

Extending the Archives: Partnering and Outreach at the Fife Folklore Archives

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They say two heads are better than one, and this has proven true at Utah State University's Fife Folklore Archives. Over the years, the Archives has partnered with organizations, government agencies, communities, academic programs, and students in order to enhance the archives' collections. Often outreach endeavors at university archives are seen as "organized activities ... intended to acquaint potential users with their holdings and their research and reference value."¹ However, following the impressive lead of the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, many university Folklore archives (Utah State University, Brigham Young University, University of California at Berkeley, and Memorial University, to name a few) form partnerships as a means to acquire, promote, and preserve the vernacular traditions of their repositories' collecting areas and to advance the discipline of Folklore.

The Fife Folklore Archives, named for folklorists Austin and Alta Fife, was built upon the academic and public sector work of the Fifes (who partnered with community members to collect and preserve the vernacular expressions of the Inter-Mountain West) and William A. Wilson and Barre Toelken (who continued in their footsteps). Both Austin and Alta Fife hoped that a Folklore program and companion repository for folklore materials would be established at Utah State University. To this end they donated their extensive fieldwork collection, including acetate disks and reel-to-reel field recordings and transcriptions, a vernacular slide collection, and a large library of Folklore books. With the Fife's input and much research, USU's library administration and the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences worked together to develop a Folklore program, affiliated

with the USU English Department, and a folklore repository, housed in USU Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

Today, the Fife Folklore Archives continues to pursue partnerships that will enhance the research holdings of the repository, provide fieldwork opportunities for USU Folklore students, and promote the discipline of Folklore through outreach endeavors. This paper² will take a look at the outreach benefits, impact on collection growth, educational opportunities, and difficulties of archival partnerships by highlighting four current partnerships at the Fife Folklore Archives: Utah State University's Folklore Program, the American Folklore Society, the Bear River Heritage Area Council, and the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress Veterans History Project.

Partnering with USU's Folklore Program

Along with Austin and Alta Fife's fieldwork collection housed at USU's Fife Folklore Archives, the student folklore collections generated from Utah State University Folklore students are definite "jewels in the crown" of the Fife Folklore Archives. The student collections are generated from a strong and longstanding partnership with the Utah State University Folklore Program. The USU Student Fieldwork Collection consists of Folklore projects generated by upper division and graduate students in Folklore, History, and Anthropology courses at Utah State University from 1978 to the present and copies of collections from Folklore students at Brigham Young University from 1967 to 1978, which William A. Wilson brought to USU when he became the first director of both the Folklore Program and Fife Folklore Archives in 1978. The genre collection consists of folklore items collected by undergraduate students in USU Folklore classes from the late 1960s to the present and folklore items collected by undergraduate students in Brigham Young University Folklore and Anthropology classes during 1960-1978 taught by Wilson, John Sorenson, and Thomas Cheney. Pre-1978 USU genre item submissions were deposited by Austin Fife, a retired French professor, who had his students collect items of folklore for the proposed repository. Most items include informant data, context, text (the folklore item), texture (analysis), and collector data. The items of folklore are in text

form on 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of line-free paper, including Fife's students' materials, which were transferred from their original 3x5 card format (see Example 1 on following pages). Since 1999, genre items also include release forms. The materials do not circulate. The collection is separated into ten groups: customs; belief; speech; tales and jokes; songs; games/pranks; legends (character, contemporary, etiological, human condition, supernatural non-religious, supernatural religious); material culture; e-lore (including folklore items transmitted by Xerox, facsimile, and email); and riddles (under construction).

When William A. Wilson arrived at USU, the BYU student materials formed the raw data for the classification system that Wilson and Barbara Walker [Lloyd] developed. Wilson and Walker, working with student assistants, divided the single submission items into similar genres and sorted them by numbers similar to the Finnish archiving system Wilson learned while working on his dissertation in Finland. Wilson stayed at USU until 1984, when he returned to BYU to assume the chairmanship of the English Department. When he left USU he took the original BYU focused projects, leaving copies for the Fife Folklore Archives. The originals of the BYU genre collections were left at USU, but copies of this collection and all the USU student generated collections (focused and genre) were copied for BYU's folklore archives. Thus, in 1985 the USU and BYU student folklore collections were identical.

