# .art libraries
# journal

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The *Art Libraries Journal* is published by ARLIS/UK & Ireland for the international art library community and for all who are interested in the documentation of the visual arts. It highlights the rapid changes in information technology which are affecting the activities of the profession, and documents developments in the converging fields of libraries, museums, archives and visual resources. At the same time it is a journal rooted in the long-term concerns of art librarians, dealing with practical issues relating to traditional art library materials such as exhibition and sales catalogues, visual resources and artists' books.

Most issues of the *Art Libraries Journal* cover a wide spread of relevant subjects, but some focus on specific themes, such as digitisation or museum libraries, or more contentious topics such as copyright or charging for services. Certain issues are devoted to aspects of art documentation in a particular country or region.

The majority of the articles in the *Art Libraries Journal* are specially commissioned from leading art librarians and other specialists. Conference papers from round the world are also published, including a selection from the IFLA Art Libraries Section sessions each year.

The Editor of the *Art Libraries Journal* welcomes contributions, especially to the annual Bibliographies Update, and also correspondence, and these should be sent to the email address on the left.

While most articles are published in English, the *Art Libraries Journal* occasionally publishes in French, German or Spanish, with summaries in English.

The *Art Libraries Journal* appears quarterly, and goes to libraries and individuals in over 30 countries.

The *Art Libraries Journal* is available worldwide with membership of ARLIS/UK & Ireland and costs £45 p.a. for individuals (within the UK and Ireland only); for institutions it is £70/$140 (surface mail) or £83/$166 (airmail) annually. Non-members outside the UK and Ireland can subscribe to the *Art Libraries Journal* for £60/$120 (surface mail) or £70/$140 (airmail).

Single copies may be purchased at £13/$26 each, surface mail postage included (£12/$24 to ARLIS/UK & Ireland members).

A limited number of complimentary subscriptions to the *Art Libraries Journal* is available, for periods of up to two years, to libraries which because of currency problems or other difficulties are genuinely unable to subscribe in the normal way. Applicants are invited to write to the Editor in the first instance.

# Viewpoint:

## Ephemera: an undervalued resource in the art library

Art events can be transitory and the danger of losing all record of an exhibition, installation, performance or happening is significant. Ephemeral items are often the only existing documentation of such events. The smallest galleries rarely publish catalogues but will often generate a private view card or press release.

Art ephemera is material which has been created and conceived by an artist or the gallery representing them to publicise an exhibition or event. In the 1960s, new low-cost mass production techniques allowed galleries and artists to disseminate information with ease. For an artist, this was an opportunity to produce objects or artworks to supplement the work in the show, small enough to be sent in the post or for picking up at the event (thus the term 'extra art'[1]). Information about art and the artwork itself became one. Galleries continue to generate the more standard publicity material – usually a single sheet or card, possibly containing some text, a list of works or an image. Other items may include button badges, stickers, posters or fliers.

Originally conceived as short lived documents, intended to last no longer than the exhibition, ephemeral materials can form a unique historical snapshot. Such items therefore contribute to the study of an artist and their work, and how that artist is perceived in the context of the contemporary art scene. A gallery may generate a body of material which reveals the development of a particular moment in art history. For example, ephemeral items spanning the existence of Seth Siegelaub's short-lived gallery in late 1960s New York map the American branch of Conceptual art which involved artists like Carl Andre, Robert Barry, Lawrence Weiner and Douglas Heubler. Similarly, the early days of the YBA movement in the UK are almost exclusively recorded via ephemeral items from disparate venues; for several years subsequent to the 'inaugural' YBA catalogue for the now infamous

1988 *Freeze* exhibition, artists such as Richard Patterson, Fiona Rae or Mat Collishaw feature in few publications of more than a few pages.

For libraries and archives who set out to collect ephemera, a constantly growing and difficult to control volume of material is inevitable. Institutions receive an endless supply, often with little effort on the part of the librarian. Questions arise concerning an item's relevance, what should be kept, and how it should be stored and accessed effectively. Often, access to such material is poor: it is usually uncatalogued and locating items can be dependent on the personal knowledge of the archivist or librarian.

In a library or museum context ephemera is usually stored in alphabetical 'artists' files', which are principally self-indexing. Larger institutions have undertaken cataloguing via templates to enable wider access and awareness of the material. Staffing constraints, in conjunction with the lack of importance which has historically been placed on ephemera as a research tool, usually necessitate that the cataloguing process is basic and reliant on trained volunteers. However, those who have been able to undertake such cataloguing report an increased use of their artists' files.

In addition to its research value, ephemera can be a useful promotional tool for an institution's other collections. In galleries, art historical exhibitions often feature supporting ephemeral material, providing a wider understanding of the subject being discussed. In an education environment, displays of ephemera can be a vibrant and accessible way of bringing academic subjects to life.

In recent years there has been a shift from paper ephemera towards that which is distributed electronically by email. Although the British Library is currently working on a project to archive websites, it remains to be seen if ephemeral mailouts will be preserved. For the time being, though, for those who work with it on a daily basis, discovering

countless fascinating and illuminating documents, it is encouraging that contemporary art ephemera is at last receiving the attention it deserves as a valid research resource.

## References

1. *Extra art: a survey of artists' ephemera, 1960-1999*. Santa Monica, Calif.: Smart Art Press, 2001. Catalogue of an exhibition curated by Steven Leiber at California College of Arts and Crafts, San Francisco, 12 October-8 December 2001.

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# The stuff of everyday life:
# a brief introduction to the history and definition of printed ephemera

*Martin Andrews*

Rubbish for the waste paper basket or valuable social documents? What is printed ephemera and what can it reveal to us about the everyday lives of people in the past? This brief introduction to the subject goes some way to answer these questions, and poses others.

There have been many debates about a precise definition of printed ephemera but there is much to be gained from a wide and embracing approach, accepting fuzzy edges. Broadly the derivation of the word lies in the Greek *epi* (about or around) and *hemera* (a day). The word is also used as the specialist term for the freshwater insect, the mayfly (*Ephemera danica*), that, in its adult winged form, is commonly believed to live for only one day. For astronomers, astrologers and navigators the word ephemeris is used for a calendar or table of days. Even Dr John Johnson, appointed printer to the University of Oxford in 1925 and founder of the extensive and celebrated collection of ephemera that is now housed in the Bodleian Library in Oxford, found it difficult to be precise. He said his collection consisted of

> . . . common printed things . . . what is commonly thrown away – all the printed paraphernalia of our day-to-day lives, in size from the largest broadside to the humble calling card . . . from magnificent invitations to coronations of kings to the humblest of street literature sold for a penny or less.[1]

On another occasion he defined it as '. . . everything which would normally go into the wastepaper basket after use, everything printed which is not actually a book'.[2]

But Johnson's definitions were not meant to be deprecating, on the contrary he greatly valued ephemera as documentation of his world of printing and publishing: I keep every trade card of every traveller who comes within the gates [at OUP], and treasure them in my archives. They are among the many gauges of our craft.'[3]

Today there is wide recognition of ephemera as an important historical source. Asa Briggs considers 'ephemera' a key word for historians:

> In the reconstruction of the past everything is grist to the historian's mill, and what was thrown away is at least as useful as what was deliberately preserved. As our sense of past times changes, we try to strip away the intervening layers and discover the immediate witnesses.[4]

Ephemera provides us with a very particular kind of evidence. It offers an opportunity for scholarly analysis as well as a more subjective quality, an almost emotional and tactile response to worn and fingered material, directly handled by the people whose concerns and activities we are trying to understand, material that against the odds has survived and come down to us, often in a fragile state. In an unpublished essay, the ephemerist Maurice Rickards wrote:

> An implicit component of every item of ephemera is the reader over the shoulder – the eyes for which the item first appeared; the living glance that scanned the paper even as we ourselves now scan it . . . Not only can you 'hear their voices' as Trevelyan put it, you can merge your glance with theirs . . . You become, as you read, an intimate part of the detail of their experience – not just overhearing them, but momentarily within them  . . .
>
> . . . As we survey a battered public notice or a dog-eared printed paper, we are aware not only of the sum total of duration (implicit in its wear and tear), not only the buffetings and bruisings that its condition proclaims, but the countless scannings it has undergone – the multitude of readings and re-readings. It is, as you might say, 'eye-worn. . .'[5]

Individually, items of ephemera might seem trivial and peripheral, but cumulatively they can throw a very particular light on history, offering not only factual detail but also an atmospheric and evocative direct link with the past.

With the growth of literacy, communications, advertising and marketing there was a great proliferation of jobbing printing in the 19th century, but ephemera has existed since the very beginning of printing from movable type. The first dated specimen of Western printing was not a book but a piece of ephemera – an indulgence probably printed by Johann Gutenberg or by his partners Fust and Schoffer in 1454. Although rare, examples of ephemera from the earliest days of book printing have survived. Two copies of a short advertisement printed by William Caxton in about 1478 for his *Commemorations of Sarum Use* still exist. The advertisement promises that the book is competitively priced ('good chepe'). Occasionally items such a prospectus or advertisement are bound into a book or more commonly found hidden away in the binding. The value of paper was such that redundant items were re-used as one of the layers of paste board or pasted down to the wooden board. This was possibly the fate of a list of books for sale printed by Peter Schoeffer in 1470. The list was used by a travelling salesman who wrote his address at the bottom of the sheet. The final line of the list is picked out in a larger size of type as a specimen of the typeface used in the Psalter for sale. Another example of early printed ephemera is a list of books printed in Greek, classified by subject (grammar, poetics, logic, philosophy, sacred scriptures) and priced, printed and circulated in 1498 by Aldus Manutius.

Finding material is often a matter of chance, locating the odd relevant item in private collections of printed ephemera or among specialist traders or at regularly held ephemera fairs. But there are also major collections in libraries, museums and company archives, such as the collection of typographer John Lewis at the University of Reading, organised with sections relating to bookselling, publishing, libraries, printing and printers. The 17th-century diarist Samuel Pepys had a particular passion for ballads, chapbooks and other street literature, many of which are preserved in the Pepys Library at Magdalene College Cambridge. Amongst thousands of items that form 'a throwaway conspectus of the life and times of a remarkable Londoner' are 40 or so tradecards gathered from the businesses in walking distance of his home, including a card for

> Roger Tucker. Bookseller at the Signe of the Golden Legg. At the corner of Salisbury Street and the Strand. Sells all sorts of Printed. Books and all

> manner of Stationary Ware at reasonable Rates. Where allso one may have ready mony for all Sorts of book.[6]

Another 17th-century collector of street ballads, John Bagford, was to become notorious as something of a vandal to those interested in books. Brought up as a shoemaker in London, with little formal education, Bagford nevertheless gained a reputation as a bibliophile. He was commissioned as an agent by many distinguished book collectors and academics, including members of the Society of Antiquaries, to search out specific and often rare volumes for their libraries. Ferreting around in attics, cellars, street markets and dusty bookshops in England and abroad gave him an opportunity to research his own book, *Proposals for printing an historical account of that most universally celebrated, as well as useful art of typography* (1707). Unfortunately, to inform his study and provide illustrations, Bagford amassed a vast collection of title-pages, frontispieces, illustrations, which some believe he wantonly cut out of precious volumes – even destroying books for their bindings and endpapers. In 1888, in *The enemies of books*, William Blades described Bagford as a 'wicked old biblioclast' who 'went about the country from library to library tearing away title-pages . . .'. Alongside his misdirected passion for books, Bagford was also fascinated by social history and picked up and preserved a vast cross-section of printed oddments of the time: tickets, bills, lottery puffs, price lists. Included in this mass of trivia was material relating more closely to his interest in printing and publishing: galley sheets, bookplates, specimens of paper and watermarks, and price lists. Bagford's collections are now housed in the British Library.

Ephemera can also provide first-hand evidence of the history of printing. Printers' advertisements and letterheads naturally boast of new processes and equipment: the introduction of lithography, photography, stereotyping, electrotyping, process engraving, monotype and linotype can be dated by noting the appearance of such terms in ephemera. The Koenig steam-powered press was introduced in 1814 but steam power was not in general use by printers until the middle of the century, and its gradual adoption can be traced through letterheads and advertisements. Invoices, bills and receipts can provide details of costings and profit margins. The other trades and industries associated with book production, such as paper manufacturers and binders, also printed ephemera of a similar nature.

In our own times, in ironic contrast to the promise of the 'paperless society', our everyday lives are littered with a seemingly ever-increasing amount of

Examples of 19th-century ephemera from the Maurice Rickards Collection in the Centre for Ephemera Studies, University of Reading.

ephemeral paper documents that permeate every aspect of our daily existence. 'Junk mail', mostly unwelcome and unsolicited, tempts us to more credit or endless fast food. The vast amount of glossy promotional material, tedious bureaucratic forms demanding our attention, the over-packaging of products and streets strewn with drifts of litter, are a bane of modern life. Yet, in their turn, these documents will reflect our age for the future. From the 'transient minor documents of everyday life'[7] we can have a direct contact with the past through artefacts that were once central to the functioning of society – the etiquette, protocol, private and business life of past centuries and societies around the world.

Maurice Rickards wrote that ephemera

. . . has much more than passing validity. Above and beyond its immediate purpose, it expresses a fragment of social history, a reflection of the spirit of its time. . . . which is not expected to survive, but which can prove to be very useful in research. . . . Ephemera, represents the other half of history: the half without guile. When people put up monuments, published official war histories they had a constant eye on their audience and their history would adjust to suit, whereas ephemera was never expected to survive . . . so it contains all sorts of human qualities which would otherwise be edited out.[8]

The world of trade and commerce can be documented through printed ephemera. It can also reflect other aspects of life: the bureaucratic manipulation and control of society through rules, regulations, forms, records, certificates and permissions that maintain the social order. It reflects the tastes and interests of a period: fashions, hobbies, entertainments, community and social events, sport, travel and the worlds of art and culture. The development of education and communication and the opening up of communities and social mobility can be traced through ephemera. Most events in life are themselves ephemeral. Often the only record of great theatrical and dance performances, musical concerts and art exhibitions, for example, are the programmes, catalogues, posters, tickets and flyers that have survived – particularly for experimental or fringe events.

However, for the librarian and archivist, ephemera can pose problems. It does not lend itself to familiar conventions of classification, storage and cataloguing. Alan Clinton has observed that:

Traditionally librarians deal with books, museum curators with artefacts, and archivists with manuscripts. Yet at the edges of what was once regarded as the proper concern of each of these are

large amounts of printed paper. These materials are often designated nowadays as "ephemera", and are generally distinguished by being difficult to arrange and to find.[9]

If the ephemera of the past is difficult to handle, then what of the future and the preservation of electronic documents and communications. Perhaps we will need a new definition of the word.

