

# About the Virginia Tech April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives of the University Libraries (2007-2011)

## The Archival Collection

In the days and weeks following the events of April 16, 2007, Virginia Tech received thousands of cards and letters of support, posters, banners, art, poetry, wreaths, memory books, and other unique items from around the world. Campus visitors often left items at impromptu memorials too. These materials were displayed on the Virginia Tech campus for several months before being gathered together and inventoried under the direction of the University Archivist, Tamara Kennelly. The Archival Collection consists of over 500 cubic feet of these condolence artifacts and related materials available to researchers through the [Special Collections Department](#) located on the [first floor of the Newman Library](#). These artifacts are a representative portion of the items given to the university and comprise the "Virginia Tech April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives of the University Libraries." The finding aid, which details the artifacts in the Archival Collection, is available in Special Collections and at <http://ead.lib.virginia.edu/vivaead/published/vt/viblv00656.xml.frame>.

For assistance using the Archival Collection, please contact Special Collections at: [specref@vt.edu](mailto:specref@vt.edu).

## The Digital Collection

Beginning in the summer of 2007, the university decided to take pictures of many of the artifacts in the Archival Collection to share with the world along with photos of campus events. Representative artifacts were digitally photographed to provide online access to the Archives, initially in collaboration with Rutgers University Libraries, who generously provided their RUCore system. In 2009, the University Libraries purchased a content management system, CONTENTdm, to locally host this more extensive collection of digital files. In March 2012 the Condolence Archives were moved to [VTechWorks](#) (an open-source DSpace repository). The online archives of photos and other digital files (e.g., audio) was largely compiled in FY 2010. The Virginia Tech April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives of the University Libraries is publicly available and searchable at: <http://vtechworks.lib.vt.edu/handle/10919/11385/advanced-search>.

To request permission to use materials in the Condolence Archives, please consult [Copyright and Conditions of Use](#). Please note that the Virginia Tech April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives of the University Libraries does not contain any official records or documents related to the event.

## Additional Resources

The [Digital Library and Archives](#) maintains links to other sources of information about April 16, 2007.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the many people who contributed to the creation of the April 16, 2007, Condolence Archives.

Almost exactly one year from the date of the first 416 CONTENTdm Task Force meeting, July 29, 2009, we reached our goal of making the Libraries' digital condolence archives available in this web-accessible management system. As of Aug. 1, 2010 there were 7060 items available. We appreciate the assistance we received from all who made this digital archive possible, but we recognize that, as with any endeavor, errors may have inadvertently crept in, so please let me know about them and they will be corrected as quickly as possible.

Many people worked to make the University Libraries' digital and physical condolence archives possible. In the wake of the events of April 16, over 90,000 items were sent to Virginia Tech from all 50 states and around the world. Many of the materials were sent to University Unions and Student Activities' (UUSA's) Squires Student Center where a good number were displayed and where several thousands of items were distributed to students and the community. Materials were then moved to the Commonwealth Ballroom, and a crew of volunteers including

Ann Campbell, Monica Hunter, Allison Dunn, Sherri Albert, Steve Burrell, Laura Bedenbaugh, Melissa Dietrich, Spencer Joslin, Robert Dugas, and Martha Glass did the initial sort by type of item and by the source that sent the item. Steve Estrada organized the volunteers and helped log in data about the items. Greg Beecher, associate director for administrative services at UUSA, supervised the overall exhibition and organization of materials at Squires. He also brought his management skills and budgeting expertise to securing initial funding for the archives and to planning and launching the archives in collaboration with the library.

The initial library team included Dean Eileen Hitchingham, Gail McMillan, Lesley Moyo, and Tamara Kennelly. Colleagues at other institutions that had experienced tragedies offered their expertise and support including Ed Galvin (Syracuse University—1988 Lockerbie air disaster), Jennifer Paustenbaugh (Oklahoma State University—plane crash), and Carrie Phillips (Bluffton University—bus crash). Anthropologist Dr. Sylvia Grider, a professor at Texas A&M, who directed the Bonfire Memorial Project, reviewed our collection and offered her guidance and expertise during a visit to campus.

Dean Hitchingham invited Library of Congress (LC) Staff to help the University Libraries' initial planning committee for the archives. Dr. Deanna Marcum, Associate Librarian for Library Services at the Library of Congress, graciously sent a team to help with the planning process. The LC team, consisting of Cheryl Adams, Cassy Ammen, Alan Haley, and Michael Taft, not only provided guidance during their visit but fielded questions afterwards. Toby Raphael from the Smithsonian Institution gave advice on the conservation of objects. The LC group stressed the importance of documenting the various spontaneous shrines on campus and in town. Student Elisabeth Ivey scoured the campus for spontaneous shrines that should be documented. University photographers Michael Kiernan (photography manager), John McCormick, and Rick Griffiths took time from their busy schedules documenting graduation to take photographs of many memorial sites and spontaneous shrines on campus. Alex Grizzard, Vincent Kline, and Sam Walters also took photographs of various sites in town as well as in the tents on the Drill Field.

