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The purpose of this research study is to illustrate the importance of ephemera and realia for historic research and undergraduate instruction and thus encourage academic archives to expand their collection development policies and cataloguing procedures to include more ephemera and realia. Through examination of the literature about the collection and use of non-traditional academic special collections materials and the information gathered from interviews with university professors, researchers and archivists in academic special collections libraries at universities in the Triangle area of North Carolina, a variety of opinions about the research and pedagogical value of realia and ephemera are revealed.

Headings:

Libraries -- Special collections -- Printed ephemera.

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RESEARCH AND INSTRUCTIONAL USES OF EPHEMERA AND REALIA IN  
ACADEMIC LIBRARY ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

by  
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## Introduction

Academic library special collections are archival repositories for documents and records of history. These institutions develop and maintain collections primarily for the academic community — both the faculty and students — they are charged to serve. The collections are principally used for research, but are also used for undergraduate instruction.

Manuscript collections can be made up of many types of materials including: handwritten letters, monographs, serials, account ledgers, diaries, photographic materials, audio-visual materials, electronic records, ephemera, and realia. When a donor offers a collection to an archives, the collection development archivist assesses a collection and decides which material the archives will accept and which material should either be transferred to a library or museum or returned to the donor as being either too problematic for the archives to deal with or without “research value.”

Historically, special collections have prized documents, preferably handwritten, by white men about great political events, as the most important primary source materials.<sup>1</sup> *The Glossary of Archival Terms* of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the largest archivist organization in North America, states that the term *archival records* traditionally has implied unique “textual documents rather than artifacts or

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<sup>1</sup> American Historical Association-Organization of American Historians-Society of American Archivists Committee on Historians and Archivists, *Historians and Archivists :Educating the Next Generation* (Bloomington, Ind.: Organization of American Historians, 1993), 59, <http://www.oah.org/pubs/archivists/historiansandarchivists.pdf>. 30.

published materials.”<sup>2</sup> Ephemera and realia were not considered suitable for an archives to collect, as cataloguing, storing, describing, and preservation issues are different for these materials than with more traditional items. In addition, archivists did not believe that dealing with the challenges posed by the materials was worth their time, energy, and budget because these types of materials were considered to have limited research value.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard Pearce-Moses, "Society of American Archivist's (SAA) Glossary of Archival Terminology," [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=717](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=717).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Terminology and Definitions

There are no universally accepted definitions for either ephemera or realia and this lack of definitive criteria is a factor that limits the recognition of these materials as valid archival documentation.<sup>3</sup>

### Ephemera

One broad definition of ephemera was written by ephemera expert Maurice Rickards in his exhaustive *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera* (2000): “The minor transient documents of everyday life.”<sup>4</sup> This definition, as Young points out, is “more poetic than it is practical.”<sup>5</sup> The definition from The SAA glossary is: “Materials, usually printed documents, created for a specific, limited purpose, and generally designed to be discarded after use.”<sup>6</sup> The SAA and others consider brochures to be ephemera, but Makepeace, who lists 125 different types of ephemera in his book on the subject, does not consider brochures to fall under the umbrella of the term.<sup>7</sup> Ephemera are generally not considered

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<sup>3</sup> CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel, *Ephemera: The Stuff of History: Report of the Working Party on Ephemera Set Up by the CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel* (London: Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals,[2003]).

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Rickards and Michael Twyman, *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera :A Guide to the Fragmentary Documents of Everyday Life for the Collector, Curator, and Historian* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 402.

<sup>5</sup> Timothy G. Young, "Evidence: Toward a Library Definition of Ephemera," *RBM* 4, no. 1 (Spring, 2003) 12.

<sup>6</sup> Pearce-Moses, *Society of American Archivist's (SAA) Glossary of Archival Terminology* [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=717](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=717).

<sup>7</sup> Chris E. Makepeace, *Ephemera :A Book on its Collection, Conservation, and use* (Aldershot, Hants., England; Brookfield, Vt., U.S.A.: Gower, 1985) 10.

to be three-dimensional objects, but Rickards includes election buttons.<sup>8</sup> Rickards' *The Encyclopedia of Ephemera*, lists over 1000 types of ephemera, from ABC primers to zoetrope strips. Young notes that "the primary difficulty with defining ephemera comes partly from the fact that it has been circumscribed primarily by example ... In fact, it is not uncommon to find the simplest definition as a negative: ephemera are nonbook material."<sup>9</sup>

Ephemera are also known as "grey literature" and "fugitive material" because they are not standard books or serials and are "typically published outside of official or normal commercial channels . . . and encompass both political concerns and a wide variety of currently topical social, economic and ideological issues."<sup>10</sup> Another way to define ephemera is as "material which carry a verbal or illustrative message and [are] produced by printing or illustrative processes" yet are not books or periodicals.<sup>11</sup>

Ephemera can be termed as "flimsy," "insubstantial," "transient," and "having a limited useful life."<sup>12</sup>

Rickards concludes: "In any attempt to define what is and is not ephemera it must sooner or later be conceded that there are gray areas in which opinions must differ."<sup>13</sup>

Despite the confusion, ephemera are generally considered to be printed, non-book materials which are distinguished by their intended "ephemerality" of usage; this definition can suffice for general use.

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<sup>8</sup> Maurice Rickards, *This is Ephemera :Collecting Printed Throwaways* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Gossamer Press : distributed by S. Greene Press, 1977) 13.

<sup>9</sup> Young, *Evidence: Toward a Library Definition of Ephemera* 12 and 16.

<sup>10</sup> Library of Congress, "Library of Congress, Collections Policy Statements, Ephemera - Acquisitions," <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/ephemera.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Makepeace, *Ephemera :A Book on its Collection, Conservation, and Use* 247.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid 247.

<sup>13</sup> Rickards, *This is Ephemera :Collecting Printed Throwaways*, 13.

## Realia

Although there is less debate about an iron-clad definition of realia, there is still not a consensus. *Realia* can be defined as “three dimensional objects,” “artifacts,” “museum objects” and/or “specimens.” Some distinguish realia as man-made as opposed to naturally occurring objects, but others do not. Some view a painting as “realia” and others consider it a completely separate category of “artwork”. The SAA glossary defines realia simply as a “three-dimensional object” and subdivides these objects into manmade “artifacts,” such as a trophy, and naturally-occurring “specimens,” such as a rock.<sup>14</sup>

The term does not include three-dimensional audio-visual materials, or any book-like materials, and usually excludes cartographic materials such as globes. The Children's Services Division Toys, Games, and Realia Committee, in discussing realia for use in public libraries, uses the concept of “actual articles and other three-dimensional objects of reality offered in words or pictures.”<sup>15</sup> Bierbaum adds that “what sets realia apart is the tangible connection to the real world [and that] they are versatile, and may fill several learning objectives or educational needs. They are often meaningful without language.”<sup>16</sup> When considering realia in a context specific to an archives, using terms such as “thing,” “artifacts,” and “objects” conveys the intended meaning.

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<sup>14</sup> Richard Pearce- Moses, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2005), [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=292](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=292).

<sup>15</sup> Children's Services Division Toys, Games, and Realia Committee, "Realia in the Library," *Booklist* 73 (1976-1977), 671.

<sup>16</sup> Esther Green Bierbaum, "Realia" in *Nonbook Media. American Lib.Assn.; American Lib. Assn.,* 1987), 299.



## Traditional Views and Technical Issues

Neither ephemera nor realia have traditionally been embraced by archivists for a number of reasons. While ephemera and realia share similarities in terms of archivists' attitudes about their worth, there are also issues specific to each type of material.

### Ephemera

Ephemera, mostly due to the fact that it can easily be filed and stored in the same containers as traditional manuscript materials, fare better in archives collections than realia do. However, Burant does note that most archivists look at ephemera with something akin to disdain, and that "in many of the major texts on archival practice and theory, the word *ephemera* simply does not appear."<sup>17</sup>

The valuation of ephemera is not a cut-and-dry procedure. Sometimes the value is determined to be in the information printed on it and sometimes relevancy is deemed due to its artifactual value. Holcombe explains that:

[A piece of ephemera] is at the same time an object to be preserved and made safe, and a source of information. And the information is not simply the words printed on it; it can be the printing method used, the colours, the paper, the font, the decorative motifs chosen . . . . Ephemera varies wildly in [their] information content, from the brevity of a bus ticket to the lengthy theatre program complete with advertisements. An item that is attractive because of its decoration may add little to a collection; something as dull as ditchwater may be an excellent type example, and therefore plays a documentary role.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> James Burant, "Ephemera, Archives, and Another View of History," *Archivaria*, no. 40 (Fall, 1995), 192.

<sup>18</sup> E. A. Holcombe, *Difficult to Find and Keep: Providing Access to Ephemera* 2001.

Larsen believes that ephemera might have some value for their aesthetic or associational value, but even though these values “may make research more exciting, they are largely incidental. Archivists and manuscript curators decide what to preserve on the basis of informational value.”<sup>19</sup>

Another major issue is the difficulties with cataloguing these materials. Clinton points out that “there is an attitude in traditional cataloguing which says that material difficult to find and keep need not be recorded. Paper which cannot easily be placed in the well-known categories of author, title, periodical series and so forth can, at least in this archetypal world, be cast out of mind, even if to others it might seem important for its aesthetic merit or for the information it provides.”<sup>20</sup> Makepeace infers that many librarians have the view that ephemera “may not justify full cataloguing.”<sup>21</sup> But even if a cataloguer wants to focus full cataloguing attention to ephemera, in many cases it is very difficult to create a good cataloguing record. Few pieces of ephemera have dates on them. Even if an item is an announcement or an invitation to an event, the year is rarely noted on it. In most cases, an author is also not recorded. The less descriptive information that can be gleaned from a piece of ephemera, the more challenging it is for a cataloguer to work with. Joumanville writes that “ephemera [are] the stuff of which catalogers' and acquisitions librarians' nightmares are made.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John C. Larsen, *Researcher's Guide to Archives and Regional History Sources* (Hamden, Conn.: Library Professional Publications, 1988) 4.

