



# Pamphlets, Broadsides, Clippings, and Posters

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THE SPECIFICATIONS for this article called for a discourse on “printed ephemera . . . as contrasted with books—emphasis on care, preservation and use.” Without venturing, therefore, up the bypath of describing the limits of printed ephemera among bound books, the first task facing the next-to-last author in this series is one of stressing the obvious fact that format and long life are related only statistically. The chief problem set is the contradictory one of preserving ephemera, or, in plain English, of conferring long life on short-lived objects. “Care” and “use” are corollaries of “preservation” unless one postulates a state of inert preservation requiring only cubic footage in a clean dry place. Preservation without use would need a discourse not from a librarian but from (if anyone) an architect for a time capsule.

Furthermore, lest anyone suppose that this article attempts to report questionnaire results on “the state and progress” of its subject matter “in the libraries of the United States and abroad,” it needs to be emphasized even before the fact is demonstrated that for multiple square and round holes, there is no median oval peg that will fit all of them. In this article, then, wherever there is a generalization, it is based on the practice of a few specialized American libraries. The great mass of libraries can and do adhere to one of three general practices when dealing with “ephemera.” (1) Most libraries don’t let it inside the building. (2) Some libraries keep some ephemera and say it isn’t ephemeral. (3) A few libraries keep everything they can get.

This article is not an attempt to indict such libraries, most of which operate under the most practicable and wisest plan for their own purposes. But it is an attempt to describe something, and since (1) and (3) above need no description, and (2) would involve a description of individual library objectives, this article therefore rules out the

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statistically average library, and considers normal practice to be that of the central scatter from an aimed shotgun. It is not an attempt to define the area of the target or the "ideal." This may be bad statistics, and is certainly a mixed metaphor, but it has made possible the writing of an article on what at first appears to be an impossible subject. Definitions, then, and a few rules of thumb are in order.

Any way one looks at them, clippings are mavericks and need to be handled gingerly unless they are in process of assembly by the library itself. Clippings are never simply clippings, but are something else as well. The most common clipping collections acquired by libraries fall into the category either of pulp paper for the scrap pile or personal papers for the manuscript collection. Jefferson's newspaper clipping books of contemporary fugitive verse, for example, seem to have permanent value; those of Kilroy do not.

But between the clippings of the nonentity and of a great man there is a wide gap. Joe Doaks' clippings from contemporary newspapers about the Burr trial might have more practical use than Jefferson's clippings of fugitive verse. Of newspaper clippings since 1870, the approximate date of the introduction of wood pulp, a good rule of thumb to follow is: if the clippings are worth microfilming or mounting, they are worth saving. The logic here is inescapable if the rule is reversed, because pulp clippings that are not microfilmed or mounted are destined for oblivion anyway as soon as their use becomes heavy enough to justify their having been saved.

Other clippings obviously will belong in the picture collections, still others will occasionally belong among the maps, just as a map will occasionally become either a book or a broadside. And frequently a clipped serialized story or article from a succession of newspapers or magazines will be properly treated either as a pamphlet or a book, either in the rare book room or in the general stack. Vertical files are, of course, sometimes heavily mulched with clippings, but American librarians generally have found few special reasons to treat clippings as clippings. Logical and most useful exceptions may be called to mind: one library regularly clips obituary notices, and has in this manner built up an extraordinarily useful file of local biographies.

One average research library currently destroys without record about a third of the clipping collections accidentally acquired. This library assumes (it may be) that there is ready access through existing indexes to the clipped material in its unclipped form. The same library films, say, another third of their clipping acquisitions before destruction. And the other third is retained, mostly as personal papers.

### *Pamphlets, Broadsides, Clippings, and Posters*

Broadsides, broadsheets, and posters are all of a single leaf, with exceptions in practice noted below. As far as classification is concerned, whether this single leaf is a full, half, quarter, or some other fraction of a sheet, and whether it is printed on one or two sides, has made no difference to the librarian, who makes such distinctions where needed by means of his cataloging process, with annotations of "Broadside" for items of a single page, or "2 p.," or even "3 p.," or "4 p.," since librarians have sensibly not prevented themselves from unfolding a single fold, or from including, in such a case at the first text of a Faulkner speech, a several-leaf mimeographed news handout.

The descriptive word used on the collation line in cataloging, it should be pointed out, will have no necessary relation to whether the item is handled as a broadside or as a poster. The descriptive word will, in fact, probably be "broadside," "sheet," or "folder," because these are the three words that come most readily to the surface in the *Rules for Descriptive Cataloging in the Library of Congress* where the words are not defined. The descriptive word chosen for a catalog card, in the rare instances in which a broadside is being separately cataloged, is followed by the item's size in centimeters. With broadsides this measurement is occasionally given for both leaf size and, in parentheses, for the type-page size, so that two identical but dissimilarly trimmed broadsides will not appear to be different ones. The reason will be obvious to anyone who is curious enough to plot on a piece of typewriter paper (full and half pieces) two textually identical broadsides that would be correctly described as "28 x 21.5 (7 x 16) cm.," and "14 x 21.5 (7 x 16) cm." The height, of course, is always given first.

