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Clemson’s Past Digitized: The Future of Archival Access

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THE PROJECT

This project created and applied a controlled vocabulary of local subject headings to items in the Clemson University Historical Images Online. Because of their visual nature and importance to Clemson history, the images needed enhanced description to provide additional access points.

Decisions were user-informed based on researcher questions fielded by Clemson University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives.

Digital collections at Clemson Libraries expand archival access into the digital realm. In the future, online collections may become the first entry point into the archives. With this comes challenges for library employees who describe items to improve access and discovery—now and into the future.

CHALLENGES

1. Library of Congress Authorities not sufficient for local researcher needs - few local names, events, and topics.
2. Existing local subjects not controlled, leading to inconsistencies.
3. Unwieldy local subject faceted list could overwhelm researchers.
4. Minimal guidelines on how to create, format, and apply local subjects.

Who or what is important enough to receive a local subject? How broad or narrow should they be? When do you apply narrow local subject vs. broad LC Authorities?

EXAMPLES

Personal Names

**TITLE**
Mess Hall staff preparing food

**COLLECTIONS**
Clemson University Historical Images

**DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION**
Interior shot of Mess Hall staff members cutting and preparing meat in the kitchen.

**LOCATIONS**
Barracks No. 1 (Historical), Pickens County, South Carolina (54.4, 79.8, 80.9)

**TOPICS**
College buildings

[Image of Mess Hall staff]

Questions of Chronology

**TITLE**
Main Building

**COLLECTIONS**
Clemson University Historical Images

**DATES**
Date Created: 1923

**DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION**
On back: [Tillman Hall] [Main Building] (1923)

**LOCATIONS**
Tillman Hall, Pickens County, South Carolina (54.6, 80.3)

**TOPICS**
College buildings
Main Building (Clemson, S.C.)

[Image of Tillman Hall]

Building Confusion

**TITLE**
Aerial view of Johnstone Hall

**COLLECTIONS**
Clemson University Historical Images

**DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION**
Language: English

**LOCATIONS**
Johnstone Hall, Pickens County, South Carolina (54.6, 80.3)

**TOPICS**
College buildings

[Image of Johnstone Hall]

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