

Providence College Archives: A Space for Student Voices Past and Present

Michelle Chiles, Head of Archives and Special Collections

Students on college campuses have long participated in activism. Whether advocating for their own rights in the campus environment or speaking out on local, national, or global issues students have long fought for their voices to be heard. The history of student protests, sit-ins, and today's social media campaigns is often told only through the lens of journalists and campus administration. While multiple perspectives are key to understanding the whole, it is often the students at the center of these events whose voices are left out of the historic narrative.

Almost every college or university has an archive, a place where the history and activities of the campus and its people are documented, preserved, and made accessible. In recent years, there has been a shift in the actions of college and university archivists who are actively engaging with students as the creators of their own history. Initiatives like Project STAND (Student Activism Now Documented) <https://standarchives.com/> center the student voice when collecting and documenting movements on campus. Most of the collections and projects from participating institutions focus on the activism of students from marginalized and underrepresented groups. This does not discount or lessen the impact of traditional voices in the archives but helps create a more wholistic view of the systems in which we work, learn, and live.

The Providence College Archives and Special Collections is no different than many of our peer institutions. Our mission is to document, collect, and share the college's history. This includes all events, issues, and perspectives as an honest reflection of where we've been, what we do, and as a tool for understanding where we need to grow and change. We recognize that there are absences and silences in the archives, which is why we have made it a priority to reach out to departments and organizations that are actively engaged in work to make Providence College a more inclusive and equitable community.

The PC Archives welcomes all forms of collaboration, including donations to the collections, and using archives in the classroom as a way to actively engage in community history. Please contact Michelle Chiles, Head of Archives and Special Collections for more information! Email: pcarchives@providence.edu or Phone: 401-865-2578.