



Drops of the Ocean - Community Archives

INDEPENDENT STUDY



Final Report

TINA M CLAFLIN
TINA.CLAFLIN@SIMMONS.EDU

ACADEMIC ADVISOR: PETER BOTTICELLI
PETER.BOTTICELLI@SIMMONS.EDU

Front Cover Image: Coast Guard Women at Sea by Andrea Mistretta

ABSTRACT

This narrative report presents the foundation and framework on the concept and implementation of a community archives project dedicated to preserving the history of women in the United States Coast Guard. Recognizing the significant gap in the historical record and accessibility of this segment of Coast Guard history, the report outlines a strategic plan and a series of initiatives aimed at empowering Coast Guard women to document, preserve, and share, if desired, their unique experiences and contributions through their Coast Guard history.

Central to this initiative are the educational resources such as the Military Service Legacy Blueprint Course of Action Planner paralleled with the online learning management system, which will guide members in the curation and preservation of their Coast Guard history in the form of a digital archives. The report comprehensively details the concept of engaging members at various stages, adhering to the Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement (ADKAR) change management model. This ensures a well-structured yet adaptable approach to community participation and active involvement in Coast Guard women's history.

This community archives project aims to bridge the historical gaps of Coast Guard women's history and also create a participatory space where the narratives of Coast Guard women are preserved to inspire, inform, and interact with future generations. It represents a significant step towards acknowledging and preserving the invaluable role of Coast Guard women in the broader scope of military and cultural history.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

ADKAR: Change management model of Awareness, Knowledge, Desire, Ability, Reinforcement

CGHQs: Coast Guard Headquarters

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

FCGH: Foundation for Coast Guard History

GB: Gigabytes

IRB: Institutional Review Board

LIS: Library and Information Science

MSLIS: Master of Science in Library and Information Science

NCGM: National Coast Guard Museum Association

SAADA: South Asian American Digital Archive

SPARs: Semper Paratus Always Ready (Women's Reserve of the USCG)

U.S. Coast Guard: Commonly used abbreviation for the United States Coast Guard

USCG: Commonly used abbreviation for United States Coast Guard

USCGA: Commonly used abbreviation for United States Coast Guard Academy

Women: In the context of this report, 'women' is used inclusively to refer to individuals who identify as women, including but not limited to cisgender women, transgender women, and those who identify as non-binary or gender non-conforming but align themselves with womanhood.

INTRODUCTION

For the culmination of my MSLIS at Simmons University with a concentration of Archives Management, I wanted to further explore the concept of community archives that I was introduced to during my LIS 443 - Archives, History and Collective Memory with Dr. Sumayya Ahmed. This independent study project is the foundation and framework to implement a community archives for Coast Guard women. With this narrative summary, I formulate the building blocks of what I hope to put into place beginning in 2024. Combined with my passion for Coast Guard women's history and the educational foundation from Simmons University I believe that I can create a successful implementation to provide women a place to come together as a community to document and preserve their Coast Guard history.

About Me

I came to Simmons University from a path of entrepreneurship and a 22 year career with the United States Coast Guard. With a background in engineering and an undergraduate degree in Management, the courses and methodologies of LIS and archives management was the missing link of where my background and passions come together.

Acknowledgments

Throughout my studies, each course has systematically contributed to important pieces in the foundation of creating this project framed by archival theory and archives management. All of my courses and professors have challenged me in ways that I would not have considered otherwise. Most impactful was LIS 443 - Archives, History and Collective Memory with Dr. Sumayya Ahmed. Through this course, I gained greater insight into compelling narratives left out of the historical record and explored the role of collective memory in contributing more diversely to these historical narratives. Dr. Ahmed pushed me to extend my inquiry well past the traditional collections of what can be found in mainstream archives.

All of the USCG Office of Cultural Heritage, including the Coast Guard Academy's museum curator and archivist, were incredibly helpful and supportive in my

research requests, not only with this project but the research of Coast Guard women's history throughout my work during active duty and beyond. Like most cultural heritage communities, they are understaffed, under-budgeted, and challenged to keep up with the demands of transitioning the future of the archives into a modern, accessible repository that enables discovery and inspires scholarly research and writing. I am grateful for their willingness to support and make time for me.

The Foundation for Coast Guard History (FCGH) has always been a unique arm of the Coast Guard's history program, often fulfilling the need for more unique and creative methods in outreach and advocacy. Gary Thomas, the Executive Director, was always available as a sounding board, reviewer, and supporter of which was imperative to the support and success of this project.

In addition to the support and friendship from colleagues who have an equal passion for research of Coast Guard women's history, the Coast Guard women who I know and who have supported me, and all of those who have lived Coast Guard women's history, I could not have done this without their faith and inspiration.

Also, my university advisor Kathy Wisser who was always excited about the prospects of this project. She provided the needed confidence to undertake such an initiative and advise on appropriate course work throughout my time at Simmons. Peter Botticelli my academic advisor for the project, additionally provided the time and insight into pulling it all together. He empowered me with self-directed creative freedom and guided me when needed.

Of course, this would never have been possible without my supportive husband, Corey, who was always in my corner and enduring my relentless enthusiasm for the topic of women's history in the Coast Guard.

BACKGROUND

The historical narrative of the United States Coast Guard is diverse and extensive, covering over 233 years of service. It is the combination of five predecessor agencies, namely the Revenue Cutter Service, the Life-Saving Service, the Lighthouse Service, the Bureau of Navigation, and the Steamboat Inspection Service. Further, it has changed departments since its inception from the Department of Treasury, Department of Transportation, to the Department of Homeland Security. The United States Coast Guard Office of Cultural Heritage is “charged with capturing, preserving, promoting and commemorating the Coast Guard’s history and heritage in all forms, including documentation, official publications and manuals, photographs, oral histories, memoirs, and artifacts, among others.”¹ This extensive portfolio includes historically valuable material dating as far back as 1790. Additionally, the USCG, as a federal agency, is mandated to follow a records management program under 44 U.S.C. Chapter 31 in order to “preserves records of the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of the agency.”² Held at the National Archives, the records management of the Coast Guard complement the historical collections in the Coast Guard archives, but are managed separately under directives of Coast Guard operational offices.

The USCG Office of Cultural Heritage oversees the USCG’s Curatorial Services Program and the USCG museum and archives at the USCG Academy in New London, CT. Two satellite offices, also under the USCG Office of Cultural Heritage, each staffed by a historian, are located on the East and West Coast and tasked with answering requests for information and researching and editing Coast Guard history. Of note, the Coast Guard is currently in the process of establishing and building a future National Coast Guard Museum (NCGM) to be located in New London, CT.

The location of the USCG Office of Cultural Heritage, holding the central archives, is on the campus of St.

Elizabeth, co-located with the United States Coast Guard Headquarters (CGHQs) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Headquarters in Southeast Washington D.C. This consolidated campus is under a Level 5 Federal Facility Security protocol requiring pre-screened visitor access with assigned escorts to and from the building holding the archives. There is a one full time archivist at the CGHQs office and one at the USCG Academy. The USCG Academy, as an educational institution manages its archival program separately with distinct priorities and goals as a Military Service Academy despite overlapping subject areas in their collections.³

As a military, multi-mission organization that ensures our Nation’s maritime safety, security, and stewardship, funding priorities are more substantial within the operational sector of the USCG. Cultural heritage programs must compete for visibility and resources in an already stressed budget environment. With the emphasis on building a National Coast Guard Museum (NCGM), this has brought renewed visibility from Coast Guard leaders and the general public with the focus on artifacts and exhibitions. As stated in the website, the NCGM mission is to, “inspire and engage with the public to celebrate the service’s members and their accomplishments of the past, present and future.”⁴

For research purposes, those interested in Coast Guard history can submit requests to research in person at the CGHQs archives or contact the archivist at the USCG Academy. Some digitized material is available through the USCG Historian’s webpage, the Connecticut Digital Archives, National Archives, and other non-profits that may collect special collections. There is a need for a consolidated collection management policy, digital management program, and searchable databases or finding aids to fully comprehend the vast resources potentially available to researchers.

