

Guide to the Matthew O'Brien Papers

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**University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections
and Archives.**

Box 457010

4505 S. Maryland Parkway

Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-7010

special.collections@unlv.edu

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Summary Information

Repository:	University of Nevada, Las Vegas. University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives.
Creator:	O'Brien, Matt (Matthew)
Title:	Matthew O'Brien Papers
ID:	MS-00849
Date [inclusive]:	2001-2011
Physical Description:	2.96 Cubic Feet (5 boxes, 1 flat folder)
Physical Description:	6.27 Linear Feet
Physical Description:	560 Digital Files (0.710 GB) JPG, MP4, PDF/A
Language of the Material:	English
Abstract:	The collection is comprised of records from approximately 2001 to 2011 that document writer Matthew O'Brien's work for two of his Las Vegas, Nevada based non-fiction novels: <i>Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas</i> and <i>My Week at the Blue Angel: and Other Stories From the Storm Drains, Strip Clubs, and Trailer Parks of Las Vegas</i> . Collection materials include research files, chapter drafts, photographs, and correspondence. The collection materials document O'Brien's process in researching the homeless community in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Preferred Citation

Matthew O'Brien Papers, 2001-2011. MS-00849. Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University of Nevada, Las Vegas. Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Biographical Note

Matthew O'Brien is a journalist, author, and college instructor known for his nonfiction book *Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas* about homeless people living underground in the Las Vegas Valley. O'Brien was born in Washington D.C. and grew up in Atlanta, GA. He graduated from the University of West Georgia and earned an MFA from UNLV.

O'Brien was a staff writer, news editor, and managing editor of the alternative weekly *Las Vegas CityLife* from 2000 to 2008. During his tenure at *Las Vegas CityLife* he wrote two stories about people living in the storm drains beneath Las Vegas with co-author Joshua Ellis, and then went on to complete a solo-

authored book *Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas* about this topic in 2007. His research and exploration of the underground drains and their residents was widely covered in the national and international press in both print and television. O'Brien also founded the Shine a Light charity to help residents of the tunnels. The charity supplies water, food, clothes, blankets and other items and also provides a variety of services, including housing, drug counseling, medical and mental-health counseling, case management and referrals.

He later wrote a non-fiction compilation of stories entitled *My Week at the Blue Angel: And Other Stories from the Storm Drains, Strip Clubs, and Trailer Parks of Las Vegas* about various characters and his experiences in modern-day Las Vegas that was published in 2010. Since 2017, O'Brien splits his time between Las Vegas, Nevada and San Salvador, El Salvador where he teaches world literature at Escuela Americana.

Sources:

"Bio." *Beneath the Neon*. Accessed June 04, 2018. <http://beneaththeneon.com/biography/>

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Scope and Contents Note

The collection is comprised of records from approximately 2001 to 2011 that document writer Matthew O'Brien's work for two of his Las Vegas, Nevada based non-fiction novels: *Beneath the Neon: Life and Death in the Tunnels of Las Vegas* and *My Week at the Blue Angel: and Other Stories From the Storm Drains, Strip Clubs, and Trailer Parks of Las Vegas*. Collection materials include research files, chapter drafts, photographs, and correspondence. The collection materials document O'Brien's process in researching the homeless community in Las Vegas, Nevada.

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Arrangement

Materials remain as they were received.

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Administrative Information

Access Note

Collection is open for research.

Publication Rights

Materials in this collection may be protected by copyrights and other rights. See [Reproductions and Use](#) on the UNLV Special Collections and Archives website for more information about reproductions and permissions to publish.

Acquisition Note

Material was donated in 2017 by Matthew O'Brien; accession number 2017-094.

Processing Note

These records are unprocessed. A rough box-level inventory of the accession was created by Tammi Kim in 2018. To prepare the inventory, the described materials were reviewed to create a contents list, estimate dates, and identify material types. No other work has been performed on the materials. Born-digital files were minimally processed during accessioning. Files were transferred off of optical discs. BUP and VOB video files were converted to MP4, TIF image files were converted to JPEG, and DOCX files were converted to PDF/A for access. Duplicate files are not included.

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Names and Subjects

- Homeless persons
- Las Vegas (Nev.)
- Photographs

Collection Inventory

Title/Description	Containers
<i>Beneath the Neon</i> drain research files, approximately 2002-2006	box 01
<i>Beneath the Neon</i> drafts, 2006	box 02
<i>My Week at the Blue Angel</i> research, <i>Beneath the Neon</i> book contract, 2006, 2008	box 03

<p><i>My Week at the Blue Angel</i> paperback copy, drafts with editors comments (2008), fax from Hunter S. Thompson, copies of Hunter S. Thompson article for <i>CityLife</i> (2001), <i>My Week at the Blue Angel</i> photographs (optical discs), 2001, 2008</p>	<p>box 04</p>
<p>Issues of <i>Las Vegas CityLife</i> featuring O'Brien and Joshua Ellis's stories on the underground drains (2002) and excerpts from <i>Beneath the Neon</i> (2007), notes on book, correcting copy of <i>Beneath the Neon</i>, "Welcome" interview on audiocassette, photographs and press for book on optical discs, 2002, 2007</p>	<p>oversized box 05</p>
<p>Flood zone map of Las Vegas Valley used by O'Brien during his research and interviews for <i>Beneath the Neon</i>, undated</p>	<p>flat file 06</p>
<p><i>Beneath the Neon</i> book photographs, chapter copies, and promotional videos; <i>My Week at the Blue Angel</i> book photographs, 2005-2011</p>	<p>digital file 00</p>