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Internship Report

The purpose of this internship was to prepare a large collection of theses for the collection. The project required contacting alumni for permission to add their work to the collection and to allow it to be circulated, taking decisions about binding and then preparing the theses, and cataloguing the works.

The project not able to be completed within the time constraints, although the majority of the work was done and all the aspects of the project that made this a unique project rather than ordinary cataloguing were completed.

Project

The theses that were included in the project were two different collections. The first collection was approximately three hundred museum studies theses that were acquired by the Inforum when the Museum Studies Program became a part of the Faculty of Information Studies. The second set of theses was a collection of approximately twenty relating to archival studies that were acquired by the Inforum when a professor formerly at the University of British Columbia joined the Faculty. The theses about museum studies required broadly three distinct stages of work to prepare them for the collection; the archival studies theses, which were not catalogued, would have required one stage.

Museum studies theses—permission to distribute

The first requirement to adding a thesis to the library collection is obtaining the permission of the author to circulate it. This authority conveys no rights to the library that are not inherent in any published work; it is necessary because the author of a manuscript does not necessarily intend it to be read by others. The permission is granted through a signed form that states that the author allows the library to allow the work to circulate and usually also allows the National Library of Canada to preserve the work on microform or digitally and is not optional

(although a two-year delay may be requested). When the authors of the majority of these papers completed them, these forms were not submitted, so that the works could not be added to the library collection. Fewer than half of the theses included this authority at the beginning of the project.

In the fall term of 2008 a project was started to contact alumni whose works did not include this authority and for whom we had contact information. The contact information was supplied by Kathleen O'Brien, the communications and development officer for the Faculty, and contained e-mail addresses, telephone numbers, and mailing addresses of alumni. Each alumnus would be contacted twice.

Since some of the alumni who would be contacted had graduated decades before, the decision was taken that first contact would be by e-mail where possible, explaining the project and including an electronic version of the authority form that they could print and return. For alumni who could not be contacted by e-mail, the first contact would be a telephone call, with a script explaining the project and the form mailed to the alumnus. For alumni for whom the only contact information was a mailing address, the first contact would be a mailed letter accompanied by the authority form. This approach was determined because it would be the most cost-effective and because it would provide alumni with some indication of the project prior to the second contact, which was a letter mailed to all alumni.

This second contact included a stamped, self-addressed return envelop to decrease the effort required by alumni to return the forms. The letter for the first contact was written rather formally, explaining why their permission was necessary and why they were being contacted now. The second letter was written more informally, with an emphasis on how their signing the form would benefit them, by allowing their research to be used by others, and with statistics of how many responses had already been received. The second contact received more responses than the first, though it is impossible to know whether this is because of the flattery or the cajoling or the generally more informal style, the return envelop, the increased awareness that the first contact provided, the importance that a large envelop rather than a standard letter envelop suggests, or some other reason.

Near the end of the internship, a cache of authority forms was discovered in a box of files. These forms had mostly been returned to the Museum Studies Program by facsimile transmission,

without being transferred to more permanent paper. Copies of these forms were made when possible, although the quality of some of the originals had degraded significantly.

Museum studies theses—processing

Most of the copies of theses were unbound. For most works, there were two copies of the thesis, one bound and one unbound. Some theses had only a single copy, which was sometimes unbound, and some had two bound copies. Many also had accompanying electronic versions, submitted in the medium current at the time that the work was written; a few works had only an electronic version. For all works other than those that had only bound copies, decisions had to be made about processing.

At the beginning of the internship, meetings were held to try to take decisions about how the theses should be processed. The discussion included determining whether theses with simple cardboard binding would be rebound, whether it was worthwhile to digitise all the works, and whether Library and Archives Canada would want copies of the works. A decision was also taken to bind the first copy of any works with no bound copies. A decision on whether to bind second copies was deferred depending on whether there were funds in the budget to complete such a large project.

Since decisions on processing were deferred, so as theses were catalogued they were not processed. The first copy (that which was designated for the Special Collections) was processed, but other copies were not processed. The additional copies of the theses were left boxed until Nadio Moro, collections technician at the Inforum, decided that the most effective and cost-efficient solution would be to put unbound second copies (those which were designated for the general collection) in report covers. This meant that the theses could be fully processed at the time of cataloguing. This also created a small project to process second copies of theses that had already been catalogued.

After the decision about processing was taken, theses were fully processed as they were catalogued, and theses for which author permission was received were processed at the time that the authority form was received. At the end of the internship, another small project was completed to process all the unbound theses so that they would be ready for cataloguing and so that there would not be loose unbound copies that could be lost or disordered.

