8-1-2010

The Folklife Archives at Western Kentucky University: Past and Present

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THE FOLKLIFE ARCHIVES AT WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY: PAST AND PRESENT

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology
Western Kentucky University
Bowling Green, KY

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Folk Studies

By
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August 2010

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Date Recommended: August 6, 2010

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Dean, Graduate Studies and Research Date

Acknowledgements

Michael Ann Williams, Jonathan Jeffrey, Pat Hodges, Lynwood Montell, Mabel Agozzino, Doug Boyd, Peggy Bulger, Brenna Heffner, Rebecca Karr, Marian Robbins, Cynthia Cotton, Beth King, and my parents, Shelley and Ray Puglia.

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This work focuses on Western Kentucky University's Folklife Archives located in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Western Kentucky University has a rich history of folklore scholarship, dating back to at least the early 20th century and the work of Gordon Wilson. Folklore archives across the nation have long been repositories for the fieldwork of folklorists and a place to look to supplement future studies both of folklorists and other disciplines. Western Kentucky's Folklife Archives are no exception, housing thousands of impressive pieces donated from many generations of folklore scholars. Yet very little has been written about the Western Kentucky Folklife Archives. Through oral history and primary documentation, I have attempted to capture this history from the earliest days of Gordon Wilson, D.K. Wilgus, and Lynwood Montell to the present day.

INTRODUCTION

This work focuses on Western Kentucky University's Folklife Archives located in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Western Kentucky University has a rich history of folklore scholarship, dating back to at least the early 20th century and the work of Gordon Wilson. Folklore archives across the nation have long been repositories for the fieldwork of folklorists and a place to look to supplement future studies both of folklorists and other disciplines. Western Kentucky's Folklife Archives are no exception, housing thousands of impressive pieces donated from many generations of folklore scholars. Yet very little has been written about the Western Kentucky Folklife Archives, a problem not similarly experienced by the Manuscripts Collection. Any folklore archive would benefit from a thorough study, but such work is essential to one connected to an illustrious folklore program like Western Kentucky University's. Through oral history and primary documentation, I have attempted to capture this history from the earliest days of Gordon Wilson, D.K. Wilgus, and Lynwood Montell to the present day.

After a review of the literature, I show how folklore studies first came to the Western Kentucky University, how it flourished into a program, and how a folklore archive developed. I then move to the contemporary Western Kentucky University Folklife Archives, their operations, their donations, and their use. I conclude with an assessment of how the Folklife Archives can be viewed today.

This thesis is an endeavor to add to the permanent record a coherent document that traces the history of what is now called the Folklife Archives and capture its current

state. It is the first and only extensive attempt to do so. This is not a comparative study, and I make little attempt to delve into the nuances of archival and information science theory beyond documenting the recommendations and objections of the associated librarians. As a Western Kentucky University folklorist, I am interested in the institution Western Kentucky University folklorists before me created, how it evolved over the years, and how it's used today.

CHAPTER 1: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature under my consideration falls into three categories. First, I look at articles that focus generally on folklore archives in the United States. Next, I appraise histories of and guides to specific collections. And finally, I examine literature that focuses specifically on Western Kentucky University, its folklore archive, and related persons and phenomena.

In 1956, folklorist Thelma James, one of the key figures in the literature on folklore archives, gave the "Report of the Committee on Archiving" in the supplemental addition of the *Journal of American Folklore*. Sixteen archives appear on this admittedly wanting list, "W. Ky State College" represented by "D. Wilgus" being one of them. In fact, Kentucky institutions make up six of the sixteen archives listed, the other five being University of Kentucky, Union College, Renfro Valley, Berea College, and The Filson Club. Based on the survey of this very small sample, James sees "six facts emerge."

1. There are vast quantities of all kinds of folklore materials already collected in this country;
2. They are almost entirely un-archived;
3. Those that have been somewhat systematically handled show treatment of individual archivists and situations in both topics and methods;
4. These materials are virtually inaccessible to either archivists or scholars;

5. The risk of loss and deterioration of materials is appalling;
6. The risk of inaccurate and inadequate information for American folklore studies is very great.

After careful study the chairman declares European models "will not apply too effectively in this country" but will make a "superb basis for comparison." James claims to have developed a tentative scheme for classification that will provide a "workable pattern for archiving across the country" which is currently under revision. She concludes that she sees the committee's task as twofold. The first is the "preparation of an accurate list of the archives of American Folklore, " and the second a "workable classification system for these archives" (James 1956).

The most useful resource for a scholar interested in folklore archiving from a theoretical, methodological, historical, or categorical perspective is Indiana University's *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist* published from 1958 until 1968, originally quarterly, and beginning in 1963 triannually. Two years after her committee report, James writes again, this time in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*, on the "Problems of Archives." She cites an "almost complete absence of agreement on principles and practices." But she philosophizes that the delay of developing a national classification system may be "fortunate" because "archive systems should evolve from the recognized standard studies in each field, rather than to have archival problems determine the trend of the practices." These recent "standards" include Ray Browne's *Popular Beliefs and*

Practices from Alabama and Archer Taylor's *Proverbial Comparisons of Similes from California*. James looks forward with great excitement to Wayland Hand's forthcoming *Popular Beliefs and Superstitions*. She clarifies her earlier point regarding the incongruity of European archive practices to the American setting. Because of their "strange" definition of folklore with its "broader interpretations of the term to include much of folk culture and craft," European archiving methods, such as the Swedish and Irish Archives "cannot be adopted without almost destructive adaptations." (Within the next two decades American folklorists would begin to embrace the broader reach of Swedish "folklife" studies which included material culture) She admits presciently that the coming wave of interest in context and analysis of function will present "problems hitherto unmentioned in American archiving." Therefore, towards her goal for a national system of classification she concludes the necessity of an "establishment and acceptance of a nation-wide system, known and used by archives, large and small, and into which new materials will fit easily, and in the use of which students may be trained" (James 1958:1-2).

One of the earliest contributions to folklore archiving by a folklorist specifically for folklore students is found in Richard Dorson's edited collection *Folklore and Folklife*, where an entire chapter is dedicated to the subject. The chapter, written by Indiana University's archivist George List for the 1972 edition, expounds on the basic tenets of folklore archiving, many of which hold true nearly four decades later (George 1972). This would be the pinnacle of attention given to archiving in folklore textbooks. Archives receive a couple of pages of attention in Jan Brunvand's *Study of American Folklore*

(Brunvand 1998). More pages, though sporadic, are dedicated to the topic in Barre Toelken's *The Dynamics of Folklore* (1996). However, his chief concern, due to his unique experiences as a folklorist working with the Navajo and the criticism he received for destroying his recordings with them, is the ethics of archiving. Robert Georges and Michael Owen Jones make no significant mention of archives in *Folkloristics* (1995). In fact, one of the few times the word "archives" is used, it is to show the preeminence of conducting fieldwork over using archives. Lynwood Montell is quoted as saying, because of his extensive use of oral history in the study of Coe Ridge (Montell 1970), he "was able to set down in print an account that could never be written by most historians who are accustomed to doing research solely in libraries and archives" (Georges and Jones 1995:85). Likewise Elliot Oring, one of the editors at the time of the *Folklore Forum*'s "Folklore Archives of the Modern World: A Preliminary Guide" two decades earlier, makes no mention of archives in his folklore textbook *Folk Groups and Folk Genres* (Oring 1986).

Today's folklorists would not find this surprising. In fact, the same year as George List's chapter on archiving appeared in *Folklore and Folklife*, D.K. Wilgus, one of the founder's of WKU's folklore archive, gave his "deliberately provocative" presidential address entitled "The Text is the Thing" (1972:241). As was becoming abundantly clear, and at the distress of some "traditional" folklorists, the new generation of folklorists no longer embraced the text as "the thing." The previous year the new generation of young, vanguard folklorists had published their manifesto *Toward New Perspective in Folklore* as a special edition in the *Journal of American Folklore* (Paredes & Bauman 1971) and

the era of folklore as communication, behavior, and performance was at hand, none of which were particularly suited to the use of folklore archives.

One of these young scholars, Dan Ben-Amos, whose seminal article "Towards a Definition of Folklore in Context" was among the essays published in *New Perspectives*, sums up neatly the new folkloristics view of folklore archives:

> A major factor that prevented folklore studies from becoming a full-fledge discipline in the academic community has been the tendency toward thing-collecting projects. The tripodal scheme of folklore research as collecting, classifying, and analyzing emphasizes this very point. This procedure developed as a nineteenth-century positivistic re-action to some of the more speculative ideas about folklore that prevailed at that time. Since then, however, the battle for empiricism has been won twice over. Folklore scholarship - which developed since the rejection of unilinear cultural evolutionism and the solar and psychoanalytical universal symbolism - has had its own built-in limitations and misconceptions. These resulted in part from the focus on facts. Because of the literary and philological starting point of folklore studies, the empirical fact was an object, a text of a tale, song, or proverb, or even an isolated word. This approach limited the research possibilities in folklore and narrowed the range of generalizations that could be induced from the available data. It might have been suitable for Krappe's notion of folklore as an historical science that purported to reconstruct the spiritual history of man, but it completely incapacitated the

development of any other thesis about the nature of folklore in society (Ben-Amos 1971:244-245).

Wilgus was critical of these new approaches, which he refused to refer to as anything but the "behavioral approach," pointing out that "many of us became folklorists because of our fascination with the materials, the things, of folklore." The material in folklore archives is "almost never with the kind of documentation demanded by a behavioral approach" and therefore folklorists "might as well burn the archives for what behavior information they contain is far too limited and too lacking in discipline methodology to be of much use" (Wilgus 1973:244-245).

The largest body of literature relating to a specific archive focuses on the Library of Congress and its American Folklife Center. Tim Lloyd, currently the executive director of the American Folklore Society, and Hillary Glatt, who subsequently earned her Master of Arts in Folk Studies from Western Kentucky University, compiled the booklet *Folklife Resources in the Library of Congress*, a revised and updated edition of the Holly Baker's 1981 original work *Folklife and the Library of Congress: A Survey of Resources* (Lloyd & Glatt 1994, Baker 1981). The reference is meant to aid folklorists attempting to navigate the leviathan that is the Library of Congress. The guide goes beyond the American Folklife Center, highlighting useful materials in other divisions of the library as well. Prior to the revision but subsequent to the first edition, Peter Bartis wrote *A History of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress* (Bartis 1982). Bartis, a prolific compiler of resources for folklife research in the Library of Congress, would later author *Folklife Sourcebook: A Directory of Folklife Resources in the United States* with

Stephanie Hall (Bartis & Hall 1993). Hall, a folklorist and librarian would publish her own *Ethnographic Collections in the Archive of Folk Culture: A Contributor's Guide* in 1995 (Hall 1995). Most of these works are available free of charge electronically through the Library of Congress. The most recent of these complimentary publications compiled at the expense of the federal government is *Folk Heritage Collections in Crisis* (2001). Put together after a conference called by the American Folklife Center in 2000, it serves as a warning of the dilapidated state of archived materials in the United States, which, as we have seen, is not a new concern.