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3.  John Johnson, *The printer, his customers and his men* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1933), p.46.
4.  Asa Briggs, foreword to Maurice Rickards, *Collecting printed ephemera*, p.9.
5.  *Ibid.*, pp.16-17. Maurice Rickards was one of the founder members of the Society of Printed Ephemera and wrote extensively on the subject. His own exemplary collection, amounting to some 20,000 items, is now part of the research collections of the Centre for Ephemera Studies, in the Department of Typography & Graphic Communication at the University of Reading. Lord Asa Briggs is the President of the Society of Printed Ephemera.
6.  Text of a tradecard preserved in the Pepys Library at Magdalene College Cambridge and quoted in Maurice Rickards, *Collecting printed ephemera*, p.40.
7.  Michael Twyman, 'Editor's introduction,' in Maurice Rickards, *The encyclopedia of ephemera: a guide to the fragmentary documents of everyday life for the collector, curator and historian* (London: British Library, 2000), p.v.
8.  Maurice Rickards, *This is ephemera* (Newton Abbott: David & Charles, 1977), p.9.
9.  Alan Clinton, *Printed ephemera: collection, organisation and access* (London: Clive Bingley, 1981), p.7.

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# Managing and cataloguing
# ephemera collections

*Stephen Lowther*

What *is* ephemera? How *do* we catalogue it? Every library's ephemera collection differs greatly from others in its content and cataloguing needs. Does one dictate the other? Is there a right way and a wrong way? Or just a way that is right for the library and material in hand? A look at how these things were approached at the Wellcome Library gives an example of how a successfully ordered collection can be created out of the initial chaos with just a little forethought and a lot of hard work.

The Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine, situated on the Euston Road in London, has been open to the general public free of charge since late 1949 and is funded by the Wellcome Trust. The library's origins are to be found much earlier in the extensive collections of Henry Solomon Wellcome (1853-1936), co-founder of the pharmaceutical firm Burroughs Wellcome. Coverage is international and is much broader than the history of medicine, encompassing related subjects such as alchemy, anthropology, the occult, ethnography, cookery, travel, ethics, sanitation and policy of medicine.

The library has more than half a million books dating back to the dawn of printing, complemented by the manuscript collections (approximately 8,000 western manuscripts and 11,000 oriental), an iconographic collection of about 100,000 paintings, drawings, prints and photographs, archives which cover important 20th-century medical organisations and individuals as well as the separate Medical Photographic Library, and Medical Film and Video Library.

There has always been ephemera in the Wellcome Library but until relatively recently it was merely dispersed among other material in the General Collections, Archives, Rare Books and Iconographic departments, as opposed to being a separate collection. This started to change in the late 1980s as Katie Hooper began to collect together single sheet items in the (pre-1850) Rare Books collection and Jeannette Lake casually piled up interesting things that had been used as bookmarks or had been inserted



"Take it on sugar" : Faulding's "Emu" brand eucalyptus oil. Adelaide: F. H. Faulding & Co.,1910s?
     Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 311:8

into journals as advertising in the (post-1850) Modern Medicine collection. She looked at them and wondered if we could make any formal sort of use of them.

I arrived at the Wellcome Library as a cataloguer in late 1989, my own roots being in graphic design and comics illustration, with a natural affinity for printed, highly visual things. Seventeen years later our constantly expanding collection of post-1850 ephemera contains approximately 27,000 single items (in addition to the 3000 printed before 1850 in our Rare Books department). Everything is preserved in acid-free plastic sleeves or paper folders inside conservation-standard box files in controlled temperature stacks. The collection has been carefully sorted and all of the (nearly 800) boxes have been catalogued as well as many of the single items they contain.

So, how exactly do you get to this stage from what was essentially just a pile of boxes containing thousands of sheets of printed material in no order whatsoever? In addition to material we found in our own collection we had bought in old material from dealers and ephemera fairs, as well as having been given sizeable donations. We also gathered *new* material as best we could, with a view to it becoming historical. The range of types and sizes of ephemera, as well as its age, was very broad.

There were a lot of questions to answer. Could we catalogue it using MARC and AACR2? Would we have it on closed access or open access? Should it be arranged chronologically (given we are an historical library), by type of material or by a subject approach? Would we classify it? If so which scheme would we use? What would we do about the variety of sizes? How would we issue it to the readers?

Jeannette left in 2000, leaving the collection very much in my hands. I started cataloguing in March 2001, but prior to that there had been endlessly evolving discussions about how to approach the gargantuan task. There was no one easy solution. Looking at the mountain of paper I opted for a common sense approach, trying to keep things as simple as possible and in keeping with established practices in other parts of the library's collections. This makes retrieval and administration easier too.

Firstly we needed a definition. What is ephemera?

Trade at S. Cook's, chemist, Hyson Green. [Diecut advertising card]       Nottingham : S. Cook, 1880s? Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 204:22

What goes into the collection and what doesn't? (The dustbin was waiting for the rejections.) Every library will have its own views on what should be included in its collection and what its emphasis should be. We thought for a while and ultimately decided that 'ephemera' was to be single sheet items (flat or folded) that have been individually 'published' and that there must be text on them – otherwise they are simply images and are sent upstairs to the Wellcome Library's Iconographic Collection. We placed no restrictions on what the item was made of (within reason). We have things in paper, cardboard, metal, plastic, silk and cloth, but we rejected photocopies (not original works) and newspaper cuttings (they are just a part of something larger and the cheap paper raises conservation issues). Anything consisting of two sheets or more would constitute a pamphlet, up to 72 pages, at which point it would be considered to be a book. Three-dimensional objects are something we simply don't keep in the library so bottles and printed tins, no matter how attractive, were rejected automatically (but reluctantly).

Secondly, how would we arrange it? Did we need to arrange it at all? We use three main classification schemes in the book collections (National Library of Medicine (NLM), Barnard and a locally devised one), let alone various numerical and alphabetical sequences. How were people going to want to use this collection? Certainly a chronological element seemed to be a good idea, as did putting together material published by various companies and charities. On the other hand a broadly subject-based arrangement seemed to be the best way to do things ('what do you have on AIDS/food habits/beauty products/diabetes' being the most common type of enquiry).

I decided to treat the ephemera as much like our books and pamphlets as possible. We'd used NLM for classifying those so it seemed logical to use the same for the ephemera. Our conservation department had earmarked plastic sleeves and box files which would house anything smaller than A4 (95% of the collection). As things would be kept in boxes, it seemed superfluous to assign classmarks to individual items and as the collection had to be kept on closed

access (bearing in mind that ephemera has commercial value and is easy to steal, some control is necessary) and was going to amount to no more than a thousand boxes, we decided to dispense with formal classification completely, opting for running numbers for the boxes with a prefix of EPH (for ephemera) and running numbers for the items within the box (EPH1:1, EPH1:2, etc.). A barcode can be attached to the plastic sleeve if that is necessary for issuing purposes. The collection would still be sorted along the lines of the NLM classification scheme though no classmarks would be assigned, saving a lot of cataloguing time.

Sorting the collection is a massive task, but you certainly become well acquainted with its contents. Getting things into a coherent and well-structured sequence that is right for your library's needs is the essential foundation from which an efficiently administered and catalogued ephemera collection will follow. Certain subject areas may well suggest certain arrangements within them. Our military medicine ephemera fell naturally into a chronological



ABC of society. [Magazine insert?]
Providence, R.I.: Hunt's Remedy Co., *ca.*1900?
    Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 318:26
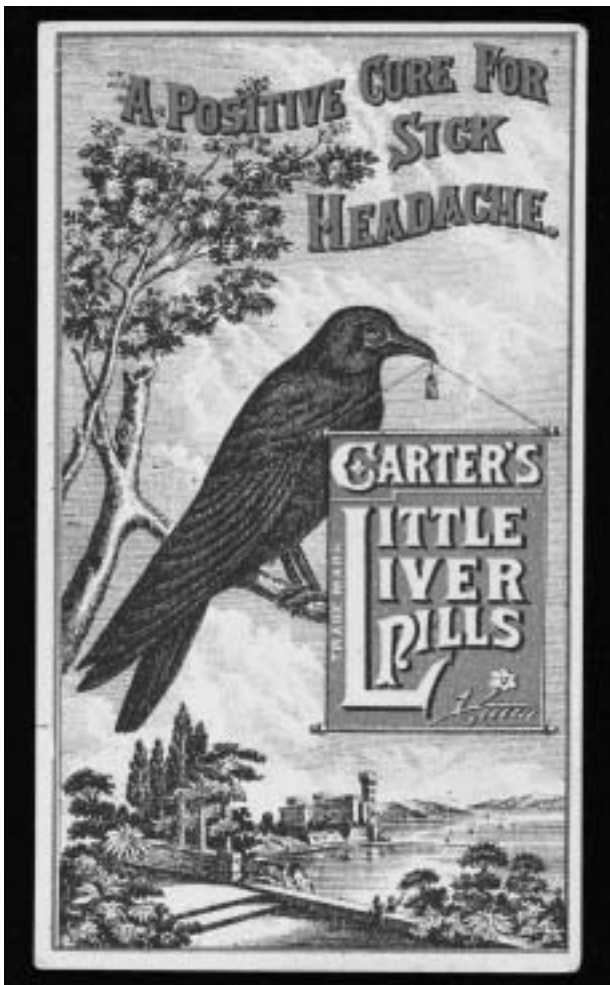


A positive cure for sick headache : Carter's Little Liver Pills. [advertising card]
New York: Carter Medicine Co., *ca.*1900.
    Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 299:22

arrangement. On the other hand, the extensive drug advertising material needed to be approached differently. We have the name of the product, its manufacturer and the disease it is used for as potential themes for arranging the ephemera. I opted for a hierarchical, broad-to-specific approach of: 1) manufacturer, 2) product and then 3) alphabetically by 'title' within that.

We have an impressive amount of AIDS ephemera in 22 boxes. This broke down simply into the following distinct subdivisions : awareness and public education, safe sex education, condoms, individual charities and support groups, World AIDS Day, AIDS and women, religion, memorials and fundraising, legal, social and training, conferences and research, and AIDS in Scotland. Food, drink, soaps, veterinary material were all divided in a similar manner.

Prostitution comes into the subject of sexology. I've compiled a collection of about 3000 'tart cards' from public telephone boxes in the Euston area since 1989. These are arranged chronologically with the date they were found written on the back and have proved invaluable in Caroline Archer's research for her recent book, *Tart cards*.[1] Using this approach, we show the history and development of the subject.

Hospital ephemera is arranged simply by the name of the hospital. The medical stamp collection is

arranged alphabetically by country, then chronologically. Essentially it's a case of looking at the material and thinking how it will be requested and which elements need to be reflected in how it is grouped, making a sensible and practical arrangement and bringing together like materials where appropriate to make retrieval and browsing easiest.

If the collection varies greatly in size then multiple sequences may be needed. The bulk of our collection is less than A4, then we have an oversize sequence (EPH+ : up to A2) and a small, giant-sized one (posters and charts: EPH++ : up to A1). All are arranged on the same broad NLM subject sequence.

Having everything in the order you want, housed in whichever way you are going to house it, it's time to turn on the computer, take a deep breath and create your first catalogue record. But you need to know how you're going to be doing *that* as well.

Our basic approach was to treat single items of ephemera as single sheet pamphlets or books, applying AACR2 and using MARC fields in the same way we would for them. There is no great mystery to it and everything has fitted into the format quite comfortably so far. Ephemera is catalogued directly into our local (Innopac) system, not in OCLC, which is normally used for the books and pamphlets.

The first challenge may well be in deciding what the title is. There are sometimes several equally valid options but, again, common sense tells you what is the best text to choose (generally the most prominent typographically). Practice helps as well. There will often be an author, manufacturer or organisation named who has produced the item in question – possibly with a place of publication too.



Japanese Vigor Tonic. [Packaging]
Ross: J. H. Hart, 1920s?
Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 386:14

The major problem that I have had has been that of a publication date. Ephemera is notoriously vague where dates are concerned. What do you do? Scan the text. Are there references to reigning monarchs, wars and other historical events? Is there similar material on the internet which will help you find a date, however approximate? Are there illustrations of people? Women's fashions and hairstyles, particularly, indicate a certain period. Printing techniques, design and typography help a lot as well. Are there tiny numbers on the back indicating a possible printing date? Chances are you will find something to help. If not then an educated guess (in square brackets) is probably better than nothing.

Whereas most of our collection can be described as single sheets or broadsides there are novelty items with very different physical characteristics: a game, a jigsaw puzzle, a paper toy, etc. You're cataloguing realia here and AACR2 shows you how.

The note fields are important. We found the 520 summary field very useful for differentiating between items with identical titles, for example a series of cards which simply have the word 'Bovril' as text. This field is keyword searchable so it gives further means of access to the material.

We use the NLM Medical Subject Headings (MeSH) and Library of Congress subject headings (LCSH) for our books and serials. No reason not to for the ephemera. Add names as subjects as required. Brand names as subject headings are something that we had to introduce and enter in a locally defined 652 field and are again something people ask for ('what do you have advertising Beecham's Pills, Angier's Emulsion, Sanatogen, Allen & Hanbury's baby food', etc.).

Genre terms (655) were something of a problem. We had a wide variety of material and needed a wide variety of terms. After looking at various lists we decided to compile our own from various standard listings, allowing ourselves the indulgence of adding headings locally if we really needed to. All of this is controlled by Paul Davey, our senior cataloguer.

Every record has to include the word 'ephemera' as a genre term. Searching on this in the OPAC you can call up the entire collection in seconds.

Depth of cataloguing is something which varies greatly from library to library. We aim to provide a high level of access, but as cataloguing time is limited we keep the amount of detail down to a sensible limit, while including good subject access and significantly featured people, brands, organisations and places.

How you issue material to the public affects the cataloguing too. In our case the circulating item would be the box – containing 25-50 single items whose individual records must be linked to that for the box's 'parent' record. It's complicated but works much in the same way as cataloguing individual pamphlets bound into a volume or analytics. We were able to set up templates for individual boxes and for component parts. The box record is fairly brief, needing an assigned title (Drug advertising ephemera: Peru, 1946-1958. Box 1), a brief physical description (1 box; 34 x 33 cm.), a series statement which links all ephemera boxes (General Collections Ephemera Collection; Box 381A) and note fields describing contents very briefly, although if you aren't going to catalogue individual items a lengthy 520 note can include any terms that you want to be searchable. Add subject headings and name headings in such depth and amounts as you have time for or see as being appropriate and then just link individual records to the parent one. We have done this in



Tom-Ton: fat boy. [Postcard] Berlin: Angeros, 1920s?
Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 499:7.

occasionally discussed at the Wellcome Library. As things stand, any ephemera photographed for our Medical Photo Library is linked from their MIRO system to the Innopac record, where a thumbnail digital image appears. This enables the item to be seen over the internet. The ephemera collection is part of our main catalogue so any search done in the OPAC will retrieve ephemera as well as books, journals, annual reports, patents, analytics, paintings and prints, giving full and integrated access to the Wellcome Library's broad and impressive collections.



