



Succession planning to create a sustainable archives in a time of crisis

Deborah Davis, CA, Professor, Director

Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections



Basic Questions that inform your practice—from beginning to end

- Why do you exist? What is your purpose--How do you serve the mission of those who fund you (the university)
- Who cares? Who are your potential users
- Do you have what is necessary for existence (base level of institution funds); what would be good (outside funding)
 - What are your archives strengths and weaknesses—nobody caring was a strength at first
 - What is your, your staff's (if you have any) and your students' skill level and knowledge of archival practice?
 - What do you have and can you find it?
 - Are your existing policies adequate or even legal, do they allow growth of material categories you want to collect?
 - What is your online presence and how to grow that
 - What are your social resources, contacts, those who care, those who might help?



Ok, Where did we start

- Part time untrained reference librarian as archivist, with most work in reference and instruction outside archives, associate professor, so professional development and service requirements; a ½ time, unbenefited student staff position, with a requirement for an index to local paper
- Small, unfocused collection, with no finding aids; Total arrangement screw-up that prohibited our adding new materials
- Few and limiting collection development and mission statements
- Small old smoking lounge on first floor repurposed as archives-1 room, no climate control outside general library standards
- No website, no predictable hours, no budget
- No interest by teaching faculty; no classes
- Interest from president's wife for using archival materials as part of outreach to older alumni

Why do we exist—What can we be—a teaching lab for work with primary sources



Prioritize resources and activities within overall mission of the institution

- Current Strategic Plan for University
 - Foster student success, including experiential learning
 - Cultivate diversity, equity, and inclusion
 - Impact Regional Progress
 - Sustain institutional strength—new development of online majors
- Mission of the University Faculty
 - Teaching
 - Research
 - Service
 - Student Success



Situate your archives within these goals

- First—the mindset:
 - In a small archives—You are the archives
 - Everything you do should be in service to the archives
 - Every committee you belong to should be a vehicle to sell the archives
 - Every contact you make should know about the archives
 - Every action you take should be some sort of archival outreach
 - Every bit of research, presentations, activity with professional archival groups should be with the goal of enhancing your archives' reputation
 - Use is why you exist—push use from any direction
 - Always think bigger than you actually are, and present your archives as such
 - Be positive—even when those around you are not—cynicism is easy and destructive
 - Challenges are not limitations; they are opportunities to go in new directions or outside traditional areas
 - Takes passion, commitment, imagination, energy, and vision
- Bloom wherever you are planted...



Put your programs under Institution's goals in order to grow and be valued:

- Teaching and Student Success
- Community Impact
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Sustain Institutional Strength



Teaching and Student Success

- Build a teaching program, create opportunities for experiential learning, create programs that lead to greater student retention
 - In archives-classes on archival research
 - IL/LI courses that include emphasis on primary sources
 - Classes centered around applicable collections
 - Work projects for class credit—experiential learning credit towards graduation
 - Volunteers for archives exposure, extra credit for certain low-level classes—retention
 - Internships, both online and face-to-face—experiential learning credit towards graduation
 - Embed in online classes; prepare materials for use with online classes
 - Semester long classes
 - Student Assistants and Graduate Assistants—part of their career growth
- Get teaching program written into outside departments' curriculum—for sustainability and succession



Research-goes under several goals

- This is part of why you exist, not all of your use
- Impeccable reference work—go the extra mile for those that have information needs
- Collect with an eye to future research needs
- Keep an eye on curriculum and check it against your collections
- Communicate the value of your collections to research needs of the university—all the time
- Present and publish what you do—your work is your research agenda
- Create the best finding aids you can afford and get them pushed up any way you can—through library catalogs, statewide and national harvesting entities



Community Impact

- Digital Program (contributes to every goal—belongs everywhere)—create online resources of use to K-12, College students, community members in region, and beyond—lots of digitization, online indexes to newspapers, genealogical information, institutional information, African American History, Women's History, Georgia History, Military History—be heavily involved with institutional repository, other groups that aggregate digital materials—get and commit to a really good website
- Create Public Programming that includes university, community, alumni, retirees
- Partner with community groups to support both them and the archives
- Revise collection development policy to encourage documenting communities, to support curriculum and wider community (after all who is the audience for a solely University Archives)
- Exhibits, both on-line and in-person, create a museum
- Local press—get the word out often and take it as far as you can



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- Make sure you are collecting materials on under-represented groups (try to make your collections represent your demographics)
- Partner with organizations working with these groups
- Make sure you are using inclusive language in description, harmful content statements
- Promote public programs in this area—sponsor diverse speakers
- Create online and in-person exhibits that support diverse viewpoints
- Re-think the items you value to represent these groups: oral histories rather than text
- Make using available funds to purchase materials on under-represented groups a priority—Make digitizing and digital access to these materials a priority
- Solicit employees (students and interns) in new ways
- Keep abreast of DEI initiatives: Land acknowledgement statement negotiated with Dean—first in university to apply this