<sup>20</sup> Alan Clinton, *Printed Ephemera: Collection, Organisation, and Access* (London: Bingley, 1981) 16.

<sup>21</sup> Makepeace, 8.

<sup>22</sup> Florence M. Jumonville, "Printed Ephemera--the Raw Materials of History," *LLA Bulletin* 53 (Fall, 1990) 56.

Collection development is also an issue. Ephemera must be collected from varied and sundry sources and, although there are ephemera dealers from which to purchase specific items, there are no jobbers on whom archivists can rely on for regular acquisitions. Anghelescu writes that: “Due to the intrinsic nature of the material, ephemera collections represent only what could escape major, radical disposal activities that took place either in the institutions (the generators of ephemeral items) or in the households of private people (the receivers of the items). However, libraries, archives and historical societies are probably the primary preservers of ephemera, especially those institutions which have large research collections.”<sup>23</sup> Young adds that “in most cases, ephemera just shows up.”<sup>24</sup>

There are also factors of preservation. Some items of ephemera that were intended for a very limited use were printed very cheaply and thus degrade swiftly. Makepeace also notes that “conservation is not helped by the treatment [these materials] receive from the public in general, often being pushed into pockets or shopping bags or pasted on notice boards in direct sunlight.”<sup>25</sup>

## **Realia**

Realia is even more controversial among archivists. Issues of cataloguing, preservation, storage, usage, valuation, and views of appropriateness are all factors.

Severn writes that:

In many archival repositories, artifacts are pushed to the very margins—literally and figuratively. Archivists discount, disdain, and worst of all, ignore these materials. Often, they don’t process artifacts as part of the collections from which they originated.

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<sup>23</sup> Hermina G. B. Anghelescu, "A Bit of History in the Library Attic: Challenges of Ephemera Research," *Collection Management* 25, no. 4 (2001) 62.

<sup>24</sup> Young, 18.

<sup>25</sup> Makepeace, 160.

Artifacts appear in catchall series obscurely titled “separated materials” mixed in among other problematic materials like videotapes, and sometimes, even photographs. Often, artifacts don’t appear in finding aids at all. One archivist explained this absence as a preservation decision, “I couldn’t tell people about the objects in our collections because then people would want to look at them.” Many archivists refuse to accept artifacts with collections preferring to direct donors to send these objects to a museum even though this means splitting the collection and ignoring the great attachment donors often have for items that are symbols of significant moments in their lives.<sup>26</sup>

Even the Library of Congress classifies realia as “non-library materials” and states in their collection development policy that they will not accept “objects or materials which more properly belong to museum collections, such as paintings, sculptures or other three-dimensional works of art; nor will it generally accept furniture or furnishings, costumes, medals, coins, stamps, badges, emblems, decorations, personal effects, or any other objects or materials, generally out of scope for the Library's collections.”<sup>27</sup>

Many archivists view realia that arrives as part of a manuscript collection as the “price” to pay in order to get a hold of the useful (*i.e.* paper-based) materials. Sandra Taylor of the Lilly Library at Indiana University “is less than thrilled at the little surprises that turn up with her acquisitions.”<sup>28</sup> Archivists feel “stuck” with the objects that come in as part of manuscript collections because, according to Brazier, often “there is no better place in an institution for them to be held.”<sup>29</sup> Brazier continues: “Most archivists have a few cupboards or shelves of these museum pieces. Because we often work as sole

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<sup>26</sup> Jill Severn, "Adventures in the Third Dimension: Re-Envisioning the Place of Artifacts in Archives" Paper given at the Society of American Archivists Conference, 2001 5.

<sup>27</sup> Library of Congress, *Library of Congress, Collections Policy Statements, Ephemera - Acquisitions* <http://www.loc.gov/acq/devpol/non-lib.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Lev Grossman, "Catalog This," *New York Times* Apr 14, 2002, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=113595017&Fmt=7&clientId=65345&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

<sup>29</sup> Jan Brazier, "Archives/Objects/Museums: Points of Intersection" (University of Melbourne, 1992), <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/confs/recovering/brazier.htm>).

archivists, or with a small staff, and with backlogs of undescribed series, these objects remain rarely or minimally listed. They often sit in a similar limbo to our ephemera collections.”<sup>30</sup> If realia is considered at all desirable, it is usually thought for exhibit use only.<sup>31</sup>

Realia can be troublesome for an archives. The wide variety of possible objects presents troublesome preservation issues including: disintegration and fragility; that the objects do not fit into the folders in which traditional manuscript materials are stored; that the shelving and storage needs can be different; and that they can take up a great amount of storage space. One of the SAA’s unofficial “Laws of Archivy” is: “If it doesn’t fit in the box, fold it. If you can’t fold it, toss it.”<sup>32</sup> Brazier states that for archivists “Our view is slightly ambivalent, for while we don't like to see the detachment of objects from their documentation, their segregation is often desirable for better storage and use. It is not that objects per se do not belong in archives but that generally, for reasons of space, storage requirements, use and access, objects are felt to best belong in museums.”<sup>33</sup> Kam also points out that most archivists and librarians do not have the training to responsibly handle art objects.<sup>34</sup>

Other archivists question the fundamental value of artifacts. Sandra Taylor of the Lilly Library at Indiana University was quoted as viewing objects as “curiosities” and felt that their preservation was not a priority: “If they disappear, then that’s what happens.” In some archivists’ views, realia does not fit into the conceptual model of “records” at all

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Dean H. Jeffrey, *"The Repository of Last Resort? Three-Dimensional Objects in Archives"* MSLS Thesis, School of Information Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill), 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Society of American Archivists, "The Laws of Archivy," <http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/papers/archivy.htm> .

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> D. Vanessa Kam, "On Collecting and Exhibiting Art Objects in Libraries, Archives, and Research Institutes," *Art Documentation* 20, no. 2 (Fall, 2001) 10-15.

because most artifacts were collected and not actually created by the creator of the record collection.<sup>35</sup>

Then there is the issue of the research value of realia. Michael Basinski, the assistant curator of the Rare Books Collection at the State University of New York in Buffalo, views a backpack in the university's collection that was owned by the poet and novelist Robert Graves as something that serves no scholarly purpose: "We're a research institution and there's not much research that can be done on a backpack. It's basically a kick. That's important, of course, but that's what it is."<sup>36</sup>

Few archivists have been exposed to the ideas of material culture studies that inform many museologists. Severn believes that:

In general, archivists have little knowledge and experience with mining the research potential of artifacts. Without a grasp on the ways in which artifacts can be understood—or in the parlance of material culture study — read — archivists cannot make effective and informed decisions about appraisal, arrangement, description, and ultimately, access. Archivists miss a chance to educate users about a vital class of records and they miss opportunities to connect with a broader array of scholars who are unaware of the material culture hidden on repository shelves.<sup>37</sup>

Taylor challenges his fellow archivists to reassess their views on the worth of collecting, preserving, and giving access to ephemera and realia:

Why do we not process some materials as fully as others, privileging the correspondence, manuscripts, diaries, and other written documents of an author over other archival materials? ... The usual litany of answers includes the following: It costs too much, publishers weed out bad materials, scholars are primarily

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<sup>35</sup> Severn, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Grossman, *Catalog this* 4 A.26.

<sup>37</sup> Severn, 9.

interested in academic materials, or, in archival terms, in biographical and literary materials about a writer or artist's development. All of these answers are laden with value assumptions with which the library is complicit. Such compliance, even if benign, does violence against those materials that question the processes of validation in our culture — and, in fact, all materials, even those more readily acceptable to mainstream culture. We in libraries can be the greatest enemies of the preservation of culture when we believe we are documenting ideas for the future but do not knowingly select materials that lie outside the academic/publishing/library complex.<sup>38</sup>

## **Reassessment of the Research Value of Ephemera and Realia**

Some archivists and theorists, while not discounting the technical difficulties with properly dealing with these materials, believe in the value of collecting ephemera and realia. The arguments for collecting both types of materials somewhat overlap but there are also distinct reasons put forth for the value and usage of each.

### **Ephemera**

Rickards states that “ephemera [are] a fragment of social history, . . . a reflection of the spirit of its time, an encapsulated visual history . . . which can prove to be very useful in research.”<sup>39</sup> Burant describes ephemera as “time capsules” and “crystallizations of another time and place” and believes that “ephemera [are] important in delineating and describing certain areas of popular thought and culture that may not be captured in other media and formats.”<sup>40</sup> The very essence of ephemerality can be a strength as ephemera may be the most reliable witnesses to an event owing to temporal proximity.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Marvin J. Taylor, ““I’ll Be Your Mirror, Reflect What You Are”: Postmodern Documentation and the Downtown New York Scene from 1975 to the Present,” *RBM* 3, no. 1 (Spring, 2002) 44.

<sup>39</sup> Rickards, *This is Ephemera :Collecting Printed Throwaways* 9.

<sup>40</sup> Burant, 191-193.

<sup>41</sup> Young, 24.

Ephemera can not only serve as a snapshot of a point and time in history, they also can serve as evidence for unexamined aspects of history. Makepeace quotes Rickards' explanation of this value: "Ephemera represent the other half of history: the half without guile. When people put up monuments or published official war histories they had a constant eye on their audience and their history would be adjusted to suit, whereas ephemera was never expected to survive — it would normally be thrown out straight away — so that it contains all sorts of human qualities which would otherwise be edited out."<sup>42</sup> Makepeace himself adds that "probably the most important reason why ephemera should be collected . . . is that [ephemera] help to provide a complete picture of life at a given point in time. [Ephemera are] sometimes able to answer questions which other surviving sources cannot and to fill in gaps which might otherwise remain unfilled."<sup>43</sup> Makepeace also notes that ephemera can be sources of information that cannot be found in traditional materials such as the prices of utilities (found on a bill) or dried goods (in an advertisement).<sup>44</sup>

Taylor challenges librarians to collect ephemera because "ephemera represent documentary evidence of the everyday" and purports that "if we collect, as comprehensively as possible, the multiple and varying fragments, shades, levels — the fuzzy images of the areas of culture that our collections encompass, then we are truly collecting something that will have lasting value beyond the highly regimented, approved discourses that culture promotes."<sup>45</sup> Taylor writes that if librarians (and by extension archivists) limit their collections to traditional published works they defeat the purpose of

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<sup>42</sup> Makepeace, *Ephemera :A Book on its Collection, Conservation, and Use* 36.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid 36.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid 37.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, 32-52.



preservation of culture.<sup>46</sup>

According to Young, more and more researchers are finding ephemera useful and these materials are being used in research about a great variety of topics including popular culture studies, political movements, social history, art, graphic design and typography, language, and folklore.