Lung tonic. M.P.S. series. [Display card] ca.1900?
Wellcome Library. Ephemera collection, EPH 378:4

Innopac by using the individual record's bibliographic record number as the linking element. This is something that will probably need to be set up by the library's systems librarian.

Looking to the future, ephemera is clearly a good candidate for digitisation, something we have

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# What should I do with paper ephemera? Looking after ephemera in a library

*Liz Yamada*

Looking after ephemera collections can seem quite daunting; their contents come in all shapes and sizes and they are designed to be 'here today, gone tomorrow'. The definition of ephemera in the *Oxford pocket dictionary* is 'things of only short-lived use', which is disheartening when we are trying to preserve these fascinating items for posterity.  However, there is a lot of information available about preservation and much of this is applicable to ephemera collections.

When I first started writing this article I wanted to know what libraries classify as paper ephemera. It is an easy enough question to ask but not that straightforward to answer. It all depends on the collections deposited at each institution and in practical terms I only managed to narrow it down to anything that is paper but not a book. The range of materials and formats can be extremely diverse, from newsprint to paper napkins, calling cards to posters. It is a big subject to cover, so the aim of this article is to look at why ephemera collections are so vulnerable, the tools available for assessing them and also to suggest some practical examples of action that can be taken to protect awkward formats.

## Why ephemera collections deteriorate

Many of the problems posed by ephemera are common to all paper collections but tend to be more extreme. Ephemeral collections can be more vulnerable than most other paper collections because of cheap constituent materials, poor storage history, unusual formats or excessive usage. Specific causes of deterioration can be grouped into two types, internal and external.

Internal factors relate to the materials used to create the item, the type of paper fibre, additives in the pulp; inks and dyes used to form the image, text or paper colour; coatings and adhesives. All of these ingredients influence the longevity of anything made of paper. Ephemera can degrade quickly because, in

the eyes of the creator, life span is often the least important aspect of the item's function. Acidic, brittle paper is as damaging in ephemera collections as it is in a book collection, and certainly many paperback books could be considered ephemeral. Inks, pigments, dyes and coatings vary dramatically in their stability from very stable carbon-based printing inks, to text created on modern thermal papers which can disappear in a matter of months. The range of combinations makes it difficult to generalise.

External causes of deterioration are common to all paper artefacts. Damp storage areas encourage mould growth, insect and rodent damage, rust, bleeding inks and dyes, and the sticking of coated papers. High temperatures accelerate chemical deterioration processes. Light fades inks and dyes, and darkens papers, through photo-oxidation. Air pollutants combine with moisture in the air to form acids which also contribute to the breakdown of cellulose. All of these processes are more likely to happen to items that are neglected, and ephemeral items are more likely to be ignored because they are disposable. However, items that have been collected, selected and loved can also suffer. Heavy use and repeated exposure are common problems for many interesting and popular paper artefacts but they are particularly problematic in ephemeral items with unusual formats, awkward shapes and moving parts. Sometimes inappropriate care and attention have been lovingly applied: for example, sticking items into albums with adhesives that have since discoloured, Sellotape repairs, protective coatings of sticky-backed plastic, lamination, PVC enclosures or acidic mounts. All of these treatments are applied as a

method of preservation but as a general rule: anything that sticks itself is bad.



Greater London Council items in an archival four-flap folder.

## Collections care

Many of the issues identified can be addressed through good collections management. The National Archives' *Framework of standards*[1] lists many standards and best practice guidelines for all areas of the profession, including conservation and preservation. The International Federation of Library Associations has published a very informative and readable introduction to caring for library materials,[2] much of which is applicable to ephemera collections. There are numerous preservation guidelines and standards available to library and archive professionals; none of them are specifically written for ephemera but they are as applicable as they would be to any other paper collection intended for the long term.

A good starting point, when tackling the preservation needs of a collection, is a survey. *Benchmarks in collection care*[3] is an extremely useful checklist for assessing the risks to a collection. It is a practical workbook that can be used to assess all the main aspects of a collections care policy, step by step, from the building structure to handling guidelines. Working through *Benchmarks* will involve a wide range of staff, from buildings maintenance and security to librarians and front of house staff, and this

can raise the profile of preservation across an institution. *Benchmarks* also grades each aspect of collections care as basic, good or best. This approach lays out clearly the steps necessary to the care of your collection.

A needs assessment survey[4] can enable statistical analysis of collections. It can be applied to a whole collection or a specific part. Four hundred random items are selected to produce statistics for the whole collection. This provides an overview of the vulnerabilities of the material. Surveys can be time-consuming to carry out. Although this process often confirms what is already known, it provides evidence on which to build.

If the manpower or expertise to carry out a survey is not available in-house, consult a freelance conservator experienced in collection surveys. In the United Kingdom finding such a conservator is easy thanks to the *Conservation register*,[5] a searchable on-line database of conservators across the country. Having read the guidelines and carried out a survey it is possible to develop a preservation plan: an action plan.

## Packaging ephemera

Unless you have a purpose-built storage facility, finding funding for improvements to meet national[6] or international standards can be hard; however, a prepared wish-list is still a useful tool if fast action is required to take advantage of an unexpected funding opportunity.

In the meantime, packaging can be improved on a small or large scale depending on resources available and has an immediate effect. Good packaging buffers fluctuations in the environment; protects items from pollution, pests, dust and light; protects items from handling; makes access easier; improves identification and retrieval; prevents acid migration; improves security; increases protection in the event of a fire or flood and increases respect for a collection because it is obviously being cared for. Good packaging is an investment.

It is essential to use boxes and folders made from materials suitable for long term storage. Acidic storage materials will impart acidic vapours to their contents which will weaken and discolour the items, most noticeably those in physical contact. Patches of yellow/brown discolouration develop in paper when it has been resting against something acidic, e.g. wooden backing boards in a frame, newsprint bookmarks or items stored in brown envelopes. This discolouration is evidence of 'acid migration', in which acidic vapours from one item transfer to another.

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While the most chemically stable papers and boards are those made from 100% cotton, they are also the most expensive. A chemically purified, alkaline buffered, woodpulp board a is good alternative and mechanical wood pulp board should be avoided. Since it isn't possible to tell just by looking at new board what it is made from, the only guarantee that it is suitable is the specification which conservation suppliers or board manufacturers will provide. To help understand the terminology I recommend 'Protective packaging' by Helen Lindsey.[7] The National Archives has been carrying out independent tests into the quality of archival box board that is currently available, as part of their materials testing programme, and the results are available on their website.[8] The best plastic to use for packaging is polyester, it is completely inert and transparent. Other clear plastics, such as polyvinyl chloride, give off acidic vapours (called off-gassing) and affect paper and film in the same way as the acidic vapours given off by poor quality papers.

The most difficult items to package are very small, very large, bulky or with moving parts. New packaging techniques are being developed all the time.[9] Below are some simple examples.



Flower cards from the Memorial Gardens of the July 7th Bombings in London, housed in commercially available polyester sleeves and an archival boxboard ringbinder.

*Small items: business cards, menus, tickets*

The main issues are: keeping the items in sequence, being able to find them and ensuring security. Placing small items in polyester sleeves is the easiest way to help with all of these.
Method 1: Decide on a standard size that suits the largest item, package everything in the series in the same sleeves and place in a box which is only slightly larger; this will ensure that the items stay in order within the box.
Method 2: There are polyester album pages available in a standard size but with a range of different sized pockets. A range of binders is sold to match the album pages; these vary in price, based on whether they are made from archival boxboard or covered in buckram for a more durable finish. If there is no information on the back of the item, a piece of paper can be included in each polyester pocket to provide additional details or a clearer reference number.
Method 3: If theft is likely to be a risk, a more secure way of storing the items is to hinge them to archival paper/board album pages. They will look good but this method is comparatively time-consuming, it should be carried out by a conservator and it is not very flexible.

*Large items*

Large items may be stored folded, flat or rolled.

Some items are designed to be folded, others were intended to be flat but have been folded to make storage easier. As a sheet of paper is folded and unfolded, the paper fibres along the fold are weakened, so new folds should never be created. In extreme cases (mostly tracing papers) cracks can occur along the folds as you open them. If you hear anything cracking stop and call a conservator. Deciding whether to store items folded or flat depends on the space available and the amount of use the items receive. The more they are opened and closed the more likely they are to tear, so flat or rolled storage is preferable.

There are various ways of storing rolled items.
Method 1: Cover rolled items with a cotton bag or a large sheet of paper. This is the most basic level of protection but it will at least keep the dust off.
Method 2: Wrap the item around a tube, this supports the roll and prevents it from being squashed. The ends of the roll are the most vulnerable area so make sure the core is longer than the item. Archival board cores can be bought ready-made. Cores can also be handmade out of archival grade cover paper rolled around itself and adhered with ethyl vinyl acetate. A quicker and easier, though less elegant, alternative is to buy a postal tube and cover it with a barrier layer of thick polyester or aluminium foil to prevent any acid migration from the cardboard tube affecting the item. Then cover the polyester/foil with a piece of archival paper to finish it off. For very large items old carpet rolls can be used, but these tend to be very heavy. The rolled item is tied with cotton tape to stop it unrolling and covered with paper or a cotton bag.
Method 3: Long thin boxes can be bought or made for putting the roll into. They can be square, circular or triangular in cross-section. Tie tape around the roll before inserting it into the tube so that it doesn't expand, making it difficult to retrieve.

Method 4: A simple way of protecting posters or other large paper items is to take a roll of polyester and cut a sheet which is large enough to be folded in half and still cover the item with a margin of at least 8cm all round the edge. The fold should be at the short edge. Insert the item and then roll it up from the folded edge and tie with cotton tape. Polyester can be charged with static so it should not be used for powdery or flaky media and may need to be covered in a dusty environment. A beautiful example of rolled storage is the wallpaper storage area at the Whitworth Art Gallery at the University of Manchester: photographs and prices are available on the internet.[10]

There are other general rules to observe when dealing with rolled storage. Always store rolls horizontally, never on end, or the ends will be damaged and the roll will gradually concertina over time causing creases across the centre of the item. Rolls should not be too tight: aim for a diameter of at least 10cm. but the larger the better. Curved supports instead of flat shelves are particularly good for heavy rolls because they distribute the weight more evenly. Specialist curved supports which can be attached to the wall are available for rolls; a budget version is household guttering. Rolls can be stored in drawers, on shelves, in boxes or in specially designed units. If the rolls have cores they can be threaded onto poles. A honeycomb structure of cells can be created so that each roll has a 'home' and the items can be stacked without squashing.[11]

The most straightforward method of storing large, flat items is in archival folders in plan chests.

For large quantities of ephemeral items that are the size of office paper or less, hanging files in a filing cabinet might be a space-efficient, easy alternative to boxes on shelves. Archival envelopes or polyester sleeves can be used to protect items from being misplaced or damaged as they are removed or replaced into the cabinet. This method is particularly useful for constantly expanding collections.

Three dimensional paper items such as printed packaging should also be protected with archival materials – unfortunately, bubble-wrap and polystyrene are not suitable for long-term storage. Acid-free tissue and polyethylene nitrogen expanded foam are suitable for long-term preservation.

Volunteers can be extremely helpful with packaging projects if you have the space to accommodate them and the manpower to supervise them. The work is simple but very rewarding. If you are unsure where to start, consult a conservator who can advise on packaging methods and train volunteers.



An archival boxboard box, an item rolled in a folded sheet of polyester with ties and an item rolled onto a covered postal tube core and covered with a cotton bag.

## Exhibiting ephemeras

Displaying material is good for attracting attention to collections and making them available to wider audiences, but leaving items exposed for long periods of time can also be very harmful. If you have an exhibition area with controlled lighting and secure display cases made from suitable materials[12] then displaying items from ephemera collections should be straightforward. If you do not have access to a good display area and improvements are not possible, displaying copies is the easiest way to protect the originals.

When mounting original items the same attention should be paid to the quality of mounting material as for packaging materials. Standard mount board is not of sufficient quality and conservation or museum mount board should be sourced.[13] Mounting items in a way that is reversible is very important. Conservators often attach objects to mount boards with Japanese paper hinges and wheat starch paste. If you don't have access to a conservator, one easy method is to cut a piece of mount board slightly larger than the item and wrap polyester strips around the item, attached to the back of the board with double sided tape. Another method is to use polyester 'v' hinges which consists of two strips of polyester welded along one long edge. The edge of the item can be slotted into the 'v' and attached to the mount with the double-sided tape that is on the back of the hinge. No adhesive comes into contact with the original and it is a quick and easy method to use, although not suitable for very large items. A more recent introduction is the use of very small, powerful magnets.[14] These can either be used to attach items to metal batons or backing boards or, if a pair of magnets is chosen, they can be used to 'sandwich' the item and mount board to each other. Obviously this method is not suitable for textured or embossed

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surfaces which could be crushed by the force exerted by the magnets.

## Guidelines and training

Good handling is a crucial element in preserving ephemeral paper objects. Training staff, volunteers and visitors how to handle material appropriately will make a huge difference, especially to the life-span of the most popular pieces. Many institutions have made advice about handling available on their websites: each organisation has slightly different priorities so it is worth looking at a range.[15,16,17] Training sessions and notices will raise awareness of preservation issues. Clear guidelines for copying, including the use of photocopiers, scanners and cameras, are essential. It may be necessary to restrict copying, especially photocopying due to the high light levels, ozone and heat; there also physical risks to photocopying complex items. Staff and readers may need to be shown how to use packaging correctly, e.g. not overfilling folders, re-rolling items in the correct way. Supplying staff and volunteers with guidelines on labelling is a valuable way of ensuring that it is carried out sensitively and consistently. Paper items are generally straightforward to label: a 2B pencil is all that is needed for most items. Darkly coloured, coated papers and very small items can be more of a problem: the silvery nature of pencil marks can make them readable on dark surfaces but not easily, it is easy to create an irreversible impression into the surface of coated papers and very small items may need an abbreviated identification number. In all these cases the packaging should be labelled clearly to ensure easy identification.



Three paper flags supported by polyethylene nitrogen-expanded foam (also known as Plastazote), in an archival boxboard box.

