Albert Gore Research Center Internship

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Oluwayemisi Adegboyega

HIST 6570

Dr. Kelly Kolar

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Introduction

The Albert Gore Research Center was founded in 1993, shortly after Middle Tennessee State University secured the congressional papers of Senator Albert Gore Sr. The acquisition of this collection laid the groundwork for a broader institutional mission: to document the political, cultural, and civic life of Tennessee. The Center was named after U.S. Senator Albert Gore Sr., who represented Tennessee in Congress for thirty-two years. Over time, the Gore Center expanded beyond Gore Sr.'s papers to acquire additional congressional collections, including the extensive records of Representative Bart Gordon, who served Tennessee's Sixth District from 1985 to 2011. The Gore Center houses congressional papers, university archives, oral histories, and a wide range of manuscript collections documenting the lives and work of Tennesseans. From its inception, the Center has operated with a dual mission of preservation and public service. Preservation involves ensuring the long-term care of materials through professional archival practices—appraisal, arrangement, description, and conservation—while public service emphasizes access and interpretation.

The Center encourages the use of collections not only by scholars but also by students, genealogists, journalists, and members of the general public who seek to understand the history of their communities and the state. In keeping with MTSU's emphasis on experiential learning, the Gore Center also plays a vital role in the professional training of graduate students in Public History. Interns and graduate assistants are integrated into the daily operations of the archives, where they gain practical experience in processing collections, supporting reference services, and engaging with community outreach. This teaching mission ensures that the Center is not only a repository of the past but also an incubator for the next generation of archivists and public historians.

Descriptive Section: Activities

Processing the Bart Gordon Papers

The bulk of my internship centered on processing the congressional papers of Representative Bart Gordon. This extensive collection, comprising more than seventy boxes, provided me with the opportunity to immerse myself in the foundational practices of archival processing. Each day involved carefully examining folders, arranging them into an appropriate order, and describing their contents to ensure that future researchers could navigate the material effectively. Over time, I became familiar with the rhythm of archival labor: removing documents from acidic folders, rehousing them in archival-quality containers, scanning selected items, and filling out separation sheets for oversized or fragile documents. Although this work could appear repetitive on the surface, I quickly came to understand its intellectual depth. Each folder represented decisions about what to keep, how to order it, and how best to describe its contents for access. These decisions echo the broader debates within archival theory, particularly those expressed by Greene and Meissner in their influential article, *More Product, Less Process*. They argue that archivists must balance perfection with practicality, noting that "the more time spent on one collection, the less time is available for others" (Greene & Meissner, 2005, p. 240). This insight resonated strongly with my experience working through Gordon's papers. Faced with dozens of boxes, I realized that my role was not to perfect every descriptive detail, but rather to ensure the collection as a whole was made available in a timely and usable fashion.

At times, the materials themselves illustrated the broader themes of Tennessee's political and cultural history. For example, while processing Box 34, I encountered a music score titled *"We Don't Want It in Tennessee (Nuclear Waste Song)."* I was struck by how ephemeral cultural expressions, like protest songs, were preserved alongside policy memos and legislative

drafts. These unexpected finds highlighted the collection's richness and the way archives capture both official records and the surrounding social discourse. Cynthia Pease Miller, in *Managing Congressional Collections*, emphasizes the importance of such contextual materials, noting that "constituent correspondence and ephemera reveal as much about congressional service as formal legislative files" (Miller, 2008, p. 45). Encountering these materials firsthand deepened my appreciation for the value of comprehensive archival practices that do not dismiss seemingly marginal items. The daily work of processing also underscored the collaborative nature of archives. I frequently discussed my findings with colleagues and sought guidance from my supervisor, particularly when encountering missing files or unusual formats such as oversized maps. These moments reinforced the idea that archival work is not solitary but deeply collegial, requiring shared judgment and collective problem-solving.

Oversized Materials and Special Documents

Working with oversized and non-standard documents was one of the most challenging aspects of my internship. The Bart Gordon Papers contained maps, bound reports, scrapbooks, photographs with glued captions, and large newspaper clippings. Each of these formats required specialized handling and preservation techniques. For example, oversized maps could not be refoldered with standard materials, so I prepared separation sheets and transferred them into flat-file storage drawers. Bound volumes often raised the question of whether to disassemble them for easier access or preserve them intact; in some cases, I scanned the title pages or inscriptions before rehousing them. These decisions mirrored larger professional debates about balancing access and preservation. Greene and Meissner cautioned against over-investing in perfectionism when processing, yet handling unusual items often forced me to slow down. As they put it: *"Processing backlogs continue to be a problem for archivists, and yet the*

problem is exacerbated by many of the traditional approaches to processing collections that archivists continue to practice" (2005, p. 208). While I kept this advice in mind, I also realized that special formats demanded careful attention to prevent damage and preserve their informational value.

One particularly striking example involved a photograph with a glued caption. Instead of discarding the caption, my supervisor demonstrated how to use a micro-spatula to carefully detach it, then trim rough edges with an X-Acto knife. We rehoused both the caption and the photograph together in a transparent folder, preserving their original relationship. This reminded me of Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's insight that *"the archivist remembered because they understood and were able to ascribe meaning to the physical object"* (2013, p. 71). The caption, as a physical artifact, carried interpretive meaning that would have been lost had it been destroyed. Fax papers posed a different challenge. Some had already begun to fade, with words disappearing irreversibly. I experimented with scanning at higher densities, though sometimes the results were unsalvageable. My supervisor ultimately agreed that scanning was the best preservation option, even if the copies were imperfect. This experience connected directly to Greene's assertion that archivists must normalize reappraisal and accept limitations: *"Reappraisal and deaccessioning should be as normal a part of standard archives administration as cataloging and reference"* (2006, p. 7). In these moments, I learned that archival work requires not just technical skill but also professional humility in the face of inevitable loss. Oversized and special documents taught me that archival processing is not uniform but adaptive. Each item, whether a fragile fax sheet, a bound legislative report, or a hand-drawn map, demanded situational judgment. These experiences gave me a deeper appreciation of the archivist's role as both a caretaker of fragile materials and an interpreter who

decides how they will be preserved and presented for future research.

Winchester Survey Photographs (Special Project)

In the final weeks of my internship, I was assigned a smaller collection from the Center for Historic Preservation: the *Survey Photographs of Winchester, Tennessee.* This project differed significantly from the Bart Gordon Papers, both in format and workflow, and it introduced me to the specialized handling of visual materials. I began by labeling envelopes, organizing photographs into their respective categories, and preparing them for digitization. Unlike the paper files I had worked with previously, the photographs required me to wear gloves and exercise extra caution to avoid fingerprints or physical damage. Once organized, I scanned the images and saved them as TIFF files. This format is widely regarded as the archival standard for digital preservation because it minimizes compression loss and ensures long-term accessibility. Saving the photographs as TIFF files allowed the Center to preserve high-quality digital surrogates, while the original prints remained safely stored. This was my first sustained experience with digitizing photographs, and it gave me a practical sense of the technical standards that underpin digital preservation in archives.

The Winchester project also taught me that photographs demand careful description to be meaningful to researchers. As Schmidt and Law point out in their discussion of functional analysis, *"the arrangement of once haphazard materials could now be far more logical"* (2011, p. 23). In my case, description was the tool that transformed anonymous survey photographs into accessible research resources. Without context, the photographs risked becoming inert images; with accurate labeling and arrangement, they became evidence of Tennessee's architectural and community history. This reinforced my growing awareness that archival intelligence is not only technical but also interpretive. As Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo observed, *"The archivists had*

touched, sorted, arranged, labelled and shelved the materials … the archivist remembered because they understood and were able to ascribe meaning to the physical object" (2013, p. 71). By handling, scanning, and describing the Winchester photographs, I internalized their meaning in a way that went beyond simple data entry.

Overall, the Winchester Survey Photographs gave me an opportunity to apply archival principles to visual materials and to see firsthand how preservation decisions—such as choosing TIFF over compressed formats—shape the longevity and usability of collections. It expanded my skillset beyond paper records, offering me insight into the challenges and rewards of managing photographic archives.

Self-Assessment of Professional Growth and Development

Gaining Expertise

Over the course of my internship, I steadily developed a wide range of technical skills central to archival processing. At first, I felt the weight of learning new methods, but through repetition, I gained speed, confidence, and accuracy. I became proficient in refoldering documents, labeling, numbering paper-clipped sets, and carefully removing staples or adhesive materials. I also learned the rationale behind using pencils instead of pens, and why items like sticky notes had to be discarded. Alongside this, I gained hands-on experience with digitization, from scanning fragile newspapers and faxes to creating high-quality preservation files for photographs.

My work also introduced me to the tools and materials archivists rely on—such as micro spatulas, separation sheets, and transparent sleeves—and taught me how each one contributes to preserving integrity while supporting researcher access. By handling a wide range of items, from maps and bound reports to oversized newsletters and fragile media, I became

more confident in applying technical methods to very different archival challenges. In sum, this phase of my growth was about moving beyond theory into practical competence, learning by doing, and steadily building the core skills of an archivist.

***Developing**

As my technical abilities grew, I also encountered situations that required me to exercise professional judgment. Archival work often demands choices: whether to rehouse, separate, or scan; whether to detach glued materials or leave them intact; or how much descriptive detail to provide in a folder title. I realized that these decisions were not always straightforward, but rather depended on balancing preservation, efficiency, and access. This was especially clear when I worked on loosely grouped or "miscellaneous" files. Instead of striving for exhaustive order, I learned to group items into coherent categories, providing just enough description to support future research. This practical experience aligned with Greene and Meissner's argument that *"collections that are truly unorganized should be sorted/ordered only into series—subseries if the series are very large—unless, again, their perceived research importance demands more detailed work"* (2005, p. 208). I found myself applying this principle directly, accepting that sometimes "good enough" description is better than over-processing, as it allows collections to move more quickly toward accessibility. Through these moments, I grew in my ability to apply judgment with confidence, recognizing that archival work is not about perfection but about thoughtful decision-making that balances competing needs.