Sustain Institutional Strength

- Get trained, and get training for your staff at the highest level; take advantage of webinars, conference workshops, university classes, stay current on all new trends and apply them where appropriate—get certifications
- Spend money strategically—archives is expensive, how do you justify special materials and equipment in terms of mission
- Long-term planning for archives in terms of space, personnel, programs and projects
- **WRITE grants**, one a year, either digitization, processing, programming, public or private, and partner
- Connect and work with larger archival entities in state or national level
- Make yourself a strong professional voice—speak, present, and publish widely, consult—if you're not a strong professional, use your knowledge of collections to present outside your profession, such as Women's Studies, History Conferences, Alumni Magazines, until you get to be that strong voice.
- Cultivate financial donations
- Take advantage of reporting documents like annual reports, strategic plans, to push your goals up the highest administrative level
- Put in a request every year for end of year funding, funding pool requests, direct requests to administration—Make funding a priority
- Make sure your description, metadata and digital materials are preserved and created to the highest standards



Where Are We Now: People and Space

- 3 certified MLIS archivists, director, processing archivist, and digital archivist (last two in job titles that do not reflect duties, responsibilities and training—LTA and Computer Tech), GA—MLIS student, 4 history major student assistants, approximately 4 interns/semester, 2 long term volunteers (MLIS), extra credit volunteers
- Physically—2 climate controlled (65/45) vaults w/compact shelving, large patron area with teaching setup, mid-size workroom, office, digitization stations in workroom, vault and patron area,
- Moving special collections and vault books to adjacent department's area this year, with office for digital supervisor, will include almost all digitizing equipment including AV and work stations
- Plans and initial bid for vault 2 expansion to double vault size, including construction, compact shelving, and appropriate climate control—for new capital campaign or MMR BOR funding

What is the VSU Archives and Special Collections--some current stats and info

- 4000 linear feet of archival materials, including paper, artifacts, photographs, audio and video. 37 TB of digitized and born digital records, 5000 Georgia Books and 375 Rare Books, dating back to 1450.
- Oldest item in the Archives—5000 year old Babylonian Clay Tablets
- 1449 requests annually from all over the country. 181 consultations that lasted an hour or more. About 40% of our consultations come from the outside community.
- Heavy community use for Genealogy, folklife, and Valdosta State information—football is favorite
- Statewide recognition and many awards for public programming, African American History, University Service, History, Consortium of Belize Educational Cooperation, American Folklore
- Community outreach programs annually and community archives digitization programs
- 25,000 users of our collection finding aids, most coming from Google
- Known widely for its art collections and Art in Odum, a museum of VSU History, and exhibits that change every semester
- Partnerships with Digital Library of Georgia, Georgia Knowledge Repository and DPLA

VSU Archives and Teaching

- **Retention and Experiential Learning:** Extra Credit Volunteer Program for History Survey classes:
 - Since 2004, **858** students have worked a total of **10,961** hours under this volunteer program, doing everything from processing, to digitizing, to indexing. Has made sure many struggling students pass their history survey classes.
- **Experiential Learning:**
 - **4-5** Interns every semester from departments as varied as history, women's studies, sociology, marketing, and higher education
 - Experiential learning projects for history gateway, public history, and capstone courses and Honor's English course—counts to EL requirement for graduation
 - Volunteer destination for Honor's Students service hours
- **Research in the Archives**
 - **40-50** classes a year on library and archives research or primary source exploration for classes that have ranged from history, English, math, and higher education, sociology, geology, and journalism, including some K-12
 - **12** FYSE classes on VSU history
- **Semester-long classes**
 - PERS 2299 Archives/Libraries for Historians, freshman cohort class taught with Dr. Byrd, EI-1 and QEP certified
 - MLIS 7710, Archival Theory and Issues, graduate online class

