Distinctive Collections at the University of Rhode Island

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DISTINCTIVE COLLECTIONS

A presentation by Karen Walton Morse, 17 November 2017

Sponsored by the Library Faculty Development Committee

Context
Definitions

**Distinctive Collections**: Special Collections (aka Special Collections and University Archives) by another name

**We**: the core staff of Distinctive Collections

- Karen Walton Morse, Director
- Mark Dionne, Archivist
- Student assistants, currently [redacted] (2020), [redacted] (2018), and [redacted] (2021)

sometimes also including Prof. Emerita Joy Emery, Curator of the Commercial Pattern Archive, and her students and volunteers

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History and mission

The mission of Special Collections in the University of Rhode Island Libraries is to create a collection of unique research materials that will adequately serve the University's academic community, at all levels, and secondarily serve the needs of those from outside the University who would have reason to use these unique resources. Its mission is to acquire, organize, preserve, and make available to qualified scholars and research-oriented patrons those materials which are adjudged suitable for permanent preservation under controlled conditions. Unique research materials will consist of rare books; special book collections, e.g. R. I. Collection; University Archives; personal papers and maps. These materials will supplement the general collection in the University Libraries and further the goals of the Library to support the University's educational, scholarly and research programs.

(Special Collections Mission - Goals, 1976)
Collections

Image made possible by Jonathan Feinberg’s Wordle app.
### Rare Book Collection

**Subject strengths**
- Agriculture
- History (especially state and colonial)
- Literature (especially poetry)
- Natural history (especially botany and zoology)
- Philosophy and religion
- Typography and book arts

**Special collections:**
- The Poetry Collection (general)
  - Edna St. Vincent Millay Collection
  - Ezra Pound Collection
  - Walt Whitman Collection
  - Edwin Arlington Robinson Collection
- Typography and Book Arts
  - The Pym Randall Press Collection
  - The Wilbur Doctor Merrymount Press Collection
  - Fritz Eichenberg Collection
- Carl Woodward Collection of Early Agricultural Publications

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### Summa Theologica

**Author:**
Saint Antoninus, Archbishop of Florence (1389-1459).

**Publisher:**
Venice: Nicolaus Jenson, 1477-1480.

**Call number:**
BX1749 A6 1477 (Rare Books)
The proceedings of the executive of the U.S. respecting the insurgents: 1794.

Author: United States. President (1789-1797: Washington)

Publisher: Philadelphia: Printed by John Fenno, 1795

Call number: E315 U62 1795 (Rare Books)

Inset by Secretary of State, Alexander Hamilton
Ezra Pound Collection

756 published items

Envelope sent to John Quinn by Ezra Pound, April 1916. Pound Collection. Gift of Barry Scott

Rhode Island Collection

Focus on local and state history

Collection includes:

- Books
- Almanacs
- Directories
- Maps and atlases
- Newspapers and magazines
- Tax books
- Pre-1900 government publications
University Archives

Collections include:
- Administrative records
- Department/Center records
- Committee records
- Papers of faculty and staff
- Records of campus organizations
- Yearbooks
- Student newspapers
- University, college, and departmental publications
- Course catalogs and directories
- Theses and dissertations
- Photographs and ephemera

Traveling display:
“Illustrations of some of the work of the Agricultural Experiment Station of the Rhode Island State College,” c. 1920s. URI
University Archives.
Political Papers
Subject specialist: Mark Dionne

Rhode Island Governors
- William Vanderbilt (1939-1941)
- Frank Licht (1969-1973)
- Philip Noel (1973-1977)
- J. Joseph Garrahy (1977-1985)
- Bruce Sundlun (1991-1995)
- Donald Carcieri (2003-2011)

Legislators

Rhode Island House of Representatives
- David Dumas (1983-1990)

U.S. House of Representatives
- Robert Tiernan (1967-1975)
- Claudine Schneider (1983-1991)

U.S. Senate
- Claiborne Pell (1961-1997)

From Univ. Archives photograph file: Chafee speaking at the inauguration of Baum (1968), Pell at commencement (1969)
Rhode Island Episcopal Church Records