***Mentorship, Collaboration, and Professional Development**

Beyond the technical and judgment-based skills I gained, one of the most important aspects of my internship was the mentorship and collaboration that surrounded me. From the first day, my supervisor made sure I was not only completing tasks but also understanding why they

mattered. He guided me in everything from handling fragile fax papers to labeling folders and preserving photographs, often explaining the rationale behind each archival decision. This support made me more confident in making my own decisions, knowing I could always ask questions and receive thoughtful guidance.

I also grew professionally through daily collaboration with my colleagues. Their presence created a welcoming environment where knowledge was freely shared. Whether it was a colleague showing me how to flatten maps, offering advice on scanning techniques, or simply sharing insights about the job market and graduate school, these interactions enriched my experience. I realized that archival work is deeply collaborative; no one processes a collection in isolation. Even small conversations about workflow or problem-solving reinforced how essential communication and teamwork are to the profession. These mentorship and collaborative experiences also helped me develop a clearer sense of professional identity. I became more comfortable speaking about my skills, asking for clarification when needed, and even contributing ideas for how processing could be improved. When my supervisor asked me to suggest better ways to track progress on the Bart Gordon collection, I was able to propose a processing tracker, drawing on both my hands-on experience and the collaborative problem-solving culture I had observed. By the end of my internship, I recognized that mentorship and collaboration were as valuable as the technical skills I learned. They not only strengthened my day-to-day work but also modeled how I hope to mentor and collaborate with others in my future career.

Critical Analysis: Impact of Scholarship and Methods

The scholarship I engaged with throughout my internship provided both a theoretical foundation and a critical lens through which to interpret my daily work. Readings such as Greene

and Meissner's *More Product, Less Process (MPLP)* emphasized efficiency, user-centered processing, and a recalibration of what constitutes "quality" in archival practice. Meanwhile, scholarship on congressional collections, functional reappraisal, reference knowledge, and deaccessioning highlighted tensions between preservation ideals, user needs, and institutional constraints. By working directly with the Bart Gordon Papers, I had an opportunity to test these ideas in practice. Processing congressional papers demanded balancing Greene and Meissner's call for pragmatic access with Miller's warnings about the scale and complexity of political collections, while also grappling with broader professional debates about value and appraisal.

***Greene & Meissner's "More Product, Less Process" and Its Application**

Greene and Meissner's 2005 article, *More Product, Less Process,* challenged the archival profession to redefine standards of processing. They wrote: "We should be paying more attention to achieving basic physical and intellectual control over, and thus affording research access to, all our holdings, rather than being content to process a few of them to perfection"(p. 237) This was immediately relevant in my internship. The Bart Gordon Papers were voluminous and diverse, making item-level processing impractical. Instead, the Gore Center adopted a strategy closer to MPLP's recommendations—prioritizing folder- and series-level description to ensure basic access. For instance, rather than removing every staple or annotating individual items, we emphasized collection-level control and broad descriptive access points. Working within the MPLP framework helped me recognize that "quality" does not necessarily mean exhaustive detail but rather providing researchers with timely, usable access. The Gore Center's application of MPLP principles thus aligned theory with practice, reflecting the archival profession's ongoing shift toward user needs and efficiency.

Cynthia Pease Miller's Managing Congressional Collections

Cynthia Pease Miller's *Managing Congressional Collections* provided some of the most directly applicable guidance for my internship, since the Bart Gordon Papers fit the model of a large and complex congressional collection. On the importance of early planning, Miller emphasizes: "The key to efficient processing begins with careful surveying and an overview of the collection in order to develop a comprehensive plan for arrangement and description" (Miller 2008, p. 61). This principle guided my initial days working with the Gordon Papers. Before beginning detailed processing, I reviewed the existing inventory, examined cheat sheets created by past archivists, and studied the processing plan established in 2016. These steps helped me grasp the collection's scope and make informed decisions about arrangement. Miller also stresses the importance of context: "Effective arrangement and description of congressional collections is based on understanding the historical context for the collection and the member's career" (Miller 2008, p. 63). I found this especially true when working with folders relating to Gordon's committee work and legislative initiatives. Understanding his role in science, commerce, and technology policy provided a lens for grouping materials and describing them in ways meaningful to future researchers. By applying Miller's recommendations to real processing tasks, I learned how theoretical guidance translates into practice, especially with the scale and complexity of congressional collections.

Archival Reference Knowledge and Functional Reappraisal

One of the central insights I gained during my internship was the importance of reference knowledge as a form of professional expertise. While much of my daily work was technical—arrangement, description, or preservation—the real value emerged in learning how these activities build toward enabling others to access and interpret congressional collections. As

Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo remind us, *"The reference librarian is one of the few professionals who is being paid not only for doing, but also for knowing"* (Duff, Yakel & Tibbo 2013, 69). This framing resonated with my experience: the deeper my familiarity with the Bart Gordon Papers became, the more I recognized that knowledge itself—how folders were structured, where sensitive materials were located, how certain issues appeared across subseries—was an indispensable professional resource.

The article also expands on the concept of "archival intelligence," which it defines as *"a researcher's knowledge of archival principles, practices, and institutions, and an understanding of the relationship between primary sources and their surrogates"* (Duff, Yakel & Tibbo 2013, 77). In practice, I saw this in moments where intellectual control over the collection intersected with user needs. Even though I was not staffing the reference desk daily, I realized that the arrangement choices I made would shape how future researchers approached these papers. Each description I wrote acted as both a surrogate for the original document and a teaching tool that could either enhance or obscure the researcher's archival intelligence. These experiences reminded me that functional reappraisal, even at the processing stage, is always relational: it connects the archivist's technical knowledge with the researcher's interpretive needs.

***Reflections on Deaccessioning and Value of Historical Materials**

During my internship, I often noticed the challenges of managing both volume and long-term value within the Bart Gordon Papers. Congressional collections are enormous, and while they hold historical significance, not every item contributes equally to future research. At times, I encountered duplicate materials, fading faxes with little informational value, or folders that seemed to carry little context. This made me reflect on the professional debate about

reappraisal and deaccessioning. Mark Greene has observed that *"Reappraisal and deaccessioning are topics that barely register within the archival profession. They seem to be rarely practiced—or at any rate rarely reported"* (Greene 2006, 39). This silence contrasts with the reality I saw in practice: that without ongoing reappraisal, repositories risk drowning in volume and limiting their ability to prioritize meaningful preservation.

Greene insists that archivists should normalize these practices, writing, *"Reappraisal and deaccessioning should be as normal a part of standard archives administration as cataloging and reference, but that they can be"* (Greene 2006, 46). Reflecting on my work, I realized how true this is. While my instructions were to preserve the Bart Gordon collection as fully as possible, the reality is that not all documents will be equally useful or preservable. Introducing reappraisal into the workflow would allow institutions like the Gore Center to strike a balance between stewardship and practicality.

These practices of honesty mirrored Greene's call for openness, and they reinforced for me that accountability is as critical as preservation in maintaining public trust. In sum, working with the Bart Gordon Papers highlighted the tension between preserving everything and prioritizing what is most significant. Greene's reflections on deaccessioning helped me see that archival value is not static but requires ongoing professional judgment and transparency.

Conclusion

My internship at the Albert Gore Research Center offered me a comprehensive and transformative experience in archival practice. From the moment I began processing the Bart Gordon Papers to my final work with the Winchester Survey Photographs, I was immersed in the daily realities of managing historical collections. Each stage of the internship built upon the last: I moved from technical skill-building, to exercising professional judgment, to recognizing how

theory and scholarship shape everyday archival decisions. In my descriptive work, I learned that processing is not only about physically arranging and describing documents but about balancing preservation with access. My self-assessment revealed that my growth lay not only in mastering archival tools but also in understanding how mentorship, collaboration, and professional judgment intersect with technical skill. The internship reinforced the idea that archival work is as much about people—donors, researchers, colleagues—as it is about collections.

Engaging with scholarship provided a critical lens for interpreting my daily work. Greene and Meissner's call for "more product, less process" resonated as I grappled with the size and complexity of a congressional collection. Miller's emphasis on context and planning was affirmed in how I approached Bart Gordon's legislative papers. Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo helped me see that my growing knowledge of the collection was itself a form of professional expertise. Greene's reflections on deaccessioning reminded me that archival value is not fixed, but something we must revisit with honesty and transparency. Taken together, these lessons deepened my appreciation for archives as both a professional practice and a scholarly field. The Gore Center provided me with space to apply theory in meaningful ways, to learn by doing, and to reflect on my future in the profession. I leave the internship with sharper technical skills, a stronger sense of archival judgment, and a clearer understanding of how scholarship and practice continuously inform each other. Most importantly, I carry forward the lesson that archival work is not about perfection, but about making collections usable, accessible, and meaningful for the communities they serve.

Appendix

Appendix A. Fieldwork Journal

The complete fieldwork journal kept throughout the internship is included here. The journal documents daily activities, reflections, and connections to assigned readings. It records specific projects such as digitizing fragile newspapers, processing congressional papers, rehousing oversized materials, and working with photographs. This journal also demonstrates my ability to integrate professional literature into daily practice, showing continuity between coursework, scholarship, and applied archival work.