Another issue that needed to be decided was about the works that had also electronic versions of the works. Some authors had submitted an electronic version of their work when they submitted print copies. These electronic versions were submitted on the medium that was prevalent at the time that the author wrote: floppy disk, diskette, Zip disk, or computer optical disc. Some of these disks had been ignored for years—longer than their typical expected lifespan. Since the decision was taken to not make digital copies of any of the works, the electronic versions were ignored, with the call number of the work written on the label and then put in a box, with the decision of what to ultimately do with these disks deferred to some future time.

Museum studies theses—cataloguing

The majority of the internship involved the actual cataloguing of the theses. This was mostly straightforward, with complete cataloguing provided for all works, including subject analysis and classification numbers. Although it was unlikely that another library (or at least a library that does not use the University of Toronto union catalogue) would acquire these works, the classification number was included in the bibliographic record, as were additional control fields.

The theses were catalogued fully, including some aspects of cataloguing that were not typically included in original cataloguing at the University of Toronto. This included all elements in fixed fields. It also included treating the theses as manuscripts rather than books (although this distinction was evident only in the fixed field coding of the bibliographic record). This decision was important to explain the unique nature of the works, as, for example, there were certain works where only one copy of the thesis had plates, or where one copy of the work had colour illustrations while the second copy had black-and-white illustrations, or where one copy was printed on leaves while the second copy was printed on pages.

Most of the works required that name authority records for the authors be created. For all authors, Amicus and the Library of Congress catalogue were searched to determine if the author had an established form of name. Most theses did not include a vita, so for most authors no additional information was available to create a fuller form of name or add a date of birth.

Some of the works required subject headings to be established. A number of these subject headings were either for specific institutions (for example, for a thesis that examined the creation of a specific museum or the history of a historic site). Many of these headings, however, were for

specific concepts that were not already included in the Library of Congress subject heading list. Generally, this was because the Library of Congress does not have as extensive a collection of works about museum studies, and most of the headings could be established using the heading for the concept in libraries (for example, outreach programs), although some headings were for completely new concepts (such as community museums). Typically, the University of Toronto does not contribute subject headings that are established to the Library of Congress subject heading list, although these headings were submitted. Headings for corporations were submitted through a Canadian member of the Name Authority Cooperative Program, a programme of the Library of Congress.

Although these were informally considered to be theses, it was decided that they should not be catalogued as theses because they properly were not, being instead research papers. This did not have much affect on the cataloguing, but instead of a thesis note (for example, "Thesis (M.M.St.)--University of Toronto, 2006.") a quoted note was made from information on the title page, which included information that it was a research paper submitted to the Museum Studies Program. This was done because of the possible important distinction between theses and research papers, and the potential importance of that distinction on institutional requirements, such as requirements to preserve the work and submit a copy to the National Library of Canada.

Archival studies theses

The archival studies theses were considered a lower priority than the museum studies theses. When they were initially acquired, all the titles were searched and found in the catalogue of the Library of the University of British Columbia, although their cataloguing for theses provides only descriptive information, so subject cataloguing would still be required.

Miscellaneous projects

Throughout the year, there were a number of miscellaneous projects that were done. Generally, during shifts working at the information desk, cataloguing of the general backlog was completed. Books catalogued were selected randomly, based primarily on a rude calculation of what might be most popular. Towards the end of the internship, as it became obvious that the entire project would not be completed, descriptive cataloguing of theses was completed during shifts at the information desk.

One specific project that was completed was the rush cataloguing of all material that were acquired for short-term loan for the winter term. This involved a substantial number of books, some of which were not received until the beginning of the term. The majority of these books were simply copy cataloguing, however, with the addition of classification numbers for many.

Another large miscellaneous project completed was the cataloguing of all theses completed for the Faculty for the most recent four years. These theses had never been catalogued or bound and needed to be catalogued in preparation for their binding. This cataloguing was fairly uncomplicated, although some of the works had very esoteric subject matter.

Additionally, when Nadio Moro was away for extended periods, requests for rush cataloguing, which were normally processed by her, were completed.

Experience

Experience with the projects

The internship was valuable for providing me with experience in project management. I underestimated the amount of time that various parts of the project would take—if I could redo the project, I would have started with contacting alumni so that the process could have occurred simultaneously with the cataloguing of works while waiting for responses. Doing this earlier would have also meant that the probability of receiving responses after I had finished the internship would be less.

Similarly, it would have been better to deal with the second copies of the works as they were being catalogued. Mostly, they were ignored because the decision on binding was deferred—had it been decided that they would be put in report covers rather than sent to the bindery, they could have been processed together. Equally, however, the unbound copies of theses should not have been left in their boxes. Once we started receiving responses from alumni and I had to retrieve works, I removed from their boxes all the unbound copies; as more responses were received and the number of theses for which we did not have permission to distribute them decreased, I interfiled the bound and unbound copies. At this time, I should have put all the unbound copies in report covers so that they would be more easily managed.

