Questions?

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