Much of the writing folklorists have done on archives are general reference materials. Notable early printed analyses of folklore archives include Richard Dorson's work on the Archives of Michigan State University and Thelma James' work on Wayne State University's archives, both of which appear in *Midwest Folklore*, V, No. I (Dorson 1955, James 1955). In 1968, the student journal *Folklore Forum*, edited at the time by Elliott Oring and F.A. de Caro, published the first of a series on bibliographic materials for folklorists titled "Folklore Archives of the Worlds: A Preliminary Guide," which they claim had never been compiled before. The introduction credits the serious attention occasionally paid to classification, but decries the "semi-private, hidden under beds in shoe boxes" nature of folklore archives, making much of the materials "virtually inaccessible." The piece then goes on to list folklore archives found around the world, including contact information, with the United States divided additionally by state. "Mr. Kenneth Clarke" is listed as the representative for the "Folklore Archive" at "Western Kentucky State College."

There exists a small body of literature directly related to Western Kentucky University's Folk Studies program, Folklife Archives, and related institutions and persons. In 1958, D.K. Wilgus reported on Western Kentucky University's "Folklore Archive" in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist* (Wilgus 1958). He credits himself for its creation and Gordon Wilson's students for the collecting, although he also mentions prominent collectors Josiah H. Combs and Herbert Halpert.

In 1989 Chad Berry gave an overview of Western Kentucky University's graduate program for the *Folklore Forum*. After giving an overview of the program, much of which stands true to the present day, he mentions the "strong folklore, folklife, and oral history archive" as "an important part of the Western program." Berry points out that Western Kentucky University's folklore archive is "the only archive in the country based in the university library system and administered by library staff," an idiosyncrasy which has shaped the development of the Folklife Archives greatly.

A number of unpublished documents have been created to guide researchers and librarians using the Folklife Archives. These are, for the most part, only available in the Kentucky Building. The works include Robert S. Phillips' *Processing Guide to Student Field Research Collections for Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Archive* (1974), *Subject Heading List for the Western Kentucky University Folklore* (1974), *and Folklife Archive A User's Guide to Subject Headings Used in Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Archive* (1974), Diane Zacharias' *Gordon Wilson Collection: Summary and User's Guide* (1974), and Adolfina V. Simpson's *Folklore, Folklife and Oral History Archives* (1981).

Archives, especially small, regional archives, are not central to the research folklorists are conducting in the discipline today; thus, we cannot expect there to be a flourishing body of literature on the topic. But folklore archives have too much history, too much latent potential, and too unique a role to ever fully disappear. In the remaining chapters, I intend to show how one small, regional folklore archive was formed, how it functioned over the years, and its potential for the future.

CHAPTER 2: PREHISTORY

The Folklife Archives, easily invisible to some, has a long and unique history, indelibly intertwined with the Folk Studies program and Western Kentucky University folklorists, dating to the early twentieth century. The first person to carve a niche for folklore studies at Western Kentucky University is illustrious university professor and avid birdwatcher Gordon Wilson, Sr. Dr. Wilson was born in the "Jackson Purchase," the region that makes up the far western portion of Kentucky. He would remain interested in the folklore of this area, as well as the Mammoth Cave region, for his entire career.

Figure 1 - Gordon Wilson
Source: WKU Hall of Distinguished Alumni

He first arrived at Western Normal School in 1908 as a student and began teaching at his alma mater in January 1912. Taking dial hiatuses to study at Indiana University, Wilson earned a master's in 1924 and a doctorate in English in 1930. He continued to teach until 1959, including heading the English department from 1928 to 1959.

Dr. Wilson, who studied under legendary folklorist Stith Thompson at Indiana University while in graduate school, had shown an interest in folklore since his college days, becoming fascinated with the subject his senior year of college. During his first

semester teaching, sandwiched between courses on grammar, he managed to offer a course on Virgil.

Five and a half years later, his interest in folklore had deepened. Wilson began building a library of folklore literature and rereading what he seemed to think of as the core texts. On June 28, 1917, he wrote:

> I have also been rereading many a delightful fairy story from the Grimm collection. I am striving to build up gradually a folk-lore library and have already the following" (1) Gayley's "Classic Myths," (2) Guerber's "Myths of the Northern Lands," (s) Aesop's "Fables," (4) Andersen's "Fairy Tales," (5) Grimm's "Household Tales," and (6) "Old English Ballads," besides "The Iliad," "The Odyssey," and "The Aeneid." (MSS B6 F2)

Less than a month later, Wilson decided to take action and begin a folklore collection of his own. On July 22, 1917 Gordon Wilson wrote in his private diary:

> I began today a collection of what I call folk-lore notes, partly for the pleasure I get out of working with folk material, partly for source material for work in Philology next year, and partly, probably chiefly, for a background for my projected "Purchase Stories." There will be sections devoted to folk-intensives or "cuss-words," superstitions, folk figures of speech, remnants of ballads, folk songs, remnants of older English, provincialisms, traditions, local-hero stories, mysterious happenings, etc. I

> already have in the book over 175 "cuss-words" and over 100 well-known superstitions in my home neighborhood. When I go to Calloway County next week I hope to get a great deal of help on my collection from Quint, mother, and Ivan. Ever since I first began to teach Vergil - January, 1912 - I have been interested in local folk-lore and have, at numerous times, discussed before bodies of teachers some of the things I have learned. Prof. Aydelothe, now of Massachusetts School of Technology, encouraged me in my folk-lore studies and introduced me to that famous preserver of the cowboy ballads of Texas, Prof. Lomax of Texas University. During my college life and even before I read nearly all the classic authors on folk-lore, and though I have not read so extensively the past two years, I have yet had time to read Sir George Dasent's very excellent collection of "Norse Folk-Tales," to reread nearly all the Grimm collection, and to go over the entire field, in Gayley, Bullfinch, and others, of Greek, Roman, and Scandinavian mythology. In addition, I have told more of the great folk-tales to my classes than ever before. Next year I am hoping to read even more deeply than I did during my last year in college (MSS B6 F2).

After years of incorporating folklore materials into his courses, Dr. Wilson would teach his first pure folklore course in 1928 (Berry 1986:1).

Dr. Wilson officially began the bulk of what the Folklife Archives now refers to as "The Gordon Wilson Collection" in 1959, interviewing informants in the Mammoth Cave

region in Edmonson County, Kentucky. His interest was linguistic in nature: the "original intention...was to collect regional words and archaisms in pronunciation and vocabulary" (Zacharias 1974:1). The handwritten responses would, by the close of the study in 1967, eventually amass to 18,500 separate cards from 240 informants, not including the supplementary audio interviews recordings he began in 1963.

Dovetailing with his passion for folklore in general, the project soon expanded to include general folk beliefs and folk items, which the Folklife Archives has grouped into the sections beyond the original "General File on Folk Speech," including a section labeled "Miscellaneous Lore." Dr. Wilson's work on folk speech over these years would be used by Frederick G. Cassidy in his *Dictionary of American Regional English* (1985). The long-time folklife archives coordinator Mrs. Hodges says, "I consider him to be the beginning of the Folklife Archives. Without Dr. Wilson's interest, there would not be a folklore area or any classes taught" (Hodges 2009).

Gordon Wilson used his extensive fieldwork in numerous academic and popular publications. He penned close to 1600 essays for his weekly column, "Tidbits of Kentucky Folklore," which appeared in newspapers across the state. He also published three books, *Passing Institutions*, *Fidelity Folks*, and *Folkways of the Mammoth Cave Region* (Wilson 1943, 1946, 1962).

The next folklorist to come to Western Kentucky University was Donald Knight Wilgus. Also known as "D.K.," he received his doctorate in English from Ohio State University, under the tutelage of Francis Lee Utley. He began teaching at Western

Figure 2 - D.K. Wilgus
Source: UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive

Kentucky University in 1950, conducting extensive fieldwork on the topics of folksong, "hillbilly" music, and folktales, most of which can still be found in the Folklife Archives. While in this position, he also served as editor of the *Kentucky Folklore Record*. He first came to prominence after publishing *American Folksong Scholarship Since 1898* in 1959.

By 1958 Wilgus was telling the nation about the Folklore Archives, which he considered himself to have founded. He writes in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*:

> The Western Kentucky Folklore Archive is basically a manuscript collection brought together by D.K. Wilgus and housed in Cherry Hall at Western Kentucky State College. The archive was established in 1953 with a small nucleus of material collected by the students in the folklore classes of Gordon Wilson. The collection has grown through student contributions, field collection by its director, and deposits such as the manuscript collection of Josiah H. Combs and the songs collected by Herbert Halpert and his students at Murray State College. Though the materials represent a wide geographical area, the archive is important

> primarily as one of the two significant repositories of the collected folklore of western Kentucky.

After giving a brief overview of the present contents of the archive and admitting the current lack of organization he concludes:

> The archive has the characteristics of most private collections. It is maintained, with a small amount of clerical help, in the spare time of its director. There are no assistants and no regular budget. Yet it is functioning as a depository and is available for consultation by students. Copies of texts and recordings can be and have been supplied, within limits of clerical help (Wilgus 1958).

Wilgus mentions that classification at the time is by area and type, but when possible, since he had no assistant and no regular budget, he planned to implement a classification system similar to "that reported by John Ball in the *Archivist*, I, 3."

In the article to which Wilgus refers, John Ball, Director of the Archive of Ohio Folklore and Music at Miami University, describes the "classification system used for general folklore is Boggs'; for songs, Child's and Laws'; and for...tales in the collection, Aarne-Thompson" (Ball 1958:1). The other index system mentioned, probably the one to which Wilgus was referring, was devised by Graduate Research Assistant xfBruce Buckley. In this system, each donation receives a four unit designation. The first indicates the collector and number of items he has donated. The second unit notes the page number. The third specifies the archive. And the fourth unit, the only letter, delineates the folklore genre. Although similar attempts were made, this method of classification was never truly

practical at Western Kentucky University. Folklorists would archive according to folklore methodology when time permitted, but until the professionalization of the archive through safekeeping by the library, little categorization was actually done.

D.K. Wilgus would leave the university in 1963 for UCLA, taking some of the folklore archives materials with him, which is now held in the D.K. Wilgus Collection at the UCLA Ethnomusicology Archive. Although large amounts of the materials, as he admitted to in *The Folklore and Folk Music Archivist*, were collected by persons other than himself, he attempted to put severe restrictions on the use of materials left at WKU.

For example, in 1974, the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives was interested in a reciprocal materials exchange with prominent country music scholar Charles Wolfe of Middle Tennessee State University, which would increase the stock of both universities' archives and increase access for researchers. Dr. Wilgus, although agreeing in principle, continued to invoke his right to place restrictions on the material and took place in wheeling-and-dealing from his new lair in Los Angeles:

1. In order to protect informants and also my stake as primary collector, I should have to place the same restrictions as apply to the use of the material as presently deposited at Western. That is, the material is available for consultation for research or other educational purposes, but publication (or duplication of materials) can be effected only with my permission. (Such restrictions should be agreed to in writing.)
2. In the event of exchange, Wolfe's material should be deposited with me at UCLA, as well as Western. While this may seem like a 2 for 1

> exchange, it seems fair to me. I could exchange with him directly -- in which case Western would not have copies of the exchange materials.

Dr. Wilgus was not opposed to outright rejections of researchers or topics he considered unworthy of "his" materials. In a letter addressed to Tony Moffeit of Cravens Library he writes:

> With regard to Mr. Keller's request for humorous children's folksongs from the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive, please deny the request. I received a previous letter from him and denied him use. That kind of "blanket" request can result in the unauthorized use of material, one which is not worth suing over, by one who has no reputation to worry about.

