Katheryne B. Willock Library Research Award Application (2013)

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As part of a collaborative Participatory Assessment of the Upper Gila River Watershed (UGRW), which involved the Water Resources Research Center (WRRC) at the University of Arizona, the Cooperative Extension Service, the community-based Gila Watershed Partnership (GWP), and the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, a the idea of a shared regional history was envisioned as a way of collecting and summarizing the social and environmental historical trends contributing to current watershed conditions (primarily in Graham and Greenlee counties). Starting in February, 2013, a series of facilitated workshops have been held in Safford. A broad variety of stakeholders participated in writing down a shared history timeline, from prehistory to the present. The comments of individuals adding to the timeline were video-recorded, and the timeline itself was brought back to the WRRC.

As graduate research assistants, we set out to create an interactive online timeline and a written social and environmental history of the UGRW rooted in the comments of the residents. The breadth and depth of the historical research for this project continued to expand, and we found ourselves on an ever broadening journey of exploration of the library's remarkable holdings and services. We began with basic queries using the online card catalog, but soon used advanced searches to locate books, academic journals, manuscripts, pioneer accounts, historical government publications, photographs, and other images tied to the watershed. The stacks of the Science Library, Law Library, and Main Library became familiar haunts. Dissertations proved especially helpful, since their bibliographies offered a wealth of further reading. Scientific texts with photo-documentation over time, like *The Changing Mile*, noted the varying landscape along the Gila River, by capturing vegetation changes (including the arrival of tamarisk and other non-native species) and shifts in the fluvial geomorphology of the channel. These photos augmented the verbal commentary of farmers and ranchers whose lands had been impacted by severe floods. We discovered the remarkable assortment of primary sources available in the Special Collections Library. Electronic copies of some documents were found online via the UA Library website, and additional important texts not available in print or online were located and requested through Inter-Library Loan. We have even made regular use of the Scholars' Corner, electronic equipment lending, and the new graduate student locker availability.

Our work has supported the creation of a new written regional narrative as well as the interactive UGRW timeline (posted on the WRRC's website), which uses web-based software to create a media-rich experience for the viewer. The timeline's extensive notations are explained and supported with images, and often supplemented with video segments recorded at the original shared history public meeting. Images were collected from a variety of sources. The UA Institutional Repository (UAir) offered excellent digitized historic images from the watershed, such as those in the Homer Shantz Collection and the Preserving the History of Agriculture and Rural Life Collection. This research process also proved very instructive in learning about the rules and regulations regarding access to and use of web-based images. We learned a great deal about fair use and citation methods. In order to organize the voluminous references, we also utilized Mozilla's Zotero software program. We were tempted to use UA-supported RefWorks, but chose Zotero in part to facilitate sharing with colleagues. Our learning carried us – physically and metaphorically – throughout the UA Library collections, and has inspired continued learning through opportunities like the "advanced research methods" online seminar.