During the following years, Barbara Walker, Director of the Fife Folklore Archives (1985-1996), and William A. Wilson and Kristi A. Bell at the Brigham Young University Folklore Archives (now known as the William A. Wilson Folklore Archives), worked to maintain the same classification system at both universities. Over the years, the materials submitted by students from the two universities began to differ from each other, as students generally collect the types of materials their professors focus on in class.

In 1985 Professor Barre Toelken came to Utah State from the University of Oregon to direct the Folklore Program. He continued the folklore-collecting legacy that Austin Fife and William A. Wilson began, including genre and focused projects as part of his students' course work. Since that time, USU's Folklore Program and Fife Folklore Archives have continued a strong partnership. Professors

Patricia Gardner, Jan Roush, Steve Siporin, Jeannie Thomas and Barre Toelken, as well as Michael Christensen, Barbara Walker, and myself have partnered with the Fife Folklore Archives when teaching Folklore courses by depositing students' focused and/or genre collections in the Archives.

The USU Student Genre Collection and the USU Student Focused Collection continue to grow. Working with archive staff and the Folklore faculty, the format has changed somewhat over the years to reflect trends in Folkloristics and the teaching styles of the Folklore faculty. As stated above, many of the early submissions had little contextual data, and often limited, if any, informant data. William A. Wilson created a collecting format that included: informant data, contextual data and text (item of folklore). Barre Toelken and Randy Williams added "texture" to the format of genre collections, allowing the collector to give "the feel" of the item to potential researchers. As well, in 1998, the students were asked to include release forms with their genre items, following a trend in the Folklore field that addresses not only the item (which in some cases, like a joke, may be seen as part of the public domain materials and therefore not needing a release), but also the performance of the lore (and therefore necessary for a release from the performer-informant). In 2002, the collection was moved from hundreds of three-ringed binders to archival folders and boxes, making the collection more physically stable and easier to manage and use. The collection registers were encoded in HTML as a means of hosting them on the Fife Folklore Archives on-line register.³ The real beneficiaries of these efforts are researchers who are able to see over space and time the vernacular expressions of a people and place. An example: Several years ago an undergraduate in a Sociology class came into the Fife Folklore Archives looking bewildered. She was working on a research paper on prison life from the inmate's point of view. To this point in her research she had only uncovered statistics and reports from wardens, state officials, but nothing giving voice to the prisoners' life in prison. She had no contacts at the local jail or state penitentiary in order to conduct fieldwork. Luckily, the Fife Archives houses several excellent focused projects on prison life: two from prisoners who were in an American Folklore course I taught over USU's closed circuit system⁴ (one on prison tattoos and their meaning and the other on prison life,

Example 1

Dick Hanson
Logan, Utah
November, 1982

Title: "Baptism for the Dead"

Genre: Supernatural Religious Legend

Informant:

Dick Hanson is twenty years old and was born and reared in Moab, Utah. He recently moved to Logan, Utah, to attend Utah State University. His major is computer science. He converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints last year and is now actively attending church services and is devout in his belief. Dick is single and lives with two other male students who are returned missionaries for the Church. Dick's family—his mother, father, highschool-aged brother, and younger sister—still reside in Moab.

Context:

Dick heard this story around the time he was converting to the LDS church and was about to be baptized. One of Dick's friends in Moab, who was encouraging him to join the Church, related this story to him after Priesthood meeting (a Mormon Sunday meeting for men). Only the two of them were talking in the lobby of the church house. Dick had been attending church meetings to get a better idea of what the Church was like. A story like this is most likely to be told in the context of a religious discussion, but on this particular occasion, Dick, who is a good friend of mine, told me the story in the Business Building hallway while we were waiting for the professor to arrive.