In the matter of classification, on the other hand, the distinction between broadside and poster, perhaps under other names than these, has been found useful by librarians, also for physical reasons.

Separately cataloged broadsides, when they have not been made into "books," are handled in acid-free legal-size folders (14 $\frac{7}{8}$  x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$  in. or 38 x 24.2 cm.), shelved in boxes (16 $\frac{3}{4}$  x 11 $\frac{1}{2}$  x 3 in. or 41.5 x 29.5 x 8 cm.) A typical call number might be "Broadsides / 1826 / J456." Fixed container sizes mean that many broadsides are folded. Posters, by arbitrary definition, are larger than the legal-size folders and cannot be folded. A poster is to a broadside, what an oversize folio is to a book and, like oversize folios, are special problems in physical location. Some posters are printed on a card-stock, where folding would be immediately destructive. A folding prohibition may, however, be exercised on a poster lithographed, for example, by Toulouse-Lautrec on

an easily foldable paper. Posters such as a Toulouse-Lautrec "Jean Avril," however, should go to the Rare Print Collection without any nonsense from the handlers of printed ephemera, who should confine their poster talents to such interesting items as the announcements of the annual undergraduate performances of "Ruddigore" or the First Jefferson Inaugural printed in 1801 on silk.

It should always be borne in mind, of course, that either a single broadside or a group of them may be converted into a book. Thus the first Royal Charter of Virginia plus a solander case is normally a book in American libraries; among groups of broadsides made into books, multiple announcements of a single private press may be offered as a real example.

The proportions of broadsides kept, cataloged, and eliminated from a collection will vary widely with special interests in a collection. One library excludes say seventy-five per cent of broadsides received, individually catalogs less than one per cent, and arranges the remainder in manageable groups catalogable by box.

No one has satisfactorily defined the word pamphlet, but everyone will agree that a multipaged, single-sheet, center-stapled or stitched non-serial is a pamphlet as long as it has a paper cover. The minute one of these gets a hard binding or a slipcase, however, it too is a book.

Multisheet, stitched or side-stapled non-serials are pamphlets as long as they have paper covers, but only up to a certain point. The *American College Dictionary* says "generally less than 80 pages." Nevertheless, in current library usage, a paperback of less than 80 pages is still not a pamphlet, and sometimes a paperbacked book of 160 pages is pamphlet-handled.

Pamphlets scheduled for a place in the permanent collection are treated singly, in systematic groups, or, like sardines, in the mass; that is, without cleaning or scaling. Those treated singly become books, are so cataloged and classified. The run-of-the-mine general collection pamphlets singly handled are hardbound for the purpose, either straightforwardly in the book binding routine, or through some such widely used makeshift as a Gaylord binder. Those for the Rare Book Collection may sport nothing more than an acid-free folder trimmed to a suitable size, or nothing less than a morocco case. In between are the Bailey cases, from green flap-folds for the thinnest, to snap-backs for the fattest.

Pamphlets treated as groups are subdivided, roughly by size, and to taste by subject, though a subject arrangement may be as simple

### *Pamphlets, Broadsides, Clippings, and Posters*

and all-inclusive as "Miscellaneous Pamphlets." Those for the general stack are hardbound in groups of about 15 or 20 to the volume, and the volume then presents a handling problem no different in kind from a Festschrift. Libraries generally have an open-entry multi-volumed set of, say, "Railroad Pamphlets," which requires only one subject card for all volumes. A single author card for each pamphlet then completes the public catalog record, and a carbon copy of the typed table of contents is kept in a loose-leaf folder at the shelf-list record, against the necessity for withdrawing author entries when a volume is lost.

Rare pamphlets group-treated are cased rather than bound, unless already bound when received, but otherwise the handling is the same, though the group divisions are likely to result from *respect du fonds* rather than subject matter: thus the Brock, Streeter, or Hazard pamphlets; or, indeed, the Thomason Tracts.

There are two kinds of temporary side-tracks for pamphlets in American libraries: the reference division's vertical file and the uncataloged, subject box-files. The ancient system of subject binding without main-entry cataloging has largely been abandoned because of the enormous duplications resulting. (The order of magnitude in American libraries is currently about thirty per cent.) Either one of the side-tracks between permanent retention and outer darkness places pamphlets on current controversial topics into immediate and sometimes urgent use: thus currently those on Red China, Formosa, or Segregation.

