



Benjamin S. Rosenthal Library

Department of Special Collections & Archives Fall 2011 Newsletter

Public Launch of Digital Archive Documenting Queens

This Fall saw the public launch of the Queens Memory Project (QMP), a digital archive documenting contemporary life in Queens, New York, the most diverse county in the United States (www.queensmemory.org). The project brings together otherwise scattered archival materials and personal stories in one, searchable, user-friendly site. In its first year, the project has attracted international attention for its ability to record the personal histories of under-represented community members and its innovative delivery of oral history content.

Special guest speakers at October's launch event included Borough President Helen Marshall, Queens College President James Muyskens, Assembly Member Grace Meng and Queens Library President and CEO, Tom Galante. Queens College and Queens Library have combined their resources to make the QMP possible, and their efforts are additionally supported by community partners including the Queens Historical Society, the Queens Borough Historian, and Queens Council on the Arts, among others. The public launch was the conclusion of the program's first year of funded development sponsored largely by a grant from the Metropolitan New York Library Council (METRO).

The launch was also a kick-off for the first annual Queens Week, sponsored by StoryCorps. StoryCorps is a national non-profit organization most notably affiliated with the Library of Congress and with their regular broadcasts on National Public Radio. Queens Week yielded 34 new interviews with Queens residents recorded Oct. 28th-Nov. 2nd. These interviews, along with all other Queens-related StoryCorps interviews (past and future) will be donated to the Archives at Queens Library for use in the Queens Memory Project.



Natalie Milbrodt speaks with Lisa McDivitt from NY1 on the night of the public launch for the QMP.

The Queens Memory Project seeks stories and images that represent the borough.

The project website (www.queensmemory.org) is now live and actively expanding into new neighborhoods in Queens. Volunteers and donors can learn more about getting involved in the "About" section of the site.

News Flashes from the Civil Rights Archive

In August Civil Rights Project Director **Annie Tummino** chaired a panel at the annual **Society of American Archivists conference**. The panel featured leading practitioners in the field and was titled, “Archiving the Civil Rights Movement: North & South, Past & Future”... The **New York Times** profiled the Archive on September 27th. See “Far North of Selma, an Allotment of Civil Rights History” by Matt Flegenheimer... We are pleased to collaborate with the **Metropolitan Expeditionary Learning School** in Forest Hills, Queens, on integrating primary source materials from the archive into their curriculum... Don’t forget to check out our **digital archive** at <http://www.archives.gslis.net>.

Civil Rights Archive Grows with Dynamic New Collections

We are proud to announce the following acquisitions. They complement our existing materials and will enrich the curriculum of the college. Deep thanks to all our donors.

Barbara Jones Omolade Collection: Omolade served as chair of the Civil Rights Coordinating Council at Queens College in 1964, helping to organize Freedom Week and other activities in support of SNCC and Mississippi Freedom Summer. She is the author of *The Rising Song of African American Women*.

Robert Rygor Collection: Rygor was a GLBT activist from 1974 until he passed away from AIDS in 1994. He helped organize the earliest protests against the Saint Patrick’s Day Parade, was the first openly gay man to run for New York State Legislature in 1978, and served as the office manager of ACT-UP, among many other accomplishments.

Clarence Irving Collection: In the 1950s Irving managed the Bisons, an integrated sandlot baseball team that became a dynasty in the Brooklyn Kiwanis League, with seven championship seasons in three divisions. In 1962 a group of ex-Bisons led by Irving formed the Bisons Athletic Club, a non-profit dedicated to good citizenship, education, and athletics. With the help of tutors from the Queens College Student Help Project, the group sponsored “Operation Elevation” a program that provided tutoring to children in all academic areas.



From the Dean Savage Collection: Martin Luther King addresses SCOPE volunteers at the orientation in Atlanta.

Dean Savage and Moshe Shur Collections: In 1965 both Savage and Shur volunteered with the SCOPE Project, a voter registration effort sponsored by the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Stationed in Orangeburg, SC, they were arrested along with other SCOPE volunteers for sitting in at the Orangeburg County courthouse. Savage’s collection includes 16 remarkable photos while Shur’s includes digitized Super 8 video footage. Savage serves as Queens College Professor of Sociology and Shur recently retired from his post as Rabbi at Queens College Hillel and is currently an adjunct professor in History at the QC Center for Jewish Studies.

Jean Konzal Collection: As a member of the Student Help Project, Jean was one of 16 Queens College students that travelled to Prince Edward County, VA during the summer of 1963 to tutor children who were locked out of the public schools due to the state’s policy of “Massive Resistance” to desegregation.

International Initiatives & Collaborations

Building on relationships formed during his visit to Sichuan University during Queens College's "Year of China" initiative, Benjamin Alexander, Assistant Professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Studies and Head of Special Collections and Archives, accepted an invitation to return with Archives staff members Annie Tummino and Natalie Milbrodt to speak with library students about the department's innovative digital initiatives.