Text:

There was this lady up at the Salt Lake Temple who was doing baptisms for the dead. Every time she was baptized for someone and coming out of the water, she would look to the back of the room and see the spirit of the individual she was being baptized for walk across

to the other side of the room. When the officiator who was doing the baptisms said that they were done, she looked to the back of the room and saw a little girl who had not yet crossed the room. She then told the officiator that they were not done and that there was still a little girl who needed to be baptized. The officiator then rechecked his paper and noticed that the paper had been folded in such a way that it concealed this girl's name. They then proceeded with the baptism and the girl (her spirit) walked across the room.

Texture:

Dick told this story with total earnestness, and in a hushed voice, because he didn't want other students in the hall to get nosy about what we were discussing. I recognize the story as one I have heard before, and it may reflect the possibility that this kind of event has occurred a number of times. The theological reference is to the LDS (Mormon) belief in baptism by proxy for people who died before they had the opportunity to know about the Church. Baptism for the dead rituals, as well as other temple rituals, are part of formal LDS religious teachings, and are not to be discussed in detail outside the temple. Stories like this one, however, are not considered sacred texts, but circulate in oral tradition, told by people in appropriate settings to illustrate the actual occurrences in everyday life, which ratify or strengthen their own personal beliefs in Church teachings.

Diana Bodily
Utah State University
History 124
Professor Toelken
Fall 1982

from foodways to folk art) and one from a warden's wife who participated in the 1992 Fife Folklore Conference and turned in a collection on "spreading" folklore (foodways) from prisoners in the Huntsville, Texas Penitentiary. All three collections included an essay, 10-20 folklore items, and informant (participant) data. The student was happy to find first-person accounts of prison life and was able to complete the research for her project.

Of course there are problems with amassing such a large collection that is processed to the item level. We are constantly faced with items in arrearage and space constraints. As well, the lack of release forms for early submissions gives me archival stress, which has driven our policy to require patrons requesting items from the collection to complete and return the Fife Folklore Archives Use Agreement Form. However, the collections' strengths outweigh any problems and concerns.

Thus, the Fife Folklore Archives longest partner—USU's (and, indirectly BYU's) Folklore Program—has allowed the archives to acquire and make available 43 years of vernacular expression. This partnership crosses university boundaries, departments, professional fields and decades to grow into a huge collection that is the heart of both USU's Folklore Program and the Fife Folklore Archives—an achievement that would surely make the Fifes proud.

American Folklore Society Partnership

On the front page of the April 1987 *The American Folklore Society Newsletter* an article appeared: "AFS Archiving Committee Seeks Suggestions." This ad hoc archiving committee, under the direction of the American Folklore Society Executive Board, was established to "place the archives of the society in an appropriate repository, and to establish standards and operating guidelines for the ongoing deposit and maintenance of the society's records." The committee called on society members for "suggestions for appropriate repositories for our papers." Under the direction of Jay Orr, the committee collected information on possible repositories and submitted a report to the AFS Executive Board. The Section Report stated: "[Orr] has been working with the AFS Archives Committee, which is looking for a permanent repository for the AFS Archives. The Executive Board is

now reviewing the materials the Committee prepared and will soon be sending out a Request for Proposals to the possible repositories selected by the Committee.”⁵

The AFS Executive Board distributed a request for proposals to U.S. folklore repositories to host the AFS collection. Representatives from the Fife Folklore Archives at Utah State University and the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina presented proposals to the AFS Executive Board at the board’s midyear meeting held in Washington, D.C., in April 1991. Barbara Walker, director of the Fife Folklore Archives, and Barre Toelken, director of the Folklore Program, collaborated with USU Library Director Max Peterson; A.J. Simmonds, head of USU Special Collections and Archives; and Bradley Cole, Manuscript Curator, to create the proposal that highlighted Utah State University’s central location to major U.S. Folklore programs; the national reputation of USU’s Folklore Program and Fife Folklore Archives; and USU Libraries’ and Special Collections and Archives’ commitment to processing, preserving, maintaining, and providing access to the collection.

