**Introduction**

Reaching the user and making archival materials available are important factors in the field of archives. Without utilization or demand, records and materials do not serve their purposes to society. Archives and archivists seek ways to introduce their resources and collections to prospective patrons and users. Availability and access to records become important issues for archives to consider, when discussing how users and patrons utilize the resources an archive offers. Archives usually present their materials in catalogs and finding aids to facilitate a search inquiry and aid a user in the allocation of materials. Although traditional methods of retrieval and presentation of materials exist in many archives, archives are finding that users with no archival knowledge or expertise are having trouble accessing records and understanding them. These are traditional methods that archives use to aid users that often requires the help of experts Because of these knowledge gaps between users and archivists, some archivists are also exploring how web 2.0 tools benefit archival collections. As a result many archives, are moving towards different ways of presenting and retrieving their collections using the Internet and web 2.0 tools.

While, many archives stick to traditional methods of retrieval and presentation with the aid of web tools and the Internet, others are not. It is important to discuss how the lack of web 2.0 tools in resources discovery and finding aids can affect a patron and user who is researching through the archive for materials. Finding the gaps between traditional finding aids and web 2.0 integrated finding aids will help archives create finding aids that are easier for a user to understand and utilize. I will be exploring Duke University Libraries: The David M. Rubinstein Library’s archive collections and how their presentation impacts a user and researcher coming to their website. I will also explore how this library presents their finding aids and how web 2.0 tools impacts a user’s expectations and perceptions of an archive collection.

**Duke University Libraries: The David M. Rubenstein Library** **Archive Collections**

As a user enters the David M. Rubenstein Library homepage at http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/, a user is confronted with a wealth of links and resources. The presentation of the homage is organized into sections with the most important information on display, while links leading to more information are available if needed. The homepage of this library features direct links to featured collections, guides, a library catalog and help. This is beneficial to a user because a user is not overwhelmed with lists of links and navigation menus. To much information can distract and disorient a user who is not familiar with library homepages, as they can vary from library to library. Dealing with an archive homepage could be a completely different experience for a user who is not familiar with archives.

The page also features a web embedded slideshow featuring library news, events, blog entries and links to their RSS Feed and Facebook. This is one example of the library using web 2.0 tools to gain attention from users outside of the library. Using Web 2.0 Tools is an important method in drawing users to archive collections from outside sources beyond the homepage and Google search. They connect the user to the archive and serve as reminders of what the archive offers . Once the user knows what types of resources and collections are available, the archive seems less intimidating.

Once an archive reaches users who are interested in exploring their materials, it is important that the archive presents their materials as accessible. One issue a user may face is structuring a search inquiry that would produce the best results for an archive. If a user does not know exactly the type of search they want to conduct or wants to explore a particular subject to find archive materials they can look at varies collection links and guides as a starting point on the Rubenstein Library homepage. The direct links and guides on the homepage are some tools a user can use to help guide them to a certain type of collection. These guides serve as resources and links to the discovery of materials and collections.

Another tool a user can utilize for searching through collections is the catalog. The catalog is easily accessible on the homepage, or through a link to the direct page of the catalog, that provides more options. The basic catalog gives options to search through only Rubinstein, only the university archive and the whole Duke Library catalog. When conducting a search, not only do collections and other archival material show up, but so do a wealthy amount of books and manuscripts. If a user wants to explore collections and other archival materials a user must limit their search on the results page for archival materials or select advance options on the catalog to limit their search inquiry to archival materials. There is no quick search tool available for direct access to all archival materials. It is not a big issue if users understand how to navigate and limit results.

Another available tool available is the finding aid search engine located adjacent to the library catalog homepage. This search specifically searches through finding aids and brings a user directly to specific collections. This is very useful to a user who is looking for a particular collection. One problem with this search is that not all of their archival materials have findings aids associated with it. This limits a researchers ability to discover what is available.

Looking at a finding aid itself, it is a traditional encoded finding aid, with information regarding the collection. There is brief information about the collection and a container list organized at the box level. The container list provides brief descriptions of the contents of the box. Little to no information about what is exactly in the box, or how much is available. A researcher must decide whether this box requires further investigation in person based on the box title assigned.

It is Important for a user to understand how finding aids function; other wise users will feel like there search inquiry needs are not meet. Some users expect archives to function like libraries and some users may expect records for every individual item. In archives collections are organized into logical groups because item level description for all materials is a tedious process. Most archives do not have the time and resources to provide this type of information to users. Although, some items in this collection are at the item level, most are not. Users unfamiliar with finding aid’s and how collections are organized don’t always understand that not every single item in the collection is processed in the same way that library materials are. This maybe an issue for some users who look at the Rubenstein Library finding aids. Users expect materials to be readily available in the same way that libraries do.

Another problem is that users expect navigation within the finding aid to simulate research on the web. For example, items of interest and information concerning it are usually connected with links and access points on the web. The finding aids at the Rubenstein Library provide information about containers, but little to no direct links to records, items or more information. Navigation within the finding aid is confined internally, with little external resources. However, the finding aids that are available are searchable on the web through external sources. A user could preform a search on the web and be directed to the finding aids in the same ways they search on the web utilizing web tools and search engines. The only problem with this is not all materials have finding aids, so a search on the web is not possible for all materials.

It is important to provide users with resources and information in the finding aid, to help users better understand how finding aids function. Since finding aids may be difficult to understand for some users, the Rubenstein Library does provide chat now options available 24/7 for users who have immediate questions. There are permanent help links at the top of every page, so a user has the option to request help from no matter what location within the website. If a user has a question while looking at a finding aid, help is available. This instant access to help resources by allowing users a chat option for asking question is an example of using web 2.0 tools.

Another alternative is to restructure the ways finding aids are presented. As mentioned above users, want instant access to materials and more information. Many archives already provide finding aids that available online, but there are also ways that archives could take this a step further. According to Anderson (2004), there are some ways archivists can incorporate web 2.0 into their finding aids. Anderson explains finding aids should use some of the tools available to users of amazon.com. There are previews, reviews, and links to related materials based on previous materials looked at. There would also be ratings and comments from both users and archivists. These type of features enable a user to participate and interact with archivists and provide feedback about collections, finding aids and more information not available on the website. This is useful for archives that do not have the time to provide detailed finding aids. It allows a user to contribute information significant to the background and context of the materials, and allows an archive the opportunity to improve their collections. It is also important to consider that archives may not have the sufficient resources and time to create finding aids embedded with web 2.0 tools. The web provides free resources and tools, but an archivist must be familiar with how to use them and understand how users interact with such technologies. Available time and knowledge of archivists are crucial to the how intuitions present their collections.

References

Anderson, I. G. (2004). Are you being served? Historians and the search for primary sources. *Archivaria*, *1*(58).