Historians are looking at the past in new ways. The Joint Committee of Historians and Archivists wrote that “the new intellectual world is more one of stories and interpretations, and less a record of objective and knowable realities. Earlier historians tended to concentrate on relating the past ‘as it really happened’; historians today increasingly emphasize originality of interpretation.”<sup>47</sup>

One of the uses of ephemera is that these materials have not been distorted by the reinterpretation of later generations. Anghelescu writes that “ephemera mirror the time when they were created, and can represent valuable additions to the understanding of a period. In addition ephemera reflect gender attitudes, fashions, political persuasions, religious affiliations and opinions of ethnic groups, along with many other ‘clues’ which can become extremely relevant in historical research.”<sup>48</sup> The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) Preservation and Conservation Panel adds that “there is a growing awareness that ephemera reveal details of a kind that other documents may have ignored or treated differently, and that they often convey the spirit of an occasion or period evocatively through their content, language and graphic style.”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> American Historical Association–Organization of American Historians–Society of American Archivists Committee on Historians and Archivists, *Historians and Archivists :Educating the Next Generation* 32.

<sup>48</sup> H. G. B. Anghelescu and J. H. Slate, "Visual Ephemera: A Selected Bibliography," *Collection Management* 25, no. 4 (2001) 69.

<sup>49</sup> CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel, 10.

The visual/graphical aspects of ephemera can convey information about history that text cannot. Hadley finds that visual ephemera offers “insights into the attitudes that underlie the use of the picture.”<sup>50</sup> One example Hadley describes is the different messages that are conveyed by the drawings of suffragists by supporters and by detractors. In comparing two cartoons Hadley notes that “both images are of women, but the pro-suffrage drawing presents an idealized version of women that conveys the message that suffrage is supported by ‘normal’, non-threatening women and the anti-suffrage drawing depicts suffragists as masculine and abnormal.”<sup>51</sup>

There is documentation in the literature about how ephemera can be used for specific historical research foci. Perhaps the most important use of ephemera for historical research and analysis is for documentation of the poor and powerless. The new generation of historians is going beyond the traditional “drums and trumpets” history to “to look into the daily lives of the not so great — those who just got on with their business, producing and consuming in their inconsequential way.”<sup>52</sup> Foges states that the documentation of this history most certainly is not located in traditional archives collections and that “this new history is to be found in what the endeavors of ordinary people left behind: not in parliaments, or in cathedrals, but in non-documentary forms of evidence — stamps, coins, bills, advertising, packaging, comics, cigarette cards — virtually anything that illustrated the life and mores of a section of society.”<sup>53</sup> Young points out that due to the existence of free libraries and the availability of inexpensive paperbacks we now think that access to bound materials is available to most people, but

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<sup>50</sup> N. Hadley, "Access and Description of Visual Ephemera," *Collection Management* 25, no. 4 (2001) 43.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid 43.

<sup>52</sup> Chris Foges, *Print: Far from Ephemeral. (Study of Graphic Ephemera by the Centre for Ephemera Studies, University of Reading)*, Vol. 53F & W Publishing Corp, 1999) 164.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

“we cannot confuse the present with the situation of the past, when bound books were a mark of higher culture, higher education, and higher income. What was left — the substandard printed item — was the domain of the poorer classes.”<sup>54</sup>

The Library of Congress elects to collect ephemera because ephemera is “literature of a fleeting or fugitive nature, produced outside of official or normal commercial channels (where such exist), [and] encompassing both political concerns and a wide variety of currently topical social, economic and ideological issues.”<sup>55</sup> The Library of Congress also lists the groups of the historically powerless whose ephemera the library actively collects: “dissident political groups, human rights groups, refugee groups, women and feminist groups, environmental groups, urban groups, labor and worker groups and movements, youth groups, ecumenical groups, and homosexual groups.”<sup>56</sup>

Not only does the very proof of the existence of some underprivileged people reside in ephemera, but ephemera can also serve as an alternative to the perspective of those in the seats of power. Lyons point out that the points of view of the powerless will not be accurately portrayed in published histories and that in order to write their histories researchers will need to access “alternate archives, whose materials may be of a different order than those required to write the histories of dominant groups.”<sup>57</sup>

Another example is how these materials can be used to study political movements as they were evolving. Lyons did a study of the history of Irish Republicanism and found that ephemera such as leaflets advertising a political demonstration “offer a less apparent

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<sup>54</sup> Young, *Evidence: Toward a Library Definition of Ephemera* 21.

<sup>55</sup> Library of Congress, *Library of Congress, Collections Policy Statements, Ephemera - Acquisitions*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Laura E. Lyons, "Hand-to-Hand History: Ephemera and Irish Republicanism," *Interventions*, no. 3, 2003 415.

record of the intellectual and political shifts and developments within a movement. . . . Ephemera serve to access the everyday quality of politics and history in so far as they provide a crucial sense of the terms used to frame particular political debates at the moment they erupt.”<sup>58</sup>

Besides historians, there are other disciplines that have their own specific uses of ephemera. Popular culture studies scholars make great use of ephemera in their research. Tschabrun explains that this field “thrives on the careful consideration of the cultural detritus of industrial society” and this “detritus, of lowly status, fleeting nature, and/or ubiquity speaks volumes about the social groups that made and used them.”<sup>59</sup> Other disciplines that make use of ephemera include art history, marketing, sociology, theater studies, and political science.<sup>60</sup>

Some of the literature supports the use of ephemera, but only in conjunction with other more traditional archival materials. Angheliescu states although ephemera can have some value in and of itself (intrinsic value), and also has some value as evidence, it is not sufficient to “reconstruct completely” an accurate history. The argument continues with the assertion that ephemera can only be used in addition to textual materials for research to be valid.<sup>61</sup> Makepeace, although an advocate of collecting ephemera, also does not think that these materials have great research value in and of themselves. He purports that “probably the largest users of ephemera are those who are engaged in research where even the smallest piece of information can be of use in building up a picture or in

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid 410.

<sup>59</sup> Susan Tschabrun, "Off the Wall and into a Drawer: Managing a Research Collection of Political Posters," *The American Archivist* 66, no. 2 (Fall/Winter, 2003) 323.

<sup>60</sup> Hadley, 39-50; Burant, 189-198.

<sup>61</sup> Angheliescu and Slate, 61.

answering a query.”<sup>62</sup>

In some ways, the arguments about the value of collecting ephemera are specious. While archivists and cataloguers can argue about whether or not an item can be classified as a piece of ephemera, researchers do not care about labels. They are only concerned about whether or not an item is useful to their research.<sup>63</sup>

There is enthusiasm for ephemera for its sheer evocativeness. Larsen describes how a collection of ephemera can “call forth a feeling of nostalgia, a close historical presence, and a sensitized appreciation of value.”<sup>64</sup> The CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel explains ephemera’s broad appeal: “People from all walks of life seem to relate more directly to ephemera than they do to more substantial documents, presumably because they impinge on everyday matters and can usually be read or absorbed relatively quickly. When ephemera relate directly to peoples’ own lives and experiences they appear to be particularly effective in engaging interest.”

## **Realia**

The use of realia in an archives strays even further from traditional concepts of “suitable” research materials than is ephemera. Realia is usually thought of as appropriate and desirable for exhibit purposes only. Severn writes that because most archivists are unfamiliar with the research possibilities of realia, they “cannot make effective and informed decisions about appraisal, arrangement, description, and ultimately, access. Archivists miss a chance to educate users about a vital class of records and they miss opportunities to connect with a broader array of scholars who are unaware of the material

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<sup>62</sup> Makepeace, 203.

<sup>63</sup> Clinton, 17.

<sup>64</sup> Larsen, 167.

culture hidden on repository shelves.”<sup>65</sup>

Insights from the field of material culture studies has informed a new appreciation of the research uses of artifacts. Schelereth defines the philosophy behind material cultural research: “objects made or modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and, by extension, the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part.”<sup>66</sup> Adrienne Hood, a historian and material culturist at the University of Toronto insists that “everyday objects have a lot of value and should not be discarded.”<sup>67</sup> Taylor praises cultural historians such as Hood as having “revealed for us a collective memory extending far beyond the archives and embracing the whole range of material culture.”<sup>68</sup>

Meraz and Severn are strong proponents of the research validity of artifacts. Meraz argues that “objects reveal in concrete form the subjects of historical discourse.”<sup>69</sup> She explains how information that can be gleaned from artifacts (such as the “the tastes, physical stature, wealth, and material context of a *particular* person”<sup>70</sup>) can only be discovered by researchers’ direct dealings with their subjects’ artifacts. Severn challenges the belief that realia is not as legitimate a record if the creator collected rather than created the artifact itself by arguing that “the creator does create the artifact conceptually by investing it with meaning and by juxtaposing it with other artifacts and records that

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<sup>65</sup> Severn, 9.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas J. Schelereth, *Material Culture Studies in America* (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, 1982) 3.

<sup>67</sup> Grossman, *Catalog this* 4A.26.

<sup>68</sup> Hugh A. Taylor, “‘Heritage’ Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture,” *Archivaria*, no. 40 (Fall, 1995) 11.

