Instruction 180: Moving Special Collections Instruction Online in a Pandemic

Rachel Duke, Rare Books Librarian
Rory Grennan, Manuscripts Archivist
Krystal Thomas, Digital Archivist

Special Collections & Archives
Florida State University Libraries
FSU & University Libraries

• Florida State University
  ○ 41,000 students at Tallahassee campus

• University Libraries
  ○ 73 library faculty and many more staff employed across multiple campuses, facilities, across Florida and the world
FSU Special Collections & Archives

• Special Collections & Archives Division (SCA)
  ○ 8 faculty, 6 full-time staff, plus hourly staff
  ○ Includes Digital Library Center
  ○ no faculty position devoted to public services or instruction
Areas of Collection Strength

- Florida State University History
- Florida History
- Civil & Human Rights
- French History
- History of the Book
- Poetry
- Children’s Literature
SCA Users

- FSU students, undergrad and graduate
- FSU faculty
- FSU administrators
- visiting scholars
- community groups
SCA Instruction Services

- Prior to Fall 2015
  - most class visits handled by a few faculty members
  - emphasis on show-and-tell sessions
  - different courses and disciplines paid similar visits
  - infrequent integration of
    - course objectives and concepts
    - information literacy concepts
    - active learning
SCA Instruction Services

- Fall 2015
  - Departure of faculty handling bulk of instruction
  - Assigned to new-to-campus faculty with minimal collection knowledge
  - Presented an opportunity/necessity to break from previous practice
    - increase collaboration with course instructors
    - integrate course objectives to SCA class visits
  - Majority of visits in-person
  - Majority of visits handled by two faculty
SCA Instruction Services

- Fall 2017
  - Another faculty departure (without imminent replacement)
  - left an instruction team of one
  - New gaps in institutional and collections knowledge
  - Requests for class visits remained fairly consistent
SCA Instruction Group - Origins

- SCA Instruction Group spun off from existing reference and research services team
  - variety of experience in instruction, public services, and special collections
- Continued emphasis on close collaboration with course instructors
  - covered gaps in content knowledge
  - wanted to plan and execute 50 class visits/year
SCA Instruction Group - Since 2017

- Team approach has remained in effect
  - field, discuss, and delegate requests as a group
  - refine workflows and documentation
- Custom session design emphasizes
  - course and instructor objectives
  - in-person active learning
- Partnerships renewed and sustained in core disciplines and other Libraries units
- Capacity to execute sessions was able to expand dramatically when vacated faculty position was filled
- Everything was perfect and nothing needed changing
Spring 2020 - Behind the Asterisk

- The original plan: 38 Class Visits in SCA Spaces
  - English
  - Art
  - Art History
  - Humanities
- Planned visits included involvement of 7 members of SCA Faculty and Staff
- A few visit series, culminating in final projects revolving around SCA materials
- MARCH 16 -

- Monday of FSU’s Spring Break (students did not return)
- Beginning of most of us moving to remote work
- March 17 - governor announces stay-at-home order

March 17 Instruction Group Meeting:

“Online Instruction Period - March 23rd to April 5th (at least)”
Spring 2020 - Behind the Asterisk

Response:

- Contact with Instructors
  - Survey attempt
    - 2 responses (immediate)
  - Most faculty were overwhelmed
- March 24 Meeting Agenda: “Who has heard from instructors? What’s the plan?”
- Creation of communication log for status and plan for moving forward
Re-Imagining Objectives and Active Learning Online

• Session objectives can be applicable to online instruction
• orientation to online resources
  ○ Digital Library
  ○ SCA finding aids
  ○ Libraries catalog
  ○ WorldCat
Re-Imagining Objectives and Active Learning Online

- Substituting for typical in-person collections items
  - existing Digital Library content
  - available digitization labor
  - smartphone photos and video
    - sometimes of personal collections
  - other publicly-accessible Web content
Examples - Redesigned Sessions

- Typical in-person active-learning session
  - select items representing breadth of collections
  - assign each student an item and guiding questions
  - class discussion
  - students gain better knowledge of collections and basic primary source literacy
Examples - Redesigned Sessions

- Redesigned as asynchronous work for remote learners
  - assigned items selected from Digital Library
  - journaling assignment substituted for in-class discussion and reflections
  - students still gained better knowledge of SCA collections and some basic primary source literacy
Examples - Redesigned Sessions

• Typical orientation to bibles collection: extra credit
  ○ Pull list developed with course instructor
  ○ Instructor leads show-and-tell session in SCA classroom
  ○ class discussion
  ○ Students gain better knowledge of SCA collections and course topics
Examples - Redesigned Sessions

- Redesigned as asynchronous work for remote learners
  - Pre-selected items not all available in FSU Digital Library
  - Images located and collated by SCA faculty from other Web resources
  - SCA faculty created slide deck for Canvas and short quiz to assess/confirm student review of images
  - Students gain better knowledge of SCA collections and course topics
Examples - Redesigned Sessions