Seven years after the departure of Dr. Wilgus, the founder and director of the Folk Studies program William Lynwood Montell joined the Western Kentucky University faculty. A Monroe County native, Dr. Montell began his education at the University of Kentucky but finished his degree at Western Kentucky University. He fell in love with folklore while taking an introductory course with D.K. Wilgus in the fall of 1959. He would take one more class with Dr. Wilgus in the spring of 1960, the semester he graduated. Although Dr. Wilgus was an alumnus of Ohio State, he encouraged Dr. Montell to pursue a doctoral degree in folklore at Indiana University.

After receiving full funding from Indiana University on the recommendation of Dr. Wilgus, Dr. Montell moved to Bloomington in 1961, and completed his dissertation "A Folk History of the Coe Ridge Negro Colony" in 1964, one of the pioneering works

incorporating oral history into the study of folklore. The work was subsequently published as *The Saga of Coe Ridge*, which won the Award of Merit from the American Association for State and Local History (Montell 1970).

Montell was inspired by cultural geographer Carl O. Sauer, who was a visiting professor while Montell was at Indiana. Sauer told Montell that if he could relive his academic years, he would choose one small, subregional area and write a book about its people and cultural landscapes. Then every fifteen years, he would examine the changes that had occurred to landscape and people. Montell chose the Kentucky-Tennessee Upper Cumberland as his small, subregional area, which encompasses South Central Kentucky and North Central Tennessee. But he refused to wait fifteen years for changes to occur. He drives every back road of the eighteen county area three to four times a year, noting the changes to the landscape.

Figure 3 - Lynwood Montell
Sources: Dept. of Folk Studies and Anthropology

He began teaching history at Campbellsville College (now Campbellsville University) in 1963, where he also served as Academic Dean. In all of his history courses, at least a quarter of the semester would be devoted to the folklife approach. Class projects involved conducting interviews and ethnographic photography. He taught one class in

supernatural folklore where students would go home and collect stories told by their relatives and community members. The fieldwork, which can be found in the Folklife Archives today, formed the basis for *Ghosts Along the Cumberland*, published by the University of Tennessee Press in 1975. The book is now on its fifth printing, and according to local librarian lore, is the most stolen book in the history of Upper Cumberland libraries.

Gordon Wilson called Dr. Montell in 1969 and asked if he would be interested in coming to Western Kentucky University. After taking a week to ponder the decision, Dr. Montell accepted the position, which he began that fall. He would bring the bulk of the materials he and his students had collected, which had been accumulating in boxes in his office at Campbellsville College, to Western Kentucky University. These would go on to be the first numbered Folklife Archives collections.

While strolling the campus on the day of his arrival, Dr. Montell stumbled across Gordon Wilson on the sidewalk in front of Cherry Hall. Dr. Wilson looked at Dr. Montell and said "Lynwood, I can't tell you how many years I have been thinking about the fact that we need to have you here" (Montell 2009). Wilson, in his last years, had been able to assemble a core folklore faculty.

Gordon Wilson had technically retired at the end of 1959. Sensing that faculty folklorists Kenneth Clarke and Mary Clark (nee Washington) were close to retirement, and having already lost D.K. Wilgus to UCLA, Dr. Wilson had targeted Dr. Montell, who was already established in the field, to continue folklore studies at Western Kentucky University. Dr. Montell would be the last folklorist Wilson would bring to the university.

Wilson died the following year, but because of his prescient recruiting, folklore studies at Western Kentucky University grew.

The popularity of Dr. Montell's folklore classes at Western Kentucky University was immediate. His classes were so large, students were being turned away simply because there was not a classroom large enough to hold them. The enthusiasm for folklore studies made the construction of a folklore program the next logical step.

Together "English" professors Kenneth Clarke, Mary Clarke, and Camilla Collins and "history" professor Lynwood Montell, all of whom possessed doctoral degrees in folklore, decided it was time to establish an independent program dedicated to folklore. The program was established in 1970, and soon thereafter, in 1973, the faculty decided to establish a graduate program as well. Dr. Montell chose to name the program "Folk Studies" over "Folklore" because he felt the word "folklore" was still laughable at the time. History professors at Western Kentucky University considered "folklore" to be the falsehood of history. It was felt that the folklore materials collected over the years would serve as an excellent source for student and faculty research in the department. Mrs. Hodges reflected on this moment in the development of the Folklife Archives:

> Some of the professors said the materials they had, they'd put them in boxes, and they were just putting them under tables, and just keeping them, knowing that in the future they would be a lot of benefit to their students (Hodges 2009).

In a memorandum dated October 19, 1970, Dr. Montell makes his case to Vice President of Academic Affairs Raymond Cravens for establishing an "Archive of Folk Culture":

> The purpose of the Archive is to gather and preserve traditional materials and to make them available to (1) students in Western Kentucky University classes and to (2) qualified researchers in subjects such as literature, speech, anthropology, sociology and music, as well as in folklore.
>
> The Archive would consist of annotated manuscript tale and song texts and taped field collections made by professional collectors and supervised students; student studies; and commercial recordings. Relevant collections particularly of Kentucky and the adjacent states, from amateur and professional students of folklore will be solicited; e.g. the Renfro Valley Collection. It is anticipated that copies of collections made at Western Kentucky University in earlier years and now housed at other locations will be added to the Archive. To facilitate usage, these collections will be cross-indexed according to culture, geographic area, genre, and content.
>
> A partial list of the materials expected to be housed in the Archive would include: Card files for short items, 8 1/2 x 11 pages for longer texts, photographic slides, films, photographs, taped field collections, secondary

material (research studies by students), other documents, bibliographical files, and clipping files.

Desired space and equipment needed would include one room for work tables, desks, filing cabinets for Archive business, and book shelves. A second room would be needed for the Archive collection, along with tables and chairs for students while they are using the materials. In this main Archive room would be needed storage facilities for many card files, recorded tapes in individual metal containers, records, microfilm, manuscripts, slides, films, photographs, and other documentary files.

Other equipment necessary would include

- One microfilm reader
- Two tape recorders and listening stations
- Xerox or z copier
- Storage area or room for recordings and photographic equipment, blank tape, other supplies

Study is being given to the possibility of transferring carded material to a supplementary retrieval system which would utilize Western's present IBM central computer system. Additionally, Mrs. Thomason, the Clarkes, and I have all been actively thinking toward the day when the Folk Studies Program at Western will lead all others in the southeastern region of the United States. This is a real and tangible possibility and is a project which deserves institutional support. We appreciate your helpful suggestions and

leadership in times past and trust that this new venture will also have your endorsement.

I shall await word from you before talking with other personnel regarding program specifics.

The collections were then transfered to Helms-Cravens Library. The folklore archives occupied an office area on the eighth floor near the other social science materials and was alloted filing cabinets and shelving. It was officially established in November of 1971 as the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives. The official "Agreement" was dated August 31, 1971 and read as follows:

Received on behalf of Western Kentucky University the body of material known as the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive. The material consists of Xerox copies of approximately 14,755 sheets of texts and 118 7" magnetic tape recordings, all duplicates of the material in the original Western Kentucky Folklore Archive at the Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, University of California, Los Angeles.

The material is accepted for deposit under the following conditions:

1. The materials may be used by students, staff, and other authorized persons for purposes of scholarly research.
2. Materials may be duplicated on a limited basis for educational and scholarly purposes.

3. Material may be published only with the written authorization of D.K. Wilgus. Publication of archival material deposited by Herbert Halpert will require also his written authorization. Issuance of commercial phonographic recordings or commercial tapes require as well the agreement of the performers. No material noted as deposited by Josiah H. Combs is to be located at the University of Kentucky or the Filson Club.
4. In the event of the death of D.K. Wilgus, permission to publish may be granted by the Director, Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, University of California, Los Angeles, or the executive officer of whatever facility in which the originals of the Western Kentucky Folklore Archive are deposited.

Folk studies students began conducting intensive fieldwork focusing on local life, local people, and the culture they produced. A typical class assignment include taking six to eight carloads of students to a subregional area and spending two to three nights examining local life. Each student would be responsible for interviewing local people and photographing the community. The results of the assignment were donated to the Folklife Archives en masse.

One such project was done on Kyrock in northern Edmonson County, which was a company town built to harvest asphalt at the Kyrock mine. The result of the students

work was “sort of a little time capsule of that community, and a history of it also” (Jeffrey 2010). This project and similar other ones are used extensively by researchers.

The classes were told in the beginning that they would be donating the materials they collected to the Folklife Archives. Students would turn all collected materials plus donation forms over to Dr. Montell, who would then take responsibility for getting the materials to the Folklife Archives. To the occasional chagrin of the librarian working in the Folklife Archives, all student projects were turned in, regardless of quality. The only exception was for informants who agreed to be interviewed but did not want the interview placed in a public archive. Dr. Montell has kept these special cases in his private collection.

After transfer to Helms-Cravens Library, the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives was cared for by the “Social Science Librarians.” These included Robert Phillips, Tony Moffeit, Patricia MacLeish, and Robert Turek in the 1970s. Janet Alm, a 1981 graduate of the Folk Studies program, seems to be the first person to refer to herself as “Folklore Archivist.” She would vie for the permanent position of Coordinator of Manuscripts/Folklife Archives soon to be created, although Pat Hodges would ultimately be rehired to fill the job.

A flyer produced by library staff advertising the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives of the day describes it like so:

> The Western Kentucky University Folklore, Folklife and Oral History Archives is located on the eighth floor of the Helm-Cravens Library. Its purpose is twofold: to collect and preserve materials relating to the history,

> customs, speech and life of South Central Kentucky; and to make these materials accessible to the students, faculty and other serious researchers. The Holdings of the archives are divided into a number of different collections each of which has its own indexes for locating materials. These collections include a Tape Collection containing about 800 reels and cassettes of music and interviews; the Field Research Collection containing manuscripts and accompanying photographs or other materials of field projects; Folksong Collection containing transcriptions of traditional ballads and folksongs; and various other collections covering regional speech, beliefs, proverbial lore, traditional architecture, etc.

In the late 1970s Manuscripts and Folklife Archives was forced to move. It was temporarily relocated to the main area of Gordon Wilson Hall, directly below the Folk Studies program at the time. This would be its final temporary location before making the permanent move to the Kentucky Building.

Lynwood Montell has donated virtually everything that he has done and still does to the Folklife Archives, with the exception of his dissertation fieldwork which remains at Indiana University. When asked why he feels this is important, he replied, “I deposited all of the things in the archive simply because I wanted the people to know that I was enough interested in what they had told me that I wanted to preserve it” (Montell 2009).

Dr. Montell was a central figure in both the creation and perpetuation of the Folklife Archives. His encouragement helped fill the archive with three decades of student donations. Furthermore, his prolific fieldwork, which he also donated, is listed

with the Sarah Gertrude Knott collection as one of their finest collections. There are many other excellent contributions from other individuals as well including Josiah H. Combs, Herbert Halpert, and Gordon Wilson. Furthermore, graduate students conducting fieldwork for theses have endowed the Folklife Archives with some large, excellent collections.

