

# So Much Data, So Little Time

Prioritizing Manuscript Collections for ArchivesSpace @  
the Watkinson Library (Trinity College, Hartford,  
Connecticut)

## Presentation Agenda:

- Background on Manuscripts and College Archives and database project
- Legacy finding aids: formats and early decisions
- Prioritization/ selection criteria and process

# Background

- Manuscripts and College Archives contain approximately 40,000 linear feet of manuscript and archival records including:
  - manuscripts spanning the 17<sup>th</sup> thru the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, dealing with various subjects such as indigenous languages in North America, 19<sup>th</sup> century education reform, colonial medicine, and 20<sup>th</sup> century civil rights activism
  - 25,000 pieces of sheet music
  - thousands of feet of ephemera ranging from postcards to broadsides
  - several thousand ornithological slides and photographic materials from the 19<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- Database project focused on adding collection finding aids from library Manuscripts; a large group of collections consisting of personal papers from prominent 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Hartford area intellectuals, artists, and naturalists, as well as members of David Watkinson's family, who played a key role in founding the college library and trustee to Trinity College.

## Legacy Finding Aids

- Finding aids were in a variety of formats ranging from card catalogs to html pages in Trinity's digital repository.
- Early-on decision made to "rewrite" 45+ finding aids to:
  - reflect DACS (Describing Archives: A Content Standard) minimum or optimal requirements
  - include file-level description and container lists for manuscripts, ephemera, and visual materials such as slides and photographs
  - enhance access to some collections physically processed at more minimal levels (using MPLP) or not in conformance to standards and best practices.

## Prioritization and Selection Criteria

- We determined which collections to prioritize for data entry and rewriting based-upon the following criteria:
  - frequent usage in past 1-2 years
  - historically significant collections for Watkinson Library
    - ~ e.g. Watkinson Family Papers
  - high demand from professors and outside researchers who would not easily be able to find or access finding aids through another format
  - format of current finding aid
  - current accessibility and degree of reprocessing needed.

# Prioritization and Selection Process

- Steps taken in process:
  - evaluate collection use data on manuscripts
  - collocate formats of legacy finding aids and accompanying materials including deeds of gift, donor information, and other files useful for enriching description
  - look ahead to see which classes are coming-in and what professors want to use– what is in-demand
  - evaluate condition of collection and whether processing would be required.

## Bio and Contact Information

- Michelle C. Sigiel graduated from Simmons University (Boston, Massachusetts) in 2017 with an MSLIS in Library & Information Science and concentration in Archives Management. She has worked in several project/ grant-funded positions, including her most recent position at Trinity College's Watkinson Library for Special Collections and College Archives where she undertook work on a data migration for manuscripts into ArchivesSpace. Sigiel also holds an MA from the University of Vermont where she focused on Central European History, and undergraduate degrees from Keene State College (Keene, New Hampshire).
- Email: [sigielmichelle@gmail.com](mailto:sigielmichelle@gmail.com)