NAME: OLUWAYEMISI ADEGBOYEGA

DATES: MAY 19- AUGUST 16

TITLE: FIELDWORK JOURNAL

CLASS: INTERNSHIP

Day One – Fieldwork Journal- May 19

My supervisor asked me to read Cynthia Miller's book *Managing Congressional Collections* to familiarize myself with the process of handling congressional papers and to use it as a reference. I was instructed to read pages 60 through 74 and take notes. I was also asked to review Appendix E, which provides guidelines for file disposition. We also had a meeting to introduce ourselves and discuss our respective assignments.

Notes on Planning for Processing

"The key to efficient processing begins with careful surveying and an overview of the collection in order to develop a comprehensive plan for arrangement and description" (p. 61).

This statement hits the foundational principles of archival work, especially when dealing with large and complex collections like congressional papers (as Andre hinted to me). It encapsulates the idea that thoughtful preparation is the cornerstone of effective archival processing. It's about working smarter, not just harder, to ensure that valuable historical records are made accessible in a meaningful way.

Notes on Physical Control of the Collection

"Effective arrangement and description of congressional collections is based on understanding the historical context for the collection and the member's career" (p. 63).

To effectively process and describe Bart Gordon's papers, I'll need to thoroughly investigate his time in Congress, which includes understanding his committee assignments, legislative accomplishments, issues he championed, and the political landscape of Tennessee during his service. This background knowledge will directly shape how the collection is organized, ensuring that researchers can comprehend its contents in a meaningful way. Biographical facts, career highlights, committee assignments, and special legislative interests will be important in guiding the arrangement.

Guidelines in Handling the Materials – Specialty

- Oversized documents, maps, and papers should be stored in oversized boxes.
- Photographs and negatives should be documented and placed in protective enclosures, and separated from paper materials.
- Oversized artifacts, textiles, and three-dimensional objects should be separated from paper materials.
- Newsprint and thermal faxes should be copied or reformatted onto acid-free paper.

- Scrapbooks may be microfilmed or digitized because the originals may be useful for exhibition.
- Audiovisual materials should be cleaned and reformatted, if necessary.
- Digital media (computer disks, DVDs, and computer tapes) have limited technological lives, so the repository must address the short-term need to access this information and plan for obsolescence of the software.

Notes on "When is a Collection Processed"

"Processing of a collection is not generally begun until after the deed of gift is signed" (p. 67). This shows the legal and ethical considerations involved. I spoke with my supervisor about the deed of gift, and he said that the legal transfer of the collection occurred in 2011. This confirms that the repository has the authority to organize, describe, and eventually make Bart Gordon's papers available to researchers. Following up on the idea of a mutual commitment between the Gore Center and Bart Gordon, I asked if there was a timeframe for completing the processing of the collection. My supervisor indicated that Bart Gordon did not specify a deadline for when the processing should be finished. He also told me that Mr. Gordon frequently visits the research center to donate additional materials and remains active in political circles. This information is important because it shows that this is an ongoing collection and that there is a continued relationship between Mr. Gordon and the Gore Center.

Notes on Levels of Processing

My reading covered the MPLP approach, and it was interesting to see this concept discussed in the context of congressional collections, as I was first introduced to MPLP in one of my reading class assignments earlier this spring semester under Dr. Kolar's guidance. Miller highlights that

congressional collections, due to their large size and hierarchical complexity, are particularly well-suited for this methodology. Understanding MPLP will be crucial as I begin to work on this collection, as it will likely guide decisions about the level of detail required for arrangement and description of different record types. It is interesting to see a theoretical concept from my reading class find such a direct and practical application in the context of this real-world archival work.

Appendix E – Guidelines for File Disposition

There are three keys for file appraisal as mentioned in the book: Retain, Review, and Dispose.

To conclude Day One:

My primary activities involved reading the assigned book and asking clarifying questions. I find the working environment to be refreshingly collaborative and enjoyable. Colleagues freely joked with one another and shared interesting details about their ongoing research. My supervisor was also proactive in checking on my progress, ensuring I had what I needed, and keeping me in the loop of his tasks.

Day Two – Fieldwork Journal – May 20

My colleagues set the day's tone with their lively discussion, as they always arrive before my resumption time at 9 a.m. When I got in, my supervisor showed me the research center's common drive and instructed me to familiarize myself with the existing work on the Bart Gordon collection. He mentioned that he would show me the physical materials during our break. The common drive contains various folders, including a folder for past student work—those who previously worked on collections. Within the drive, there's a "Manuscripts" folder that houses other collections, including regional, political, and university-related materials. I clicked on the "Political" folder to familiarize myself with what's been done on the Bart Gordon collections and

to review past work. This folder contains unprocessed inventories, and work is still ongoing. Later, my supervisor checked in with me and moved me to another table. He had me review the Bart Gordon processing cheat sheet and told me that Morgan worked on the collection previously—so she would be a good person to direct my questions to. If Morgan isn't available, I can always ask him.

While reading the cheat sheet, one line immediately caught my attention: *"The Bart Gordon papers will not be processed using MPLP standards; it will be processed according to DACS."* This surprised me because, based on my earlier reading from Miller, I had assumed we would apply MPLP standards to this collection since it's a congressional collection. I'm glad I discovered and read this information before diving into the actual processing. From the cheat sheet, I also learned that former political archivist Sarah Calise and selected past graduate assistants developed a processing plan for this collection starting in 2016.

While still reading through the cheat sheet, a colleague walked up to me and kept me company for a while before heading off to his assignments. Towards the end of the day, I began scanning newspaper clippings from the Bart Gordon files. I believe this process is called digitization. Newspapers aren't kept for long because they are acidic, so I scanned them, printed the scans, stamped the printed copies using a "COPY" stamp on the back, and then shredded the original newspaper clippings. I saved all the scans as PDFs at 300 dpi—this is the standard because the files aren't intended for long-term storage. Throughout the day, my colleagues maintained a cool and friendly working environment. It's been a good balance of productivity and community, and I'm looking forward to what comes next.

Reflective Note

My discovery that the Bart Gordon papers will not be processed using MPLP standards, despite being a large congressional collection, connects directly to the themes in Greene and Meissner's article *"More Product, Less Process."* The authors argue that MPLP should become a standard practice, especially for massive collections, to reduce processing time and increase researcher access. In contrast, this project is choosing to follow DACS guidelines—highlighting that institutions sometimes maintain traditional or legacy processing decisions even when MPLP might seem more efficient. This experience reminds me that theory doesn't always dictate practice, and each repository chooses methods that reflect its values, staffing, and long-term goals. Greene and Meissner also stress that backlogs result from archivists "doing more than they need to" in processing. It'll be interesting to observe whether the decision to avoid MPLP here affects how much of the Bart Gordon collection ultimately becomes accessible within a short time frame.

Day Three – Fieldwork Journal May 21

My colleagues consistently arrive earlier than I do, and I always find them chatting and creating a jovial atmosphere. I greeted them and went straight to my desk. My supervisor wasn't at his desk this morning—he was in a meeting—so I emailed him to ask what I should start doing. I felt I didn't need to wait for his arrival before beginning work. I picked up the box and started working on it as I did on Day Two. I began digitizing materials, and he met me while I was already on it. Later, he checked in on my progress. I decided to take my 30-minute break, and

after that, I continued digitizing the items. Towards the end of the day, he showed me how to shred newspapers. The working environment remained positive throughout. I easily related to my colleagues and felt comfortable asking them questions.

Reflective Note

Today's decision to start work on my own, rather than waiting for my supervisor's direction, reflects the professional initiative discussed indirectly in Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's *Archival Reference Knowledge* article (2013). The article emphasizes that successful archival staff must be proactive, flexible, and capable of navigating uncertain situations—especially in reference and technical work. Although it focuses more on reference service, the traits of awareness, independence, and professional judgment certainly apply to my fieldwork context too. Additionally, my ongoing digitization of newspaper clippings links with ideas found in Miller's guidelines and hints at issues touched on in Greene's "I've Deaccessioned and Lived to Tell About It" (2006). While Greene focused on reappraisal and removing redundant or low-value material, he emphasized transparency and consistent standards for handling ephemeral or deteriorating formats—like acidic newspaper. My activity today (scanning, copying, stamping, and shredding) is part of that larger archival practice of responsible long-term preservation through format migration and selective retention.

Day Four – Fieldwork Journal May 22

I continued with my digitization work today, and I expect the scanning process to take a while to complete because there is still a large volume left. I arrived 13 minutes late to work this morning, and my supervisor was understanding—especially since I worked beyond closing time on Day

Three. He acknowledged the effort and didn't make it an issue. He later showed me the shelves where I could pick up additional boxes to work on. I selected another box filled with newspaper clippings and continued scanning. He mentioned that we are intentionally starting with these simpler tasks, and once I finish scanning the newspaper clippings, we will begin processing the collection more deeply. After taking my 30-minute break, I resumed scanning for the rest of the afternoon and ended the day by writing this journal entry. The atmosphere in the workspace remains lively, thanks to the energy my colleagues bring each day. Life is already hard enough—I'm grateful that the work environment doesn't add to that. Instead, it feels light, supportive, and human.

Reflective Note

The decision to begin with digitization before moving into processing reflects the careful, phased workflow that Cynthia Miller recommends in *Managing Congressional Collections*. Miller emphasizes that responsible archival work, especially with complex collections, starts with managing physical formats thoughtfully—something I've seen in how newspapers are prioritized for reformatting and preservation early on. The work environment also mirrors some of the values Mark Greene touches on in *I've Deaccessioned and Lived to Tell About It*. Greene argued for professional openness and flexibility within institutions—not just in how collections are handled, but in how archivists are treated as people. Having a supervisor who recognizes effort and a team that fosters community shows that archival work doesn't need to be rigid or cold to be effective. It can be structured, human, and kind. The ongoing digitization work also continues to highlight Miller's point about non-permanent formats like newsprint. Scanning and replacing them with acid-free copies is not just busywork—it's active preservation planning in response to

material fragility.