As one would expect, what is considered to be the best collections held at the Folklife Archives has changed over time. In fact, near the inception of the Folklore, Folklife and Oral History Archives, the *Procedures Handbook*, compiled by Adolfina V. Simpson under the guidance of Dr. Vera Guthrie, lists primarily faculty fieldwork, which is quite rare in comparison to student fieldwork, as the pinnacle of the collections. These include the "Gordon Wilson Collection," which is "a study of folk speech and folklore items from the Mammoth Cave Region, Edmonson County, Kentucky." After the passing of Gordon Wilson, the collection was formally closed, with a final tally of 18,500 cards and 48 tapes arranged into four categories: general folk speech items, proverbial lore, folk beliefs, and miscellaneous items.

Professor Lynwood Montell's fieldwork on folk belief is held in the "Montell Belief Collection." These focus very generally on beliefs found in the state of Kentucky. Interestingly, at the time, these were classified according to the system devised by Wayland Hand in the *Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore*, Volumes VI and VII, the same work the prescient Thelma James coveted for future use in folklore archive classification.

Folksongs, always of interest to folklorists, have been collected for the archive by many prominent folklorists of the day, including Dr. Wilgus, Lynwood Montell, Herbert Halpert, and George W. Boswell. The "Folksong Collection," which is also now closed, are arranged by category, with ballads assigned Child or Laws numbers, with the miscellaneous songs identified by first lines.

Faculty from other departments have also made use of the university's folklore archives. Dr. Hugh Thomason of the Department of Government donated a large collection of Kentucky political folklore items, known as the "Political Folklore Collection." The collection, however, is restricted due to its sensitive nature.

The D.K. Wilgus collection became after his departure its own collection, known as the "Wilgus Collection." Genres covered include games, rhymes, tales, customs, beliefs, folk speech, jokes, and recipes.

One popular collection of note mentioned earlier is the Sarah Gertrude Knott Collection. Knott was the founder and director of the National Folk Festival (see Williams 2006). Although the collection sees much use due to its influential subject, it is particularly interesting in that it is one of the few collections in the Folklife Archives that contains information about a proponent of folklore, rather than a collection of folk materials themselves. The collection contains correspondence, programs, newspaper clippings, photographs, and the preliminary materials for a book. Besides one transcribed interview with Knott, the collection is essentially the manuscripts of a prominent public folklore figure, yet found a home in the Folklife Archives.

In the late 1970s, Annie Archbold under the auspices of the Bowling Green-Warren County Arts Commission conducted fieldwork focusing on the traditional arts and crafts of Warren County. The interviews, photographs, and slides she amassed were donated to the Folklife Archives and are held as the "Annie Archbold Collection." A book was subsequently published using these materials entitled *Traditional Arts and Crafts of Warren County Kentucky* (Archbold 1980).

Of course, even if not originally highlighted, from the beginning most of the actual fieldwork donated to the Folklife Archives has been done by students under the direction of folklore faculty. One of these, under the direction of Gordon Wilson, was the "Student Linguistic Collection." Although all Kentucky counties were eligible under this study, it was the immediate region where the most intense collecting occurred. The materials are divided into five major categories: Linguistic Atlas Short Form, Dictionary of American Regional English (D.A.R.E.) questionnaire, free conversation, special questionnaire items, and informant files.

Another student collection of note, the "Campbellsville College Student Collection," brought by Lynwood Montell to Western Kentucky University after his defection from Campbellsville College. This collection is particularly focused on types of Kentucky folk architecture, which Dr. Montell would use in his 1976 book *Kentucky Folk Architecture* and film *Folk Housing in Kentucky*.

CHAPTER 3: EARLY MODERN HISTORY

As we have seen, several folklorists were influential in developing the Folklife Archives, but it would be left to a librarian to run the day-to-day operations. That librarian was Pat Hodges. Upon graduating from Western Kentucky University in 1969, Mrs. Hodges inquired as to a graduate assistantship in Helms-Craven Library, thinking she might like to be a research librarian. The head librarian assured her of a position but wanted her to work in the Kentucky Building her first semester. Second semester she could move to the reference area of the main library if she desired. Mrs. Hodges was sent to work as the assistant to Elaine "Penny" Harrison, who had just been hired the year before to begin working with manuscript materials, the first librarian hired specifically for this task. Manuscripts had been collected by the librarians since the 1920s at Western Kentucky University, but very little had been done with the documents besides collection and storage in containers.

At the end of her first semester, Mrs. Hodges knew she was where she was supposed to be, in an area of the library that combined both research and regional history, her other major. Although little did she know at the time, with the exception of one short break, she would spend the next thirty-eight years there. While in this position she received her Master's in Library Media and was offered several full-time positions, but chose to take two half-time positions instead, one in her hometown of Franklin at the local high school, and the other at Western Kentucky University. At the end of the year, both positions became full-time positions, and Mrs. Hodges had her choice. Mrs. Hodges

chose Western Kentucky University. The next twelve and a half years, Mrs. Hodges would work as a Western Kentucky University librarian, eventually being promoted to Coordinator of Manuscripts.

Figure 1 - Pat Hodges
Source: Photograph by Author

In 1981, she and her husband moved to Chattanooga, Tennessee, for her husband's career. Two and a half years later, the family returned to Kentucky, and Mrs. Hodges, whose previous job was available, was told she could return to her same position at her same desk. There had, in fact, been a hiring freeze during her time away, and her position had never been filled, and her desk never soiled. Upon her return, Mrs. Hodges was told that she would inherit the additional responsibility of overseeing the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives, the first time she had worked with them at all. For the next twenty-three years, Mrs. Hodges would be the Coordinator of Manuscripts/Folklife Archives.

Her first job was to get the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives combined with Manuscripts. The move to the Kentucky Building was completed within a month of her return. It was also soon decided that six words was "a little much," and Mrs. Hodges decided to change the name simply to the "Folklife Archives," which it is known as to this day.

One of the problems Mrs. Hodges encountered in her time as coordinator was the lack of evaluation of materials prior to donation. Lynwood Montell does not deny this point. He admits he would donate "everything" his students turned in to him (Montell 2009). Some projects didn't even show the basics of grammatical competence like "begin[ning] each word of a sentence with a capital letter" and "put[ting] a period at the end" (Hodges 2009). But Mrs. Hodges knew that there was value in some of the grammatical atrocities. She would ask herself, "Are they giving us some information here that we would never get from anyone else, and is it worth something?" (Hodges 2009). Mrs. Hodges requested the faculty be more selective in what was donated to the archive, which she believes worked.

Mrs. Hodges admits there were still plenty of donations that probably should not have been accepted but were because she chose to err on the side of inclusiveness. Content, in the end, was more important than grammar or style, and Mrs. Hodges did not want to risk excluding anything that might be helpful to researchers in the future.

Mrs. Hodges attempted to meet fairly regularly with the Folk Studies faculty, but this endeavor lasted no more than a year before dying out. The Folk Studies faculty showed no intentions of micro-managing. "Basically they were not as concerned about it as long as we took care of it and kept it running with no problems. Hey, go for it. And that's basically what we did" (Hodges 2009).

Before Mrs. Hodges returned, the Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Archives had a full-time person, a half-time person, and four students. Upon her return, staffing had been reduced to Mrs. Hodges and one of the previous four students, Tom. Mrs.

Hodges, who felt completely lost, relied on Tom to teach her the workings of the Folklife Archives. Mrs. Hodges relayed an anecdote on how much she had to learn when she arrived:

> They had a card catalog, and then they had all these tapes and so forth on shelving. And I tried my best to interpret what was on the card catalog that would designate where you went to find the materials, and I was just lost. So one day Tom came in, and I said alright, I've got to have some assistance here. I hope you were here long enough to learn this. I said tell me what this means. So he looked at it and he said "Oh, they don't even use that anymore. They quit using that a while ago" (Hodges 2009).

Mrs. Hodges discussed the situation and came to the conclusion that the Folklife Archives should be arranged using the same system as Manuscripts, because many patrons who came in would use materials from both collections. Before this, cataloging had been limited to twelve subject possibilities, which included songs, rhymes, games, tales, riddles, beliefs, language, names, custom, food, and industry. The new system allowed for more flexibility, and the inclusion of organization by county and by person.

After establishment in 1971, library staff were tasked with the very unusual task of caring for a folklore archive. Originally, librarians intended to maintain the genre classification using standard folklore reference works, in addition to Library of Congress Subject headings. But as the backlog mounted, the idealism faded and the Manuscripts librarians chose to categorize solely based on to the Library of Congress subject headings

that they were accustomed to, which they saw as more practical, more accessible, and more compatible with the rest of Special Collections.

Since its inception in the 1950s, the Folklife Archives had taken in approximately 2,000 fieldwork donations and 2,000 cassette tapes and reel-to-reels. Beginning in the 1970s, a new system was formulated for processing these donations, reminiscent of the manuscripts system. Donations were now assigned accession numbers as they came in, the first number correlating to the year of the accession, regardless of when the actual fieldwork took place, followed by a second number which referenced the numerical order in which the donation was accessioned that year. The numbers were alway preceded by the suffix "MSS," which stood for "Manuscripts." This accession number, which can still be found on older donations today, is now officially known as the "old number."

The accession number, the accession date, the author, and the title of the project were all noted in the official "Folklore, Folklife, and Oral History Accessions Handbook." An accession sheet was then completed for each project, which held more detailed information. In addition to the information held in the accession book, the accession sheet includes information on "the donor" (often a professor donating the work on behalf of the "author" or "collector"). A section was kept for noting the "physical description" of the project, which in this case included information about the number of pages, illustrations, sound recordings, and additional accompanying materials. The address of the collector was also recorded, as it is to this day.

Standard procedure called next for the accession number to be noted and a bright red "Folklore and Folklife Collection Western Kentucky University" stamp to be used on

every page. After this, photographs were put into photo-corners, staples were removed, and clippings from periodicals were transferred onto high quality bond paper. The materials were then placed in a similarly labeled folder, which the staff lamented at the time were not acid-free due to lack of funds. Restricted materials were noted with a red dot in the upper right-hand corner. Cassette tapes and reel-to-reels were cross-referenced, assuming other work was donated as well, in the project's folder but held separately.

Cassette tape and reel-to-reel donations were accessioned very similarly to paper donations. They were also labeled sequentially, using a “T” prefix for reel-to-reel and a “CT” suffix for cassettes, but the date was not used. Numbering was continuous from year to year, and was recorded in two separate notebooks, one for cassette tapes (“Accessions Cassettes”) and one for reel-to-reels and video cassettes (“Accessions Reels and Videotapes”). Recorded on the facade of the tape was, at minimum, the “CT” or “T” number, the collector, the informant, and the general topic. The recording date and location were also included when available.

Accessioning was done as quickly as possibly. Cataloging on the other hand, which actually required carefully reading the project, was done as time permitted. Archive staff would wind and rewind cassette tapes periodically, believing this would preserve their quality. This was likely due to the encouragement of Dr. Lynwood Montell, who mentioned that he encouraged the archives to follow this preservation technique when I spoke with him. Besides the lack of acid free folders, Folklife Archives staff also lamented their inability to store tapes in a temperature and humidity controlled room, which they deemed as simply “not feasible” at the present time.

Although Pat Hodges would be the driving force behind switching to the new cataloging system, years before librarians had sensed a deficiency in the original classification method, and attempted to begin change. On March 23 ,1976 social science librarian Patricia MacLeish wrote in an interoffice memo:

> After having worked with the existing cataloging system in the Folklore and Folklife Archive for several months it became evident to me that the cataloging procedures were inadequate. The cataloging system was complex and attempted to be both subjective and classificatory at the same time. Only staff members trained to use the system could easily find material. After discussing the problem with Tony Moffeit, we decided a change was in order.
>
> Eunice Wells suggested the use of Library of Congress subject headings in cataloging the folklore material. Since this was a system with which the archive's users were familiar, it seemed an excellent alternative. It was abvious [sic] that the material in the archive was more specialized than what L.C. headings might cover. The initiation of an authority file for the special libraries on campus though would allow for the establishment of additional headings and thus, make the use of L.C. headings more feasible. It seemed possible then that the use of L.C. subject headings would be workable in the Folklore Archive.

