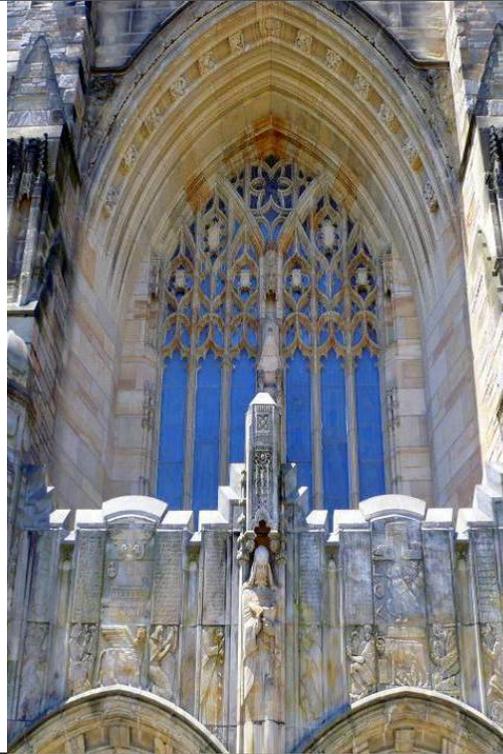


The Hidden Collections of North America

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RLUK First Conference:
The Power of Knowledge

22- 24 October 2008



Most illustrations to this talk are drawn from Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University Library and from the collections of Yale University Library system

Introduction:

What are “hidden collections”?

- Some definitions from the perspective of special collections
- Some answers from the perspective of special collections

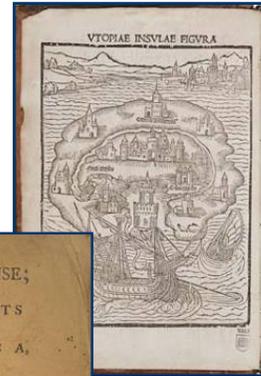
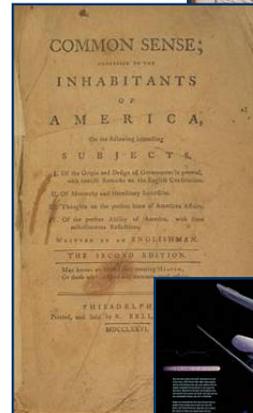


The concept of “Hidden Collections” as adopted by the Association of Research Libraries and now also by the council on Library and Information Resources for its new funding program, refers to uncatalogued or inadequately described materials that are hidden from the view of library users for that reason.

1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

Special Collections in libraries include:

1.1. Rare books



*Image from More's Utopia; image from title page
of Thomas Paine's Common Sense; illustration
from Gene Roddenberry, Star Trek*

Rare books may be the format most commonly understood to fall within the definition of special collections, but even here there are variations and grey areas. The inclusion of a page from the Star Trek serial on this slide illustrates the point.

1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

Special Collections in libraries include:

- 1.1. Rare books
- 2.2. Printed Ephemera

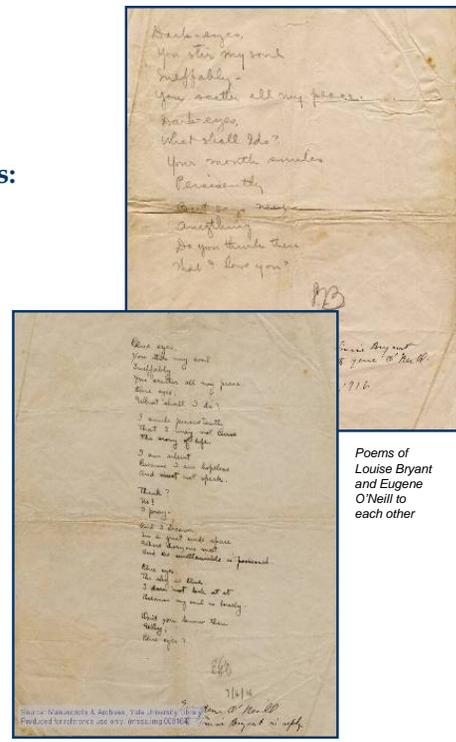


Printed ephemera, now so highly valued as all-too fugitive original evidence of social and cultural history, also present special problems for purposes of cataloguing and description.

