

Introduction

As noted by Todd Welch in his seminal 1999 work, “Green” Archivism: The Archival Response to Environmental Research,” archivists have made progress collecting and promoting material documenting the new fields that emerged in the 1960s, such as Ethnic and Women’s Studies. However, the same enthusiasm has not been displayed towards archival material related to Environmental Studies, which developed shortly after the “new” Social History. Although Welch observed an upward trend in usage of environmental research, there remains a dearth of scholarship on this collecting focus in archives.

This poster seeks to reveal the current state of environmental research in academic special collections and archives, with an emphasis on materials related broadly to environmental activism, including environmental justice and environmental racism. The evolution of environmental research collections and the implications for archival repositories and their patrons will be addressed.

Methodology

The use and availability of archival environmental activism collections was assessed by a two-fold process. The use of such collections was evaluated through a citation analysis of research articles published in *Environmental History*, the premier scholarly journal in the field of environmental history. A total of 36 articles related to environmental activism in North America published between 1999-2009 were selected.

The citation analysis reviewed the prevalence of archival collections sourced and examined citations by repository type and material type in order to gain insight into the kinds of items used by researchers. The citation study method was employed, which counted a source every time it was cited, as opposed to a reference study, which only counts a source the first time it is cited. This method was deemed more appropriate, as the works addressed normally contained an extensive number of citations within each footnote, of which there were an average of 57 per article.

Additionally, academic archives with significant collections related to environmental activism were surveyed. These selected repositories are arranged by region and include details such as subject areas covered. Though not extensive, this overview seeks to highlight the availability of relevant materials for scholars.

Citation Analysis Study

	Number of repositories by type
Academic Special Collections & Archives	16
Public Libraries	3
Historical Societies/Museums	9
National Archives	5
State/Local Archives	6
Institutional Archives	4
Foreign Archives	4
Private Collections	1
Repositories cited	48

Percentage of repositories cited by type



	Number of materials by type
Documents	391
Photographs	11
Images	5
Maps	11
Archival materials referenced	418

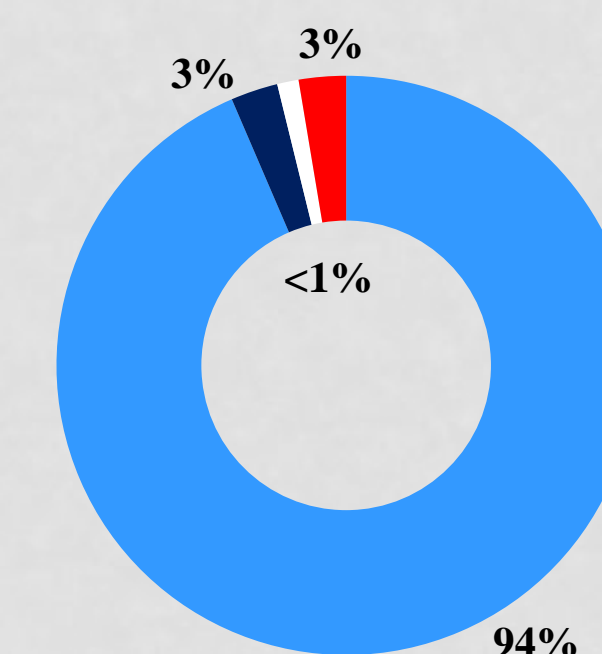
Percentage of archival materials cited by type



Maps include political, economic/resource, and thematic maps

Documents include manuscripts, correspondence, official reports, city plans, and transcribed interviews

Images include all visual material other than photographs, such as cartoons, advertisements, and graphic covers of printed works



Academic Archives

Below are selected academic Special Collections and Archives with significant holdings related to environmental activism

NORTHEAST

University at Buffalo, State University of New York (SUNY): The University Archives maintains numerous collections on environmental issues in Western New York, with a special emphasis on material related to the environmental disaster, Love Canal.

University at Albany, SUNY: The Special Collections and Archives houses several organizational records of advocacy groups and faculty papers regarding water resources and the environmental impact of proposed construction projects in the Albany region.

College of Staten Island, City University of New York (CUNY): Staten Island Environmental History is a major collecting focus of the Archives & Special Collections. The work of individuals and advocacy groups are documented, with an emphasis on the closure of the Fresh Kills Landfill and successful efforts to preserve Staten Island’s park system from infrastructure projects.

University of Pittsburgh: The Archives Service Center has extensive holdings of personal and organizational papers on urban environmental history and activism concerning industrial pollution and other environmental issues in Western Pennsylvania.

MIDWEST

University of Michigan: The Bentley Historical Library has extensive material documenting the work of citizens, officials, and activist groups to prevent the destruction of Michigan’s forests by logging companies and the reduction of fish and game populations by commercial interests.

Indiana University Northwest: The Calumet Regional Archives includes collections of activists, politicians, and advocacy groups that document efforts regarding industrial pollution, the steel industry, and environmental protection of the Calumet Region and surrounding Great Lakes.

SOUTH

University of Florida: The Special and Area Studies Collections maintains the papers of several environmental activists involved with preserving the Everglades and Florida’s water resources.

University of Houston: The Special Collections maintains extensive material related to the work of local environmental advocates whose work focuses on watershed management, wilderness recreation, green space protection, and urban planning. These four themes of environmental activism have culminated in a current exhibit, “Houston’s Environmental Past.”

WEST

University of California, Los Angeles: In addition to numerous manuscript collections, the Center for Oral History Research captured decades of local environmental activism. Issues such as conservation, restoration, environmental justice, and toxic waste disposal were discussed.

University of California, Berkeley: The Bancroft Library embarked on several initiatives to support its strong environmental activism holdings, including the Grassroots Environmental Oral History Project and the on-going Environmental Papers Processing Project.

San Diego State University: The Special Collections & University Archives maintains numerous collections related to environmental protection and wilderness conservation, including the Pandora Rose Environmental Activism Collection.

University of Wyoming: The American Heritage Center holds a number nationally significant environmental collections related to conservation and wildlife advocacy.

Conclusion

The citation analysis exposed insightful data that quantified the frequency and types of archival sources used for scholarship on environmental activism. Of the 36 articles reviewed, nearly half (17) used at least one primary source from an archival repository. There were a total of 2,052 footnotes listed in all of the articles, and 20% (418) of those included references to archival material, with an average of three separate repositories cited. This data indicates that scholars regularly researched archival collections for material related to environmental activism. Furthermore, the majority of those archives are housed in academic libraries, which accounted for one-third of the repositories cited. It was also found that the articles which used the most archival sources focused on a single-subject or an historical event for which a relevant archival collection was available.

While surveying academic archives for environmental activism collections, it was observed that many archival holdings on the topic were not clearly identified as such, and were often found in related collections, such as those on conversation or environmental history. With few exceptions, such material was excluded from artificial collections or subject listings for social activism. Therefore, although this study illustrates that significant collections on environmental activism exists, it also confirms Welch’s argument that the records of environmentalists, both individual activists and grassroots advocacy groups, do not have the same standing as those associated with other social movements.

There are several future studies that would shed additional light on the use and availability of environmental activism collections in academic archives. It would be helpful to perform a citation analysis using the reference study method, and to account for the number and types of unique collections cited in order to further quantify the use of archival material. The kinds of material cited could also be broken down in order to identify, for example, the category of maps or variety of documents used. It may also be advantageous to develop new terminology to account for digitized archival material as well as primary sources found in printed works. The results of such studies would help archivists better understand their users’ research needs and may encourage collecting related to environmental history and specifically the role of environmental activists.