Beginning in 1981, with Pat Hodges now in control, the Folklife Archives adopted the Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, Second Addition as their modus operandi.

However, due to the idiosyncrasies of a Folklife Archives, the Library of Congress is occasionally lacking in specific subject headings. In this case, the archivist would create what she considered an appropriate heading, leading to a de facto hybrid system. The archive maintained an "Authority File" to track these creations, ensuring that despite the innovation, internal uniformity would be maintained. A guide for this system can be found in the "Subject Heading List for the Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Archive" and librarian Robert Phillips' supplementary "A User's Guide to Subject Headings Used in Western Kentucky University Folklore and Folklife Archive."

For example, in August 1979, it was noted that, although Library of Congress subject headings existed for beliefs, proverbs, and superstitions, there did not exist the appropriate subdivision necessary for the specificity required in a folklore archive. The researcher, thus, looking under the "Beliefs, Proverbs, Superstitions, Etc." category is instructed on a catalog card to check the invented "weatherlore" subject heading, because there exists "no LC heading or subdivision appropriate for such collections."

The Card Catalog was originally stored in the Manuscript Reading Room, and eventually moved to Harrison-Baird Reading Room. This was the primary method of accessing the Folklife Archives, and the method of creating these cards was meticulous. Cards were created for, and researchers could find projects by, shelf list, collector, informant, title, and subject heading. Regardless of the subject heading, all cards held certain information deemed requisite. This included accession number, the collector's name, the informant's name, physical description, geographical subdivisions, and subject headings.

Most materials were stored at the time in steel filing cabinets, arranged sequentially according to accession number. The exception was made for reel-to-reels, cassette tapes, and video cassettes, which were stored separately for their protection, reel-to-reels upright on wooden shelves and video cassettes and cassette tapes in plastics cases and then in cardboard file containers.

Beginning at this period in the Folklife Archives history, it may be best to think of the Folklife Archives as an "idea" rather than simply a physical manifestation. I have come to this conclusion because of the many "Manuscript" materials which would more suitable for the Folklife Archives but were processed as a Manuscript donation because of either an ostensible ambiguity of categorization or to protect that materials during one of the precarious periods in the folklore archives' existence.

Graduate students donations, from small class projects to prodigious theses, are always housed as "Folklife Archives." Professors' submissions are usually stored as manuscripts. A careful perusal of, for example, John Morgan's Dark-Fired Tobacco donations and Lynwood Montell's *Killings* donations shows there is little difference between the the materials submitted. Both contain the basic tapes, transcripts, photographs, etc. Nonetheless, professors' materials are archived as manuscripts, whereas graduate students work is archived as Folklife Archives.

The distinction between Manuscript and Folklife Archive material is muddy at best. For example, Lynwood Montell's total body of fieldwork, which takes up almost an entire row of shelving on its own, is cataloged exclusively in Manuscripts. On the other hand, student papers devoid of any fieldwork material are saved in the Folklife Archives.

Pat Hodges, who acknowledged the problem without need of encouragement, explains it as follows:

> There had to be a decision made about where the faculty's materials go. If the person has some things that pertain to his educational career, as to what's personal and what's professional. And whether it goes with the manuscripts collection or with the Folklife Archives. Like Dr. Gordon Wilson, Sr., anything that had to do with teaching we tried to - and as I'm saying this it's hard to distinguish. Most of his materials are in manuscripts, and part of it is - as I'm saying this I realize we did it because we had better hold and could materials easier in the manuscripts area than we could in the Folklife Archives. They were easier to search and had better finding aids and so forth (Hodges 2009).

CHAPTER 4: MODERN HISTORY

The current Coordinator for Manuscripts/Folklife Archives, Jonathan Jeffrey, was in graduate school working on a history degree at Stephen F. Austin State University in Nacogdoches, Texas, using their special collections when he realized he would like to be an archivist. He attended the library science program at the University of Maryland, concentrating in manuscripts and archives. He worked as a librarian in the Kentucky Library from 1990 to the end of 2006, although he had been working eight hours a week in Manuscripts since 2000. At the beginning of 2007, he was promoted to Coordinator of Manuscripts/Folklife Archives, succeeding Pat Hodges' three decade reign.

Today the entire operation is quite different. The Folklife Archive's card catalog, approaching obsolescence but occasionally still useful, is located in the Harrison-Baird Reading Room on the other side of the foyer from the Manuscripts Reading Room. This is due to the fact that the Manuscripts Reading Room no longer has a reference librarian available to field patron requests. All requests for materials are submitted to the librarian manning the reference desk, who will summon another staff member to retrieve the materials. The Folklife Archives stacks today are located throughout the Manuscripts Reading Room. In front are the vertical file and cabinets containing donations dating back to Lynwood Montell's tenure as a professor at Campbellsville College. In a small antechamber to the rear of the reading room lies D.K. Wilgus' folksong collection, among others. Behind this is the Manuscripts and Folklife Archives collection. Currently the

majority of these donations, from as far back as the 1950s to as recently as the present year, are located along a row of shelving at the far end of the room.

The Folklife Archives continues to be located on campus in Western Kentucky University's Kentucky Building, under the auspices of the Kentucky Library. The building, which is also home to the Kentucky Museum, is responsible in general for the library's "Special Collections." Manuscripts/Folklife Archives share a single webpage on the Kentucky Building's website. On the website, the Folklife Archives are described as follows:

> Folklife Archives holdings consist of papers and projects generated by folk studies undergraduate, graduate, and faculty members coupled with reel-to-reel, audio, and videotape interviews and performances (some transcripts), about folk ways, folk songs, folk beliefs, and regional speech patterns. Two of the outstanding collections of individuals are those of Lynwood Montell and Sarah Gertrude Knott.

The Department of Folk Studies and Anthropology also maintains a webpage about the Folklife Archives. The link to the page can be found in the frame on the right hand side of the department's main page. Underneath the picture of the Folklife Archives' graduate assistant at work in the Kentucky Building's Natcher Room is the following information:

> The Folklore Archive is located at the Kentucky Library. It serves as a resource for students and lay people, with information about all of Kentucky at each patron's fingertips. The archive has been used specifically by Western Kentucky Folklore students both as a repository for work done while at the University and a resource for materials used in successful National Register nominations and class research.
>
> The archive holds more than just documentation. In fall of 2009, the Kentucky Archive received a grant from the Kentucky Oral History Commission to purchase digitization equipment. With this equipment, students from the Folklore department have been able to digitize collections within the archive and for professors in the department.
>
> The Folklore Archive, headed by Jonathan Jeffrey, is an excellent resource for any student interested in Kentucky history!

The Folklife Archives, both as an idea and a tangible manifestation, lives in the Manuscripts Reading Room and its associated stacks. The Folklife Archives custodians are the Manuscripts librarians, of whom there are currently two full-time, the Coordinator for Manuscripts/Folklife Archives (Jonathan Jeffrey) and Manuscripts/Folklife Archives Assistant (Lynn Neidermier), plus a half-time Manuscript Technician (Donna Lyle), two students workers, and a graduate assistant. The graduate assistant is the only staff person dedicated solely to the Folklife Archives.

Jonathan Jeffrey thinks of the Folklife Archives as more of a student collection than a faculty collection. There will always be items in the Manuscript collection that

would perhaps be be better in the Folklife Archives, a community scholar's fieldwork on local quilting for example. These types of projects will continue to be preserved in the Manuscript collection in the future. But, the beauty of the Folklife Archives being hosted in the same building as the Manuscripts Collection is that Folklife Archives projects can "aid people doing research in the Manuscript collection" (Jeffrey 2010).

Picking and choosing whether a faculty member's papers are put in the Manuscripts or Folklife Archives collection is a discretionary decision. Politically, at least at one time, Manuscripts was the safer decision due to the occasional precarious predicament that the Folklife Archives found itself in, to which the more stable Manuscripts Collection was somewhat immune. Bibliographic records and access are more easily guaranteed in the Manuscripts Collection.

The recent renaissance of the Folklife Archives has led to a sense of security that did not exist in the past. Recent Folk Studies faculty donations, including Michael Ann Williams' interviews on Sarah Gertrude Knott and Renfro Valley which were used in her book *Staging Tradition* (Williams 2006), have been placed in the Folklife Archives collection, making today's Folklife Archives collection more of a combination of student and faculty work.

Since the 1980s, one of the big differences between Western Kentucky University's Folklife Archives and most other folklore archives is that materials are categorized by a manuscript-derived system of subject analytics rather than a folklore derived genres system. Although D.K. Wilgus originally planned to use a genre-based

system, due to decades of librarian stewardship, the manuscript hybrid system is now firmly entrenched.

Processing has changed vastly in the new millennium, understandably changed by the advent of technological advancements. The business of processing is dramatically different from only a couple of decades ago. The core idea of a hybrid manuscript-folklore archive system remains the same, but the Folklife Archives have regained a sort of independence from the Manuscripts Collection. Funding, although still minimal, has allowed the Folklife Archives to enter the digital age, which can be seen in the processing changes that have occurred over the years.

While donation methods remain essentially intact, from who donates the project to who accepts it, and what documentation must accompany it, accessioning is notably different. The two numbers used to differentiate projects previously, the year the donation is accessioned and sequential number of the project that year, remain the core of the accession number. The previous example, “1982-42” would now read would now read “1982.42.1,” when entered into the PastPerfect collection management system.

PastPerfect is collection management software primarily used by museum personnel. It can also be useful to related institutions such as libraries, art galleries, and archives. In theory the software provides those responsible for the institution instant access to all data concerning their collections. It can used for keeping track of accessions, exhibits, condition reports, repatriations, and loans.

The PastPerfect accession numbers are coincidentally very similar to the folklore archives original accessioning system. As discussed earlier, not only did the Folklife

Archives have its own accessions notebook, it had a separate book for specific donation mediums (e.g. paper, cassette tapes, reel-to-reels). The PastPerfect system has completely replaced these notebooks, but unlike the notebooks, the PastPerfect system is shared with all the departments in Special Collections, including Manuscripts, Rare Books, and the Museum, who accession their files similarly. If a donation was originally donated in 1982, it will be accessioned again in PastPerfect using that year, but will be assigned a sequential number in the order that the re-accessioning occurs, all departments' re-accessions included.

A second large change is the shelf number now assigned. The "MSS" suffix has been changed to "FA" (i.e. Folklife Archives), showing again what I believe to be an increased independence on the part of the Folklife Archives from the Manuscripts divisions. The FA number, similar in some ways to the MSS number of times past, is determined solely by the Folklife Archives staff, without regard to other Special Collections divisions, in a system reminiscent of the old notebook, although the "notebook" is now stored as a massive word document on Manuscripts/Folklife Archives Assistant's computer. The FA number is assigned chronologically as projects are processed. Whereas the PastPerfect or accession number could be considered the "expert" number, used in complex affairs, the FA number can seen as the "practical" number. It is by this sequential numbering system that folders and boxes are stored, now on shelves, and it is by this number that researchers will request files. While assigning a donation a more official PastPerfect number can be put off indefinitely, a project must be assigned an FA number rather quickly, simply so the project has a resting place.

