

Information Fluency in the Service of Community

Final Report

ACS Grant

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Fall Meetings

FRIENDS of the WEKIVA RIVER

In September and October I met with the Friends of Wekiva River (FOWR) at Rollins two more times to gather all the materials for the archives, to assess their historical value, and to discuss the manner of the deposition of their records and studies to the Olin Library. Professor Zhang, the Director of Archives, took us on a tour of the Archives and Special Collections; board members were impressed with the security system and saw some of the techniques of preservation for photographs and other rare documents. Rare items from the Olin's Florida Collection were also on display.

These meetings culminated in discussion of a contract for the library deposition and the formulation of a set of principles to present to the full meeting of the Board in December. It was decided to make 1995 the cutoff for this initial deposition. Materials since that time are still largely in use and can be considered in subsequent years (on a five or ten year basis) when the collection is updated. The idea is to keep the size of the collection the same, and hence to add new materials when they supercede older ones. At the December 5th meeting, the FOWR Board unanimously approved the goals and proposals of our tentative agreement (see Appendix A). In the late spring only after the collection is fully prepared for transfer to the College, will a certificate of gift be signed.

WORKSHOP LUNCHEON

In late October the four workshop presenters met over lunch to set forth the syllabus and especially to coordinate the schedule of workshops and the uses of the IT facilities. Blackboard has worked as a valuable intranet software package to bind the teacher planning and later the student project work. In this luncheon workshop, all we really needed to do was get everyone attuned to the Blackboard system for communication, discussion, and presentation of course materials. This was especially helpful for Bill Belleville, the off-campus workshop leader, and has made further meetings unnecessary.

Shortly after this meeting, Professor Zhang loaded up his extensive materials for IF workshops, complete with electronic tests to insure that students (and workshop co-leaders) were getting the instruction. This process has continued into the rest of the course and will be our best record for ACS colleagues to consider who wish to learn from our processes and mistakes

COURSE RECRUITMENT AND ENROLLMENT

In the week before spring registration I sent the 35+ Honors students eligible to take the course a two-page email describing how this years version of the course would be more focused on Florida and the Wekiva River with full descriptions of the extended IF workshops and the opportunities for community service. Students were given links to the course syllabus on my web site and the FOWR web site where a previous Honors class had produced eight fine disciplinary studies. In the initial pre-registration we were excited because twenty-five students selected the course (they had another option to fulfill this requirement besides our class), but in the final analysis, only nine were able to fit this course into their schedules. This is largely a matter of my choosing of a two o'clock time that would allow for field trips in the late afternoon.

COURSE PREPARATIONS

Prior to the beginning of the term, I was able to complete almost all the preliminary work on the materials: the bibliography of studies, the list of file folders, and the list of audio/visual material for the students to take in hand (Appendix C). We purchased a new cabinet to match those in the archives front room, a set of filing boxes for the studies, and some acid-free folders to replace the old ones, sometimes rusty from paper clips with 20-years of oxidation. We have made the studies secure by pasting in security strips that will set off the alarm system at the Archives door.

For materials respecting the course, but not a part of the archives materials, I created a substantial reserve shelf at the circulation desk. This list has been growing throughout the term as events unfold, conferences and public meetings are attended, and valuable new materials are found (Appendix D).

Spring Term: The Course Begins

PRELIMINARY SURVEY OF INFORMATION FLUENCY SKILLS

Early in the term we had the students fill out a questionnaire about their previous training for each of the workshops. Most of the students had some experience and were therefore not beginners, but we were able to identify which workshops should be geared toward the advanced skills and which needed special attention. One surprise of this survey was that the variety of six different majors in the course did not provide special education in the use of databases and on-line resources specifically for the major. The results of the survey were posted on the Blackboard for all to see.

WORKSHOPS AND THE PACE OF THE COURSE

As the syllabus shows, the course has a path of substance conducted mostly in the Tuesday afternoon classes and a path of technology built up over the sequence of eleven Thursday workshops. With hindsight it is now evident that the problem of exposition of the concepts of the River Community, the history of Florida river literature, and the

Wekiva River itself needed more time to gel and the some of the IT workshops should have been postponed until the students had their own topics and materials to use for their projects as they were learning web page production, scanning, and power point. The students were inundated with materials from the FOWR and its archives in the first few weeks and after viewing the documentary film made by Bill Belleville and Bob Giguere began to formulate topics in their major fields relating to the Wekiva. With some discussion in conferences with me and with some feedback from other FOWR members via email, phone, and lunch engagements, a solid set of topics was created by week six (Appendix E). Since most of these topics related well to the audience of homeowners and their associations, we decided as a mini-board of the FOWR that the course projects would focus on a PR campaign for homeowners and their associations. The students projects will be loaded up to the web site and a variety of materials have been gathered to help engage the homeowners in supporting the river.

Later, the FOWR itself will generate, out of the archives, materials for the history of each development and subdivision, the so-called "Landmark Projects" conducted by the organization over the past twenty years. This will include what the builders, the FOWR, and the county commissioners wrangled over before the development ever took shape. This material will have a salutary effect because it will show that the FOWR has been working to create something more attuned to the river community than the typical outrage (Not In My Back Yard!) that is usually the first way citizens get involved in local government. As a part of this initiative, we have begun the development of a complete list of housing subdivisions and homeowners associations which FOWR is already prepared to use in its new membership campaign.

