The Equitable Representation of Women in Digital Archival Collections:

An Analysis of IUPUI's Digital Archives

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Abstract

The field of archiving has changed tremendously since the advent of online technologies, and digitized collections can now be accessed by many more researchers. Because of the volume of artifacts in various collections, not every physical collection has been digitized, and as it is a time-consuming and expensive process, managers must consider what best meets the needs of their users and is physically and financially feasible. While considering these factors, however, it is important to ensure that all groups are not only well-represented, but equally represented as much as possible. Taxpayer dollars fund public institutions, so it is important that institutions funded by these tax dollars make every effort to ensure their digitized collections are as equitable as possible for researchers who rely mostly or solely on digital collections. Digital collections also make information more accessible to everyone who has access to the World Wide Web, so it is important that they information that the public has access to is as complete and as equitable as possible when it is provided by public institutions. This study upon completion will determine whether or not women are equally represented in artifacts in one collection housed in IUPUI's digital archives.

Hypotheses

When women's archives were in the early stages, archives were traditionally run by men. Now that women hold more positions in college libraries, does that have any effect on whose

information is digitized? As more and more information is digitized, are women equally

represented in the materials archived from public academic institutions? Based on what little

literature there is on the topic, it seems unlikely that women's archives are receiving the attention

from archivists that they should be in regards to digitization.

Methods

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) does not have a specific

collection set aside solely for the purpose of collecting women's artifacts. There are sixty-seven

digital collections housed at IUPUI. A preliminary review will be conducted to exclude those

collections that do not contain information about human history. Though there is a federated

search available to look through a given collection at once, representation will need to be

determined by going through archives individually as artifacts may or may not have the metadata

relevant to this study. Coding all of the archives individually is far too great an undertaking for

one preliminary study, so only one collection will be chosen for this study, the IUPUI Image

Collection. This collection has a total of 9,222 artifacts, and the metadata and visual content in

every eighteenth artifact will be analyzed for a statistical sample of 512.

Metadata will aid in determining whether or not an artifact within a collection is directly

related to women's history or studies, but a visual analysis will also be conducted in the event the

metadata is incorrect, incomplete, or simply does not contain relevant information for whatever

reason. Items will be placed into one of four categories: men, women, neither, or both. Neither

and both were chosen as categories because many artifacts have no relation to the documentation

of any gender's story. A story about a snowstorm that caused several automobile accidents, for

example, has no relation to gender, and would thus be coded as "neither." A picture that

includes both the men's and women's U.S. Olympic teams is not exclusive to either gender, and

would be coded as "both." Artifacts that may or may not be included involving groups or individuals who do not identify exclusively as either male or female, such as transsexuals, will be coded on a case-by-case basis according to what gender group with which the majority of the subjects are identified in the metadata.

Once coding is complete, the coded categories will be compared to the total number of artifacts within each collection to calculate the percentage that each category (women, men, both, neither) represents relative to the entirety of the collection. Subsequent interpretation will assume that the meaning of these values will be relativistic, and analyzed on a collection by collection contextual basis.

Expected Findings

Numerically, equal representation would mean that artifacts from each of the four categories comprised 25% of the total number of artifacts analyzed. The expectation from this study, however, is that the number of artifacts dealing exclusively with women will be lower.

Expected Contribution to the Field

There is literature regarding how to set up a women's digital collection, but not whether or not this influences equitable representation. There is also no literature regarding equitable gender representation in digital archives. This study will add to the field by taking a preliminary look at the quantifiable numbers in order to determine whether or not equitable representation is a problem in digital archives. Collection development managers responsible for making decisions regarding digital collections will be able to use these methods to analyze their own collections for equitable representation among any number of diverse groups. Managers will also be able to take this information into consideration when making decisions for their own collections depending on what artifacts are available to them. Regardless of the findings of this

study, these methods can be used for further study which may include comparisons between institutions that have separate inclusive women's collections and those that do not, and the rate of digitization relative to physical artifacts in an institution's collection.

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