Day Five – Fieldwork Journal May 23

I arrived at 8:58 a.m., greeted my colleagues, and immediately began working. I continued scanning from the same box I had been working on. Doing the same task for the past three days has significantly increased my speed and accuracy. While I was working, my supervisor and a colleague came over to discuss entering my timesheet. My colleague took the lead in guiding me and taught me how to use the timesheet properly. After completing it, I went on my 30-minute break. When I returned, I resumed by printing the scanned newspaper clippings and then shredded the originals.

Reflective Note

My growing speed and accuracy in digitizing materials reflect an important theme from *More Product, Less Process* by Greene and Meissner. They emphasized the value of developing efficient, repeatable workflows to address large backlogs without compromising access or quality. This repetitive scanning process, though simple, has helped me internalize that principle and improve both precision and pace. Additionally, the guidance I received on using the timesheet ties back to *Archival Reference Knowledge* (Duff, Yakel, & Tibbo), which emphasizes the importance of mentorship, collaboration, and procedural fluency as part of archival competence. Having a colleague walk me through the process reinforces the learning-through-doing environment that defines much of archival fieldwork.

Day Six – Fieldwork Journal May 27

I came in by 9:00 a.m. and greeted my colleagues before beginning my work. I continued scanning, printing, and stamping the printed copies as usual. At some point, we ran out of paper, so my supervisor left to get more for the office. While waiting for the paper, I kept working on the scanning portion to stay productive. While I worked, a colleague walked up to me and we chatted for a while, mostly catching up and sharing how our weekends went. At 11:30 a.m., I took my 30-minute break and resumed work afterward. I also noticed a new intern being shown around the center when I arrived earlier in the morning. That was all I did for the day.

Reflective Note

The rhythm of today's tasks—scanning, printing, and stamping—continues to reflect the kind of methodical, hands-on practice that Greene and Meissner encouraged in *More Product, Less Process*. Although my current work is repetitive, it is forming a solid foundation in managing physical formats and workflow consistency, which will be useful when transitioning into more complex processing tasks. Noticing a new intern being onboarded also reminded me of the importance of internal institutional knowledge and peer engagement as emphasized in *Archival Reference Knowledge* by Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo. Just like I benefited from learning through interactions with others, that new intern will soon be part of the same shared environment of informal learning and professional support.

Day Seven – Fieldwork Journal May 28

I came in by 9:00 a.m., as always, and greeted my colleagues. Another intern joined this morning, and someone showed him around the office. I immediately returned to digitizing. I anticipate that this scanning process will take about three more days to complete. While I worked, I noticed a colleague placing books on top of maps. Curious, I asked about the action,

and he explained that it was a process called *flattening*. I found it interesting how simple physical techniques are used to prepare materials for long-term preservation. I took my 30-minute break and resumed work afterward, continuing with the digitization task until the end of the day.

Reflective Note

Today's encounter with the map-flattening process touches on a key point from Cynthia Miller's *Managing Congressional Collections*, where she discusses the importance of preparing different material types—especially oversized or delicate formats—for preservation and access. Flattening is a basic but essential conservation practice that prevents distortion and facilitates easier handling, scanning, and storage. Observing and asking about this technique reflects the kind of observational learning and curiosity encouraged in *Archival Reference Knowledge* (Duff, Yakel, & Tibbo). As the article suggests, knowledge in archives is not only gained through formal instruction, but through noticing, asking, and doing. These small daily interactions quietly contribute to professional development and skill building.

Day Eight – Fieldwork Journal May 29

I arrived as usual at 9:00 a.m. and greeted my colleagues. I went straight to my box to begin work. Not long after, my supervisor approached me and informed me that I would need to move to the scanner at the back. They set it up for me, but using this scanner significantly slowed down my workflow. With this new setup, I had to crop images manually and double-check the scan quality, which really impeded my progress. I now believe that the three-day estimate I gave for completing this digitization task will need to be extended. I took my 30-minute break as usual and resumed work afterward before closing out for the day.

Reflective Note

Today's experience ties closely to the ideas in *More Product, Less Process* (Greene & Meissner). One of their core arguments is the need for archivists to strike a balance between high-quality processing and practical efficiency. The additional quality control steps I had to take—cropping and verifying each scan—are important, but they also highlight the challenge of sustaining throughput under tight timelines. This tension between precision and productivity is exactly what MPLP was designed to address. At the same time, this scenario reflects Cynthia Miller's reminder that digital preservation isn't just about speed—it also requires attention to format integrity and access quality. As frustrating as the delay was, the care taken to ensure the scans were usable and clear aligns with best practices in responsible archival digitization.

Day Nine – Fieldwork Journal May 30

I arrived by 9:00 a.m. and continued with digitizing as usual. I worked consistently throughout the morning. Most of my colleagues were not in today, so the workspace was much quieter than usual. I took my 30-minute break and then resumed work. Later in the day, I saw that another intern had been accepted and was being shown around the center. It's amazing how people keep joining the organization—there's always new energy and fresh faces being added to the team.

Days Ten to Twelve – Fieldwork Journal June 2,3,4

Over the past three days (Days 10 through 12), I continued with the digitization of newspaper clippings from the Bart Gordon collection. Each day, I arrived at 9:00 a.m., greeted whoever was present in the office, and went straight to work. The task remained the same—scanning, printing, stamping, and preparing documents for shredding. By now, I've become very comfortable with

the workflow. Repeating this process daily has made my movements more fluid and my output more consistent. I've developed a strong rhythm, and even though the work is repetitive, I find it satisfying to see clear progress being made toward the completion of this stage of the project.

I took my 30-minute break each day as usual and returned to my station afterward. As the scanning nears completion, I'm gradually preparing myself to transition into the next phase—processing. Though I haven't fully moved into that stage yet, I'm beginning to anticipate what new challenges and learning opportunities it might present.

Reflective Note

These days of repetition reinforce a point raised by Greene and Meissner in *More Product, Less Process*: that archival work, especially when dealing with large collections, often depends on structured, consistent effort. The value of efficiency without compromising archival standards becomes clearer the longer I stay with one task. This consistency is a core element of archival productivity, particularly in digitization work. Additionally, this stage of the internship reflects what Cynthia Miller emphasizes about physical control and handling—dealing with fragile formats like newsprint requires not only careful handling but repeatable systems to ensure preservation and access. Through this work, I continue to gain hands-on appreciation for those principles.

Day Thirteen – Fieldwork Journal June 5

Today, I completed the scanning phase and moved on to processing. I began by refoldering some of the files, naming untitled folders, and double-checking everything against the pre-existing inventory. This marked a shift from the repetitive rhythm of digitization to the more focused and

hands-on tasks involved in physical arrangement and description. My supervisor ensured I had all the tools I needed to do the job properly. I was given:

- A micro spatula to carefully remove blunt staples,
- Folders for refoldering,
- Boxes to house the newly organized folders,
- Instructions to remove paper clips and number paper-clipped documents to keep their original grouping identifiable,
- A pencil—since anything written on archival documents must be reversible, and pen is never used,
- Instructions to get rid of post-it notes because the adhesive can damage paper over time,
- And a dry sponge to gently remove surface dirt from the documents.

I resumed work at 9:00 a.m. and took my usual 30-minute break. The day felt like a fresh start, moving from digital handling to physical archival care, and I'm beginning to see how layered and detailed the processing phase can be.

Reflective Note

Beginning the processing phase brought many of Cynthia Miller's recommendations into practice—especially the emphasis on *physical control* and *preparation of materials*. Every instruction I received today, from the use of a pencil to the removal of paper clips and sticky notes, aligns with the best practices Miller outlines in *Managing Congressional Collections*. These steps aren't just routine—they're about preserving the integrity and accessibility of materials for long-term use. Additionally, these tasks mirror the values promoted in *More Product, Less Process*—finding structured, repeatable ways to handle large collections while

being intentional about what actions truly preserve meaning and usability. The shift to hands-on processing is teaching me that even the smallest decisions—like labeling a folder or removing a staple—are part of the larger effort to maintain both order and authenticity in archival work.

Day Fourteen – Fieldwork Journal June 6

I arrived as usual at 9:00 a.m., greeted my colleagues, and went straight to work. I continued with the processing tasks I started on Day Thirteen—refoldering, checking against the inventory, and cleaning up files. While working, I came across magazines that were found in the files. I kept them as they were, since that was the best approach for preservation and original order. I also encountered bound documents that could potentially damage the files if taken apart, so I left them intact. I consulted Andrew throughout the day on how best to handle such materials to make sure I followed proper procedures. Aside from that, the day mostly repeated the previous processing steps—removing paper clips, labeling folders, and organizing files into new boxes. I took my usual 30-minute break and returned to work to finish up the day.

Day Fifteen – Fieldwork Journal June 9

Today followed the same pattern as Day Fourteen. I continued with processing—refoldering, organizing, and cleaning documents. As I worked through the materials, I came across a file that had tap on it. I asked my supervisor what to do, and he explained that removing the tap could damage the documents, so we must leave it as is to avoid causing harm. Later, I found a bound file. After examining it, I realized that removing the binding would not damage the content. So I carefully took it apart and numbered the pages accordingly to preserve their original order and

context. Aside from those moments, the day followed the usual rhythm. I arrived at 9:00 a.m., took my 30-minute break, and continued processing until the end of the day.

