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The Reading Room

a journal of special collections



an open-access scholarly publication focusing on special
collections in a variety of settings including libraries, museums,
historical societies and corporate environments.

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Volume 3, Issue 1

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The Reading Room: A Journal of Special Collections is a scholarly journal committed to providing current research and relevant discussion of practices in a special collections library setting. The Reading Room seeks submissions from practitioners and students involved with working in special collections in museums, historical societies, corporate environments, public libraries and academic libraries. Topics may include exhibits, outreach, mentorship, donor relations, teaching, reference, technical and metadata skills, social media, "Lone Arrangers," management and digital humanities. The journal features single-blind, peer-reviewed research articles and case studies related to all aspects of current special collections work.

Journal credits

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Cover photo: After school hours: interior of the Bond Street Branch of the New York Free Circulating Library, 1899. From The New York Public Library Digital Collections, <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47e0-d8cd-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>

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Editors Note

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the fifth issue of *The Reading Room*. In this issue:

- » Gabriella Karl-Johnson investigates the American Viewbooks Collection in the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. A recent CLIR Hidden Collections grant has increased discovery and exposure of the collection. Ms. Karl-Johnson discusses the depths of what this collection reveals to researchers via the role of contemplative cataloging.
- » Sarah Allison details how New Mexico State University Archives and Special Collections employed a SWOT analysis to evaluate and redesign their student employee program, focusing on developing competencies related to all aspects of the department as well as unit-specific work.
- » What to do with collections lacking original metadata? Erin Passehl-Stoddart shares a creative solution to this common issue for special collections. Using gamification techniques, Ms. Passehl-Stoddart was able to create and enhance metadata while connecting student employees to visual literary standards and library learning goals.

Our readership is indebted to the efforts of our peer reviewers who generously contributed their time to the journal, as well as the expertise of the team at Scholastica and the UB Libraries, especially Kristopher Miller and Don Gramlich. We also extend our sincere thanks to all of the authors who submitted manuscripts and to you, our readers.

If you wish to participate in *The Reading Room*, we are seeking authors for upcoming issues, along with images of libraries, particularly of reading rooms, for our cover. Images should be a minimum of 300 dpi and 8" x 10" in size. This issue's cover image is from The New York Public Library Digital Collections. Questions and comments are always welcome. Please send all inquiries to thereadingroomjournal@gmail.com.

Whether as an author, reviewer, researcher, or reader, we hope you enjoy this issue of *The Reading Room*.

In appreciation,



Molly Poremski
Editor-in-chief



Amy Vilz
Editor-in-chief



Marie Elia
Editor-in-chief

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Turn of the Century America by Pen and Camera: Social Histories in the American Viewbooks Collection

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The content of this article was written while Gabriella Karl-Johnson worked as a project cataloger at the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University. Gabriella is now the Architecture Librarian at Princeton University. The author gratefully acknowledges the support and assistance of Carole Ann Fabian, Director, and Lena Newman, Classics Assistant, of the Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library.

Abstract

The American Viewbooks Collection in Avery Classics, the rare books division of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, consists of works originally produced as promotional and commemorative items depicting American cities and towns during the late 19th and early 20th century. Avery Classics recently completed a rare books cataloging project, funded by a CLIR Hidden Collections Grant, to catalog the Viewbooks Collection, which had long been exclusively described in the library's physical card catalog. The author of this article was in sustained contact with the collection over the course of two years, initially as an intern cataloger, then as a supervisor to student catalogers. Within these wide-ranging books that cover all corners of the United States, the author noted several patterns of content and theme that elucidate broader stories of the American cultural landscape at the turn of the 20th century.

Keywords: cataloging, hidden collections, American cultural landscapes, vernacular architecture, viewbooks, social history

Turn of the Century America by Pen and Camera: Social Histories in the American Viewbooks Collection

Gabriella Karl-Johnson, Architecture Library, Princeton University

The American Viewbooks Collection in Avery Classics, the rare books division of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University, consists of works originally produced as promotional or commemorative items that depict American cities and towns during the late 19th and early 20th century. The books are primarily pictorial, sometimes with little to no textual material accompanying the photographs and etchings. In 2013, Avery received a Hidden Collections Grant from the Council on Library and Information Resources to support the cataloging and exposure of this unique collection. Over a two year period, graduate student interns, including this article's author, worked with experienced rare books catalogers to catalog and house these rare materials.

Within any special collection of library or archival materials, hidden stories of history and provenance reside. This article highlights some of the hidden stories held within Avery's Viewbooks Collection, stories of both the built environment and its human inhabitants. A few examples of the vehicles for these stories include the extensive annotations in a souvenir book of Boston comprising the ad hoc travelogue of a traveler at the turn of the century; annotations in a town souvenir book that correct and enhance content through the addition of local knowledge; booster booklets for towns vying to be the next Great American City, towns whose names are now all but forgotten to history; and a pictorial album of the Ohio Penitentiary, a book

that exemplifies the ideals of a proselytizing progressive prison warden of the late 19th century. An underlying theme in the following explication is the extent to which thoughtful rare books cataloging can serve to assist the work of researchers and activate conceptual connections that would otherwise lay dormant.

Collection History

The American Viewbooks Collection was initially constituted by a former curator of Avery Classics, Herbert Mitchell, during his thirty-year tenure (1960-1991) in Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library. Long interested in architectural ephemera, Mitchell scoured yard sales and flea markets, as well as more typical sources for used books such as dealers and bookshops, to find the varied items that ultimately comprised the Viewbooks Collection. The collection has continued to grow in subsequent years through additional purchases and donations.

The collection includes roughly 4,800 illustrated works depicting cities, towns, and regional attractions across the United States. The items represent a variety of formats, including fold-out souvenir postcard booklets and accordion-folded embossed-cover board books, ranging in size from smaller than a deck of playing cards to full folios. The books were largely produced as souvenir keepsakes or promotional booklets by city booster organizations, real estate boards, or chambers of commerce; many bear the stamps of local stationers, book shops, or general stores. Primarily representing the span of time between 1880 and 1930 (but from 1850 to 1980 in full), the viewbooks depict enormous shifts in the American cultural landscape at the turn of the 20th century.

The viewbooks provide a unique glimpse of the ordinary environment of turn-of-the-century America, with content as much the domain of cultural geographers as that of architectural historians. While some of the viewbooks highlight individual buildings, including some landmarks, the works generally showcase the built environment. A typical viewbook heavily features the streetscapes of main streets and residential neighborhoods as well as municipal and civic infrastructure: churches, public schools, town halls, plazas, post offices, city parks and monuments, hospitals, colleges, social services, and transportation features such as railroad stations, bridges, and waterways. In short, the viewbooks present a thorough overview of the everyday landscape of American cities and towns at the height of industrialization and rapid urban growth. The items that comprise the American Viewbooks Collection stand as documents of civic pride and evidence of the optimistic belief in civic progress.

Collection Access and Discoverability

While the American Viewbooks Collection has been held by Avery Library for many years, patron and researcher access has been limited by the lack of presence in Columbia University's online catalog. Many of the viewbooks were represented by physical card catalog entries, very few of which were transferred to the online system. When Columbia University adopted an online catalog, the card catalog records for some of the viewbooks were included in the OPAC, but merely as stub records without significant detail. The object of the CLIR Hidden Collections grant was to expose the wealth of information in the Viewbooks Collection by creating detailed catalog records for all of the viewbooks, thereby broadening discoverability and increasing researcher access in the Columbia Libraries OPAC. Due to both a high level of competence among the student interns and the efficacy of the cataloging template, the project reached completion in 2016, with all goals on target.

The cataloging of the collection was executed by student interns with a variety of experience in information science, ranging from non-existent to a moderate level of experience. All of the project interns were graduate students of art history, architectural history, historic preservation, or library science. While the library science interns were already conversant in MARC cataloging, other interns were new to the concept of authority control altogether. (In the first days of cataloging training, a Viewbooks Collection intern memorably informed library staff that he now understood the purpose and role of subject headings: "They're like hashtags, but old fashioned"). Given the anticipated range of experience and the need for expediency on the project, a cataloging template was developed for the project by supervising project staff in collaboration with an experienced staff cataloger. The detailed MARC template allowed cataloging interns to supply details through a fill-in-the-blanks approach, enabling novice catalogers to capture salient bibliographic information without undertaking significant training in rare books cataloging. Descriptive terminology relating to binding, format, annotations, insertions, and printing methods was supplied in the template for the cataloging interns, who then could pick and choose the completed fields as appropriate. The template also called for the exercise of cataloger's judgment in the provision of subject headings, which, as any cataloger knows, is where things get interesting.

While many of the viewbooks were made by a similar design formula, the precise subjects depicted or emphasized by a single viewbook can range greatly. The intern catalogers quickly learned to read through the images and captions to perform subject analysis to appropriately capture

the content. By far the most frequent subject heading in the Viewbooks Collection is “Streetscapes (Urban design)”; nearly every book features at least one detailed image of a main street or city square. Other elements depicted include schools, churches, and homes of notable town residents; colleges or hospitals will also appear, if the town was fortunate to have one, as well as charitable institutions such as orphanages, homes for the aged, or mental institutions. In the cataloging process, the interns have attempted to capture these features as completely as possible, either through subject headings or detailed, keyword-searchable notes fields.