Codex Amiatinus
(c. 700 AD)

Extant Manuscript Includes at the end of OT:
- Sapientia
- Ecclesiasticus
- Tobis
- Hester
- Judith
- Esdrae 1 & 2
- Machabearum 1 & 2

EXCLUDES Letter of Jeremiah and Book of Baruch

Digital Surrogate: http://mss.hmlonline.it/s.aspx?id=AWOS3h2-i1A4r7GxmdaR&c=Biblia%20Sacra#book
Late Spring 2020 Stats

- Of 17 in-person sessions scheduled for March 16-April 23:
  - 5 became Zoom sessions
  - 9 re-imagined as asynchronous projects with some content provided by SCA
  - Only 3 canceled outright
  - About 250 out of 300 students remained supported by SCA instruction team
Punching up Online Presence

Overall Search Tips for Special Collections Catalogs & Databases

- Try the same keyword searches in all three search tools, different tools may yield different information, even about the same collections.
- Avoid using very specific terms or combined keyword searches at first - start with a lot of results and narrow from there.
- Placing quotations around a specific phrase will help you narrow results in order to find information containing that exact wording (but may also lead to no results if the phrase is too specific).

FSU Libraries Catalog Advanced Search

- Best source of information on rare books collections (and lots of other resources at FSU Libraries).
- Also includes description of some archival collections, with links out to finer description in the finding aid database (see below).
- General guidelines discussed here: [https://youtu.be/rnEaAMBuIA8](https://youtu.be/rnEaAMBuIA8)
- Advanced Search offers greater specificity in search terms.
The Digitization Plan of Attack

● March 23 to May 1, Staff from the Digital Library Center (DLC) worked from home so no new digitization could be completed during this time.
  ○ Creating digitization priorities for when we would be back on campus
  ○ Planning the new workflow for digitization projects
Returning to the DLC

- Starting May 7, one staff member of the DLC at a time could return to work
  - Rotating schedule during the week
  - Down a person as we had someone retire during the pandemic
Using Restrictions to Our Advantage

- Materials sans context useful for instigating open and exploratory conversations
- Opening discussion about virtual vs. in-person archival work with students
Using Restrictions to Our Advantage

- Encouraging discovery of materials outside of FSU Special Collections and Archives
- Contextualizing our materials and connecting our collections to those at other institutions
Using Restrictions to Our Advantage

● Asynchronous Resources
  ○ Permit unlimited simultaneous student interaction (no space restrictions), but also flexible interaction times
  ○ Recorded Zoom sessions automatically create asynchronous resources
  ○ Asynchronous resources will continue to have value when we return to in-person visits
    ■ Videos
    ■ Modules
    ■ Materials Packets
Using Filming to Our Advantage

- Not everything goes online easily…
- Artist Books and Scrapbooks were a particular challenge to bring online for instruction
- Filming a video of the object was a way to help us give access
Navigating Instructors

- Some instructors were really lost when things went online
- Some instructors got ambitious
Getting Materials Online In Time

- Getting the new workflows up and running for both digitization and description
- Challenges of our digital library platform
- Sustainability of the digital library as our main delivery platform for instructional materials
Documenting Instruction Services

- **Before Spring 2020**
  - Employed Libraries-wide tool to report statistics
  - Understood that an SCA “instruction session” included more time than just reported class visit time
  - Consultations, selection, set-up and tear-down time

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Documenting Instruction Services

- Late Spring 2020
  - Not all instructions services performed resulted in synchronous class visits
    - creation and contribution of learning objects
    - assisting in devising asynchronous assignments
  - how sessions were re-imagined carefully tracked in other documents
- Going forward - ?
Summer and Fall 2020

● Unlike Spring, we have some warning of how public services will be different from normal
● FSU will continue to have a lot of online and hybrid instruction
● FSU Libraries may keep classrooms closed through 2020 and beyond
● How to be proactive?
Summer and Fall 2020

- Revising research guides and web pages to better describe remote services
- Training in campus learning management system
- New SCA resources
  - Session templates with online and asynchronous modifications suggested
  - Canvas content for course instructors to plug-and-play
  - document cameras
Beyond the Emergency

- Continue to develop and promote our online services and resources
- Canvas (Learning Management System) Modules
  - Requests to be added as Course Designer
- Asynchronous Tools for pre-visit or post-visit
- Continue to look for opportunities with digital objects and different modes of instruction
Beyond the Emergency

- Keeping an Instructional Support digitization workstream on the schedule moving forward
  - navigating instructor expectations, copyright, and what our delivery platforms can do to meet needs
  - Using pull lists and call slip data more systematically to prioritize digitization
Thank you! Questions?

Rachel Duke  
rachel.duke@fsu.edu

Rory Grennan  
rgrennan@fsu.edu

Krystal Thomas  
kmthomas@fsu.edu