Reflective Note

Handling the taped and bound documents today brought to mind the careful decision-making emphasized by Cynthia Miller in *Managing Congressional Collections*. Not every document can be treated the same way—context and condition must guide the choice between preservation and intervention. The decision to leave the tap untouched reflects respect for the document's physical integrity, while the removal and numbering of the bound file aligns with the goal of improving accessibility without disrupting the material's original structure. These small but meaningful choices also tie in with *More Product, Less Process,* where Greene and Meissner stress practical judgment and minimal intervention when appropriate. The focus is not on perfection but on preservation, order, and usability. Today was another reminder that archival processing requires both attentiveness and restraint.

Day Sixteen and Seventeen – Fieldwork Journal June 10 and 11

I resumed work as usual at 9:00 a.m. and followed the same processing steps I've become familiar with—reviewing files, refoldering where necessary, scanning fragile items like faxes, and updating the inventory. The rhythm of the work is now second nature, and I moved through the tasks with growing ease and confidence. I took my regular 30-minute break and returned to work, continuing the same process until the end of the day.

Day Eighteen– Fieldwork Journal June 12

I resumed work as usual this morning, but before settling into my tasks, I asked my supervisor for a small favor. I wanted to make a short video with my colleagues to wish my dad a happy birthday since I couldn't be there to celebrate with him on June 12. My supervisor kindly agreed, and my colleagues joined in to record warm wishes. It turned out to be a beautiful moment, and I really appreciated their help in making my dad's day brighter from afar. After that, we addressed a large newspaper that couldn't fit into a standard archival folder. To manage this, we used a separation sheet to document all the details and link it to the rest of the collection. Once that was done, I continued working on the remaining unfolded documents. As the day was coming to an end, I shared the edited video with my colleagues, and they all loved it. It was a joyful way to close the workday.

Reflective Note

Today's use of a separation sheet ties into Cynthia Miller's emphasis in *Managing Congressional Collections* on maintaining intellectual control when dealing with oversized or nonstandard items. Even though the physical item couldn't be stored in its original folder, documenting it properly ensures it stays connected to the larger context of the collection—preserving both accessibility and coherence. On a more personal note, the supportive and collaborative atmosphere I experienced today reflects the informal learning and community-building aspects discussed in *Archival Reference Knowledge* by Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo. The ability to blend moments of human connection with professional responsibility is part of what makes an archive a living, dynamic workplace.

Day Nineteen – Fieldwork Journal June 13

I arrived at work as usual and began the day by showing appreciation to my colleagues for their help in making the birthday video for my dad. Their kind gesture really meant a lot to me, and I made sure to thank them sincerely. After that, I returned to working on the collection. The tasks continued as before—processing, organizing, and maintaining consistency with the standards and workflow I've come to know well.

Reflective Note

Even on days when the work feels repetitive, *More Product, Less Process* reminds me that consistency is key to successfully managing large collections. The steady rhythm of my tasks aligns with the core principle of efficiency without compromising care. These daily repetitions aren't just routine—they're training grounds for deeper skill and archival fluency.

Day Twenty and Twenty -One – Fieldwork Journal June 16 and 17

I came in two minutes late today and brought cupcakes with me to celebrate my birthday. Two of my colleagues had called in sick and couldn't make it, but I told the rest of the team it was my birthday, and they warmly wished me well. We shared the cupcakes, and it was a cheerful start to the day. As I continued working, I picked up another box, which was full of *Congressional Quarterly* and *National Journal* magazines. I wasn't sure how best to preserve them, so I asked

one of my colleagues who had worked on this collection before. She advised me to start by removing the staples and wait for guidance from my supervisor, who would make the final decision. The magazines are acidic, so I plan to ask him tomorrow what preservation method we should follow. Later in the day, I went to pick another box so I'd have something else to work on while waiting. While reviewing the inventory and boxes, I noticed that some titled folders listed in the inventory were missing from inside the physical box. I'll also ask my supervisor tomorrow how to handle this discrepancy.

Reflective Note

Today's experience highlighted the importance of judgment and collaboration in archival work. Cynthia Miller, in *Managing Congressional Collections*, discusses the variety of materials found in political collections and the care needed in deciding how best to preserve each type. The acidic nature of the magazines, the presence of staples, and the missing folders all require thoughtful consultation and measured action—something Miller identifies as key to managing congressional archives. Moreover, my decision to ask a colleague for guidance while awaiting my supervisor reflects the informal knowledge-sharing emphasized in *Archival Reference Knowledge* (Duff, Yakel, & Tibbo). Peer support continues to play a vital role in developing both my practical skills and decision-making confidence in the archive.

Day Twenty-Two – Fieldwork Journal June 18

I resumed work at 9:00 a.m. and continued with the same tasks from the previous day—processing materials, organizing folders, and working through the box of *Congressional Quarterly* and *National Journal* magazines. I focused on removing staples and preparing

questions for my supervisor regarding preservation steps and missing folders noted from the inventory.

Day Twenty-Three – Fieldwork Journal June 20

I resumed work as usual today, although I was nine minutes late. I felt bad about it, but my supervisor reassured me that it was fine, and I appreciated his understanding. After greeting my colleagues, I got straight to work. Someone brought in Dunkin' Donuts, and we all shared and enjoyed them together—it was a nice way to start the day. I continued working on the same box I'd been processing and made it a goal to complete it today so that I could begin a new box on Monday. I'm glad I was able to achieve that. I took my usual 30-minute break and returned to finish up before closing out the day.

Reflective Note

Today reminded me that productivity isn't just about speed—it's about setting clear goals and following through. That focus on moving through a box with intention aligns well with the practical efficiency emphasized in *More Product, Less Process*. Greene and Meissner encourage archivists to make steady, realistic progress without over-processing materials—something I've continued to practice. The supportive environment in the archive also echoes the importance of workplace culture described in *Archival Reference Knowledge*. The way my colleagues and supervisor created space for encouragement—even in small things like snacks or a late arrival—contributes to a learning space that feels both structured and human.

Day Twenty-Four – Fieldwork Journal June 23

I resumed work as usual after the long weekend, greeted my colleagues, and got right back to processing. While working through the box, I came across a photograph with a caption glued to it. I wasn't sure whether to scan the caption and discard it due to the adhesive, so I asked my supervisor for guidance. He explained that we didn't need to throw it away—we just needed to separate it carefully from the photograph. Using a micro spatula, he detached the caption and then trimmed the rough edges with an X-Acto knife. We placed both the photograph and the caption in a transparent light folder and put them in a new folder I had created for the file.

As I continued working, I also had to make some short readings on a few files that weren't titled so I could determine appropriate folder names. This helped ensure that their content would be accurately reflected in the collection inventory. I also reminded my supervisor about an oversized folder I had worked on a week ago that still hadn't been properly housed. Together, we found a space for it in the map case drawer. After that, I took my usual 30-minute break and resumed working until the end of the day.

Reflective Note

Today's work with the glued caption and photograph directly connects to Cynthia Miller's emphasis on *physical control* and *preservation handling* in *Managing Congressional Collections*. The use of micro spatulas and proper enclosures is a textbook example of how fragile materials should be treated to prevent damage and preserve context. Our decision to retain and store both the image and its caption also reflects Miller's advice to preserve the informational value of related components together whenever possible.

Similarly, taking time to read and assign titles to untitled files reflects Miller's guidance on accurate arrangement and description. This aligns with the fundamental archival principle that records should be made accessible not only physically but intellectually, through thoughtful naming and contextual understanding. Addressing the oversized folder by relocating it to the map case drawer reflects another key point in Miller's guidance—ensuring that unique formats are housed appropriately while maintaining their place in the intellectual arrangement of the collection.

Day Twenty-Five – Fieldwork Journal June 24

I arrived as usual, greeted my colleagues, and got straight to work. While processing a box, I came across a bound report inside one of the files. Based on the consistent approach we've taken with bound documents throughout this collection, I made the decision to remove it. I then refoldered the contents into a new archival folder. I did the same for another bound report that had an inscription on the front page. Before disassembling it, I scanned the front page to preserve the inscription. When I informed my supervisor about the decisions I had made, he acknowledged that they were appropriate and aligned with our preservation practices.

Later, I found an envelope glued to the back cover of one of the reports—similar to the glued caption we handled yesterday. I applied the same method and carefully removed it. Inside the envelope was a folded map titled *"Ground Water Flow Routes – Hydrogeology of the Snail Shell Cave."* I placed it in the same oversized folder located in the map case drawer and included a separation sheet for documentation. During the same session, I came across a document (not a fax sheet) with text that was nearly unreadable. Since my supervisor was on break, I asked a colleague for advice. She suggested using the copy machine to increase the density in hopes of

making the words more legible, but unfortunately, there was no improvement. When my supervisor returned, I explained the situation, and he confirmed there was nothing more we could do—the document would need to be left in its current state. I took my usual 30-minute break and continued working until closing out for the day.

Reflective Note

Today was filled with small but significant preservation decisions, echoing many of the technical and ethical concerns raised in *Managing Congressional Collections* by Cynthia Miller. Removing bound materials, scanning inscriptions, and dealing with fragile or faded documents all speak to the need for thoughtful interventions that protect both the physical integrity and informational value of records. The way I applied a learned method from a previous day to remove a glued envelope reflects the kind of adaptive learning emphasized in *Archival Reference Knowledge* by Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo. It also demonstrates the importance of building on past experiences and peer knowledge when supervisors are unavailable—a hallmark of effective archival practice. Finally, facing the limitations of technology when trying to enhance the faded document was a reminder that archival work often involves accepting imperfections. In this case, as Greene and Meissner point out in *More Product, Less Process*, the goal isn't to fix every flaw, but to ensure the broader collection remains usable and preserved within reasonable standards.

