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Artifacts as Ambassadors: Sharing Special Collections through Collaboration with Student Curators

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Artifacts as Ambassadors: Sharing Special Collections through Collaboration with Student Curators

Abstract

Special Collections and College Archives at Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, regularly collaborates with various academic departments to conduct class visits utilizing the primary sources in Special Collections Reading Room. In the last two years, some of these opportunity have grown into semester long student curation experiences both inside Special Collections and in collaboration with Schmucker Art Gallery at Gettysburg College.

The exhibits discussed included:

[Slaves, Soldiers, Citizens: African American Artifacts of the Civil War Era](#)

Slow to Heal: The Evolution of Medicine from the Civil War Era to WWI

Owl & Nightingale Players, 1914-2014: One Hundred Years of Drama

[Art + Politics](#)

[The Gettysburg Cabinet](#)

Keywords

Special Collections, College Archives, Exhibit Design, Curation, Student Curator, Artifacts, Museum

Disciplines

Archival Science | Cultural History | Information Literacy | Public History | Social History | Theatre and Performance Studies | United States History

Comments

This talk was given as part of a larger presentation, *History in Action: Collaboration in Academia*, at the [Spring 2015 MARAC/NEA Joint Meeting](#) in Boston, MA on March 20, 2015.



Artifacts as Ambassadors



Sharing Special Collections through Collaboration with Student Curators

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S12.History in Action: Collaboration in Academia
The Revolution Continues: Spring 2015 MARAC/NEA Joint Meeting, Boston, MA
March 20, 2015



Special Collections and College Archives – 4th Floor Musselman Library

- Staff
 - Director of SC & CA
 - Archivist
 - Digital Projects Coordinator
 - Conservator
 - Special Collections Assistants
 - Interns/Student workers
- Collaboration: Class Visits/Exhibits



Class Visits to Special Collections

- Custom visits
- History Department
- First Year Seminars
- English Department
- Art History
- Theatre Arts
- Science



Yan Sun's ARTH 234 Arts of China class visits



Special Collections and College Archives Class Visits Fall 2013 (20 sessions for 17 courses)



9/10 HIST 300 **Historical Method** – Michael Birkner - 25 students
Introduction to the Archives and the archival project on unprocessed collection

9/10 FYS 185-2 **The Long Shadow of the Civil War** – Brian Jordan – 13 students
Civil War related items and Battle of Gettysburg reunions and monuments

9/19 FYS 183 **Investigate the Battlefield Gettysburg** – David Booz – 18 students
Civil War related items and Battle of Gettysburg reunions and monuments

9/24 HIST 106-A **Atlantic World 1600-1850** – Barbara Sommer - 20 students
Map visit with a focus on selections from the Stuckenberg Map Collection

9/24 HIST 106-B **Atlantic World 1600-1850** – Barbara Sommer - 10 students
Map visit with a focus on selections from the Stuckenberg Map Collection

10/3 FYS 167 **The Pity of War** – Chris Zappe – 10 students
Display of World War I materials including those with ties to College History

10/3 HIST 460 **Individualized Study-Research** – Ian Isherwood – 1 student
Student Sarah Johnson - World War I research and Hurd Collection

10/9 HIST 426 **Seminar: Pennsylvania's Indians** – Tim Shannon – 10 students
Indian Captivity Narratives and Native American Chief lithographs

10/16 FYS 128-2 **Shakespeare: Then and Now!** – Susan Russell – 4 students
Shakespeare 2nd Folio

10/21 FYS 135-2 **The Secret Life of Puppets** – Leslie Strongwater – 7 students
Indonesian puppets and Javanese shadow puppets

10/21 HIST 301 **Public History** – Jill Titus – 17 students
Slaves, Soldiers, Citizens exhibit and material culture exercise

10/29 ARTH 131 **Introduction to Asian Art** – Yan Sun – 12 students
Display of over 40 pieces of Asian Art

10/30 ENG 214 **17th Century English Drama** – Gavin Foster – 12 students
Shakespeare 2nd Folio, religious tracts, and 17th century book binding

11/1 FYS 174 **Four Years, Far Away** – Dan Gilbert – 13 students
Materials featuring 1957-1961 Gettysburg College and Space Race materials

11/5 ARTH 131 **Introduction to Asian Art** – Yan Sun – 13 students
Display of over 40 pieces of Asian Art

11/11 ARTH 234 **Arts of China** – Leslie Wallace - 11 students
Asian Art pieces from the Kramer Collection

