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Nathalie Belkin

Palmer School of Library and Information Sciences

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If We Were Without A History: The Preservation of Women's History - Collection, Development & Continuing Importance

Nathalie Belkin

Introduction

As a whole, women's archives are lacking in their collections and development and funding. Mary Ritter Beard, one of the foremost female historians, and champion for the preservation of women's history is barely a footnote herself. In the 1930s, Mary Ritter Beard made a commitment to "the promotion of women's archives throughout the next decades."¹ Her first attempt, The World Center for Women's Archives, was a failure due to lack of finances, physical storage space, and publicity. This paper addresses the preservation of women's history through archives, the development of established collections, as well as the perception of women's history preservation within the field of women's studies. While small, established women's archives thrive, women's lives and activities are still not being adequately documented or preserved.

Mary Ritter Beard was not alone in her fight or desire for the preservation of women's history. Suffragists Rosika Schwimmer and Rosa Manus also joined the call and devoted themselves to collecting documents of importance to, by, and for women. Beginning with the women who gave voice to such need for document preservation, the argument here is that while innovative work is completed and archives geared toward women exist, there is still an urgent need and relevance in the arena of the preservation of women's history. Women's collections need a cohesive development strategy, and gaps in the history need to be filled via preservation in archives dedicated to women. These archives and collections need to be accessible to the people that wish to research and study women's history, as well as give a voice to all groups of women from diverse backgrounds.

Literature Review

To understand where women's archives stand today, and where it all started, one must review the early proponents of preservation of women's history. Before Rosika Schwimmer and Rosa Manus, and before Mary Ritter Beard stepped out from behind her famous husband's shadow, there was Lucy Stone. Joanna Schneider Zangrando's 1973 piece, "Women in Archives: An Historian's view on the Liberation of Clio," reflects upon prominent feminist Lucy Stone and her 1855 lamentation over the lack of documented history of women. Zangrando's paper is notable for its observations on the lack of preserved documentation of important events in women's history. Zangrando's main argument centers around the difficulty in getting women's studies courses introduced as sustainable and basic classes at the university level in the early 1970s. However, she also points out, "Any change in the assessment of the past that will include women more fully will demand new curriculum materials, fresh sources, and innovative methodologies."² Women's studies and archives compliment the discussion of documentation collection and management. In order to teach and study women's history, there must be preserved and relevant documentation that more than adequately allows for this.

Mary Ritter Beard's efforts for women and the historical preservation of their achievements echo the sentiments first put forward in the mid-1850s by Lucy Stone. Lucy Stone called herself a disappointed woman when "I reached forth after the sources of

¹ Anke Voss-Hubbard, "'No Document-No History': Mary Ritter Beard and the Early History of Women's Archives." *The American Archivist* 58, no. 1 (1995): 16-30.

² Joanna Schneider Zangrando, "An Historian's View on the Liberation of Clio." *The American Archivist* 36, no. 2 (1973): 203-214, 209.

knowledge, I was reproved with, 'It isn't for you'; it doesn't belong to women.'"³ Ritter Beard actively tried to change this. As a feminist educator, Mary Ritter Beard built upon the disillusionment of Lucy Stone in her crusade to preserve women's history. Anke Voss-Hubbard's 1995 article in *The American Archivist* notes Ritter Beard as the first woman to inspire "many colleges and universities to collect source material by and about women."⁴ Voss-Hubbard discusses Ritter Beard's pursuit of an archive dedicated to preserving women's history. She writes of the struggles and obstacles Ritter Beard encountered, as well as her failures and successes; the women's history collections at both Smith and Radcliffe Colleges are two collections of notable and sustained success. In her article, "Mary Beard: Feminist Educator," Barbara Kivel Turoff continues the discourse of Ritter Beard as a crusader for preservation of documents pertaining to women in an archival setting, in order to offset women's studies in the wider academic environment. Mary Ritter Beard believed it was educating women about their past that would change how women viewed themselves and the importance of women's history. To do this, she "encouraged university administrators and faculties to develop women's collections that could be used with courses in women's studies."⁵