<sup>69</sup> Gloria Meraz, “Cultural Evidence: On the Common Ground between Archivists and Museologists,” *Provenance* XV, no. 1 (1983) 23.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

form the framework of his or her material life.”<sup>71</sup>

Meraz reinforces this viewpoint with her belief that:

As primary materials, [artifacts] are tools that serve as original “participants” in events. Where the tool is physical, the tool creates the activity. Where the tool is textual, the activity creates the tool. And history is both a product of initiating an activity and weighing the evidence left from that event. Archives and artifacts are necessary for a complete historical narrative.<sup>72</sup>

Arguments about the very nature of what can provide “information” also come into play in this debate. Buckland asserts that objects are “information-as-thing” since they can be resources for information and can convey knowledge. He disagrees with any view of information that does not include objects.<sup>73</sup>

An important research use for realia is for studies of pre-literate or illiterate people. Moore purports that “material culture is in fact the most democratic form of historical evidence.”<sup>74</sup> Schelereth writes that the study of artifacts is necessary in “overcoming the inherent elitist bias of most literary remains that are the product of that small minority of people in the past who could write.”<sup>75</sup> In many cases, someone’s artifacts are the only records that they existed.<sup>76</sup>

Realia has an evocative quality that can be hard to articulate. Bierbaum states that objects “enhance the affective as well as the cognitive domains.”<sup>77</sup> Taylor discusses the biology behind the affectivity of realia: “The display of evidence [of our heritage] . . . is

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<sup>71</sup> Severn, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Meraz, *Cultural Evidence: On the Common Ground between Archivists and Museologists* 11.

<sup>73</sup> Michael Keeble Buckland, “Information as Thing,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 42 (June, 1991) 351-360.

<sup>74</sup> Kevin Moore, *Museums and Popular Culture* (London: University of Leicester, 1997) 40

<sup>75</sup> Schelereth, *Material Culture Studies in America* 3.

<sup>76</sup> Severn, *Adventures in the Third Dimension: Re-Envisioning the Place of Artifacts in Archives* 10.

<sup>77</sup> Bierbaum, *Realia* 300.

greatly enhanced by emotive media such as maps and artifacts that trigger powerful responses from the right side of the brain that are not always based on the limitations of reason.”<sup>78</sup>

Rowlands and Bradley explain that artifacts:

have [the] particular capacity to evoke and to establish continuities with past experience precisely because as a material symbol rather than verbalized meaning, they provide a special form of access to both individual and group unconscious processes. Why this should be so is embedded in the function, status and role of objects as aide memoire. Objects are culturally constructed to connote and consolidate the possession of past events associated with their use or ownership.<sup>79</sup>

Realia are used by many disciplines. Jarrell writes that while researchers refer to text-based materials much more frequently than they do realia, scholars in the fields of history, anthropology and sociology do use artifacts to try to understand the situations in which they were created and used.<sup>80</sup> Bierbaum champions the versatility of realia since artifacts are not “subject linked,” suggesting, for example, that an artifact such as a costume can be used for studies in the social sciences, languages, and art.<sup>81</sup>

Some archivists are reconsidering the traditional view that artifacts should be removed from archival collections and placed in museums. One of the fundamental arguments to keeping artifacts within an archive is about “preserving the integrity” of a collection by not separating out realia from manuscript material.<sup>82</sup>

There are additional arguments in favor of having artifacts in archives. One of the

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<sup>78</sup> Taylor, 9.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Rowlands and Richard Bradley, "The Role of Memory in the Transmission of Culture," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993) 144.

<sup>80</sup> Michael C. Jarrell, "Providing Access to Three-Dimensional Collections," *Reference & User Services Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1998) 30.

<sup>81</sup> Bierbaum, *Realia* 300.

<sup>82</sup> Kam, *On Collecting and Exhibiting Art Objects in Libraries, Archives, and Research Institutes* 10-15.



primary differences between archival repositories and museums is access to objects<sup>83</sup>. Archives make materials available for researchers to directly hold while museums do not. Another difference is that while museums interpret the meaning of objects, archives follow the tenet that, as Smith writes, “the rawer the materials served, the better.”<sup>84</sup> Smith elaborates on her culinary metaphor with the idea that: “the more ‘cooked’—that is, selected, edited, shaped by an expert—the less integrity an item is deemed to have as an object of research. She points out that the role of librarians (and, again, by extension, archivists) is to provide access, not to judge and interpret.<sup>85</sup> Finally, Kam suggests that the donors of collections might specifically prefer their artifacts to be accessible to researchers in an archives rather than be preserved in a museum.<sup>86</sup>

## Collection and Management

Clinton and many others point out that it would be completely impossible to collect, never mind arrange and describe, all material generated by society nor would that be a worthy goal.<sup>87</sup> There is a consensus in the literature that archives should have very specific policies about the non-traditional materials that they will collect and that they should only collect materials that are part of their stated collection strengths. In addition, archives and other cultural heritage institutions should work together cooperatively so that not only are collection efforts not duplicated and resources not wasted, but also that these policies help ensure that as much material as possible is being preserved

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<sup>83</sup> Jarrell, *Providing Access to Three-Dimensional Collections* 29-32.

<sup>84</sup> Abby Smith, "Library Collections Online," *Collections, Content and the Web*, no. January (2000) .

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Kam, 10.

<sup>87</sup> Clinton, 87.

*somewhere.*<sup>88</sup>

The Library of Congress adds an additional restriction to their collection policy restricting what they will retain even within accepted collections of ephemeral materials.

They only keep a “representative sample” of the materials because:

ephemeral materials by their nature tend to be repetitive in content. The groups issuing leaflets, posters, pamphlets, or other types of ephemera typically concentrate on a very narrow range of issues which they consider to be of prime importance at the time of dissemination. A careful selection of ephemeral materials obtained through approved projects will, therefore, generally suffice to document the primary themes or programs advocated by the sponsoring groups.<sup>89</sup>

Even with well-thought out collecting policies, there is always a great amount of guess work in collecting. As the CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel noted, it is much easier to determine the value of ephemera from the past than it is to try to make decisions about current material.<sup>90</sup>

Another management issue that arises with ephemera and realia is whether or not they should be separated from their original collections and be added to an artificial collection of materials that are similar in form (*e.g.* a postcard collection) or subject (*e.g.* artifacts from a world’s fair). Artificial collections are fairly common in archival repositories and there are both advantages and disadvantages to this approach. If the arrangement and description policy of an archives is to leave ephemera and artifacts found in collections uncatalogued, removing these items and adding them to an artificial collection can be useful for scholars who are researching types/forms of material or particular subjects. Another advantage is that if specific types of materials have similar

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<sup>88</sup> Burant, 189-198; CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel; Anghelescu and Slate, 77-80; Michael Launder, 67-76.

<sup>89</sup> Library of Congress, *Library of Congress, Collections Policy Statements, Ephemera – Acquisitions*.

<sup>90</sup> CILIP Preservation and Conservation Panel..

preservation or storage needs which differ from those of standard archival materials, these needs can be accommodated as a group. On the other hand, there are distinct disadvantages to artificial collections. When an item is removed from a collection, it loses context; this loss of context, according to Hadley, may “obliterate most of its significance.”<sup>91</sup> Another major problem is intellectual control. Very careful documentation and extensive cataloguing are necessary in order to maintain accurate intellectual control over each item in an artificial collection. Finally, removing items from collections causes inconveniences to researchers who need to use the removed items and their research can suffer accordingly.

### **Instructional Value of Archives**

In 2000, The Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)’s Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education specifically affirmed the importance of teaching undergraduate students about primary sources.<sup>92</sup> The literature shows that there is enthusiasm and interest from both instructors and archivists for expanding instruction opportunities. Schmiesing and Hollis assert that “incorporating special collections into teaching creates a unique environment in which to inspire students to become actively involved in their learning.”<sup>93</sup> “Active learning” is a common theme in most of the literature dealing with undergraduates using archival materials. Meo writes that “teachers are building strategies to help students in historical skills such as analyzing motives and

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<sup>91</sup> Hadley, 39-50.

<sup>92</sup> American Library Association., "Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education," <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>.

<sup>93</sup> Ann Schmiesing and Deborah R. Hollis, "The Role of Special Collections Departments in Humanities Undergraduate and Graduate Teaching: A Case Study," *Portal* 2, no. 3 (July, 2002) 479.

considering multiple perspectives. Using primary sources allows students to see history as an ongoing process of constructing the past, rather than a fixed body of knowledge.”<sup>94</sup>

Working with archival materials can “enable [students] to be stewards of their own learning” by giving them the experience of sorting and judging documentation instead of simply relying on the pre-interpreted information in secondary sources.<sup>95</sup> Robyns asserts that teaching students to use primary sources in their research process helps them develop as scholars and that “the archivist can make a real difference in education by guiding students through the process of critical analysis, making the archives not only a repository of the past but also a challenging center of critical inquiry.”<sup>96</sup>

However, undergraduate instruction using archives and archives materials is not very common. Many students are not aware of the special collections libraries and archives within their universities.<sup>97</sup> Greene writes that “students must overcome many false stereotypes to fully appreciate [archives]. These include false perceptions about the narrowness and drabness of archival materials and their inappropriateness for undergraduate use.”<sup>98</sup>

Introducing students to visually and artifactually evocative materials can strongly engage undergraduates with archival collections. Although there is little literature specifically on the instructional uses of ephemera, there are pedagogical theories about the use of realia. Bierbaum asserts that “the use of realia for teaching and instruction goes

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<sup>94</sup> Susan Leighow Meo, “‘In their Own Eyes’: Using Journals with Primary Sources with College Students,” *The History Teacher (Long Beach, Calif.)* 33, no. 3 (May, 2000) 335.

<sup>95</sup> Shan Sutton and Lorrie Knight, “Beyond the Reading Room: Integrating Primary and Secondary Sources in the Library Classroom,” *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol.32, no.3 .321.

<sup>96</sup> Marcus C. Robyns, “The Archivist as Educator: Integrating Critical Thinking Skills into Historical Research Methods Instruction,” *American Archivist* 64, no. 2 (2001) 365.

<sup>97</sup> Sutton and Knight, *Beyond the Reading Room: Integrating Primary and Secondary Sources in the Library Classroom* 320.