Episcopal Diocese of Rhode Island
Episcopal Church Women

Churches:
- Christ Church (Lonsdale)
- Church of the Advent (Pawtucket)
- Church of the Ascension (Cranston)
- Church of the Epiphany (Providence)
- Church of the Good Shepherd (Pawtucket)
- Church of the Messiah (Providence)
- Church of the Resurrection (Warwick)
- Church of St. Andrew and St. Philip (Warwick)
- Emmanuel Church (Newport)
- Grace Church (Providence)
- Old Narragansett Church
- St. Ansgarius (Providence)
- St. George’s Episcopal Church (Newport)
- St. John’s Church (Barrington)
- St. John’s Church/Cathedral (Providence)
- St. John’s (Millville, MA)
- St. Luke’s (East Greenwich)
- St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (Warren)
- St. Michael’s (Bristol)
- St. Paul’s Church (Pawtucket)
- St. Peter’s and St. Andrew’s Church (Providence)
- St. Stephen’s Church (Providence)
- Trinity Church (Pawtucket)
- Trinity Church (Bristol)
Personal Papers and Manuscripts

A sampling -

Journalism:
- Burton Hoffman Papers
- G. Wayne Miller Papers
- John Carter Minkins Papers
- Tony Hofford Kingston Hill Scrapbooks

Performing Arts:
- Bonoff Family Papers (Warwick Musical Theatre)
- Records of the Rhode Island Feminist Theater
- Records of Theatre-by-the-Sea

Rhode Island families:
- Hazard – Caroline, Rowland, Rowland G., Thomas
- Perry – Rev. James DeWolf, Raymond Henry Jones
- Potter – Elisha Reynolds, John

Small Presses:
- Biscuit City Press Archives
- Pym-Randall Press Archives
- Richard Wilmarth Papers (Dead Metaphor Press)

Textile industry:
- Allen Knight Remington papers
- Records of the Carolina Mills

Unions:
- Amalgamated Transit Union, Division 618
- American Assoc. of University Professors. URI Chapter
- Arthur H. Riani and the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, Lodge 66 Papers
- Edwin C. Brown Labor Union Collection
- Paul Buhle Rhode Island Labor Collection
- Brown and Sharpe Labor Strikes Research Collection

Fayerweather Family Papers, 1836-1962
MssGr121

Account book, Blacksmith shop of George and Solomon Fayerweather, 1809-1826 (MssGr121, oversize)
Foster Parents
Plan International
MssGr117

Minutes of the Board of Directors, October 28, 1940
(MssGr117.2, Ser I, box 1, folder 4)

Oral History Collections

20th century events:
➢ The Family in the Fifties
➢ What Did You Do in the War, Grandma?
➢ The Whole World Was Watching, 1968

Immigrant and Minority groups:
➢ Immigrant Oral Histories
➢ Life Story Theatre (Latinx)
➢ Interview of Mable Graves (Osahadah)
➢ RI Black Heritage Society Oral Histories
➢ Samuel Fine Family History

Labor and activism:
➢ Bernard LaFayette Oral History Project
➢ Florence Luscomb
➢ Jamestown and Newport Ferry Company
➢ Mill Life Oral History Collection
➢ Rhode Island Working Women

Local community:
➢ Galilee Fishermen
➢ HERA (Gallery)
➢ In the Wake of ‘38
➢ Jamestown Bridge Project
➢ Rhode Island’s Islands
➢ South Providence Community Gardeners
➢ Yankee Ingenuity

University history:
➢ Graduate School of Oceanography Oral History Interviews
➢ John C. Weldin and Donald B. Webster Oral Histories of Rhode Island State College
➢ (Re)Presenting a Half Century: Oral History of the College of Arts and Sciences
➢ University of Rhode Island Oral History
➢ URI Centennial Oral History

Morse, K.W.  Distinctive Collections at the University of Rhode Island, lecture sponsored by the University Library Faculty Development Committee, Kingston, RI, November 17, 2017

Naomi Craig being interviewed by S. Kingston High School student Ashley Johnson, 1998
(MssGr143, Ser III, box 5, folder 6)

Commercial Pattern Archive (CoPA)
Curator: Professor Emerita Joy Emery

Pattern Collections:
- The Betty Williams Collection
- The Joy Emery Collection
- Fashion Institute of Technology
- URI [Pattern]Collection

Records Collections:
- Betty Williams Research Collection
- Butterick Research Collection

Reference Library
(490 books, 7211 serials)