Viewbooks

The typical viewbook consists primarily of illustrations, with captions ranging from brief and generic to several sentences of detailed information. The format and binding method, if not simply stapled, generally is one of two distinct types: accordion-folded pages pasted to board covers, or stabbed and tied bindings of stacked pages with card stock or board covers. The illustration types included in the viewbooks present a history of printing and photographic reproduction methods, including photogravure, photolithography, chromolithography, and photography. Many of the viewbooks in Avery’s collection were printed in Albertype, a photomechanical process that creates a printed image with appearance similar to that of lithography.

While photographic processes had existed since the mid-19th century, it was the development of less costly photomechanical reproduction techniques in the late 19th century that facilitated the widespread production of viewbooks. As Jay White explains in his study of late 19th century tourism in Nova Scotia, “Tourist literature underwent a metamorphosis of sorts in the 1890s. Book publishing in general experienced a technological revolution when improved techniques for printing photographs were developed, such as the gravure process and the half-tone block” (White, p. 149). With the development of quicker and less expensive photomechanical reproduction techniques, small books with detailed illustrations could be produced and sold for an accessible price to tourists and travelers.

Small publishers and jobbers at the turn of the century specialized in viewbooks, contracting with towns, cities, and institutions to create customized mementos. Among the well-represented small publishers in Avery’s collection is Adolf Wittemann, whose firm The Albertype Company¹ was based in New York City but published books on all corners of the country, from Oregon and Ohio to New Hampshire

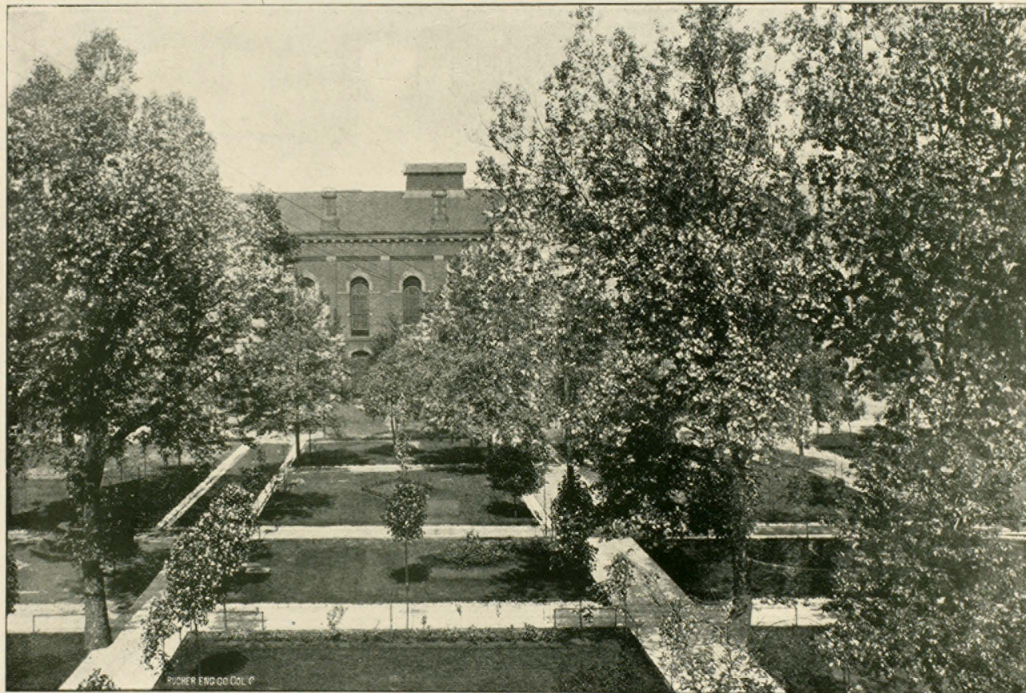
1. The Albertype Company was a solo operation formed by Adolf Wittemann in 1887, after an earlier printing company with his brothers Rudolf and Jacob, Wittemann Brothers. Further background information on Wittemann and his brothers is available through the online finding aid for the Wittemann collection, Pennsylvania Historical Society, and on the websites of the Staten Island Advance and Soda and Beer Bottles of North America.

and Florida. The Chisholm Brothers, based in Portland, Maine, ran a printing operation with a similarly wide geographic spread. Many viewbooks, particularly those coming out of a specific printing house, follow a formulaic layout: a birds-eye view of town often opens the book, images are set within decorative printed borders, municipal buildings are proudly displayed, and the homes of the town's most noted residents depict domestic beauty. Jay White notes that while viewbooks enjoyed brief and significant popularity, "the novelty of the genre quickly wore off due to their formulaic content" (p. 149). However, for purposes of research in the early 21st century, this formulaic content takes on a desirable quality, as it facilitates interpretation. With evidence of consistent patterns between books, one can sort the books and images into revealing typologies.

City or town overviews are the most prevalent form of the viewbooks, but several other veins of content appear in the collection as well. Among the more focused single-subject viewbooks are groupings of industrial, residential, and disaster books. Industrial viewbooks include presentations of mills, mining operations, and industrial zones of developing cities, frequently with an emphasis on commercial development possibilities and economic output. Residential viewbooks include profiles of apartment buildings, hotels, and housing developments. The disaster subgroup presents images of municipal devastation caused by earthquakes, fires, floods, and hurricanes. At first glance the disaster books seem a dreary counterpoint to the images of civic progress manifest in most other viewbooks, but the general undertone in disaster viewbooks is the resilience of the town and the effectiveness of the recovery effort. Other subgroups of single-subject viewbooks include profiles of prisons, military forts, and colleges. Each type of viewbook reveals another aspect of the fin de siècle American social and civic imagination.

Progressivism in Viewbooks

Among the single-subject viewbooks, a prison viewbook from the Ohio Penitentiary, published by the penitentiary warden Elijah G. Coffin in 1899, stands out as a striking example of the American progressive agenda at the turn of the century. Progressivism was governed by the notion that the human condition could be continually improved and that societal ills could be steadily ameliorated through legislative, social, and moral reforms. The progressive movement coalesced in many arenas, including secular and faith-based groups engaging in social voluntarism

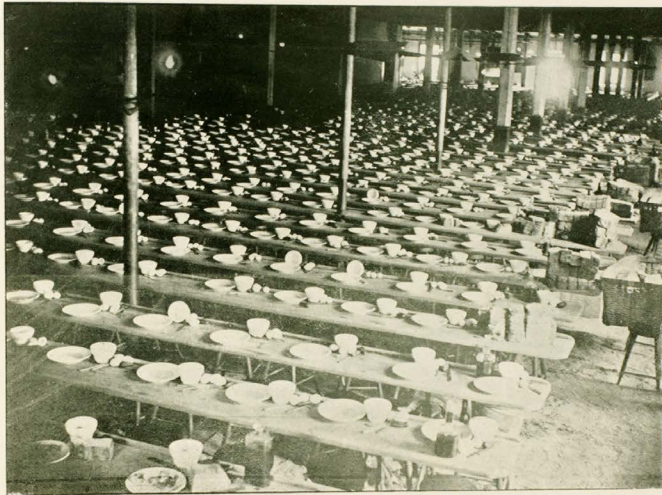


PRISON CAMPUS, WALKS AND FOLIAGE—SECTIONAL VIEW OF NEW HALL BLOCK IN BACK GROUND.

or political activity, addressing topics that ranged from immigrant assimilation and racial inequities to child labor and prison conditions.

As head of the Ohio Penitentiary, Warden Coffin lectured frequently on the topic of prison reform, and aimed to make his prison an example of the ideals he espoused. *Souvenir of the Ohio Penitentiary* was printed, illustrated, laid out, photographed, and typeset by inmates in the penitentiary. The book is bound in flexible binding with textured beige paper covers, with an illustrated cover title printed in metallic gold ink. The illustration, produced by one of the prison inmates, features a ball and chain enclosing the title text, drawn with an almost playful hand. The content of the book is largely photographic, opening with images of the warden's residence but focusing strongly on the prison buildings and grounds, or the "prison campus," (see Figure 1) as it is referred to in captions, with its orderly paving, greenhouse, flower beds, and well-planted foliage. Solid brick buildings in the background are identified as the new bathhouse and prison hospital. A trio of images depicts prisoners lunching with their families and friends on the prison grounds on the July

Figure 1. Ohio Penitentiary campus.
From *Souvenir of the Ohio Penitentiary*.
Image courtesy of Avery Architectural &
Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

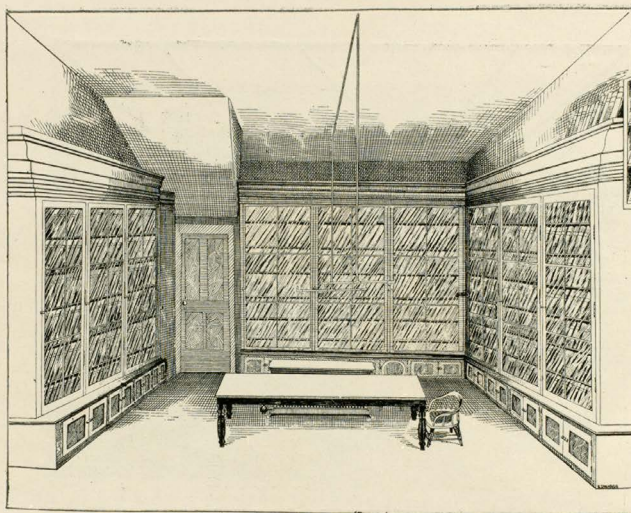


INTERIOR VIEW OF DINING ROOM-DISHES SET FOR CONVICT'S DINNER

Figure 2. Ohio Penitentiary dining hall.
From *Souvenir of the Ohio Penitentiary*.
Image courtesy of Avery Architectural &
Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

Fourth holiday. In the massive expanse of the prison dining room, rows of narrow tables are single-loaded to face the front of the room, with plate, bowl, and drinking cups in uniform arrangement: “Dishes set for the convict’s dinner” (see Figure 2).