The “Folklore and Folklife Collection” stamp is not used anymore, nor is every page numbered with a collection number, as it was in the past. The new policy is to write in pencil the FA number on the back of the first, last, and every tenth page in between. The materials in a single folder are sorted into “items,” which are essentially minimal units. One photograph counts as an item, whereas the entirety of a essay, be it two pages or two hundred pages, also counts as a single item. These items are then ordered logically in the folder, and assigned a sequential item number. All items containing more than one page are then numbered “item number - page number,” with a double underline indicating the last page of an item. If the projects contains multiple folders, item numbers are not continuous from one folder to the next, returning to “1” at the beginning of each new folder.

Cassette tapes, and more often compact discs, are today always kept with the rest of the project, rather than being held separately. Their only separation comes from being assigned their own manilla envelope, and within larger projects, their own folder within the box. This reflects a general philosophy of the Folklife Archives today, which aims to keep the entirety of projects together for easy retrieval.

Access is the last big change to occur this decade. Although the card catalog, now in the Harrison-Baird Reading Room, still exists, it is slowly being dismantled, eventually to be completely replaced by TopSCHOLAR, Western Kentucky University's online digital repository. TopSCHOLAR defines itself as follows:

> TopSCHOLAR is a University-wide, centralized digital repository dedicated to scholarly research, creative activity and other full-text

> learning resources that merit enduring and archival value and permanent access. WKU faculty, staff, and faculty-sponsored students are encouraged to publish in TopSCHOLAR.

After reaching this webpage (http://digitalcommons.wku.edu), universally accessible through the Western Kentucky University's Library, the interested researcher clicks "colleges, departments, units" under the "Browse Research Scholarship Heading" banner, and then clicks on the "Folklife Archives" link, located under the "Library Special Collections" heading, which is located under the "University Libraries" heading. The researcher now has two options listed under "Browse the Folklife Archives" collection. He or she can choose between "FA Finding Aids" and "FA Oral Histories." The "Finding Aids" link is where the many finding aids created every week in the Folklife Archives are stored. This is what will eventually replace the card catalog completely. Although the full-text of the actual project is not currently available online, the researcher can examine the finding aid and assess the relevance of the project in question to their own research. At this point, if the researcher decides they would indeed be interested in reviewing the full project, they can make a request for copies by calling or emailing the Manuscripts/Folklife Archives staff, or review the original project by visiting the reading room in person.

Using the search feature in the upper left corner, the researcher can quickly search the entire repository at once. It is this feature that will enable TopSCHOLAR and the finding aid to eventually completely replace the antiquated card catalog and its droves of

index cards. It is also an excellent example of the idiosyncratic hybrid system unique to the Folklife Archives at Western Kentucky University, with its many Manuscript influences. The preparation of these finding aids has now completely replaced the preparation of index cards, which is elaborately explained by Adolfina Simpson in her 1981 *Procedures Handbook*.

The Oral Histories page, on the other hand, contains full-text transcriptions that can be downloaded from home and used more or less freely in scholarly research. Although some fieldworkers are so gracious as to transcribe their interviews prior to donating their work, interviews are donated much more often in purely audio form. Transcribing is an extremely time-consuming task, not uncommonly taking as much as ten hours to transcribe a single hour of interview. Due to this fact, transcription is very much a limited good, and Mr. Jeffrey must choose from a huge archive of oral histories the interviews that he thinks are both high quality and relevant to contemporary research demands. As seen by limited number of transcriptions posted under each year, Mr. Jeffrey has the resources to assign only a few transcriptions per year. The task often falls to the Folklife Archives interns, who are usually assigned two transcriptions as a part of the standard 150 hour, three credit internship.

Western Kentucky University's Folklife Archives are going digital as quickly as funding and staffing allows. Finding aids can be accessed digitally through TopSCHOLAR, not just by students, or even just Americans, but by anyone in the world. They can then contact the Folklife Archives with very specific requests, which will be

provided to them. Transcriptions of exemplary projects, like John Morgan's work with darkfire tobacco, are also being made available. In the near future, selected recordings may be made available on the Internet, as other archives have done, but there are obvious concerns about allowing such purely unrestricted access.

The Folklife Archives is looking to the future for providing access to the collections by putting the finding aids online. In 2010 the Folklife Archives made its first full-text collection completely available online, which will be the goal for the future. Transcriptions from oral histories, if available, have also been posted online. These transcriptions, if not provided by the donor, are done solely by Folk Studies interns. Deciding which interviews will be the most useful or "the best" can be a tricky supposition. Mr. Jeffrey uses his experience as coordinator in picking and choosing those interviews that he thinks will be used the most, like John Morgan's work on tobacco farmers and Lynne Ferguson's work with Taylor County African-American school teachers.

One important member of the Folklife Archives, especially in regards to accessioning, cataloging, and digitization, is the graduate assistant. This person, who is funded Graduate Studies, plays a pivotal role in the operation of the Folklife Archives. In fact, most other universities with folklore archives do not enjoy the collaboration with their library that Western Kentucky University's Folklife Archives does. The well-known folklore archive at the University of California, Berkeley, for example, is run entirely by a graduate assistant.

The WKU Folklife Archives graduate assistant today provides support to the archive in three main capacities: digitization, cataloging, and accessioning. Graduate assistants at the folklore archive date back nearly to the beginning of the Folk Studies graduate program, the current director of the American Folklife Center Peggy Bulger being the first to hold the position (Bulger 2010).

Digitization is made possible by equipment provided by a grant through the Kentucky Oral History Commission. Specifically, this equipment includes one laptop and one cassette-to-wav digital converter. Using Sony's barebones but reliable digital audio editing program Sound Forge, graduate assistants digitize student and faculty audio interviews, including work from Lynwood Montell, Camilla Collins, and Michael Ann Williams. These are converted to wav files and preserved on dual external hard drives. The first year of this program saw over five hundred hours of cassette tapes digitized. The end of the grant meant the equipment had to be returned at the culmination of the Fall 2009 semester, but due to the success of the grant, the equipment will return for a second period by Fall 2010. This effort is partly in response to a preservation assessment conducted in March 2002.

Although initially conducted towards the end of Pat Hodges tenure, the preservation assessment conducted in 2002 would in reality have a stronger effect on Jonathan Jeffrey's time as coordinator and the push for digitization. In 2001 Folk Studies professors Michael Ann Williams and Erika Brady, concerned at the condition of reel-to-reel and cassette tapes in the Folklife Archives, applied for a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a preservation assessment of the audio recordings. In

the application the professors point out that the Folklife Archives "houses a collection of over 1,500 audio reel tapes with approximately 800 hours of interviews and music collected between 1949 and 1983 by several prominent folklorists," but the audio collection is "currently inaccessible for purposes of research or general listening due to both the deteriorating condition of some of the reel tapes and the inability of the Archives to either locate or purchase a reel-to-reel player."

The program requests $2,345 to bring in a "professional conservation specialist" who, after surveying the materials, could make recommendations that would "increase the integrity and availability of this collection for posterity." They state their intention to one day transfer the recordings to a digital format.

The job fell to Alan Stoker, Audio Restoration Engineer for the Country Music Foundation. In his April 2002 "Preservation Assessment of Audio Recordings in Western Kentucky University's Folklore Archives," Stoker gives a dismal, although sympathetic, evaluation of the Folklife Archives. Just a sampling of his criticisms include "no consideration in regards to temperature and humidity for proper storage," "improper tensioning and winding of the tapes," and the possibility of demagnetization due to the storage of magnetic tape recordings on metal shelving.

Stoker recommends the current collection be transferred to two formats: analog reel-to-reel and recordable compact disc. (Analog reel-to-reel was a reliable storage medium at the time, but the scarcity of reel-to-reel players in recent years has led to its obsolescence) Although his recommendations seem sound, the problem lies in the numbers. In his conclusions, after listing the cost of various endeavors the total comes to,

if his top recommendations are followed exactly, $92,419.04. At the very least, using in-house personnel and bulk supplies, the project could cost as little as $34,570.85, although Stoker is very much against using in-house personnel and believes paid positions should be created. In the current fiscal environment this is obviously not feasible, and to the point that Stoker's recommendations have been implemented, it has been Folk Studies interns and graduate assistants who have digitized the audio recordings.

Cataloging is the second mainstay of the Folk Studies graduate assistant. The goal of the Folklife Archives is to preserve projects and provide easy, well-organized access to them in a timely manner. The graduate assistant helps in this goal in two ways. First, he sorts and numbers both new donations coming in regularly, and old donations reaching back to the 1980s that were never properly cataloged. Second, he develops finding aids for these projects. The finding aids are then posted on TopSCHOLAR, enabling researchers to view the basic information of those collections from home.

Accessioning involves the use of the collection management software PastPerfect. This includes both accessioning and "accessioning." New donations are official accessioned into PastPerfect where they can be quickly found by library staff. Older donations, although accessioned once already, are "accessioned" again, this time into PastPerfect, with the goal of having all donations, from the 1950s to present, managed in the PastPerfect system.

Although perhaps not one of the three main functions, the other important function of the graduate assistantship is having a person trained in the discipline of folklore to transmit and translate disciplinary trends to the library staff, who

understandably spend more time reading the *American Archivist* than the *Journal of American Folklore*. Furthermore, it is this reciprocal relationship that serves both the Folklife Archives and the Folk Studies program. The Folklife Archives is able to do its job most efficiently when there is a dedicated graduate assistant to assist with the work, and the Folk Studies program is more likely to be willing to furnish a graduate assistant when the Folklife Archives appears to be providing a valuable service to the program.

The Folk Studies program also occasionally garnishes the Folklife Archives with an intern. These 150 hour, three-credit internships are performed by Folk Studies graduate students and satisfy the requirement of the Public Folklore or Historic Preservation track. When supplied, the intern supplements the graduate assistant as one of the two staff persons who eschew Manuscripts and work only with Folklife Archives materials. The intern is often the only one in this role over summer session. The practice of Folk Studies graduate students interning in the Folklife Archives has been around since at least the early 1970s. Interoffice correspondence shows Social Science Librarians both accepting and occasionally rejecting potential Folk Studies interns throughout the decade.

Today interns learn the basics of Folklife Archives operations, including processing incoming projects, preparing transcriptions, and digitizing audio recordings, when the equipment is available. The experience usually culminates with the intern processing a large collection independently from start to finish. From conversations with Folklife Archives interns, one of the most insightful aspects of the internship seems to be learning the other side of fieldwork, which has the potential to make the intern a better fieldworker.

Ellen Swain notes in her article on oral history in archives that "since the early 1990s...few archival and library publications in the United States have addressed the role and use of oral history in research institutions." It seems that archivists these day are more interested in "oral history in terms of digital management" (Swain 2003:142).

Swain hypothesizes that this has to do with who archivists are today. While in the past they were likely to hold a doctorate in history, today's archivists are more likely to hold degrees in "information sciences." These professionals, therefore, see their role to be in providing, as widely and efficiently as possible, access for researchers, as well as expert preservation of materials.

In the 1981 *Procedures Handbook*, Adolfina Simpson notes that the tape collections are growing very rapidly and only a few had been cataloged due to the archives limited staffing. While cataloging is now more reliable and efficient, the ideal of digitization and online transcription increase the workload of what it means to properly "process" an audio donation.