¹ “USCG Office of Cultural Heritage.” Accessed December 15, 2023. <https://www.history.uscg.mil/home/about-us/>.

² “Records Management by Federal Agencies (44 U.S.C. Chapter 31).” 2016. National Archive. August 15, 2016. <https://www.archive.gov/about/laws/fed-agencies.html>.

³ Price, Scott, and Nora Chidlow. USCG Office of Cultural Heritage Management Study, October 8, 2023.

⁴ National Coast Guard Museum. “Mission + Vision + Values.” Accessed December 15, 2023. <https://uscg-development.materielcloud.com/about-us/mission-vision-values/>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review discusses scholarly work and draws inspiration from the South Asian American Digital Archives (SAADA). The main points of consideration of the selected literature were to examine the definitions, roles and impact of, and consistent challenges in establishing community archives. It is a brief overview of the research used to develop the theoretical concepts in creating a community archive for Coast Guard women's history.

Definitions of Community Archives

In defining community archives, there's a spectrum of terms and concepts that are associated with what is often described as an "umbrella term."¹ Society of American Archivists defines community archives as, "documentation of a group of people that share common interests, and social, cultural and historical heritage, usually created by members of the group being documented and maintained outside of traditional archives."²

Some of the more prominent voices in community archives, such as Andrew Flinn, Michelle Caswell, Mary Stevens, and many others, offer definitions in this growing movement of community archives or community-based archives. The attempts to define the term have contributed to much scholarly research and analysis, including the paper by Welland and Cossham titled, *Defining the Undefinable: an analysis of definitions of community archives*. In her work, Michelle Caswell cites archival scholars Andrew Flinn, Mary Stevens, and Elizabeth Shepherds with their description, "collections of material gathered primarily by members of a given community and over whose use community members exercise some level of control."³ Other descriptive phrases such as "deep community involvement," "community

ownership," "collaborations," "autonomy," "social justice," "common identities and experiences," and a "desire to document communities historically under-represented in mainstream archives."⁴ The consensus on community archives appears that their appeal lies not in a singular defining concept but in the community's ability to define itself. These establishments often emerge in response to the "perceived failings, absences and misrepresentations in 'mainstream' archival and heritage institutions."⁵ In exploring other work, the term grassroots was a commonly used term. In Flinn's *Community Histories, Community Archives*, the emphasis is that [they] "are the grassroots activities of documenting, recording and exploring community heritage in which community participation, control and ownership of the project is essential."⁶ Although broad definitions are common, the essence of community archives lies in highlighting lesser-known histories by communities that recognize the value of archives in shaping historical narratives but are often excluded from established traditional archives.

Common characteristics that community archives may seek to model are the opportunities to explore the use of technology in the processes of creating and administering community archives and engaging with a community not defined by physical space. The increase of technology applications has greatly influenced the growth whereas the formation of communities of common interests no longer need to be confined by physical spaces, geographical locations, or buildings.⁷ Other flexible aspects brought about by the use of technology have created an opportunity to explore innovative collection methods, such as the concept of 'post-custodial' and 'non-custodial.' Post-custodial methods are often preferred practices, as highlighted in the interviews of 12 Southern California community archives in *A process where we're all at the table*.⁸ This works

1 Mattock, Lindsay Kistler, and Aiden M. Bettine. "Situating Community Archives Along the Continuum of Community-Engaged Archival Praxis: Autonomy, Independence, and the Archival Impulse." *Archival Issues: Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 47–70. <https://doi.org/10.31274/archivalissues.16294>.

2 "SAA Dictionary: Community Archives." Accessed December 15, 2023. <https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/community-archives.html>.

3 Caswell, Michelle. "Seeing Yourself in History." *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2014.36.4.26>.

4 Gilliland, Anne, and Andrew Flinn. "Community Archives: What Are We Really Talking About?," n.d.

5 Gilliland, Anne, and Andrew Flinn.

6 Flinn, Andrew. "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (October 1, 2007): 151–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>.

7 Flinn, Andrew

8 Zavala, Jimmy, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor. "A Process Where We're All at the Table': Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice." *Archives & Manuscripts* 45, no. 3 (October 16, 2017): 202–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1377088>.

well as the archives may digitize and return originals to the owner but facilitate access and descriptions to the digital form, thus creating “a network of collections that span far beyond the space itself.”⁹ Flinn writes the model as important to addressing concerns of communities in depositing their archives in formal heritage institutions.¹⁰ Whereas a non-custodial approach is more aligned with a supportive role in stewardship and preservation for the creators and custodians in managing their own collections.¹¹ The South Asian American Digital Archive uses a post-custodial model and is defined as, “an independent, online-only, community-based repository.”¹² Here, the focus is on access, where items are borrowed and digitized and then returned to the owner, unlike a traditional repository that collects and manages physical artifacts and documents.¹³

While no single definition may fit in the scope of any one community archive, the umbrella term may better describe the adaptability to the specific needs and visions of the respective communities represented. Rather than using a defining model, community archives can shape and define themselves by the unique characteristics and needs of the community they represent.

Role of Community Archives and Their Impact

While the definition of community archives may be broad, their roles and impact on the historical narrative share many common community characteristics. Caswell describes SAADA as “a community-based online archive that documents, preserves and shares stories about South Asian American experiences in the United States.”¹⁴ By facilitating participatory microhistory projects, the community encourages “everyday people to document their own experiences.”¹⁵ The impact of incorporating diverse histories in the broader historical narrative is monumental, as they may not otherwise

exist in mainstream archives. If records exist, they are often government records lacking personal accounts. In Caswell’s First Days stories, the emphasis is on the importance of the narrative and using a government record to serve as a visual to supplement and corroborate the text.¹⁶ As Flinn states, “community archives and the stories they tell can help us construct an inclusive local and national heritage in which all communities, all relations and interactions are included.”¹⁷ A primary aspect of community archives is the “community’s right to own its own memories and that community participation is a core principle of community archives.”¹⁸ Just as community archives assert the right to own their memories, they also recognize the importance of these memories in connecting past, present, and future generations. Interviewees of the research article *A process where we’re all at the table*, express the importance of intergenerational narratives to engage “community members across generational lines and for building intergenerational engagement” as a strategy for the “long-term survival of the community archives” but also for the survival of the community itself.¹⁹

In summary, critical aspects of the impact and role of community archives is encapsulated in Caswell’s identification of five key principles: broad participation in archival processes, shared stewardship of cultural heritage, a multiplicity of voices and formats, the positioning of archival collecting as activism, and continuous reflexivity regarding the evolving nature of community and identity.²⁰

Challenges

Community archives, much like mainstream archives, encounter significant challenges in staffing and funding, which are imperative to their sustainability and ongoing

9 Zavala, et al.

10 Flinn, Andrew. “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges.” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (October 1, 2007): 151–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>.

11 Flinn.

12 Caswell, Michelle, and Samip Mallick. “Collecting the Easily Missed Stories: Digital Participatory Microhistory and the South Asian American Digital Archive.” *Archives & Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (March 20, 2014): 73–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.880931>.

13 Caswell, Michelle. “Seeing Yourself in History.” *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tpb.2014.36.4.26>.

14 Caswell, Michelle, and Samip Mallick. “Collecting the Easily Missed Stories: Digital Participatory Microhistory and the South Asian American Digital Archive.” *Archives & Manuscripts* 42, no. 1 (March 20, 2014): 73–86. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.880931>.

15 Caswell and Mallick.

16 Caswell and Mallick.

17 Flinn, Andrew. “Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges.” *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (October 1, 2007): 151–76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>.

18 Gilliland, Anne, and Andrew Flinn. “Community Archives: What Are We Really Talking About?,” n.d.

19 Zavala, Jimmy, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor. “A Process Where We’re All at the Table: Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice.” *Archives & Manuscripts* 45, no. 3 (October 16, 2017): 202–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1377088>.