## Dealing with vulnerable or damaged items

News cuttings are a common problem in mixed collections. They tend to add valuable context to other items in the collection. Unfortunately they are acidic from manufacture and will continue to degrade at a more rapid rate than most other paper. Storing them in cool dry conditions which will slow down the rate of deterioration, and de-acidification before the paper starts to deteriorate, might help but copying the material is the best way of preserving the information long-term. There are guidelines for preservation photocopying available on the Library of Congress website.[18]

Scrapbooks are very complex objects, containing a huge range of materials, including the paper and board used to make the book; the wide variety of ephemera inside; the adhesives used to attach the items to the book. How all these factors come together to form each unique item will contribute to its condition. The first thing to do is put scrapbooks in a box, flat on the shelf, this will ensure that the item is kept free of dust, in a more stable environment and putting less stress on the binding.[19] For scrapbooks that are damaged, it is best to consult a conservator because each one is different.

The easiest way to ensure the long-term preservation of items that have already been damaged is to remove them from access. Leaving items in a box in a strongroom will ensure their survival but is not a satisfactory permanent solution. Although it may be tempting to get out the repair tape, this is always best left to a professional. Undoing inappropriate repairs is much more time-consuming and costly than carrying out 'fresh' ones. One non-interventive way of dealing with tears in single sheets is to put them carefully into polyester pockets. This will prevent tears from getting bigger and will enable careful handing.

To prevent damage occurring to particularly vulnerable items, it might be worth considering the use of surrogates, either paper, microfilm or digital. Which method you choose depends on the needs of your users but remember that the surrogates present their own preservation issues if they are to be stored for many years and the originals should always be kept.

## More radical storage solutions

There are some more unusual storage solutions that tackle the chemical reactions causing deterioration in
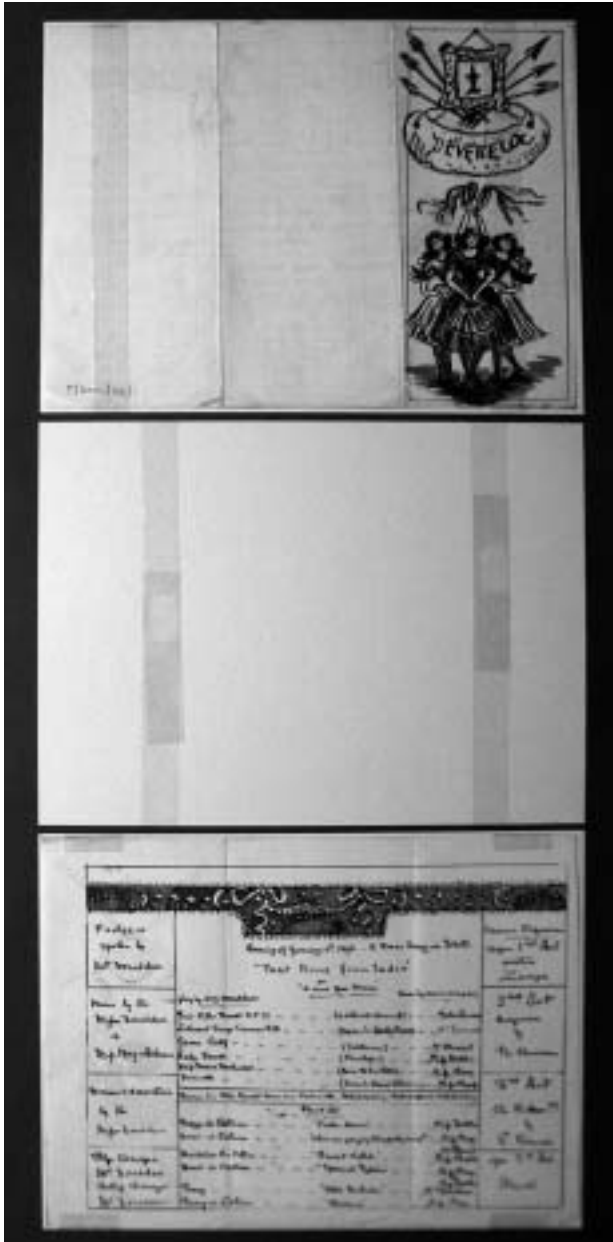
Two items mounted with polyester strips front and back and one item mounted with 'V' hinges in the top and bottom corners.

paper. They aim to remove one or more of the elements that encourage chemical deterioration.

Mass de-acidification has been popular in America and Continental Europe but there has never been a facility built in the United Kingdom.[20] Mass de-acidification is unlikely to be suitable for a mixed collection of ephemera due to the variety and complexity of the items, but it might be suitable for more uniform ephemera collections.

In the same way that you can keep food fresh if you vacuum pack it, you can keep paper 'fresh' too or at least radically reduce the speed of deterioration. One of the difficulties with vacuum packing is that the material is packed under a lot of pressure so the items need to be the same size, with no paper clips or

staples, lumps or bumps otherwise other items in the package will be embossed with their outlines. Another difficulty is that the seal has to be broken and the vacuum re-created every time someone wants to look at an item. One example of its use is the storage of newspapers that have been microfilmed. An additional benefit of vacuum packing is that it also reduces the amount of storage space required.

Cold storage conditions are being used to store photographs and negatives to slow down the rate of deterioration.[21] It will also work for paper but the facilities needed to install and run cold storage units are expensive and unlikely to be an option for most libraries.

Conservators at the Tate Gallery, London, are currently researching the practicalities of housing items in sealed packages containing oxygen scavengers.[22] Their interest is in conserving modern art works, many of which contain items of ephemera. By removing oxygen from the environment they are hoping to prevent the fading of sensitive inks and the discolouration of woodpulp papers.

## Conclusion

It can be tempting in dealing with ephemeral items not to battle with nature, to enjoy them for what they are and just let them be 'things of only short-lived use' but they are often such intriguing, informative, emotional or silly pieces of paper that they are worth keeping for as long as possible. The varied nature of ephemera makes them awkward to preserve but a combination of good storage, packaging and handling can postpone the inevitable and transform them into things that live a long time and are useful over many years.

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# The collection of ephemera at the Bibliothèque Forney in Paris

*Frédéric Casiot*

Labels, packaging, bills, colour prints, blotters, fans, trade cards, publicity leaflets, social stationery, pious images, good-points cards, wrapping paper, golden crowns from Galettes des Rois . . . Far from being complete, this list[1] gives just a glimpse of the iconographic collections of the Bibliothèque Forney. Alongside the prestigious collections that have always been part of the history of the institution (posters, wallpaper, printed fabrics, ancient books), the Library has in fact long been developing a collection of ephemera. These can be counted in hundreds of thousands of items, but it is difficult to be more precise; the ephemera collections grow daily, often as a result of small donations, and remarkable acquisitions enrich the collections.

*English version by Gillian Varley*

## Historical background

The Bibliothèque Forney, a library of art belonging to the Ville de Paris, was founded in 1886, some 120 years ago. It is named after an industrialist whose legacy to the city of Paris – intended for evening schools for adults of both sexes, public libraries for the people and training in professional schools – was finally used to create a library for Parisian craftsmen who could meet there, read and borrow books or models.  It was situated in the heart of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the historic district for artisans in furniture and decoration. Responding to a real need, since no other establishment of this type existed, it was very soon a victim of its own success in its extremely cramped location. Although it had been decided to transfer the collections to the Hôtel de Sens in the Marais from 1929, this did not happen until 1961 and it was only in 1973 that the collections were rehoused in their new quarters in their entirety. Today, 30 years later, it is once again bursting at the seams and in pressing need of modernisation.

Curators of great stature, Henri Clouzot[2] and Gabriel Henriot,[3] worked to give the library national renown, and subsequently Jacqueline Viaux[4] contributed to its international fame. Under Anne-Claude Lelieur[5] the library became known for its holdings of graphic arts and posters. The library is notable for the diversity of its documentary material: monographs and periodicals, of course, exhibition catalogues from all over the world, catalogues of public sales and of the salons, and those of commercial firms, and also an important iconographic collection.

Responding to a very specific need, both for the craftsmen and for students, that of being able to consult and borrow images, to stimulate creative inspiration or simply to provide illustration of general knowledge, the iconographic collection began at the same time as the library itself. Today it houses a rich heritage collection of 25,000 publicity posters, both ancient and modern (the third largest in France), of wallpapers, fabric samples, postcards (one and a half million), original designs and archival models, as well as a substantial collection of ephemera.

## Definition

The ephemera held at Forney are all the small publicity documents and popular illustrations, those modest witnesses to daily life, which have become rare because until very recently they were considered to be of no interest and without value, documents which are distributed free or which accompany ordinary consumer products and which are

essentially throw-away. Each document is a two-dimensional object, therefore flat. There are few exceptions to this rule (various lids and boxes which are notable for their iconography and their printing). Large and small posters and cardboard boxes are excluded from this category and are part of a separate collection.

The ephemera collection is central to the library's acquisition policy for decoration, graphic art, imagery and commercial art. It complements other resources (books, periodicals, trade catalogues) and cannot be separated from them. While the popular nature of the imagery and the weight of nostalgia of these documents that survive from daily life draw in a large public, researchers also value their historical value. These ephemera provide historians with information about the evolution of taste, the graphic arts, advertising, customs and society in general. Perhaps most characteristic among the areas of research for which these documents provide evidence are trade marks, printing, the ethnography of daily life and popular traditions.



Label for thread 'Fil au géant'.         D. Leclerq, Lille.
Lithograph.

## Holdings and acquisitions

The collection was built up throughout the 20th century through a succession of gifts, and was relatively unknown until the beginning of the 1980s, when it was decided to systematically exploit this accumulation of material that had become so valuable. Its origins lie in the partial acquisition of legal deposit material from printers, something which benefited the collections of posters and postcards equally. At the same time as these old documents were being dealt with, it was decided to deal also with the more contemporary material which was being collected free, and to buy additional older examples including documents from the years just before 1950-1970. The activities of Sylvie Pitoiset, the librarian responsible for this collection for more than 20 years, were crucial here.[6]

Purchases were made from booksellers who specialised, amongst other areas, in ancient imagery (D. Bordet, S. Charbonnel, C. Courtet, D. de Lattre, B. Sepulchre, J. Yzarne, etc.), from auction houses, from vintage paper fairs but especially from private collectors. As far as these last were concerned, although they knew in general terms about the Forney's collections, a subtle approach was sometimes required since what was involved was the breaking up of an original collection which had been put together with passion and erudition, in order to enhance a public collection, certainly of heritage status but one that demanded suitable conditions. Often these transfers were made over a period of several years. To supplement the acquisitions budget of the library, the *Société des amis de la bibliothèque Forney*[7] added their financial support.

The following are some examples, amongst hundreds of others, which show the variety of the last few years' additions, whatever their value in the market place:

- 1 lot of tobacco packets 1930-1940
- 1 album of matchbox labels
- 1 important collection of lingerie labels from the years 1935-1950
- 3 albums of labels decorated with tinplate lithographs
- several albums of 19th-century labels for thread (very valuable)
- numerous illustrated diaries circulated by advertising firms for publicity purposes
- 1 lot of 3500 colour-printed publicity images
- 2 albums of packaging and labels for Houbigant perfume (again very valuable)
- 1 lot of 20,000 labels for cheeses
- 1 album containing a collection of calendars from the printer Oberthur

- 3 albums of lids from boxes of sugared almonds
- 1 lot of 200 exercise-book covers
- 1 collection of fruit wrappers
- 1 colouring-in book from the end of the 19th century
- 18 chemists' fliers illustrated by Vasarely
- 1 lot of 160 colour prints (chromolithographs) from the Chocolaterie d'Aiguebelle
- 1 lot of 80 boards for games from the end of the 19th century

Some very important purchases have been made possible through the dispersal of printers' archives, amongst them publicity documents (Tolmer, Draeger). And as a result of the intervention of collectors or people with family archives, it has been possible to acquire large collections from one particular printer (Dureysen, Ghesquiers and Lecat).

Word-of-mouth has been key in interesting potential sellers but also in attracting numerous benevolent collectors who, by their numerous and diverse gifts, have helped us to enrich the ephemera collections on an almost daily basis. Amongst them are a number of library colleagues who, attracted to the originality of this collection through its frequent exhibitions, never fail to contribute the small treasures they have collected on our behalf when they visit Forney. Displaying the collections in exhibitions devoted to particular subjects (lingerie, domestic arts, writing materials, advertising personalities, labels), and the publishing of postcards and illustrated catalogues, have created an ephemera-loving public for whom the library has become a rallying point. In addition the library subscribes to current magazines from clubs or associations of ephemera collectors and possesses numerous early periodicals about curiosities that are useful for research.

## Conservation and processing

All this illustrated material has to be sorted and classified into a coherent bibliographic unity to allow it to be conserved, identified, catalogued, indexed and publicised. The number, the diversity and the fragility of these media (illustrating numerous printing methods on a great variety of paper, boxes and cut-outs), and their precarious state of conservation, means that they require meticulous treatment. It is necessary both to protect them from ageing and also to make them accessible to readers. In general, processing is carried out on large quantities of similar material: in this way one can deal with several hundreds of menus in one go, or a collection of documents from one printer, a group of boards for

games which need to be mounted on fabric, preservation of the collection of exercise-book covers or the complete collection of sugar papers.

We differentiate between different categories of material needing to be dealt with.



Label for perfume 'Pommade Figaro au musc'.
*ca.*1890.                                    Eugène Pichot, Paris.
Golden chromolithography

### Individually-processed documents

In the 1990s we moved away from sticking documents onto Canson card (using a neutral glue or a combination of double-faced Japan paper and photographic corners) and having them boxed in the library's bindery, and began putting these documents into Mylar conservation pockets, according to format, and then housing them in files or boxes, either bought or made in-house (all these are in a neutral material). 'Atlantis' files can house up to 18 of these transparent pockets, permitting easy consultation and maximum protection. They are used for the colour prints and allow material to be arranged by subject, product type or brand. One particularly time-consuming aspect of the treatment can be unsticking the images before they are reconditioned.

This type of treatment is lengthy and expensive and is reserved as a priority for the most precious documents (those that are rare, expensive, old or fragile) such as labels, cut-outs or original designs.

### Individual unprocessed documents

This category includes those less urgent pieces that can wait for appropriate treatment in pockets (for older material) and also more recent items. They are filed in archival boxes, plan chests (for mosaics, games, crowns) or metal racks, left unsorted or

classified according to a variety of criteria (date, brand, iconography, etc.) into sleeves or envelopes.

### Printed items and made-up albums

Documents in these two categories (programmes, diaries, albums of colour prints, albums of samples) are filed in made-to-measure covers. Note that the shelfmark label is stuck onto the envelope or the box, file or cover in preference to the documents themselves.

