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The Art of Processing a Collection

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The Art of Processing a Collection

Abstract

One of the most astounding things about Special Collections and Archives is that there is no necessarily right or wrong way to process a collection. If you have the same questions as I did when I first started, you may be wondering what exactly processing a collection means. Coming from a background of working in libraries, there has always been a right and wrong order, and most often than not the right way includes being alphabetical and chronological. However, that's not always the case in Special Collections. What I've learned so far is that effectively processing a collection means to organize any array of papers, letters, artifacts, etc., in a manner that will make it easiest for researchers to either know if the collection could be useful to them, or quickly identify which parts of a collection they're interested in. [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, Barbara Holley Library Intern

Disciplines

Archival Science | Library and Information Science

Comments

The Interns at Gettysburg College's Musselman Library captured their internship experiences since the spring of 2011. Over time the blog has featured Fortenbaugh, Smith, and Holley interns. They shared updates on semester long projects, responded to blogging prompts, and documented their individual intern experience.

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July 14, 2015

By: Alexa Schreier

One of the most astounding things about Special Collections and Archives is that there is no necessarily right or wrong way to process a collection. If you have the same questions as I did when I first started, you may be wondering what exactly processing a collection means. Coming from a background of working in libraries, there has always been a right and wrong order, and most often than not the right way includes being alphabetical and chronological. However, that's not always the case in Special Collections. What I've learned so far is that effectively processing a collection means to organize any array of papers, letters, artifacts, etc., in a manner that will make it easiest for researchers to either know if the collection could be useful to them, or quickly identify which parts of a collection they're interested in.

With this new knowledge, I've been spending a large majority of my time processing what have become the *Schwartz Family Papers* and the *Papers of Janet Biesecker Schmidt '32*. Though the contents of both began as one collection, I made the decision to separate Janet's belongings because she had not apparent relation to the Schwarz's. After many hours of sifting through and reading letters and documents, it became obvious that the collection contained items from three generation of Schwartz's: John William Schwartz (1834-1919), his son Frederick Keller Schwartz (1893-1966), and Frederick's son, John Frederick Schwartz (1928-2007). Each of the Schwartz's graduated from Gettysburg College, respectively in 1856, 1917, and 1950. Beyond College memorabilia, the collection includes information about Worthington, Pennsylvania where John W. was originally



from, a photograph album from Fred's early years at Gettysburg, and John Frederick's letters home while serving in the Navy for 18 months during World War II.



Separated from the Schwartz Family Papers and turned into their own manuscript collection were the belongings of Janet Biesecker. Janet graduated from Gettysburg College in 1932 and the items in her collection primarily consist of 12 dance cards and various paper ephemera (such as College event and sorority invitations, a pin, ribbons, name cards, and bridge score cards, among other things) from her time at Gettysburg College.

As always, new and exciting things continue to happen in Special Collections and Archives each and every day!

<http://blogging.musselmanlibrary.org/2015/07/>