20 Caswell, Michelle. “Seeing Yourself in History.” *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tpb.2014.36.4.26>.

support. These challenges are often more acute for community archives due to their niche community and limited resources. As an example, SAADA, which, as highlighted in Caswell's writings, was initially established with a modest investment of \$100 each in server space, has since grown to operate with \$37,485 in revenue, with only a portion of that in grant funding.²¹ Despite this growth, there remains a notable challenge in convincing government funding agencies and mainstream foundations to support them. Caswell's observation underscores the difficulty that community archives face in being perceived as legitimate archival institutions by traditional funders, a perception that significantly impacts their financial stability and long-term viability.²² With fundraising also comes staffing commitment and dedication to spending significant time supporting fundraising efforts. Unique to the UK was the funding and infrastructure support from the state and the community archives movement as described in specific case studies particular to the UK under Flinn's work.²³ Currently in the UK, the Community and Archives Heritage Group, has evolved into a "membership body which seeks to represent, advocate for and provide services" along with a dedicated website rich with resources.²⁴

One of the defining aspects of community archives is their reliance on a dedicated volunteer network. However, as Gilliland and Flinn caution, this reliance, while essential for "sustaining autonomy," also presents challenges. They note it can be a "potential vulnerability to the long-term stability, succession and sustainability."²⁵ This is particularly evident in the experience of the 12 Southern California community archives, where concerns about resource adequacy and preservation are prominent, remarking "significant concerns about access to adequate resources to accomplish their current work, to grow and to adequately preserve archival material in their care."²⁶ Some of these challenges can be alleviated by a strong commitment to intergenerational engagement, as found in many of the cases examined. This engagement inspires future generations and fosters a sustained commitment

to the community, which is crucial for ensuring the long-term stability and continuity of the archives.

While community archives face significant funding and staffing challenges, their resilience lies in innovative approaches and intergenerational commitment. When addressed thoughtfully, these challenges can transform into opportunities for growth and sustainability, ensuring the preservation and continuation of these diverse community narratives.

Conclusion

This literature review represents only a small portion of the literature and examples of community archives but has sought to provide a comprehensive overview highlighting definitions, roles and impacts, and the challenges they commonly face. The findings underscore the importance of adapting the community archives model to fit the unique needs and framework for a community archives for Coast Guard women.

For future research, two critical areas stand out. First, the concept of collective memory, which complements the essence of community archives, deserves further analysis, especially in how it shapes and is shaped by the experiences of members of a community. Second, the realm of digital asset management, as discussed by Carbajal and Caswell, is vital in a post-custodial archive model. Key considerations include effective management, preservation, metadata creation, and ethical online access. Their work reminds us that digital archiving "isn't ancillary to historical work but provides important context to do digital history better."²⁷ The potential of these archives lies in their ability to empower communities and individuals to preserve and narrate their own stories, contributing significantly to the broader narrative of what this concept aims to achieve in the context of Coast Guard women's history.

21 Caswell, Michelle. "Seeing Yourself in History." *The Public Historian* 36, no. 4 (2014): 26–37. <https://doi.org/10.1525/tph.2014.36.4.26>.

22 Caswell.

23 Mattock, Lindsay Kistler, and Aiden M. Bettine. "Situating Community Archives Along the Continuum of Community-Engaged Archival Praxis: Autonomy, Independence, and the Archival Impulse." *Archival Issues: Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference* 42, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 47–70. <https://doi.org/10.31274/archivalissues.16294>.

24 Community Archives and Heritage Group. "Community Archives and Heritage Group." Accessed December 14, 2023. <https://www.communityarchives.org.uk>.

25 Gilliland, Anne, and Andrew Flinn. "Community Archives: What Are We Really Talking About?" n.d.

26 Zavala, Jimmy, Alda Allina Migoni, Michelle Caswell, Noah Geraci, and Marika Cifor. "A Process Where We're All at the Table: Community Archives Challenging Dominant Modes of Archival Practice." *Archives & Manuscripts* 45, no. 3 (October 16, 2017): 202–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2017.1377088>.

27 Carbajal, Itza A., and Michelle Caswell. "Critical Digital Archives: A Review from Archival Studies." *American Historical Review* 126, no. 3 (September 1, 2021): 1102–20. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/rhab359>.

ISSUE OVERVIEW

PRESERVING OUR LEGACY: THE CASE FOR A COMMUNITY ARCHIVES

Mainstream archival repositories, such as the Coast Guard's, serve as a resource for research and guardianship of cultural and institutional memory. They aim to encapsulate the entirety of the history they are charged with preserving. Like most cultural heritage institutions, the Coast Guard is limited by staff, resources, and competing interests to fully develop and process personal histories. Occasionally, donations of more prominent individual histories are accepted and accessioned into the archives under the special collections. Still, these have been limited to high-ranking officers, policymakers, and notable historical figures and firsts, leaving the stories of countless women in the shadows. This selective historical documentation fails to represent the full scope of women's roles in the Coast Guard. It deprives current and future generations of an authentic understanding of this integral part of Coast Guard military history. Establishing a community archives dedicated to Coast Guard women is essential to fill this void and to ensure that every woman's service is recognized and their story is preserved. This will contribute to a more inclusive and accurate historical record so that future generations are inspired, informed, and will interact with this history.

This independent study project, creates a foundational concept to establish a community archives for Coast Guard women. Establishing this community archives will also create a network of Coast Guard women who actively engage in documenting and preserving women's history of the Coast Guard, including their own.

The current collections found in the archives raises important considerations – how do we ensure the representation of the typical service member, especially those from marginalized communities? These individuals, whose experiences may not have been as widely recognized or recorded, are an integral part of a service member's connection to organizational history.

Those lesser known, often challenging narratives serve to help navigate a deeper sense of belonging and identity within the Coast Guard community. Much of those narratives lie in the individual collections that are boxed up after the member's service completion. Throughout history, the storms of change and various cultural events have often been the catalysts for significant operational and policy transformations, reflecting the Coast Guard's ability to evolve in response to shifting circumstances and challenges. Correlating those with personal narratives and collections helps connect the pieces of these changes and progress towards equality.

One striking example of the gaps in the current archival narrative is the exclusion of Coast Guard women's experiences, particularly during the years 1949-1973 following WWII when women remained restricted to a dedicated women's reserve despite the passage of the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act⁵, that allowed others service branches to integrate into active duty. Many of these women who served through this transitional period are still with us today, offering a living history in dire need of documentation and preservation to fully understand the continued exclusion of Coast Guard women into active duty. Their accounts and experiences are invaluable to the legacy of Coast Guard women, yet they remain largely undocumented in mainstream archives.

The most widely documented topic of women's history in the Coast Guard is that of the Coast Guard's women's reserve during WWII, known as the SPARs, named for the service motto *Semper Paratus Always Ready*. While our World War II veterans remain an inspiring source of patriotic freedom, the current generation may not find similarities of their own service with this history.

For the current generation of service members, forging connections with those who have previously navigated similar paths is crucial for navigating their own journey. Recognizing and engaging with contemporary history plays a vital role in this process, offering new generations

⁵ Clafin, Tina. "The Long Blue Line: 50 Years of Women's Service in the Regular Coast Guard!" United States Coast Guard (blog). Accessed December 15, 2023. <https://www.mycg.uscg.mil/News/Article/3603850/the-long-blue-line-50-years-of-womens-service-in-the-regular-coast-guard/>.

valuable insights and a sense of community as they carve out their place in the spectrum of Coast Guard history. It is equally important to honor and know those that have helped set the course for those opportunities in which they are afforded.