Despite the efforts of Stone and Ritter Beard, difficulties and challenges still arise in finding preserved women's history.⁶ A 2007 case study of two women's archives—the Archives of Women in Science and Engineering at Iowa State University and the Iowa Women's Archive at the University of Iowa—shows the work that still needs to be done. In this study, Kären M. Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher argue that, "women's archives were founded on the premise that women's lives and activities were not being adequately documented in traditional repositories."⁷ Mason and Zanish-Belcher discuss the collection methodology for the two archives, observing a gender bias and issues dependent upon who the archivist collecting at the time is, in relation to what gets collected. Quoting Eva Mosely, they wrote, "archivists had a responsibility to preserve women's papers, but if all archivists did a good job of documenting women there might be no need for separate women's archives"⁸

Archivist bias is a large problem in the collection development and decision process of all archives, but it is especially prevalent among archives preserving women's history. As curator for the Louise Noun-Mary Louise Smith Iowa Women's Archive, Kären M. Mason shares these issues in her discussion of the challenges and methods used in the acquisition of documents and materials for the archive.⁹ Specifically, she writes about the challenges of

³ Zangrando, *An Historian's View*, 203.

⁴ Voss-Hubbard, 16.

⁵ Barbara Kivel Turoff, "Mary Beard: Feminist Educator." *The Antioch Review* 37, no. 3 (1979): 277-292, 277.

⁶ Further discussion and readings on Mary Ritter Beard come from Bonnie Smith's 1984 article, *Seeing Mary Beard and Forceful Yet Forgotten: Mary Ritter Beard and the Writing of History*, by Margaret Smith Crocco in 1997. Both these articles are cited fully in the bibliography and where contained in this paper.

⁷ Kären M. Mason and Tanya Zanish-Belcher. "Raising Archival Consciousness: How Women's Archives Challenge Traditional Approaches to Collecting and Use, Or What's in a Name?." *Library Trends* 56, no. 2 (2007): 344-359.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 345.

⁹ Also known as the "IWA" and referred to in this paper as the "Iowa Women's Archive."

deciding what to collect when so much remains uncollected, especially amongst diverse communities (e.g., the lives and history of Latina and Indian women). The inability to hire more archivists is also frustrating.¹⁰

A session on women's archives at the 2011 Society of American Archivists annual meeting shed more light on the creation, development, and funding problems associated with women's archives as a whole. Using the World Center for Women's Archives in New York, the International Archives of the Women's Movement (now known as the Aletta Institute for Women's History), in Amsterdam, and the virtual International Museum of Women, headquartered in San Francisco, speakers Rachel Miller, Danelle Moon, and Anke Voss-Hubbard highlight the aforementioned pioneering work of Mary Ritter Beard, Rosika Schwimmer, and Rosa Manus. They discuss the role of these women in highlighting the need for preservation of women's history and the creation of women's archives. Ritter Beard, Schwimmer, and Manus were the impetus for the archives noted above. The speakers show how their legacy has influenced the growth of women's collections; however, these archives are not without problems, including the all too familiar lack of funding and support.¹¹

Collection development has played a large role in the evolution of women's archives. One important study is Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, Elizabeth Engelhardt, Frances Smith Foster, and Laura Micham's 2002 article, "Archive Survival Guide: Practical and Theoretical Approaches for the Next Century of Women's Studies Research." Much like the issues Mason raises, this accessible piece highlights the importance of women's archives, the need for in-depth collection management, as well as how women-centric archives can work together with women's studies departments and researchers to build and manage collections. They accurately state that the "implications of archival research for the field of women's research are vitally important."¹² Without good collection development and development policies, there may be little research material available, which could lead to the disappearance of women's studies in higher learning settings. Eva Moseley, curator of Manuscripts at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America at Radcliffe College, shares this perspective. In a 1973 article, she discusses the difficulties and lack of collections and documentation of the history of women. She notes the significance that collecting women's history should and will have in the future, by pointing out how "many participants in the women's movement are not aware of the value of keeping papers."¹³ All this leads to inadequate collections, but Moseley states that this situation is reversible. She suggests that it possible "to contact women in the movement, as well as women active in earlier decades but still alive, and to urge them to save and to deposit records no longer in use

¹⁰ Kären M. Mason, PhD, "Fostering Diversity in Archival Collections." *Collection Management* 27, no. 2 (2008): 23-31.

¹¹ Rachel Miller, Danelle Moon, and Anke Voss. "Seventy-Five Years of International Women's Collecting: Legacies, Successes, Obstacles, and New Directions." *The American Archivist* 74, no. 0 (2011): 1-21.

¹² Jennifer Bernhardt Steadman, Elizabeth Engelhardt, Frances Smith Foster, and Laura Micham. "Archive Survival Guide: Practical and Theoretical Approaches for the Next Century of Women's Studies Research." *Legacy* 19, no. 2 (2002): 230-240, 232.