Day Twenty-six and Twenty-Seven – Fieldwork Journal June 25 and 26

Today went as smoothly as most days. I continued my usual processing work, but with a specific task in focus—I labeled each of the boxes I had completed so far. This was to create more space and allow me to shelve them properly in the designated Range Z shelf area. I labeled the boxes by hand, following the established naming convention based on congressional years, series, and subseries. Once I completed labeling Boxes 16 to 21, I picked up another box to begin processing. While reviewing its contents, I discovered that two files listed in the inventory were missing from the physical box. I informed my supervisor as he was heading out for his break. He instructed me to write the missing file information down, which I did, and I handed the note to him once he returned. After that, I continued processing, took my usual 30-minute break, and closed out for the day.

Reflective Note

Today's labeling task reinforces the importance of intellectual and physical control—a core idea in *Managing Congressional Collections* by Cynthia Miller. By labeling according to congressional years, series, and subseries, I was helping to ensure that both access and context are preserved, which is critical for long-term usability. The issue of the missing files also echoes Miller's emphasis on documentation and accountability. By noting the absence and informing my supervisor, I helped maintain the chain of custody and the accuracy of the collection's metadata. This workflow also reflects the kind of flexible problem-solving and organizational judgment that *More Product, Less Process* encourages—working steadily while making thoughtful decisions that prioritize usability and integrity over perfection.

Day Twenty- Eight– Fieldwork Journal June 27

I arrived 15 minutes late today because I missed my bus. I sent an email to my supervisor to notify him of the delay and received an auto-reply indicating that he was out of the office. After greeting my colleagues, I completed my training on Title VI, which had been pending. Once the training was done, I resumed processing. I tried connecting to the folder on the common drive, but it wasn't responding—I wasn't sure what went wrong. Rather than wait and lose time, I decided to continue working on another folder so the delay wouldn't affect my productivity. I'll follow up on the connection issue again on Monday when my supervisor is back.

Reflective Note

Today highlighted a key trait in archival work—adaptability. When access to digital tools is disrupted, the ability to pivot and stay productive becomes essential. This aligns with the mindset promoted in *More Product, Less Process,* where flexibility and momentum are valued over perfection. Additionally, completing the Title VI training reflects the kind of administrative and legal awareness emphasized in *Managing Congressional Collections*. Miller underscores that archival work isn't just physical—it's also shaped by compliance, ethical standards, and institutional protocols. Training like this ensures that archivists are not only preserving records but also protecting the rights and accessibility of the communities served.

Day Twenty-Nine – Fieldwork Journal June 30

I arrived as usual and resumed work right away. I returned to some files I had processed earlier—specifically on June 27—that I realized were fax sheets and needed to be scanned. I did what was required: scanned the pages, printed the copies, and ensured everything was preserved

properly. After taking my usual 30-minute break, I returned to continue working. At times, I find myself wishing that the copy machine and scanner were located closer to my workstation. Having to walk to the reference stand to pick up scanned items can interrupt the flow of work. But on the flip side, I've also started seeing it as a form of exercise. It's a subtle way to stay active throughout the day, instead of staying rooted in one spot from clock-in to clock-out.

Reflective Note

This day illustrates how physical space and workflow design play a critical role in archival labor—something *More Product, Less Process* doesn't often address directly, but which is central to the everyday experience of archivists. The small disruptions that come with navigating shared equipment and workstations can subtly influence productivity and pacing. Additionally, revisiting and correcting the treatment of previously processed materials—like realizing they were fax sheets—echoes Cynthia Miller's emphasis in *Managing Congressional Collections* on ongoing attention to material formats. It's a reminder that processing is rarely linear; it often involves revisiting earlier work to ensure standards are met.

Day Thirty – Fieldwork Journal July 1

I arrived at work as usual and decided to start the day by emptying my trash box. I usually don't immediately shred or trash items that are meant to be disposed of; instead, I wait until I've sorted through each box I'm working on so I can easily retrieve anything if cross-checking is needed. After organizing the contents, I asked my supervisor what to do with a bound hardcover I had set aside. He told me it would be recycled and showed me the proper bins for both recycling and trash. I shredded the necessary items and took care of the rest. Once I was done with that, I resumed work on the box I had been processing. But when I opened the inventory on my

computer, I was shocked to see that everything I had entered since June 14 had disappeared. The last auto-save was from June 13. I immediately called my supervisor to inform him. He explained that I should have been saving manually each day instead of relying solely on auto-save. Although I felt disappointed at first, he reassured me that I didn't need to reprocess the boxes—just re-enter the information into the inventory. That helped me feel a bit better, and I quickly got to work. I went to the shelves, brought back all the relevant boxes, and began the task of re-entering everything. That was the focus of my entire day. I took my usual 30-minute break, resumed work, and clocked out at the end of the day.

Reflective Note

This experience underscores the importance of **information management and preservation**, not just for the materials we handle but also for the records we create as archivists. As Cynthia Miller stresses in *Managing Congressional Collections*, the tools and documentation we maintain—like inventories—are just as essential as the physical items themselves. When they're compromised, it can impact the entire chain of arrangement and description. The day also reflects the *"human side"* of archival work that Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo highlight in *Archival Reference Knowledge*. Mistakes happen—even digital ones—and learning from them is part of building professional competence. Today, that meant understanding the limits of technology and the importance of routine backup practices.

Day Thirty-One – Fieldwork Journal July 2nd

I resumed work as usual and continued updating the inventory. I completed work on Box 31 of 78 and moved on to Box 32 of 78. The label on the box read "Misc Files," and it immediately brought to mind a point from Dr. Kolar's archival management class "never label anything as miscellaneous." That reminder stayed with me as I opened the box and began reviewing the contents more critically. Just before my break, my supervisor let me know that he'd be out for the rest of the day to attend his grand uncle's funeral service. While he was away, I kept working and eventually entered my time sheet before clocking out for the day.

Reflective Note

This day reflects a quiet but powerful principle of archival theory—the responsibility of description. Labeling folders or boxes as "miscellaneous" may seem convenient, but as *Managing Congressional Collections* emphasizes, clear and meaningful descriptions are crucial for long-term access and usability. Vague labels create barriers for future researchers. This also connects to *Ritzenthaler's* emphasis on functional appraisal—taking the time to understand what role each item plays within the broader collection, even when the folder lacks context. Naming matters, and today's experience reminded me that even small decisions, like renaming a folder, contribute to the ethical and intellectual integrity of archival practice.

Day Thirty-Two – Fieldwork Journal July 3rd

I arrived and began working immediately. I came across some loose papers from Box 30 of 78 that hadn't been foldered, so I took the time to describe them properly and assign a suitable folder title. Then I turned my full attention to Box 32 of 78, which is entirely in my hands to process and describe—no folders, just a stack of loose papers. The original Bart Gordon inventory described this box as: *"ENTIRE BOX: mostly science and commerce committees; no*

folders; loose papers." That meant I had no pre-existing guide to rely on, and because the box had been previously labeled "Misc Files," I was responsible for reviewing every item and creating a structure from scratch.

At first, the task felt a bit overwhelming. I had to bring out several documents, compare their contents, and group related items together. While sorting, I asked my supervisor if there was any reference point or clue for processing a box labeled "Misc Files." He told me, flat out, that there wasn't—I would have to read through everything in the box to make sense of it myself. He added that he also dislikes using "Miscellaneous" as a label, which reassured me that I was on the right track. I spent the rest of the day labeling and describing each document carefully. I didn't even take a proper break because I was so focused on organizing the contents. I'll revisit the folders again on Monday with fresh eyes to double-check and see if any should be grouped differently. I clocked out at the end of my shift, feeling both tired and accomplished.

Reflective Note

This was a day of true intellectual and curatorial labor—the kind that's often hidden but essential. As Miller emphasizes in *Managing Congressional Collections*, the absence of original order or folder titles often demands close, contextual reading and sound judgment from the archivist. My task today required both. My supervisor's response also reminded me of a key lesson from *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo* in *Archival Reference Knowledge*: archival work is interpretive. It's not just about storing materials; it's about reading them, understanding them, and shaping them into something useful for researchers. The fact that both of us agree on avoiding the "miscellaneous" label reinforces the responsibility archivists have in making collections accessible and meaningful—not vague and confusing.

Day Thirty-Three – Fieldwork Journal (July 7)

I came to work as usual and continued working on the box originally labeled "Miscellaneous." I stayed focused on describing each document and placing them into appropriately titled folders based on their subject matter. The process required a lot of careful reading and sorting, but I was determined to bring order to the disorganized contents. I took my usual 30-minute break and returned to work, picking up right where I left off. That was the main task I worked on throughout the entire day.

Reflective Note

Today's work further emphasized the importance of *intellectual control* in archival processing. As highlighted by *Miller (2008)*, the role of the archivist includes transforming loosely organized records into a structure that reflects both their content and original order—especially in collections like congressional papers. Labeling folders meaningfully contributes to the long-term usability of the archive and prevents future confusion. This ongoing task also echoes *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's* point that archivists must not only preserve documents but also enhance their accessibility by understanding and interpreting them. With every document I describe, I'm actively shaping the way future researchers will encounter and understand this collection.

Day Thirty-Six – Fieldwork Journal (July 8)

I resumed work as usual and continued processing the box previously labeled "Miscellaneous." As I sorted and described more documents, I was able to fill up Box 22 and picked up a new empty box to label as Box 23. This allowed me to keep stacking the newly created folders in an orderly manner while I worked through the remaining contents. The process of reading, sorting,

and describing continued throughout the day. I took my usual 30-minute break, returned to work, and closed out at the end of the day.

