

Report on 2023 Special Collections Analysis Pilot

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Participating Institutions and Committee Members

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Background

In 2022, the EAST Resource Sharing Working Group revised the [EAST Resource Sharing Best Practices](#) to include conditions for the retention and sharing of special collections. This work followed recommendations from the EAST Special Collections Working Group regarding the feasibility of EAST libraries committing to retain and make accessible special collections titles. Given this work, an option was given to the 67 EAST members participating in the 2023/2024 collection analysis of titles published or acquired between 2011 and 2021 to include a separate file of special collections titles for analysis. Five libraries volunteered to submit special collections titles and participate in a working group to determine what the collection analysis should look like and to consider what the results might mean for EAST.

Collection Analysis

From the start, the collection analysis project looking at special collections titles was envisioned differently than the traditional circulating monograph EAST collection analysis, which results in proposed retention commitments for libraries. In the case of the special collections work, the goals were to

- determine how these collections relate both to existing EAST retentions and to each other and
- determine if there was a model to recommend retentions and/or if the reports could inform the libraries on self selecting retentions or other local collections work.

The working group recommended that the following reports be generated. Note that titles matching EAST's ephemera criteria were removed before the analysis.

-All special collections titles for the institution that included:

Overlap with EAST

Overlap with HathiTrust and the copyright status in HathiTrust

OCLC WorldCat holdings (same edition, worldwide)

-Overlap between the library's special collections titles and their circulating titles that were included in this round of collection analysis.

The intent with this report was to note if there are circulating copies of special collections materials that might merit retention. There were two caveats with this:

- Circulating titles were from 2011-2021
- Matching is based on the Gold Rush Matchkey

-Overlap of the institutions circulating titles with the other institutions special collections.

The intent with this report was to identify material in open stacks that might merit consideration for special collections. Again there were two caveats with this:

- Circulating titles were from 2011-2021
- Matching is based on the Gold Rush Matchkey

Note that with this report many titles that were in open stacks in one collection were in special collections at another institution due to those institutions collecting policies, e.g. faculty publications.

After the first review of the reports, it was noted that putting a retention commitment on a title that is held elsewhere in open stacks may put pressure on the Special Collections copy if other holding libraries chose to withdraw their copy. The initial reports showed other EAST retention commitments, but the group thought it would be useful to also see other EAST holding libraries, which could potentially be asked to retain their stacks copy. EAST updated the reports with EAST holdings information.

Outcomes and Implications for Future Work

Limitations:

A few factors limited the potential usefulness of this collection analysis. Most notably was the size of the dataset. With so few institutions participating, cross collection comparisons were not as useful as they could have been. Also comparisons to circulating collections was limited to the post 2010 titles, as that was the scope of the circulating collections project, and thus the only data in Gold Rush available for comparison. Differences in collecting policies, e.g. topics of local interest such as faculty publications, may have limited the usefulness of comparisons of what is considered 'special' in cross institutional comparisons.

Potential uses of reports:

Given the limitations, the group did still find the reports somewhat useful, though a broader context for comparison would have been desirable. One library noted that it was helpful to

compare their holdings to others, as they are starting to build a collection policy for special collections. Also of interest was identifying materials that perhaps should be moved to special collections.

Libraries were open to considering making commitments to some materials, given that digital delivery is an option. It was noted however that some material may be too fragile to scan, and these should be identified up front, which is a labor intensive process. Three institutions, Lehigh University, University of Rochester, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI), initially agreed to make some commitments, though staffing issues have caused delays for at least one member. There was also some discussion of the usefulness of identifying and committing to retain an open stacks copy of a title if one is available in EAST, as this could reduce wear on the special collections copy. While this idea was of interest, it has not been implemented.

Some of the rationale cited for retaining special collections were the value libraries find in belonging to EAST, particularly in weeding opportunities, and the light lift to commit to materials that were already identified for long-term retention. This was seen as an effective way to give back to the community.

Future Work

If EAST embarks on another group collection analysis, including more institutions and comparing full circulating titles would be helpful. EAST will continue to engage membership on the topic, e.g. by holding special collections breakout sessions at the annual member meeting.

Feedback on this work is welcomed at info@eastlibraries.org.