11/13 HIST 426 **Seminar: Pennsylvania's Indians** – Tim Shannon – 10 students
Native American items and Carlisle Indian School photography

11/14 FYS 130-2 **Pills, Potions, Poisons, and Pathogens: Exploring the Mysterious World of Fungi** – Ralph Cavaliere – 14 students
Preservation discussion and behind the scenes tour of the Collections Room

11/20 ARTH 234 **Arts of China** – Leslie Wallace - 11 students
Maoist era posters

11/26 ENG 221 **Survey of English Literature: 17th & 18th Century** – Joanne Myers – 11 students
17th and 18th century rare books, bookbinding methods, conservator's tools

Student Curated Exhibits in Special Collections

- Slaves, Soldiers, Citizens: African American Artifacts of the Civil War Era
- Slow to Heal: The Evolution of Medicine from the Civil War Era to WWI
- Owl & Nightingale Players, 1914-2014: One Hundred Years of Drama

Timing is Everything

- Excellent Content
- Student talent
- Campus Interest/Support
- Topical Anniversary
- Audience
- Curricular ties
- Memorable



Timetable

- Idea
- Collaborators
- Learning Goals
- Research
- Storyboard
- Permissions
- Promotion
- Installation
- Refinement
- Documentation



Slaves, Soldiers, Citizens: African American Artifacts of the Civil War Era

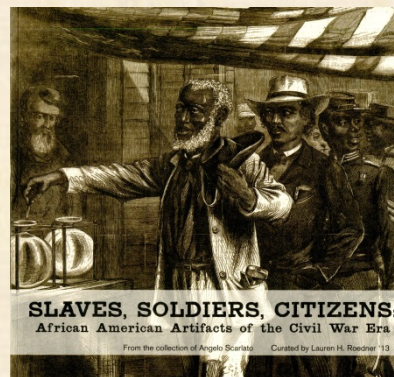
- Collector – loan opportunity that complements curricular interest
- Student Curator (Africana Studies)
- Department/Program Support
- Class/Campus/Community/Visitors
- Word of Mouth (New York Times)
- Timing (Sesquicentennial Committee)
- Legacy (Exhibit Catalog)



Slaves, Soldiers, Citizens: African American Artifacts of the Civil War Era



Scott Hancock's Slavery, Rebellion & Emancipation class



President Janet Riggs '77 and Lauren Roedner '13

Slow to Heal: The Evolution of Medicine from the Civil War Era to WWI

- Student Curator – Science topic in an archival wrapper (College History – Faculty Advisor – Specialty Museums)
- Library support (Exhibits Intern)
- Friends of Musselman Library Lecture
- Conservation opportunity
- “I didn’t know that factor” (Medical School)
- Legacy (Video on Student Curation)

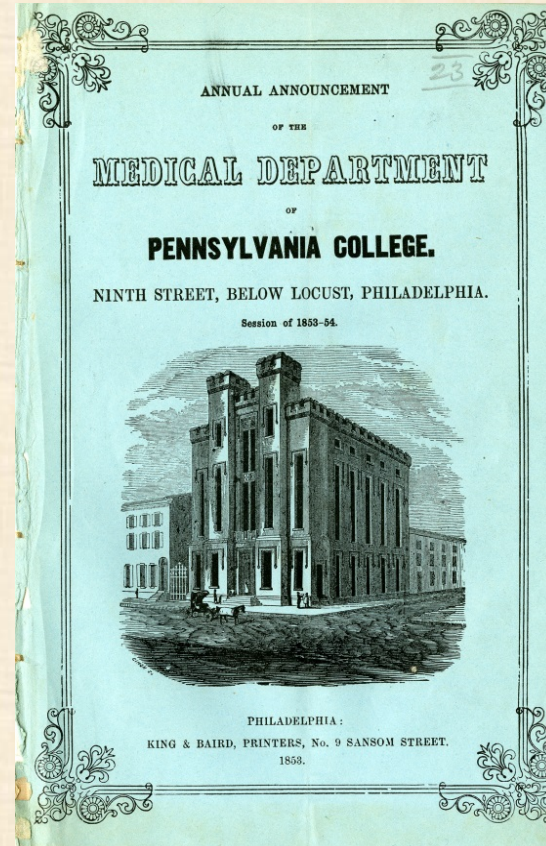
Slow to Heal: The Evolution of Medicine from the Civil War Era to WWI



Natalie Sherif '14 – Student curator of Slow to Heal exhibit



Weiss & Sons Surgical Set, London, belonging to P.W. Bassett-Smith, Royal Navy (1855) - On loan for the exhibit from Ian Isherwood '00



Did you know that Pennsylvania College (now Gettysburg College) had a medical school in Philadelphia from 1839-1861?