<sup>98</sup> Mark A. Greene, “Using College and University Archives as Instructional Materials: A Case Study and an Exhortation,” *The Midwestern Archivist* 14, no. 1 (1989) 32.

back to our very beginnings; for by their nature, objects are the essence of the real world and the optimal means of teaching about it.”<sup>99</sup> Schaus gives examples on how objects can be used to teach: “What for example, do whale bone stays from an 18<sup>th</sup>-century corset say about women’s roles, health concerns, distinctions of social class, large-scale fishing, or the garment industry? A quick-release hub cap remover from the 1920s leads to questions about the growth of the automobile industry, the development of the highway system, and the greening of suburbia.”<sup>100</sup> Schaus believes that when students are working directly with artifacts, history is made to feel very “immediate”.<sup>101</sup> Chung adds:

A cultural artifact is easily accessible to students because it is a concrete, observable manifestation of a cultural belief, scientific break-through, or aesthetic accomplishment of an examined culture, as opposed to a piece of abstract information. Therefore, educators can use cultural objects to explain aesthetic expressions, complex concepts, values, traditions, and ideas from various cultures . . . .In-depth explorations using a variety of cultural objects can help students understand themselves and the visual world around them . . . . These cultural objects are preserved and passed down primarily due to their social, political, religious, or aesthetic significance and are accompanied by a rich repertoire of human beliefs and values.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Bierbaum, *Realia* 297-323.

<sup>100</sup> Margaret Schaus, "Hands-on History: Working with Historical Documents and Artifacts as an Alternative to the Library Research Paper," *College & Research Libraries News*, no. 9 (October, 1990) 827.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> Sheng Kuan Chung, "The Challenge of Presenting Cultural Artifacts in a Museum Setting," *Art Education* 56, no. 1 (January, 2003) 13.

## **Methodology**

This research consists of interviews with archivists who are involved with reference services, undergraduate instruction, and public outreach, and interviews with university professors who have used archival materials for their own research as well as teaching. These qualitative interviews were conducted with four archivists and three professors who are affiliated with universities in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina. The purpose of the interviews was to determine their attitudes about and their uses of ephemera and realia in research and undergraduate instruction. The interviews also explored issues of digitization, collection, and cataloguing of materials, and artificial collections. Through interviews with both archivists and academic instructors, data was accumulated from the curators, the users, and the educational intermediaries of the materials in order to try to build a multifaceted understanding of the topic.

There was an interview script with a set of ten open-ended questions (Appendix A). These questions were used as an outline for unstructured interviews. The unstructured nature of the interviews allowed for flexibility and opportunities to follow up when the interviews took unexpected directions.

In order to protect confidentiality I gave the interviewees the pseudonyms: Archivists Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Delta, and Professors/Researchers Epsilon, Zeta and Theta.

The interviewees were the units of analysis, although their responses were informed by both their personal views and by the policies of the academic institutions where they are employed. Interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the participants and lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and transcribed. The interviews that were conducted in an archivist's office were very helpful because he or she could give me a tour of their facilities and show me both their on-line and off-line catalogues.

I relied on colleagues' recommendations to find interview subjects and it was necessary for the subjects to be within a close driving distance. This is defined as nonprobability sampling and it does not allow for generalizations about a population and has the risk of sampling bias.<sup>103</sup> However, the limitations of time and the exploratory nature of the research justify the sampling method.

I contacted ten people who were either recommended to me or who I found by searching on an university's Special Collections website, and I was granted interviews with seven of them. The faculty members I interviewed were all trained historians, the group of scholars who have traditionally been the most frequent users of archives. Other than the criteria that the interviewees were either public-services archivists or instructors who used archives in their instruction and/or research, participants were chosen with no regard to their gender, race, ethnicity, or age. I sent emails to each of the participants asking them to be a part of this study (Appendix B). If they agreed to participate, they were given a copy of the recruitment letter (Appendix C) and a copy of the consent form (Appendix D).

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<sup>103</sup> Earl R. Babbie, *The Practice of Social Research*, 10th ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2004), 183.

Qualitative interviews are very appropriate tools to determine attitudes and behaviors. Interviews allow for more nuanced and in-depth responses than does a standardized questionnaire and tend to produce valid responses.<sup>104</sup> However, the small sample size of the study that was necessitated by the time restraints under which I worked, along with the non-standardized response possibilities, leads to a low reliability factor. The unstructured nature of the interviews also meant that statistical analysis of the results was not possible. However, the results of this study might be useful in identifying trends in the field and be beneficial to other researchers, scholars, and archivists.<sup>105</sup>

I analyzed the data by looking for patterns of opinions and views that either concurred with or deviated from the literature and also with the views and experiences of the other interviewees.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid 245.



## **Interview Results**

### **Ephemera Research Uses**

According to the interviewed archivists, ephemera are heavily used in their repositories. They found that researchers look at ephemera for many different reasons and rarely is ephemera used for the factual information printed on or in it. For example, a set of 1950's Soviet industry reports that has been preserved in a local repository includes graphically striking charts. These charts have been studied for their graphic design qualities, not for the industry statistics they describe. Archivist Alpha said that some of the research topics for which her collections are used include gender studies, clothes design, graphic design, theater set design, history, and other popular culture aspects. Archivist Delta commented that "what is interesting to me is [the question of] when does something torque in its meaning and become ephemera?" He has noticed that when researchers look at an object they can "totally translate why they are looking it and it is not for the reasons we collected it."

Although, researchers typically use ephemera to study things that the ephemera are not explicitly about, sometimes these materials are used to find out specific facts. The archivists have used ephemera to field research questions about the previous location of a statue on a campus and the names of graduation speakers and field marshals.

Archivist Gamma's view of ephemera is that they are "marvelous social documents." He used examples of researchers using old university football programs to study the place of football in culture and other researchers using the imagery in sports ephemera to study the portrayal of women. This university archivist has created a well-used "reference file" of duplicates of archives materials that is arranged by broad subjects such as athletics, faculty, campus dining, and religious life on campus; these files contain ephemera such as flyers, notices, maps, and menus.

Archivist Delta described view of ephemera as "ephemera are important for documenting history even though they're not things that appear to have great research value on the surface; But [in fact] they are important documentary material." He also said that he never uses the term *ephemera* with researchers because it does not matter to them: "researchers [do not] view ephemera any differently than other materials. The only important issue is whether or not the material is useful."

The interviewees spoke about many specific instances in which ephemera were used for research. Researcher Theta, a cultural historian, works with 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century promotional direct mail advertisements in order "to think about these items and the rise of consumer culture and branded goods, to think about how this company was trying to encourage people to purchase more of their product, and [to try to discern] what the rewards were for doing that."

This same researcher studies Victorian-era scrapbooks that were created by girls and that are filled with contemporary advertisements, and finds that they can be used for at least two different research purposes: "They both reflect the consumer culture of the time because there are these advertising pieces but they also reflect something about

Victorian girlhood and the way in which the girls use advertising as part of their leisure culture.”

Other research examples discussed include the usage of promotional advertising cookbooks to look at images of men and women in domestic kitchens, the study of football programs to trace the development of football helmet design, chefs referencing early 20<sup>th</sup> century menus so that they can recreate the meals, an actress wanting to know a typical meal of someone she was portraying in a play so that she could better “get into” her character; and imagery for documentary films and magazine articles.

Although ephemera were considered very valuable by most of these interviewees, Researcher Zeta does not use ephemera (nor realia) at all for research and only utilizes it for illustrations for her books. Researcher Epsilon pointed to the problem that most ephemeral materials are not dated, which makes these materials challenging for research.

## **Cataloguing and Storage of Ephemera**

There was a consensus among these interviewees that these materials would get more use if they were better catalogued and thus easier to find in the collections. Because ephemera are not easy to catalog using standard library and archival finding aid methods, they are not easy to find in catalogs or finding aids. Archivist Alpha said that in her repository, ephemera are “catalogued by the subject, but not by the item.” In this institution, cataloguing ephemera “is a low priority because we’re limited in the amount of time and funding we have to do processing. Because there are entry points [in the online catalog] already and because the reference archivists are well acquainted with the collection its less of a need to get that catalogued.” Archivist Beta explained that “the

ephemera collections [in his repository] are cataloged online by MARC records by collection level. I think they should be treated archivally and [be put into] finding aids but that's not what we're doing. We're doing gigantic MARC records [for them]."

With the exception of specific "ephemera collections," ephemera are usually filed throughout traditional manuscript collections and are rarely as well catalogued in the finding aids as materials such as letters. Researchers relayed that they find ephemera in the collections only through "serendipity" and they generally do not know that materials are there because the cataloguing is "very haphazard." Archivists felt that ephemera would be used more if scholars knew the materials were there. Instructor Epsilon said that she felt that "as it stands now I find that [ephemeral materials] are scattered about. You might accidentally happen on a folder and 'Oops! Here's a folder of brochures and flyers from events.'" This instructor feels that it would help her students' research if there could be catalog records about certain historical events. Most of the researchers interviewed rely on an archivists' in-depth knowledge of their collections to find ephemeral materials.

## **Realia Research Uses**

There was more disagreement about the research value of realia. Archivist Alpha, who believes that "artifacts have intrinsic and evidential value," admitted that neither general researchers nor students coming into the repository to do research for class assignments have used artifacts from her repository's "memorabilia collection."

One of the problems described concerning realia in archives is that in many cases they lack adequate documentation about their provenance and context. Another issue is that archivists find that people generally want to see artifacts only for the curiosity value.

Artifacts in these repositories have gotten research use. Archivist Alpha said that “researchers have come in and used artifacts as a jumping off point to tell the larger story.” Additionally, there are instances where journalists wanted to see particular objects for a magazine article they were writing and where textbook companies wanted scans of political buttons and other political material as illustrations.

Other archivists do not feel that realia has any value for archival collections. Archivist Gamma said, “I don’t know what you do with this kind of stuff except use it in exhibits” or as logos for web pages of his library. He continued, “I’ve never had any experience really with anyone coming in and looking at objects to determine some kind of thesis.” He has had people come to him wanting their possessions authenticated and/or appraised.