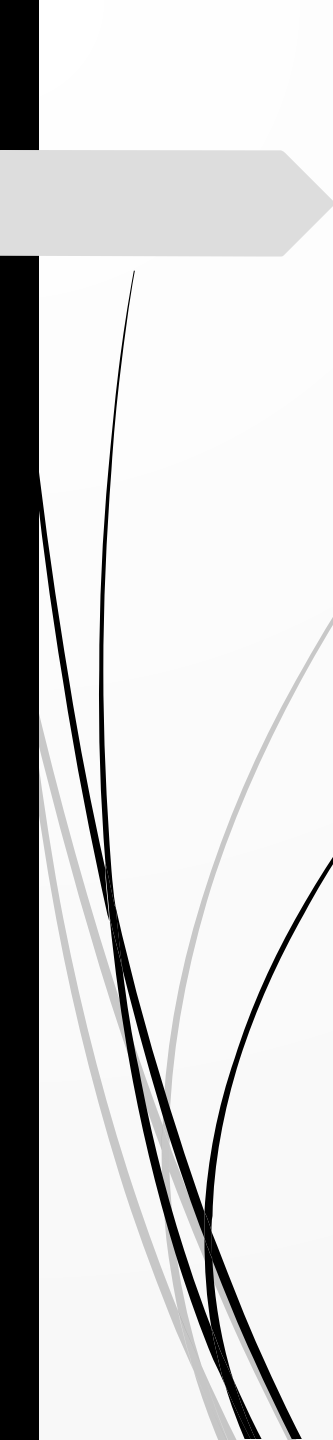
VSU Archives Digital Program

- **37 TB** of digital and digitized materials
- **OAIS Standards Compliant Digital Preservation** system for the long term preservation of archival electronic records.
- **Vtext** (VSU Institutional Repository—we built it and they came): **43,265 page views**. *Includes theses and dissertations, VSU history, regional history, African American history, Civil War history, rare books, and much more. Also harvested*
- **2829 digital objects embedded in ArchivesSpace**
- **Over 15,000** digitized photographs and counting on Flickr, from early 1900's to the present. **4.3 million views!**
- **2.01 million YouTube Views. 430** videos and counting. *Featuring Blazer football, seminars, regional history, and VSU Communication Arts televised programs. (approximately 1500 videos digitized)*
- Online versions of Oral Histories going up on Vtext—500 in the collection
- Very active with social media at archives, campus, and state levels



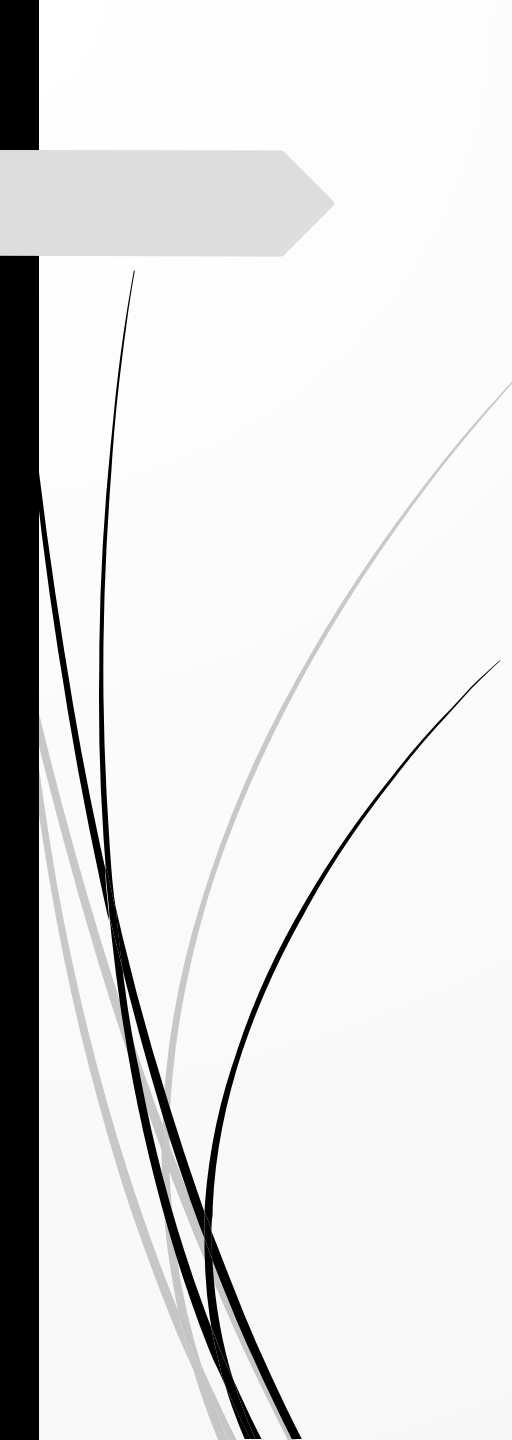
Planning for Retirement Years out

- Solidify safety of your data, from Archon with IT, to ArchivesSpace with Lyrasis, to AS with DLG
- Invest in digital expansion and digital preservation—additional server space, Cloud storage, training, investigate new systems to automate preservation steps
- Space Maximization and long term planning
- Get instruction and EL written into curriculum
- Use budget strategically—amend travel to operating, attend conferences virtually, get presentation grants, and buy for long term needs—overestimate growth and you'll probably be right
- Push staff education and certification so staff at high levels to take on higher job titles, or in worst case, move on successfully
- Make partnerships with community and campus as solid as you can
- Solidify budget where possible and take advantage of endowment to sustain growth and fill holes



