

The Digital Reference Desk: Creating a Resource Guide at the Center for Southwest Research

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The Problem: An Embarrassment of Riches

The Center for Southwest Research and Special Collections at the University of New Mexico makes a wide variety of materials available to patrons and researchers through several resources. Materials include archival collections with different identifiers, book and microfilm materials, and pictorial collections, among others. The resources are extensive and complex. A guide to CSWR resources will help to flatten the learning curve for researchers as well as new CSWR and library staff.

What the guide does

- Describe how different CSWR resources work, what materials each resource will find, and what materials they will not find
 - Explain how CSWR collections are organized, including collection identifiers and finding aids, with tutorials for their use
- Support patron education with an introduction to archival research, how archives differ from libraries, and general information on using archives in research
 - How archival collections are processed and described
 - How archival collections differ from library collections
 - Archival etiquette, including a packing list for visits to archives

What the guide does not do

- Describe specific collections or sets of collections
- Offer starting points for researchers interested in particular topics or periods of history

CSWR Resources At A Glance

New Mexico Archives Online (NMAO)		New Mexico Digital Collections (NMDC)		UNM Digital Repository	
UNM University Libraries catalog					
CSWR Vertical Files					
<p>New Mexico Archives Online (NMAO)</p> <p>New Mexico Archives Online (NMAO) serves as an access point for 19 different archival collections across the state of New Mexico, including the CSWR's collections housed in Zimmerman Library at the University of New Mexico's main campus in Albuquerque.</p> <p>NMAO users can search for items in one or more repositories by keyword, name, date, kind of object, and in other ways. In some cases, finding guide information will contain links to other archival collections or to digitized content available on New Mexico Digital Collections (NMDC). The NMAO search function only searches the finding aids for archival materials - books in the CSWR collection will not show up in searches through NMAO.</p> <p>Note: since NMAO searches several repositories across the state, users should be aware of which repository houses materials they find and would like to consult. Note also that different repositories and institutions have different hours of operation and procedures for using materials.</p>					
NOTE: the chart below assumes that the user has filtered NMAO results to only include collections held by CSWR.					
What does it find?	Archival collections at the CSWR.				
What information does it provide?	Finding aids on NMAO provide information like the repository where the collection is held (the CSWR, in this case), the unique identifier for the collection (for example MSS-123-BC), and other information about the collection including content, dates of the materials, languages in which the materials are written, restrictions to access, and how the collection is organized.				
What does NMAO not find?	Searches on NMAO will not find books, DVDs, periodicals, and other materials that are in the Zimmerman Library collection. NMAO will also not find books, DVDs, etc. that are part of the CSWR collections, but not assigned a manuscript identifier (MSS, PICT, UNMA, SWA, etc. - click here for more information on these acronyms.)				
How to consult items found through this resource?	CSWR collections are available to be consulted in the Anderson Reading Room in the West wing of Zimmerman Library. Click here for hours and more information. In some cases parts of archival collections held at CSWR have been digitized and made available on New Mexico Digital Collections (NMDC). For more information, click on the NMDC tab above.				

Above: A screenshot of the guide's homepage listing quick facts about CSWR resources. In this case, at-a-glance information on using the New Mexico Archives Online. This content is immediately visible on the home page of the resources guide.

MSS: manuscript collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These collections might consist primarily of documents, correspondence, and other not specifically photographic material. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: Thomas B. Catron Papers (MSS-29-BC) How to find these collections: searching New Mexico Archives Online (this includes the finding aids), or the UNM library catalog
PICT: pictorial collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These collections consist specifically of photographic materials, often including prints or contact sheets as well as original negatives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: Thomas Benton Catron Photograph Collection (PICT-000-029) How to find them: searching New Mexico Archives Online (this includes the finding aids), or the UNM library catalog
UNMA: UNM Archives collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These collections consist of materials that relate specifically to the history of the University of New Mexico, including administrative documents, ephemera related to UNM sports teams, facilities planning documents, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: Albuquerque Booksellers Coalition Records (UNMA-023) How to find them: searching New Mexico Archives Online (this includes the finding aids), or the UNM library catalog
SWA: Southwest Archivists collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Architectural plans and drawings housed in the CSWR's John Gaw Meem Architectural Archives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: Arthur Dekker Drawings Collection (SWA-Dekker-Drawings) How to find them: searching New Mexico Archives Online (this includes the finding aids), or the UNM library catalog
MU: Music Collections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CSWR does not house very many collections with this identifier. These collections consist of songs, music, and other audio material. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Example: James S. Griffith New Mexico Popular Music Collection (MU-19) How to find them: searching New Mexico Archives Online (this includes the finding aids), or the UNM Library catalog
WPA: WPA Files Collection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These files consist of copies of the Fray Angelico Chavez History Library's WPA New Mexico Collection. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The full finding aid (AC 228 at the Fray Angelico Chavez History Library) How to find these materials: use the finding aid linked above

Above: A chart identifying the different collections identifiers in use at the CSWR, as well as how to find these materials. Screenshot from the completed research guide.