In a statement issued by the American Folklore Society Executive Board in October 1991, the board announced the selection of Utah State University as the official repository for the Society’s historical records. Barre Toelken stated that “the establishment of the Society collection will create the opportunity for firsthand study of the primary documents of the discipline’s history.” The statement noted that the “Society’s agreement with the Special Collections department calls for Utah State to house the Society’s records, to preserve them according to accepted archival standards, to organize them according to a system jointly determined with the Society, and to make them accessible....” and called on Society members to send their society records to USU.⁶

The Society’s collection includes a wide variety of materials, such as official (and some personal) correspondence, membership lists, files of the officers and editors, and minutes of Board meetings. The collection continues to receive regular additions from current AFS officers and section heads. The AFS collection is divided into two parts: a manuscript collection, which is housed in the USU’s Special Collections and Archives Manuscript Collection; and the published collection—consisting of the *Journal of American Folklore* and the

AFS book series, including those on Folklore published by ABC-CLIO—which is housed in the Fife Folklore Archives.⁷

Partnering with the American Folklore Society allows USU's Fife Folklore Archives and Special Collections and Archives an opportunity to serve the largest folklore society in the United States by managing its ever growing collection. It also allows USU students, faculty, and patrons access to the AFS Collection. Stephen Sturgeon, Manuscript Curator at USU, manages this sizeable collection to the highest archival standards and works with both Timothy Lloyd and myself (AFS Archival Liaison) to ensure that the Society's interests are preserved and protected. This partnership has many facets and is ever changing to reflect the needs of the Society and current archival best practices; however, one thing stays constant: USU's commitment and dedication to protect and make available the important history of the American Folklore Society. At the 1999 annual AFS meeting in Memphis, Tennessee, I gave a "state of the collection" report to the Executive Board. The Board was pleased with the work that USU has done managing the collection, and this partnership continues to benefit both organizations.

Partnering with Government & Agencies: The Bear River Heritage Area Council

In August 2000, I was asked as a Folklore scholar to join the Bear River Heritage Area Council (BRHAC) on a current grant proposal. The purpose of the Council is to identify, preserve, and enhance the natural, cultural, and economic heritage and to stabilize and expand upon the economic opportunities associated with the heritage of the Bear River area. Four counties in southeastern Idaho—Bear Lake, Caribou, Franklin, and Oneida; and three counties in northern Utah—Box Elder, Cache, and Rich—make up the Bear River drainage, and thus the heritage area. As a representative from USU's Fife Folklore Archives, my involvement with the Council involved education and fieldwork. One of my first tasks was to help the Council define its goals, including an effort to catalog the traditions in the Utah portion of the area. The Council created a strategic plan that called for working with long time area residents and scholars to record local histories and identify and

document traditional artisans and folklore of the Bear River region. This plan included working with communities and professional Folklore fieldworkers to collect and record oral histories and information on local culture, artisans, and historically significant buildings.

In order to move this plan forward, I wrote a grant and the BRHAC received funds to conduct a fieldwork survey in Utah in the summer and fall 2001. (The Idaho component of the fieldwork took place in the summer 2003.) The grant monies were used to hire Folklore consultant Andrea Graham to conduct interviews with local community members and tradition bearers; to mentor three graduate student interns from USU's Folklore Program (Sally Haueter, Robin Parent, and Michael Ward) to assist with the fieldwork; and to develop an inventory of folk traditions in the Bear River Heritage Area. The project also called for the finished inventory and fieldwork to be housed in USU's Special Collections and Archives and made available to community members and scholars.