Planning for Retirement about 3-4 years out

- Push staff to take on roles outside comfort zone, teaching, supervision, reporting
- Ask staff to choose their future roles, and mentor one for at least interim position and future competitiveness for search
- Solidify commitments with teaching faculty for internships, work projects, and volunteer extra credit program
- Keep spending strategically—replace older equipment where possible—use every funding source you can get access to
- Make sure Archives elements of strategic plan are on university's future strategic plan, academic affairs strategic plan, library's plan for at least 5 years out
- Move advocacy for Vtext IR to higher campus level



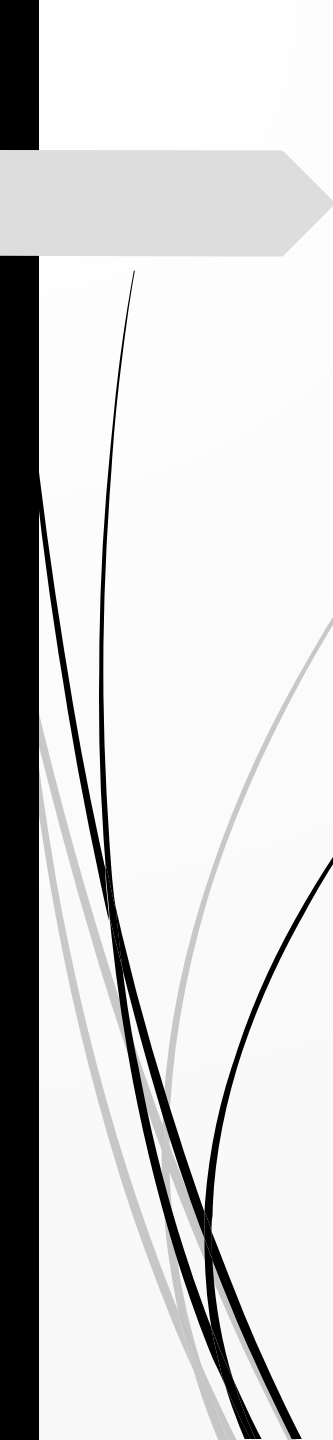
Wait a minute—Things just changed in a major way

- Covid 19 Pandemic—limited hours, numbers plummeted, decimated our teaching program, volunteers halted, processing stopped and backlog built back up, digital content generated at a much lower rate—right in the middle of my 5-year retirement planning
- Had to build it back and fast



Covid value added: Opportunity to solidify collection control

- Covid and medical accommodation allowed processing archivist to completely revise finding aids, make them DACS compliant and prepare them for migration to DLG
- Backlog cleaned up in one semester
- Complete archives inventory and selective reprocessing puts our description in great shape going forward—physical processing much smaller part of work flow
- Digital archivist did a lot of value-added description and addition of digital objects in Vtext and AS



All of our programs recovered and expanded

- ❑ Interns exploded with EL requirement for graduation—EL written into classes
- ❑ Teaching program recovered and expanded due to new public history program and inclusion in freshman year experience classes
- ❑ Grant writing resumed and expanded
- ❑ Back on track for retirement.....except...

Looming Financial crisis:

Beginning in 2025, over the succeeding four years, the number of 18-year-olds will decrease by 15% nationally. Existential crisis for university combined with covid



The crisis came early for VSU

- VSU had second highest drop of all schools in Georgia
- The University System of Georgia reported Valdosta State University had a **12.2** drop from Fall 2021 to Fall 2022
- Commitment to younger faculty meant that retirements were encouraged and positions not replaced
- Programs were and will be cut
- GA Legislature playing politics with BOR and in addition to tuition and funding level cuts, the BOR may have to include a overall 66 million dollar cut