¹³ Eva Moseley, "Women in Archives: Documenting the History of Women in America." *The American Archivist* 36.2 (1973): 215-222, 219. There are other articles discussing and relating to the importance of collection policies and management which are cited in full in the bibliography and throughout this paper when relevant.

where they will be safe and available.”¹⁴ Moseley does not believe this would be an easy or cost effective way of collecting documents, but she does believe it is worthwhile.

The History of Women's Archives and Collections

When Rosika Schwimmer approached Mary Ritter Beard in 1935 with her concept for the World Center for Women's Archives, Mary Ritter Beard was already an outspoken proponent of preserving the contributions of women to the growth of humankind. She strongly believed that “women had always been ‘co-makers of civilization side by side with men’” and that “documenting their past shared leadership would help to cement it into contemporary’ reality.”¹⁵ Ritter Beard summarily rejected the ideas put out by the suffrage movement, that women had been “subjugated throughout history” and requested a “reexamination of the documentary evidence.”¹⁶ Thus, her commitment to Schwimmer's idea was borne, even if her reasons were at odds with Schwimmer's. Ritter Beard and Schwimmer were not alone; they were joined by other likeminded women of the time who believed, as they did, that the need to preserve women's history for future generations was of the utmost importance.¹⁷

The idea for the World Center for Women's Archives—also referred to herein as the “World Center”—was to do what Lucy Stone had been prevented from doing over 80 years prior: provide women with historical and contemporary documents about women and with access to study and research women's history. The World Center's purpose was twofold. It was to “serve as a repository of women's individual and organizational struggles, inspiration and achievement and to form a ‘vital educational plant in which the culture ... will receive attention ... in seats of higher learning.’”¹⁸ From the outset, problems abounded. Raising money for a women's archive was a herculean task and despite the stalwart attempts by the newly formed board of the World Center, it was not widely publicized. There was also no established physical repository in which to store the newly collected and promised materials.

The members and sponsors of the archives were an impressive group of women, counting Eleanor Roosevelt, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Brooke Astor among them. These women and the initial donation to the World Center of Amelia Earhart's personal papers should have given the World Center a head start on its funding efforts. Sadly, it did not. The lack of money set a course for failure almost immediately.¹⁹ In 1940, the World Center for Women's Archives was officially disbanded. If raising money for a women's history preservation organization was difficult during the economic depression of the 1930s and 1940s, the United States' imminent entry into World War II made any potential revenue far less likely. Extra money that may possibly have gone to the World Center were sent to groups or charities connected to the war effort.²⁰

¹⁴ Ibid., 219.

¹⁵ Voss-Hubbard, *No Document*, quoting Nancy F. Cott, 17.

¹⁶ Ibid., 18.

¹⁷ The other women that vocally supported the World Center were Kathryn McHale, Mary Jobson, Lena Madesin Philips and Geline MacDonald Bow.

¹⁸ Kimbell Relph, Anne. "The World Center for Women's Archives. 1935-1940." *Signs* 4, no. 3 (1979): 597-603, 597.

¹⁹ Ibid., 598-599.

²⁰ It should be noted that Mary Ritter Beard had already left the World Center for Women's Archives when it disbanded, but only by a few months.

Archives at Smith and Radcliffe Colleges

The beliefs that Mary Ritter Beard, Rosika Schwimmer, and the other women who gave their support held dear, did not die with the failure of the World Center for Women's Archives. For Mary Ritter Beard, the idea of preserving women's history for researchers and future women's studies students grew stronger. Even though they had not raised enough money, much good work had come from the five years the World Center was active. The publicity it garnered gave rise to pledges of papers from women that would be deposited into or donated to repositories for and about women. The World Center had identified various "historical records about women in private hands, historical societies, universities and other archives."²¹ Its members had also created exhaustive lists of sources of information about records and the study of women in various institutions. In this respect, the World Center was a success. It jumpstarted collection development for women's history, something that was previously unheard of or ignored.