The inventory was used as the foundation for identifying heritage traditions and themes and future projects of the BRHAC, and as a reference for interested community organizations. The fieldwork culminated with three free public presentations in each of the Utah counties entitled: "The Living Traditions of the Bear River Area." These programs included a PowerPoint presentation from the lead fieldworkers and graduate students and demonstrations from two community tradition bearers in each county. At the completion of the fieldwork, Elaine Thatcher (Associate Director of the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies at Utah State University, who also participated in the fieldwork), Sally Haueter, and I worked on *The Bear River Heritage Guide*, a publication that showcases the heritage sites, services and traditions of the area. It is available throughout the region to help "heritage tourists" and local residents alike learn about and visit local heritage sites. It is also available for download in PDF format from the BRHAC website at www.bearriverheritage.com.

The partnership was mutually beneficial: the Council received direction for their heritage projects (and is now in the process of finalizing a proposal for the 108th Congress to establish the National Bear River Heritage Area in Idaho and Utah); three USU graduate students received in-the-field fieldwork experience; and USU Special

Collections and Archives received the fruits of the fieldwork survey, including oral interviews with long time residents on folkways; photographs and logs; publicity, greater awareness for the archives and its holdings; and submissions that help record the vernacular expressions of local communities.

The partnership had many components and was in truth a lot of work. From working with a committee of individuals unaccustomed to Folklore fieldwork (it took almost six months for the group to fully define “heritage”) to drafting a plan to document the local “heritage” through the fieldwork survey, the partnership took a great amount of energy and effort. However, once the Board embraced the vision of a heritage survey and other folklorists got on board, the work took off and was immensely rewarding for the entire committee. In fact, folklorist Elaine Thatcher is currently chairing the BRHAC Board.

Partnering with the Library of Congress

Like many local repositories, Utah State University Libraries Special Collections and Archives is an official partner of the Library of Congress Veterans History Project. The mission of the VHP is to collect the memories, accounts and documents of war veterans from World War I, World War II, the Korean War, Vietnam War, and the Persian Gulf War.⁸ In 1947, USU was second to West Point in graduating and commissioning Second Lieutenants, and so the VHP seemed like a perfect project for USU’s Special Collections & Archives. Utah State’s efforts concentrate on the veterans and other support personnel who live in Northern Utah and Southern Idaho and USU alumni, faculty and friends. USU Special Collections & Archives serves as a regional repository of oral history interviews generated from this project.

One immediate benefit of this important project was the incredible response we received from veterans who were so willing to share their stories. We received great support as well from local partners, including newspapers, a printing house, veteran groups, schools; local citizens who wanted to get involved with the project as volunteer interviewers; and university faculty and staff, including USU’s President Kermit Hall. The USU Veterans History Project began with a one-day oral history workshop in June 2003 to train interested volunteers to collect

and transcribe an oral interview with a U.S. war veteran or support person. The workshop was a huge success, with over 50 participants in attendance. Many of them are now busy interviewing family and friends about their war-time experiences and will eventually deposit their interviews at USU. The workshop was funded in part by a generous grant from the Utah Humanities Council, and with support from the American Folklore Society, USU's Mountain West Center for Regional Studies, Watkins Printing, the Herald Journal newspaper, and Utah State University Libraries.

The project benefited USU graduate students Matthew Irwin and Charity Lund, who were hired to conduct oral interviews. Lt. Colonel Jeff Bateman, Professor and Department Head in Aerospace at USU and a graduate student in History, participated in the workshop and has now conducted numerous oral interviews with U.S. war veterans. Of his involvement he states,

What a great experience! While I have a military background myself, I was struck by the diverse experience and challenge these veterans faced. Most of all, I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to listen to their stories of sacrifice and courage. They are not called the 'Greatest Generation' for nothing!¹⁹

Continuing the project during USU's week-long Veteran's Day celebration in November 2003, we hosted: "Voices of Cache Valley Veterans," an evening of poignant and patriotic real-life stories of decorated Cache Valley war veterans who participated in the USU Veterans History Project. The event, also a partnership, was produced in conjunction with The Friends of USU Libraries and the Concert and Lecture Series at the Tabernacle, a local group that works to present

cultural and educational events of common interests and values, with the object of promoting understanding and respect between the diverse cultures of Cache Valley. The enlightening event was well attended, and it brought USU's Veterans History Project more exposure and contacts. Continuing their support of this project, the *Herald Journal* now highlights a veteran a week from the project and calls on those that are interested to get involved.

