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Archives Annual Report, 2013-2014

Meg Miner

Illinois Wesleyan University, mminer@iwu.edu

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2013-2014 Tate Archives & Special Collections Report

Meg Miner, University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian

August 10, 2014

Service and Accessions Summary

Four student assistants (representing less than one FTE in staff time) helped me provide access to Tate Archives & Special Collections material during most of 2013/2014. One student was devoted solely to the oral history transcription project and one graduated in December; the remaining two graduated in May. I employed a new student starting in May who continued throughout the summer and was joined by another new assistant in July. Both of these students will continue throughout the next academic year.

Our holdings grew by 34 linear feet, but I also deaccessioned 18 linear feet (see details in the Special Collections section of this report); therefore, our total holdings as of this year are 1,339 linear feet.

From August 2013-July 2014, we fulfilled 166 requests for substantive research support. The largest patron group initiating these requests—a total of 71— was comprised of faculty, staff or administrators; this number includes requests for class support from eight faculty.

In the case of the latter, our collections helped meet the curricular needs for course designations of Anthropology, Art, English (one each with upper and lower division credit), French (upper division level), Greek & Roman Studies, Humanities, Spanish (two classes at upper division level); seven of the ten classes carried General Education attributes. All of these interactions involved components of information literacy on the initial day of the class visit and most required follow up encounters with the students conducting research outside of class time.

One faculty member used Special Collections materials with an Independent Study student for advanced reading of non-English texts in both printed and facsimile manuscript editions.

Due to the increase in curricular support this year, we recorded 116 walk-in patrons who needed full research assistance. With the addition of 57 walk-ins for staff assistance of a less time-intensive nature, the total number of on-site visitors to use our collections during this year reached 173.

I was also invited to speak twice on topics related to IWU history and collections: once to a campus student organization and once to a Rotary group.

Archives Accessions and Activities

Changes in the physical spaces containing archival material deserve special mention this year. I acquired a fire-rated filing cabinet from another office and so permanently transferred IWU's founding documents from another fire-safe location on campus to the archives. We also acquired regular filing cabinets from State Farm's used furniture warehouse and so after four years, work permanent housing for a large accession of photographic material (reported on in the 2010-11 academic year) is nearing completion. The filing cabinets allow us to use approximately 25 linear feet of space as opposed to the 75 linear feet of shelf space that would have been necessary without them. Even with this space savings, though, the collection will not fit within the standard storage area of Tate Archives, and so we are using a long, empty section of wall space elsewhere on the fourth floor. The time and expense involved in organizing this collection

is proving a worthwhile endeavor. We have satisfied numerous research requests in just the last few years with the help of photographic material that is now accessible.

Notable additions to the archives this year include our first ever bulk transfer of electronic files from a student group (Titan TV) on an external hard drive. I processed this collection using one of the tools the Digital POWRR group (<http://digitalpowrr.niu.edu>) explored: the DataAccessioner. The automation offered by this tool provided an unmediated analysis of the accession (totaling over 1,000 files and 200+GB) and recorded the file integrity checks necessary for understanding any changes in the collection during long term storage. This rate of transfer is not sustainable on an annual basis, though, so educating the new leaders of this group on the value of selecting a smaller amount of content that represents the best of their work is a high priority for me this year.

While I am satisfied that our redundant external drive provides us some measure of security for digital objects, they will not benefit from the other recommended preservation steps (file normalizing, ongoing integrity checks and future file migration) and they are all still contained in one building on our campus. We remain at the initial stages of our ability to secure IWU's digital heritage.

I should also note that this accession required mediation by Library IT because it arrived on an Apple hard drive and the archives' PCs could not read it. This was the case with another A/V transfer this year, too. I note that here in order to point out that acquisitions of this nature have implications for both staff time in other areas and for potential data loss in our file transfer protocols. I will continue to investigate improvements for these processes.

