

Emeritus Faculty and Alumni as Volunteers

When Good Things Can Go Bad!

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Emeritus Faculty: Benefits

- Knowledgeable about subject
 - May even know individual whose papers they process
 - Know the places in photographs or events named in documents
 - May help identify time period
- Dedicated to University
- Pride in work/conscientious

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Emeritus Faculty: Problems

- Health
 - Steps the archivist can take:
 - Monitor work closely
 - Require emergency contact information
 - Sometimes you just have to say “It’s time to go.”

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Emeritus Faculty: Problems (cont’d)

- Technological Experience or “I’m a computer expert!”
 - Steps the archivist can take:
 - Analyze/test computer skills
 - Create backup system for their work
 - Create folders for them so they do not have to navigate the system
 - Sometimes you may have to say, “how about a different type of volunteer work?”

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Emeritus Faculty: Problems (cont’d)

- Space Concerns or “This is my area!”
 - Steps the archivist can take:
 - Identify work space for volunteer that is for their project
 - Try to select a computer that is not used for other purposes (like scanning operations)
 - Explain the changes to the volunteer
 - Sometimes you may have to tell them, tactfully, they must be more accommodating

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Emeritus Faculty: Problems (cont’d)

- Absences and memory loss or “Oops, I forgot!”
 - Steps the archivist can take:
 - Write the procedures out and keep them in a folder for the volunteer
 - Ask them to write down their vacation plans
 - Monitor their work, and the waste basket!

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Alumni: Benefits

- Knowledge of places and events
- Dedication to alma mater
- Encouraged to give back
- Pride in helping out their institution

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Alumni: Problems

- Technology: Not much knowledge
- Steps the archivist can take:
 - Have volunteer write up finding aid and have a student type it
 - Give them non-computer based work to do

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Alumni: Problems (cont'd)

- Technology: Too much knowledge
- DVD Oral History
 - Good aspects
 - Innovative idea
 - Unique
 - Expectations/Problems
 - Equipment/software expenses
 - Interview with the president/acknowledgement as donor
 - Kick-off celebration

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Alumni: What to Remember

- What the archivist must remember:
 - Volunteers are doing something for the archives, not to further their own agenda
 - The project should match the archives' mission
 - Guidelines should be followed, especially if the work is being done outside the archives premises

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Alumni: Rules and Regulations

- What the alumni must be told:
 - The project must be related to archives' goals
 - Volunteering does not equal financial donation (it will not get you tickets to the football games!)
 - Volunteering does not lead to jobs or contracts elsewhere at the university
 - Set limits – financial, what extras are done
 - Volunteers must follow the same rules as everyone else
 - The work they do is for future researchers

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Conclusions

- Volunteers can be very beneficial
- Problems can be avoided by making expectations clear and discussing problems
- Pay attention to work and health problems
- Acknowledge the limitations on both sides
- Appreciate the volunteer, but protect the archives!

Thank you!

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