Items that have not yet been processed can be filed into boxes (programmes for example) or in different cupboards and drawers devoted to the iconographic collection (e.g. albums). Here again the difference between methods of processing is not due to the type of document but to their age and number.

The library would like to create surrogate versions of its ephemera as far as it possibly can. It has therefore started digitising printed fabrics and a thousand or so wallpapers, which are already recorded on transparencies, like the collection of posters. It will never be possible to digitise all the hundreds of thousands of images held by the library. A choice will be essential and will be made to suit the automated catalogue, which is conceived as an illustrated catalogue which will bring together records for the items and digitised images, according to different formats.

## Catalogues

The documents are far too numerous to be catalogued individually. The made-up albums and the collections that have been created are catalogued, indexed and subject-indexed like the other documents in the iconographic Reserve and are recorded on cards in the catalogue. The library is in the process of automating its catalogue, and part of it is already consultable on the web[8] but it will not be until 2007 that the pre-2005 records for the Reserve, including the ephemera, will be retro-converted to Unimarc and will therefore be available. By contrast, the database is already being enhanced with online cataloguing. In addition to indexing the images, the cataloguers have to spend time identifying the illustrators.

Loose documents, arranged by type in boxes, appear in content lists in these boxes.

## Consultation and exploitation

Since its creation the mission of the Bibliothèque Forney as an institution open to everyone has never been challenged; as a result the library makes its collections as easy to access as possible, and ephemera are no exception to this rule. Nevertheless, they are invigilated scrupulously during consultation, which takes place in a special reading room to which the



Invoice.                          Lefèvre-Utile, Nantes.
1909.



Invoice (back).                  E. Petit & F. Sevette.

documents are delivered individually. A number of different publics use the collections; these can be grouped by their type of research as follows:

- iconographic research for models and inspiration
- loan of documents for exhibitions (and their catalogues)
- illustration of publications of all types
- research into commercial history and the history of advertising
- research into the history of printing
- research into the history of popular graphic art
- collectors.

As has already been mentioned, the collection is exploited especially in those of our thematic exhibitions that illustrate the totality of the library's heritage collections: posters, periodicals, diverse iconographies, trade catalogues. This gives us the opportunity to publish copiously illustrated catalogues where this imagery, able to be seen in conjunction with other iconographic sources, reveals all its richness.

In 2002, a major exhibition entitled *Questions d'étiquettes* was organised, on the theme of the label. An important catalogue[9] was published on this occasion. This was Forney's first large exhibition to be devoted exclusively to ephemera, and allowed these small documents to be the stars. Labels constitute one of the richest aspects of the collection and certain items are particularly spectacular. To be sure, some other French collections are even richer, for example those of the Bibliothèque nationale de France and the Institut national de la propriété industrielle. But no other collection can be consulted as freely as ours.

Another way of exploiting the collection of labels is to publish, with financial help from the Société des amis de la bibliothèque Forney, a series of postcards, a medium that is well adapted to the format of the items themselves.



Label for hotel 'Parkhotel Alpenhof Garmisch'.

## The future of the collection

The ephemera collection must continue to develop. There is a great deal of work still to be done in its treatment (arranging, cataloguing, reconditioning). We hope we shall continue to find wonderful acquisition opportunities but here, of course, an element of chance enters the game. We would especially like to attract the generosity of donors, who will grow in number as the collection becomes better known. The provision of photographic images for publishers and the organisation of exhibitions are particularly important here. We also have a lot of faith in the ability of our digitisation programme to create collections of well-chosen images which will be integrated into our catalogue and will thus give still more visibility to our collection.

The collection of ephemera, together with the poster collection, the collection of wallpapers or the collections of books specialising in iconography, constitute a body of material which ensures that the Bibliothèque Forney truly deserves the name of 'library of the image'.

## References

1. See the appendix.
2. Curator from 1905 to 1920, when he became curator of the Musée Galliera.



Label for ink 'Encre du Globe'.                    Lithograph.

See amongst others *Dictionnaire des miniaturistes sur émail* (Paris: A. Morancé, 1924); *Le papier peint en France du XVIIe au XIXe siècle* (Paris: G. Van Oest, 1931); *Les arts du métal précieux* (Paris: H. Laurens, 1934).

3. Curator from 1920 to 1940, he was one of the pioneers of library education. See for example *Encyclopédie du luminaire* (Paris: Guérinet, 1933-1934).

4. Curator from 1951 to 1980. Her work includes *Le meuble en France* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1962).

5. Author of some 15 works on poster artists, advertising iconography, the French photographer François Kollar and the designer Paul Iribe, A.-C. Lelieur spent all her career at the Bibliothèque Forney, of which she was director from 1983 to 2004.

6. Contact sylvie.pitoiset@paris.fr/.

7. See http://www.amis-forney.fr/.

8. See http://www.bibliotheques.paris.fr/.

9. *Questions d'étiquettes: mille et une étiquettes de 1830 à nos jours* (Paris: A. Biro; Paris bibliothèques, 2002. Distributed by Paris bibliothèques).

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**Appendix: Ephemera in the Bibliothèque Forney**

Advertising images (e.g. for makes of chocolate)
Bags, wrappers (e.g. orange papers, sugar papers)
Beer mats, mats for plates and glasses
Blotters
Book jackets
Bookmarks
Boxes and packaging
Calendars
Colour prints (chromolithographs)
Decorative blinds made of thin strips of wood, used for publicity
Diaries
Doilies
Emergency money
Entrance tickets, seat tickets (for entertainments)
Envelopes, writing paper, invoices, headed rent receipts
Fabric labels for clothes
Fancy papers
Fans
Fast food boxes, packaging and illustrated games
Gift-wrapping paper
Golden cardboard crowns from Galettes des Rois
Greetings cards
Illustrated rent receipts
Invitation cards noteworthy for their design
Invitation cards to commercial events, and flyers (e.g. fashion, entertainment, other events)
Invitation cards to exhibitions (relating to the holdings of the Forney)

Lottery tickets
Luggage labels
Menus
Paper hats and masks
Paper napkins
Paper table mats
Patterned cords and ribbons
Personalised invitation cards
Pharmaceutical publicity
Pochoir stencils (for interior decoration)
Printing plates
Private visiting cards
Programmes for entertainments
Publicity games, colouring-in books, cutting out books
Publicity leaflets
Publicity stickers
Recipes
Sample sheets (for paint, nail varnish, fabrics, etc.)
Stickers (e.g. anti-TB or holidays in the open air)
Teaching materials: notebooks, illustrated covers, exercise-book covers, good-mark cards, images
Tourism leaflets from shipping companies, railways, airlines
Trade cards and commercial visiting cards
Trade labels
Transfers
Vitrophanie paper (thin transparent paper printed with transparent inks,  that can be stuck on window panes)

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# RSVP . . . the strange life and after-life of the private view card

*Beth Houghton*

The private view card is a ubiquitous form of art ephemera. Produced in large quantities and circulated widely within the art world, it has evolved over time  from the simple postcard invitation to a vehicle for graphic and artistic creative licence taking on, in the process, the widest (and weirdest) forms. At the same time it becomes, retrospectively, vital documentation of that art world, providing information otherwise untraceable through more conventional publications.

The humble private view card is a strange beast with a slightly misleading name (in English at least): chameleon-like in format, ostensibly single-purpose but having a range of other purposes (overt and covert) and with an unplanned after-life in the altogether different realms of libraries and research. As we will see, it is by no means always a card so, for the purposes of this article, it will be referred to as a PVI (or private view invitation).

## The origins

The PVI is just one type of art ephemera if, arguably, the most numerous. It of course arises from, and is inextricably linked with, the art exhibition which, in modern times, has generally been the main forum in which artists have presented their work to the public and/or to potential buyers. If the definition of an exhibition is the installation of a work of art (or, more often, a number of works) in a particular location, for a limited (and generally very specific) period, then the purpose of this temporary event is that people will come and look and, if the items are for sale, buy.

This requires publicity. Therefore surrounding the exhibition is a huge range of publicity activity and materials: posters, adverts in the art press, press releases, press views to elicit reviews (hopefully), mention in 'what's on' listings and so on. And, of course, the PV invitation. On the surface the PVI is nothing more than the invitation to the party (or private view) which traditionally is held to herald the opening of the exhibition.

However, the private view itself is a somewhat strange social event with inherent contradictions. For a start, it is often not especially private, since the idea is to maximise publicity, and the invitation list may not necessarily be very exclusive or targeted. The German *Einladung* is perhaps a more accurate word, though the etymology of the French *vernissage* (originating from the word meaning 'a varnishing') is way more interesting. The invitations to this event are mailed to individuals in a cross-section of constituencies (often nowadays at home and abroad) whom the organisers believe will be interested both in the art on show *and in each other* because, after all, this is an invitation to a party, and it often appears that many people primarily attend the event in order to meet other people and to *be seen* themselves. The fact is, the private view, as well as not being particularly private, does not usually provide the best opportunity to view the art. Who else will be there is possibly as much a determinant of whether to attend or not for many PV goers.
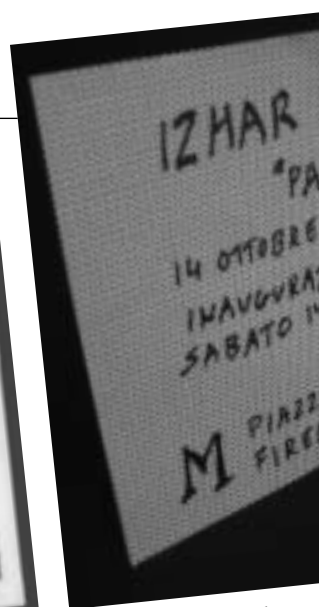
The compilation of the mailing lists to which these invitations will be sent is an art in itself and is managed with increasing sophistication and (with the advent of technology: with the aid of spreadsheets, databases, etc.) with increasing complexity, the higher up the art world food chain one goes. The major venues will even have a hierarchy of PV parties to cater for differing constituencies. Whom to invite, how many (and which) people are needed to give the event the requisite level of 'buzz', how many invitations must
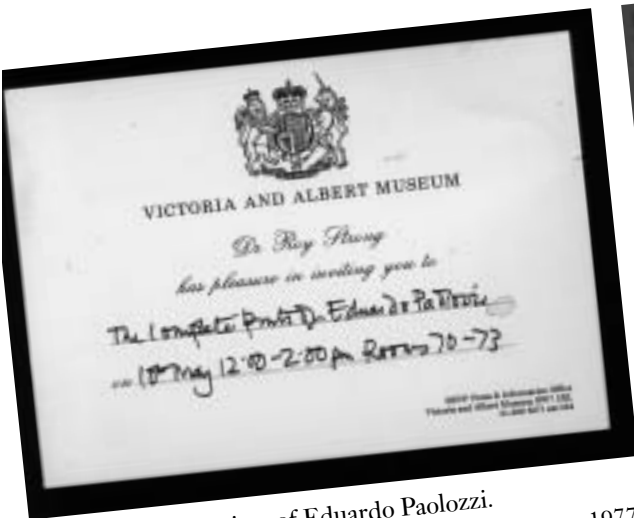
1. The complete prints of Eduardo Paolozzi. Victoria & Albert Museum, 1977.


2. L'oeuvre graphique de Braque de 1910 a 1953. Gimpel Fils, 1953.


3. Claes Oldenburg. Stadtische Kunsthalle, Dusseldorf, 1970.


4. Izhar Patkin: Palagon


5. Richard Serra


3a. David Mindline: photo objects. London, Curwen Gallery, 1971.


9. Schaufelbagger und Muldenkipper. Coracle Press, London, 1983.

10. Milc
Guilfor

be sent in order to ensure the right sized crowd turn up, who is likely to come, who will be put out if they are not invited, are all questions to be considered and make this a black art almost worthy of art historical study in its own right. Unfortunately the machinations by which lists are compiled, names added and subtracted and the record of who actually attends are to a certain extent informal, opaque and unlikely to be preserved in any usable form for the researchers of the future, which is a loss for anyone studying the sociology and anthropology of the art world of the

late 20th/early 21st centuries. But, in any case, the invitation list does not necessarily correlate with who was actually there. Although some invitation-only events can be hard to penetrate without the
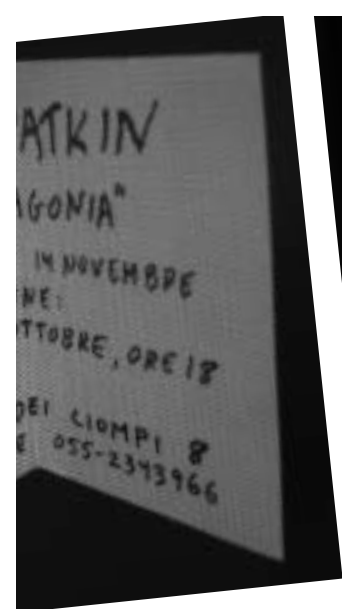
'M', Florence, n.d.



6. Enrico Baj:  la cravatta di Jackson
Pollock. Sudio Marconi, Milan, 1969.



7. Barbieri:  tableaux et ?????Rodolphe Stadler, Paris, ??????



ne drawings. Gagosian, New York, 2002.



7a.  Joe Zucker.  Holly Solomon, New York, n.d.



8. On loan.  Coracle Press,
London, 1980.



six artists.  64-65
treet, London, 1990.
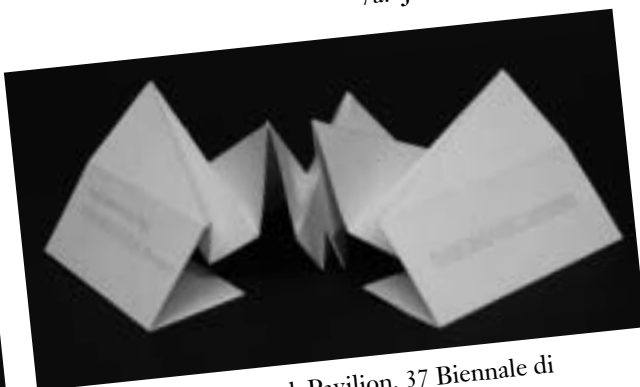


10a. Michaeledes.  Greek Pavilion, 37 Biennale di
Venezia, Venice, 1976.
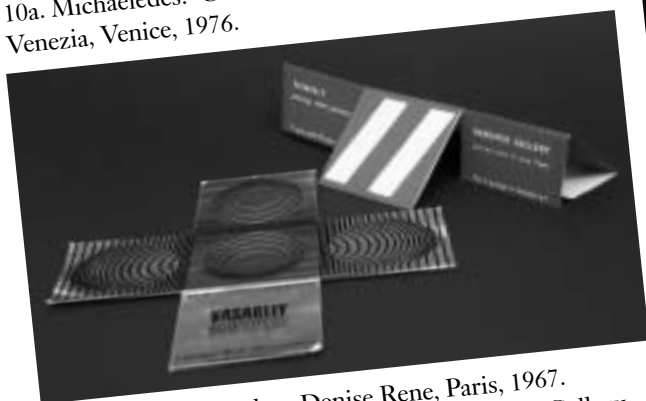


11. Vasarely: multiples.  Denise Rene, Paris, 1967.
Vasarely: paintings, reliefs, gouaches.  Hanover Gallery,
London, 1965.