This same archivist said that “we have a lot of artifacts here that people give us but we don’t really want to be a museum.” He believes that artifacts do not belong in places where there are only one or two examples of an object because “I think that artifacts are more appropriate for places in which you can start to do comparisons among them in order to see changes over time . . . You have to have a critical mass of similar kinds of materials [for items to have research value]. I don’t know how much you can do with a single object.” This archivist admitted that “I don’t have a background in museum studies and I’m sure that someone in museum studies would find many more ways of looking at artifacts.”

Indeed, the archivists who have backgrounds in museology were much more enthusiastic about realia. Archivist Delta said that his view of realia is that “as a place of discovery I think it’s important . . . .I think that there’s a real use in artifacts. I think that there’s an emotive use, I think there’s an inspirational use, I think that there is a real factual use.” He described the type of research that can be done with artifacts: “There are people who are interested in product and there are people who are interested in process and artifacts allow people who are also interested in process to go just a notch deeper and say, ‘Okay, what’s going on here?’” One hypothetical example he shared was that if a researcher could have access to a photographer’s camera and realize how heavy the camera was and how difficult it must have been to maneuver, the researcher would have an insight into why the photographer’s photographs were sometimes blurry. This archivist has a strong belief in the value of studying tools. He rhetorically asked, “Do the tools inspire the drawings? Do the drawings inspire the tools?” He further explained that “if you’re going to do a real aesthetic evaluation I think there is relevance . . . .I think it would be interesting to look back in fifty years at someone who used a Mac and someone who used a PC [to determine whether or not there are differences in design] as a function of what they’re looking at because Mac users have a very different aesthetic.”

This archivist also described some differences between the understanding of artifacts in an exhibition and artifacts in an archives: “Developing exhibitions you draw conclusions [about artifacts] for visitors and having similar material in [an archival] collection allows researchers to draw conclusions that we haven’t thought of.”

Ironically, the very people whose museum studies training have given them an appreciation of the importance of artifacts are also the most reticent about allowing

access to them for researchers. Archivist Delta whose training was in artifact handling said, “How willing are we to provide access to artifacts? I can tell you that we probably would be very reluctant to bring out a box of beakers for a patron. I would have to facilitate that visit and I probably wouldn’t let a patron handle an item. I err on the side of the artifact . . . . I wouldn’t expect people to know what to do.” In this archivist’s view not only does he believe that the “artifact is sacrosanct”, but also since artifacts in his repository are stored off site and a staff member has to personally retrieve them from storage, he needs researchers to “justify” any requests to see objects from the collections there. Although his repository prides themselves on their policy of open access to all researchers, in his view, simple curiosity cannot justify the staff time necessary to bring artifacts out of storage. He mentioned a situation where a researcher requested to see a cornerstone of a building. This cornerstone was large and heavy and it was stored offsite. The archivist interviewed the researcher to ascertain whether he actually needed information that could only be gleaned from experiencing the actual cornerstone, or whether an examination of a photograph of the cornerstone would suffice. The archivist concluded that this particular research scenario did not justify the time and effort that would be required to give the researcher direct access to the object. Archivist Delta explained:

We described it as best as we could to [the researcher] . . . The “I’ve seen the real [object]” desire is a visitor’s standpoint versus a researcher’s standpoint of value. [The researcher] asked pointed questions about markings. Certainly, if he was doing a paper on masonry — markings, techniques — it would be more valuable. He was writing a history and I said, “What information do you need off of it?” He said, “I just know you have it and I want to see it.” And it felt a bit much to carry a huge stone.

## Cataloguing and Storage of Realia

The issues with cataloguing realia are similar to those with cataloguing ephemera.

Archivist Alpha described the importance of detailed finding aids:

Then, do you catalog every single t-shirt? No. Do you want to? Yes, so people can know what's there and so you don't open a box and not be sure why you have that t-shirt. Because a lot of times [the t-shirt will be commemorating] an event and unless you have some documentation that connects the event with the item, you don't understand yourself why it's there unless it's somehow written in the finding aid. That's where the finding aids are really important because I've only been here two years and don't know the history of why we have certain items in our collection.

One difference in the ways in which realia is treated differently than ephemera is that usually artifacts are physically separated from the rest of a general manuscript collection. Archivist Alpha explained that this is because “a lot of times [this is] for the items for protection.” However, in many collections the removed artifacts are not catalogued by item and they become essentially “lost” to researchers. In addition, if an item is removed from a collection, it prevents the accidental discoveries that can occur with even uncatalogued ephemera that are interfiled with a collection.

A large part of the problem is that current library catalogues do not handle artifacts well. Archivist Delta, a museology-trained archivist, noted that museum artifacts have dedicated cataloguing software: “Are we going to invest in that container [*i.e.* specialized museum software] that is completely different than all our other containers [*i.e.* library catalogs and archives finding aids] or are we going to just try to fit those artifacts into our containers? Odds are we are going to try fit the artifacts into our containers and those don't handle items well.”



The instructors/researchers interviewed do not know how to search for realia in the collections and they rely on archivists to bring artifacts to their attention. They also said that they would certainly use more artifacts (*e.g.* political buttons that feminists in the 1960s and 1970s wore) in their undergraduate instruction if they could find these objects in the catalog. Instructor Epsilon brought up the additional point that her students need to actually *see* what is available before they can decide if the items would be relevant to their research. She added that students “need a breadcrumb trail to where they are going to find something or else they will simply look at a picture [*e.g.* a .jpg of of a political button] on the website and think ‘that’s enough.’”

Artifacts can be brought to students’ attention when they are part of an exhibit. However, as Instructor Epsilon pointed out, when “you display these items it’s only temporary and then students graduate and then new students come in and they haven’t seen that ‘Oh, wow, this cool collection of posters or objects exists’, because there isn’t a permanent way to display these things.”

Instructor Epsilon said that she would find it very helpful if archivists created a “research guide,” which is a version of an annotated bibliography, of realia in archival collections. She envisioned these guides organized by “what these things look like, what they are, what time period they are relevant to, [or] what kind of academic inquiry they could be used for. I know that’s hard. It sort of involves getting into the head of your audience and trying to understand what are they trying to do with this.”

## Collecting Policies for Ephemera and Realia

The collecting policies of the different institutions of the archivists interviewed varied. Some archives had clearly formulated policies while others dealt with decisions about materials on an *ad hoc* basis.

At one repository, Archivist Beta said that they “will take anything pertaining to [their collection specialty] that can be stored and preserved. Most of the ephemera we add now has been stuff specifically gathered for the ephemera collection by either staff members or people who know we’re interested in this kind of stuff.” This archivist says he collects ephemera in order to create a collection that is “not-elitist” and hopefully represents people who “may not have the resources to publish books on their own.” He further explained that:

These are things that we think will be important later on but that anyone else will be unlikely to pick up and save now. We [believe that] because we have things in our collection that are 100, 150 years old that are ephemeral, like ballots and campaign materials, and brochures about events and speeches, that are incredibly valuable to us now. [These] things were ephemeral then and that no one else saved. We are taking that forward and thinking that [we should] collect [current] materials even though they seem kind of goofy now. For example there is a lot of stuff scattered at the rest stops on the interstate — those big banks of brochures. Again, these are things that document the local area and the history and culture there. Going from the fact that since no one got that stuff in the old days we’re thinking that no one’s getting it now.

The archivists who work with materials from their universities actively collect campus ephemera because, as archivist Beta said, “students who are here are always interested in students who used to be here and how things used to be. So saving these things seems like a no brainer to me.” At his institution, they actually have people go around and tear flyers off of campus bulletin boards to add to their collection.

Archivist Beta admitted that his repository did not have a written collecting policy on non-traditional materials but that “it would probably help if there were.” Archivist Gamma, who works without a collecting policy for either ephemera or realia, said that they try to avoid accepting objects unless there is a very clear connection to the general collection focus, the provenance is well-documented and there are no special preservation and storage difficulties. Without a clear collecting policy archivists fear that they “will just gather stuff,” including duplicate materials, and run out of storage space. On the other hand, Archivist Delta, who came from a museum training background, has difficulty with the concept of only keeping one copy of materials.

Perhaps even more so than with traditional archival materials, archivists struggle to determine which specific ephemera and realia to collect. Most of the archivists interviewed expressed sentiments such as: “It’s difficult to anticipate what people will use in the future but we have to or else this kind of stuff will just disappear.” Archivist Beta said, that although he strongly believes in the value of collecting ephemera, “sometimes I subscribe to the theory of natural selection — that the strong ephemera will survive in manuscript collections and instead of us going out to get it we can just wait for things to show up twenty years from now in people’s personal papers. I go back and forth on that.”

In many cases, an archives does not have a say in what is sent to them. Archivist Alpha said, “The donors send us what they want to send us and we are left trying to decide what do we keep and what we don’t keep. We do want to have some record of the ‘real life’ of the corporation rather than just these dry documents; You want to have something that says, ‘they had a party and this was the commemorative t-shirt.’”

With realia in particular, institutions struggle with the question about whether artifacts belong in an archives or in a museum. One of the issues is whether or not researchers would look for realia in an archives rather than a museum. Archivist Delta phrased the issue as, “You have to figure out where it will do the most good and where it will serve the public the best.” Archivist Alpha said that her institution has refused collections in which the bulk of the collection constituted artifacts. Another issue is the consideration about what is best for the artifact itself. Archivist Delta said, “I think that in library training there isn’t a lot of emphasis on ‘the thing.’ Without proper training, you can really run the risk of not caring for artifacts well. We don’t want to do a disservice to the thing by damage, neglect, or loss.” This issue is a complicated one and will probably have to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

### **Instructional Uses of Ephemera and Realia**

Undergraduates are usually introduced to special collections libraries at an instructional session set up by an archivist and an instructor of an individual class. Students come to the archives and are given a lesson on how archival material differs from regular library materials and how archival materials can be used in their research projects. Then they are shown a selection of materials from the collections that are relevant to the subject matter of their class. Sometimes the students simply examine the materials, while other times they do an in-class project with the materials or are assigned to work with the materials for a research project. For some instructional sessions, the instructor and archivist work closely together to choose the archive materials that will be used in the session, other times instructors have a list of materials they want to use, and in

other instances the archivist is expected to come up with the entire presentation without any instructor input. For one of her classes, Instructor Theta has seven “stations” set up at which there is a different type of material (*e.g.* maps, scrapbooks, letters, broadsides, advertisements) at each. After the archivist does the “here is how things work in Special Collections” introduction, the students wander around from station to station. The instructor speaks to the students about how they might work with these kinds of materials.

