The Place of Special Collections in a Research Library

Erin Mollenhauer

THE PLACE OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS IN A RESEARCH LIBRARY

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The glamour sector

- Galleries
- Libraries
- Archives
- Museums
- Records management
Definitions

• Research library = a library which collects and maintains in-depth material to support research in one or more subject areas

• Special collections = “collections of books and archives considered important enough to be preserved...they are rare, unique or fragile, they have research or cultural value, or significant provenance”

  • University of Glasgow https://www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/specialcollections/whatarespecialcollections/

Special collections

• Manuscripts and personal archives
• Rare books
• Ephemera
• Original audio/visual material
• Realia
• Photographs
• Artworks
Significance

“‘Significance’ refers to the values and meanings that items and collections have for people and communities. Significance helps unlock the potential of collections, creating opportunities for communities to access and enjoy collections, and to understand the history, cultures and environments of Australia”


Types of significance

• Primary criteria:
  1. Historic
  2. Artistic or aesthetic
  3. Scientific or research potential
  4. Social or spiritual


Types of significance

• Secondary criteria
  1. Provenance
  2. Rarity or representativeness
  3. Condition or completeness
  4. Interpretive capacity

But I don’t have any special collections...

- Does your organisation produce anything: newsletters, audio recordings, ephemera...
- Do you have anything that belonged to someone important? Did they make annotations?
- Is the institutional memory of your organisation being recorded?
- Do you have stuff you don’t know what to do with?
- Build your own

Why special collections are important

- Enhance research – primary sources are ‘the raw material of history’
- Attract scholars
- Preserve unique history and memory
- Community engagement
- Promotional value

A. Flick. New York Times 5th March 1925
Access v. preservation

• “He... at least as I (surely unfairly) remember him, he might as well have worn a sign about his neck reading *Noli me tangere* (or my books, either)” Traister (2000), p. 58.

• “On the one hand, readers need access; on the other, our materials need protection... We can ignore neither side of these pairs, yet both have the constant potential to conflict” Traister (2000), p. 60.

Excursus: gloves

• Are you: a) Mickey Mouse, b) a band leader, or c) handling rare books? If c) – leave the white cotton gloves at home

• Cotton gloves are slippery and break off the edges of pages

• Clean dry hands are fine for books and paper

• Nitrile gloves are necessary for handling photographs, glass or metal objects
Metadata for special collections

- Published material – provenance, annotations & features recorded in the 590 and 700 fields
- Archives management system – records, manuscripts, ephemera
- Finding aid
- Any metadata is better than none
Title: The New Testament in English; after the Greek translation annexed with the translation of Erasmus in Latin. Whereunto is added a Kalendar, and an exhortation to the reading of the holy scriptures made by the same Erasmus with the Epistles taken out of the olde testamant both in Latin and English, whereunto is added a table necessary to finde the Epistles and Gospels for every sondays and holyday throughout the yere after the use of the churche of England nowe.
Physical description: [264] leaves ; 18 & 19 cm. (8vo)
General Note: The fourth edition of Tyndale's English version with the translation of Erasmus in Latin.
General Note: The initials I. C. (i.e. I. C.) stand for the name of the publisher, who, according to his preface, was also editor. They may indicate John Cawood, the London printer. There appears to be no adequate reason for connecting this edition with the name of Sir John Cheke.
General note: Signatures: Aka, Bb, Cc, Dd, Ee, Ft, Gg, Hh, Ii, Jk.
Local note: 'Black letter text. Pages not numbered. (528pp-text). Of the preliminary leaves present, only the title page and Epistle to the Reader are present here, in skillful facsimile in red and black. First leaf in Matthew in similar good facsimile. Possibly the two final table leaves at close also. One leaf Mark repaired and remaraged outer edge. Minor marks. Some outer marginal notes shaved or very slightly trimmed in places. A very good copy. 19th century red gaarined morocco. Blind line borders. Ownership bookplate and signatures from 1917, Scarboro, UK, D.M.H. The Fourth Edition of Tyndale's English New Testament, with Erasmus's Latin Translation added for good measure, in parallel columns. Quite scarce nowadays, and always sought after. NB. This could have come from Francis Fry's collection, through nothing positively identifies it. The excellent facsimiles in red and black are very reminiscent of his productions on old paper. Also the 19th century bindings are similar to what he had done. Finally, the book has come from a source where other of Francis Fry's books" – Booksellers notes, Humor Books.

Added Entry-Personal
Name: Tyndale, William, d. 1536.

Added Entry-Personal
Name: Erasmus, Desiderius, d. 1536.

Reflections for every day in the year : on the works of God : and his providence throughout all nature
Sturm, Christoph Christian, 1740-1876,
key:
Local system #: ococ523076243
Personal Author: Sturm, Christoph Christian, 1740-1876,
Uniform title: [Betrachtungen Aûber die Werke Gottes. Selections, English]
Title: Reflections for every day in the year : on the works of God : and his providence throughout all nature / translated by John Hemet.
Physical description: xvi, 403 pages : illustrations ; 17 cm
Local note: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge stamp on front cover. Inscription on fly-leaf: A small token of remembrance to Master W. Blaxland from M. Marsden June 24 1829.
Subject term: Devotional literature, German--Translations into English.
Subject term: Nature--Religious aspects--Christianity.
Subject term: Natural theology--Early works to 1800.
Subject term: Meditations--Early works to 1800.
Subject term: Devotional calendars.
Added Entry-Personal
Name: Blaxland, William,
Digitisation

- Digitisation is not digital preservation
- A website is not a digital asset management system
- Metadata first, conservation second, digitisation third

Digital preservation

- “The coordinated and ongoing set of processes and activities that ensure long-term, error-free storage of digital information, with means for retrieval and interpretation, for the entire time span the information is required...”

Digital preservation

- Use sustainable file formats
- Use detailed and standardised metadata
- Replication - creation of multiple copies of data at one or more locations
- Refreshing - the transfer of data between two types of the same storage medium
- Migration - the transferring of data to a newer hardware and/or software environment

Lingel, Jessa (2013) 'This is not an archive' Retrieved from: https://jessalingel.tumblr.com/post/66108956850/this-is-not-an-archive
Digital asset management systems

- Ex Libris Rosetta
- D-Space
- Fedora
- Archivematica
- ContentDM from OCLC

Christian voices in the public square

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Files in this item

Name: Christian-Voices-in-the-Public-Squa
re-PFJ.mp3
Size: 93.04Mb
Format: mp3 audio
Collaborative digitisation

• Australia – become a digitisation partner with Trove
• New Zealand – National Library’s Papers Past project
• The resulting files will be made available on a secure platform and will be actively preserved
“special”?

• Special collections are an asset to an institution and its researchers
• Managing them requires creativity and branching out into other GLAM domains
• Explore available programs and resources
• DIGITISATION IS NOT DIGITAL PRESERVATION

Questions?