Day Thirty-Seven – Fieldwork Journal (July 9)

I resumed as usual and started the day with a conversation with one of my colleagues. He shared that he's expecting to graduate by Fall 2025, and we caught up on a lot of other things too. About an hour later, Dr. Kay, the director of the archives, walked over and invited me to join the others for a donut breakfast. Most of my colleagues were already there talking and enjoying the snacks. I picked a donut and made an effort to chat with one of my colleagues before heading back to work. I didn't want to seem awkward by just grabbing a donut and walking away. After that, I went back to processing and describing materials. I later took my usual 30-minute break and closed out for the day when I was done.

Reflective Note

Today reminded me of how workplace culture and professional growth go hand in hand. Casual moments—like conversations over donuts or updates from colleagues—foster community and build relationships that make collaborative tasks more meaningful. As highlighted by *Duff and Yakel*, archives are not only places of preservation but also spaces shaped by human interaction and shared knowledge. Balancing productivity with connection helps make archival work both effective and enjoyable.

Day Thirty-Eight – Fieldwork Journal (July 10)

I was able to finish working on the miscellaneous box this morning. After completing it, I picked up the next box in the sequence—Box 33 of 78—and began processing its contents. I scanned

the documents that needed to be preserved digitally and prepared two separation sheets for oversized items, which turned out to be newsletters. I housed them in the rear drawer alongside the other oversized documents stored there. I continued processing the rest of the box, taking my usual 30-minute break, and closed out for the day once my shift ended.

Reflective Note

Finishing the box labeled "miscellaneous" marked a small but significant milestone. It reflects the kind of progress that *Greene and Meissner* encourage in *More Product, Less Process*—steadily moving forward while maintaining practical standards. The use of separation sheets for oversized materials also reinforces practices emphasized in *Miller's* guidelines on housing non-standard documents properly to ensure preservation without disrupting the arrangement of the rest of the collection.

Day Thirty-Nine – Fieldwork Journal (July 11)

I resumed work as usual and started my day with the regular processing tasks. My supervisor mentioned that he would like to have a meeting with me on Monday to discuss my progress and have a conversation about what I've learned and understood while working on the Bart Gordon collection. I appreciated the opportunity to reflect on my growth so far. I took my usual 30-minute break, resumed work afterward, and closed out for the day.

Day Forty – Fieldwork Journal (July 14)

I resumed work as usual and continued processing materials. About an hour and thirty minutes before my closing time, my supervisor came over and said we could have the progress discussion he mentioned earlier. We started by talking about Nigeria. He asked me what archives and

museums are like in Nigeria, and if I had thought about the direction I wanted to take in my career. I told him I am still deciding between archives and museums because I have a strong interest in oral history, which I believe cuts across both fields.

We also discussed how I have been getting along with the Bart Gordon collection. I explained that I've become familiar with different preservation tools and techniques, as well as how to describe and arrange materials properly. I then asked if he had any advice for someone approaching the job market after their master's program. He was kind enough to share his perspective on the job market in the United States based on his experience, which I found very helpful. Our conversation also touched more on Nigeria and its cultural institutions, and overall it felt like a good, open conversation.

Towards the end, he asked if there were any areas I would like to gain more experience in. I mentioned that I haven't worked with photographs in the archives yet and would like to learn more about photograph preservation. He said he would arrange for me to spend about a week getting familiar with handling photographs in the archives. I also mentioned that I'm interested in learning more about reference services. He explained that reference work can be more complex because it involves not only interacting with researchers but also having a deeper knowledge of collections to guide research effectively.

Reflective Note

Today's conversation reflects the professional growth and career exploration highlighted in *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's Archival Reference Knowledge*. Their work shows how archivists develop through mentorship and reflective conversations like this, where guidance extends beyond daily tasks to long-term career development. The opportunity to explore photograph preservation

connects directly to *Cynthia Miller's* emphasis on the diverse formats handled in congressional collections and the need for specialized skills for each. Learning more about reference services also aligns with Miller's point that archival work extends beyond the back room—it's about facilitating access and supporting research, even if that requires a different skill set.

Days Forty-One to Forty-Three – Fieldwork Journal (July 15 to July 17)

I came in as usual on July 15 and continued working on the same box, repeating the regular cycle of describing, arranging, and labeling. The process stayed consistent through Day Forty-Two, and I was able to finish up with the box by the end of Day Forty-Three on July 17. Today, July 17, was also my supervisor Andrew's birthday. One of my colleagues brought in donuts to celebrate, and we all took a moment to acknowledge his day before continuing with work. It was a nice way to balance routine work with a bit of celebration.

Day Forty-Four – Fieldwork Journal (July 18)

I came in as usual at 9:00 a.m. and resumed work. Since I had already finished processing Box 33 of 78, I initially thought I would be switching to the photograph collection, as my supervisor and I had previously discussed. I went to ask him if he wanted me to continue with the Bart Gordon collection or start working on the photograph collection. He told me to continue with the Bart Gordon collection for now, explaining that I would shift to the photograph collection during the last two weeks of my internship.

Following that, I went to the shelves, picked up Box 34 of 78, and started working on it. As I was getting familiar with the files, I noticed that a file was missing from the box. I wrote down the file number and all the details I could find in the inventory and handed it to my supervisor for recordkeeping. While processing, I came across a music note titled *"We Don't Want It In Tennessee (Nuclear Waste Song)"*. I showed it to my supervisor, and we had a light moment about it. I asked if he had heard the song before, and he said no—he had only seen it referenced in materials before. I returned to my desk, continued processing, and later closed out for the day after my usual break.

Reflective Note

Today was a reminder of the unpredictable discoveries that make archival work enjoyable, such as finding unique items like a protest song in a congressional collection. *Miller* talks about the diversity of formats in political archives, and today's discovery highlighted just how varied and culturally relevant these materials can be. The interaction with my supervisor also reinforced the importance of collegial knowledge sharing, something *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo* highlight as central to building archival experience. Even small, casual conversations add to my growing understanding of the collection and its historical context.

Day Forty-Five – Fieldwork Journal (July 21)

I resumed work at 10:00 a.m. today due to an unforeseen personal circumstance. As soon as I realized I would be late, I emailed my supervisor, and he was gracious and understanding about it. I arrived at the office and began working immediately. Later in the day, we had a pizza party, which gave everyone a chance to relax and connect. It was a good time to share and learn more about one another. I had the opportunity to talk about my home country and its culture, and my

colleagues also shared aspects of their own backgrounds. It was a warm, welcoming exchange that made the workplace feel even more inclusive. After the gathering, we all resumed work. I continued with my tasks and closed out for the day at my usual time.

Reflective Note

Today reflected the importance of workplace culture and community, a theme emphasized in *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's* work on *Archival Reference Knowledge*. They argue that building relationships and informal exchanges are a key part of learning in the archives. The cultural sharing that happened during the pizza party not only fostered connection but also enriched my understanding of the diverse perspectives present in the archival field. Moments like these highlight that archival work isn't just about collections—it's also about people.

Day Forty-Six – Fieldwork Journal (July 23)

I resumed work as usual today at 9:00 a.m. and continued processing the Bart Gordon collection. While working, it dawned on me that I've now used nearly four full legal-size folders since I began working on the collection. I'm currently using the fourth, and each box contains about 100 folders. It's a good feeling to see how much tangible progress has been made over time. During the day, I came across a map, which I placed in a separation folder and stored appropriately, as I've done with other oversized materials. I continued processing and closed out for the day after my usual tasks.

Reflective Note

Realizing how many boxes I've worked through reminded me of the scale of archival work—and the value of steady, consistent effort. As *Greene and Meissner* note in *More Product, Less Process*, the goal is not perfection at every step but meaningful progress that makes large collections more accessible. My familiarity with tools, formats, and processing techniques has grown stronger with each box. Placing the map in a separation folder also reflects the importance of format-specific care that *Miller* emphasizes in handling oversized materials responsibly.

Day Forty-Seven – Fieldwork Journal (July 24)

I came to work and started processing as usual. After a while, I had a light conversation with three of my colleagues. It turned out to be a really interesting chat—we talked about the job market, our thesis projects, and comprehensive exams (comps), noting how each of those experiences is unique to a student's academic journey. After the conversation, I returned to work and came across a map in the box I was processing. I followed the usual procedure and placed it in a separation folder, as I've consistently done for oversized documents. I then continued working until it was time to close out for the day.

Days Forty-Eight to Fifty – Fieldwork Journal (July 25, 28, and 30)

I resumed work as usual on July 25, 28, and 30. Each day followed a steady rhythm: I greeted my colleagues, had a few light conversations, and then settled into my tasks. During this stretch

of days, I completed filling Box 25 with well-described folders, arranging them according to congressional year for clarity and consistency. Once that was done, I picked up a new empty box to begin filling with processed folders and started sorting another box that still needed description and rehousing into archival folders. I took my regular breaks each day, resumed my tasks afterward, and closed out at the end of each shift.

Reflective Note

These days represent the core of archival processing—routine, repetition, and refinement. The process of describing, foldering, and arranging according to congressional years echoes *Miller's* emphasis on intellectual control and proper series arrangement, especially within congressional collections. The steady interaction with colleagues also continues to provide informal support and a collaborative atmosphere, reinforcing *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's* point that knowledge in archives is often shared conversationally. Even when the tasks feel familiar, each folder adds value to the collection's usability.

Days Fifty-One to Fifty-Four – Fieldwork Journal (July 31, August 1, 4, and 5)

I resumed work as usual on each of these days and continued with the familiar routine. I separated documents that needed to be housed apart—such as oversized items or fragile materials—and scanned or photocopied others that required reformatting. I also consulted with my colleagues occasionally when I had questions or needed to verify preservation steps. Each day followed a steady workflow: I processed, scanned, and organized folders while continuing to build on the structure already established in previous boxes. I took my regular 30-minute break and returned to complete my work before closing out for the day.

