The Preserving of Gifts and Donors

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Cornucopia, or...
Pandora’s Box?

Stories of the Gods and Heroes by Sally Benson, 1940, Dial Press.

The Value of Gifts

- Gifts are essential to the growth of any collection
- Help shape/define the collections
- Provide additional (or the only) resources
- Can bring draw attention to an organization
- But...
The Costs of Gifts

- Nothing is ever free
  - Costs of bringing a collection in
  - Costs of housing a collection
  - Costs of making a collection available to the public
    - Processing costs...
  - Costs of preserving a collection
    - Infrastructure such as heating and A/C
    - Boxes and other enclosures
    - Conservation...

The Perfect World

Gifts that are received are in good condition, have been well cared for over their life, are properly housed, and come with an endowment to help pay for their long-term care.

Is this possible?
What if they’re not?
Some of the Problems of Collections

- **Collections received in a disorganized state**
  - Piled into boxes = Extensive processing required to make available
  - Will require purchase of folders
  - Will require purchase of boxes
  - Other enclosures for special materials...

- **Brittle paper**
  - Can it be safely handled
  - Reformatting or making use copies
  - If unique and valuable
    - Conservation treatment?

  Which has the greater value, the content or the medium?
Some of the Problems of Collections

- Deteriorated bindings
  - Options more limited
  - “Repair” or conservation treatment
    - Consolidation, especially in case of leather... (red rot)

Conservators and even qualified book repairers limited in CNY region, costs can be quite high so informed selection for treatment critical.

Some of the Problems of Collections

- Scrapbooks
  - Enough said.
    - Rich primary sources of information
    - Contain myriad of other formats
    - Usually made of poor quality materials
    - Structure over-taxed by used and over-filling

Options can include boxing, disbinding and folding, conservation treatment, or reformatting
Conditions in Your Institution

- Do you have the infrastructure to properly house collections?
  - If not, are fixes manageable?
    - Room-sized a/c unit
    - Dehumidifier
    - Pest management
- Do you have the staffing and tools to properly accession/process materials?
- Do you have a budget for supplies...?

If Not...

- Consider options
  - Not accepting gift (not always attractive, especially if bigger prospect)
  - Raise funds to complete improvements (not easy in today’s economy...)
  - Ask for additional funds to help support acquisition and housing of collections from the donor...
  - Accept as is, but...
What are Major Costs?

- Enclosures
  - Folders, Boxes, Sleeves, ...
- Repair & Conservation
- Environmental Controls
- Staff (easily overlooked)

Where to find more information

- Department of Preservation and Conservation, Syracuse University Library
  - [http://library.syr.edu/information/preservation](http://library.syr.edu/information/preservation)
- West Lake Conservators
  - Conservation of paintings, work of art on paper, photographs
    - [http://www.westlakeconservators.com](http://www.westlakeconservators.com)
- Other regional resources
  - [http://library.syr.edu/information/preservation/referral.htm](http://library.syr.edu/information/preservation/referral.htm)