Throughout the rest of her life, Mary Ritter Beard continued to fight for and support the creation of archives for women, documenting women's lives for future generations of scholars and students. She wished for broad and open access to the information. However, Margaret Grierson, Smith College's archivist in the 1940s, was not so convinced. At first, she did not fully embrace Ritter Beard's desire to see the Smith College archives expand to include an all-women's history archive—what is now the Sophia Smith Collection. Grierson was content with Smith's collection documenting literary women. However, over time their friendship blossomed and Grierson soon came to believe, as Ritter Beard did, that "Smith must redefine the collection to include works about, as well as by women ... material that records and reflects the ideas, interests, visions, endeavors and achievement of American women."²²

Margaret Grierson still had a fight on her hands to get college board members to support redefining the Smith collection. She defended the proposal against vocal protests against a separate women's collection. Many of those that objected wanted to know why a separate collection was necessary at all. Similar questions are often raised today. The need to document works representing women's contributions to society in an equal fashion to men has not changed from the days of Ritter Beard and Grierson.²³

As well as supporting and influencing the expansion and redirection of the Smith Archives, Mary Ritter Beard was a significant contributor to work at the Radcliffe College archives as well. A large portion of the documents, materials, and lists fell into Ritter Beard's hands after the failure of the World Center for Women's Archives. It was the hard work of the World Center, and these documents, that spawned the collection of materials available for the study and research of women's history at both Smith and Radcliffe Colleges. Mary Ritter Beard was instrumental in helping to shape both collections with preservation, collection and increased access. Radcliffe College's archives got its first major boost with Ritter Beard's assistance in creating a Women's Rights Collection. This collection was based on the donated papers of noted suffragist Maud Wood. Mary Ritter Beard gave Radcliffe the papers she had

²¹ Voss-Hubbard, *No Document*, 21.

²² *Ibid.*, 25-26.

²³ *Ibid.*, 26.

in her possession from the World Center for Women's Archives, as well as papers and documents of other women she had kept. However, she did not think that the collection at Radcliffe was growing quickly enough.²⁴ She became disenchanted with the project and eventually distanced herself from the archives. Nevertheless, her advice and experience stayed with the archives and her influence has endured over the years.

Collection Development: Why and How

Mary Ritter Beard's perseverance and vocal activism at the World Center, Smith College, and Radcliffe College archives paved the way for future women's archives, but as more women's archives are created, the issues facing them have changed. The prevailing questions have shifted slightly and become focused on what to collect and how to develop the collection to give a coherent and connected focus, rather than the basics of how women's archives should be started or supported.

Collection development has become increasingly important to archivists working in women's archives. Eva Moseley wrote that historically, the "neglect of women has ... meant little or no space given to women's papers in manuscript repositories and little or no effort to acquire these materials" has been made.²⁵ Even Smith College archivist Margaret Grierson was not originally on board with the creation of a separate collection of documents pertaining only to women. This attitude from the past, which continues today, has led to many papers being lost and other collections left scattered or incomplete, and provides an argument for the importance of collection development. A collection must remain well defined and coherent in order to retain its focus. Mary Ritter Beard felt very strongly that everything and anything related to women's history should be collected and that the cohesive focus of a collection should be women's lives. For her, this was context enough. It is the assertion of the author, as well as that of the scholars contained herein, that materials related to one another should ideally be collected and grown together. Unfortunately, the simplicity of this idea is not always manifested in real world application, leading to the aforementioned scattered and incomplete collections.

Ideal collection development and policy is hard to achieve in any type of archives, not only in those collections dedicated to women's history. If Mary Ritter Beard had gotten her way, all archives created by and for women would hold as much material as possible, by women from all different walks of life. Her vision for a women's archive was one that documented the entire history of women. That history would then be accessible to all women, researchers and women's studies students. While a lofty and idyllic goal, this is not a realistic one if a collection is to remain coherent and space be made available to house such documents and materials.

Yet, there is also no cookie-cutter archival collection, due to differences in collections and that "many judgment calls and creative applications of archival theory are required" before materials are accessioned.²⁶ During Mary Ritter Beard's lifetime, there was no real focus on collection policies and strategies for what to collect. This was especially true

²⁴ Ibid., 23.

²⁵ Moseley, *Women in Archives*, 215.