12. Robert Barry: some places to which we can
come for a while … Galleria  Sperone, Turin,
1970, and other venues through 1971.

magic PV invitation, they are not all so exclusive and, depending on the venue, can be surprisingly porous with, on any given night in London, free drinks available to blaggers in the know.

However, although ostensibly presenting itself as a party invitation, the PVI has other immediate purposes – at least partly consciously intended by the organisers. For the PVI is undoubtedly sent to far more people than could be accommodated should they all turn up on the night. To a certain extent this is based on the air-line booking principle of overbooking in order to achieve the right number but, beyond this, the PVI is also sent to people the organisers *know* will not turn up, but whom they wish to notify about the exhibition in the hope that they will come along during its run. Therefore, as well as an invitation to the opening party it is also a personally targeted notification of the exhibition itself. Hence the PVI will invariably carry the opening and closing dates of the exhibition and gallery hours which, strictly speaking, are unnecessary for those attending the opening party. The other essential pieces of information are the venue and the subject of the exhibition.

## A bit of history

Early PV cards were usually text only and followed the familiar and rather formal appearance of invitations to other social events, their style in terms of typography and layout dictated by the venue, signalling the gravitas (or otherwise) which the gallery or museum wished to project, rather than echoing the style of the art or artists(s) involved. (*See* the rather staid invitation to what would most probably have been quite a lively display of Paolozzi works on paper at the V&A).

They were often also produced in the form of postcards (with exhibition and PV details on one side and the mailing address and stamp on the other) and simply popped in the mail like that (*See* Braque, Gimpel Fils, 1953). Later, as printing became more sophisticated and affordable the cards became more elaborate, commonly including an image (or two, or more) from the works on show. That remains the most common type of PVI today: sometimes a simple two-sided card, sometimes a folded card, but invariably, these days, mailed in an envelope. How long it will remain the primary form of exhibition notification is an open question, as email invitations become more popular and economically tempting to those who produce them.

Economics also played a part in the further elaboration of the humble PVI, as galleries which

couldn't afford to produce a separate catalogue would print further information on the card (brief artists' biographies, list of exhibitions, even occasionally the list of works in the present exhibition, making the PVI double as a catalogue and blurring the boundary between PVI and small catalogue).  Also common in the earlier post-war years was the typescript list of works in the exhibition (often duplicated by the primitive pre-photocopying methods available at the time; sometimes even a carbon copy on flimsy paper). This would not have been mailed with the PVI, but might have been available on request in the gallery. Completing the scant documentation of an exhibition comprised entirely of the PVI and such a list, and marrying (and keeping) said scraps together for posterity, posed a unique challenge to the dogged documentalist of those times, and may cause the contemporary art librarian to feel that they have it relatively easy. However, the looming transition to email PVIs may reverse this situation.

## Metamorphosis

However, by the 1960s things started to change, with artists becoming more involved, both by influencing the design of the PVI so that it reflected their art , rather than merely reproducing an example of it. (*See* Oldenburg, Mindline, Patkin, Serra) and, in the case of the more conceptually oriented artists, by providing the opportunity for the artist to conceive of the PVI as an artwork in its own right (either on its own or as part of a wider concept within the context of the exhibition or event). The PVI was certainly no longer always a card, as a wide range of materials were employed to present the exhibition in as eye-catching a manner as possible. (*See for example* Baj (a PVC tie); Barbieri (a rubber life-belt); Zucker (cloth). And some invitations ventured beyond two dimensions, producing the private view *object* (Coracle Press, 1980 and 1983 (a library issue pocket and a beach spade); Milch (a milk bottle)). Though some made a concession to the practicalities of mailing by creating objects which could be folded flat in transit, and assembled into 3D objects by the recipient (*See* Michaeledes; Vasarely).

As some artists at this time began to challenge the nature of the art world and the gallery system, the PVI became a readily available element and opportunity for intervention: the PVI became a work of art itself.  An artist such as James Lee Byars employed the opportunity afforded by the PV mailing list to circulate multiple works of art. The

object (for example, in one case a long strip of thin paper screwed up) might contain no information about the exhibition – that information appearing only on the envelope which he also designed (librarian, beware which envelopes you cast into the bin).  Robert Barry's series of exhibitions in 1970-71 is another example of the indivisibility of artwork/ephemera/gallery programming consisting of a series of announcement cards issued over a period with the venues being added to the same list as the work progressed, the invitation issued by each space actually containing the record of all previous venues (*See* two examples from this series illustrated). The last decades of the 20th century therefore provide some of the most interesting PVIs, both visually and art historically, as documentary relics of the period, and most of the PVIs illustrating this article are from this period. The emailed PVI clearly has the potential to develop in equally interesting and potentially new, and even interactive, ways, but one wonders whether they will be as easy to capture and preserve. The PVI has always been an elusive beast, but the electronic PVI may prove more challenging still to the would-be collector.

## After-life

And so to the after-life of the PVI. PVIs are ephemera. They were not produced with any intention that they would be captured by librarians at all, and the collection, documentation and management of PVIs poses significant problems which arise from their origins. Why would libraries collect PVIs?  And how would they collect them?

Again, the primary and most obvious reason is the documentation of exhibitions and, incidentally, of art and artists. The PVI provides evidence that an exhibition occurred, and may be the only evidence of this if no catalogue was produced (supported perhaps by adverts and possibly reviews in the art press). It documents where it was held and when. The 'when' is, however, frequently incomplete as the year is often omitted from the dates of the exhibition, because the original recipient of the PVI will be perfectly aware what year it is.  Those early PVIs which were mailed as postcards have an advantage for the retrospective collector. They carry a postmark with the full date. The envelopes in which cards tended to be mailed later on also bear dated postmarks, but these have usually been immediately discarded. For those receiving PVIs currently and aiming to keep them for research, it is therefore vital to note the year on those which omit

this information; it is extremely time-consuming (and sometimes impossible) to work this out later.

In addition, the PVI may provide valuable information on artists, where it contains a brief biography, an artist's statement or a list of exhibitions and works in collections. It will probably, in more recent decades, contain at least one illustration. For lesser-known artists, or those at the beginning of their careers, this may be the only information available. If an artist subsequently went on to gain recognition, these early scraps of documentation become more significant and, as artists themselves played a bigger role in the design of PVIs and began to use them to create statements about, and vehicles for, their art, these items became collectible in their own right and gained substantial market value.

As already mentioned, through PVIs the history of the art trade, the rise, development, merging and fall of galleries, trends and fashions in graphic design, variations in house styles, the increasing importance of branding and the influence of the burgeoning public relations business sector, can all be traced through the evolution of the exhibition PVI.

It is not the intention of this article to discuss the creation and management of a PVI collection (managing ephemera is dealt with elsewhere in this issue). But a brief word about acquisition may be appropriate here. How are they to be collected? As in the case of all ephemera, not very easily. Those in the best position to amass this material on any scale are those who naturally find themselves on the mailing lists of the galleries and museums producing them, and the circulation of this material is initially very wide. The natural ecology of PVIs is one of glut and famine. Those who are not chosen to be on mailing lists may find it difficult to maintain a regular supply (after all the producers are not very interested in providing libraries with research material); but those who are on the lists are usually drowning in the stuff. Individuals (curators, collectors, gallerists, journalists, art academics) who receive them may keep them and build up collections for which they often later (and frequently sooner rather than later) need to find a home. Institutions (such as museums, galleries and art schools) may receive numerous copies of the same PVI sent to different members of staff, and these can be (and often are) eventually passed to the library. Therefore, expediency suggests that PVI collections are most sensibly built in the libraries of those institutions which naturally receive them, or by acquisition of a collection already accumulated by an individual recipient or enthusiast who has

hoarded them.

That some libraries have accumulated sizeable collections of this type of material is without doubt. However, whether absorbed within general ephemera collections or held separately, they are often a hidden resource, difficult to manage and make accessible. In North America, in particular, 'artists' files' or 'vertical files' containing a high proportion of PVIs have been maintained in many museum libraries.  The extensive collection amassed by the Museum of Modern Art was published on *ca.*6,000 microfiche in 1986.[1] Some co-operative projects have been undertaken to identify and promote these collections, the most recent being that published for Canadian art libraries,[2] and a further initiative currently being discussed within ARLIS/NA.

But their value as research material remains largely un-tapped within the UK, and the time may be ripe for a resource-discovery project to highlight this hidden treasure before economic and electronic forces bury it any deeper.

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# Calling in the dark:
# identifying our ephemera files

*Jacqueline Cooke*

Art ephemera are an evocative resource that can document innovative art and convey diverse histories. This article looks at the relationship between such ephemera and contemporary art practices, and at the relative values given to ephemera by artists, curators and librarians and, in this context, considers integrated catalogues and online guides as methods of re-contextualising art ephemera in the library. Recent collaborative initiatives, and projects that identify and locate artists' files are reviewed and three themes are identified: the biographical approach, interfaces for distributed catalogues and the integration of art and its documentation.

Art ephemera are visually and textually evocative, and are a vast supplement to the documentation contained within art libraries. As Julie Ault, editor of the ground-breaking study *'Alternative art New York'* states, art ephemera 'convey the visual strategies of the times when they were made'.[1] The potential of these collections of ephemera remains largely unrealised, since description of their contents has been limited, access difficult and circulation restricted, although they form a particularly valuable source of information on innovative contemporary practices and show different attitudes, methodologies, styles and perspectives employed by artists, curators and other participants. However, over the past decade there have been a growing number of large-scale projects that map or showcase these collections in order to facilitate access and promote their use and appreciation. This article reviews some of these projects and puts them into the context of factors that have influenced these developments. They include increasing appreciation by curators of ephemera as a source, and particularly a recognition of the relationship between art ephemera and 'alternative' and avant-garde practices; secondly the development of digital technology for managing online databases, images and other digital objects in catalogues and hierarchical links which will enable us to draw out the relations between an

ephemeron and other entities; and thirdly, the sharing of knowledge between libraries, archives, museums and art itself, both in practice, in projects which cross borders between these domains, and theoretically, in influencing our strategic approaches to our role as art librarians, for example in recognising how libraries de-contextualise and re-contextualise items they hold.

Recently I became responsible for planning how to catalogue the Women's Art Library/Make collection at Goldsmiths College Library,[2] which includes 9,500 artists' files on women artists and also files on related institutions. As a result I have been considering existing models and projects and it is from this standpoint that I here describe various projects across the UK, Europe and the USA. After discussing the 'relative values' of ephemera from the archival, library and curatorial sectors, I outline the two main tools used to map ephemera: standard library cataloguing procedures and web portals that include data from other catalogues. Finally I cite some interesting art ephemera collections in the UK, in order to give some idea of the scale and significance of material available, and then review a number of recent, innovative projects intended to identify and locate ephemera files.

## Relative values

A growing body of literature affirms the value of contemporary art ephemera in documenting activities and events that play a significant part in contemporary and innovative art practices, which may themselves also be ephemeral or transient. In her introduction to *Alternative Art New York*, Julie Ault makes a strong case for ephemera as source material, and they are reproduced extensively throughout the book. The contributors use ephemera as source material as they recount and analyse histories of the 'alternative' movement in New York from multiple perspectives. However Ault notes that documentation of ephemeral events – protests, meetings, actions, installations, exhibitions, temporary public art and items from the paper trails of short-lived groups – is least likely to be found in library collections, and comments that 'What becomes history is to some degree determined by what is archived'.[3] In 1995 Clive Phillpot observed that acquisition of ephemera by art libraries had often been 'somewhat passive', although he pointed out the value of the resulting unique sets of resources that reflect 'that institution's unique geographic and intellectual environment',[4] adding that these unique resources may give the library a distinctiveness for researchers. The changing and fluid configurations of the contemporary art environment mean that varied collections are built up for many reasons; as a critical mass they represent the art world but individually they are often fragmentary.

## Acquired collections

Libraries are also likely to acquire ephemera collections built up by others. Some significant and substantial collections containing ephemera have been actively compiled for strategic reasons, which give them distinctive values as research resources. A number of collections that began as support organisations for artists from the 1970s onwards are now housed within academic libraries. They may arrive as archives, such as the PAD/D archive, or as libraries, like the Women's Art Library/Make collection. Both these resources were built up for and by artists, they contain a large number of files holding ephemera, and their originating aims remain evident in the kind of materials they contain.

The Women's Art Library (MAKE), was established in the late 1970s as a slide library and grew into a research collection on women artists and their work. At the beginning, members sent slides of their work to this artist-run organisation, often accompanied by their own statements or CVs, so that they could be viewed in a public space, by unanticipated visitors. Ephemera such as private view cards and press releases, the artist's statement produced for an exhibition, and photocopies of reviews from magazines, were collected as evidence of the activities of women artists. The collection now also has an 'archival' function, as a collective archive of women artists, of women's cultural practices and of the activity of producing the resource itself. The Political Art Documentation/Distribution (PAD/D) archive, now at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (MoMA), is an example of a working resource that entered a library as an organised archive. This artists' collective, conceived by Lucy Lippard in 1979, was active until 1988. For some ten years the group distributed documentation of political art amongst themselves. In 1989, after this phase ended, the collection of documentation was deposited in MoMA library as an archive. PAD/D's stated goal was to 'provide artists with an organized relationship to society, to demonstrate the political effectiveness of image making, and to provide a framework within which progressive artists can discuss and develop alternatives to the mainstream art system'.[5] Both these collections show how specific concerns and strategies can influence the resulting resource.