During their visit, the team was also invited to speak at Renmin University in Beijing, where efforts are underway to launch university-wide social memory projects. The Queens Memory Project and the Civil Rights Digital Archives were of particular interest to students and faculty at both Chinese institutions.



Left: Ben Alexander at Sichuan University, Chengdu, China

Below: Renmin University, Beijing, China.
Ben Alexander, Annie Tummino & Natalie Milbrodt field questions as Professor Jenny Wang, School of Information Resource Management (left) looks on.



Annie Tummino (above) and Natalie Milbrodt spoke at a graduate level Archives class at UCLA in November.

Other invitations and speaking engagements by Special Collections & Archives staff this fall included presentations in Professor Anne Gilliland's Community Archives graduate class at UCLA, Professor Robert DeCandido's Digital Archives graduate class at Queens College, and the American Library Association webinar "Digitizing Hidden Collections."

In February, Alexander, Milbrodt, and Tummino will give talks at University College, London and University of Glasgow.

New Addition: The Seamen's Church Institute Archives

The library has reached an agreement with the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and New Jersey (SCI) to transfer SCI's collections to the Queens College Libraries Department of Special Collections and Archives.

Back in June, SCI's Archives team packed up the Institute's collection of nearly two hundred linear feet of archival materials into a moving truck and headed for the Brooklyn Bridge. The big move marked the first time SCI's records, some as old as the 178 year Institute itself, had left the island of Manhattan.

The newly acquired materials document the history of the Institute's work providing pastoral and professional assistance to seafarers in the Port of New York. The collection details the development of maritime workers' rights from the 19th century to the waterfront labor and political tensions of the 1930s and 1950s.

"At its heart," said SCI Associate Archivist Johnathan Thayer, "this collection represents the voices and perspectives of the working seafarer in New York."



A mural painted in the lobby of 25 South Street depicting the Merchant Marine involvement in the World War II Normandy invasion.



Bridge navigation instruction on top of the roof of SCI's headquarters at 25 South Street in Lower Manhattan.

Thayer will continue to process the records of the Institute at Queens College. The collection consists of paper documents, photographs, artifacts and publications collected over SCI's history. Highlight items include 19th century journals from the chaplains of SCI's three floating chapels, letters from long-time SCI Board member Franklin D. Roosevelt and a photograph collection dating back to the late 1800s.

New and ongoing projects include the transfer of SCI's more than 12,000 digital items to a new hosting website and an oral history initiative that will record interviews with veterans of the American Merchant Marines.

Learn more about Seamen's Church and access SCI's Digital Collection at www.seamenschurch.org/archives.

More Department News



Ann Birstein: The department has acquired additional materials from her personal collection, including correspondence, manuscripts, images and other memorabilia. Birstein is the author of nine books, and her shorter works have appeared in such publications as *The New Yorker*, the *New York Times* and *Vogue*. She is a recipient of a Fullbright Fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts grant. Additionally, she has taught and lectured at her alma mater Queens College, the Iowa Writers Workshop, Columbia University and Barnard College, where she founded and directed Writers on Writing. She has also taught and lectured throughout Europe and Israel.



Vamp & Tramp: In November, Special Collections & Archives proudly sponsored a show-and-tell lecture by one of nation's premiere book arts vendors. Bill & Vicky Stewart of Vamp & Tramp, LLC introduced GSLIS students, as well as other attendees, to the fascinating world of Artists' Books. In the past, the department had purchased several pieces from this unique vendor, further diversifying and expanding our existing collection of Artists' Books. The event was covered by The Knight News of Queens College.



Preservation Specialist visits Special Collections & Archives: In October, the department welcomed Angelina Altobellis, from the Northeast Document Conservation Center, to perform a conservation and preservation survey of the department's collections. Ms. Altobellis' visit was sponsored by the NEH grant which was awarded to the department of Special Collections & Archives earlier this year. The report, with her recommendations, will be available in 2012.

Special Thanks to Special Collections Fellows and Volunteers

The Department of Special Collections and Archives is committed to serving as a learning laboratory for students within the GSLIS, from across campus, and from a global perspective. It is within that context that the Department gratefully acknowledges the work of our Graduate Fellows:

Corinne Klee for her work with the Civil Rights Collections; **Kyoko Aoki** for her work with the Queens Memory Project; **Jenny Frémont** for her work with the Seamen's Church Institute Collections; **Justin Manchini** for his work with the Rare Book Collection; **Christine Parker** for her work with the Queens Memory Project and the Rare Books Collection; **Deborah Tint** for her work with the Artist Book Collection; and **Caity Selleck** and **Devin McKinney** for their work with the Institutional Archives.

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