

# Documentation Strategy and WPDHAC



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# Defining Documentation Strategy



“...archivists have no choice than to conduct their appraisal according to the emphasis and weight placed on events of the time by contemporaries.”

–Hans Booms, ‘Überlieferungsbildung: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity,’ 1992

“A documentation strategy is a plan formulated to assure the documentation of an ongoing issue, activity, or geographic area [...] ordinarily designed, promoted, and in part implemented by an ongoing mechanism involving records creators, administrators (including archivists), and users.”

–Helen Willa Samuels, ‘Who Controls the Past,’ 1986

# Hans Booms



- ❧ Arose from rapid changes in societal structure and a proliferation of records
- ❧ Traditional archival practices vs. personal intuition
- ❧ Build contextual knowledge
- ❧ Example: Subject experts (disability rights advocates)
- ❧ Suggestion: Committee with members of target community

# Helen Willa Samuels



- ☞ Response to an abundance of records
- ☞ Functional analysis approach
- ☞ “...designed, promoted, and in part implemented...”
- ☞ Example: Disability in classrooms; HHC accessibility efforts
- ☞ Suggestion: Archival liaisons; just hit the target

# Doris J. Malkmus



- ❧ Need for narrow topic that everyone agrees on; best if limited geographically
- ❧ Need for strong collaboration
- ❧ Example: Overlap in HHC and WPDHAC missions and collecting scope
- ❧ Suggestion: Pick a (collecting) lane and stay in it

# Jennifer A. Marshall



- ❧ Documentation can influence record creation
- ❧ Ongoing drain on institutional resources; concerns about sustainability
- ❧ Example: WPDHAC oral history initiative; twice-yearly events
- ❧ Suggestions: Assess potential of non-archival funding avenues through community; limit strategy application



# Takeaways



- ❧ Build knowledge alongside community partners
- ❧ Use projects to make disability history visible and to gradually increase access
- ❧ Know and clearly define your limits; lend support if you can
- ❧ Something is better than nothing

# Resources



Booms, Hans. "Überlieferungsbildung: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity." *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 25-33.

Malkmus, Doris. "Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success?" *The American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 384-409.

Marshall, Jennifer A. "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-First Century?: Rethinking Institutional Priorities and Professional Limitations." *Archival Issues* 23, no. 1 (1998):59-74.

Samuels, Helen Willa. "Who Controls the Past." *American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986): 109-124.