In terms of ephemera and realia that archivists and instructors have used for undergraduate instruction, Archivist Beta said that he never goes out of his way to include ephemera in his class presentations (“never ephemera for ephemera’s sake”) and incorporates these materials only if the materials are directly relevant to the topic at hand. Alternately, Archivist Alpha has had consistent feedback from instructors that students really enjoyed seeing the ephemera they were shown in their classes and so she includes ephemera in all of her classes. In this particular case, the archivist was using advertisements and the students thought that the advertisements were “snapshots” and an “application of what they were studying in the reality of that time period.” Archivist Gamma, who dealt with university materials, said that he usually uses student scrapbooks and handbooks written by students and sent to incoming freshman that told them about what they should pack for school and what behavior was expected of them. This archivist said that these materials really give students a sense of what life was like for previous generations of students. Archivist Delta tries to “bring out as many materials as I can and in as broad a spectrum as I can” for his classes. The more familiar instructors are with an

archive's collection, the more likely they will ask the archivist to pull a specific "shopping list" of materials.

Each archivist was asked his or her view on the instructional value of ephemera and realia. Archivist Gamma said that he uses these materials because "it helps students see [historical figures] as real people. That kind of use has value to it." Archivist Alpha said that "I think ephemera and realia are very important for instruction. There is nothing better than having an actual item to contextualize information or represent a person. It becomes more real . . . and makes things come alive." She also thinks that realia is very important to include in instructional sessions because "when you're talking about something and there is a piece of paper and there is [also] a physical artifact that is somehow tied into that piece of paper, the piece of paper becomes much more interesting and important to the student."

The instructors, even the ones who rarely used ephemera and realia in their own research, were uniformly positive about the value of these materials when working with students. Instructor Zeta uses the imagery on ephemeral items to "personalize" and provide "context for understanding" topics her class is studying. This instructor said that "I find that sometimes that the ephemera or the realia touches a nerve with people. I don't know the psychology behind it but to hold this object that somebody held one hundred years ago . . . opens a window onto that person's existence that you might not really understand by reading something." She is a strong proponent of using realia with her classes because:

I find that a lot of my students aren't historians . . . and that their sense of history is 'you read the textbook' or 'you go on line and do research' so that the students we have now have grown up entirely digitized. They don't have to touch the document. They don't even

have to open a book. They can get it all online. Not to contest the technology, because it's wonderful and we should embrace it, but [its is important] to destabilize that sense of history and to make them think of history in terms not so much of these taken-for-granted-histories. Realia opens up different ways of seeing history that aren't always represented in our textbooks.

Instructor Theta, a cultural historian, always uses postcards with her classes because "it helps them connect the present with the past," especially if the places depicted in the postcards are places that the students know exist in the here and now. She said that many students find the handwritten materials "daunting" because the handwriting can be very difficult to decipher.

Instructor Zeta waxed eloquently about the ineffable qualities of artifacts and how they have affected her students: "Students really feel privileged to touch that material . . . . It's nonverbal. That's the point. You have to look at the [students'] faces or watch them put the thing down and say 'Oh my God!'" She described her students as "naïve viewers," for whom looking at artifacts affords them a particular type of educational experience: "When people have to figure out what they're looking at, they don't forget it because it's part of a process. It's not like the other stuff you have to memorize for an exam. It's a different type of learning because it's an experience, it's not just learning...It makes the information that they're reading about more interesting." She explained that when students are presented with an item without being given any accompanying contextual information and they figure out "that's what that is" it gives her students "a kind of frisson." This instructor continued that "students more and more are living in a visual world of icons and of images and they think with pictures. And to show them puzzling pictures...they're really good at figuring it out and they like it."

Instructors shared some of their experiences using ephemera and realia in their instruction. Instructor Zeta has shown students Nazi artifacts in order to “normalize” Nazism so that “conceptually it enables [the students] to say that this is not weird, these are not sadists, these are not particularly cruel people. These are rather decent people like everyone else and they committed catastrophically evil murders and that seeps into their understanding in a way that very few written texts would.” This same instructor shows her students a map of Eastern Europe that is covered with different sizes of stars of David. Her students have to puzzle out that these stars represented the relative populations of Jews in the area and that the Nazis used this map to help plan the most efficient way to deport Jews to the death camps.

Instructor Epsilon said:

I’ve always used political cartoons because I find that humor is a good way to get at students and try to get them thinking . . . .  
 .Everybody has seen political cartoons and we look at early 20th century cartoons and depictions of mannish women or dangerous radicals and [also] cartoons that make suffragists look respectable in an effort to encourage other women to join the cause. . . . We learn a little bit about feminist strategizing and also what are some of the dominant stereotypes that these feminists have to fight in order to get themselves heard.

Instructor Theta described how she used a broadside from the 1880’s from the Prohibition Party of Durham, N.C. :

It’s great because this is the party’s literature and it raises all sorts of questions: Who’s in the prohibition party? Who supports them? What happened in that election? It doesn’t tell you the whole story, [but] it gives you this one little snapshot. It’s tantalizing. Since the collections of newspapers of Durham from that time period are a little spotty, it’s not entirely clear what actually did happen.



Instructor Epsilon said that she did not know of any other instructors who used realia in their instruction and hypothesized that the reason might be because it does not occur to them to use these kinds of materials, suggesting that perhaps if other instructors knew what materials were available that they might consider integrating ephemera and realia into their courses. She pointed out that she is interested in these materials because it was part of her own education and that if other instructors do not find the items “personally compelling” then they might not make the effort to integrate them into their classes. She also offered a retort to a hypothetical argument that education should focus on theory only: “It proves the theory, it helps show the theory if you can put your hands on it. Sometimes students don’t get that theory right away until they’ve actually handled it and experienced it.”

The final question to instructors was whether or not they assign their students to use archive materials for research papers and, if so, whether or not they would accept a paper based solely on research of ephemera or realia. Not all of the instructors require students to use manuscript materials; Instructor Theta, who does require her students to use some primary documents, also gives them the option of using digitized images. Instructor Zeta does not require her students to use archive materials because “items are delicate and if they don’t prize that material, they’re not going to treat it right and they’re also not going to write a good paper.” The consensus seems to be that these instructors do not think that non-textual material offers enough contextual information on which to base a successful research paper.

## Artificial Collections

Archivists used to separate ephemera and realia from collections and add it to either artificial “artifact” collections or “ephemera” collections that were sometimes based upon a certain theme, such as “postcards” or “advertising.” This is a policy that many archives have ceased. At some of the archives visited, their ephemera and artifact collections are closed (*i.e.* nothing new is being added to them). In other cases, archives are still adding to their artificial collections and these archivists feel that as long as the archives maintains good records about provenance and context it is fine to separate the materials as long as the donor approves this.

Even within one institution, policies can differ. Archivist Delta explained that in his archive, artifacts that come in with manuscript collections stay with the collection, but general university ephemera and realia are put into an artifact collection. In addition, the realia that is added to the artifact collection are given accession numbers, which follows museum procedures. He was not sure what his view on policy was: “It’s tricky. Should things be with the person or with other similar types of things? It gets disjointed because it’s hard to know.”

Archivist Alpha pointed out that there is the question of the value of one item (*e.g.* a trade card) remaining with the collection versus removing the item and transferring to a collection of trade cards.

The instructors interviewed did not think separating items from their original context was a good idea because, as Archivist Epsilon said, “If you take [materials] out of context they lose their value as an educational tool.” This instructor also thought it would

be very useful to have research guides or that photocopies of material could be grouped into a subject file.

## Issues with Digitization

The interviewees were asked what they thought about the idea of the ‘intrinsic value’ of ephemera and realia versus digitized images of objects. The SAA defines intrinsic value as: “the usefulness or significance of an item derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its content, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction.”<sup>106</sup> Since it was assumed that all of the archivists would unequivocally believe in the intrinsic value of all items in archives, it was surprising to speak to archivists who thought that, at least for the ephemera, any information that the items offered could be just as well served by digitized images of these materials. For example, Archivist Beta, who worked in an archives that actively collects ephemera for particular subject-based ephemera collections, believes that the primary purpose of actual physical ephemera was for exhibits and that you can “do research just as well with an digitized object assuming it’s digitized well.” The only reason that he would not support a digitization project of his collections’ ephemera is that the effort would not be financially worthwhile since the ephemera does not currently get much research use. On the other hand, Archivist Alpha did say that she believes that the actual thing has value because “it adds the magic of life.”

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<sup>106</sup> Pearce-Moses, *Society of American Archivist’s (SAA) Glossary of Archival Terminology* [http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term\\_details.asp?DefinitionKey=42](http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=42).

The instructors brought up additional issues. Instructor Epsilon feels that looking at the digitized images of political buttons does not have the same informational and educational worth as holding the buttons. For example, by examining an actual button a student could get a better sense of the quality of the button which would signify how much money a political movement might have spent to publicize its cause. Instructor Zeta pointed out that digitized images are always accompanied by “descriptive labels” that contextualizes objects and thus “pre-digests” the objects for the students, thus robbing them of the educational experience of interpreting the item themselves. This same instructor, however, in her own research “is just as happy” to use digital images as actual items because she already “knows what [she is] looking at.”

Instructor Theta shared her belief in the importance of digital exhibitions of archival materials. Her first point was that digitization “democratizes the experience of research” and “opens up the possibility of discovery” by providing access to materials for people who cannot get to or have not yet made their way to an academic library archives. Her second point is that since she has found that students find archives to be “alien” places and they are “afraid they’re going to tear something and ruin it,” if students first encounter archival materials via the web, they can become “acculturated to ‘this is what old stuff looks like’ and ‘this is how you could use old things’” and this can make archives feel like less intimidating places.