At the turn of the millennium, the Folklife Archives had thousands of audio interviews on cassette tapes that were potentially at-risk. In response to the preservation assessment, Mr. Jeffrey decided to pursue a grant through Kentucky's Oral History Commission to digitize the collections. The earnest effort shown by Mr. Jeffrey on behalf of the Folklife Archives was noticed by the Folk Studies program, who rewarded him by funding a graduate assistant to work with the Folklife Archives.

At Western Kentucky's University's Folklife Archives, there is still much work to do, not just with audio, but with video as well. The archives do not hold a particularly

large number of video cassettes, but what is held, by donors like John Morgan and Lynwood Montell, is of the quality to be worth the work it will take to preserve.

Digitization does ostensibly add to the life span of a donation by increasing the stability of the medium, but two problems are faced in the process. First, digitizing will not make up for the low quality of the tapes. Second, the tapes, which were produced on old technology, have deteriorated in quality over time, making the digitized copies of equally deteriorated quality. The Folklife Archives would like to get as many of these video cassettes digitized as possible as quickly as possible, but it is an expensive process, and funding is always an issue for a small, regional folklore archive. Furthermore, digitization can lead to what I call the paradox of technology.

> I knew that we were in a serious problem with our audio collection because of the medium that they're on. And the equipment - no longer did we have a workable reel-to-reel player, and to this day we still don't have one. And I have all of these reel-to-reel tapes back here, but I can't allow access to them because I don't have anything that will play it (Jeffrey 2010).

As noted in the preservation assessment, Western Kentucky University has a massive reel-to-reel collection and no technology on which to play them. This problem is not faced by the Folklife Archives alone. The Folklore Institute at Indiana University, the largest folklore program in the Western Hemisphere, faces a similar problem. "The Indiana University Press, can't read its files from eight years ago because they can't get a machine that will read those files" (Hansen 2000). As fragile as paper can be, and despite

technology's great promise of preservation, it is paper that is the most reliable for future use.

A second, related technological paradox exists as well, that has been recognized by a few for some time. Arthur Schlesinger noted in an article written for *The Atlantic* in 1967 that in "three quarters of a century, the rise of the typewriter has vastly increased the flow of paper, while the rise of the telephone has vastly reduced its importance." This extends today to digital recordings, e-mail, blogs, and webpages. The great promise of digital technology is that files are self-archiving and infinitely reproducible and, therefore, potential of loss due to fire, theft, deterioration, etc. is eliminated.

But when the first paradox I mentioned rears its head, that is, when new technology makes old technology obsolete and the collected data is subsequently lost, the job of reconstructing this information will fall to folklorists and oral historians. Folklore and oral history methodology will be crucial in recovering valuable information that was assumed safe. Ellen Swain asks archivists to realize this paradox now and be proactive by "step[ping] into the active role of "creating" new documentation by migrating old formats to new, capturing Web pages to print or disk, and providing primary resources on the Internet" (Swain 2003:149). In this way, archivists will again be creators as well as preservers of primary documentation, a role with which they may not always be entirely comfortable, but which is essential in attaining their goal of maximum utility to the researcher.

None of these intricacies, however, is particularly important to the new students introduced to the Folklife Archives every year, whose more basic question is "What is

this place?" Each semester the Folklife Archives hosts five or six Folk Studies classes. In an introductory folk studies class, students are transported to the Kentucky Library where they are first instructed in the basic rules of the Folklife Archives, which are the same for all of Special Collections, including keeping all bags in the lockers provided and using only pencils while working with the materials. They are then given a brief history of the Folklife Archives and its evolution, followed by an exploration of the types of collections available

After the basics are covered, students are taught not just what the Folklife Archives can do for them, but what they can do for the Folklife Archives. This includes all of the myriad ways the student can document the community, from interviews to photographs to collection of memorabilia. Understanding that the definition of folklore is muddy to everyone, even professional folklorists, the staff member, often Mr. Jeffrey, spends some time letting students know what kind of work is acceptable for donation to the Folklife Archives. This talk is meant to be expansive rather than restrictive.

> I hate to say this but we probably have - I won't say enough - but we have plenty of projects on quilting. I am much more interested what even students are doing today, and documenting those types of things, than I am about getting anymore information about quilting...I'm very interested in students doing things related to their own culture...documenting things that's in their everyday, contemporary life. And there's so many things they could do, sometimes it just doesn't pop into their head. This is something that's a folkway. It's something that we

> do just about everyday, but it never gets documented. I sometimes use the example of braiding hair. I still don't have a project on braiding hair. But it's something that women, and some men, do everyday. I want to know how they learned to do it? Who taught them? What was the setting they did it in? Do they ever talk to anybody else about it? Have they ever taught someone to do it? And these are folkways, and I wish we just had more just their contemporary life. In their life, what is a folkway today? I wish we had more of that, and I'm trying to gear the students I talk to more toward that. And you know the very typical things: cell phone protocol - I still don't have a paper on that. Texting - I don't have a paper on that at all. Just all kinds of things of today, not fifty years ago.

The ideal donation today includes both a digital copy of the work, be it audio interview or photographs, as well as a hard copy. The hardcopy allows for easy use for anybody, including older people who eschew technology like compact disc players and personal computers. But like the vast majority of the population, young and old, they can read. For this reason, even completely digital donations are printed when possible to allow for maximum usage.

Although paper products are used most by patrons, donations submitted in digitized form are highly appreciated because of their ease of preservation. Hard copy photographs and transcriptions must be manually scanned and saved, whereas audio files and digital photographs can simply be transfered from disc to hard drive. The transcription is highly valuable because it can be easily posted online for digital perusal.

In regards to approach, the best projects, according to Mr. Jeffrey, are when a student, doing a paper, conducts fieldwork and then analyzes that data. Either aspect of a project can be and have been turned in individually, but together the projects are most beneficial to future researchers.

As for documentation, supplementally to the papers and the interviews, the folklorist must have been thorough with consent forms and information sheets. Although often rejected by folklorists today as too simplistic, the information sheet can be of great assistance to a future researcher who is looking for contextual information and allows for deeper research. And last but not least, the student must sign a donor form as well. Without these donor forms, projects either simply cannot be reviewed or, if they can, become so restricted in regards to quotation that they become essentially useless.

Today the Folklife Archives relies chiefly on faculty members' recommendations in deciding which donations to accept into the collection. If a faculty member recommends a donation, it is then sent to the Acquisitions Committee for Manuscripts and Folklife Archives. The committee meets and sorts out what will and what will not be taken. The committee must have a compelling reason for rejecting a donation. If a faculty member has recommended a donation, selling the committee on accepting it is mostly perfunctory. On the other hand, if a student acts independently in donating a collection, which is not typical, then Mr. Jeffrey and the committee must take a closer look and decide if the project is of the quality and pertinence to be preserved in the Folklife Archives.

Only a small handful of projects in the past three years have been outright rejected. These donations experienced two main problems. The fieldwork methods may not have followed the rigorous standards that most folklorists hold themselves to today, and thus Mr. Jeffrey did not think it reflected well on the Folk Studies program at Western Kentucky University. The other possibility is that it was severely lacking in consent forms, making the project useless to researchers.

Requesting excessive restrictions be put on a donation also increases the chances of rejection on the part of the Acquisitions Committee. If the work's quality and content merits certain restrictions, then due action will be taken. But if the restrictions seem unnecessary or the content is not worth sitting on a shelf unused for the restricted time span, the committee will simply decline the donation.

On the other hand, the Folklife Archives is more than happy to place certain small restrictions on donations if the donor is concerned their fieldwork will be used by someone else before he or she gets a chance to publish themselves. For example, Mr. Jeffrey agreed to wait five years before putting the transcriptions of a donation on Western Kentucky University's digital repository TopSCHOLAR, where it could be accessed globally, as the donor expects to do all of her publishing on this topic in that time frame. Her work remains completely accessible were a researcher to physically enter the Kentucky Library, but the added restriction gave the donor the necessary sense of security that her work would not be improperly or overly used before she had a chance to publish it herself.

Folk Studies graduate students have shown a lack of interest in donating their work to the Folklife Archives. Mr. Jeffrey always encourages, and will at times go so far as to beg, students to donate their work. The problem as he sees it is, however, that like the donor previously discussed, students are worried that others will “steal” their work and publication opportunities once their fieldwork is made freely available to the public. This ingrained reaction is impossible to fully overcome, as the coordinator's goal of extreme accessibility and an anxious potential donor will never fully mesh. In reality, however, it may be that graduate students are simply too preoccupied with other responsibilities to have the idea of donation even cross their mind. Folk Studies graduate student Beth King put it quite simply: “I really don’t think about donating” (King 2010).

Mr. Jeffrey will use every trick in his metaphorical book, within the boundaries of ethics, to receive the donations he sees as valuable. Rhetoric that he has employed includes loyalty to the alma mater, threat of natural disaster, pointing out the fieldworkers lack of technical training in archival procedures, noting personal space restrictions, and the human proclivity towards forgetfulness. The goal, in Mr. Jeffrey’s mind, is to build the collection up with the best projects available. One large difficulty that he faces is that he is not always aware, especially if the students aren’t coming in and using collections, of the work that students are currently undertaking.

The bridges that he has been building over the last several years with the Folk Studies program he hopes will encourage donation by instilling confidence in the students that their projects will be handled properly, quickly, and professionally. He sees it as necessary to convince students that it benefits them to be part of the permanent record,

and it benefits the Folk Studies program to have the best work it produces on display to the public in the Folklife Archives. He believes the faculty are ultimately the best judge of which projects those happen to be.

Although faculty often want to keep their fieldwork within reach, one service that the Folklife Archives quietly promotes is their ability to create order out of chaos for faculty members and their research. Professors who admit their shortcomings in regards to organization can bring in boxes of materials that are then properly archived by the Manuscript/Folklife Archives staff. In these circumstance when professors do decide they want to use their work, the deftness with which the archivists are able to render the requested material more than makes up for the time making the cross campus trek to the Kentucky Building. In summary, faculty donations are highly desired, but not highly sought after, due to a general perception of standard faculty behavior. Nonetheless new faculty members will continue to be lightly petitioned in the future.

Although projects of local significance are requested most often, a myriad of out-of-state projects are stored in the Folklife Archives as well. Many students have, for example, conducted fieldwork in their hometowns over Spring Break where they have an increased number of contacts and ample time to pursue ideas, which have subsequently made it to the Folklife Archives.

These projects will most likely not be used as often as local projects but are representative of work being done by Folk Studies students, and would therefore be accepted. On the other hand, the globalization of information access around the world, and specifically at Western Kentucky University, has somewhat blurred the lines on

which projects are and are not related to “local” issues. Furthermore, digital access and Internet search engines make researchers searching generically across many states more likely to stumble across what they are looking for many thousands of miles away.

Following this line of thinking, expressive forms that are stereotypically associated with Kentucky, balladry, fiddling, and barbeque for example, are also frequently requested, often over the phone or through the Internet. In this case the researcher has an idea and then chooses a suitable folklore archive.