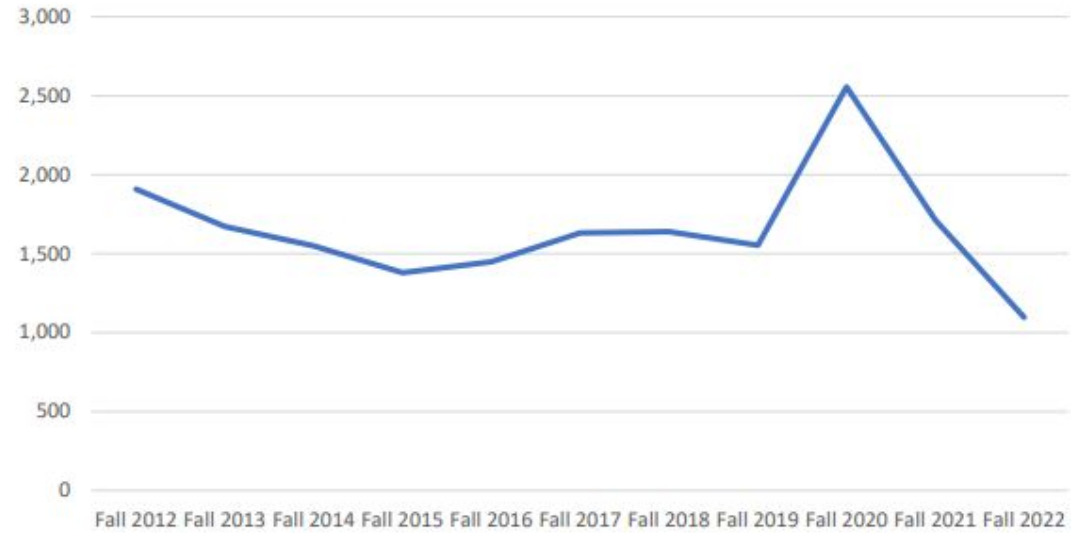
Enrollment: Ten Year Trend

2012 - 2022

New Transfers



New Freshmen



This is before the expected 2025 drop; from 2020-2021 retention dropped from mid 70's to low 50's percent



Covid affected our enrollment in some weird ways

Fall 2023 Enrollment Tracking

Point in time comparison.

Undergraduate: 183 days until start of term

Term	Date	Applied	Applied % Change	Accepted	Accepted % Change
Fall 2019	Feb 17, 2019	8,759	22.44%	3,423	24.47%
Fall 2020	Feb 16, 2020	7,643	-12.74%	3,320	-3.01%
Fall 2021	Feb 14, 2021	8,546	11.81%	5,750	73.19%
Fall 2022	Feb 13, 2022	7,229	-15.41%	2,248	-60.90%
Fall 2023	Feb 12, 2023	7,350	0.78%	2,938	28.4%

Pre-COVID. ACT/SAT Test Score Required.

Test Score Waived. 2.6 GPA

3.2 GPA Test Score Waived.
Below 3.2 GPA, test required.

Graduate – Master and Specialist : 183 days until start of term

Term	Date	Applied	Applied % Change	Accepted	Accepted % Change
Fall 2019	Feb 17, 2019	563	16.56%	26	23.81%
Fall 2020	Feb 16, 2020	511	-9.24%	23	-11.54%
Fall 2021	Feb 14, 2021	462	-9.59%	37	60.87%
Fall 2022	Feb 13, 2022	484	4.76%	60	62.16%
Fall 2023	Feb 12, 2023	677	34.95%	89	48.33%



How the school redefined itself:

The image shows a screenshot of the Valdosta State University website. The browser address bar displays 'valdosta.edu'. The website header features the Valdosta State University logo on the left, the text 'VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY' in the center, and navigation links for 'MYVSU', 'DIRECTORY', 'APPLY', 'GIVE', and 'VISIT' on the right. A red 'MENU' button is located in the top right corner. The main content area has a dark background with an aerial view of the campus. The headline reads 'ONE UNIVERSITY. THREE OPPORTUNITIES.' followed by the subtext: 'Offering you the flexibility to tailor learning to your interests and needs. You'll find an educational experience shaped to fit your goals.' Below this, three circular icons represent 'ON CAMPUS' (a building icon), 'ONLINE CAMPUS' (a house with a laptop icon), and 'GRADUATE DEGREES' (an open book icon). In the bottom right corner, there are play and pause icons.

valdosta.edu

VALDOSTA STATE UNIVERSITY

MYVSU DIRECTORY APPLY GIVE VISIT

MENU

ONE UNIVERSITY. THREE OPPORTUNITIES.

Offering you the flexibility to tailor learning to your interests and needs. You'll find an educational experience shaped to fit your goals.

ON CAMPUS

ONLINE CAMPUS

GRADUATE DEGREES

Most Recent Numbers

Learning Opportunity	Spring (28 days after)		Difference	
	2022	2023	Number	Percent
1. On-Campus	7,474	6,109	(1,365)	-18.3%
2. eDegree Campus	381	798	417	109.4%
3. Grad School	2,599	2,524	(75)	-2.9%
Total	10,454	9,431	(1,023)	-9.8%

Most of the graduate programs are online, and eDegree is only a small percentage of our online classes. To be counted as an on-campus student, one only needs 1 course that is face to face. Online is increasingly important.



Now I'm not planning for a replacement

- ❑ Planning for a major downsizing 1 year out from retirement
- ❑ 3 certified staff will go to 2; without reclassification, those 2 are vastly underpaid and are perfectly positioned to leave—Archives jobs are expanding, but not here
- ❑ My role is teaching, outreach, administration, supervision, budgeting, etc. I'm also faculty.
- ❑ Throwing a 10% raise to a very underpaid person with very good archivist credentials to act as an interim and perform two jobs, with the Director job held in abeyance, guarantees stagnation or great decline in ability to function
- ❑ Moving from COHSS to Library for administration, with a new library dean



So what to do:

- New Strategic Plan for archives—with high priority programs embedded in VPAA and University strategic plan—A plan created for the next 5 years, with staff, to prioritize projects and still move forward
- Create new workflows taking advantage of students and interns—move work down to cheapest level—move paid students to digital preservation, some metadata work, basic processing. Interns digitize and create metadata
- Put GA in charge of processing new acquisitions with oversight
- Revise teaching program down, while still serving teaching departments
 - Everything with any LI component goes to Reference librarians
 - Archives teaches only classes related to Archives
 - Stop teaching semester-long classes, Revise Archives/Libraries for History PERS class to FYSE class taught by history prof, with substantial archives and library content. Hand off MLIS Archives class to outside VSU archivist
 - Have MLIS GA teach some FYSE or create video for FYSE inclusion
 - Continue volunteer program
 - Interns are critical
 - Work projects limited to 1-2 day instruction and in-archives work (with minimal supervision) afterwards

Reclassify Employees and back-up help

- ❑ Reclassify Processing LTA to a Program Coordinator (should be director, but can't afford)—allows position to teach and administer all areas of archives)
- ❑ Reclassify Computer Tech to Instructional Tech, which allows instruction and training, in addition to heading up digital program
- ❑ Save the cost of an entry level faculty member to go back to the university
- ❑ Archival staff stay in staff positions, but with administrative rank.
- ❑ Does not threaten other faculty positions in library
- ❑ Publish/service requirements of faculty position thus will not take time from archives work, but can be done as needed, mostly at state level
- ❑ Exhibits will be limited or permanent—possible renovation may make our rotating art gallery (with two shows a year) go obsolete anyway—move to interns
- ❑ Retiree will come back and do art tours, maybe some FYSE talks—always in the background to be called upon for outreach and overflow teaching—gotta do something in retirement



Community Archives Program actually benefits

- ❑ Retiree takes outreach role to community archives, helping select and bring in collections for archives interns to digitize and staff/student assistants to put online, link to outside services, and digitally preserve under direction of Instructional Tech. Outreach will be a very time consuming part of the program that a working archivist could not do. Program could not effectively continue without this outreach.
- ❑ Community archives get selected collections digitized and put out there on a variety of platforms, but community Archives keep their materials and master scans to do with as they want
- ❑ Interns continue to get EL credit and create online collections they can put on their resume
- ❑ Archives can meet university expectations for this program, even with fewer staff



How am I leaving it

- With expanded space, double the size of current patron area
- With all new computers
- With equipment anticipated 5 years out already acquired
- With extremely competent and well credentialed staff already known in campus and state
- With firm organizational support of departments, several deans, and the provost
- With an endowment we can pull on to supplement shrinking budget
- With a solid teaching program re-sized for existing staff as required part of curriculum
- With no disruption of a search or a leadership limbo
- With a floorplan and cost estimates for long term expansion on the library's priority list
- With a five-year plan agreed upon by staff to keep us going forward



Still working on it, keeping an eye out for timing and threats

- Kick off PR plan for Community Archives
- Complete manual detailing my role
- Create final deliverables for perspectives course one last time, prior to revision
- Make contact with partners to introduce new archives
- Make sure staff have had a turn doing everything
- Cross stuff off my list of things only I know
- Help plan priority of future projects and mentor
- Need to clean my office and move computer files to central location
- Take everyone on an Archives Field Trip—students, interns, staff
- Present a few more times
- Do some oral histories—save institutional knowledge



Please send questions to

Deborah S. Davis, CA, Director, Professor
Valdosta State University Archives and Special Collections