Several hand-drawn illustrations by inmate artists appear in the book, including drawings of the expansive prison kitchen, bakery, and school room, as well as the prison library, with a caption that boasts of its 5,000 volumes (see Figure 3).



SECTIONAL INTERIOR VIEW OF PRISON LIBRARY, CONTAINING FIVE THOUSAND VOLUMES.

Figure 3. Ohio Penitentiary library.
From *Souvenir of the Ohio Penitentiary*.
Image courtesy of Avery Architectural &
Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

Despite the wide variety of images in the book, the strongest visual emphasis is on the aspects of the prison associated with inmate labor. Here in the foundry, glove workshop, broom factory, and furniture workshop - to name only a few of the prison industries depicted - is where inmates of the Ohio Penitentiary lived out Warden Coffin's notions of productive penitence. Coffin, a prison reformer and former sheriff who served as warden during the last years of the 19th century, viewed industry as an essential element of humane and reformatory incarceration, along with education and proper nutrition. Coffin's theories on the humane prison appear in his tract "Progressive Penology," published in 1899 as part of his collected *Speeches and Essays*. Coffin writes, "Occupation is the mission of man, and if he is shut up where he cannot work, those responsible commit a crime against nature" (p. 20). Prior to the late 19th century, Ohio prisons relied heavily upon corporal punishment and the warehousing of prisoners throughout their sentences, which Coffin describes as exacerbating all manner of moral and physical ills. Coffin describes the rise in morale among the prisoners of Ohio Penitentiary after the move away from the "idle house" to the implementation of prison labor. No doubt the prison also benefitted from the revenues generated by prison industries; while financial benefits from prison labor contracts are not described in any detail, we might read these profits in the depicted construction of new prison buildings. On the topic of nutrition Coffin writes, "Imperfect alimentation is an unmitigated evil, fraught with the gravest consequences to the physical man, and also exercising a distinctly immoral influence" (p. 16). Coffin compares a hungry man to a tiger and suggests that better nourishment would turn men away from crime, drink, and animal instincts. The images of the prison bakery and the neatly set dining tables appear to illustrate Warden Coffin's ideals.

The fruits of the Progressive Era are visible in other ways across numerous viewbooks from coast to coast. Alongside images of courthouses and public schools, many viewbooks feature images of local charitable and social service organizations like orphanages and homes for the aged and the handicapped. Images of mental institutions are also featured prominently at this time, which was a surprise to many of the project cataloging interns. However, as John Sutton describes in his study of mental institutions in the Progressive Era, the number of mental institutions expanded hugely in the late 19th century, and it follows that images would be featured in viewbooks of the time. While many reformers and civic groups of the era may have acted from intentions to do good unto a mishandled population, Sutton notes that the effects of this expansion of mental institutions served mainly to confine the poor, intemperate, and physically disabled, without addressing root causes of these conditions (p. 665). All the same, the images of mental institutions, referred to by various terms such as "Home for the Incurable

Insane,” are featured regularly in the viewbooks, along with “Homes for the Friendless,” the intemperate, the orphaned, and the aged, presumably as evidence of a municipality’s commitment to its less fortunate citizens. A 1903 viewbook of Hastings, Nebraska, boasts of its State Asylum of the Incurable Insane, with a capacity of 1,080 patients and a cost of \$1.25 million.

Another aspect of early 20th century progressivism illustrated by the Viewbooks Collection is the notion of civic good through technological progress, particularly in American westward expansion. As cities in the East grappled with the challenges of retrofitting city cores and aging buildings with modern conveniences, newly developing towns in the American West were capable of implementing current technologies in pace with or in advance of human habitation. A viewbook from Abilene, Kansas, produced in 1915, demonstrates the capability of new cities of the West to implement municipal infrastructures of technologies and services to facilitate residential comfort and business success. The opening page of *Abilene, Kansas: A clean, healthy town, a prosperous business center, a rich, growing community* boasts of the city’s twelve and a half miles of asphalt paving and “beautiful white way with five-light cement posts and lights on every street crossing throughout entire city” (see Figure 4).

Much of the content of the viewbook follows the standard repertoire of images, but these five-light lampposts are featured repeatedly throughout the book, with a credit noted of their manufacture in Abilene by one J. E. Valentine. The booster text boasts of the city’s Carnegie library, new post office, and uninterrupted access to “99.998 percent pure, finest water in Kansas,” administered through the city-owned plant and spring. In a new town of the west, electricity and gas could hardly go without mention, nor could the proximity of railroads. At the time of the book’s publishing, the Santa Fe, Union Pacific, and Rock Island lines all came to the city, with “another north and

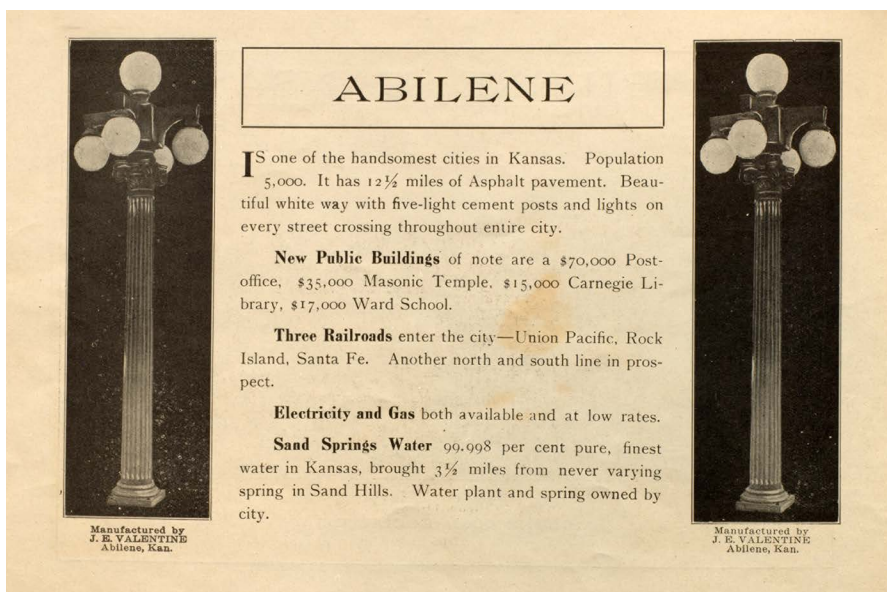


Figure 4. *Abilene, Kansas: A clean, healthy town, a prosperous business center, a rich, growing community* viewbook. Image courtesy of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University

south line in prospect.” The city boosters of the Abilene Commercial Club might have been disappointed to know that the population of the city never expanded much beyond its 1915 numbers, despite Abilene’s promising municipal framework. Today the city of approximately 6,500 residents is known mainly as the location of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Presidential Library and Museum.²

Annotations

Given their origin as souvenir items, many of the books within the American Viewbooks Collection include annotations and inscriptions. In large part, these are brief dedications or notes of ownership, occasionally including a date. In a few cases, annotations included in the books are considerably more detailed, comprising narratives unto themselves. In the case of a viewbook of Beaver, Pennsylvania, book annotations provide details from a town resident that serve to correct and augment the printed textual and pictorial information. Extensive annotations in a souvenir viewbook of Boston emerge from the viewpoint of a stranger to the city, who notes with thorough detail her impressions of the sites depicted.

