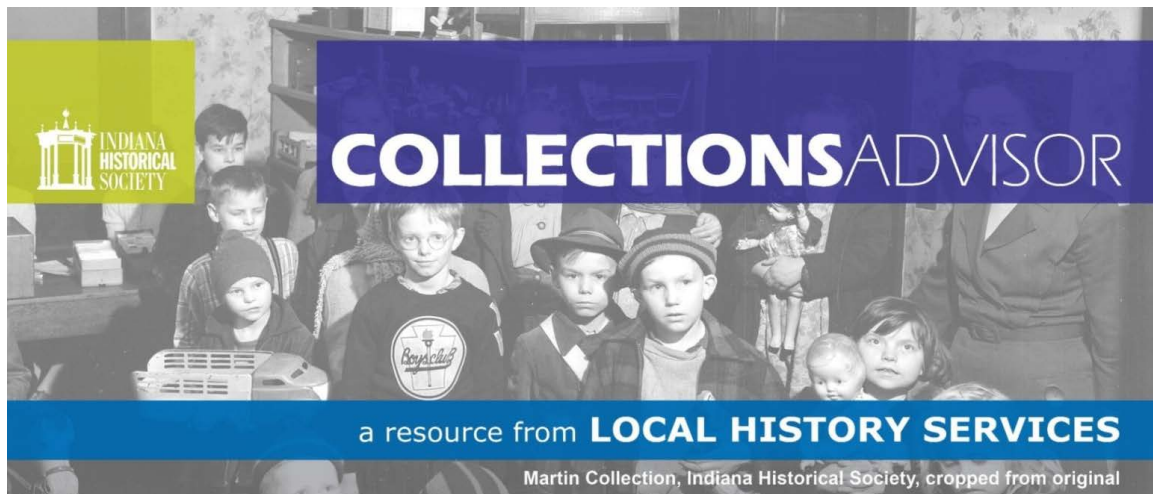


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Connecting to Collections project.



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Promoting Awareness for Collections Care, Part One: Getting the Work Done and Getting the Word Out

by Amber Gowen, archivist/internship director, [Vanderburgh County Clerk's Office](#)

In October 2014, Vanderburgh County Clerk Debbie Stucki initiated a long-term project to inventory un-indexed or insufficiently documented archival county records stored in a warehouse. Two overarching goals for the inventory included gaining better access to the collection and the completion of a comprehensive advocacy plan for the archives. Using the advocacy plan as their guide, Stucki and her staff developed the following programs and projects as a way to find the necessary help to complete the inventory, forge connections with fellow history institutions and build public awareness of the research potential and preservation needs of the county's historic records.

In this first installment of a two-part series, an internship program and a blog are highlighted as effective ways to connect with people and organizations who can help you reach your collections care goals.

Internship program

The size of the Clerk's Archives made finding help to complete the inventory a necessity. Archives staff developed an undergraduate internship program with the University of Evansville that began for the Spring 2015 semester. Between January and April, the first team of four interns and office staff inventoried more than 1,000 boxes of microfilm, 1,600 record books and 3,400 folders (known as shucks in local court lingo). During the course of their work, interns completed 343 condition evaluations on historical materials reaching as far back as 1818, and began three research guides to the most valuable research collections. Beyond providing the necessary labor to start the inventory, the internship program built ties with the University of Evansville, raised the profile of the archives and increased the pool of influencers willing to support future collections care projects.



Clerk's Archive intern
inventorying estate files.



A recent Clerk's Archives blog post featured this historic billhead discovered in the estate files.

Images provided by Vanderburgh County Clerk's Office

Archives blog

After considering the benefits and risks of social media, staff of the Clerk's Archives decided that a blog would be the most manageable way to promote ongoing archives projects online. The resulting blog, titled [Be It Remembered](#), creates a space to convey the purpose of the archives, the stories that the records contain and the projects underway to improve their care. A secondary purpose creates a space for connecting and engaging with individuals and institutions that also work to preserve local history. As public awareness of the collection grows through social media, an added benefit could potentially be increased use of the archives by researchers. The blog is also used by interns to contribute articles on topics they develop through their historical research while working with the records. The blog could also provide an avenue to publicize the progress of any future grant-funded projects.

Blog goals:

- Provide an outlet to highlight record management projects
- Develop narratives for future funding efforts
- Raise awareness of our collection
- Advocate for our collection
- Educate our audience as to the contents and importance of our collection
- Network with other local, regional and national groups and individuals with an interest in local history and historical preservation
- Be an active voice within the local history community and speak with a greater collective voice

Target audience:

- Local history community
- All individuals with an interest in history
- Decision-makers
- Grant funders

Coming Next Month

The second part of the series will demonstrate the value of exhibits and public programs in promoting awareness for collections care.

Resources

[Be it Remembered: blog of the Vanderburgh County Clerk's Archives](#)

[Connecting to Collections Care: Outreach Activities for Collections Care](#)

[The Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts: Collections Advocacy Toolkit](#)

[Society of American Archivists: Advocacy Toolkit](#)

"Like a Good Neighbor: Community Advocacy and Outreach for Small Museums," Small Museums Toolkit, Book Four: Reaching and Responding to Audience, available in the [Lending Resource Center of the Indiana Historical Society](#)



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