Library Visit Analysis of:

Walter Havighurst Special Collections at Miami University and BGSU Center for Archival Collections

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Introduction

This paper is an analysis of two different libraries in Ohio. These two libraries are Walter Havighurst Special Collections at Miami U. and BGSU Center for Archival Collections. The first part of the analysis is over topics of administration, clientele, fees, restrictions, services, staff, and these departments within the library. While the second part of the analysis is on the advice the head librarians interviewed would give to someone new to the information field, the characteristics they look for in a new hire, and the likes/ dislikes about their jobs. There is also a comparison table at the end of this analysis with topics not covered here. The information for this analysis is based on research of the libraries’ websites and from interviews. Both of the interviews lasted longer than an hour. The same 18 questions were asked over topics shown in the comparison table and those discussed in this analysis for each interview. For example, some of these questions were “How many professional librarians are employed at your library?” and “ What is your Administrative Structure?”.

I interviewed the head librarian Michelle Sweeter from Bowling Green State University libraries center of archival collections. I also interviewed William Modrow, the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Center department head at King Library, Miami University.

# Library one: special Collections:

The first library I chose was a special collection center, part of an academic library at Miami University, the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Center. It was established in 1970, with its’ first curator being Helen Ball. The special collections Center is named after Walter Havighurst because he was a writer and professor of English who taught at the University from 1928 to 1969 (“About special collections” 2021). Since the Special Collections Center's beginnings at King Library, it has grown to hold more than 95,000 volumes plus manuscripts and is only continuing to grow. Other significant collections include the Samuel F. Covington Collection, Andre de Saint-Rat Collection of Russian History, art and literature, and the Samuel Richey Collection of the Southern Confederacy(“About special collections” 2021). The Center also has collections in American history, performing arts, and the Miami university's history. Some of its other collections include the John Hough James Collection and the Ferdinand Bach Collection of Native American Materials.

I picked the Havighurst Center even though it also does archival collections. Though it is similar to an archive, there are differences between the two. I have worked in a center similar to the Havighurst Center that did both special and archival collections.

While I haven’t been to this Center in the King Library, I wanted to learn how this Special Collections Center works differently from the center I had worked at. Also, I wanted to learn how a special collection library differs from other libraries. So, once I have my MLIS degree, I will know more about the organizations that I may potentially work at in the future.

I interviewed William Modrow, the head of The Department of Steward and Sustain at the Havighurst Center. While speaking with Mr. Modrow, I not only learned about the center but the whole King Library. Mr. Modrow also shared a couple of different experiences he’s had during his career and about the people he knows at Wayne State University.

The King Library is an academic library with three different parts; the center for special collections is one. Its primary and secondary clientele are listed in the comparison table below. Most of the special clientele they have are generally concerned with a given collection at the center. Alternatively, they typically get a lot of clientele from the Freedom Summer alliance. Some of the other services they provide in their department are consulting, preservation, research, and working with artifacts; some of their other outsourced services also go to partnerships with global studies and the women's center on their campus.

Overall, the total number of professionals at the library used to be 48, but since they recently hired a few people, it has gone up to 52. His department has 8 of the 52 positions. The non-librarian staff working at the library is 103 technicians and maintenance staff. Each of these is broken down further into three different types of staff: classified, unclassified, and non-librarian. He also briefly mentioned the different kinds of student workers in his department, saying that four out of 12 are grant students and interns.

Fees and restrictions were another area we discussed during our interview. While they do have fees, they do not charge for reproductions of partial information from a collection, but there are for reproducing an entire collection. Most protocol restrictions are on handling the collections, and materials may not leave the center. Also, all users are required to complete a brief registration procedure and present valid photo identification. While it was not required to request an appointment before COVID 19, researchers from out of town were encouraged to contact staff in advance to confirm hours to make sure the materials were ready. However, with the pandemic, all patrons are supposed to schedule an appointment before coming to the center. There are also restrictions on what records are available for a patron to see. All collections are to be viewed only in the special collections reading room with an attendant. While in the reading room where the special collections are viewed, patrons cannot have food and drink because it could accidentally damage a collection. Patrons must also get permission to cite or publish materials held in the special collections center. Other restrictions are the number of hours that the center is open for patrons to view collections.

One of their facilities I found the most interesting to learn about was their vault. Since my interview was remote, I did not get to see the vault at the center. I did use the vault a lot at the special collection center I used to work at, so I am aware of how they look. However, the vault at the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Center, as Mr. Modrow described it, seemed to be very high-tech. The vault at the center is climate-controlled. He also mentioned that they do much of their accessions and work in the vault or in the cold storage area. Mr. Modrow also said they have an exhibition room that differs from the reading room, displaying specific collections over time.