The 1905 edition of *Souvenir of Boston and Vicinity* in itself is not a striking object. The softcover book has a stapled binding and a faded black cover, measures roughly 6x10 inches, and contains about 60 pages of black and white photographs of the city of Boston. As viewbooks of the first decade of the 20th century are concerned, it is rather standard issue in format and content. The book has also not earned singularity through survival, as WorldCat notes more than fifteen other copies. However, the uniqueness of Avery Library’s copy of this book lies in the penned annotations that accompany nearly every image. While the book was published in 1905, the annotations are dated from the months of July and August 1909, when the annotation author seems to have stayed in Boston for several weeks. The annotator appears to have utilized the souvenir book as a travel guide for the city, noting dates under images to record visits to each site. Occasionally the annotator expands the dated note impassively, simply stating “Seen this” or “Been here,” or notes a site’s adjacencies to other monuments and sites depicted. Some notes include more emotive impressions: on an image of Old South Church, the annotator writes, “Visited this July 29, 1909. A very interesting collection is kept here. Still used as a church.” Next to the image of the Public Garden: “Walked past. The garden is beautiful.” Occasionally an annotation is both factual and appraising, such as the note included under an image of the statue of General Washington astride his horse, located in the Public Garden: “Splendid but the horse has no tongue.” The annotator

2. General information on Abilene, Kansas, is available through the city website

Historical population data is summarized on the Abilene Wikipedia page



Figure 5. Annotated page in *Souvenir of Boston and Vicinity* viewbook. Image courtesy of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

includes notes relating only to the sites depicted, without expansion of his or her visits beyond those places pictured in the book's photographs (see Figure 5).

While we could reconstruct the travel itinerary of the *Souvenir of Boston* annotator with ease and some accuracy, the annotations give only small indications of his or her identity. The adjective “we” appears several times, implying that the annotator did not travel alone. The annotations provide no indication of the author's gender or relationship to his or her traveling companion. As to the home city of the annotator, our only clue, which may be misleading, is located alongside an image of the Sullivan Square Elevated Station in Charlestown: “Change here in going to Malden,” a town located four miles north on the city subway system. A note next to a photograph captioned “Longfellow's Home” may give a further clue as to the annotator's identity, which refers to being given a tour of the home “by Mr. Longfellow's grandson Mr. [Henry Wadsworth Longfellow] Dana” (see Figure 6). At this time the historic house trust had not yet been established for the Longfellow home, and without further research to confirm that Mr. Dana often served as a tour guide to his family's private home, we might presume that the author of this book's annotations had some connection to the Longfellow or Dana family.

Another instance of unique annotations within the American Viewbooks Collection appears in a 1900 viewbook on Beaver, Pennsylvania. This viewbook is unsigned by an owner (as was often the case), but the annotations clearly communicate that the annotator was a resident of the town. Through handwritten corrections and additions, the



Figure 6. Annotated page in *Souvenir of Boston and Vicinity* viewbook. Image courtesy of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

annotator evinces the self-assurance and sense of ownership over content that only a resident can possess. On nearly every page the annotator expands upon or corrects the information presented through the text and images. It would appear, from what we can glean of the annotator's perspective, that the book's authors have made their first oversight in the matter of page numbers, which have not been printed in this viewbook: our annotator corrects this omission with handwritten number on the corner of each page (see Figure 7).

On an opening panorama, the annotator, perhaps unimpressed with the originality of perspective, notes, "I have a Kodak & took of this same view." A later page features a view captioned "View of Ohio River looking east from Front Street," to which the annotator has written in response, "I am sure this is a view looking west, not east," drawing an arrow to the caption for further clarity. A rather ordinary image of the county courthouse is enlivened by the annotator's addition of "Court House, burned down, by fire beginning up in tower,-"; the annotation ends curiously with a comma and a dash, implying that the annotator may have intended to elaborate. Beaver, Pennsylvania, was once home to a college, and a dormitory is featured in an image captioned, "Elk Street and College Dormitory." Our annotator expands thus: "'Elk Street' was later called College Ave. The College - for women only - was burned down in 1895 or 96; was rebuilt, then the building was bought by the School District, and used as a high school. Elmer graduated from Hi-school in that building in 1927." Through these annotations, we are endowed with local knowledge of the town, presented by an insider who thoroughly knows the town and its history. We also gain a sense of the local endurance of a



Figure 7. Annotated page in *Beaver, Pennsylvania : The ideal home town, 1800-1900* viewbook. Image courtesy of Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University.

book such as this one; though published in 1900, our resident annotator was interacting with and commenting on the contents of the viewbook twenty-seven years later.

Along with Avery Library's collection of trade catalogs and the Robert Biggert Collection of Architectural Vignettes on Commercial Stationery, the American Viewbooks Collection enables the Library to present a vivid picture of the everyday built environment at the turn of the 20th century. Not only does the collection highlight commonplace local architecture, occasionally side by side with high-style works, but the books also illuminate often-unseen aspects of social history and lived experience through annotations and inscriptions. Throughout the Viewbooks cataloging project, Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library aimed for the effective capture of hidden stories and social

historical threads within these unique books, in addition to cataloging the architectural and urban details of the cities and towns. In some cases, such as the *Souvenir of the Ohio Penitentiary*, the viewbook at hand is the only copy in WorldCat, thus careful cataloging serves a particularly important role in identifying a unique item. In other cases, such as the *Souvenir of Boston and Vicinity*, annotations and inscriptions constitute the uniqueness of the object, in which case the cataloger needed to thoughtfully approach the notes fields of the item's bibliographic record. Due to a well-ordered approach to the project, the dedication of intern catalogers, and the funding of the Council on Library and Information Resources, the bibliographic records of the American Viewbooks Collection are now available in their entirety in the Columbia University OPAC. In 2016 Avery Classics presented an exhibition of the Viewbooks Collection to help further open a window on this unique group of publications. Many more hidden stories in the Viewbooks Collection are still waiting to be found.

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Conducting a SWOT Analysis: Evaluating the Student Employee Program in Archives and Special Collections at New Mexico State University

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Abstract

Student employees within an Archives and Special Collections department support the public service and collection management responsibilities at many academic libraries. What tools can be used to evaluate a student employee program from within the department? Can utilizing a business management tool work within a library department? This paper outlines the steps taken to conduct a SWOT Analysis to evaluate the student employee program, and the outcomes and recommendation, at New Mexico State University Archives and Special Collections Department. While the focus is on a selected department within an academic library, the principals could be applied in any areas of the library where students are employed.

Keywords: Student employees, SWOT Analysis, Academic libraries, Archives, Special Collections

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In November of 2015, the Archives and Special Collections Department Head at New Mexico State University created a departmental work group to revise the student employee training manual. Several long-term student employees were graduating, necessitating new hires. Additionally, the student training manual had not been updated since 2008 and there was a need to evaluate the current student employee program. The work group, comprised of the Special Collections Librarian, the student supervisor and the back-up student supervisor utilized a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis to develop recommendations for improving the student employee program.

Background

Over the course of an academic school year, NMSU Archives and Special Collections employs between five and nine student employees. The department is comprised of five units each with a unit head: Political Papers Collection, Reprographics, Rio Grande Historical Collections (RGHC), Special Collections, and University Archives.

While there are some tasks for which all student employees within the department are responsible, such as reproductions and retrievals, each unit is assigned one to two student employees to perform tasks that are more specific to the needs of the unit. For example, student employees in Special Collections process new material, whereas RGHC student employees create container lists for unprocessed collections.

Before November of 2015, student employees were under the supervision of a paraprofessional staff member. This position, the student supervisor, was responsible for hiring, scheduling, and any HR requirements related to student employees. Additionally, the student supervisor was responsible for training regarding departmental tasks and overseeing all disciplinary actions. After the SWOT analysis was completed and the work group submitted their report to the department head, unit heads assumed responsibility for training and supervising student employees' work within their unit, and open communication was encouraged among unit heads, student supervisor, and student employees.

Literature Review

In September of 2015, a University standing committee was reevaluating its mission, goals and value as a committee. The chair, along with a representative from the College of Business, decided to conduct a SWOT analysis with the members of the committee. Albert S. Humphrey has been credited for the development of the SWOT Analysis. In the newsletter for the *SRI Alumni Association* (2005), an abridged version of Humphrey's paper, *SWOT Analysis for Management Consulting*, was published outlining the areas of the SWOT Analysis that he used for more than 35 years. This management tool was a product of research conducted at the then Stanford Research Institute (now SRI International) between 1960 and 1970. The research was funded by Fortune 500 companies to develop a new system for managing change. According to Humphrey, the original acronym was S-O-F-T: Satisfactory, Opportunities, Fault, and Threat. Over time it became SWOT: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (p. 7-8).

Simoneaux and Stroud (2011) assert that a key advantage of the SWOT process is the promotion of proactive thinking and planning vs. reactive decision-making (p.75). As information technology improves, libraries need to adapt quickly and nimbly. Simoneaux and Stroud discuss the effectiveness of a SWOT analysis as a "tool for managing change, determining strategic direction, and setting realistic goals and objectives (p.78)." This process could be adapted from a business setting to a library.

Fernandez (2009) outlines how libraries could use a SWOT analysis for social media initiatives. "A SWOT analysis of social media in libraries will give libraries the opportunity to use such media to develop a dynamic relationship between themselves and their users (p. 36)." Additionally, the article outlines the four areas of the analysis with social media as the subject. It addresses key points in each area to help the facilitator of the analysis

solicit comments. Using this model, the committee chair substituted the term “student employee program” for “social media” and conducted the analysis.

NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections SWOT Analysis

The chair provided members of the work group with an introduction to SWOT analysis asking them to focus on the student employee program. The goal was to evaluate what the department was doing well and what may need improvement. The work group was asked to think about the ideal student employee program and what steps the department could take to realize this ideal. Each member, including the chair, contributed to the activity, which started with the strengths, or the “what we have been doing well” category.

Strengths

The literature regarding SWOT analysis suggested starting with a discussion about strengths, focusing on what your organization has done well. For NMSU Archives and Special Collections, the work group identified the length of time the student employees work in the department. The nature of the department, namely its unique material, allowed student employees to work in a specialized environment, promoting a sense of being part of a team. Furthermore, the work group discussed that employment of student employees freed up staff time to focus on other projects.

Weaknesses

While it was challenging to identify and acknowledge weaknesses within the student employee program, the work group openly discussed problems that the department had faced over the last couple of years. A lack of policies or procedures pertaining to the role of unit heads with regard to student employees led to uncertainty and decreased productivity. Members of the work group stated that there was a lack of checks and balances with student employees leading to miscommunication and neglected projects. The work group further noted that they felt the student employees did not understand the role or purpose of an archives and special collections department,

including a key understanding of policies and procedures regarding security. The flexibility of scheduling for student employees, which was cited as a strength, was also cited as a weakness, as it placed restrictions on departmental staff regarding the availability of student employee assistance during work hours.

Most of the weaknesses identified during the SWOT analysis pertained to the student employees, communication, and the need for policies and procedures, but the work group also recognized that the structure of the department, both physically and organizationally, had created silos. In particular, being physically located on three different floors and a subsequent lack of communication limited cooperation regarding the student employee program. These were mentioned as weaknesses that could be improved upon in the future.

Opportunities

The work group approached this section with optimism. Building upon the strengths, the work group began considering external factors that could contribute to the department's success. The work group discussed ideas to improve the department's public services, using technology to improve communication, developing a more robust student employee program, and educating student employees on the mission, role, and function of an archives and special collections department. To achieve these goals, the work group defined specific areas to address: refining retrieval process of material for patrons, staffing the reference desk with student employees, creating a tiered structure for student employee positions, and developing graduate internships.

Threats

Much like the 'weaknesses' section, beginning a discussion about threats was difficult. Defining 'threats' as potential problems or risks caused by external factors helped to guide the conversation. The group focused on student employees' lack of understanding regarding security policies and procedures, which could lead to theft or damage to material, and how the absence of consistent standards and expectations for student employees could affect the completion of projects. Lastly, the increase of complaints from patrons regarding the department's public service due to the difficulty of locating student employees to retrieve material was identified as a threat and concern by the work group.

Conclusion

As the work group completed the analysis, a discussion took place about the role of the unit heads within the student employee program. Because some of the weaknesses seemed to result from lack of transparency with regard to the role of a unit head with student employees, the work group decided to meet with each unit. Since unit heads were a vital part of the student employee program, four discussion questions were developed by the work group and distributed to the units. The meetings were helpful in identifying the specific needs of each unit and areas of improvement within the department. Many of the ideas, comments, and expectations were used in developing the recommendations for improving the student employee program. The questions and the responses can be found in the appendix.

Recommendations

The recommendations were developed from the SWOT analysis, unit meetings, and members of the work group. There were three areas of focus: student employee management, communication, and training. Each area provided methods for improvement and/or change to the student employee program. While the recommendations were submitted to the department head for review, it was stated that if the department wished to move forward with any of these, compliance within the rules, regulations, and guidelines regarding student employment at NMSU would need to be followed.

Student Employees Management

To help manage student employees, the work group recommended that the department develop consistent standards and expectation of student employees, in consultation with current standards provided by university policy pertaining to student employees and with an understanding of the library and the staff's role as educators. Student employees are students first, and university employees have a responsibly as educators to help students develop "soft skills" and prepare them for the workforce. Standards and expectations could help with training, provide the educational component mentioned, and assist in setting achievable goals for student employees.

Student employee management within the department was not clear to many of the unit heads. There was a student supervisor, but projects were supervised by the unit heads for which the student employees were assigned. The units suggested developing a policy regarding the authority, oversight and direction unit heads should have regarding student employees. They recommended that the policy should detail the day-to-day responsibility of the student supervisor and the unit heads. For example, where does the responsibility lie when comments regarding the level of socializing among the students has increased? Would this be the student supervisor or the unit head? Clear understanding in this area would increase student employees' productivity and contribute to the department goal of providing access and public service.

Additionally, the work group recommended exploring the possibility of a tiered student position structure. New student employees would start as a Student Aide 1. As the student progressed through school and assumed more responsibilities within the department, they would be 'promoted' to Student Aide 2. The development of this structure opened the possibility that Student Aide 2's could train new student employees, sit on the reference desk in the reading room, and provide minimal level reference.

Communication

The second area of focus for the recommendation was the overall need to improve communication among the departmental staff regarding student employees. This included the student supervisor, unit heads, and student employees. There was a need for better dialogue regarding absences, changes in schedules and work load. The work group suggested that improving communication in these areas could improve departmental workflows and public service.

Additionally, improvement in communication between the student supervisor and the unit heads was needed. This included scheduling, training, identifying departmental projects needing student employees' assistance, specifying student employee daily duties in the unit and within the department. Ongoing dialogue between the student supervisor and the unit heads could improve overall departmental communication and productivity.

The work group recommended that student employees should be required to contact both the student supervisor and the unit head with any type of scheduling issues. This was not the process at the time and important information was lost or not communicated. Through training

and guidance student employees should improve their communication with the unit head they are working under.

To improve communication between the student supervisor, unit heads, and students, the work group provided many recommendations. The first was the development of a departmental blog to centralize student employee projects and schedules and to communicate within the department. The second was to develop a prioritized list of daily duties for student employees. An example for the department would be duplication orders and returns. For one of the units, it could be shelving archival and/or special collection materials, or shelf reading material in Special Collections and RGHC. Finally, the work group wanted to provide options for the department to improve communication and suggested weekly or monthly reports from student employees submitted to both the student supervisor and unit head.

While communication between the student supervisor, unit heads, and student employees was a topic of conversation during this process, one major concern was the lack of communication, access, and reliability with student employees and retrieval of material for patron use. Public service to walk-in patrons had been affected by the amount of time it took to locate a student employee. Many issues stemmed from the disbursement of the units across three floors of the library; however, student employees who were on the retrieval schedule could not be located, either by phone or in person.

The work group recommended the use of a communications device, such as an Apple iTouch, to improve retrieval times and more importantly, improve communication. Additionally, it was recommended that the departmental Google account be used to GChat with the iTouch. For example, a staff member on the reference desk could use the desktop Google chat window, to provide a straightforward, cut and paste set of information from either the library catalog, archival finding aids or the patron database. This process could eliminate the chance for errors in location information and served as a way for student employees to ask questions while retrieving material.

Training

The final area of focus was on student employee training. At the time training of administrative and department responsibilities of the student employees such as using the time clock, duplication orders, returns and the retrieval schedule was conducted by the student supervisor. It was unclear where the responsibility of training within the

unit lay. It was also not communicated when training of a student employee was to commence.

The work group recommended that training of administrative and department responsibilities should continue to be the responsibility of the student supervisor. Training within each unit should be the responsibility of the unit head, including student employees assigned to that unit and any cross-training needed. Additionally, to improve the communication, it was recommended that a training schedule be created when a new hire arrived in the department and that the student supervisor work directly with the unit head to facilitate a smooth transition for training.

Another recommendation was to establish cross-training of student employees to do minimal level duties within all the units. This would require involvement from the unit heads; it would be his or her role to provide minimal level duties that could be completed by any student employees, along with the responsibility to provide training for these duties. Some examples that were discussed in the unit meetings were retrievals, re-shelving and shelf reading in both archives and special collections, processing books, shifting, and basic preservation across all units.

Overall, training of student employees within the units was not an issue. However, it did create the silo effect that was mentioned during the unit meetings. To overcome this issue, the work group recommended that there be a general overview of the department and information session regarding the different units to all new and current student employees. Additionally, it was clear from the unit meetings that many of the current student employees did not understand the role, mission, or value of an Archives and Special Collections department. The student supervisor provided a general walk-through of the department and the only time a student employee would be on a different floor than his or her assigned unit, would be during a retrieval. The work group recommended that the walk-through of the department continue and a more formal orientation be developed that included departmental history, how collections are organized, the history of why we do what we do, basic preservation, and an understanding and correct approach to security and security procedures. It was also recommended that the student supervisor work with the department head and unit heads to develop this orientation.

Recommendations were also made to develop information sessions with the different units. These sessions could be provided by the unit head for all student employees. Such a session could help with cross-training and develop a student employee's understanding of the department as a whole. Additionally, this could also achieve the recommendation of providing an educational component to training and supervising our student employees. Furthermore, it was recommended that these information sessions should

be a scheduled meeting and a requirement of training for all student employees. The work group stated that this should start with a discussion between the student supervisor and the unit head to best facilitate timing. While this recommendation could be seen as redundant, and maybe similar to the general orientation to the department, these sessions should be more focused on the individual units.

