Private libraries as special collections in academic and research libraries: description challenges and users needs: a case study

22nd February 2016
Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal (Lisbon)

Fernanda Santos | Pedro Estácio
School of Arts and Humanities Library, University of Lisbon
Summary

- Preliminary note
- Private libraries as *Special Collections*: a statement
- Description challenges and users needs: two case studies
  - VA & AS Libraries
  - Collection ID
  - Description challenges: marginalia, reading marks & provenance
- Defining principles: our practice
- Forecoming challenges: future achievements
Preliminary note

By 2009 the Library of the School of Arts and Humanities (SAH), University of Lisbon, did not have a written policy on special collections or an Old and Rare Books and Special Collections Section. Materials were located, with few exceptions, in the general collections.

Guidelines on the Selection and Transfer of Materials from General Collections to Special Collections (2008)

Adoption of institutional policies concerning collection development and the adaptation of international cataloguing standards “Note area” of ISBD, with emphasis to the “notes relating to the copy in hand” (7.11) and “Notes block” of UNIMARC, particularly fields 316 (“Note relating to the copy in hand”) and 317 (“Provenance note”).

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Private libraries as *Special Collections*: a statement

SAH Library policy adopted the ARL *Statement of Principles* (2003):

“[…] 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, for example photographs, moving pictures, architectural drawings, and digital archives.”

Since private libraries meet such criteria, they were considered as part of these type of collections.
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Collection ID:

Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu Library (VA)

Acquisition date: 1911

Acquisition mode: purchase

Type of materials: printed books, ephemera & journals

Total volumes: undefined (ongoing process of collection reconstitution) – so far ca. 500 volumes

Subjects covered: Oriental languages, literatures and cultures

Guilherme de Vasconcelos Abreu

Scientist; Military and Professor

Born in Coimbra, Portugal, in 1842
Died in Coimbra?, Portugal, in 1907

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TWO CASE STUDIES

Collection ID

Augusto Soromenho Library (AS)

Acquisition date: 1878

Acquisition mode: purchase

Type of materials: printed books and ephemera

Total volumes: undefined (ongoing process of collection reconstitution) – so far ca. 500

Subjects covered: Archaeology; Ancient & Medieval History; Epigraphy

Augusto Pereira de Vabo e Anhaia Galego e Soromenho
Writer and Professor
Born in Porto, Portugal, in 1834
Died in Lisbon, Portugal, in 1878
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TWO CASE STUDIES

- Description Challenges

  Marginalia

  “[…] original discursive notes that express a reaction to the text or an opinion about it […]” (Jackson, 2001, p. 14)

  Reading Marks

  “Readers’ marginal comments range from hasty marks to extended essays. The most basic marks are signs of attention, a line across the margin or running vertically down it, or underlining of the text itself. These are often coupled with a fist or an asterisk, or one of the conventional symbols indicating approval or disapproval: the check, exclamation mark, cross, or question mark.” (Jackson, 2001, p. 28)
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Marginalia & Reading marks: examples
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Marginalia & Reading marks: examples
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Marginalia & Reading marks: examples
Defining principles: our practice

Marginalia & Reading Marks: established description
formula: examples

316 |a Contém 440 notas manuscritas a tinta negra, uma extensa no verso da guarda anterior direita, uma na página de rosto e as restantes distribuídas pelas páginas [4], 3, 7-9, 11, 15, 17, 21, 23, 26, 28, 31-32 [....] |5 PTULFL: ULFL070354

316 |a Contém 5 notas manuscritas a lápis azul, distribuídas pelas páginas 37, 279, 460, 548, 582 |5 PTULFL: ULFL070354
Defining principles: our practice

Marginalia & Reading Marks: established description
formula: examples

TWO CASE STUDIES

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Defining principles: our practice

Marginalia & Reading Marks: established description formula: examples

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TWO CASE STUDIES

- Description Challenges

Provenance

“A record of the origin and history of ownership or custodianship of a specific copy of a book, manuscript, or other work of art. [...] References in catalogs, correspondence, and other historical records may also provide clues. In later works, bookplates, ownership marks, inscriptions, inserted matter, a special binding, and notes written in or on the item often provide evidence of provenance, often important in establishing value.”

(Reitz, 2014, Provenance)
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Provenance: examples
Provenance: examples
Defining principles: our practice

Provenance: established description formula: examples


317  |a Pert. (carimbo): Augusto Soromenho |5 PTULFL: ULFL114242317

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Defining principles: our practice

Provenance: established description formula: examples

317  |a Pert. (etiqueta): Da Livraria de Augusto Soromenho |5 PTULFL: ULFL114242317

317  |a Pert. (ex-libris): Philip Smith |5 PTULFL: ULFL114242317

317  |a Pert. (etiqueta): Librairie Ancienne et Moderne Ernest Thorin, gendre d'Auguste Duraud, 7 Rue de Médicis, Précédemment 58, Boulevard St. Michel, a Paris |5 PTULFL: ULFL00000014294

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TWO CASE STUDIES

Defining principles: our practice

Provenance: established description formula: examples
Forecoming challenges: future achievements

Ephemera

“The printed materials of everyday life, generally regarded as having little or no permanent value because they are produced in large quantities or in disposable formats for a specific limited use. The category includes [...] bookmarks [...] greeting cards, invitations [...] leaflets [...] pamphlets [...] postcards, tickets, visiting cards, etc. Ephemeral items are sometimes retained and exhibited for their graphic qualities or for their association with a specific person, event, or activity. When collected by libraries, they are usually stored in special collections.” (Reitz, 2014, Ephemera)
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TWO CASE STUDIES

Ephemera: examples
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TWO CASE STUDIES

- Forecoming challenges: future achievements: linking records to images

CHILDERS, Robert Caesar,


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Thank You.

f.santos@campus.ul.pt
pedrosantos@campus.ul.pt

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