Reflective Note

These days reflect the rhythm and discipline of archival work, where the repetition of core tasks leads to mastery over time. As *Greene and Meissner* emphasize in *More Product, Less Process*, the aim is not to perfect every detail but to ensure consistent, useful access to materials. My ability to confidently identify what needs separation, scanning, or consultation with colleagues shows the kind of internalized knowledge *Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo* describe—learned through doing, asking, and repeating.

Day Fifty-Five – Fieldwork Journal (August 6)

I resumed work as usual and began processing. Early in the day, I asked one of my colleagues what *ArchivesSpace* is, as I had recently seen the skill listed on someone's résumé and was curious about how it's used. He explained it to the best of his knowledge and mentioned that it's typically used for specific projects, particularly those involving digital description and public-facing collection records. Later on, my supervisor informed me that I would soon be taking a break from processing the Bart Gordon papers and transitioning to working with photographs. This will give me an opportunity to gain experience with a different format, and I'm looking forward to learning how photograph processing differs from working with paper-based materials. After that conversation, I picked up another box of folders—making this my fifth legal-size box—and continued working. I took my usual 30-minute break and closed out for the day.

Day Fifty-Six – Fieldwork Journal August 7

I arrived at work and began with the fax sheets I had previously set aside for scanning. After scanning them, I returned each to its respective folder. My supervisor then introduced me to the

next phase of my work—processing photographs. He explained how to work with and label each envelope that would house the photographs, emphasizing proper handling techniques. The collection I was assigned to was titled *Center for Historic Preservation: Survey Photos of Winchester, Tennessee*. I was instructed to wear gloves while working with the photographs to prevent oils and dirt from my hands from transferring onto the images. Once I completed the labeling, my supervisor told me he would guide me on scanning procedures for the photographs. I began working on this small collection, taking care to follow the preservation protocols he had outlined. After my 30-minute break, I resumed until it was time to close out for the day.

Reflective Note

This transition from paper document processing to photographic material echoes one of the central arguments in Miller's *Managing Congressional Collections*—that a well-rounded archivist must develop proficiency with different material formats to adapt to the diverse nature of archival holdings. Photographs, unlike most paper records, present unique preservation challenges, particularly in terms of handling, labeling, and environmental sensitivity. The gloves requirement directly reflects Peary's (2000) emphasis on preventive conservation techniques, where minimal intervention and proper handling significantly extend the lifespan of archival materials. Working on this collection also ties into Greene and Meissner's "More Product, Less Process" (MPLP) philosophy, in that the photographs will still be accessible without over-processing, but the minimal steps taken—labeling envelopes, maintaining original order, and preparing for digitization—will protect the materials for long-term use. This day was a reminder that archival work is not monolithic; it requires both the consistency of established workflows and the flexibility to adjust techniques depending on the format.

Day Fifty- Seven to Fifty- Nine – August 8-12

I continued working on the photographs in the same manner as yesterday, labeling each envelope as instructed and ensuring they were properly organized. I had a brief meeting with my supervisor to let him know that my internship will be ending soon. He mentioned that on Thursday, he would like to have a more detailed meeting with me to discuss where I stopped on the Bart Gordon collection and to brainstorm ways to make the processing workflow better for the person who will take over after me.

Reflective Note:

This day reminded me of the importance of succession planning in archival work, a point emphasized in Miller's *Managing Congressional Collections*, where she notes that documenting workflows and decision-making processes ensures continuity for future processors. By preparing to communicate my progress and suggestions, I am contributing not only to the preservation of materials but also to the efficiency of the next person's work. The proactive approach in discussing process improvements aligns with best practices for archival management and collaborative stewardship.

Day Fifty-Eight to Sixty – August 13, 14, and 15

I began scanning the photographs and saving them under *Still Images* within the *Center for Historic Preservation* file, specifically under the *Winchester Survey Photos* collection. This became the steady rhythm of my last few days as an intern. During this period, I also had a mini-meeting with my supervisor to review where I had stopped on the Bart Gordon Collection. In the meeting, I suggested creating a processing tracker to mark which collections were ongoing,

completed, or not yet started. I felt this would make it easier for the next person to continue smoothly.

On my final week, I received an unexpected but exciting opportunity—the director emailed me to say he was pleased with my work and offered me a Graduate Assistantship to continue working at the Gore Center. I accepted with gratitude. I also took a picture with the colleagues who were in the office that day, as a memory of my time here. Looking back, I can say they have been wonderful people to work with, and the experience has been both rewarding and formative.

Reflective Note:

These last few days highlighted the importance of continuity and institutional knowledge in archival work. Miller (2008) underscores the need for documentation and planning in large congressional collections to prevent disruption when staff changes occur. My suggestion of a processing tracker aligns with Greene's (2006) argument that reappraisal and workflow transparency are essential to avoid future inefficiencies. At the same time, the transition into scanning and organizing photographs reflects the adaptability of archival practice, echoing Duff, Yakel, and Tibbo's (2013) emphasis on professional knowledge-sharing and learning new competencies on the job. Ending my internship with the offer of a GA position felt like a recognition not only of my contributions but also of the value of building strong collaborative relationships within an archive. This reflects Jimerson's view of archives as both memory institutions and communities of practice, where professional growth is nurtured through collective work.

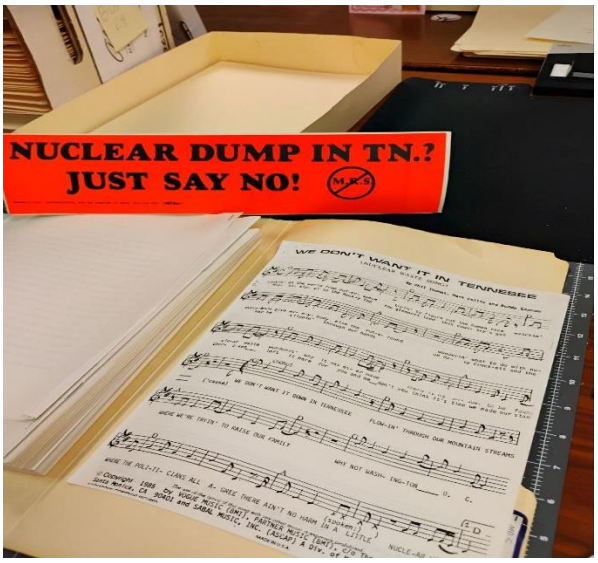
Appendix B: **Work Samples: Photos**



This photo shows the condition of a box from the Bart Gordon Collection before it was processed. I completed work on close to 15 similar boxes



Demonstrating my archival duties, I processed nearly 13 boxes during this period.



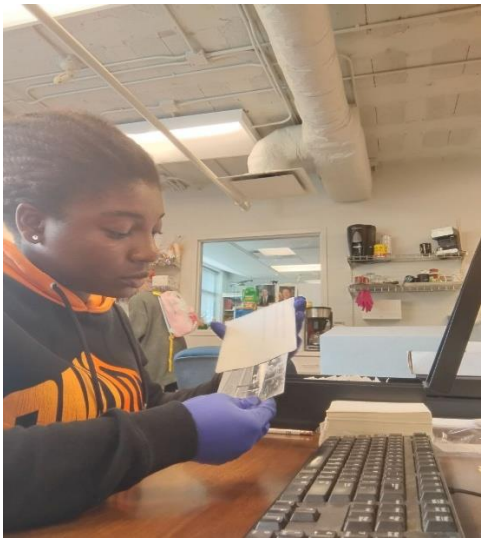
A music sheet found while working on the Bart Gordon Collection. It's an anti-nuclear dump protest song with the message, 'Just Say No!'



This photo shows the acid from the newspaper has made the paper stored next to it turn yellow.



I successfully digitized nearly 600 photographs from the Winchester Survey, making them accessible for future research.



My station for digitizing the photographs.



The final processed result after digitizing, labeling, and rehousing the photographs.

Appendix C: Original and Revised Description of Duties

Original Description of Duties (from Internship Contract):

"The summer intern will spend most of their time processing the Bart Gordon Congressional Papers. They will also occasionally perform other duties as required, such as staffing the reference desk, assisting in moving archival collections to our offsite storage facility, and processing the occasional small collection. Through this work, the intern will practice and acquire many archival skills, including but not necessarily limited to appraisal, arrangement and description, conservation, and reference."

Revised Description of Duties (Actual Work Completed):

My internship work focused primarily on processing and preservation. My duties included digitizing fragile newspapers and fax papers, refoldering and labeling documents, and separating oversized items such as maps and bound reports. I later expanded my skills by processing the Winchester Survey photographs, mastering proper handling, labeling, and TIFF digitization. Though I did not regularly staff the reference desk, I gained reference knowledge through colleagues and even suggested a new processing tracker to improve workflow. The emphasis on processing and digitization was unexpected but beneficial, allowing me to gain depth in areas I had only studied in theory. Overall, the experience turned out to be a very good one.

Appendix D: Advice for Future Interns

For anyone beginning an archival internship, my piece of advice is to focus on learning by doing. Archival skills are best developed through hands-on work—refoldering documents, scanning fragile media, describing files, or creating inventories. These tasks may feel repetitive at first, but over time they build confidence and expertise. Interns should not hesitate to

ask questions, but they should also trust themselves to make decisions and learn from them. Interns should also remember that processing does not require perfection. Large collections demand efficiency, and "good enough" description often serves researchers better than over-processing. The real goal is to make records accessible in a timely and usable way. Keeping this perspective prevents frustration and allows interns to see the larger purpose of their work.