Outcomes

A report of the recommendations was submitted for review. Overall, the department head was satisfied with the work that was completed and suggested that a departmental meeting be scheduled to further discuss the recommendations and to gain additional input. At the meeting, the department agreed to develop a policy and procedure regarding the authority, oversight and direction unit heads have regarding student employees. Once this was implemented, unit heads had a strong understanding of their role in managing student employees, which increased productivity of projects within the department. Some units, while this was not a department wide accepted recommendation, developed standards and expectations for student employees. To improve communication, the department agreed on the use of a communications device, such as an Apple iTouch, and a department overview and unit information sessions to be incorporated into the student employee training.

At the start of 2016, the implementation of the iTouch had resulted in great improvement in public service. Average retrieval time was between ten to fifteen minutes, whereas before the SWOT analysis, retrieval time could take up to twenty minutes or more to provide access to material. Overall communication improved throughout the department. Student employees became more involved within, and were seen as members of, the department. The division between the units had softened and there was more collaboration on projects, ideas, and student employee involvement.

In February 2016, after the report was reviewed and implementation of recommendations were taking place, the student supervisor responsibilities were reassigned to another paraprofessional. The following academic semester, the new student supervisor developed a more focused student employee program. The student supervisor developed and communicated expectations of work ethics to the student employees. There was a clear directive to commit to a schedule as assigned, communicated with members of assigned units, and to be productive. Also, the student supervisor began to communicate with the unit head more frequently. The unit heads were made aware of changes in schedules, absences, and the need

for training. Additionally, unit heads participated in basic cross-training and information session pertaining to his or her unit, which was facilitated during an orientation, developed by the student supervisor, for all current and new student employees.

While not all the recommendations were implemented, the report sparked conversations regarding the future of the student employee program. Using the SWOT analysis allowed the work group to think critically about the current student training program, in addition to thinking outside the box and improving our services and department. Certain recommendations could not be implemented at the time due to elements outside the control of the department and library. However, this exercise allowed the work group to evaluate the current state of the NMSU Library Archives and Special Collections student employee program.

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Appendix

The questions and responses from the meeting with the unit heads.

1: *What do you as a unit need from all student employees and what do you expect from all students?*

Need:

- » Reliable and follow directions in a timely manner. Come with questions early in the process of doing their job
- » Attention to detail
- » All students should be able to retrieve anything with little help from unit head.
- » Being able to recognize other library employees
- » Workflow for arrival of student employees
- » Communication with students during their time at work
- » Communication about retrievals, if taking too long contact the desk to let them know

Expect:

- » Professional level of involvement
- » Socializing kept to a minimum
- » Punctuality
- » Follow set rules regarding the use of university computers while at work
- » Expect them to work independently and with little supervision.
- » Complete projects in a timely manner

2: Do you have standards and expectations for student employees within your unit? Should there be?

There is a need in general for standards and expectations of student employees

- » Stick to schedule, call when sick or out of the office, follow rules
- » If you do not have something to do ask

3: What do we need as a department from our student employees and as a department what do we want students to do?

Need:

- » Students for Retrievals
- » Communication about retrievals, if taking too long contact the desk to let them know
- » Accessing students to do the retrievals, without the pager, is harder to get a hold of students on the fourth floor, harder to retrieve materials Friday afternoon and during lunch hours
- » Preliminary inventory of archival collections, everyday library duties, shelf reading
- » Rehousing, preservation photocopying
- » Student employee who is not a senior, looking for sophomores and/or junior
- » Someone who is sharp and a quick learner

Want:

- » Student daily duties: within the units and within the departments
- » Rotating students throughout the units-maybe with students who want to do it
- » Trained students within the unit could train others from different units
- » Tiered student assistants

- » If students are interested in going after a library degree, giving them the broadest experience within the department

4: *What do you think your role is with our student employees?*

- » Training students
- » Overseeing projects
- » Participation in evaluation
- » Supervisor their work in the unit and set projects
- » General work supervisor
- » Introduce them into the world of archives
- » Educational role

Additional ideas came up during the discussion that were not completely related to the direct question.

- » Cross-training on basic duties throughout the units
- » Orientation on units conducted by the unit head
- » Project pool
- » Tracking students projects, use of a blog or Google Doc, OneDrive
- » More training in other units
- » How collections are organized, back history of why we do what we do
- » Understanding and correct approach to security
- » Communication from student employees to student supervisor and unit heads
- » Student employees on the swipe card system
- » Student Employees having lanyards to identify them as members of the department

- » Something that is not the pager for contacting students for retrievals
- » A way to see what gets put back on the shelf as a part of security
- » Long term goal, senior students serving on the reference desk

Idea of cross-training was mentioned and a follow up question was asked.

What can students do in each unit?

- » Retrievals and reshelving in both archives and special collections
- » Copying
- » Processing books
- » Shelf reading in both archives and special collections
- » Preliminary inventories
- » Shifting
- » Rehousing materials, basic preservation
- » Basic preservation training as a whole, more specific preservation by the unit level

Playfulness in the Archives: Enhancing Digital Collections through Card Sorting

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Abstract

Regardless of institutional type or resources, one question facing archives and special collections is how archival collections can be efficiently enhanced with minimal or no original metadata. This issue becomes a focal point when collections are digitized, as metadata is what makes digital collections more accessible and usable. This case study explores the development of a digital collection using card sorting activities and gamification techniques, and analyzes the direct and indirect effects of each strategy, including student employee connections to library learning goals and visual literacy standards.

Keywords: archives and special collections, metadata, digitization, student employees, visual literacy, gamification

Playfulness in the Archives: Enhancing Digital Collections through Card Sorting

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The William Allen Stonebraker Collection¹ was donated to the University of Idaho (UI) Library Special Collections and Archives in 2003. The collection consists of approximately 550 photographic negatives and prints, some located in bound scrapbooks, for a total of 1 cubic foot. W.A. Stonebraker was an amateur photographer, whose images document several important topics in Idaho history from the turn of the 20th century, including remote wilderness areas, early homesteads, and entrepreneurial operations such as dude ranches, pack train operations, mining, big game hunting, wildlife, scenic views, and early aircraft operation. After a patron requested to access the collection from a distance, the University of Idaho Library Digital Initiatives unit scanned the entire collection to add it to the Library's digital collections. Upon creating a spreadsheet with the minimal descriptive information provided with each photograph, the question that emerged was how could we efficiently augment metadata for photographs with little to no original information? My role was to enhance metadata for all 550 images from the Stonebraker collection, with an emphasis on generating geographic location tags for as many images as possible.

Problems with Identifying Trends across Digitized Materials

A few common issues emerged as I looked to create additional metadata for existing images. First, the archival collection contained very little individual, family, or historical information. Only one-third of the images contained identifying description, and it did not match across related photographs. In flipping through the images, staff identified individuals sporadically, and most images lacked geographic locations. Additional research was required to identify people and places, and in turn, better understand the potential importance of the collection.

1. <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/stonebraker>

The second problem was the difficulty comparing photographs and metadata across the collection. Digital Lab staff tried sorting the scanned images on computer screens with a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet of the original metadata provided for each image. However, even with dual computer screens, there was not sufficient physical space to compare hundreds of images. Since both the archival collection and digital images were not in any specific type of order, images taken on the same date or location were spread out physically throughout the collection and spreadsheet with different identification suffixes.

The third issue that arose was the more images someone sorted through, the more likely they were to express: “I know I have seen a similar photo before” and “This location looks very familiar.” Staff felt as though they were taking two steps back for every connection they made. It became clear that one way to solve these challenges was to remove technology from the equation.

Not Every Digital Project Requires Technology the Entire Time

Many public and academic libraries have embraced the trend of crowdsourcing to enlist volunteers to assist with tagging and generating metadata for digital collections; two successful examples are “What’s on the Menu?” (New York Public Library, 2011) and “DIY History” (University of Iowa Library, 2012). However, our unit was not prepared to spend that much time or programming on this project. We decided that a low-tech/low-effort approach utilizing existing infrastructure and staff would work best. Much like the ideology behind the New York Public Library Labs that “...the idea that digitization is the beginning of a whole life cycle, followed by transformations, further processing, and downstream uses, rather than an end point” (as cited in Enis, p. 38), we wanted to generate additional metadata so users could conduct basic search and browse via subjects, location, and date and contribute to public understanding of Idaho’s early businesses and rural life. Instead of sourcing this out to crowds online, I created an internal card sort solution that was inexpensive, simple, and utilized analog methods.

Card sorting is a concept to emerge from computer science literature typically associated with organizing and evaluating website architecture that entails providing a group of users with a set of cards with descriptive information that needs to be organized; users sort the cards with similar concepts into piles (Faiks, & Hyland, p. 350). The card sorting activity I used was a cross between website usability card sorting and the board



Figure 1. Images printed using Microsoft Windows Picture Viewer. Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.

game *Memory*. The game requires players to take turns trying to pair matching images lying face down, requiring concentration to remember where images were located. Not only did this mimic my experience on the computer, I felt like a game could also be the solution. Converting this activity into a game would make it fun for both students and staff; we could spread out all 550 images at one time for comparison purposes instead of only a handful at a time on a computer screen and find trends and subject similarities much faster; and it would not interfere with the original order or handling of the archival collection.