1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

Special Collections in libraries include:

- 1.1. Rare books
- 1.2. Printed Ephemera
- 1.3. Manuscripts & personal papers



Poems of
Louise Bryant
and Eugene
O'Neill to
each other

The two pages shown here are from the papers of radical journalist and writer Louise Bryant, thought to have been lost until cataloguing of the papers of ambassador William Bullitt, her second husband. These pages contain poems exchanged between Bryant and her then lover, Eugene O'Neill. The text reads: "Blue eyes"

unpublished poem by

Eugene O'Neill for Louise Bryant

Blue eyes

You stir my soul

Ineffably

You scatter all my peace

Blue eyes

What shall I do?

I smile persistently

That I may not curse

The irony of life

I am silent

Because I am hopeless

And must not speak

Think?

No!

I pray

1. The uniqueness of special collections: the challenge of definition

Special Collections in libraries include:

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- 2.2. Printed Ephemera
- 3.3. Manuscripts & personal papers
- 4.4. [Institutional archives](#)

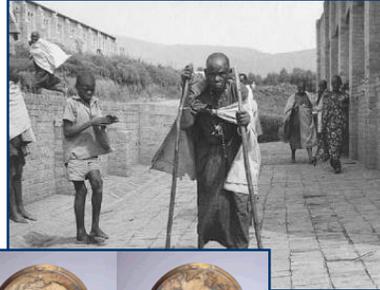


One notable example of the way responsibility for special collections can embrace institutional archives comes from the Library and Archives Canada, where the unified Public Archives and National Library of Canada now include responsibility for setting up a national gallery of Canadian portraiture, as well as proliferating responsibilities that provide a rich set of examples and shared experience for other North American research institutions.

**1. The uniqueness of special collections:
the challenge of definition**

Special Collections in libraries include:

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- 2.2. Printed Ephemera
- 3.3. Manuscripts & personal papers
- 4.4. Institutional archives
- 5.5. Maps, photographs & works of art



*Photograph of old Tutsi woman; globes from
Yale University Library Maps Department*

These illustrations from Yale University Library's collections show: a photograph by sociologist David Apter, taken in the gold Coast (Ghana) during the period of decolonization; and two rare globes from the Map Department

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- 1.5. Maps, photographs & works of art
- 1.6. Film, video and recorded sound



Marion P, a Dutch rescuer of Jewish fugitives during WWII



Images from the Yale University Library Historic Sound Recordings collection

In addition to examples from Yale's Historical Sound Recordings collection (c.250,000 items, only now being catalogued with the help of a grant from the Andrew w. Mellon Foundation), the image in the middle is taken from the University Library's Fortunoff Video Archive of Holocaust Testimonies, which includes over 4,000 separate interviews, each several hours long, with survivors of the Holocaust. The woman pictured is Dutch, and recounts her experience of helping Dutch Jewish citizens to hide from the Nazis.

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- 1.6. Film, video and recorded sound
- 1.7. Oral histories 



Aaron Copeland



Duke Ellington



Mel Powell



David Lang



Ellen Taaffe Zwilich

*Images from Yale
University Library Oral
History of American
Music collection*

These images come from Yale's Oral Histories of American Music project, a program that has been running for about forty years.

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- 1.7. Oral histories
- 1.8. Objects and artifacts



Stone weight in form of duck, about three pounds (YBC 2262)



Mathematical exercise to find diagonal of square, using the square root of 2 (YBC 7289)



Old Babylonian recipe collection (YBC 4644)



Old Assyrian letter with envelope (NBC 1905)

These examples come from the Yale Babylonian collection of cuneiform tablets, dating back to the dawn of writing.