## Artists, artworks and curators

Art ephemera have an older, established relationship to avant-garde art. The Jean Brown Collection at the Getty Library,[6] which includes significant ephemera, is well known. It includes archives and ephemera from 20th-century avant-garde artists from the 1920s onwards, through Fluxus to mail art, movements that took place outside traditional galleries. More recently ephemera have been produced as part of art practices that are not object-based but conceptual, or which are concerned with contexts of art and its presentation, or situation. In comparison to the more traditional 'primary source' material of the artist's statement, and valuable as a commentary on or explanation of art or artists' working practices, this kind of ephemera comments on, or functions as, artwork, or is produced by artists/ curators to mediate the experience of art. In the introduction to the *Life/live* exhibition catalogue from 1996, which was a survey of artist-run spaces in London in the 1990s, the curator of the Musée d'art Moderne in Paris, Suzanne Pagé, comments that 'in addition to pursuing their own creative work, these artists also take charge of its distribution and communication, adopting a Situationist-style do-it-yourself

approach'.[7] Here the context of art is part of the artists' or curator's practice and ephemera may document this directly. Art ephemera have in the past frequently been shown as supporting material in art exhibitions, as in the London section of *Century Cities*,[8] but as the material has become better appreciated by the curatorial world, there have been many exhibitions consisting of ephemera, or which represent the process of its accumulation. For the exhibition *Extra art*, Steven Leiber and Todd Alden introduced the term 'artists' ephemera' to define printed matter that functions, to greater or lesser degrees, in the manner of artworks.[9] The project *Interarchive*, curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, was formed from a vast accumulation of ephemeral and archival material; the Bankside Browser project curated by Andrew Renton to accompany the building of Tate Modern in London, consisting of archive folders from local artists to represent their work; and the project called B+B Archive, by the curatorial team B+B, in which they collect and sometimes show material they have collected 'in order to map emerging practices and to investigate strategies to re-present process-based projects',[10] are just three examples of many which show explorations of ephemera in exhibitions.

the presentation of art, it may itself be artwork and it may function as documentation or as the material evidence of a process. We can see a blurring of roles between curator and artist, and also between what we would define in a library as an 'archive' or a 'collection of ephemera'. The material produced by an organisation reflects its activities, thus giving it an 'archival' function, and libraries too may contain archives of projects or organisations. This crossing of terms and definitions is part of the territory. We have material which is both visual and textual, has everyday, direct qualities from being produced at the time of events by those involved, is fragmentary but a valuable source both in its individual fragments and/or as a critical mass, can be produced as art, or as a side-effect of art and art's contextualisation. In a library this material can form a kind of 'artificial archive', which is de-contextualised by being held there, and which we re-contextualise in the way we manage and catalogue it. This review categorises three of the ways we re-contextualise collections: biographical approaches, interfaces for distributed databases and projects that integrate digital representations of art and its documentation. But before discussing these, I would like to refer to the two main approaches to cataloguing ephemera.



B+B Archive                                    ©B+B

## Contextualising and re-contextualising ephemera

The examples given above indicate that ephemera may be produced by artists or others involved with

## Description and access

As more flexible electronic cataloguing methods have become available, there have been initiatives that attempt to make artist's files and other types of ephemera collections on art more visible. Developments in electronic cataloguing and information-sharing protocols mean that catalogue records produced in one database can easily be re-used by being imported into or presented in another online resource (see the examples European-art.net and arlis.net below). At the same time, developments in digital imaging and availability of digital object management systems mean that items can be represented visually in catalogues. As Michael Twyman[11] has observed, in the context of ephemera studies, digital technology has the potential to make a huge impact on the visibility of ephemera. Two

mainstream routes are available to reach this goal. One is to include ephemera files in library catalogues and larger bibliographic utilities (using collection-level entries at file level), the other is to produce web guides that provide collection-level descriptions or summary statements to identify and locate files across collections.

## Artist's files and ephemera in art libraries

In libraries, art ephemera are usually stored in files termed Artists' Files (or Artist Files, vertical files or ephemera files) and these, rather than the individual items within them, appear on the library's catalogue. Files are maintained for galleries and other institutions as well as for individual artists. The files in each collection contain unique selections of material, and a shared location list would not necessarily indicate what each file held, any more than library catalogues do. Digitisation of files has been explored in some projects, such as European-art.net[12] and CIAO,[13] as a way of providing access to ephemeral material. However, the problem of giving more visibility to art ephemera and artists' files already held in libraries has featured regularly as a topic at IFLA, ARLIS/NA and ARLIS/UK & Ireland conference sessions and workshops throughout the past decade, indicating the ongoing interest in this subject. Access remains an issue and calls for joint action continue.

The RLG Union Catalog includes some entries for ephemera files, although these are contributed by only a small number of libraries. The RLG Art and Architecture Group 'Inaccessible Domain' Materials Working Group,[14] which considered the problem of how to provide access to ephemera and similar materials, produced a minimal record for collection level catalogue entries, which has since been adopted by BIBCO.[15] Records for files catalogued in this way can be searched alongside entries for books, in an integrated approach.[16] This model has been employed by several major libraries. The library catalogues of MoMA, the UK's National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the Hyman Kreitman Research Centre for the Tate Library and Archive at Tate Britain, include large numbers of ephemera files. In their catalogue records, the genre of the material is defined and the contents of such files are described in a generic note, for example MoMA library Artists' files/Pamphlet files consist of a folder that 'may include announcements, clippings, press releases, brochures, reviews, invitations, small

exhibition catalogs, and other ephemeral material'.[17] The National Art Library Artists' Information files 'typically contain a mix of private view cards for exhibitions, newspaper or periodical cuttings, offprints and press releases, slides or photographs, leaflets, promotional flyers, and hand-outs, often generated by the artists themselves'. The main entry in each case is the name of the artist, or institution, and the title is generic, usually Artists' file, Pamphlet file, or Ephemera file.

## The scope of ephemera collections in the UK

In England there are many publicly accessible research collections of ephemera and archival material on contemporary art in national libraries and archives, in public institutions and in the libraries of art colleges and universities. The following is a brief account, giving some idea of the quantity of material to be considered.

In addition to the ephemera held by the National Art Library and Tate Library mentioned above, the British Council Visual Arts Library, which has developed to support the curatorial work of that department, holds books and catalogues as well as 2000 files of exhibition announcements, press cuttings and biographies on post-war artists who were either born or live in Britain. These include hard-to-find materials and ephemera. Academic institutions have also developed or accommodated wide-ranging collections of exhibition documentation and artists' ephemera. Chelsea School of Art Library has a particularly good collection of art ephemera and artists' ephemera, discussed in a report on art ephemera in art libraries in New York and London by Elizabeth Lawes and Vicky Webb.[18] The Diversity Archive, formerly the African and Asian Visual Arts Archive (AAVAA), housed at University of East London, was established in 1988 by Eddie Chambers, who has stated the importance and value to Black artists of keeping and making available proper records of exhibitions and other related activities, for research.[19] Panchayat is an archive of documentation on contemporary visual artists producing issue-based work around cultural identity, housed at the University of Westminster. The visual arts organisation inIVA exists to bring the work of artists from culturally-diverse backgrounds to the attention of the widest possible public; it has a library and archive which contains artists' files and project archives, as well as an online archive.

Whilst most of the libraries I mention here do catalogue their ephemera on their web catalogues to some extent, there is no collective finding aid or scoping and many other institutions have little or no electronic access to their ephemera files. Arlis.net[20] does describe UK art library collections, and is being developed to do so at a deeper level, but is currently able to identify only a few ephemera collections.

ARLIS/UK & Ireland's 2002 conference included a workshop run by Liz Lawes and Vicky Webb on art ephemera; following this, a mailing list[21] was established, some members of which have continued to discuss the possibility of a 'union' catalogue for UK art ephemera collections and have recently begun liaison with the ARLIS/NA Artist Files Working Group.

'best practices' page for artists' files was proposed. The notes from the 2006 meeting of this group[22] show development of this idea to cover recommendations for cataloguing and access, and for creating artists' files.

The background to this project can be traced in the long-standing interests of the RLG and ARLIS/NA members. As already mentioned, in the late 1990s the Research Libraries Group project 'Inaccessible Domain' considered ways to improve access to material such as ephemera, including artists' files and other types of documentation defined as catalogues, clippings, visual resources, architectural records, documents, all of which were considered partially 'hidden collections'.[23] This group has continued to work on artists' files, the emphasis being on participation by member libraries in the RLG Union Catalog. In 2004 the ARLIS/NA Artists' Files Working Group was set up and this has since met annually. Notes of the meeting held that year say that 'a diverse group of interests were expressed: ranging from institutions with limited or no electronic access to files, those pursuing independent databases, those who have already added files to their local catalogs and larger bibliographic utilities (RLG, OCLC), those who wish to undertake digitization projects, individuals who were more interested in the potential for an increase in name authority records'.[24] Amongst these diverse interests, the web-based directory plan was prioritised.



arlis.net, showing search results for 'ephemera'.

## Collective progress towards access

The ARLIS/NA Artist Files Working Group's current project to produce an online directory of artist files seems likely to make a North American directory a possibility. Notes from the meeting at the ARLIS/NA conference in 2005 report the group's decision that 'Ultimately, it was agreed upon to produce a double-pronged approach: encourage the future addition and migration of minimal level artists' file records to bibliographic utilities, while simultaneously creating a web-based directory of institutions and their holdings that would ideally be mounted on the Arlis/NA web site'. In addition, a

## Collaborative projects

Over the past ten years, many projects have investigated the potential of web-based portals and joint catalogues to represent ephemera collections held in libraries or archives.

*Biographical approach*

Artists' files are compiled as resources about individual artists, and often provide unique evidence of their life and career, therefore it is reasonable and useful to use artists' names to identify holdings and

to include biographical information in an index to such files. A number of projects take this biographical approach, and aim to locate files held on artists in libraries and archives. The National Gallery of Canada Library's *Artists in Canada* is a well-established list that identifies the locations of files on Canadian artists, with biographical and bibliographic references.[25] The IFLA Section of Art Libraries Medium term programme 1998-2001 included the objective of investigating the possibility of creating an online database containing biographical information on artists born after 1950. While a biographical index on such a large scale remains a future possibility, other online projects have been established which index artists in a particular country, such as the UK *Artists' papers register* or have a particular focus, like WAAND (Women Artists' Archives National Directory) in the USA.

The aim of the *Artists' papers register*[26] was to compile a computerised register of papers and primary sources relating to artists, designers and craftspeople located in publicly accessible collections in the UK and this is now a useful finding aid. WAAND[27] is being developed by Rutgers University Libraries: it is an online integrated directory that 'directs users to primary source materials of and about women artists and women artists' organizations active in the U.S. since 1945'. The project website started operating during 2005 and has founding institutional partners that include the Archives of American Art, MoMA Museum Archives and the Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division. Repositories are asked to contribute by filling in an online form, and artists are invited to provide information about their archives and papers. It is also part of the remit of the project to encourage artists to 'organize their papers for donation to an appropriate research collection'. Another project that encourages the creation of archives as well as mapping them is the *About Art Spaces Archives Project* (AS-AP).[28] This online resource maps the archival heritage of living and defunct for- and not-for-profit spaces, from the 'alternative' or 'Avant-garde' movement of the 1950s to the present, throughout the United States. The initial project to provide an index of places and spaces began in 2004. The prospectus for this project argues for the role of ephemera as a historical source, and aims to encourage the organisation of archives as well as to provide an access tool.

*Interfaces for distributed catalogues*

The libraries and archives in art galleries collect ephemera amongst other documentary, archival and bibliographic material. Such libraries and archives may, but are equally likely not to, participate in shared cataloguing schemes. Vektor[29] was a Culture2000 EU-funded project to research the potential and problems of sharing information on contemporary artists in European archive collections in a web-based catalogue. The project investigated whether it would be feasible to use the Dublin Core[30] to make a joint catalogue for both digitised material and physical items. The partners included basis wien (the Austrian national contemporary art documentation centre), the Documenta Archive at Kassel, Galleria Moderna in Ljubljana, the Archives de la Critique de l'Art in Rennes and the Hansard Gallery in Southampton. Nine countries were represented. Some had existing electronic catalogues but these used different standards and many were offline. During the project, a small part of this information was presented in the forum's database to form a joint catalogue. The working language of the project was English. Critical issues that were explored by the project were differences between archival and library cataloguing practices, both at the basic level of organisation, and in rules of data entry and vocabulary. Names, for example, appear differently in different languages due to differences in translation and transliteration, diacritics can cause problems for searches, and names can change over time, particularly in formerly communist Eastern European countries, so it was agreed that the form of the name in use where the person concerned was a citizen at the time of the creation of the material should be employed, while reference was made to authority files such as PND[31] or ULAN.[32] Vektor also compiled a subject thesaurus, which indicated aspects of art practices important to local communities; these included definitions of curatorial strategies and practices, and socially motivated art practices.

After the end of the Vektor project, European-art.net,[33] an engine for searching art archives, was developed by several former Vektor partners. European-art.net aims for 'presentation of the results of database searches in various databases through one web address, and the special focus on the problems of Eastern European contents and structures (diacritics in names and many offline databases)'. Data from offline databases is imported and these are accompanied by a link which refers to the original database. The resource is also designed to function well in the wider terrain of web search engines such as Google. Another European project which found solutions to the issues of different languages and cataloguing structures is the Virtuelle Katalog Kunstgeschichte (VKK), which is a specialised, multilingual, art bibliographic search

European-art.net, entry for an artist (Josephine Pryde).          © basis wien

engine. This uses CGI script to search the contents of members' databases. Because the subject indexing is not consistent between the library catalogues it searches in Germany and Italy, the VKK solution was to have no separate subject search, but a combined title, keyword and subject search field.[34] Links are provided to the separate catalogues so that more detailed searches can be carried out in those.

A number of digital object management products have recently become available, in which digital representations of physical documents or objects, or original digital files, can be displayed and linked to the catalogue entries. One project using such a product was the UK Digitool Project,[35] which used the Ex Libris Digitool software and Dublin Core metadata to store and access text, image and sound files from digital repositories. This software incorporated image retrieval software and full-text searching of the digital document itself, rather than just its catalogue record, as well as hierarchical management, in which lower-level objects (such as a video-clip) can inherit data elements from higher-level objects (such as databases). All of these are useful features for cataloguing ephemera. As digital object management systems begin to be used by libraries, particularly in connection with institutional repositories,[36] it will be possible to employ them to catalogue both digitised ephemera and electronic art ephemera.

*Integration of art and its documentation*
Some of the key forms of contemporary art are

works or practices which can be variable, such as performance and installation, or which are not discrete entities, such as context-specific works or digital works playing on the internet. If digital recordings are made which are representations of these, they can be catalogued as digital objects. When mediation or reception is part of the form of the work, or when the technical programs or languages used become obsolete, preserving them in archives becomes difficult and the knowledge they create may disappear. These were some of the problems addressed in 'Art in Variable Media' and CIAO, large-scale consortial projects led by Berkeley[37] dealing with access to art collections. The technical problems of long-term digital curation apply also to digital ephemera produced as documentation of such work, which will provide evidence of the work. When cataloguing digital objects, the catalogue must include one set of the kind of information that the works have in common with other art works, such as a creator, title, format, etc., and another technical set, recording what has been done to the work. The article discusses how these sets of metadata are managed. In the *Conceptual and Intermedia Arts Online* (CIAO)[38] project, material was catalogued in which the documentation or re-presentation of work for the archive and the work itself might be indistinguishable, both conceptually and in format. The catalogue was used to create relationships between parts or groups of material in different media using a hierarchical structure based on Encoded Archival Description, and this principle can be applied when we catalogue digital ephemera, or ephemera related to recordings of art practice. Artworks, documentation of art and administration may be interrelated and the catalogue can be used to make those relationships evident, using FRBR[39] structures to catalogue items in context.