Owl & Nightingale Players, 1914-2014: One Hundred Years of Drama

- Student now Alum Curator
- Department Support (Theatre Arts)
- Office Support (Alumni Office)
- Timing (O & N Reunion)
- Alumni Connections
- Across the decades collaboration
- Legacy (Growth to Digital Collection)

Owl & Nightingale Players, 1914-2014: One Hundred Years of Drama



Chris Kauffman '92 (Chair of Theatre Arts Department) and Chelsea Bucklin '10

Collaborations between Special Collections and College Archives, Musselman Library and Schmucker Art Gallery

Frederic Remington: Sculpture from the Gettysburg College Collection

Curated by Elizabeth Peterson '10
September – October 2009

Ancient Ritual Objects of China

Curated by Elizabeth Peterson '10
November 20 – December 5, 2009

Reviving the Past: Antiquity and Antiquarianism in Chinese Art in the Ming and Qing Dynasties

Curated by Brittany Simmonds '11
February 24 – March 11, 2011

Art + Politics

Curated by students in Shannon Egan's "Art and Public Policy"
November 19 – December 10, 2011

The Gettysburg Cabinet

Curated by students in the course "Wonders of Nature and Artifice:
the Renaissance Quest for Knowledge"
Felicia Else, Associate Professor, Dept. of Art and Art History and
Kay Etheridge, Professor, Biology Dept.
November 16 – December 8, 2012

Visualizing War

Curated by Andrew Egbert '13, Natalie Sherif '14 and
Alexandra Ward '14
August 29 – September 29, 2012

Judy Chicago: The Birth Project

Curated by Francesca DeBiaso '12
January 25 – March 8, 2013

Andy Warhol: Polaroids & Portraits

Curated by Emily Francisco '14
August 30 – September 28, 2013

Field and Factory: Chinese Revolutionary Posters

Curated by Molly Reynolds '14
November 1 - December 6, 2013

Glenn Ligon: Narratives

Gift of Kimberly Rae Connor '79
January 23 – March 8, 2014

Method and Meaning: Selections from the Gettysburg College Collection

Curated by students in Professor Yan Sun's Art History Methods course
November 7 – December 12, 2014



Class Curated Exhibits of Special Collections Materials in Schmucker Art Gallery



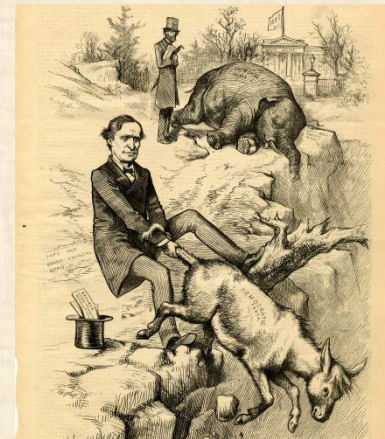
Art + Politics

Gettysburg Cabinet





Art + Politics



Curated by students in Shannon Egan's
 "Art and Public Policy" course
 November 19 – December 10, 2011



Shannon Egan's ARTH 267 Art and Public Policy made two visits to Special Collections in addition to curating the exhibit

Art + Politics



The closing reception for Art + Politics inside Schmucker Art Gallery

The Gettysburg Cabinet

Curated by students in the course
*“Wonders of nature and artifice: the
Renaissance quest for Knowledge”*

Felicia Else, Associate Professor,
Dept. of Art and Art History and
Kay Etheridge, Professor, Biology Dept.

November 16 – December 8, 2012



Gettysburg Cabinet



gettysburgwondercabinet.wikispaces.com/Introduction+to+the+Gettysburg+Cabinet

Collaborative Lessons

- Listen and think creatively
- Look for the natural fit to curriculum
- Draw from talent already present
- Discuss a feasible timeline
- Anticipate and facilitate ways for collaborators to balance the expected steps with all the unexpected challenges
 - Communicate progress throughout
 - Address challenges together
 - Celebrate unexpected benefits
- Give credit where credit is due
- Collaboration is synergy – welcome help
- Document successes and lessons
- Learn, enjoy, and build on new collaborative foundations



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