Online Database
What we do

AND WHAT WE CAN DO FOR YOU
Processing for preservation and access

Images: SUNY Buffalo University Archives collections during processing. ©Karen Walton Morse

RIAMCO
Rhode Island Archival and Manuscript Collections Online

Records of the Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island, 1971-1990

COLLECTION OVERVIEW

Title: Records of the Coastal Resources Center, University of Rhode Island, 1971-1990

Date range: 1971-1990

Creator: University of Rhode Island, Coastal Resources Center

Extent: 65.6 linear feet
133 boxes

Abstract: The records of the Coastal Resources Center (CRC) document the activities of the CRC from 1971-1990. The records are concerned with Rhode Island and the northeast region, and peripherally deal with national and international programs. Types of materials include: reports, correspondence, research data, project proposals, budget data, reference materials, publications, photographs, audio tapes, maps, receipts, minutes, pamphlets, transparencies, and drafts of theses and dissertations.

Language of materials: English

Repository: University of Rhode Island Library, Special Collections and Archives Unit

Collection number: Ms. G. 113

Morse, K.W. Distinctive Collections at the University of Rhode Island, lecture sponsored by the University Library Faculty Development Committee, Kingston, RI, November 17, 2017
Digital and digitized collection material available:

![DigitalCommons@URI](uri_today)

Facilitating research

Distinctive Collections Reading Room
Open by appointment, 9 am-4 pm, Monday-Friday (excepting state holidays)

Reference and research assistance for distance researchers via phone and email.

Image: Prof. Emeritus L. Patrick Devlin reviewing items from his collection of political campaign ads (MssGr193) in the Distinctive Collections Reading Room *(URI Today)*
What we can do for students

Access to select textbooks
Archival research assistance
➤ Assistance using materials in Distinctive Collections
➤ Referral to other repositories with collections more relevant to the research topic

Documenting student life and activities
➤ Archiving records of student organizations
➤ Ensuring future availability of yearbooks, student newspapers, etc. (and documents needed for recertification)

For LIS students interested in archives and/or special collections librarianship
➤ Professional field experience
➤ Career advising

What we can do for faculty

Class presentations (in the classroom or in the library)
➤ Using primary sources
➤ Doing research in archival repositories
➤ On collections we hold

Guest lectures
➤ Archives
➤ Public history
➤ University history

Collaboration
➤ Exhibits
➤ Digitization projects
➤ Crafting Distinctive Collections-based research assignments for students
➤ Documentation projects

Access to vital records
➤ University records needed for recertification or reaccreditation
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Access to vital records
- University records needed for recertification or reaccreditation
- Course evaluations

Future Projects
Project STAND (Student Activism Now Documented) brings together information about student activism archives from colleges and universities.

Image: Title page of American Library Association of Ohio (ALAO) presentation on Project STAND. ©Lae’l Hughes Watkins. Used with permission
Conclusion

“The dedication of a library is in itself an act of faith. To bring together the records of the past and to house them in buildings where they will be preserved for the use of men and women in the future, a Nation must believe in three things. It must believe in the past. It must believe in the future. It must, above all, believe in the capacity of its own people so to learn from the past that they can gain in judgment in creating their own future.”

- Franklin D. Roosevelt (June 30, 1941)

Image: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library dedication (cropped), June 30, 1941. From the collection of Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library & Museum.
As ARL libraries carry out these important functions [of preserving and providing primary sources], our Special Collections play a critical role. **While many of our general collections are remarkable in their comprehensiveness or age, our Special Collections tend to the unique.** They comprise manuscripts and archival collections unduplicated elsewhere and one-of-a-kind or rarely held books. They also include items precious through their rarity, monetary value, or their association with important figures or institutions in history, culture, politics, sciences, or the arts.

Special Collections extend beyond paper to other formats of cultural significance [...] Special collections are also significant for their focused assemblages of published materials so comprehensive as to constitute unparalleled opportunities for scholarship. The development, preservation, support, stewardship and dissemination of major special collections thus becomes both a characteristic of the true research library, and an obligation assumed by all members of the Association of Research Libraries. Special Collections represent not only the heart of an ARL library’s mission, but one of the critical identifiers of a research library.

**Assoc. of Research Libraries**

"[Research Libraries and the Commitment to Special Collections](#)" (2003; emphasis mine)