Preliminary survey results (see Appendix A) offer compelling evidence that typical women's experiences are left out of the historical narratives. One respondent correlates her experience to the continued isolation she feels by only finding narratives about the contributions of prominent and successful women. "Nowhere in the official histories, official publications, etc. do I see that story [sexual harassment, bullying] being told. Because I do not see it being told, I feel isolated in my experience and continue to feel ashamed that somehow I did not do better or was not able to fit in. I feel I cannot be alone in this erasure of what actually happened. But nobody talks about it. Above all, the omission of "herstory" creates a void where there should be a path that women entering the service are able to follow to find their way ahead. History repeats itself when the past is ignored."⁶

History is not just about the past; it is the lens through which we envision our future. When we see ourselves reflected in the stories of those who came before us, we are inspired to carry forward their legacy. Representation in history ignites the aspirations of future generations, providing the courage to pursue new paths and the wisdom to navigate them. This particular objective is rarely found in traditional archives. Historical narratives can not be contextualized solely by primary source material such as government documents or records more prominently found in mainstream archives. A community archives can enhance and broaden the scope of understanding by utilizing collective memory, oral histories, personal records, artifacts, photos, ephemera, and other contributions found within the collections of our military members.

SUB PROBLEMS:

Establishing a dedicated community archives addresses several critical factors that may inhibit individuals, in this case, Coast Guard women, from donating their personal career histories to more traditional archival repositories such as the Coast Guard archives.

Safety and Trust:

For many individuals, the prospect of engaging with an archives, let alone contributing their personal records, can be an intimidating concept. Unfamiliarity, trust, and privacy concerns may also be a contributing factor, especially for those who may have experienced trauma or adverse events during their career.

In establishing the community archives, a primary objective is to create a safe space that commits to privacy, ensuring that contributors retain control over their narrative. The project promotes self-curation, choice, and ownership of access by providing Coast Guard women with the tools and knowledge to document, organize, and preserve their histories. Contributors are then poised to make informed decisions about sharing their legacy within the community archives. For those who opt out, the process still yields a rich, privately curated history for their families, preserving their legacy for posterity and potential future donation as part of a legacy plan. This approach is consistent with a non-custodial model, offering a support role in stewardship and preservation initiatives.⁷ In creating a vast network of Coast Guard women with lived histories, we create a hub to promote, educate, and collaborate in creating robust historical narratives to complement the primary source material found in other archives.

Collection Criteria:

While the Coast Guard's collection management policy does not exclude the donation of personal or official papers, records, reports, letters, diaries, scrapbooks, and photographs, its archival collections adhere to stringent selection criteria, accepting only those artifacts and records deemed "important" or "significantly impactful" to the Coast Guard narrative.⁸ This selective process is further complicated by the management of unsolicited materials lacking clear provenance, which adds an additional burden on the already resource-limited staff. These limitations highlight the necessity for a more strategic approach to collection development, aiming to enhance the archives' value and manageability.

Adopting a post-custodial collection method for the community archives, focusing on digital-only contributions, emerges as a strategic arm of the Coast

6 Clafflin, Tina. "U.S. Coast Guard Women's History Survey." Survey, n.d.

7 Flinn, Andrew. "Community Histories, Community Archives: Some Opportunities and Challenges." *Journal of the Society of Archivists* 28, no. 2 (October 1, 2007): 151-76. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00379810701611936>.

8 Price, Scott, and Nora Chidlow. USCG Office of Cultural Heritage Management Study, October 8, 2023.

Guard's collection management. This approach allows for creation of a specialized collection that can be linked to the broader Coast Guard narrative while remaining outside of the Coast Guard's resource limitations. It also offers a flexible platform for Coast Guard individuals, not just high-ranking officials, to contribute their histories digitally to the community archives, ensuring that each collection piece comes with its own provenance and context as the contributors themselves directly curate it. Should certain materials be identified as particularly valuable or significant, the community archives can serve as a conduit for the Coast Guard to engage with the individual contributor, potentially leading to the physical accession of items into the official Coast Guard archives if appropriate. Thus, the community archives helps to alleviate the resource constraints and enrich the historical narrative with authenticated personal documents, reflections, and memorabilia.

Representation:

There is a notable absence of extensive scholarly work dedicated to the historiography of Coast Guard women. This lack of academic attention has resulted in an incomplete historical narrative that fails to acknowledge the full scope of women's contributions and experiences in the Coast Guard. Creating a community archives would catalyze scholarly research, enabling a deeper exploration and understanding of this underrepresented aspect of military history.

Not since the conclusion of WWII have women actively documented and preserved their own Coast Guard history for the record. This was seen in the publication *Three Years Behind the Mast*, where the Director of the Women's Reserve, Captain Dorothy C. Stratton pens, "This book is ours – written for all of us by some of us. Those talented ones of our number who have created it, have made permanent for us those fleeting memories and impressions of the past 40 months."⁹ This book is a flashback to the experiences that might seem trivial to the common observer but their work continues to reflect important cultural context into the everyday lives of the women who volunteered to serve in the Coast Guard women's reserve. The only other official publication documenting the Coast Guard SPARs is from the post-

WWII historical series, *The Coast Guard at War Women's Reserve XXII A*. It is subtitled: *A Preliminary Survey of the Development of the Women's Reserve of the United States Coast Guard*, Prepared by the Public Relations Division for the Women's Reserve Division. This is a historical compilation of the women's reserve but was expected to be continued for a more thorough review. The preface states, "It is anticipated that the scope of the present study will be considerably broadened upon the receipt of historical reports from the Districts on the progress of the Women's Reserve program there."¹⁰ No further known official history was created or documented, and some district records of the subject exist in the National Archives but have yet to be compiled into a more complete history.

Access and Use:

While there are commendable efforts by various non-profits, community groups, and social media platforms to share and make historical information accessible, these methods often fall short of aligning with archival standards of organization, preservation, access, and use. Particularly, the process of sharing and downloading off of these platforms can strip out valuable metadata and provenance, essential for maintaining the integrity and context of historical records. Despite their well-intentioned efforts, these online platforms dedicated to Coast Guard communities may not have the resources or expertise to adhere to archival standards, potentially compromising the integrity and longevity of historical records.

The digital age presents unique challenges for archival preservation, including issues of digital archiving standards, long-term data preservation, and potential digital obsolescence. Within closed groups dedicated to community connections and special interests, there may be a lack of established procedures in place for privacy, permissions, and end-use. Archiving content from these groups without established privacy clauses and terms of use could lead to legal challenges, as future access to and use of individuals' contributions may inadvertently breach privacy laws and personal data protection regulations. This highlights the need for a structured and a legally sound approach to digital archiving, especially

9 Lyne, Mary C., and Kay Arthur. *Three Years Behind the Mast*. Historical Section Public Information Division U.S. Coast Guard. Accessed December 15, 2023. https://media.defense.gov/2020/Aug/20/2002481201/-1/-1/0/SPARS_3_YEARSBEHINDTHEMAST.PDF.

10 Women's Reserve Division. "The Coast Guard at War Women's Reserve XXII A." Historical Section Public Information Division U.S. Coast Guard, April 15, 1946. <https://media.defense.gov/2017/Jul/02/2001772337/-1/-1/0/USCGATWAR-SPARS.PDF>.

in sensitive or private group settings where privacy may be expected. Creating a community consistent with archival standards and ethics with the preservation of metadata, provenance, and legal contribution is crucial.

In examining the resources available, such as ‘notable firsts’, women’s history chronologies, and writings on Coast Guard women’s history, a significant concern emerges – the absence of robust citations to primary source documents. Many publications, including internal articles from the Coast Guard serve as the primary means of highlighting Coast Guard History. These can be found in various modes such as the Long Blue Line Blog series, bulletin articles, or website content, but often lack citations to primary source materials. This deficiency in citing original sources hampers the academic rigor of these publications and diminishes their reliability and potential for deeper research. Additionally, a substantial portion of the bibliography comprises internal bulletin articles that, while valuable for internal communication and announcements, do not always reference original sources useful for future research.

Recognizing these challenges, the establishment of a community archives for Coast Guard women’s history is not just a standalone project but a pioneering framework for future community archives initiatives. This model can be adapted to support the collective histories of various groups within the Coast Guard, particularly the 11 recognized affinity groups that advocate for inclusivity and diversity and the 30+ non-profits dedicated to special topics and subject areas of Coast Guard missions. By integrating archival methodologies into this community-driven approach, Coast Guard affinity groups and other marginalized communities will have the education and resources to accelerate the development of more inclusive history into the larger historical narrative of the Coast Guard.

