INTRODUCTION
In 2012, Brock University unveiled a new strategic plan that called for more innovation, graduate research and transdisciplinary work. A transdisciplinary program calls for faculty and grad students from varied departments to collaborate on original, scholarly interests.
Recognizing that the rates of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) have been climbing and that the subject of ASD can encompass a wide range of study, the Special Collections and Archives department of the Library investigated the potential of making Autism Spectrum Disorder a new collection focus.

OBJECTIVES
• Survey other institutions to see who may be collecting ASD records
• Look internally at Brock to see who is researching ASD and determine the practicability of preserving such a collection here
• Develop a focused collection policy to guide the acquisition of the records
• Make contact with informed individuals and solicit donations
• Become known as the place for collecting the history of ASD

WHO IS COLLECTING ASD RECORDS
A survey of archival and library catalogues and portals in North America shows that there are no repositories specifically targeting ASD as a collection focus. There are a growing number of research centres dedicated to finding the causes and treating those with ASD. These organizations collect and provide access to the most current articles and share data with other researchers. But there does not appear to be an institution preserving the records of individuals and groups who live with or work within the subject of autism.

WHAT IS HAPPENING AT BROCK
• There are currently eleven faculty members who list ASD as one of their primary research interests. These individuals are found in four different departments and faculties: Child and Youth Studies, Centre for Applied Disability Studies, Applied Health Studies – Kinesiology, and Education.
• Further, there are other faculty members whose main research touches upon topics relating to ASD including children with language and learning disabilities, bullying, self-regulation, companion animals, parenting, child development, and social justice for people with intellectual disabilities.
• There has been more than 60 theses about or relating to autism by Brock graduate students since 1998.
• Move towards transdisciplinary research at Brock. Autism as an academic focus can share many disciplines including:
  - Chemistry
  - Environment
  - Social Justice
  - Medicine
  - Politics
  - Education
  - Literature
  - Language Development
  - Psychology
  - Business
  - Genetics
  - Popular Culture
  - Sociology
  - Music
  - Technology

WHAT TO COLLECT
Archival collections consist of records that are created or amassed organically over a period of time. These materials become the primary documentation of a person or organization. We anticipate collecting a variety of items including:

- Analog: letters, diaries, notebooks, artwork, reports, photography, film, etc.
- Born Digital: web sites, blogs, forums, databases, digital images and video

We developed a collection policy with five areas of focus:
1. Private Records - primary documents that chronicle those individuals who experience ASD in their daily lives.
2. Businesses and Organizations - records of larger organizations whose mandate or purpose is principally to research, advocate for, or support people with ASD.
3. ASD in Popular Culture - materials connected with artistic works such as television, films, plays, novels, etc. where ASD is a prominent theme.
4. Scientific Research - records that document the study, experimentation and findings of scientific research involving ASD.
5. Historic and Rare Secondary Source Materials - published works about or including ASD that are considered seminal, unique or valuable.

RESULTS - THE COLLECTION BEGINS QUICK AND BIG

Temple Grandin: The collection’s first donor was noted researcher, author and autism activist Temple Grandin. Dr. Grandin donated some of her early writings on autism and her main profession - the development of humane equipment and treatment of livestock in the meat industry. Dr. Grandin noted that many of these writings would be difficult to find online today.

MORE DONATIONS
More records and books have been donated following the Grandin donation including:
• Bettelheim, Tinbergen and Hall fonds - an archive of correspondence between two ASD researchers and the editor of Psychology Today through the 1970s.
• Cynthia Kim fonds - a preserved blog of a woman who was diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome at age 42. Her postings revolve about living with Asperger’s, raising a family, and being a woman.
• Mandy Klein fonds - a blog maintained by a mother of a family where every member is on the autism spectrum.
• Andrew Bloomfield Collection - a compilation of books written by an independent, non-verbal adult with autism.
• The Autism Acceptance Project (TAAP) fonds - a Canadian organization that promotes acceptance and the empowering of people with autism and their caregivers.
• Etsie Klar fonds - the blog “The Joy of Autism” written by a parent of a child with ASD.
• Bloomfield / Waterloo-Wellington Autism Services Resource Collection - a collection of older books and A/V materials about ASD.

CONCLUSIONS
• There is a genuine interest in this collecting effort. Pulitzer Prize winning music critic, Timothy Page who was diagnosed with Asperger’s Syndrome commented, “I approve wholeheartedly of what you are doing.” As well, we have received guidance and attention from Autism Ontario, the Toronto Star and others in the ASD community.
• Of the potential donors that we have contacted, we hear back from about 10%. Some have donated their materials eagerly. Most others are not ready to donate their materials presently but will consider the transferring their records to Brock in the future.
• Donors are discovering our collection by indirect means such as Twitter, Facebook and listservs. Word of mouth has been positive and growing.
• There is a need to collect such non-traditional records which has typically been the realm of history, literature, business and government.

CONTACT
David Sharron, Head of Special Collections and Archives, James A. Gibson Library, dsharron@brocku.ca or x3364.