## Conclusions

Many contemporary artists and art researchers are mobile, and the issues they deal with matter across geographical borders, as art works and practices cross media and disciplines. As libraries we need to

communicate in the same way across such borders, of curating, archiving, librarianship, so that our users can find the information they are looking for. The boundaries between different formal systems and conventions are explored in the various projects that are evolving, whilst technological innovations make it possible for our catalogues to be more flexible. Both standard catalogues and online databases are desirable for different reasons; catalogues and standards are reliable and authoritative and existing networks are widely used internationally, whereas web portals are relatively quickly produced and can hold information about files in collections that do not produce traditional library catalogues, and can also be used to highlight subjects or to publicise materials to particular audiences. These are both ways in which particular, local, content present in ephemera can be catalogued in such a way that information about it can be re-used and widely retrieved, as a mass of fragmentary information is joined together to represent ephemera visually and textually. Such projects can be understood as making, as well as documenting, histories that would otherwise disappear.

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# reviews

*Trade bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660-1800*

Stuart Bennett

London: The British Library;
New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press,
2004. 176 p.: ill. ISBN 0712348484
(UK)/1584561300 (US). £45.00/$85.00

*English bookbinding styles, 1450-1800: a handbook*

David Pearson

London: The British Library;
New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press,
2005. 221 p.: ill. ISBN 071234842X
(UK)/1584561408 (US). £35.00/$65.00

In a lecture given at Columbia University in 1984, the celebrated antiquarian bookseller Bernard Breslauer drew attention to the surprising number of articles and books published on the history of bookbinding since its inception as a scholarly field in the mid-19th century.[1] He noted that by the end of the century Sarah T. Prideaux could already list about 500 entries in the appendix to her pioneering *Historical sketch of bookbinding* (London, 1893). Subsequent decades witnessed an explosion of interest in the subject by bookish savants, local erudites and connoisseurs, all duly recorded by European bibliographers. Breslauer reckoned that by 1975 the titles of approximately 8,000 works on the history of bookbinding had been compiled, a rather startling figure given the relative obscurity of the subject.[2] These days the vigor of bookbinding studies shows no sign of abating, especially since new avenues of inquiry have been opened up in recent decades by professional scholars such as Mirjam Foot, Anthony Hobson, Nicholas Pickwood, Marianne Tidcombe and others, who have begun to study bookbindings in the broader context of social and economic history.

Before this, bookbinding historians spent their time documenting the activities of individual bookbinders or ateliers and focusing on the identification of specific tools attributable to them. Their long-term project was to chart the evolution of national styles and the relationship between bookbinding and the other decorative arts. Not surprisingly, therefore, their investigations were taken up with questions of connoisseurship and 'taste' that more often than not dealt with the *chefs-d'oeuvres* of the acclaimed 'masters'. Only secondarily had scholars been concerned with the workaday and technical aspects of the craft, such as the various materials used to cover books. Likewise, they by and large passed over that more mundane part of the process known as 'forwarding', i.e. the operations of sewing and covering in preparation for the final 'finishing', or decorating. Finishing, particularly gold-tooling, was held up as the acme of the binder's art and the only aspect of the craft really worth bothering about. Indeed, the history of bookbinding was for many decades construed exclusively as the description and classification of the decoration of luxury bindings, a class of production that accounted for only a tiny fraction of the total output. This focus on the style or 'invention' of individual artists and the rarified production of the high end of the market has meant that relatively little attention has been paid to the structure and workings of the trade as a whole, providing us with a lopsided and somewhat patchy picture. We saw only the brilliant snowy peaks, as it were, and not the massive range in its entirety. The two works here reviewed, however, fit squarely into the corrective pattern of the most recent wave of scholarship on the social history of books.

David Pearson's *English bookbinding styles, 1450-1800*, a broad and holistic survey of the genre, sets out to fill a gap that should have been plugged earlier: until now there has been no comprehensive handbook of bookbinding in England that covered all aspects of the craft. Pearson, a senior scholar who has published extensively on the history of books and libraries, has written an extremely useful and engaging guide to the identification and dating of every sort of English bookbinding from the handpress era, and to how they were created, disseminated and used. This undertaking is large,

but he handles it with the deftness acquired by long experience with the material. His presentation is nimble and easily accessible to non-specialists. On the other hand, it is saturated with enough learned insight and bibliopegic detail to satisfy library and booktrade professionals seeking a systematic overview. Certainly most handy as a reference tool, it also makes irresistible reading for neophytes and veteran bibliophiles alike.

The overview format allows Pearson to weave a history of the general trends and patterns in the bookbinding trade with a classification of its physical output, running the gamut from plain to fancy and from temporary to permanent. That he weaves this history so seamlessly is one of the chief strengths of the book. Most importantly it enables Pearson to discuss the social aspects of bookbinding – in particular, how the men and women who created these artifacts related with one another in the sometimes charged context of the atelier, as well as with the men and women who used them. Moreover, in plotting the evolution of the physical features of bookbindings, he spends significant time looking over the shoulders of the forwarders, giving us a much clearer picture of what happened to the bound sheets before the finisher got hold of them.

Pearson opens with a succinct summary of the technical terminology used in describing early bindings. This, and the section on the 'key points' for the newcomer to keep in mind in thinking about the archaeology of bookbinding, will be especially valuable to those without much experience in handling the originals and serves as the perfect jumping-off point for his extended description of the physical features of early English bindings. Pearson then tracks changes in the decorative styles of covers and spines and along the way catalogues a dizzying array of the brass tools used to impress the gilt designs. But he is not content to limit his discussion to expensive high-end production, as earlier scholarship has done. He portrays a trade calibrated to serve the needs of even the most unpretentious readers alongside the wealthiest and most discriminating patrons. In so doing he tackles the hitherto unfashionable topics of cheap and temporary bindings in plain paper and boards; the labeling of spines or fore-edges; the wide variety of covering materials and the appropriate uses for each.

This reviewer's heart was gladdened by the first sentence of chapter one: 'What does a bookbinding *mean*?' Here we have, right up front, the expression of that holistic approach, that sociological or humanistic approach, to a technical subject that we find in much of today's best interdisciplinary scholarship in the history of the book. It's an

approach that goes beyond the simply tutorial: Pearson wants to teach us how to look at bookbindings but, even better, he wants us to comprehend their cultural significance as well.

One of the 'key points' in Pearson's introduction, seemingly obvious, is that many of the early books that survive in museums and rare book collections today have been rebound, perhaps more than once and perhaps far from their place of origin, making the dating and localizing of their present coverings somewhat challenging. Another point, also perhaps self-evident, is that before the invention of binding machines every book was gathered, sewn and covered by hand. This was true of every single one of the tens of thousands of manuscripts laboriously copied out before Gutenberg, as well as every single one of the millions of copies of printed books that issued from the press until the late 1820s, when machines first made it possible to cover all the copies of an edition in a uniform binding. This mechanized product is called 'trade binding', and we used to say – axiomatically (as I myself did in another review for this journal several years ago) – that 'trade binding' (sometimes 'publishers' binding') was a result of industrialization and rare in the earlier handpress period.

Now we are rescued from this misconception by Stuart Bennett, an antiquarian bookseller specializing in early modern English books, who documents the phenomenon of 'trade binding' much earlier than hitherto noticed, indeed all the way back to the 16th century. His provocative *Trade bookbinding in the British Isles, 1660-1800*, covers some of the same ground as Pearson's handbook but offers an intriguing and original polemic as well, one that has already attracted a good deal of critical attention. Bennett's general argument is that the trades of publishing, bookselling and bookbinding were in the 17th and 18th centuries interdependent to a degree hitherto unsuspected. Indeed, for lack of documentary evidence in the form of shop records etc., earlier studies assumed that retail customers almost always bought books from wholesalers (either printers or booksellers) unbound in sheets, or very crudely stitched, and then carried them across town, as it were, to bookbinders for covering. In other words, it was supposed that in pre-industrial England bookbinders dealt almost exclusively with the retail book-buying public, covering their books on an individual or 'bespoke' basis as use and purse demanded. Bennett reads the existing evidence differently, however, and concludes that *booksellers and publishers* were in fact the principal clientèle of the bookbinders. In his version the three trades work together to provide the end-user, the retail

buyer, with a variety of ready-bound books. These could be simple bindings in 'drab' boards or more durable ones in full calf or goat; but Bennett's point is that these trade or publishers' bindings were much more common than previously suspected, and long before the industrial period. This of course has important implications for our understanding of the ways that printed books were disseminated and used in the 350 years after Gutenberg.

One real strength of Bennett's book is the large number of good color illustrations (nearly 200) spread throughout the text. Since, for lack of documentation, a portion of his evidence must be anecdotal, these illustrations serve to reinforce what might otherwise seem conjectural and make his point all the more forcefully. Over the years others besides me have lamented the quality of the illustrations in the series of books on the history of bookbinding jointly published by Oak Knoll Books and the British Library. I am pleased to report, however, that Bennett's *Trade bookbinding in the British Isles* does not suffer the fate of its fellows. In fact, it's worthwhile and instructive just randomly browsing the images and reading their extensive captions. (Pearson is not so well served, alas: the halftone illustrations, which make up the bulk of his book, are lacklustre and muddy, making it often difficult to distinguish 15th-century diaper design from 18th-century tree calf from a slice of burnt toast; the gloom is somewhat relieved by a 16-page section in color in the middle.)

Bennett is a lively and urbane scholar/bookseller who draws his evidence from a wide range of sources, from publishers' catalogues to warehouse ledgers, from literary anecdotes to the books themselves. But he is writing for those who already have experience in the field (collectors, curators, antiquarian booksellers and cataloguers),  those already familiar with the work of the previous generation of bookbinding scholarship and hence with the widely accepted notion that books were purchased unbound in sheets and that 'it was the task of the owner to have them bound'.[3] Put another way, Bennett takes for granted that his audience will already possess the basic knowledge of bindings and the book trade found in Pearson.

It's true that bookbindings, when studied carefully, can tell us a lot about themselves; but, as these two books demonstrate, they can tell us a lot about their owners, too. In this regard the study of bookbinding can certainly shed much light on the social history of reading, on economics and trade practices in early modern Europe and on the history of the decorative and graphic arts.

## References

1.  B. H. Breslauer, *The uses of bookbinding literature* (New York: Book Arts Press, 1986). Breslauer, who died in 2004, was widely considered to be the antiquarian booktrade's chief authority on the history of bookbinding.

2.  Wolfgang Mejer, in *Bibliographie der Buchbinderei-literatur* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1925), lists 2,691 entries; Hermann Herbst, in *Bibliographie der Buchbinderei-literatur, 1924-1932* (Leipzig: Hiersemann, 1933) and in 'Bucheinbandliteratur 1933-1937', *Jahrbuch der Einbandkunst* 4 (1937), lists 2,781 entries; and F. A. Schmidt-Künsemüller, in '20 Jahre Einbandforschung – ein Bibliographie', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 8 (1967) and in 'Weiter 10 Jahre Einbandforschung', *Archiv für Geschichte des Buchwesens* 18 (1977), lists approximately 2,500 unnumbered entries.

3.  Graham Pollard, 'Changes in the style of bookbinding', *The library*, 5th series, 11, no. 2 (1956).

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*A bibliographical history of the study and use of color from Aristotle to Kandinsky*

Kenneth E. Burchett

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The theory of color harmony has long captivated men's minds and imaginations. From the time of the ancients through the Renaissance, color harmony was understood as a 'metaphor of life implying unity and beauty based on mysticism and symbolic logic' (p.i). Soon after the Renaissance a more scientific approach to color developed, with particular interest in the link between color and emotion. By the mid-19th century the natural laws governing both the action and the effect of color were well understood.

Being broadly interdisciplinary, color theory has a substantial literature. In *A bibliographical history of the study and use of color from Aristotle to Kandinsky* Dr. Kenneth E. Burchett, Professor of Color Theory at the University of Central Arkansas, aims 'to assimilate the knowledge available on the subject of color aesthetics and to interpret the many ideas which over the history of color study have shaped present understanding of the response to color' (p.1) as well as 'to describe the evolution of the many separate color-application theories'.

In 'A short history of color harmony', the first of the book's three sections, Burchett identifies the earliest writings on the subject in the work of Aristotle, traces developments from the Renaissance through the early 19th century (including Newtonian, Chevreulian and Goethean color-harmony theories) and concludes by addressing new color theories and their relationship to major artistic movements from the later 19th century through the time of Wassily Kandinsky just prior to the First World War. The remaining chapters in this section survey the ways various schools of thought extrapolate 'meaning' from color harmony theory and how such meanings coexist and even blend together (e.g. art and psychology, science and industry, color and biology, color and education). Because it is difficult to talk about meaning without a discussion of language, the final chapter addresses the ever-evolving language or terminology of color.

Burchett's second part, 'Books on color harmony and color in art', is devoted to brief reviews of 12 key texts spanning just over 150 years of scholarship, from Goethe's 1810 *Zur Farbenlehre* (*The scientific study of color*) to Josef Albers' 1963 *Interaction of Color*.

The final section, 'Color bibliographies', lists works selected by Burchett in consultation with five leading scholars on the subject. It is organized into four sections: selected works with pre-1975 copyright dates, a broad-spectrum assemblage of works from antiquity to the present, a list of cross-references by subject, date, and title to this general bibliography, and a collection of other bibliographies on color.

Some may find the book's arrangement excessively complicated. It's also puzzling that the chronological scope is described as being 'from Aristotle to Kandinsky' given the inclusion of Josef Albers' 1963 publication *Interactions of color* as one of the 12 key texts included in the second section. One might also expect a book about the study and use of color to have color illustrations, representations or samples; in fact, there are no illustrations at all.

Despite these problems, Burchett's evaluative reviews of a broad scope of selected literature in the first two parts are clear and succinct and his bibliographies in the third part are extensive. He thus realizes his stated goal of presenting the evolution of the various ideas related to color harmony and provides a worthy resource for libraries supporting advanced research in the study and use of color.

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