

February 2006

Collecting Books and Other Artifacts

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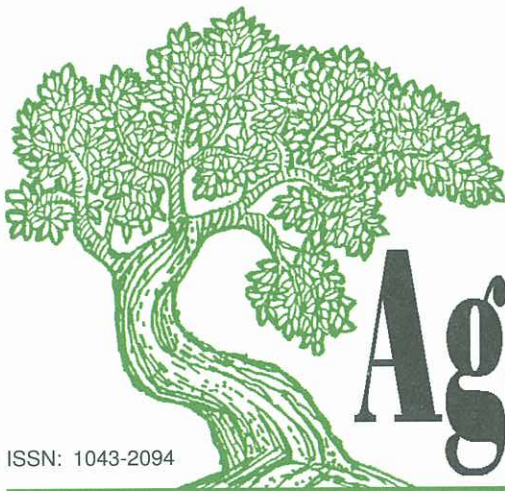
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Recommended Citation

Steele, Kirstin A. (2006) "Collecting Books and Other Artifacts," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 1, Article 5.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4834>

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Against the Grain

“Linking Publishers, Vendors and Librarians”

ISSN: 1043-2094

Collecting Books and Other Artifacts

by **Kirstin A. Steele** (Assistant Professor and Collection Management Librarian, Daniel Library, The Citadel, Charleston SC) <steelek1@citadel.edu>



At the **2004 Charleston Conference**, keynote speaker **Michael A. Keller** noted that librarians' preoccupation with journals has often prevented us from collecting more contemporary, less traditional cultural artifacts (e.g., video games or early versions of automated library systems). **Dr. Robert Martin** of **IMLS** noted how the missions of libraries, museums, and some broadcasters have become so similar as to eat through the walls of our separate “silos.”


Those two addresses helped to get thoughts I'd had about why people and libraries collect certain books. A larger question, of course, is why humans collect things at all, sometimes things that are barely useful. For this issue, I have focused on two questions: why individuals collect what they do, and why/if it is important to individuals to find their collections a perpetual home. One in-

spiration is the **Chapin-Herowitz Collection** of dog books at the **Earl Gregg Swem Library** at the **College of William & Mary**. Another is the variety of collections just in my own family.

In addition to books about dogs, I collect refrigerator magnets shaped like insects and coloring books, and harbor unfulfilled desires to collect wooden chairs. My motivations are fairly straightforward: I like dogs and enjoy reading about them; and my inner six-year-old still enjoys coloring and the fun shapes that magnets come in. Chairs are useful and interestingly made sometimes; I don't actively collect because they take up a lot more space than magnets and books! I purchase a lot of jigsaw puzzles, but I never keep them. I don't expect any of my little collections to find permanent homes after I'm dead.

My paternal grandmother collected salt and pepper shakers in animal shapes, and my maternal grandmother collects rocks... sometimes not real pretty ones! My sister collects miniature tea cups and saucers. Undeterred by space limitations, my mother collects furniture. Buttons, postcards, and keys...

I solicited short essays from my family and acquaintances about their collections, asking how they started their collections, why and if they continue to collect, whether they think the collection is an “important” cultural record, and where they would like to see their collection in 100 years. I found it interesting that in this small sampling, the men had concrete, large-scale collections, while (like me) the women chose things they enjoyed looking at or handling. No conclusions, just interesting!

Nothing I've gathered here addresses library collection development directly, but I hope these essays generate thought on strategic collection planning and maybe the balance between collecting for perpetuity and collecting for short-term or pleasure reading. On a personal note, I've found it much easier to get rid of stuff at my house since I have acknowledged that I don't consider my bug magnets important cultural records. Or are they? 

If Rumors Were Horses

Back from San Antonio. I ran into a lot of great friends and colleagues. And San Antonio is especially fun. Even spent some time with my daughter-in-law **Lindsay** who lives in the area. We had some great times!

Hoo ha! The fabulous **Karen Hunter**, Senior Vice President, Elsevier has been awarded the **2006 CSA/Ulrichs Serials Librarianship Award** (formerly **Bowker/Ulrichs Serials Librarianship Award**), recognizing her leadership in the collaborative development of the electronic delivery of scholarly information. **Karen's** colleagues in libraries and in publishing organizations describe her as a “thought-leader” and “innovator” with concerns that go “beyond any interests she may have as an employee of a single publishing company.” A dedicated explorer of the yields of electronic delivery, she has spearheaded many important re-

search initiatives that influenced the thinking of an entire professional community. Two key collaborative projects were **TULIP (The University Licensing Program)** (1991 to 1995) which involved nine major research universities in the United States and other partners and its successor **PEAK (Pricing Electronic Access to Knowledge)**, a collaboration with the **University of Michigan** and other partners. She actively champions a range of projects addressing the challenge of archiving digital information and orchestrated **Elsevier's** project planning effort in its collaborative work with **Yale University Library** on the **2001 Andrew W. Mellon Grant, “Archiving Electronic Journals.”** These projects were characterized by the open sharing of research findings. **Karen** was an early supporter of the **Coalition for Networked Informa-**

continued on page 8

What To Look For In This Issue:

<i>ILL Purchase Express</i>	46
<i>How to Select a Vendor for an Approval Plan: Through Friendship, Personality or an RFP?</i>	50
<i>And They Were There — 2005 Charleston Conference Meeting Reports</i>	53
<i>Books as Entertainment</i>	77
<i>Podcasting, Coursecasting, and the Library</i>	78
<i>NISO Metasearch Initiative</i>	79
<i>What in the WorldCat is OCLC up to?</i> .	82
<i>Interviews</i>	
<i>Matthew J. Bruccoli</i>	30
<i>Gregory Desilet</i>	31
<i>F. Dixon Brooke, Jr.</i>	72
<i>Profiles Encouraged</i>	
<i>Maria S. Kuhn</i>	50



1043-2094(200602)18:1:1-Z