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- 8.8. Objects and artifacts
- 9.9. Born-digital databases, web sites,
creative works



Examples from the internet, which will be familiar to all of us in the autumn of 2008. Each one is changign and evanescent, andthey illustrate the difficulties of archiving web sites. Despite the admirable work of the Internet Archive, a large amount of material that might have been preserved if it had appeared in printed form is now lost within months of its creation. The political web sites speak for themselves. The amnesty web site is just one example illustrating the profound importance of preserving the record of human rights abuses. Libraries in North America that are working on this problem include Columbia, Duke, Notre Dame, the University of Connecticut, and Yale. The MacArthur Foundation has recently awarded a grant to the Center for Research Libraries based in Chicago, to investigate the issues involved in preserving the records of human rights organizations.

2. The Association of Research Libraries work on special Collections

2.1 The other imperatives in research libraries

- Preservation; off site storage; retrospective conversion of main catalogues
- An environment in which a long habit of scarce resources can also engender low expectations
- Collective realisation of the legacy of neglect or inattention



It was not really until about eight years ago that the ARL libraries turned their attention collectively from some of the other pressing and expensive imperatives, to the question of special collections.

2. The Association of Research Libraries work on special Collections

2.2 Growth of digital opportunities

Shared electronic resources

The challenge of born digital

Creating a community of concern

- Conference at Brown University, 2001
- Conference at LC on “Hidden Collections”, 2003

2.3 Generating a report and recommendations for action



There is now a firm recognition that the time is now to promote work on special collections, using the opportunities of digitization and digital exposure in other ways. The slides that follow allude to the main considerations of the ARL Special Collections Working Group, which will be presenting its report in a few months.



The Association of Research Libraries Special Collections Working Group

Set up in 2007 in succession to the task force that pursued the ARL "Hidden Collections" agenda. Draft report to be presented in fall 2008.

Priorities:

1. Encourage concerted action ...for collecting and exposing 19th- and 20th - Century materials in all formats
2. Identify criteria and strategies for collecting digital and other new media that currently lack a recognized and responsible structure for stewardship

"These two issues are closely linked. An enormous amount of valuable material in all formats remains uncollected and risks being permanently lost."

2. The Association of Research Libraries work on special Collections

2.4 Recommendations:

- Collecting
- Ensuring access
- Digital challenges...



The environment for digitization:

Traditional concerns for special collections librarians and archivists:

- Collecting carefully, with close attention to the total costs of caring for and making available a collection, be it digital or in other formats
- Advocate against restrictions on access
- Transparency over provenance
- Good practices in records management
- Ensuring discoverability and access:
Address the hidden collections problem
No digitization without metadata



The digital challenge

Digital infrastructure
from scanning facilities to
sustainable digital repositories

Debates over preservation:

- of original materials
- of digital surrogates and born digital material

Staff skills: a sharp learning curve

Exponential increases in demand:

- growth in teaching with primary sources and undergraduate research
- local and family historical research
- political pressures to extend access to unique assets

Increased visibility and scrutiny



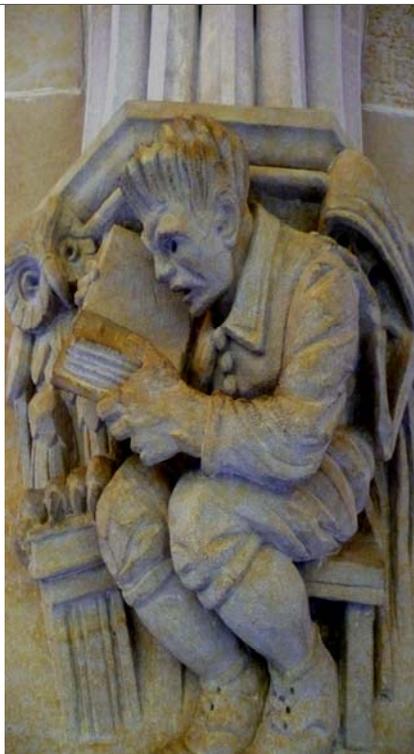
The nightmare digital challenge:

Intellectual property law suits

Increased visibility brings greater scrutiny

Contested interpretations

Packaging material to make it comprehensible out of context



These headings refer to some profoundly important issues, which have been familiar to special collections librarians in the non-digital environment for many years. The enhanced visibility brought about by digitization of both original texts and images, and finding aids and descriptive catalogues, has increased the problems and responsibilities. Exposure of copyright or contested material digitally increases the chance of law suits. Digitization of originals from non-western cultures raises in a new and sometimes acute form a host of issues associated with the rights to interpretation, as well as questions about ownership of the original.