We also discussed his department's challenges and whether or not they are a part of any library cooperatives. They only work with the two cooperatives mentioned in the comparison table but are not really a part of them. The center is having trouble with staffing and backlogs of processing collections and other things for the center. These drawbacks have to do with the lack of funds and the loss of staff during the pandemic.

Mr. Modrow had lots of advice for me as someone who is new to the information field. His biggest suggestion was “ to volunteer or find a student position in a library”(Modrow 2021). Alternatively, get involved in various ways to help you in the field, even if only by volunteering. Or to look at “non-classified” library positions and suggested I look at Notre Dame University since they are hiring. He said a good time to start doing this would be during the semester right before I graduate with my master's, to make sure I get exposed to all different parts of the library field. His second suggestion was, don’t wait until you are graduated to look for jobs. While in the program, you can see what people are looking for because it can change quickly in this field. Mr. Modrow also stressed the importance of networking with people in the field to help with getting a job. He even gave me an example of how to help with networking which I can use when I am looking for a career in this field.

The characteristics Mr. Modrow looks for in a new hire are extroverted people and being interested in their job. He looks for these types of people because he expects a lot from his staff and looks for passionate and enthusiastic people who want to grow. While he said it is good to be good at digitalization, he thinks it is better to have soft skills since it is a people-oriented field. Since you don’t become a librarian just to read books, you work with people to provide the information they need.

The part of his position Mr. Modrow does not care for is the lack of decision-making from his supervisors. Other areas are the lack of resources he has and the stress that comes with the job. As well as personal issues he had at one of his previous positions. But overall, Mr. Modrow enjoys his career, and one of his most significant rewards is the people he works with and his network.

# Library 2: Archive:

The second library I chose was an archive at the BGSU academic library, The Center for Archival Collections. The center is an archive and manuscript repository within the University(“Center for Archival Collections” 2021). Their archives focus on manuscript collections, the Great Lakes historical collections, and their Rare Books. They also house local records from the nineteen counties of Northwest Ohio (“Center of Archival Collections,” 2021).

The center was founded in 1968 as the Northwest Ohio-Great Lakes Research Center (NWOGLRC) was established under the direction of Dr. Richard J. Wright, a nationally known history scholar with an extensive Great Lakes maritime history collection (“About” 2021). The center officially became the center known today in 1977 after the BGSU Archives was absorbed by Northwest Ohio-Great Lakes Research Center and became known as the Center for Archival Collections. The center became known for assigning in establishing the BGSU Records Management Program, which is used to help campus offices with official records retention, including identification of historic documents for permanent retention at the center and the disposal of non-permanent records in compliance with the Ohio Revised Code (“About” 2021). The center continues to grow and is a part of the Annual Conference on Local History.

Even though there are many similarities to the Walter Havighurst Special Collections Center, and special collections are part of the Center for Archival Collections. These similarities stop there, primarily since the center does not focus on special collections; other parts of the main library focus on these. The two centers have different missions, separate facilities, and their services differ.

These differences are what I really wanted to learn about because regardless of how they are classified, each library is unique. Another reason I chose this library was to learn more about other archives in Ohio. Especially this library, since I have heard a lot about it and wanted to know more.

During my interview with Mrs. Sweetser, she provided ample information about the archive. I also learned a bit about the other parts of the BGSU library and how the archive is different. The in-depth answers Mrs. Sweeter provided were exceptional, and we ended up talking about the center longer than I expected. She also explained how they had become the home of a specific athletic archive called the Cochrane Cunningham Athletics Archive. She talked about the archive's condition when they received it and how it had to be sent off-site for processing, and they are now considered its’ curators.

In the first part of the interview, we discussed the structure of the BGSU Libraries and how the archive she is the head of relates to the other library sections. She considers the center an archival repository. They are the university’s archive and considered a collecting archive because they go out to several different communities and document the area. She explained that each part of the library mainly operates independently but still works together for other procedural purposes. For the special collections center in the library, she explained that they work parallel to them in the administrative structure. Three different centers parallel them: the music library, popular culture library, and curriculum resource center.

The archive has a “special” clientele, so I wanted to discuss this separately in this analysis because of who they are. Mrs. Sweeter said during our interview that anyone could be a “special” client; this also seemed to be emphasized when I read the BGSU libraries’ website, which encourages people to come and visit their libraries; other library websites do not encourage this.

Student workers are another significant part of the archive by performing many operational tasks to keep things running smoothly. They also produce finding aids and upload them onto archive space. Digitalization, reference desk, and social media are other areas Student-workers are trained.