RESEARCH RESULTS

SURVEY ANALYSIS

In compliance with ethical research standards and following application approval (see Appendix B) from the Independent Review Board (IRB) of Simmons University, the Coast Guard Women's History research survey (see Appendix C) sought to analyze the awareness, interest, and engagement of those interested in Coast Guard women's history and of their interest in potentially participating in a community archives for Coast Guard women. The survey was anonymous and used informed consent for participants, ensuring both confidentiality and integrity. The insights from this survey will be used to influence the approach to more tailored educational resources and training programs.

The conceptual framework for the survey questions is grounded in the ADKAR change model, which provides a structured approach to assess awareness, desire, knowledge, ability, and reinforcement among Coast Guard women regarding their engagement with Coast Guard women's history. This model serves as a theoretical lens to understand and measure participants' awareness and desire to actively participate in preserving and sharing their history.

The research questions sought to understand the following main objectives:

1. To what extent are Coast Guard women veterans, active duty and reserves or others interested in Coast Guard women's history and aware of the methods and resources available for conducting research on Coast Guard women's history?
2. How interested are those participants in understanding and promoting Coast Guard women's history?
3. Are participants actively participating in Coast Guard women's history by learning how to capture and preserve their own personal narratives or others?

Timing for the survey outreach was optimal despite the approval of the IRB a bit later than desired. I was able to promote the project and solicit respondents coinciding with the Coast Guard's commemoration of the 50th anniversary of women's integration into the regular Coast Guard during the first week of December.

In coordination with this commemoration, December 5th, I was asked to write an article by the Coast Guard which was also released during this time frame. This article provided a historical understanding of events leading up to women's integration into the regular Coast Guard. Both the article and the Coast Guard's commemoration, along with the survey outreach attributed to the large number of respondents in a short period of time. In total, I received 69 respondents during 2 weeks of outreach. Outreach included social media, emails, and distribution of a flyer (see Appendix D) along with creating the website landing page to promote awareness www.dropsoftheocean.org. The website also included an independent sign-up to be notified of the next steps and to begin to add members to the community email list. As of this writing I have 13 subscribers that have joined the community.

Based on the results of the survey data, several significant aspects stand out. Focusing on the three objectives the data suggests the following:

Awareness of Archives: There is a varied level of awareness about archives and their role in preserving historical records among different age groups. The distribution of awareness levels is mostly balanced across the age brackets.

Challenges in Accessing Materials: A significant portion of respondents reported challenges in accessing sources or materials related to Coast Guard women's history. This includes issues such as limited availability of information and documentation challenges, which underscore the need for improved accessibility and dissemination of historical resources.

Age Group Distribution: The majority of respondents are in the 37-48 and 61-72 age groups, suggesting a strong representation from these age brackets. This might be attributed to the correlation between retirement age groups from active duty and also general retirement age.

Interest in Contributing to Community Archive: Interest in contributing their Coast Guard career histories was varied amongst the age group. This may reflect the need

for more understanding of the intent of the community archives and awareness of the established values of privacy and choice that is built into the strategic plan.

- Among the 25-36 age group, 100% showed interest in contributing their Coast Guard career history.
- The 37-48 age group had a 69.57% interest in contributing, with 26.09% maybe considering it.
- For the 49-60 age group, 61.11% were interested, and 38.89% were maybe considering it.
- Similarly, in the 61-72 age group, 69.57% were interested in contributing.

Resource Needs: The survey indicated various types of resources needed by participants, with over 50% stating they have some resources but may need additional support. Among the various types of resources, 'knowledge and education' were identified as the most needed, chosen by 40.9% of respondents, closely followed by 'time' at nearly 40%. Of the responses, 'desire' was at 13.6% indicating a possible undervaluation of their service. This is fairly consistent with many veterans in my experience as they may not recognize the importance of their contributions.

In addition to the quantitative data there were a series of questions that participants could add comments or expand upon further. Included below are some of those responses. Many of those comments reaffirmed the current challenges of accessing sources or materials related to Coast Guard women's history. Also, many respondents affirmed that they would be interested in documenting and preserving their own Coast Guard history.

Limited availability is the greatest challenge. More needs to be recorded and then made available. This should include not just the "firsts" and groundbreakers, but also the average enlisted and mid grade officers. The everyday life is as important to portraying the full picture of women in the service as the senior decision makers, because, in my opinion, the average Coast Guard member often has a more clear understanding of the reality of the service than the most successful, higher ranking individuals.

The Coast Guard did not do a good job in documentation of history of women in the CG.

Very limited information available.

Not enough source material.

I don't know where to look.

Yes, photos with context was one of the hardest areas to obtain from a reputable source.

There was very little information readily available.

The CG Historian's office is minimally staffed and has a huge span of responsibility.

I love your idea of an archive. I would gladly contribute, format guidance and prompts would be helpful for framing the career history input.

I commend this initiative! Sure, there's the CG Historian and the Women's Memorial, but no clear source to use to research women in the CG.

I love the idea of growing resources to record and share women's CG stories and histories. But I would need to have a better understanding of the type of documents and information that would be collected before being comfortable contributing personal materials.

Overall the level of participation and interest in the survey provided valuable input and validated the interest and enthusiasm for creating a resource that was focused around Coast Guard women's history. There is, however, an opportunity to obtain more specific baseline data for those that join the community archives after being introduced to the full concept. Additionally, a post participation survey will gauge their continued interest, overall experience and satisfaction, and how and if they want to volunteer their time or expertise into the community.

CONCEPT

OVERVIEW



Figure 1: Flow diagram depicting the process of participation of a community member.

INTRODUCTION

Military service members accumulate a diverse collection of documents, records, awards, certifications, memorabilia, and personal experiences. These comprise both physical and born digital formats as well as 3d objects. Upon leaving the service, they are typically boxed up and stored until they are handed down, disposed of, or potentially donated. These records can provide important clues to assist in building post-service resumes and also serve as key pieces of evidence for veteran benefits claims and service connected disabilities. Additionally, they hold significant value for family legacy and research, providing clues to a member's service and perhaps unknowingly the larger historical narrative of the Coast Guard.

As outlined in the 2024-2029 Strategic Plan (see Appendix E), the community archives initiative adopts the ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement) change management model. This strategy, aligned with the strategic directives, is particularly relevant given that most individuals need more experience with archival practices in managing their own records and collections and a reason to do it in the first place. Therefore, the initial step of establishing awareness is critical to engaging potential community members. Providing a basic understanding of the community archives and providing educational resources to start, will be instrumental in determining continued engagement.

This project acknowledges that individuals are at various stages in their lives and military service, each with unique archival needs that the community archives can address. These stages can be categorized into the following groups:

Current and Future Service Members:

For Coast Guard women seeking representation and mentoring, the community archives provides historical connections with the legacy of Coast Guard women.

Transitioning Service Members:

For transitioning service members as they navigate the journey from military service to civilian life. It empowers them to integrate their military backgrounds into their civilian identities and creates closure.

Legacy Preservation:

For older community members contemplating legacy preservation, it supports their desire to influence future generations and provide primary source records of the history they were a part of during their service.

Family Members: For family members of those who have passed away, it assists them in piecing together and comprehending the full scope of their loved one's service and experiences. By offering guidance and an avenue for donation, family members can contribute to the legacy of their loved one's service and the collective Coast Guard narrative.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH

Education and outreach create a community of interested individuals and provide an essential educational overview of what the community's mission, vision, and goals include. This involves setting up a contact list and social media group to communicate through those separate channels. The Facebook Group will be a private group dedicated to Coast Guard women who have entered through the subscriber list. The group members will be screened through group administrators and utilizing the Admin Assist function within the group settings.

Facebook Group Settings

1. Members will be pre-approved to join if a person has one friend or more in the group.
2. Members will be declined if one of the three criteria is met:
 - They have a missing profile picture,
 - have not agreed to the group rules,
 - or have not answered the membership questions.

