Snakes in the Library: “Taking up Serpents” in a DVD Collection

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The Library at the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga is fortunate to hold a unique archival collection: The Hood-Williamson Archives on the Serpent Handlers of Southern Appalachia. This archive currently consists of 184 DVDs of 400+ hours documenting the contemporary (1975-2004) serpent handlers of Southern Appalachia, with extensive footage of entire services of the major Jesus Name serpent handling churches of Appalachia over many years. The DVD archive, which was filmed by two professors of psychology, one from UTC, also includes personal narratives and descriptions of various personal experiences such as witnessing fatal bites, being divinely healed, ingesting strychnine, and experiencing the anointing. Glossolalia (speaking in tongues) is also shown.

We are now in the process of making these DVDs available to researchers and scholars through our new catalog, OCLC’s Worldshare Management Services (WMS) and OCLC’s CONTENTdm Digital Collection Management Software.

The archive consists of several groupings to aid interested scholars and researchers. They can be identified as follows: Old Rock Mountain Holiness Church, Sand Mt., Alabama (26 DVDs); The Church of God in Jesus Christ’s Name, Del-Rio, Tennessee (8 DVDs); The Church of the Lord Jesus, Jolo, West Virginia (24 DVDs); The Church of the Lord Jesus Christ, Kingston, Georgia (49 DVDs); The Full Gospel Tabernacle in Jesus Name, Middlesboro, Kentucky (10 DVDs); The Church of True Believers in Jesus Name, Calhoun, Georgia (7 DVDs); Interviews with handlers, focusing upon the experience of handling and of near-death experiences from serpent-bites (34 DVDs); Fatal bites, funeral, and wake (5 DVDs); Special interests DVDs, including TV clips and documentaries, arbor meetings and handling in private homes (12 DVDs); Isolated footage of additional churches (9 DVDs).

An extensive finding aid created in CONTENTdm can be found at http://findingaids.library.utc.edu/Hood.html

For more information please refer to:


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