Disaster may overtake a library if it tries to adhere to an iron-clad rule designed either to retain all ephemeral material or to discard it all. While it is presumably better to operate a system that accidentally retains fifty copies of a Ford Motor Company broadcast than it is to follow a practice that accidentally sends a *Tamerlane* to the Salvation Army's paper salvage, there is a safe channel followed by some American libraries between the Scylla of all and the Charybdis of none, namely the collective exercise of common sense through a committee. Both the membership of this committee and its criteria for pamphlet selection will vary widely in nature with the library. The important thing in selection is for reasonable people to have clearly in mind what they want their library to be. If they want it to be a research collection on the history of railways, they will save an out-of-date railway timetable that to a small public library trying to furnish current information might be only a source of annoying misinformation.

In the following notes on a pamphlet committee, therefore, a middle

ground is adopted for descriptive purposes. The committee described supposes a library midway between the small college library and the New York Public Library, or midway between the small public library and Harvard University Library. The committee presupposed is therefore generally made up of representatives from the divisions of rare books, reference, and circulation.

Each week for 5 or 10 minutes (or more or less as occasion demands), the curator of rare books, say at his convenience on a Monday, skims through the week's take of presumably ephemeral material put aside by Acquisitions, who have already set aside any *Tamerlanes* they have noticed. Maybe the curator of rare books will take out one or a dozen pamphlets, or more likely none, from the week's wheelbarrow load.

On say Tuesday, the reference librarian or his deputy examines the once-screened lot, pulling the currently hot material for the vertical file and perhaps reinserting some now cooler items that have already served their stint. Remaining items are divided into pamphlets for the permanent collection, pamphlets for temporary subject boxes, and pamphlets for discard or exchange. Acquisitions will already have eliminated pamphlets that would certainly or probably require separate treatment and will have started them on the way to becoming books, but throughout the screening process, other pamphlets are diverted by other people to separate handling.

Then finally, say on a Wednesday, the circulation representative surveys the result. Looking over the three piles of Permanent, Temporary, and Discard, the circulation representative generally approves the bulk of the decisions and refers a small group back to Reference for reconsideration. Occasionally the librarian will be called upon to arbitrate a stubborn disagreement, but this is likely to depend more upon the weather than the pamphlets.

The discards then go to Exchange, where they get their final sorting. The separation at this point may be made by a book dealer or a staff member: in either case the basic division is into a pile for the pulp paper man, and pamphlets that may be of use to other collections.

Most libraries separate out very few pamphlets for individual sale, and these are likely in fact to have been separated out at some other point in the machinery. But most libraries do have special bulk arrangements, casual or quite formal, with other libraries, whereby, for example, all pamphlets of Virginia interest will be shipped express collect to the University of Virginia, or the Kentucky ones to the

## *Pamphlets, Broadsides, Clippings, and Posters*

University of Kentucky. The kinds of arrangement depend directly on the nature of a library, but such arrangements make it possible for a library with restricted interests to see that the pulping process does not destroy a unique if relatively minor item that belongs in some other collection.

The only inescapable conclusion in all this is that to handle ephemeral material intelligently, it is necessary to have intelligent handlers—a conclusion hardly worth so much palaver. Librarians are among the few people in the world who have it constantly brought to their attention that they need to satisfy not only a single present generation of readers, but also a succession of generations with widely differing and often conflicting interests. Most librarians know that the greatest and most useful library in the world could be formed in three generations by putting into a collection the books from other libraries that have not been used for any given 20-year stretch. But while all librarians seem to know what is necessary, there are few enough who have admitted even to themselves which of the necessary things are also possible.

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The earlier professional literature on the subject of this article may be traced through the professional indices, notably *Library Literature*, and through the bibliography appended to Lester Condit's admirable *A Pamphlet about Pamphlets* (Chicago, 1939). The author of the present article has not, however, attempted to mine anything from this body of professional literature, since sample drillings yielded discouraging results. This is not to disparage the writings sampled: they happened to be descriptions of specific practical solutions to specific practical problems that did not readily lend themselves to the kind of generalization intended here. They were all models of their kind of writing.

Condit's own comprehensive treatment of pamphlets, however, is a horse of another color. It is so good that it would have discouraged the present writer from laboring the subject if he had discovered the *Pamphlet on Pamphlets* before the completion of the present article.

Works cited in the following list, heavily loaded with broadside references because these are not dealt with by Condit, are included for a variety of reasons: two are merely period pieces; the work on posters is only a concession to the present article's title and should be supplemented by reference to the article on prints in this symposium. The introductory matter in most of the works cited will, however, be of permanent value to anyone interested in the subject of the present article, and most of the catalogs listed are essential in any library seriously engaged in research. Even the following catalog list can be usefully extended by reference to Condit's Tables II and III on pages 28 and 30 of his *Pamphlet*.

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JOHN COOK WYLLIE

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