Another library unit that began providing archives' support this year was Information Discovery & Systems. Data capture from the campus website for ingest to records' locations in Digital Commons began when the Reserves and Digital Projects Coordinator took the campus press releases on as a responsibility two years ago. Digital Projects also assisted in processing Honors works this year, and our Cataloging Coordinator started tracking and harvesting 16 record types from a variety of campus offices' websites—most notably the Faculty & Student Senate meeting minutes and the IWU Magazine. Involving other library staff in these processes has brought a much-needed professional standard to metadata input and to the quality of our records' capture efforts. My thanks go to these individuals, their supervisors and the students they supervise for their great support!

Physical records received in boxes of varying sizes and content arrived at a slightly higher rate this year. I attribute this to recent office changes and to faculty and staff departures as a result of the campus's right-sizing efforts. The result is an addition to our processing backlog, but my students and I made some progress this summer and I evaluate priorities for each new transfer we receive. We are still a year or two behind on processing vs. new acquisitions, but this is an acceptable delay for our physical holdings. A notable completion this summer involved the selection of over 3 linear feet of syllabi that was distilled from eight linear feet of material sent by an academic department last year.

We also received and processed records that I gave higher priority to: they document activities for two student groups that we previously had no records for and one existing group's founding. These acquisitions were possible due to a faculty member's retirement and to an outreach effort I initiated with the Alumni Office.

A final comment in this section concerns work conducted by a graduate student from UIUC's GSLIS as an Alternative Spring Break project. In addition to learning about our library processes generally, she spent the week exploring specific processes needed for implementing our hosted version of ARCHON. The work involved in creating descriptions that will make our archival holdings more easily accessible to our patrons and discovery systems elsewhere will be

time consuming but it is achievable due to the workflows created by this student. Structuring this data in this way will benefit us in the future since it will make future migration possible when newer systems become available.

Special Collections Accessions and Activities

Earlier in this report I mentioned a deaccession of 18 linear feet of material. This quantity was represented by one 19th Century periodical title (an incomplete run) that has been held in Special Collections for 12 years but that has not proven useful for our community. All volumes were in poor condition and The Ames Library now subscribes to a digital version of the entire title. Additionally, this periodical enjoys widespread representation in literally thousands of WorldCat libraries, including a record for the Hathi Trust's digitized holdings. The removal of this title made possible a rearrangement of our Special Collections as a whole in order to relieve space pressures elsewhere, especially on our oversized holdings, whose conditions were in jeopardy due to shelf over-crowding.

Purchases in Special Collections this year were made to support curricular needs of courses in the English department and for a special program the library is hosting this fall on 19th Century British designer (of books and other materials) William Morris. Morris's influences extend into political and economic realms, and his ideas mark the founding an international design movement known as *Arts and Crafts* that resonates today. Additional funds for collection purchases in this area were provided by another library fund, but the event itself received funding from the IWU *Re-Centering the Humanities* grant. The bulk of the Morris-related material for this event is on loan from the personal collection of Jack Walsdorf of Portland, OR. We are hosting Mr. Walsdorf and University of Iowa's Florence Boos for a three-day series of classroom encounters and public lectures, both on campus and at the McLean County Museum of History.

Goals for 2014/15

The Digital POWRR group was encouraged by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to apply for an implementation grant under a new federal funding category: the National Digital Preservation Platform. The goal of this next phase is testing a consortial workflow from accession to preservation-quality storage in a cost-effective (currently define as less than \$1000/TB) manner. I believe it is important for IWU to support my participation in these efforts, and I will not be required to devote as significant an amount of time to this effort as in the past three years. Funding announcements will not occur until sometime in 2015.

As of this writing, our whitepaper on our work has been reviewed by our IMLS project officer and is undergoing minor editing. Our work will be sent to our external reviewers soon. As our project closes, we are traveling in small groups to venues throughout the U.S. to train others on the workflows we are recommending. This travel will end in November and our final report on our activity and assessment work is due to the IMLS this winter. At that point we should know if the National Endowment for the Humanities Grant that we submitted last spring in order to extend our training initiative will be funded. If neither opportunity is approved, my group's joint effort will be over this year.

Regardless of those potential plans, I hope to move ahead this year with the enhancements of our archives' and special collections' descriptions through the CARLI-hosted instance of ARCHON.