No decision was ever finalised on what to do with the electronic versions of theses that were submitted. The only decision was that no effort to digitise the theses would be made and

that the electronic media would not be checked for accessibility. Instead, once a work was catalogued, the call number of the work was written on the carrier and then the carrier was put in a box. Since the decision during the year when an internship was dedicated to these theses was that they would not be digitised, and since not all works had electronic versions, and since it is improbable that print copies will ever be made from the electronic versions, there seems no reason to maintain a box for the carriers of the electronic versions. Many of the formats of the carriers have exceeded their expected usable lifespan, and many of the documents are in obsolete formats, so if one wanted to access the data it is questionable whether one could. Additionally, while a box of random disks may be all right during the course of a project dealing with those works, eventually the box becomes just a box of random disks that are clutter.

It was rewarding to complete projects other than the primary purpose of my internship. Cataloguing current theses was more rewarding than cataloguing old theses because the material was current and interesting. It was rewarding also because these were works of significant importance to the Faculty and the Inforum and yet had not been catalogued for years because of time constraints, and I was able to catalogue them. It was especially rewarding to catalogue theses that had been completed within the academic year—once an author came with a few pages to insert in her thesis, and I was able to give her the copies and a copy of the catalogue record to show her, even though she had just submitted her thesis a few weeks prior.

Shifts on the information desk provided welcome variety. It was nice during those shifts to catalogue works from the general backlog because it was an opportunity to see current works and a change from the difficulties of original cataloguing. A number of times, while cataloguing at the desk, a user would come up, see the pile of books on which I was working, find something interesting, and request a hold for it. It was also always satisfying when checking out books to users to recognise a book as one that I had catalogued.

It would have been nice to have been on the reference desk side of the information desk-reference desk dichotomy, however. There were times when a user would come to the desk and ask a reference question and rather instinctually I would direct them to the reference desk, even though I had the skills likely to answer their question. Many other libraries on campus hire students from the Faculty to provide reference service, and the Inforum would be an ideal place to gain reference work, in an environment where the users know that we are students and

appreciate the education that librarians have and where other librarians are available for additional help.

Experience cataloguing

There were a number of aspects of cataloguing that I did differently than had previously been done. This included establishing subject headings—I was surprised (and dismayed) to learn that the University of Toronto does not establish subject headings or contribute any through the Subject Authority Cooperative Program of the Library of Congress. If one of the largest academic libraries in North America does not consider it important to contribute to the cataloguing community, it is difficult to convince other institutions that they should contribute, and contributive cataloguing is possible only when libraries are willing to give as much as they take. Throughout the course of cataloguing the theses, there were a number of headings that were not currently in the Library of Congress subject heading list. Mostly, these headings were analogous to headings for libraries or were for more specific types of museums, and did not exist simply because no item about that subject had been catalogued. Since the theses represent a body of scholarship about museum studies more extensive than almost any other library would have it is not surprising that we should have works on subjects that no other library has had.

I also added more data in records than had typically been the case. This included fixed-field data in the bibliographic records. Policy (whether informal or formal) at the University of Toronto and therefore at the Inforum was to not supply most of the fixed field coding. Presumably, this decision was taken before catalogue displays were able to manipulate the data contained in these fields, and it was decided that it would be more efficient to ignore most of the elements. Now, however, the current catalogue, Endecca, is able to manipulate some of these data but the records do not contain it. I also provided content notes for all items for which it would be useful, since this provides users with additional information about the work to help them determine if it is relevant and also provides additional access points.

At times it seemed frustrating cataloguing within the University of Toronto system (not specifically at the Inforum). The feeling that I developed about the catalogue was that its value was not appreciated and that the most important thing was to process items as quickly as possible. I assumed this was the reason that the University of Toronto does not contribute to cooperative programmes and why fixed-field formatting was not considered important. Working in such a

large system, additionally, was frustrating at times, since it seemed like nobody had control over the entire union catalogue—each library was responsible for their own items and there was little oversight.

Personal value

The internship helped give me a better appreciation for the city of Toronto. Many of the theses were about specific collections or galleries or historic sites throughout the city. Learning something about the history of these places allows me to better appreciate the city.

This experience also provided me with something more nebulous. As only the second place I have worked, it allowed me to experience another work environment. This is important because each workplace has a different culture and dynamic between the staff. Working at different places allows a perspective on what qualities are important in an ideal work environment. Additionally, for cataloguing, each library has its own local policies so working at multiple institutions is valuable to gain an understanding of what policies are unique to an institution and to know how other libraries might solve a problem. After years of working at the same place, I had forgotten the difficulty that can come with a new workplace.

The experience that I had was overall very positive. I enjoyed working with the staff at the Inforum. I liked the accomplishment of seeing a project through the various stages leading to its conclusion. This position provided me with valuable lasting experience that will be useful for me in the future. The internships at the Inforum are important for students to gain experience, and I hope that the programme will continue.