PROJECTS COMPLETED

By the end of the term all the projects were completed on time: an array of Power Point presentations, web pages, and a new brochure, all aimed at the homeowners. Acting as a mini-board of the FOWR, the group had a \$1000 (grant money from Rollins) to spend on behalf of the organization and decided to fund three projects. The first is a screen saver with some fifty of Mary Colby McKey's river photographs. Students helped Mary gather and select the photos, scanned them for web use, and found a cheap software package to create the screensaver. It was decided to make this available to members via the website and save the money of CD production. Linda Watson is working now on actual production of the screensaver file.

The second project approved was for Sally Maxwell's brochure. An international business major interested in marketing, Sally set the focus for the course production when she early decided that she wanted to make a brochure pitched at the homeowner. She researched all the ways and costs of publication of the brochure for a low-budget, non-profit organization, and we decided to print 500 copies through the discount available at the Rollins print shop for \$350. As soon as the FOWR has a chance to approve the content of the brochure at its August meeting, we will print the first run for them.

The rest of the money, \$600, was allocated for the renewal of the web site. I negotiated with a sister organization, The Wekiva Wilderness Trust, who have a better web site and with their former president who runs an e-business company. We are in the process now of getting FOWR approval for this switch of web hosting and design services, and therefore I will be waiting to load up the results of the students' course work until the makeover takes place. I am hopeful this will be not take more than a month or two.

FINALE: THE ANNUAL FOWR BANQUET

On May 16th, for the first time in its history, the FOWR held its annual banquet on the Rollins Campus. The students unfortunately were already gone, but it was a celebration they should have seen of the commission of the FOWR archives to the permanent Special Florida Collection of the Olin Library Archives. We filled the Galloway room with almost a hundred guests: 60-70 members of FOWR, including several charter members who came from other corners of Florida, a few choice politicians who received awards, members of the Rollins faculty interested in the new archives representing Environmental Studies and Biology, the director of the Olin Library, and the director of Archives and Special Collections.

In a public ceremony, the outgoing President of FOWR, Jim Lee, and the Rollins Archivist, Wenxian Zhang, signed the official certificate of deposit (see Appendix B) and the deed was done. Through the combined efforts of board members, library staff, IT staff, students, and faculty we have produced a lasting record of the FOWR's extraordinary success as a grassroots organization working to protect the river. This consists of 123 important scientific and government documents relating to the ecology of the river, now already catalogued by the library staff, plus several hundred folders and a drawer full of artifacts including audio and visual materials (listed in Appendix C: 1-3).

As a part of the budgeted work of the course, we have arranged for digitization of most of the early newsletters of the FOWR, an excellent resource for the description of the history of the groups activities. When these newsletters are added to the site and a site index is provided, citizens of Florida and new members will be able to educate themselves about the organization and their river community heritage. The course has already added to the web site scanned copies of the By-laws and the Articles of Incorporation.

In addition, this summer, with money from the ACS grant, the documentary film by Bill Belleville, *Wekiva: Legacy or Loss?*, will be professionally converted to digital form so that FOWR can market it as both a Video and a DVD. A digital copy will be deposited then in the Archives to allow for greater longevity of this fine work of art. The digital version will also allow students to use outtakes in future web site work.

COURSE EVALUATION

Students are not used to working in the chaos of the real world. I overloaded them with materials and expected them to find what interested them individually the most. With hindsight and the benefit of student evaluations at the term's end, I would make the following adjustments:

- force on them a more rigorous schedule from the beginning
- postpone the IT workshops for the first three weeks or so
- only provide the workshops they needed, rather than a complete set
- make a schedule for the projects to be done earlier, allowing more time for editing and review inside the course
- the larger the project, the more feedback time necessary
- make sure the archives preparation is fully done before the course begins
- consider determining the project more precisely in advance, perhaps at the discretion of the organization.

These are all matters an experienced teacher like myself should know and take care of in transit, as it were, but I didn't take into account the amount of work I had to do for this course and by the middle of the term my own exhaustion was a factor. This is a feature of the management of an archives project that would not apply to most other community service courses.

At the end of the term we made a little video of the project for the ACS which probably puts the best light on our accomplishments and the values we perceived in our work. The candid student evaluations indicate real consternation at the "lack of direction" of the course. They felt lost until they got their own projects going and then it was too late. I wanted them to decide both as a group and individually, but this translated into "confusion" for most of the students a goodly amount of the time.

I am not dismayed by these results in a term when we went to war and two of the eight students had serious personal tragedies. I have already scheduled a revised version of this course for a Master of Liberal Studies elective to be offered in Fall, 2004. It will be one of the first community service courses for that program and will use the archives that this course and the ACS IF grant has helped make available.

I wish to thank all at ACS and Rollins who have helped with this project. It was embarrassing at the FOWR banquet when I received an award for this archives project, considering the dozens of people who worked so hard, including my colleagues Linda Watson, Wenxian Zhang, and Bill Belleville who taught workshops and helped in many other ways. So this award belongs as well to ACS for giving us the support we needed to do something that would otherwise never get done. We all learned, by doing something for the community.

FINAL BUDGET ACCOUNT:

Stipends for workshops and coordination efforts:

Bill Belleville (2)	\$1000
Linda Watson (5)	\$1000
Wenxian Zhang (2)	\$1000
Steve Phelan (2)	\$1000
total	\$4000

Archives Materials and Services:

File Cabinet (four drawer)	\$ 162.50
Acid-free File Folders (hundreds)	\$ 177.84
Shelf Boxes for Studies (20)	\$ 93.35
Stipends for Scanning Newsletters (25 hours)	\$ 250.00
+ (enough hours to balance the books)	\$ 45.44
Digitization of VCR master to DVD	\$ 60.00
DVD's for video transfer	\$ 10.87
total	\$ 800.00

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Appendices

- [Appendix A](#)
- [Appendix B](#)
- [Appendix C1](#)
- [Appendix C2](#)
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