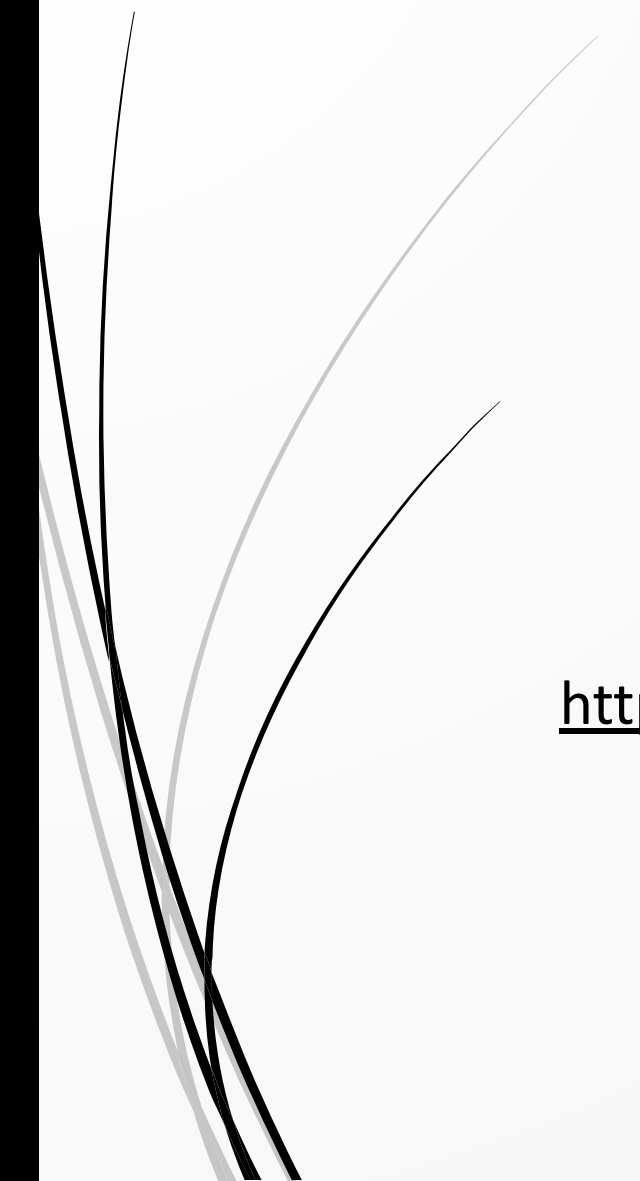
1500 N. Patterson Street

Valdosta, Ga. 31698

229 259 7756

dsdavis@valdosta.edu

<https://www.valdosta.edu/academics/library/depts/archives-and-special-collections/>





SUCCESSION PLANNING: NURTURING THE GARDEN

DEAN DEBOLT

UNIVERSITY ARCHIVIST/UNIVERSITY LIBRARIAN
UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES AND WEST FLORIDA HISTORY CENTER
UNIVERSITY OF WEST FLORIDA, PENSACOLA

BASICS

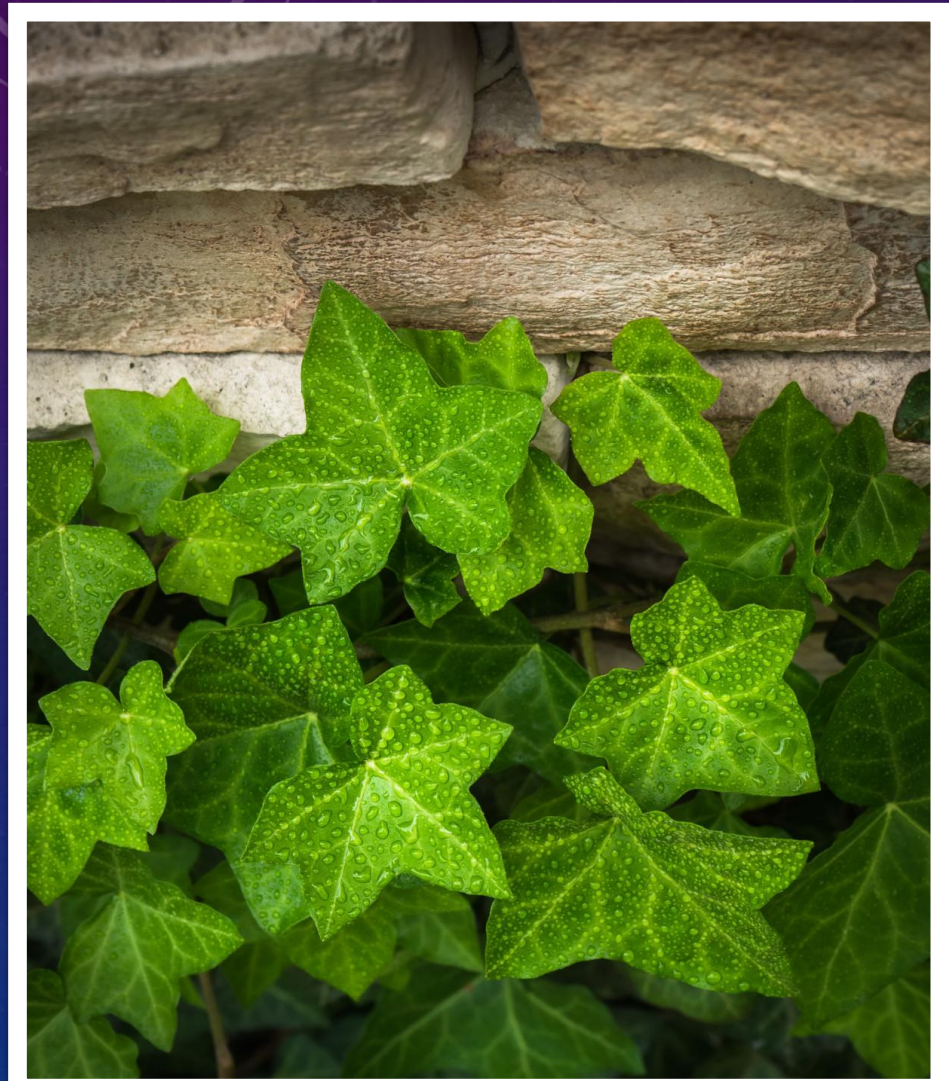
Archives Like a Plant

- establish (purpose, goals)
- feed (acquisitions, collections)
- nurture (cataloging)



