Building Special Collections From Scratch: The Artists’ Books Collection at the University of Denver

ARLIS/NA Mountain West Chapter Virtual Conference

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University of Denver
Special Collections at DU

- Before 2004
  - Unfunded
  - Haphazard
  - Reactive

- Since 2004
  - Budgeted
  - Planned
  - Proactive

EVERYTHING BEGINS WITH “A”
Overall Humanities Collection Strategy

- Monographs/journals
- Transition to digital
- Digital primary source collections
- Print special collections
We Have a Budget. Now what?

- Add to existing collections
  - Cookery, dance, books on books
- Find a niche
  - Fine press / artists’ books
  - Skiing
Why Artists’ Books?

- Reasonably affordable
- Existing interest on campus
- Antidote to electronic resources
- Ability to create a unique collection
Funding

- A little more each year
  - $20-50,000
- Supplement with endowed funds
  - About $100,000 annually
The Collection

- 739 books
- Mostly contemporary
- Book as object
- Collections within the collection
  - Colorado & the west
  - Shakespeare
  - Miniature books
  - Cookery, dance, etc.
What is a Book?
Shakespeare

- 42 Books
- 1893 (Kelmscott) - Present

Gonerill. You see how full of changes his age is, the observation we have made of it hath beene little: he alwaies lov’d our Sister most, and with what poore judgement he hath now cast her
Laura Wait

- Colorado artist
- 15 books
- Personal Papers
## How Much Does it Cost?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal Year</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FY 2004</td>
<td>$2,963</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2005</td>
<td>$2,721</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2006</td>
<td>$11,384</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2007</td>
<td>$16,257</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2008</td>
<td>$72,769</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2009</td>
<td>$98,723</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2010</td>
<td>$108,338</td>
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<tr>
<td>FY 2011</td>
<td>$58,889</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>$372,004</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
If You Build It, They Will Come
He awoke to a sleep-blurred explosion. Trains, bridges, cars, and people surrounded him, looming in color and thunderous black-and-white. A woman’s hair obscured her face as she dug her face from a grooved leather...