Fees and restrictions are another part of the Archival Center. While they try to avoid restrictions and fees, this is not always possible. These restrictions include copyrights, donors' permissions, handling, legal guidelines, and licensing of materials. Some restrictions deal with handling materials at the archive and are similar to those at the Havighurst Center. There are guidelines for how the library's staff and student employees provide services, which helps improve response times for remote reference queries and lets patrons know when to expect a response. There are fees for reference queries when research lasts for more than thirty minutes. The archive charges a $50 fee for up to 2 hours.

One exciting part about this archive is, it was not originally built as an archive. So, it is not climate controlled and does not have an adequate fire suppression system. While there are compact shelves and stacks, they do not have a vault.

We also discussed some of the challenges currently facing the archive: staffing and having enough physical space. Other challenges are: managing the amount of work to do at the archive without spreading everyone too thin, since they cannot hire at this time, working with other parts of the library when resources are needed, and the cost over time for managing the archive.

Mrs. Sweeter also gave me some advice for anyone new to the information field. She said to try to be open to new ideas, to learn new things, expect you will have to continue to learn always (Sweeter 2021). She also mentioned finding different types of work opportunities, such as day-to-day work like a scanning project. These opportunities open you up to more marketing possibilities. Try to arm yourself with many different skills, especially technical ones, since most library work is now digital.

The characteristics Mrs. Sweeter looks for in a new hire are to have good customer service skills, a person who takes pride in their work, has lots of soft skills to make it easier to learn the archival skills needed. Other things are having a desire to learn and grow in the job. She mentioned some practical work experience such as student and volunteer work and how these would translate into the field. The last thing was being able to think on your feet and knowing how to interact with others.

Some dislikes Mrs. Sweeter has about her position are balancing the job demands within a 40-hour workweek. Since she has tenure, they expect her to publish articles regularly. Other dislikes are being in a middle management position and not having needs for the archive met, giving bad news, or doing something that she doesn’t believe in strongly. Some of her likes are being able to help her staff, answering chat and reference questions, and the collaboratives she is a part of. Other challenges for her are managing other priorities and life events. Rewards for her are: being a part of the archive, pride in her work, and her friendships.

# Comparisons

When comparing these two libraries, I was surprised at how different they are. The first difference I noticed was their clientele, especially their secondary clients. I was not expecting genealogists or Mormons to be interested in archives. Nor was I expecting the staffing differences at each library. The King Library has 52 librarians compared to the BGSU Archival Center, with only 8. There are differences in the staff titles, and these types differ between professional and non-professional. Another difference was the number of services offered at each information center. The last difference I noticed was their websites. While the Havighurst Center website does not have as much information as the BGSU’s, it is easier to navigate and search for what you need. The similarities I found were their funding sources, the cooperatives they use, and their facilities, including reading rooms and general stacks. Also, both their administrative structures are hierarchical.

# Conclusion

This assignment was fun for me, and I learned a lot about different information centers. The advice from each of the head librarians will be useful in the future. I didn’t realize about having customer service skills until Mrs. Sweeter mentioned it during our interview. After reviewing all of the information, I have realized that I do not want to be in their position. Hopefully, as I continue in the library field, I will learn some of the skills needed for a different position at a special collections center or an archive.

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| Comparison | Library 1: Special Collections | Library 2: Archive |
| Clientele | Primary- undergraduate students and admin  Secondary researchers | Primary- Students, Admin, campus programs  Secondary- genealogists, Mormons, ship specialists |
| Staff | Professional in whole library 52  Nonprofessional and support in department 12  Students 12 in department | Professional 8  (Full-time archivist and full-time cataloguist)  Volunteers 2  Student-workers 8  Internships 1  No non-professional librarians in the center, only in other parts of the library |
| Administration | Hierarchical | Hierarchical and Flat |
| Departments | Similar to library two but also instruction and processing for the special collection part of the library. | For the whole academic Library, not just the archive: special collections library teaching and learning, collections and technical, specific collections, interlibrary loan, learning commons, and rational book. |
| Types of Services | Consultations, digitalization, and other similar services  Outsourced: information to donors | Remote reference, digitalization, instruction with faculty, one on consultations, IOL, microform lab, digital exhibits, chat, multiple session classes, reference management  Outsourced: films, Av, formats, some digital transcriptions, and finding aids |
| Facilities | General stacks, cold storage, and reading room | Study spaces, general stacks, reading rooms, depository |
| Funding Sources | University money, and similar founds | University money grant, foundation supports from the BGSU foundation |
| Cooperatives | Ohio networks and Ohio link or cooperatives for an exhibition at a museum | Ohio networks and Ohio link |

# Comparison Table