Group rules follow our community values as outlined in the strategic plan, and membership questions are intended to ensure those who join understand they are joining a private group and have some affiliation or interest with Coast Guard women's history. This Facebook group is intended to spread informational resources and serve as a platform for questions or connections, not as a place to be confused with the dedicated platform that will become the community archives. Therefore, membership will only be restricted based on violation of the rules or criteria above. Monthly community events will be organized and facilitated through Zoom and announced through email and social media notifications.

During the first month of our outreach campaign, January 2024, there will also be a simultaneous initiative to engage with other stakeholders. This objective is to provide informational sessions to stakeholders such as the U.S. Coast Guard Office of Cultural Heritage to address alignment and ensure the community archives works to complement the Coast Guard's history program. While not intended to become a non-profit organization, our community archives actively seeks collaboration and alliance with established non-profits with similar or complimentary missions.

We recognize the opportunity for non-profit organizations such as the US Coast Guard Women's Leadership Initiative, the Foundation for Coast Guard History, and the Military Women's Memorial to further harness our educational resources to support their mission. This collaboration may include cost-sharing options, sponsorships, joint fundraising initiatives, and other forms of partnership aimed at mutually benefiting our shared goals of preserving and promoting Coast Guard women's history.

As future sustainability through grants or supplemental funds is imperative, detailed data collection from community members and stakeholders will be conducted during this first-year pilot. Stakeholder interest and support are pivotal in enhancing the reach and impact of our community archives, and we will look for various ways to accomplish this. This can range from spreading awareness through endorsements to

sponsoring other community initiatives or events. For instance, stakeholders can sponsor members to register their service through the Military Women's Memorial, offer grants for archival projects, research, cloud storage, or support other research initiatives. These efforts strengthen our archival resources and foster a collaborative environment, ensuring the preservation and accessibility of our shared history.

Our Course of Action Planner is a valuable education resource for Coast Guard women and holds the potential for broader application in various community initiatives. We envision it as a versatile resource that can be offered to other non-profits supporting veterans and related causes. Through collaborations, we aim to extend the reach of this educational tool, raising funds that can further support the preservation of Coast Guard women's history while benefiting other veteran communities. By sharing our resources, we hope to foster a spirit of collaboration and support among organizations dedicated to honoring the service and experiences of all veterans.

Potential Stakeholder Involvement

1. Outreach Pledges
2. Earmarked Funds Contributions
3. Technology and Preservation Grants
4. Partnership with Educational Initiatives
5. Volunteer and Training Program
6. Informational Presentations

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT

In the first 3 months of 2024, the pilot year for our community archives initiative, we'll focus on phased engagement to optimize resources. Our primary goal for Jan - March is to enlist at between 50-100 members into our email list, a crucial communication and engagement tool. We'll track engagement metrics through bi-monthly automated drip emails featuring strategic plan highlights, informational events, invitations to join our Facebook group, and access to the Drops of the Ocean Military Service Legacy Blueprint Course of Action Planner (see Appendix F). This planner serves as the outline for the educational series that will follow. It will also serve as the foundation for the 3-step process PREPARE, PRESERVE, PRESENT, in curating a military service archive. Step 1, PREPARE, is used to introduce participants to quick, tangible wins such as the Service Timeline and developing the vision to their own service legacy.

In March, aligned with Women's History Month, we will actively increase our campaign to bring new members in, enticing them with the opportunity to be a part of the first cohort, or "Plank Owners," of the community archives and to participate in the full educational series. This model facilitates an interactive and collaborative learning environment, fostering community engagement and motivation among participants.

Beginning April 01, 2024, this first group will be enrolled in the Course of Action educational series as structured in the Course of Action Planner. Our bi-monthly live sessions, will be coordinated with the advanced online learning management system. The online learning will provide educational resources, templates, video instruction, and internal messaging for questions. This cohort model will be used to analyze any barriers that participants may have in this process and understand any adjustments or changes that may be needed to the material or instruction.

Those who sign up after the March 31st deadline will automatically be included in our ongoing email series, keeping them informed and engaged. The start of this subsequent cohort will depend on the level of interest and engagement we observe with current participants

and new sign ups. In the meantime, given the resource unknowns beyond the pilot year, we are considering offering these individuals access to a do-it-yourself (DIY) version of the course on our platform. This self-guided option, available for a suggested donation, ensures that all interested members can participate, even outside the structured cohort with the option to join any new subsequent cohorts. Adjustments like these are necessary for continued assessment and changes to our strategy. This ensures we adapt to changing circumstances while providing valuable resources to our community members, irrespective of when they join the community.

FORMATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Deadline:</i> March 31 for applications into the first “Plank Owner” Cohort. • <i>Goal:</i> Form the first cohort for the full educational series, targeting a specific number of participants (50 - 100 members).
STRUCTURE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Commencement:</i> Start the series on 01 April. • <i>Content:</i> Based on the outline of the Course of Action Planner. • <i>Format:</i> Bi-monthly meetings, with sessions conducted using an online learning management system (Memberpress).
ACTIVITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group learning tasks and collaborative projects. • Regular check-ins and progress assessments. • Guest speakers and expert-led discussions. • Video instructions and assignments.
RESOURCES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to exclusive educational materials and templates. • Online forums for discussion and peer support. • Technical support for navigating the learning management system.
FEEDBACK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular collection of feedback from cohort members to assess their learning experience and satisfaction. • Adjustments to the program based on feedback and learning outcomes.

Figure 2: Overview of educational component that the community members will receive.

PRESERVATION AND COLLECTION

The bulk of our educational resources and by far the most intensive, is found in Step 2, PRESERVE of the Course of Action series. Here, participants will learn to navigate the technology in preserving their collections using basic archival standards. This phase, aligning with the “Knowledge” and “Ability” components of the ADKAR model, focuses on equipping participants with the skills and knowledge necessary to preserve and manage their collections successfully. It’s important to note that this stage has a high potential for drop-off rates due to its demanding nature and technology components.

Also during this phase, we emphasize ensuring technological accessibility and confidence for all participants. Recognizing that our community members come with varying degrees of familiarity and proficiency with digital tools, we are committed to creating an inclusive learning environment. This approach is critical, as scanning, digitizing, and managing digital assets requires a certain level of technological engagement.

To address these needs, we offer additional support and instructions tailored to different levels of technical expertise. This might include step-by-step guides, video tutorials, and live support sessions, ensuring that every participant feels confident in navigating the digital aspects of archiving. Our goal is to eliminate any barriers to participation, making the course content accessible to everyone, regardless of their prior experience with technology.

Moreover, the course materials are designed to be inclusive, catering to various learning styles. Whether through visual aids, interactive modules, or hands-on practice sessions, we strive to accommodate the unique learning preferences of our participants. This inclusive approach ensures that everyone, from tech novices to those more comfortable with digital tools, can fully engage with and benefit from the educational series or seek additional support if needed.

The success of our educational series in the Preservation and Collection phase heavily relies on its adaptability to participants’ evolving needs. Understanding that feedback is a cornerstone of effective learning, we have

integrated mechanisms to actively gather and respond to participant inputs. This dynamic approach allows for tailoring the educational content to suit the diverse requirements of community members.

Regular surveys and feedback forms embedded within the course platform and through weekly check-in emails serve as the primary tools for collecting participant insights. These instruments are designed to capture both the effectiveness of the instructional content and the participants’ comfort levels with the technology and course materials. The quantitative and qualitative feedback provides a deeper understanding of the participant’s experiences and challenges.

Based on this feedback, iterative adjustments to the course content can be made. This may involve simplifying complex concepts, adding more resources to address specific challenges, or modifying the pace of the course to align better with participant learning speeds. For instance, if a significant number of participants find the metadata annotation section challenging, we could introduce additional tutorials or interactive workshops to clarify these concepts.

Furthermore, using an agile management strategy ensures that these adjustments are implemented promptly, enhancing the learning experience in real-time. By valuing and acting upon participant feedback, this creates a learning environment that is educational and also responsive to the unique journey of each participant in preserving their service history.

PRESERVE Course Outline

- 2.1 Scan & Digitize
- 2.2 Manage Digital Assets
- 2.3 Metadata
- 2.4 Storage & Backup

Resources: Video tutorials, worksheet templates, live Q and A, resources, and step-by-step guides.