Resources needed to create our own *Memory*-like card game were minimal: it required a color printer, paper, and a paper cutter. Since the images were already scanned, I printed out the access jpegs at 35 images to one page, 1.5 inch by 1 inch in size, for a total of 16 printed sheets (see Figure 1). Using Microsoft Windows Picture Viewer, we printed the file name/photograph identifier number at the bottom of each image, which was helpful so we could quickly identify the images when making metadata changes in the spreadsheet. It took about an hour to print and slice the images using a paper cutter (see Figure 2).

Over 500 cards with identification numbers were cut out and spread out across a large table in the Digital Lab. At first, it looked like a colorful



Figure 2. Example of image printed with corresponding file identifier.
Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.

kaleidoscope, and then chaos, as hundreds of images swirled together on the table (see Figure 3). However, within minutes it became easy to see that this was going to help immensely. We could already start to identify images that shared some of the same features, identification that was too difficult to point out when scrolling through images on a computer screen.

Figure 3. View of individual cards printed and spread out on a table.
Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.



Identifying Trends through Card Sorting

Reactions to a table covered in hundreds of small cards ranged from the curious, “What are you working on?” to incredulous students exclaiming, “This is actually pretty fun!” Similar to traditional crowdsourcing, anyone who walked in, from library staff to student employees, was invited to spend time trying to identify trends and similarities across the collection. This activity could be completed quickly as it did not require a login or learning software and was accessible to all skill levels. It invited different perspectives and levels of expertise to participate; one did not need to have expertise in the life of Stonebraker to make a positive contribution, as card piles could be moved and renamed easily. As participants went through the cards, scrap pieces of paper were used to write down emerging themes and trends that developed naturally. For example, someone would write down winter on a scrap paper, and then start making a pile of images that included something related to winter (snow, activities in snow, etc.). That



Figure 4. Student employee sorting cards by topic. Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.




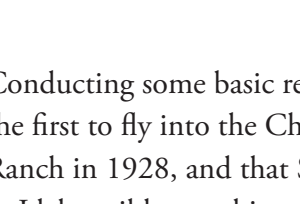


Figure 5. Example of card sort by subject. Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.

theme may later break down into smaller categories (snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, exterior buildings in snow, etc.) and the piles would be moved around (see Figure 5). Piles could be pushed around as new cards were analyzed, and cards could be swapped out as new themes emerged or were collapsed. At first, most people were a little intimidated, thinking that they could potentially mess up the order. An advantage of the card sort game was anyone could participate and the activity could take as long or as short as the participant wanted, from a five-minute break between other activities, to working on a specific topic for a half hour.

By sorting the cards by topics, themes, and trends that would directly assist with filling in metadata holes, other categories emerged such as sorting by family, individual, or geographic location. With hundreds of images physically and intellectually spread out in a digital collection, it felt impossible to identify unnamed individuals or locations. However, card sorting allowed us to see where an individual appeared many times; we looked to contextual information in these images to help identify individuals. An example of this was a group of seemingly random images of airplanes. After making a pile of all images related to air travel, it became evident that the same man (pilot Nick Mamer, identified through newspaper articles) occurred in many photos.² Because his name was described in the original metadata on one of the prints, but not in the other twelve, we identified the pilot and the year the images were taken.

2. Image comparison online at <http://digital.lib.uidaho.edu/cdm/search/collection/stonebraker/searchterm/mamer/field/all/mode/all/conn/and/cosuppress/>

		Title	Description	Date	Location	Latitude	Longitude	Identifier	Keywords
	Initial metadata		Nick Mamer next to airplane. Man on horseback.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	PG 26, P055	Aircraft;
	Final metadata (identifies the pilot, date, and location based on newspaper research)	First Airplane in Chamberlain Basin	Pilot Nick Mamer (of Spokane, Washington) stands next to his airplane in the Stonebraker Ranch meadow. The airplane was a consolidated fleet with the National Guard. A man sits on a horse near the airplane.	08/21/28	Stonebraker Ranch	45.37785	-115.198892	PG 26, P055	military aircraft; horses; pilots;
	Initial metadata		Man and woman standing next to airplane. "U.S. Army Consolidated 0-17 NG 28-360" on plane.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	PG 26, N08	Aircraft;
	Final metadata (identifies family members through other photographs, date and location based on newspaper article)	National Guard airplane at Stonebraker Ranch	A young boy Adolph "Bill" (left) and mother Golda stand near a National Guard 116th Observation Squadron. The plane reads "U.S. Army Consolidated 0-17 NG 28-360" on its side. The plane is parked in the Chamberlain Basin meadow near the Stonebraker Ranch, piloted by Nick Mamer.	08/21/28	Stonebraker Ranch	45.37785	-115.198892	PG 26, N08	military aircraft; women; children;
	Initial metadata		Two men standing in front of porch eating.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	PG 26, N31	
	Final metadata (identifies men, date, and location based on other photographs)	Al Stonebraker and Nick Mamer	Pilot Nick Mamer (left) and Al Stonebraker (right) eat from bowls on the porch of Stonebraker Ranch.	08/21/28	Stonebraker Ranch	45.38936	-115.197614	PG 26, N31	military aircraft; women; children;

Conducting some basic research on this pilot, we determined that he was the first to fly into the Chamberlain Basin wilderness near the Stonebraker Ranch in 1928, and that Stonebraker documented this monumental flight in Idaho wilderness history (see Figure 6).

This type of metadata enhancement occurred not just with people, but also with identifying dates and years of events, buildings, and geographic locations. We knew this was important metadata since these are two popular ways for users to search the Library's digital collections per Google Analytics. The geography was important not only in telling the story of W.A. Stonebraker, but as an addition to the Library's Digital Map Room.³ The Map Room is based on Google Maps and Google Fusion Tables that utilize latitude and longitude coordinates for individual images across digital collections. Wanting the Stonebraker collection to be discoverable in the Map Room meant that we needed to determine as many geographic coordinates as possible. Physically sorting cards meant that we could determine many images overlapped by location, which we could not "see" before.

Direct Effects of Gamification Strategy in Digital Collection Development

While the initial strategy and preparation for the card sort was not centered on gamification or game dynamics, these later had a direct effect on the development of the Stonebraker digital collection. Academic

Figure 6. Metadata descriptions before and after card sorting activity. Image courtesy Special Collections and Archives, University of Idaho.

3. <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/maps/>

definitions of gamification mainly focus on video games and motivation; a broad definition of gamification useful for libraries is “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding, p. 12). While the card sort activity was not designed with typical game outcomes in mind (scoring, levels, achievements, etc.), it did lend a sense of competition and playfulness that helped motivate both staff and students that were experiencing fatigue and frustration over trying to identify photographs in the collection. The card sorting activity helped counteract these feelings by increasing staff and student engagement with the metadata process and making it fun. For student employees, the gamification of the metadata process enabled and motivated them to plan and perform simple to complicated tasks towards a goal, as well as exercise a significant level of diligence, creativity and resourcefulness (Kim, p. 466). Other attractive outcomes include inducing strong motivation, spurring a high level of productivity, and simply having fun in a library-related context (Kim, p. 467-468). Overall, the card sort allowed for both staff and students to work through all the photographs at a significantly faster rate while having fun working on a difficult identification process.

Since student employees work in the Digital Lab, it was also important for the card sorting activity to produce and enhance skills that are part of the Library’s overall learning goals. Students became engaged with different learning styles, including working individually and collaboratively, and experienced that a process can take different avenues and end with success. Another direct effect was an enhanced set of visual literacy skills. In ACRL’s *Visual Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education*, visual literacy is defined as:

A set of abilities that enables an individual to effectively find, interpret, evaluate, use, and create images and visual media. Visual literacy skills equip a learner to understand and analyze the contextual, cultural, ethical, aesthetic, intellectual, and technical components involved in the production and use of visual materials. A visually literate individual is both a critical consumer of visual media and a competent contributor to a body of shared knowledge and culture (Hattwig et.al., p. 62).

Specifically, student employees developing metadata for the Stonebraker collection met the following sub points in Standards 3, 4, and 7 (Hattwig et.al., p. 77-78, 82).:

Standard 3: The visually literate student interprets and analyzes the meanings of images and visual media.

- » The visually literate student identifies information relevant to an image's meaning.
- » The visually literate student situates an image in its cultural, social, and historical contexts.
- » The visually literate student validates interpretation and analysis of images through discourse with others.

Standard 4: The visually literate student evaluates images and their sources.

- » The visually literate student evaluates the effectiveness and reliability of images as visual communications.
- » The visually literate student evaluates textual information accompanying images.
- » The visually literate student makes judgments about the reliability and accuracy of image sources.