Carolyn Kletnieks, Kimberli Weeks, and Tamara Kennelly designed the original metadata structure using Dublin Core standards. Elements were defined to assist team workers in properly logging in materials. In late June 2007 materials were moved to a building in Virginia Tech's Corporate Research Center (CRC). Don Kenney loaned furniture from the University Libraries, and Christopher Peters, Arron Hudson, and Ronnie Smith moved equipment over to help set up shop. Computers were loaned from the Libraries' Systems Department, and crucial technical support came from Mike Linkous, Donald Anderson, Ron Mecham, and Milan Pucelj who set up the computers and the network that permitted team members to simultaneously log in metadata on the Excel spreadsheet. A team of workers—all present or former Virginia Tech students—was hired in late June to accession and process the collection. The initial team of workers consisted of Jill Harrison-Rexrode (team leader), Chris Gustin, Karen Mackey, Eric Norris, Seth Powers, and Jonathan Reaves Hawkes. When the original team leader returned to graduate school in the fall, Seth Powers became team leader. Additional team members were Melissa Croushorn, Steve Estrada, Frank Green, Ryan McCollum, and Amy Sorensen.

University photographer John McCormick reviewed our camera set-up on-site at the CRC; Michael Kiernan also offered guidance. Our initial set-up was primitive with inadequate "chicken lights." Steve Tatum came to the rescue with the loan of his professional lights. John Kline from John's Camera Corner generously loaned his copy stand. John Kline, who was assisted by Jimmie Elwell, and Paul Rossi photographed materials in their studios. Photographers who worked on site at the CRC were James Dunay, Alex Grizzard, Vincent Kline, Shawn Whiting, and Seth Powers. Steve Tatum also photographed materials.

The Office of Recovery & Support administrators and staff members provided invaluable guidance and assistance with the collection. Special thanks goes to Megan Armbuster for her unflinching helpfulness. Amy Shaffer Vilelle worked with Tamara Kennelly on the selection of materials for the permanent physical collection. Mailroom staff, Deb Hobbs, Betty Locke, and Carol Sinclair, were helpful in processing archival supply orders for the collections and seeing that materials were delivered to the CRC, which was a change from normal ordering procedures.

The University Libraries is grateful to Marianne Gaunt, University Librarian, Rutgers University Libraries System, for the generous offer of server space on Rutgers RUCore for the [initial digital offerings](#). Special thanks goes to

Rutgers staff Dr. Grace Agnew, Kalaivani Ananthan. Isaiah Beard, and Li Sun for help facilitating the transfer of images into RUCore and flexibility in working with the challenging materials.

Technical Services staff Althea Aschmann, Jana Doyle, Debbie McAlexander, Paul Hover, Philip Young, Mary Finn, and Christy Stanley verified and completed the metadata for the RUCore presentation. They created a standardized vocabulary with standardized names, places, and events, some of which they passed on to the Library of Congress. Digital Library and Archives (DLA) staff Gail McMillan (director), Kimberli Weeks, Carolyn Kletnieks, and Jane Wills worked to make images available through RUCore.

The task force that researched various content management systems included Leslie O'Brien (chair), Curtis Carr, Andrew Fabian, Gail McMillan, Aaron Purcell, Steve Tatum, and Kimberli Weeks. Gary Worley (director) and Donald Inman of the University's Digital Imaging unit also served on the task force. Andrew Fabian installed the first Content DM server.

The Content DM Task Force was charged with effecting the library's transition to the Content DM system, in particular for the 4/16 Condolence materials. The task force consisted of Gail McMillan, (project manager), Althea Aschmann, Marc Brodsky, Kira Dietz, Curtis Carr, Jana Doyle, Mary Finn, Tamara Kennelly, Beth Lancaster, Anne Lawrence, Paul Mather, Jennifer Mitchell, Leslie O'Brien, Jeremiah Puryear, Aaron Purcell, Steven Tatum, Kimberli Weeks, and Jane Wills.

DLA staff members, including Gail McMillan (director), Kimberli Weeks (technical director), Anne Lawrence, Jane Wills, and students Thomas Rossmeissl, Daniel E. Culpepper, Kaavya Giridhar, Shvetha Soundararajan, and Collin Brittle and System's staff, Paul Mather, worked valiantly, planning and trouble-shooting the system, and preparing and loading images and data on Content DM. Special thanks to Jana Doyle, Jennifer Vipperman Mitchell, and Steven Tatum for their diligent work on quality control and image and data preparation and loading. Kudos to Kimberli Weeks for her perseverance in keeping the project on-track and moving forward.

The physical collection was moved back to the Special Collections Department of the University Libraries in September 2008 by a team of workers from Physical Plant including Tim Mills (lead worker), Chris Weitzel, Scott Rowland, and Timmy Atkins. Special Collections staff members Aaron Purcell (director), Marc Brodsky, Kira Dietz, John Jackson, Jennifer Vipperman Mitchell, and Sherrie Bowser all helped with the collection in various ways. Emily Cook was invaluable in her work with the card collection. Student Katherine W. Hunter worked diligently logging in the additional materials received.

We are grateful to all who have made both the digital and the physical collections possible.  
Gail McMillan, Director, Digital Library and Archives. Dec. 14, 2010

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