T.W. Mussen: Identifying & Analysing a Hidden Collection

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INTRODUCTION

- Hidden Collections in Academic Libraries
- T.W. Mussen collection, a perfect example of "hidden collection"
  - risk of items being lost
  - inaccessibility to wider scholarly community
  - manual finding aids underutilized by inexperienced researchers
  - staff-dependent local access
  - wear of physical items
  - exclusion from retrospective conversion projects

T.W. Mussen Collection

T.W. Mussen (1832-1901)
- Rector at West Farnham at 1859
- "A man of culture and erudition"-J. Douglas, History of the Diocese of Montreal

T.W. Mussen collection at McGill
- 1919 – collection of books, prints, and Roman and Greek coins donated to McGill
- "An exceptional gift"-Notable Gifts to McGill Library: Montreal Gazette, November 40, 1919
- Unique and valuable items:
  - old master prints (Ex. Dürer, Van Dyck)
  - early printed books (16th and 17th cent.)
  - Subject-focused
  - Theology, Church History, Ancient History, Latin, English, Greek
  - Evidence of bibliographic research and constant interest in book collecting

GOAL & OBJECTIVES

- Identify, describe, analyse, and make accessible to the public a ‘hidden collection’ of rare prints and early books donated to McGill Library by T.W. Mussen

Objectives

Phase 1 – completed:
- identify all T.W. Mussen prints and books
- compile an inventory of the collection

Phase 2:
- investigate the history of the items
- analyse & describe the collection as a whole
- describe individual items

Phase 3:
- prepare a catalogue for publication
- create a digital exhibition / website

IDENTIFICATION METHODS

Books:
- No list of donated books
- No total number of donated books
- Accession registers initially unavailable for consultation
- Only 16 books in online catalogue with T.W. Mussen in notes
- T.W. Mussen traced as a donor in only 2 records
- Small binder with 46 old type-written or handwritten 3 x 5 cards

Prints:
- No comprehensive list of donated prints
- No records in online catalogue
- Some prints listed in "European prints" typewritten catalogue
- Carbon copy of Mussen Memorial list - no links to the physical items

RESULTS

Prints:
- Finding prints from Mussen Memorial list in ‘European prints’ catalogue – abandoned
- Examining the whole section of European prints in RBSC:
  - 1,605 catalogued
  - more than 900 uncatalogued prints

Books:
- Finding titles from binder in online catalogue – 4 more books
- Mussen Memorial list starts at page 3, pages 1-2 may have had a list of books.
- McGill Archives to find missing pages of Mussen Memorial list
- Comparing information found in:
  - Archival documents
  - McGill online catalogue
  - RBSC card catalogue
  - 3 x 5 card binder
  - Library accession register

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Yacik, Elizabeth "Hidden collections in archives and libraries." : CCCC Systems & Services, vol. 21, iss. 2 (2005), 95-9