Challenges

- Accurately describing the most frequently used resources at CSWR without overwhelming researchers
- Reaching a variety of different audiences with varying degrees of experience with archives
- Structuring content within the confines of Springer LibGuide format possibilities

Patron_*(Required)

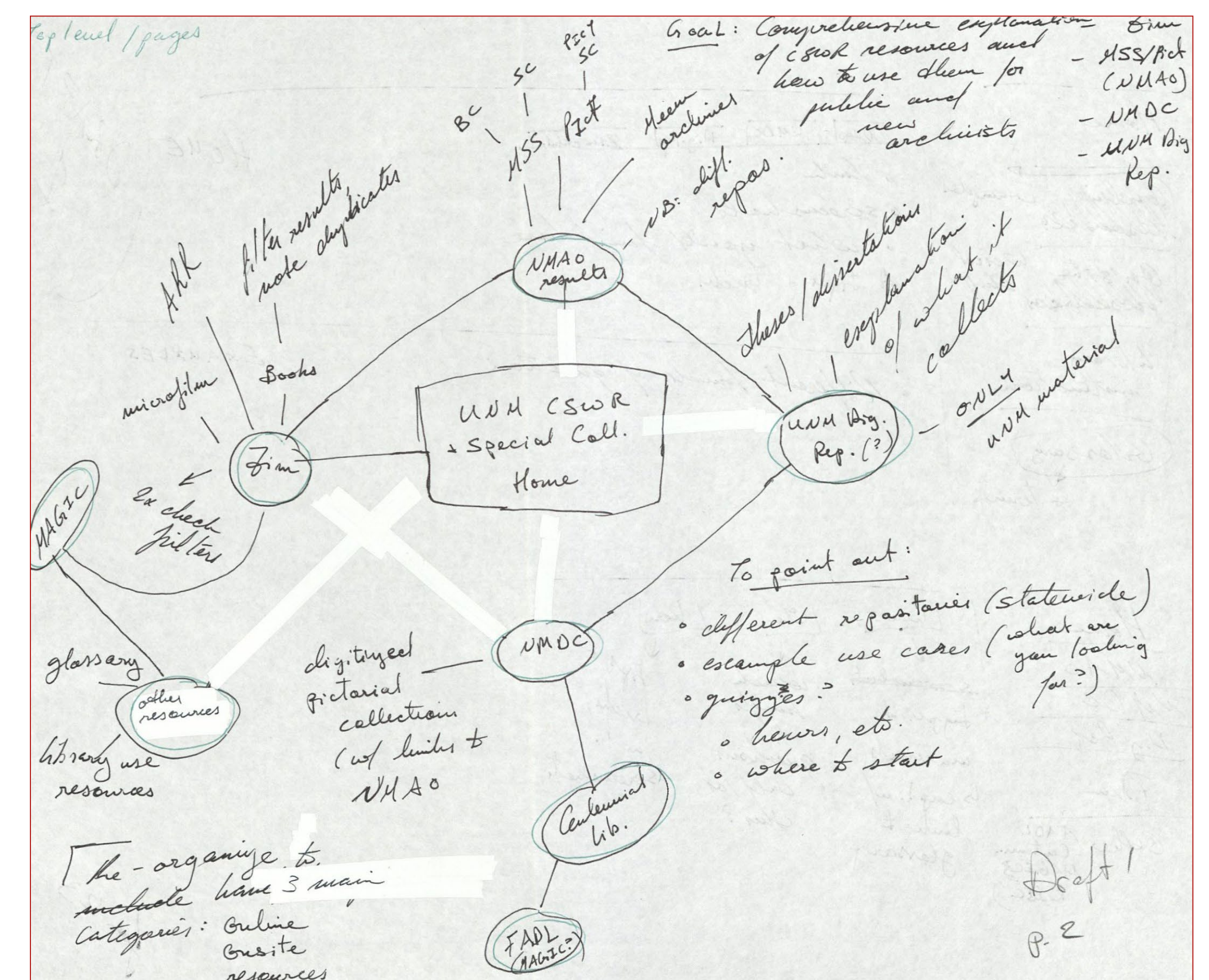
- Undergrad Student
- Graduate Student
- Faculty Staff
- NM Community Researcher
- Non-NM Researcher
- Retiree
- Alum
- Unknown

Above: A screenshot of the menu in RefAnalytics used to track transactions with CSWR patrons. The wide variety of patrons served by the CSWR presented challenges to structuring an effective resource guide.

Right: The guide's top-level page menu. At-a-glance information about each resource is available from the home page. More in depth information is available with no more than two clicks from the main menu. Information on archives in general is available at the top of the menu, while CSWR-specific tutorials and explanations are consolidated at the bottom.

Approach and Method

- Minimize navigation distance from the guide's homepage to at-a-glance content
- Modular organization to allow for expansion of the guide as new resources become available
- Present the same information in multiple ways: charts/tables, bullet points, paragraph-length explanations
- Use screenshots of CSWR resources and materials from CSWR collections as examples
- Use consistent formatting on each page, including numbered tabs for in-depth resource tutorials
- Internal links to other relevant pages within the guide
- Include information on how archives are organized, including collections identifiers, finding aids, etc.
- Include direct links to contact CSWR staff



Above: A hand-drawn draft schematic of CSWR resources. The first step in creating the guide involved clarifying the relationships among resources. This step informed how the guide was organized later.

Ongoing Efforts

- Include other library resources not directly housed by the CSWR
- Ensure that guide content adheres to best practices for accessibility, including the use of screen readers and other assistive technology
- Include a dynamic list of CSWR materials and collections with irregular or particular organization (and tips on their use)
- Make efforts to make the guide as mobile-friendly as possible

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Scan to access the completed guide!