This partnership, like the partnerships with USU's Folklore Program and the American Folklore Society, will continue for years to come and will help to enhance our holdings of America's war-time memories which will allow us to better serve the university and local communities.¹⁰

Conclusion

Partnerships and outreach opportunities are vital to the Fife Folklore Archives for providing professional networks and service opportunities to our students and faculty, and to the Folklore and the university communities at large. At USU many Folklore graduate students are interested in public sector folklore. Outreach activities in the archives have given many, like Sally Haueter (Program Director at the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering at the Western Folklife Center) a hands-on experience in fieldwork that compliments academic instruction. Haueter states, "Working on the Bear River Heritage Area Project introduced me to cultural tourism and helped me understand its complexities, which has aided me in programming the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering"¹¹

Outreach and partnership opportunities result in collection development, another benefit to archives. As an example of this, I would like to briefly explain another partnership at the Fife Folklore Archives: the National Cowboy Poetry Gathering. The partnership began when the Archives served as the repository for the original fieldwork that helped produce the first gathering in Elko, Nevada, in 1985. The partnership continues as USU serves as the on-site cowboy poetry library at each gathering. Each year the Skaggs Cowboy Poetry Collection, assembled originally through a grant from the L. J. and Mary C. Skaggs Foundation, travels to the annual Cowboy Poetry

Gathering, where Gathering participants have an opportunity to use the books in the collection. As well, generous tradition bearers donate their poetry books (press published and self published), helping the Archives' Cowboy Poetry Collection grow to become one of the largest publicly owned cowboy poetry collections in the country.¹²

Perhaps the most important reason for folklore archives to form partnerships is the continuing education it provides the curator. It is imperative to stay abreast of current trends as a means of collecting and preserving for present and future generations the folklore (soul) of a people. Partnerships provide insights and perspectives to a curator that aid in the growth and strength of the repository. Outreach helps take the curator out of the archives, often seen as a "tomb," to the land of the living where the materials collected and preserved are made. Partnerships and outreach are key to the life of an archives. A wise curator, however, will always let the archives collecting policy drive all outreach activities. Therefore, like Austin Fife, who was a folklorist in French professor's clothing, being a folklore archivist means being a public sector folklorist in librarian's clothing.

Notes

1. Bellardo, Lewis J. and Lynn Lady Bellardo, compilers. 1992. *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers*. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists. p. 24.

2. This paper is an outgrowth of a panel presentation by Stephen C. Sturgeon, Elaine Thatcher, Barre Toelken, and myself at the Building Bridges with Folklore Archives Conference at BYU in February 2003.

3. For a look at the Fife Folklore Archives Collecting Guide and registers visit <http://library.usu.edu/Folklo/index.htm>.

4. Fife Folklore Archives, FOLK COLL 8: FFC 92-04; FOLK COLL 8: USU 97-03, 97-14.

5. *The AFS Newsletter* 19, no. 1 (June 1990):3,7,

6. *The AFS Newsletter* 20, no. 5,(Oct 1991):1,3.

7. MSS COLL 206, see the register at <http://library.usu.edu/Specol/manuscript/collms206inv.html>; For published collection, see FOLK COLL 18.

8. For more information, visit www.loc.gov/vets.
9. *Marginalia* 15 (Fall 2003).
10. Visit USU VHP Collection register at <http://library.usu.edu/Specoll/manuscript/veterans.html>.
11. Personal conversation, 5 December 2003.
12. Western States Cowboy Poetry Collection, FOLK COLL 11f. Register available at <http://library.usu.edu/Folklo/cowboypoetry.htm>.