CONTRIBUTION AND SHARING

One of the principal values of the community archives is a commitment to respecting and upholding member privacy. Histories and experiences of Coast Guard women encompass more than just records and memorabilia, and often many narratives contain personal accounts of adverse experiences or sensitive memories.

Recognizing this, our approach to archiving is built on a foundation of choice and trust. We empower our members to decide how much or how little they wish to share. Whether a member chooses to keep their archive private for family use, share a biographical summary for research purposes, or contribute more extensively to the community archives, their privacy preferences are always prioritized.

At the most private level, members have the option to maintain their archives exclusively for personal and family use. This can be achieved through saving their digital archive on a hard drive coexisting with a comprehensive legacy plan as outlined in the Course of Action Planner (see Appendix F, pg. 64). This method ensures that their histories are individually maintained or preserved for future generations within their families while maintaining complete privacy.

Members can opt for a more safeguarded approach to contribution without fully relinquishing control. This can be done by creating biographical summaries or finding aids using the templates provided of all or some of their archive. These summaries allow members to share an overview of their service, enabling researchers with specific interests to reach out directly for more information.

For those willing to contribute to broader initiatives, there are options and instructions to register their service with the Military Women's Memorial or to record and submit an oral history as part of the Veterans History Project or other archives. These contributions preserve individual legacies and expand the collective narrative of Coast Guard women's history into existing archives.

Alternatively, members who choose to share their digital archive more extensively can donate parts, or even their

entire archive, to the community archives immediately or at some point in the future. This contributes to building a rich and accessible repository that honors the service and experiences of Coast Guard women, making these histories available for research and community interest. Each option reflects our commitment to empowering members to decide how they contribute to the shared narrative, ensuring that their participation aligns with their comfort levels and personal wishes.

In addition to the traditional forms of archival contributions, our community archives will enable a wider spectrum of participation that moves beyond conventional categories. Understanding that the talents and capabilities of our members are as diverse as their histories, we encourage contributions that leverage their unique skills and passions.

Outreach and Advocacy:

Members can play a pivotal role in outreach and advocacy, helping to broaden the project's reach and impact. This could involve sharing their experiences with the broader community, participating in public speaking engagements, or helping to organize awareness campaigns. Their active involvement in these areas serves to draw more attention and support to bring new community members in.

Volunteering Expertise:

We welcome members who wish to volunteer their expertise in various fields. Whether it's offering professional advice, providing technical support, or sharing archival or information science knowledge, these contributions are invaluable in enhancing the professionalism of the community archives.

Creating Exhibits and Special Topics:

There's an opportunity for members to curate exhibits or focus on special topics that resonate with their interests or backgrounds. This could include organizing collections around specific themes, such as artwork, photography, or other creative expressions related to their service in the Coast Guard or creating educational outreach and lesson plans on Coast Guard women's history.

CONTRIBUTION AND SHARING

Creative Contributions:

We encourage members to contribute their own creative work to the community archives. This could be in the form of art, photography, creative writing, or other mediums that allows them to express and share their service experiences in unique and personal ways.

Throughout this phase, the emphasis is on empowering participants to decide how they want to be represented and how they want to communicate their service experiences in the archives. By offering multiple avenues for contribution, we ensure that each participant can find a comfortable and meaningful way to share their legacy, in alignment with their personal preferences and privacy concerns.

THE DIGITAL ARCHIVES

In consideration of the digital platform to use for the community archives there were a lot of factors to meet. Our criteria focused on user-friendliness, long-term preservation, accessibility, affordability, and the ability to control legacy and privacy settings. Another primary consideration was the alignment with professional archival standards such as metadata fields and retention, file formats, and scalability. There are no shortages of consumer based cloud services and professional archival collection management systems to consider. Some of these aspects were examined in a previous literature review conducted during LIS438 (see Appendix G).

Due to the uncertainty of long term sustainability and active participation, the decision to use Permanent.org appears to be the ideal platform. Permanent.org presents a unique solution for digital preservation and archiving, particularly suited for community-based projects and those with a cultural heritage focus. In addition to affordable a single 'permanent' purchase of storage GBs with an non-profit endowment model, Permanent.org offers several advantageous features:

Community-Based Structure:

Permanent.org is structured to support community-driven archiving efforts. This aligns well with the idea of allowing a member to control their individual archive and potentially contributing some or all of their archive to the community archives hub.

Cultural Heritage Focus:

Its orientation towards preserving cultural heritage makes it an ideal platform that ensures standards of archival principles such as metadata, file integrity, certifications, and access are maintained for future generations.

Digital Preservation:

The platform provides robust digital preservation tools that are crucial for long-term archival storage, including automated file conversions, redundant backups, and file integrity checks.

Privacy and Access Control:

Permanent.org allows for controlled access to archives, ensuring that privacy is maintained. This is particularly important for individuals that are only comfortable with creating an individual archive and controlling access now or for future use.

Ease of Use:

The platform is designed to be user-friendly, lowering the barrier to entry for those who may not have extensive technical skills, which is crucial for ensuring ability of community members participation.

Scalability:

The service is scalable, accommodating small projects as well as expanding to larger collections, making it suitable for the growth of the community archives over time.

Permanent describes their vision as – “a trusted platform for individuals, families and small organizations that provides a secure and private environment to build and share archival quality history with family, friends, colleagues and the public, at their complete discretion.”¹¹

¹¹ Permanent.org. “The Comprehensive Digital Preservation Platform.” Accessed December 17, 2023. <https://www.permanent.org/why-permanent/>.

CONCEPT

4

CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMUNITY ARCHIVES:

Along with the educational resources and online learning for contributing an oral history, or registering their service with the Military Women’s Memorial there will be a specific section dedicated to using Permanent.org as the preferred cloud storage platform for the legacy preservation of a community member. While Permanent.org has a vast number of user guides and resources, the online courses will include step-by-step video instructions and guides for members that reflect the community archives application. They will also have the opportunity to view some demonstrations with a real community archives that will be developed based upon my own service and my research on Coast Guard women at sea.

Once a community archives is populated, community members can choose how and if to share with the main community archives. This can be done by creating shared folders, setting up public access to certain parts of their archive, or by direct contributions of selected items. Throughout this process, they maintain control over what is shared and when. Other legacy preservation and access features include the designation of a trustee or a successor through their legacy plan. Optionally, a member that owns an archive may choose to delete or donate their archive with specific instructions included as part of their legacy plan.