²⁶ Cynthia K. Sauer, "Doing the Best We Can? The Use of Collection Development Policies and Cooperative Collection Activities at Manuscript Repositories." *The American Archivist* 64, no. 2 (2001): 308-349, 308., quoting F. Gerald Ham.

because there were no women's archives to look to or separate into specialized collections. This interest came later, in the 1970s and 1980s, when the Society of American Archivists President F. Gerald Ham gave his 1974 speech calling for "activist archivists" to "play a role in selecting which records to acquire and even actively solicit them." Ham called the collection methods at the time "inadequate" and proposed an overall program of collection development.²⁷

The case of collection development and policy for women's archives is almost more difficult than for other archives. The importance of documentation of women in history has remained largely in the shadows, if not altogether invisible. Archivists have used a variety of collection development methods to reach potential donors for both funds and documents. Even as a large and successful archive, the Iowa Women's Archives is no different when it comes to issues and questions regarding its own collection development. Mason and Zanish-Belcher's methods include publicizing their achievements in print format as well as over broadcast media. They also host events in the archives itself, give presentations in various venues, attend community celebrations, and create tabletop displays about the archives.²⁸ These methods have been adapted over the years to suit the needs of the archive according to what collection they are looking to grow and develop, as well as make the archives more accessible for people.

For the Iowa Women's Archives, it has been a learning curve to apply collection development that suits their needs and the needs of the community at large. The archivists have had to deal with failed solicitation attempts and potential donors who had no idea the archive existed. The small number of people who did reply to various outreach requests did so only because they were already aware of the archives. This led to a collection development overhaul that now reflects the women in the community, as well as focuses on what the archivists desire from the collection and the donor types. Mason and Zanish-Belcher point out that many of their solicitation appeals were too intimidating. They left out the majority of women in society, women they were hoping to reflect and keep visible in their collections. This instance highlights all too well the need for coherent and focus-driven collection development in women's collections, as well as the need to remain inclusive of the community.

If women's history is to be documented, then archives must include all women. In addition to aristocrats of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the lives of the working class, poor, and minorities should all be preserved. However, it must also remain contextual to the archives themselves. For example, collecting papers and materials of a wealthy socialite in nineteenth century New York City is not relevant to an archive or exhibition dedicated to female migrant workers in the Midwest. While that appraisal decision would be a relatively easy one, others are not. However, it is hard to give up certain documents when there may be no other home for them, or money was given to start a particular collection made up of specific papers. Here again collection development becomes a sticky issue and the archivist must make a judgment call.

A good illustration of change in collection development and growth at work in the Iowa Women's Archives is the outreach by the archivists for the Mujeres Latinas Project.

²⁷ Ibid., 309-310.

²⁸ Mason, *Raising the Archival Consciousness*, 352.

Historically, archives focusing on minority and immigrant women have been less visible. Therefore, a variety of new methods needed to be implemented to reach potential donors and obtain donations, as well as engage the collection's target population. To that end, Mason and Zanish-Belcher specifically geared the solicitation and publicity done for this archival project toward women who had no knowledge of the archives. Mason and Zanish-Belcher adapted their methods and "designed colorful brochures depicting women in everyday settings ... the text was kept to a minimum and was consciously jargon-free." Photographs of Latina women from the '20s and '60s were displayed with the words, "Every woman has a story--tell us yours."²⁹

The idea was to appeal to Latina woman in the community. This type of collection development has become an important part of the Iowa Women's Archives as well as collection development for many women's collections. The simple idea of appealing to the community you wish to collect documents and materials from should seem an obvious one. Yet, the fact that archivists at the Iowa Women's Archives had to overhaul their own development policies and come up with specific ideas in order to gain the attention and appeal of a group of women shows that it is not. It is still a struggle to document women's history and women are still largely invisible.

One interesting development in the development of women's collections comes in the form of the International Museum of Women. It is a virtual museum, conceived of as "a museum without walls."³⁰ The International Museum of Women—originally named the Women's Heritage Museum—came into being through the idea of hard-working feminists seeking to secure the voices of women around the world. The archive was originally a more traditional, physical archive based in San Francisco, California. It sought to educate the public about "the contributions of women in history, with a specific focus on the suffrage movement and international feminism ... in order to improve women's status in society."³¹ However, the archive faced the same problems as prior archives devoted to preserving women's history. Funding and the inability to secure a permanent home for the collection consumed the time of the women who worked at the Women's Heritage Museum.

Like the World Center for Women's Archives before it, the Women's Heritage Museum was attempting to raise money and find a home during a period not conducive to attracting funding. In the mid-1980s and '90s, any extra money earmarked for liberal causes was going towards AIDS education and charities, as well as women's groups focused on the prevention of rape and domestic abuse. Not to be deterred, the women of the Women's Heritage Museum fought long and hard, eventually securing space in the Bay Area of San Francisco. Unfortunately, the space, Pier 39, was deemed too dangerous and structurally unfit to build upon.³² It was then that the museum became virtual, while still maintaining an office in San Francisco.