## **ANALYSIS**

The thesis tested by this study was that the undervalued uses of ephemera and realia should justify an increase of the collection of these materials in academic special collections. I understand the additional challenges these materials impose in cataloguing, storage and preservation, but I did not delve into the questions about how archives would negotiate these challenges. I agree that archives must work within their limitations and that collection decisions need to be made on case-by-case basis that take into consideration the collection foci of each archive in conjunction with technical, physical and budgetary considerations. Any conclusions that can be drawn from results of this study are not intended to be definitive assessments of the invaluableness of these non-traditional materials for special collections. However, these results hopefully offer insights into a few of the issues that academic archivists need to consider in their collection development plans. These considerations include research value, instructional value, cataloguing and digitization.

### **Research Value**

The people I spoke with were essentially in agreement about the scholarly value of ephemera but there were differences about the value of realia. I had hoped that there would be more research interest in and use of realia. At this point in time it would appear

that realia is primarily used for exhibits, but academic disciplines are always evolving and as scholarship in material and popular culture studies increases, the use of realia (and ephemera) should also increase.

I believe that we need to redefine the idea of what constitutes “research value.” Ephemera and realia have research uses beyond the traditional historical research for which most archive collections have been used in the past. These non-traditional materials are used for a variety of research needs including design and the particulars of someone’s day-to-day existence. Archivists with museum studies background were more open to the possibilities of use of nontraditional materials and afforded them a higher value.

A question I had not anticipated was whether you need a critical mass of similar materials in order for ephemera or objects to be useful for research. If this is the case, then there is certainly an argument against archives maintaining the odd object here and there in their repository.

## **Instruction**

Although I do not feel that I came away with the ringing endorsement of the research value of ephemera and realia that I was seeking, I think that I did find that these materials can be very valuable for undergraduate instruction. These materials seem to capture the interest and imagination of students and make history come alive for them in ways that traditional text material does not. Anyone who has encountered 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century handwriting can attest to the difficulty of reading these documents and that it can be intimidating to try to decipher diaries and letters. As we are evolving into an

increasingly visual culture, ephemera and realia will be understood more and more as sources of education and information. As it stands now, these materials can be used in conjunction with textual material in order to create a richer documentation of history than can be done with the materials separately.

## **Cataloguing**

People are interested in having greater intellectual access to these materials, but this would require that archivists spend time and effort to create more detailed catalogues and finding aids. This would be difficult to expect in an age of increasing backlogs of unprocessed collections. I appreciate the desire to have everything catalogued and cross-referenced but that is not going to happen with current academic archives staffing and budgetary levels. However, archivists knowledgeable about their collections could create research guides or consider creating artificial collections, especially with duplicate ephemeral materials. Such artificial ephemera collections would be valuable to researchers whose research requires them to study the changes of imagery or graphics or manufacturing and construction of materials over time.

## **Digitization**

Students are increasingly relying on online digitized documents for their research. As the digitization of information and the movement to provide digital exhibits of physical objects increases, the debate will only intensify about the value of seeing and holding an actual object. I think that there is information you can only get from the physical object, but there is also a great amount of value to digitized images from the

exponentially increased access to archives' holdings and in which users are able to zoom in and read most of the information contained in or on a particular item.



## **Conclusion**

Archivists in academic special collections libraries are constantly evolving to meet the needs of researchers. In doing so, they need to continue to expand their ideas of “value” for both the items collected by their institution and the types of research being done with the materials.

Archives are also becoming more involved in undergraduate instruction. Thus, archivists need to consider the learning styles of students and choose the materials used in instruction with an understanding of the increasing importance of visual culture in these students’ lives.

For both research and instruction, the importance and relevance of ephemera and realia need to be reevaluated. As archives evolve, these “untraditional” materials should become an integral part of the new tradition of archives’ collection development.

## Appendix A

### Interview Guide

1. Have you used ephemera in your research, writing and/or instruction?
2. If yes, what kind? Do you find that these materials have research and/or instructional value? Explain.
3. Have you used realia in your research, writing or instruction?
4. If yes, what kind? Do you find that these materials have research and/or instructional value? Explain.
5. How do you use realia and ephemera in your research, writing and/or instruction?
6. How do you find out about/locate ephemeral objects or realia in archives?
7. Do you search specifically for these type of materials? If so have you been able to find them in catalogs or finding aids? Do you find these items adequately catalogued?
8. Would separating out ephemera and realia from personal collections and compiling them into an artificial collection based on a topic or theme be useful to you?
9. In academic writing, do you feel that ephemeral objects and realia have research/informational value?
10. Do you find that these materials have any or all of these values:

**Intrinsic value:** The usefulness or significance of an item derived from its physical or associational qualities, inherent in its original form and generally independent of its content, that are integral to its material nature and would be lost in reproduction.

**Informational value:** The usefulness or significance of materials based on their content.

**Evidential value:** The quality of records that provides information about the origins, functions, and activities of their creator rather than the information content of the records.

(Definitions from *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, Richard Pearce Moses, The Society of American Archivists, 2005, at <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/index.asp>)

## Appendix B

Email Text

Hello!

I am a graduate student at the School of Information and Library Science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. As part of the requirement for completing my Master of Library Science degree, I am preparing a research paper on issues related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

I would like to visit you in person and ask you a series of questions about your experiences with and opinions about research and/or instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections. With your permission, I would like to tape record the interview. I expect the interview to last thirty minutes to one hour, with a possible follow-up by phone or by email for clarification of answers or comments. Your responses are entirely confidential. In my paper, your anonymous interview responses and those of the other participants will be discussed separately and then analyzed as a group to find common issues and practices related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

This research has been approved by the UNC office of Human Research Ethics Institutional Review Board. If you have specific questions about the research, you may contact me at 919-740-8520 or my advisor, Dr. Deborah Barreau, at 919-966-5042. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant at any time during this study, you may contact Stuart Rennie or Lawrence Rosenfeld, Co-Chairs, Behavioral IRB at 919-966-3113.

Please let me know if you would be interested and available in participating in my study. If you are, I will send you an official consent form.

Thank you,

Beth Ann Koelsch

## Appendix C

April 9, 2007

Name Here

Address

Greeting:

As part of the requirement for completing a Master of Library Science degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I am preparing a research paper on issues related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

I would like to visit you in person and ask you a series of questions about your experiences with and opinions about research and/or instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections. With your permission, I would like to tape record the interview. I expect the interview to last thirty minutes to one hour, with a possible follow-up by phone or by email for clarification of answers or comments. In my paper, your interview responses and those of the other participants will be discussed separately and then analyzed as a group to find common issues and practices related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

There are no anticipated personal risks associated with your participation in this study. You can refuse to answer any question and may stop the interview at any time. Withdrawing from the interview will not result in any negative consequences for you. If you are uncomfortable providing names of specific collections or involved parties, special care will be taken not to include any identifying information. Due the small number of people that I am interviewing, keeping your participation anonymous would be difficult. However, no identifying information beyond your name and institution will be used.

If you have any questions, I encourage you to contact me at [bethannk@email.unc.edu](mailto:bethannk@email.unc.edu). Thank you in advance for your consideration of my project; I know that your time is valuable. Two copies of an Informed Consent Agreement are enclosed with this letter. If you choose to participate in my study, please sign one copy of the agreement and return it in the enclosed stamped and addressed envelope.

Sincerely,

Beth Ann Koelsch  
Master of Library Science Candidate  
School of Information and Library Science  
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

## Appendix D

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill  
Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Adult Participants  
Social Behavioral Form**

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**Consent Form Version Date:** February 12, 2007

**Title of Study:** What are the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections?

**Principal Investigator:** Beth Ann Koelsch

**UNC-Chapel Hill Department:** School of Information and Library Science

**UNC-Chapel Hill Phone number:** 919-962-8366

**Faculty Advisor:** Deborah Barreau

**Funding Source:** none

**Study Contact telephone number:** 919-740-8520

**Study Contact email:** bethannk@email.unc.edu

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**What are some general things you should know about research studies?**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies.

Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above any questions you have about this study at any time.

**What is the purpose of this study?**

As part of the requirement for completing a Master of Library Science degree at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, I am preparing a research paper on research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

**How many people will take part in this study?**

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of seven people in this research study.

**How long will your part in this study last?**

Thirty minutes to one hour, for an in-person interview, with possible follow-up by phone or by email for clarification of some answers or comments.

**What will happen if you take part in the study?**

I would like to visit you in person and ask you a series of questions about either your research and/or instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections. With your permission, I would like to tape record the interview. You will have the right to skip any question you choose not to answer for any reason. There is also the possibility that I may ask for clarification or more information after the interview by phone or by email. In my paper, your interview responses and those of the other participants will be discussed separately and then analyzed as a group to find common issues and practices related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

**What are the possible benefits from being in this study?**

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may also expect to benefit by participating in this study by learning how some of your colleagues are dealing with issues related to the research and instructional uses of ephemera and realia in academic library archival collections.

**What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?**

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

**How will your privacy be protected?**

Your responses are entirely confidential. Although every effort will be made to keep research records private, there may be times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of such records, including personal information. This is very unlikely, but if disclosure is ever required, UNC-Chapel Hill will take steps allowable by law to protect the privacy of personal information. In some cases, your information in this research study could be reviewed by representatives of the University, research sponsors, or government agencies for purposes such as quality control or safety.

I would like to audio tape our interview. If you consent to being taped, you may request that the recorder be turned off at any time. The tapes will be for my use only, will not be shared with anyone, and will be erased once my paper is written. Any written transcript of the interview will be destroyed once my paper is completed. You may decline to answer any question for any reason.

**Will you receive anything for being in this study?**

You will have the option of receiving a copy of this research paper upon its completion.

**Will it cost you anything to be in this study?**

There will be no costs for being in the study

**What if you are a UNC employee?**

Taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration

if you take part in this research.

**What if you have questions about this study?**

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researcher listed on the first page of this form.

**What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?**

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB\_subjects@unc.edu.

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**Participant's Agreement:**

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.

- I give permission for the researcher to audio record the interview.
- I do not give the researcher permission to audio record the interview.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Research Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Research Participant

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