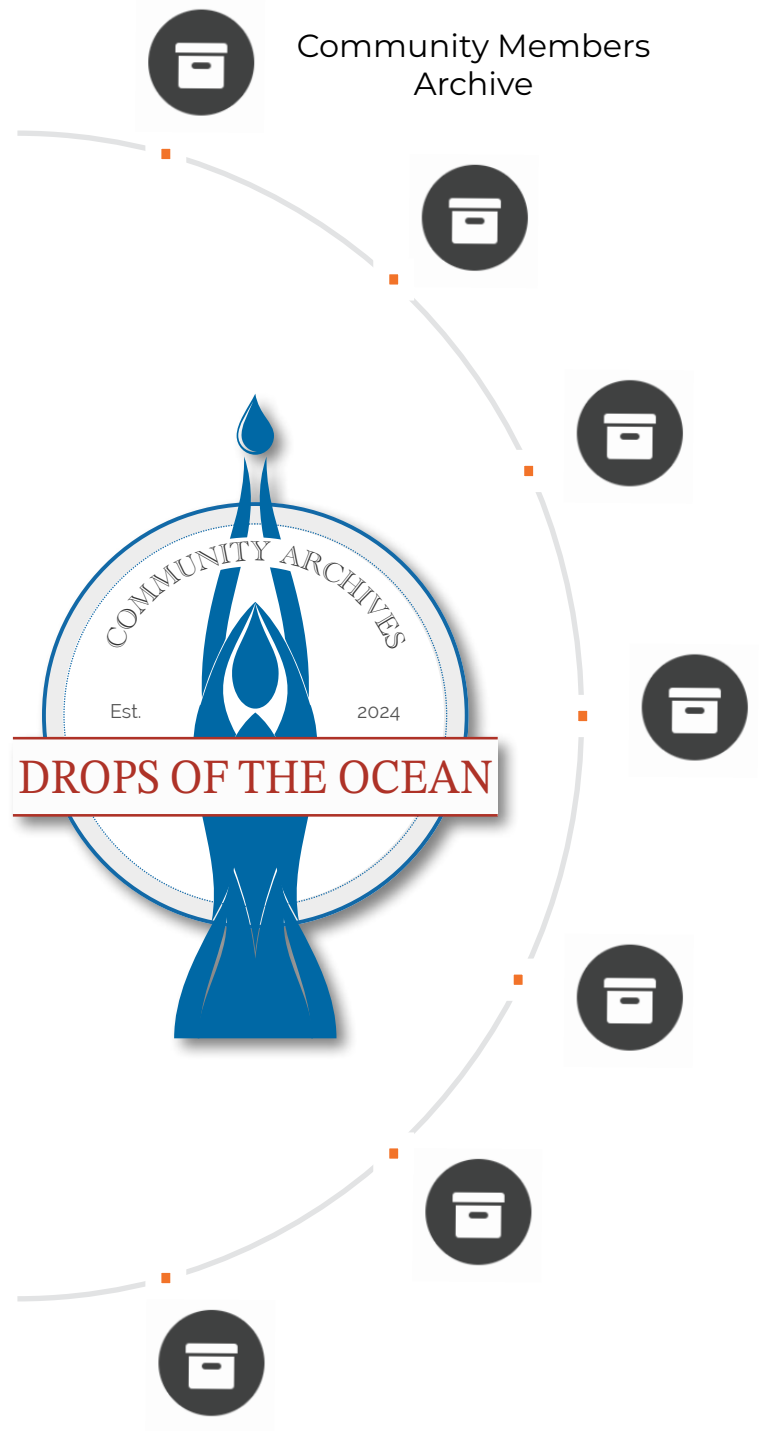


Figure 3: Diagram showing Drops of the Ocean Community Archives as the hub for community members connections and participation.

USER EXPERIENCE AND FEEDBACK

The final step for a community member once they have completed the education series and curated their personal archive is to ensure that objectives were met and any difficulties that they may have had were addressed. User experience and feedback will be developed to create baseline data points and analyze success, failures, and continued interest. This feedback will be imperative to seek out stakeholders involvement, future grants, or determine if changes or adjustments will be made.

CAPTURING AND ANALYZING FEEDBACK

Collection Methods:

- Tools and methods to gather feedback from participants, include surveys, feedback forms, and direct communication channels within the online platform via internal messaging.
- Regular check-ins, both formal and informal, are conducted to gauge participant satisfaction and gather insights on their experience with the course content and community interactions.

Analyses:

- Feedback is analyzed to identify common themes, suggestions, and areas of concern.
- This analysis helps to understand the efficacy of the content, the usability of the digital platform, and the overall participant engagement levels.

ITERATIVE ADJUSTMENTS

Adapting Course Content:

- Based on feedback, refining course materials may be necessary. This might include breaking down complex concepts into smaller segments, incorporating additional resources, or providing alternative learning methods.
- The pace of the course may also be adjusted, offering flexibility to accommodate varying learning speeds and styles.

Enhancing the Community Experience:

- Feedback on the community aspect of the project informs how we can improve the digital platform for better interaction, ease of use, and overall user satisfaction.
- We strive to create a space that is not only informative but also welcoming and supportive, fostering a sense of belonging among members.

UTILIZING FEEDBACK FOR FUTURE OUTREACH

Data-Driven Outreach and Engagement Strategies:

- The insights gained from user feedback are invaluable in shaping our future outreach and engagement strategies.
- This data helps identify effective communication channels, topics of interest, and methods that resonate with our audience, guiding our marketing and promotional efforts.

The process of collecting and responding to feedback is ongoing, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement. By remaining agile and responsive to the needs and experiences of the community users, we ensure that our project remains relevant and a true reflection of the community it serves.

CONCLUSION

This narrative report presents an overview of the Drops of the Ocean Community Archives as a framework and conceptual plan to implement in 2024. It synthesizes the need and process to establish a community archives for Coast Guard women by integrating background analysis, a critical literature review, and strategic planning. It highlights the vital role of community archives in preserving marginalized narratives to fill historical gaps and aims to influence Coast Guard women in active participation of Coast Guard history. By incorporating survey insights, the project is tailored to meet community needs, ensuring an inclusive, accessible archives that documents and preserves the legacy of Coast Guard women.

NEXT STEPS

Learning Management Platform

One of the next major initiatives of the project is to implement the online educational learning management system. Here new community members established into the first cohort will have the full spectrum of video instructions, worksheet templates, instructions, and other resources for successful participation. This will be complemented with bi monthly live sessions for Q&A or other community participation such as guest speakers or training.

Collection Management Policy

In establishing the community archives, developing a collection management policy is a primary step. This policy will serve as a guiding framework for the acquisition, preservation, and dissemination of archival materials. Guidance will ensure that the process aligns with the mission to preserve and share the history of Coast Guard women. The policy will detail criteria for what materials are collected, emphasizing diversity of materials and relevance to the community's intent. It will also outline preservation strategies, adhering to archival best practices to safeguard valuable records for future generations. With accessibility as a key consideration, the policy will describe how the community can access and utilize the archives, balancing the need for public accessibility with privacy and ethical considerations.

Grant Applications

Exploring potential grant opportunities is critical for the ongoing development and implementation of new initiatives with this community archives, as additional funding can significantly enhance sustainability and future capabilities. Coordination with entities like the USCG Women's Leadership Initiative or the Foundation for Coast Guard History, both non-profit organizations, may be essential as many grants are offered to entities such as non-profits.

Pilot Year Study

Upon completion of the one-year pilot program, the next step will be summarizing the process as a case study. This case study will document the process of our community archives project, capturing both the challenges faced and the insights gained throughout the process. It will serve as a valuable resource, providing a detailed account of the experiences, strategies, and outcomes. The intention is to analyze the progression but also offer a framework for other communities looking to establish similar initiatives.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: U.S. Coast Guard Women's History - Survey Responses

Survey responses as of December 16, 2023

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BuuJEou4jWAr3aCFcfqf-2o7pDjmjXWU/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix B: Coast Guard Women's History Community Archives IRB Application

Application for the approval of surveying human subjects.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Nt8t2aYKV4VCtq83hO-ExJbomIjiiou4/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix C: U.S. Coast Guard Women's History - Survey Questions

Survey questions for participants in obtaining research data.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Tl05ojX4rmYTemogHpueGxxaawgoEro8/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix D: Drops of the Ocean - Survey Flyer

Marketing flyer to distribute in outreach campaign for survey.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1p3sWXRQeiSdhymF6TKBwEtcKeRCvuoTT/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix E: Drops of the Ocean Community Archives - 5 Year Strategic Plan

The 5-year strategic plan, covering 2024-2029, establishes six core strategic directives: Education and Outreach, Active Engagement, Preservation and Collection, Accessibility and Inclusivity, Sustainability and Growth, and Research and Scholarship.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1KmhLjCmxss4uWoqkheXAra8GTxChjDvd/view?usp=sharing>

Appendix F: USCG Service Legacy Blueprint - Course of Action Planner

A step-by-step guide to turn military clutter into a curated service legacy. Chart the course with structure and clarity to shape and discover the pieces of military service that will inspire generations.

Link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_rtoZs42cckDwLuSfa2KojUjikCYP2k7/view?usp=sharing

Appendix G: Literature Review of Establishing a Digital Archives in Small Organizations

This literature review is provided for those smaller institutions seeking an overview of some of the processes and best practices in the project planning and implementation of a digital archives.

Link: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/149TGCFZrSLygQRir7yrQQTssqbkRSGYI/view?usp=sharing>