The agenda of “Hidden collections”

Partnerships and collaborations

[The Archivists Toolkit](#)

[Collaboration between Libraries,
Archives and Museums](#)

The “[Collections collaborative](#)” concept



3. The agenda of “Hidden collections”

3.2 Grant-giving bodies supporting the exposure of hidden collections (a few examples)

Mellon

Arcadia’s programmes

Endangered Languages

Endangered Archives

other ...

US Federal agencies

The Canadian approach

The CLIR Mellon program:

a programme to grant some \$20 million over four years for cataloguing

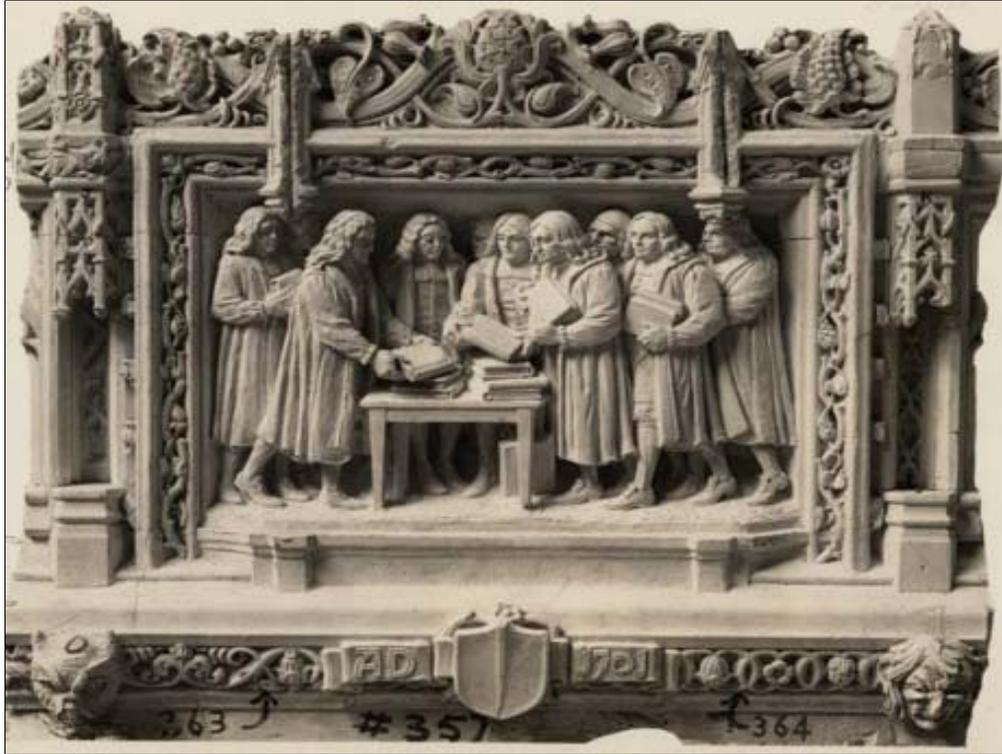


The agenda of “Hidden collections”

Endangered and hidden collections
in the future

- 1.1. Rare books
- 2.2. Printed Ephemera
- 3.3. Manuscripts & personal papers
- 4.4. Institutional archives
- 5.5. Maps, photographs & works of art
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This image from the stone frieze in the cathedral-like “nave” of Sterling Memorial Library at Yale depicts the ministers who in 1701, brought books “for the founding of a college in this colony”. They were concerned at the way religion was being taught at Harvard, and wanted to provide an education consonant with their own beliefs. It serves to illustrate the enduring importance of the written word, and perhaps also to suggest some of the different ways that people including educators and librarians, may look at the utility of library collections.