Now called the International Women's Museum, the collection is noteworthy for its ability to reach out across states as well as globally, connecting all manner of visitors, researchers, and students. The online exhibitions and collections are wide and varied,

²⁹ Ibid., 352.

³⁰ Miller, *Seventy-Five Years of International Women's Collecting*, 506:15.

³¹ Ibid, 506:16.

³² Ibid., 506:17

encompassing a diverse swath of women. As Catherine King, the vice president of exhibition and programs, stated, “it does not collect or conserve artifacts and objects, but, as a nonprofit, it is committed to ‘curating the art and ideas of women around the world’ on critical social issues and human rights,” from the past up to today.³³ This type of collection embodies collection development, allowing people to preserve themselves and their histories online for posterity.³⁴

Oral histories have also become more prevalent in discussions related to collection development and the preservation of women’s history.³⁵ Nicole Dalmer writes of the present contexts and concerns women face and the future implications in collections and collection development. Echoing the sentiments of oral history proponents before her, she also notes “women’s collections and women-centered repositories ... often mirror the plight of the advancement of and equality of women in society at large.”³⁶ Nicole Dalmer discusses the notion that in order to promote the continued donation of women’s documents into women’s repositories and archives, we must prove to other women that they are important.

Women must believe that their histories and lives are important. One way to influence this is through oral history. There is great power in hearing stories told directly from women themselves. Overall, oral histories provide a rich context to any area of study. Most specifically, the recording of women’s oral histories has the potential to play a large and important role in the documentation of minority women. It is these women whose stories and personal histories are often absent in the field of women’s history, and they are unlikely to consider or be contacted for donation of their papers to repositories.

Women-centric archives and collections exist and are cultivated in order to give voice to a group that goes largely undocumented in mainstream collections. Oral histories can help to change this outlook with their widespread appeal to women from all walks of life. The role of the archivist would be to promote and continue promoting donations of records pertaining to women, the recording of women’s history, and outreach.³⁷ Oral history as an accurate form of documentation of history can be problematic and for some archivists and historians, brings up issues of authenticity. Nevertheless, that can also be said of all forms of the written record. Oral histories provide a very real and useable context as they reflect the environment in which they were created. It can be argued that oral histories are more subjective than objective. Yet again, though, this can be said for all types of historical records.

When considering collection development, it is easier to see the impediments. The possible subjectivity of oral histories, lack of publicity, and little funding available to grow an archive are a few examples already discussed in this article. However, one method of collection development that is worthy of some attention is the idea of “cooperative collecting.”³⁸ Though there is a great deal of negative literature about archives adopting

³³ Ibid., 506;20

³⁴ The website for the International Museum of Women is: <http://imow.org/home/index>

³⁵ For a detailed and interesting exploration into the history and value of oral history and its role in an archive, see: Ellen D. Swain. "Oral History in the Archives: Its Documentary Role in the Twenty-First Century." *The American Archivist* 66, no. 1 (2003): 139-158.

³⁶ Nicole Dalmer. "Women in Archives: Present Contexts and Future Implications." *Felicitier* 58, no. 4 (2012): 26-28, 26.

³⁷ Ibid., 27-28.

³⁸ Sauer, *Doing the Best We Can*, 312.

policies to encourage cooperative collecting, with many experts in the field suggesting that it is not cost effective, there is also some degree of success and worthiness to it.³⁹

Cooperation in archival collections can lead to documents and papers initially headed to one repository ending up in one that is more appropriate, with cross-archival capabilities to share some of the information. This can “eliminate some competition for collections” and lead to “a face-to-face meeting which focuses on ... current holdings.”⁴⁰ This same idea also complements the need for coherent and cohesive collections of women's papers. Cooperative collecting is not specific to any one type of archive, but women's archives could potentially benefit from this approach. Even Mary Ritter Beard might have approved of this type of cooperation.