NURTURING

- grows (collections expand)
- space (need more space)
- sharing (digitizing)



EXHIBITING

- sharing (reference services)
- publicity (exhibits)
- reporting (news releases)





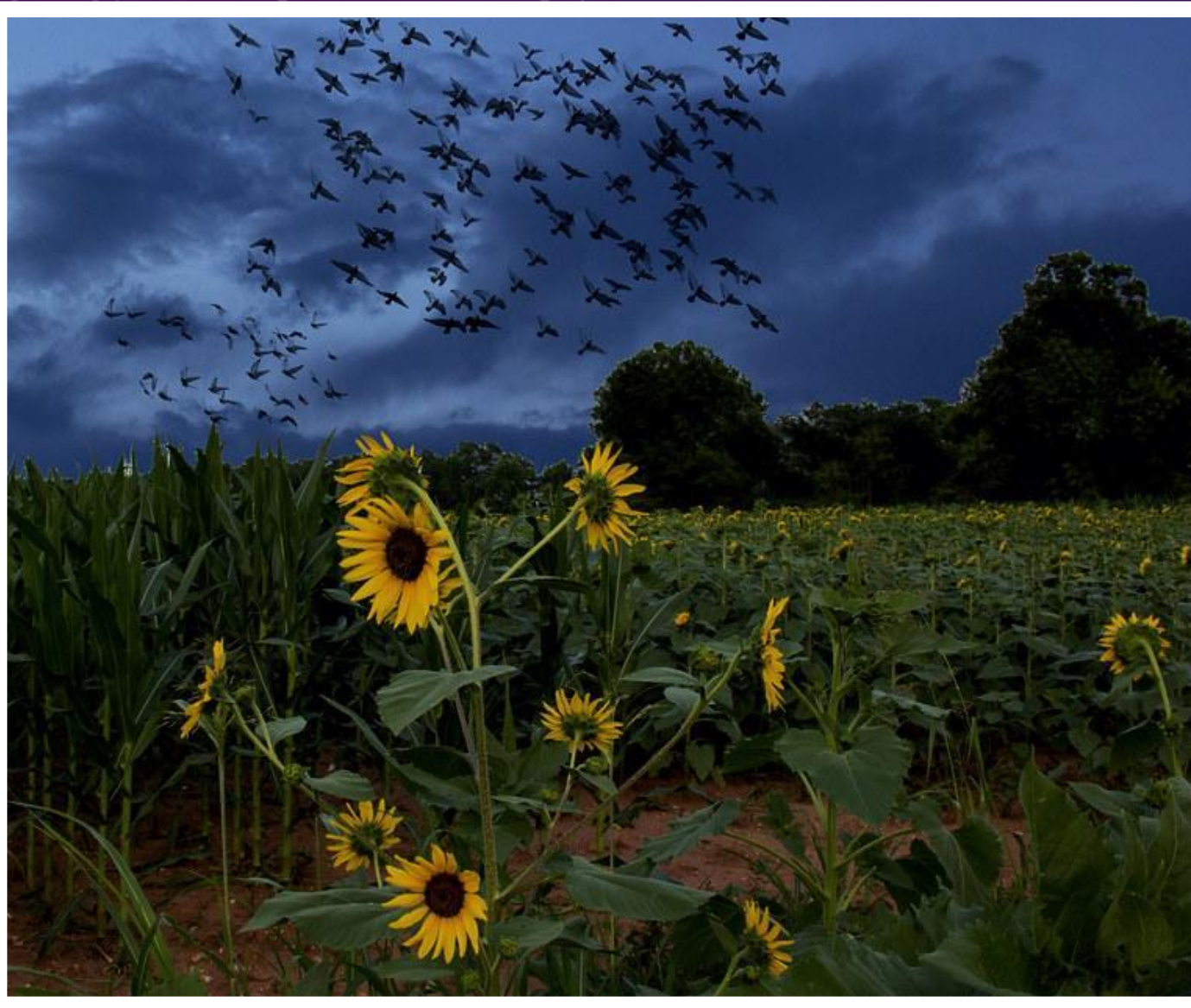
WINDY DAYS

(CRISIS MANAGEMENT)

- need more gardeners
- need more fields
- too many plants
- not enough seed gatherers
- not enough funds for seeds



**WEATHERING
THE
STORM**



MAINTENANCE

- services and feedback
- publicizing
- partnerships
- seeking advantages



**PASSING
IT
ON**



INTROSPECTION

- inevitability
- what can you control
- what can't you control
- stay positive



GETTING THINGS IN ORDER

1. Let inevitability guide you.
2. Set some priorities
3. Instruction Manuals
4. Labels
5. Recording the past
6. Backlog Inventory