Standard 7: The visually literate student understands many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding the creation and use of images and visual media, and accesses and uses visual materials ethically.

- » The visually literate student understands many of the ethical, legal, social, and economic issues surrounding images and visual media.

This activity helped increase student's visual literacy and critical thinking skills, including the ability to interpret and analyze images for contextual information and conducting research for source reliability. Students and staff compared notes and talked through how they were determining information from clues found in the photographs. This card sorting technique introduced the standards and sub points found in the Visual Literacy Array⁴ based on ACRL's *Visual Literacy Standards*.

Indirect Effects of Gamification Strategy

Although employing a gamification strategy in the development of digital collections yielded many effects internally to the unit and the collection

4. http://www.ala.org/acrl/publications/keeping_up_with/visual_literacy

itself, it also provided indirect results due to the enhanced metadata that was created because of the strategy.

Enhanced Access and Discoverability

One of the benefits of “touching” each image and creating broad subject piles was it later translated into established subject headings that provided increased access and discoverability of the Stonebraker photograph collection. For this collection, we utilized Library of Congress Subject Headings, Getty Thesaurus of Graphic Materials (TGM) and Getty Art and Architecture to add subject headings to individual images. With the use of recognized controlled vocabularies across all images instead of just a small selection with original metadata, the collection can be browsed in a subject cloud using TagCloud software as well as keyword searched, adding another layer of discoverability to the collection that previously was not there.⁵ Additionally, adding latitude and longitude coordinates to individual images allows for users to browse the collection by geographic location or map of Idaho.⁶ These two features are displayed prominently as additional ways to discover materials in the digital collection.

Enhanced Metadata Tells a Better Story

Before the collection received additional metadata attention, the images were seemingly unconnected to each other, with no links between individuals, family members, businesses, or geographic locations. When archival collections do not have embedded background or historical information before undergoing the digitization process, it can be difficult to describe individual items without an understanding of the whole or story behind the collection. These enhanced descriptions of materials provide a compelling narrative to both staff and students working on collections as well as users of the digital and physical archival collection.

The collection did not initially provide much biographical information about W.A. Stonebraker. After conducting research using local newspapers and references in books, we determined more aspects of Stonebraker’s life that matched the photograph collection. We discovered Stonebraker was one of the original Idaho homesteaders in the Chamberlain Basin area whose businesses had an impact on the local economy. He also helped construct a major route named the Three Blaze Trail which led to Thunder Mountain during the mining boom. His pack train operation is heavily represented in the digital collection, including images of mining towns that

5. <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/stonebraker/subjects.html>

6. <https://www.lib.uidaho.edu/digital/stonebraker/map.html>

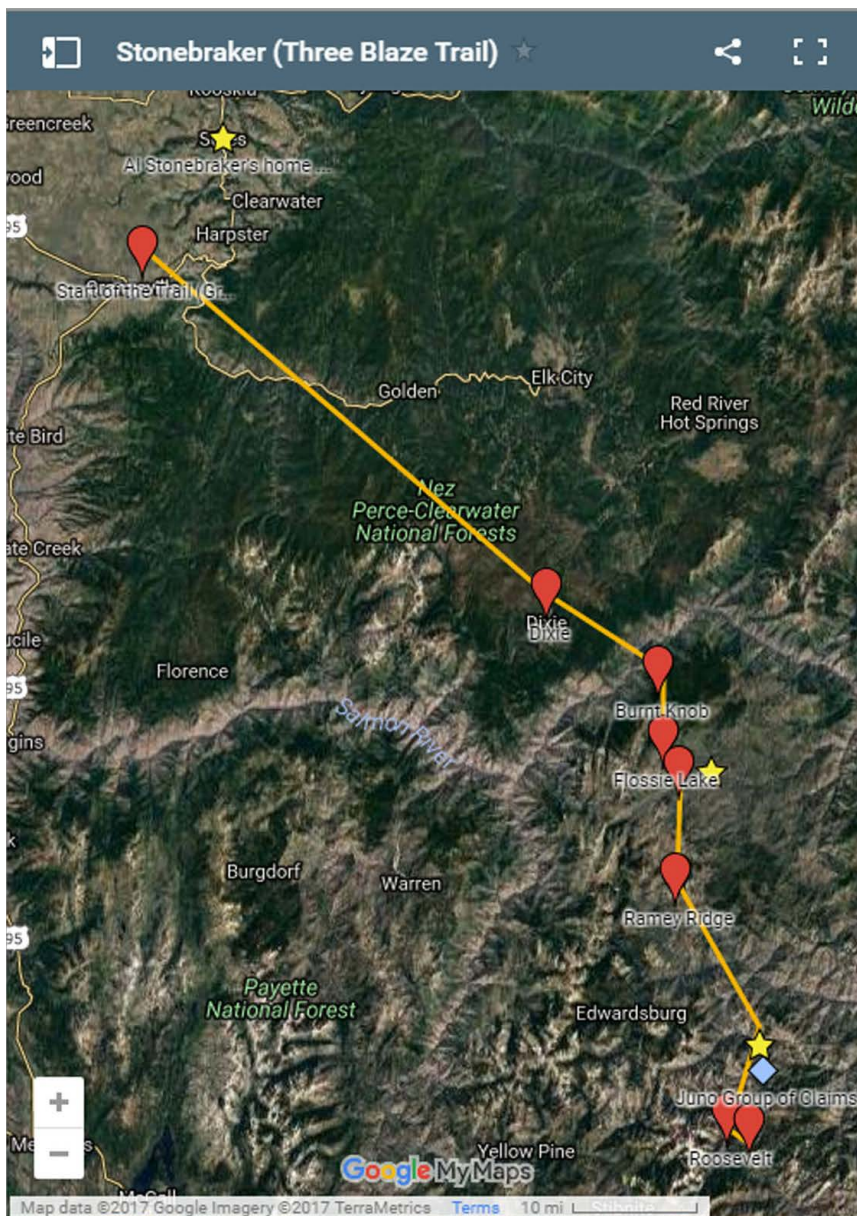


Figure 7. Map of Three Blaze Trail created using Google Maps (University of Idaho Library, 2014). Map data © 2017 Google Imagery, © 2017 Terra Metrics.

no longer exist. We determined several properties in the images, including mining properties and a cabin used primarily for big game hunting tours. Stonebraker also captured picturesque views of Idaho's wilderness and the introduction of new modes of transportation to rural Idaho, including railroads, automobiles, and aircraft. Perhaps most significant was the connection that parts of the Stonebraker homestead still stand today, maintained by the Payette National Forest and still only accessible by horseback, foot or air. All in all, by piecing together this rich narrative, the collection became a cohesive story that connects to Idahoans and people studying the American West at the turn of the twentieth century.⁷

Enhanced Metadata Grabs a Larger Audience

What started out as a simple patron request to scan images from the Stonebraker collection became the most interesting digital collection the UI Library released that year. Suddenly the archival collection had quite a story to tell and allowed for a high level of public outreach and engagement with the university, local community, and statewide.

The UI Library issued a press release, resulting in a local TV station interview of our department that aired on the evening news and online (Ryan, 2014). Boise State Public Radio called for a phone interview and published an article online with images from the collection (Wright, 2014). The story was also picked up by a few statewide news stations and newspapers, giving the digital collection excellent coverage. In the weeks after the release, we received emails about how excited people were about the collection. One email from an archaeologist at the United States Forest Service at the Payette National Forest branch offered detailed information about the location of some of the wilderness photographs, as well as corrections to metadata that she and her staff had specific knowledge of, having visited the area many times. Therefore, knowing the collection inside and out gave it more value and a compelling narrative to share with others, which in turn allowed for public engagement.

Conclusion

While the development of the Stonebraker digital collection did not start out with intentional strategies involving crowdsourcing and gamification, it turned into a simple, inexpensive, and effective way to process and create enhanced metadata for over 500 images. This project served as a reminder that analog solutions can sometimes be the answer to digital quandaries and technical difficulties around the development of digital collections. It is easy to get focused on using technological means and forget that sometimes something as simple as a card sorting game can be the answer to the problem. It proved worthwhile in cost effectiveness, student engagement, and an improved digital collection.

In looking to transfer this process to other institutions and collections, this card sorting activity would be useful with large, complex collections where little to no original metadata is provided, but could be used for smaller visual collections as well. The exercise can be easily adapted for different types of collections; the only suggested best practice is to print the unique identifier on each card so that the

image can be traced back to the original metadata. One lesson learned to decrease the amount of time needed to create additional metadata is to sort the original metadata in Microsoft Excel by category instead of applying subject headings and keywords image by image.

Besides instilling a sense of playfulness and fun while learning in the Digital Lab, it was intriguing to see how students engaged with the visual literacy aspects of the activity. Next steps to increase value in these types of exercises and activities is to directly tie them to the ACRL Visual Literacy Standards and demonstrate how it increases student engagement, visual literacy and critical thinking skills, and potentially retention of student employees and interns in the unit. Finally, building in ways to formally assess these measures and standards will help demonstrate the value of the library to student learning in the library and university.

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