Yet another important factor in collection development for women's archives is cohesive collection criteria. Elizabeth A. Novara writes in her 2013 article of the challenges faced in collecting the political papers of women, particularly female state legislators. Novara goes on to state that the “University of Maryland ... Special Collections has a long history of collecting Maryland political papers and more specifically of collecting materials related to women in local, state and national politics.”⁴¹ This archive is not specifically a women's archive; rather, it is a large archive filled with various collections. However, due to its significant geographic location near Washington, D. C., the institution is in an ideal position to be the repository of political papers. Because of this as well as the lack of other archives of female politician's political papers, the University of Maryland began to focus on the development of women's political collections.⁴²

In order to accomplish the task of creating a focused repository for collecting women state legislators' papers and materials, Novara believes that guidelines need to be put in place. The guidelines she created are an excellent example for use in general collection development in women's archival collections. Novara utilizes collection development policies created by archivist Faye Phillips, in her 1984 archival collection development outline, to address the issue of how gender can affect collection decisions, even in women's archives. The nine criteria Novara covers are geography, leadership, legislation, diversity, membership, time in office, historical importance, related social and political issues, and flexibility.⁴³ It is Novara's intention that each separate item be considered when deciding what to collect, and serves as a building block to a stronger foundation for accession. The archivist will then be able to make a more fully informed decision based on their knowledge of the collection. It will also give overall strength to their collection at the same time.

Like archives themselves, Novara's criteria is not a one-size-fits-all solution. Women's collections face issues of coherence that cover social movements, class struggles, race relations, and sexuality that run deeper than merely gender relations. As discussed herein, collection development in women's collections must include women from all types of backgrounds while remaining cohesive and true to the collection. However, Novara's nine-

³⁹ Ibid., 312-314, Sauer quoting Richard Cameron, Gerald Ham and Anne Kenney.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 325, quoting Frank Boles.

⁴¹ Elizabeth A. Novara, "Documenting Maryland Women State Legislators: The Politics of Collecting Women's Political Papers." *The American Archivist* 76, no. 1 (2013): 196-214, 198.

⁴² Ibid., 200.

⁴³ Ibid., 204-206. The table is written out fully with a detailed explanation of each of the nine criteria.

point system is a good start. This shows why collection development is so important, and the job of the archivist is a continuous one. Wise and informed choices within the scope of a collection are of the highest priority, especially in women's collections, which are smaller and sometimes less well-funded than general archives.

Women's Archives and Women's Studies

Also important to the development of women's archives is the availability of the body of work for research and women's studies. As stated before, Mary Ritter Beard's desire was to make available everything relating to women so that active study and education could happen. This would be an overwhelming and almost impossible task. Nevertheless, one archive tries to do just that in a cohesive and organized fashion. The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture, located in Duke University's Rubenstein Rare Book and Manuscript Library, has a record of "pushing the boundaries with the types of collections it seeks and how it promotes them," throughout the university and community at large.⁴⁴ While utilizing many of the same criteria that the Iowa Women's Archives has used to attract collections and interest, the Sallie Bingham Center tasked themselves with the tasks of acquiring, preserving, and making accessible various materials in both published and unpublished form related to the public and private lives of women.

The archive is noteworthy because its creation was born from the desire of its namesake, feminist and writer Sallie Bingham, to place her papers with an institution that that would "make her collection 'easily accessible to women undergraduate students and scholars.'"⁴⁵ Remembering the words of Joanna Schneider Zangrando, who stated that "fresh sources and innovative methodologies" would be needed in order for there to be adequate women's studies in academia, the Sallie Bingham Center is doing just that.⁴⁶ The Sallie Bingham Center has become a formidable force in the field of women's studies.

The collection itself covers a large and diverse selection of women. The topics covered include women of color, southern women, female activism and activists, theory, women's health and art, as well as literature by and for women and girls. The archive has strengthened the women's studies department at Duke with its sheer size, accessibility, and innovation. The Sallie Bingham Center also utilizes collaboration and cooperation as part of its collection development and overall ethos. The Sallie Bingham Center demonstrated their ideas in 2003 at the symposium documenting the women's health movement and the commemorating of *Roe v. Wade*. During the symposium, "faculty, students and staff from Duke's academic departments and the medical center joined community residents ... in engaging a range of topics that addressed ... feminism."⁴⁷ All of this proves the important place that women's archives hold for women's studies students and researchers.

Unfortunately, this example of cooperation is the exception and not the rule when it comes to archives and women's studies, and particularly women's archives. Many women's archives are isolated, with only researchers, faculty, and women's studies majors utilizing the materials. The archivists deal with the collection and its development on an individual basis,

⁴⁴ Laura Micham, "The Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture: Research, Ethics, and Activism in the Archives." *NWSA Journal* 16, no. 2 (2004): 177-179, 177, quoting Ginny Daley.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

⁴⁶ Zangrando, *An Historian's View*, 209.