Folklife Archives, in this way, serve one of their functions by supplementing the Manuscripts Collection. But this logical use is in fact only the second most common function. The pinnacle of Folklife Archives use is in fact those files related to the supernatural. These include projects that deal, for example, with topics like ghost stories, tarot card reading, Ouija boards, UFO’s, and dreams. These projects, of course, don’t usually feature documentation directly of a ghost or a UFO, but rather the narratives of such experiences. When questioned why he thinks these materials are the most frequently requested by patrons, Mr. Jeffrey hypothesizes that it might have something to do with the public’s idea of what folklore is.

This highlights the usage of in-house versus out-of-house. In-house usage focuses on the projects that cover those things that are seen as important to the local community. External usage however, coming by phone and by email, are quite different. These requests, almost always from scholars in the writing process, are usually comparative and ethnological in nature.

The advent of technology has greatly increased external use. The Folklife Archives receives on average at least one request every day, usually through email, and occasionally over the phone. These requests will be honored for a nominal fee. If the request is for audio, the archive can send the patron a digitized copy. Documents and photographs will be photocopied as time allows and sent.

Despite the length that the library staff is willing to go to help their global patrons, the responsibility for doing the research rests solely with the patron. When a patron, reviewing a finding aid online, thinks there may be something of interest and can point the staff to that file, they are more then happy to oblige. What they cannot do, though they are frequently asked to do so, is do the research for the patron. The librarians do not have the time and are not scholastically comfortable making these sorts of judgments for patrons.

The disparity between Folklife Archives and Manuscripts use, estimated by Pat Hodges in her time to be twenty to one in favor of Manuscripts, has diminished today. Usage is now closer to three to one, in favor of Manuscripts. An increase in faculty encouraging students to make use of the Folklife Archives and a greater general awareness of the facility seems to have snowballed usage in the last few years. Although still statistically inferior to Manuscripts, given the context of Manuscripts whose collection is larger, broader, older, and better funded, its younger sibling the Folklife Archives is holding its own.

It must be kept in mind that use does not solely rely on the patron. The research librarians in a closed stacks facility like the Kentucky Library are always a mediating

factor. Educating those working the reference desk on the utility of the Folklife Archives has been instrumental in researchers increasingly deciding to request its collections. When a researcher uses an obvious buzzword like “folk,” “traditional,” or “supernatural,” the reference librarian’s mind easily goes to the Folklife Archives, but projects involving topics on local life, on which the Folklife Archives has much to say, do not always trigger this same response. The education process extends not just to patrons, but to those who use the collection most, the reference staff, and it has to be taught constantly and repeatedly.

It is easy to forget that the reference staff are, in fact, the most frequent users of the collections. In today’s digital society, patrons prefer not to cross the physical threshold of the building, making most of their requests by phone and through email. This is especially true for community members, who are not easily roused to make the trek to the Kentucky Building. And sometimes it’s just not physically possible, as Europeans, Australians and Southeast Asians have increasingly been making requests of the Folklife Archives. Those who are willing to make the a transnational trip to the Kentucky Building for the research want to first make absolutely sure what they are looking for can be found in the Kentucky Library’s repository.

The Folklife Archives has a third goal, on top of documentation of local life and culture and indexing the work of the Folk Studies program. This third goal is the collection and preservation of model folklore projects which can be used by folklore students as an example of good work in the future. Following this theory, the best projects are not only useful to researchers and cast the Folk Studies program in a

favorable light, but have the reciprocal effect of encouraging more good projects in a similar vein.

Student donations are more sought after than faculty donations. Myriad issues play into faculty donations that do not as often come up in student donation. Faculty often do not want to put their collected data on display until they have produced their intended scholarly product. Donations are almost never made until after publication, which can make for a long wait. Moreover, faculty members often want to wait until retirement before donating a complete collection, which, in the career of a contemporary university professor, can make for a very long wait.

The most valuable donations in terms of content are those that document a local group or custom that has not been recorded before. But this does not mean that nonlocal or traditional donations will be rejected. Mr. Jeffrey admits he would much rather see a project on contemporary expressive form, "what people are doing today - I still don't have a good project on texting," than another work on a traditional subject. Projects on piercings, hackysack, and tattoos, Mr. Jeffrey thinks, will be used more than traditional projects on ballads, quilts, and basket making, not that these projects aren't appreciated as well (Jeffrey 2010).

Projects focusing on local community, like those conduct by Dr. Montell's students, are one of the most frequently requested in the Folklife Archives. This is most likely because those doing work on a local custom or group think to look in that area's regional folklore archive, but they often would not for a nonlocal custom.

The typical projects that were received in the very early years have proven to be the least useful. These were projects where students were collecting evidence of folklore genres, for example folk remedies and folk recipes. Students would collect a remedy here and a remedy there, donating their findings in the end. Theoretically, were this type of project to be donated today, it would still be accepted, but is, of course, unusual. Those who are interested in the genre based approach, even today, are changing their methods and including contextual information and digital copies to better fit with modern day folkloristic frameworks and facilitate access.

For example, there has been a renewed interest in this sort of collection due to the work of Assistant Folk Studies Professor Mabel Agozzino. The new system puts one folklore "text" on each page, replete with contextual information. Materials are collected as part of a requirement for Introduction to Folklore and donated en masse. The system is derived from a similar requirement by Alan Dundes of Berkeley students, the results of which make up the Berkeley Folklore Archives. Mr. Jeffrey is working with Dr. Agozzino to get these online in full text form.

Community relations and the Folklife Archives is important, now and in the future. Most of the projects, and particularly the ones that are most frequently used, are the ones where folklorists have gone out and done fieldwork with individuals in the community. If we want to continue to build good relations with community, for benefit of the Folk Studies program, the Folklife Archives, and researchers, then the Folklife Archives and its associated folklorists have a responsibility to community. The fieldworker must actually donate the material he or she promised he would donate, and

the Folklife Archives must accession and catalog the donation in a timely manner. Mr. Jeffrey laments on the subject:

> I can't tell you how many times we've had people come in and say we had a student come and interview. And then we have to tell them well no we've searched through all of the list that we have, we searched through the catalog, and the student may have said they were going to turn it in, but it was obviously not turned in (Jeffrey 2010).

As folkloristics and folklore archives have changed over the years, what is considered the most valuable has changed as well. Whereas in the past the emphasis seemed to be to highlight larger collections, today the preference seems to be towards the small student projects that make up the majority of the collection.

Although the Sarah Gertrude Knott and Lynwood Montell collections are still valued for their quality today, they are no longer touted as the best the archive has to offer. The unique perspective that student fieldwork on local people and customs can offer is understood by the staff to be what makes the Folklife Archives special. It also offers a chance for exploration of esoteric and under-explored subjects that would not otherwise exist.

CONCLUSION

Now that a history has been inscribed and a temperature taken, we have an understanding of *what* the Folklife Archives is. We now must come to a conclusion about *who* the Folklife Archives is. I see it serving three functions. It's a library for ephemeral or intangible community knowledge, an index of the Folk Studies program, and an advocate for all matters placed in its repository.

First, I see the Folklife Archives are a library for ephemeral or intangible community knowledge. In his new introduction to his classic monograph *Black Culture and Black Consciousness*, Lawrence Levine remembers with both humor and horror his history professors informing him, in regards to the history of places like Africa, "there is none" because they had no written documentation (Levine 2007:xiv). This did not sit well with Levine or a number of his colleagues of the era. It would seem that it is these sorts of inadequacies of history that fieldworkers and the Folklife Archives are meant to ameliorate.

Paul Thompson's influential *Voice of the Past*, published in 1978, "provided new ways of doing history and capturing history from the bottom up" in order to "uncover the forgotten or unacknowledged history of women, minorities, and 'ordinary' life" (Swain 141). This method of history, long established in the Folk Studies program at Western Kentucky University and epitomized by Lynwood Montell, can be seen in Folklife Archives oral history collections like the Campbellsville-Taylor County Oral History

Project, which was conducted by a Folk Studies alumna this decade, but focuses on the African-American experience in a small city in Kentucky in the mid-twentieth century.

Secondly, the Folklife Archives is one of many indices of the Folk Studies program at Western Kentucky University. In his 1894 "What is a Sign?" Charles Sanders Peirce articulated his idea of index. "The index is physically connected with its object; they make an organic pair" (Peirce). It represents an object by evincing its consequences. In an ideal existence, a folklore archive, if connected to a university folklore program, can serve as an index of the program itself, maintaining information not just on the community, but on the evolution of the folklore program.

Now this is, as I stated, idealistic for two reasons. First, donation is voluntary, producing a skewed sample for anyone trying to understand a folklore program solely through its archive. And second, folklorists, as fanatic advocates of context, would disagree that reviewing the work donated to the archive alone could possibly account for the complex reality of "being a folklorist."

But these philosophical hang-ups aside, the idea of a folklore archive as an index of a folklore program is a intriguing one. Although not having the same broad value, it can be useful for the study of folklore scholarship in practice over time. It is one thing to write a history of folklore theory and debate over time (Bronner 1986, Zumwalt 1988); it is another to examine the work folklorists have actually been doing. As proponents of regional variation, this is something folklorists should be very comfortable with.

Francis Blouin noted in 1999 a new trend in scholarship that focused on the archive as an object of study, rather than simply the objects found within the archive

(Blouin 1999). In some ways, my work on WKU's Folklife Archives can be seen as an example of this trend. And certainly variations of my study with differing motives could be done in the future as well, including comparative studies.

And lastly, the Folklife Archives is an advocate for the all materials placed in its collections. When folklorist Jay Orr moved to Memphis to begin work at the Center for Southern Folklore, his landlord asked him to fill out a tenant information sheet. Under "occupation" he wrote "archivist." "'Activist!?' she hissed...we don't need any activists living here" (Orr 1989:19). Orr assured her, he was an archivist, not an activist. He had moved to Memphis to be "something like a librarian," not to stir up trouble. It was only years later, as Head of Technical Services for the Country Music Foundation's Library and Media Center, reflecting back on his many years as an archivist that Orr realized his landlord had been right all along. He was an activist. His job is to advocate for "not only the well-known hitmakers and historic figures, but also musicians who are active and popular at the regional and local level" (Orr 1989:19-20).

While this is a very romantic take on the job of an archivist, it holds some serious truth. Steve Zeitlin remembers Kenny Goldstein telling prospective Folklore and Folklife graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania, "folklore isn't a discipline, it's a religion, and you are its missionaries." While the obvious hyperbole may go too far for comfort, the idea of folklore as a philosophy has merit. Folklorists value, if not in theory, than certainly in practice, the local, the common, the ordinary, and the Folklife Archives is evidence of this.

The Folklife Archives needs constant donation, rigorous maintenance, and perpetual use. The advent of technology has not changed these core principles. These features make for successful archives, and successful archives will show these qualities.

The future of the Folklife Archives seems to be in digital recording and online access. The "behavioralist approach" that D.K. Wilgus scorned years ago does not actually call for the burning of archives. But if they are to work with archived material, a recording, if only an index of an event, seems to make today's folklorists more comfortable than a paper collection. Even folklorists like Mabel Agozzino, who continue to encourage text donations, understand that to make this information accessible, it must be put in context and made digitally available to Generation Y who sees access from the comfort of their desktop not as a luxury, but as a right.

Like folkloristics, the Folklife Archives is most effective when its donation focuses its attention on small groups. In the era of folklore as regional ethnography, the Folklife Archives have more potential than ever. Necessarily, a folklore archive must continue to develop around the same theoretical constructs that are informing the researchers who use them. If the two do not coincide, the archive may fall into disuse. The Folklife Archives must evolve as the Folk Studies program evolves.

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