⁴⁷ Micham, *The Sallie Bingham Center*, 178.

instead of uniting as a single, powerful force. Steadman, Engelhard, Foster, and Micham advocate changing this. Their article shows that many in the field of women's studies do not even use archives for research. Steadman, et al., assert that the "implications of archival research for the field of Women's Studies are vitally important. Accurate theories of women's experience ... or history depend upon adequate data about diverse populations of women."⁴⁸ They argue that while women's studies departments continue to flourish, the diversity among them remains hopelessly biased to the experience of women from the western hemisphere. This leaves out entire populations of women and women's history from developing countries.

It is here that the co-mingling of women's studies majors, feminist researchers, and archivists should occur. Steadman, et al., succinctly assert that new curricula for women's studies undergraduate and graduate programs should develop to include the teaching of "traditional methods of working with archives," because "archival research allows us to go to the primary sources about women lives."⁴⁹ They believe that this will expand the field of women's studies dialogue and use of the sources, which would in turn deepen scholarship on a more diverse cross-section of women. It would also be an excellent use of cooperation between students, researchers, and archivists. An active and positive shift away from male-dominated collections and growth in the field of women's collections means that collaboration between these women can only enhance research and encourage collection development.⁵⁰

In their discussion of women's studies and archival research, Mason and Zanish-Belcher note that, "Because many women's archives are located on university ... campuses, students and scholars are often the largest clientele."⁵¹ Their experience at the Iowa Women's Archives notes again how it is at the forefront of collaboration, putting into practice what Steadman and company discuss in their article. By employing the internet with online search guides and various websites, the number and range of researchers contacting and utilizing the vast women's history collections and documents has grown significantly. To encourage growth from outside the university walls and collaboration with undergraduate and graduate students, the Iowa Women's Archives conducts open houses of the archives, which educate the public about the archives and its contents. The importance of this shown in that "the archives not only preserved the history ... but also provided a physical space in which women could recall their shared history."⁵² We cannot lose the significance of this in the context of women's archives or students of women's studies.

Conclusion

There is no question that mainstay archival collections at Smith College, Radcliffe College, the University of Iowa, and Iowa State University are havens for women's history and its continued preservation. They have led the way for the creation of smaller collections devoted to the history of all types of women. These include the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture and the women's political papers collection at the University of Maryland, as well as the criteria for collection development that has come from this last

⁴⁸ Steadman, *Archival Study Guide*, 232.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 232.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 238.

⁵¹ Mason, *Raising the Archival Consciousness*, 354.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 355.

collection. However, I believe that we can achieve more in the realm of collection policy and development. We should not forget the Mary Ritter Beards and Lucy Stones of our history, nor should we forget their fight for the preservation of women's historical documents. Collection development must continue to be inclusive of all women in our society. More inclusion of minority and immigrant women, with a focus on oral history as a way to achieve this, is a good start.

There is more work we can do in regards to women's studies going forward. As shown throughout this text, if women's studies courses and majors are to continue in a realm larger than that of the private women's college, we must continue to fight for collections and collection development that will allow access for all. Women's studies majors should be encouraged to conduct research in the archives and use them to their fullest. Women's studies scholarship can only grow in its diversity with collaboration between researchers, faculty, and archivists. These individuals can work together to further ongoing collection development and areas of study about women, with researchers sharing their findings. In turn, archivists can provide valuable information to scholars about the body and breadth of holdings. This would provide an excellent way to build collections and shape their development.⁵³

Overall, as past and current discourse shows, the importance of women's collections and collection development today are paramount to the sustainability of women's studies and the preservation of women's history. There are thriving archival collections about women as evidenced in the body of this paper, along with an ongoing conversation about their importance. However, this raises the question: is this enough? While one would like to think that Mary Ritter Beard, Rosika Schwimer, and the myriad other women who gave their support to the creation of the World Center for Women's Archives would be proud of the work done today, they would still believe that more should be done to ensure these collections are developed and grown to their fullest potential.

Nathalie L. Belkin is a graduate student obtaining her MLIS at the Palmer School of Library and Information Science, specializing in Archives and Special Collections. She also holds a B.A. in history from Brooklyn College. She currently interns at the NYC Municipal Archives, where she is processing the papers of a former Commissioner of the Department of Records and Information Services. Her interests lie in two main areas, the importance of preserving women's history and the preservation and documentation of New York City History.

⁵³ Steadman, *Archival Survival Guide*, 238.