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Preserving a Legacy of Literary Lives: Re-connecting Patrons to one of our most Dynamic Digital Collections

Tara Wink

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, twink@wcupa.edu

Jennifer O'Leary

West Chester University of Pennsylvania, joleary@wcupa.edu

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Preserving a Legacy of Literary Lives: Re-connecting Patrons to one of our most Dynamic Digital Collections

Tara Wink, Special Collections Librarian and Jennifer O'Leary, Library Technician
West Chester University of Pennsylvania, Library Services

Abstract

This poster describes a project at West Chester University to re-digitize the Philips Autograph Library Collection. Combining the efforts of the Special Collections, Cataloging, and Interlibrary Loan Departments, the goal is to improve and enhance access to this unique and valuable WCU treasure.

Collection Description

The Philips Autograph Library Collection contains over 3,000 autographed books from the 19th and 20th centuries; named after Dr. George Morris Philips, principal of West Chester State Normal School from 1881 to 1920. In 1885, Dr. Philips began purchasing books and sending them to their authors, including return packages and postage with a letter explaining his purpose and request.

In his 35 years of collecting, Dr. Philips obtained autographs for 2000 volumes. Inscriptions and autographs came from influential writers such as George Bernard Shaw; American Presidents such as Woodrow Wilson; and historical figures Frederick Douglass, Helen Keller, and Susan B. Anthony (to name a few).

The collection was bequeathed to his son, William Pyle Philips. William Pyle donated the autograph library, along with a ten-volume set of, The Signers of the Declaration, and a set of Shakespeare Folios to West Chester.

Today the collection is held in the Philips Autograph Library in the Philips Memorial Building on West Chester University's campus. The Library was built specifically for the Autograph Collection through a West Chester State Normal School Alumni campaign.

Who was George Morris Philips?



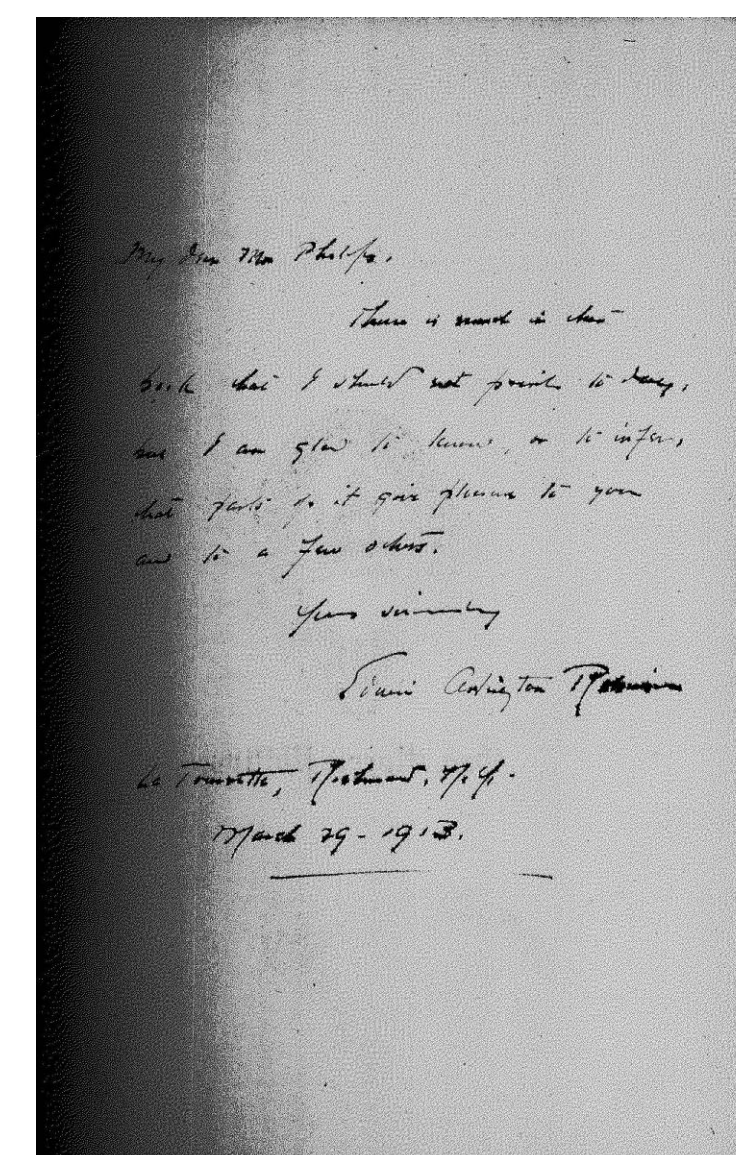
Dr. George Morris Philips was the 4th Principal of West Chester State Normal School from 1881 to 1920. During his 39-year term the Normal School enrollment increased to four times its size and was a site for influential visitors and speakers.

Dr. Philips held many positions including founder, director, trustee, and president of various organizations. In terms of education, he was a trustee of Bucknell University, and held membership in the College and University Council of Pennsylvania, the State Committee to revise School Laws, and the State Board of Education. He was a highly demanded lecturer and instructor and wrote several books on topics ranging from Astronomy to Natural Philosophy to Government and Mathematics.

Why Re-digitization?

The original digitization was completed through a grant project around 2007. Unfortunately, the images were all scanned in black and white, at a low resolution, and with inconsistencies in page captures. This resulted in difficulty reading and utilizing this resource. The decision to re-digitize came after an influential autograph scholar came to West Chester University to look at the collection and encouraged the library to catalog it; thus making it more accessible to the public.

This suggestion inspired library faculty and staff to reassess the collection, its research purpose, and discoverability. The decision was made to create a finding aid in ARCHON instead of creating individual catalog records for each book. The anticipated result will establish intellectual control over the collection as well as make it more accessible to researchers. While working on describing the collection in ARCHON, the opportunity arose to re-digitize the materials, leading to collaboration among different departments and skillsets within the library.



Left: Example of an original 2007 scan.

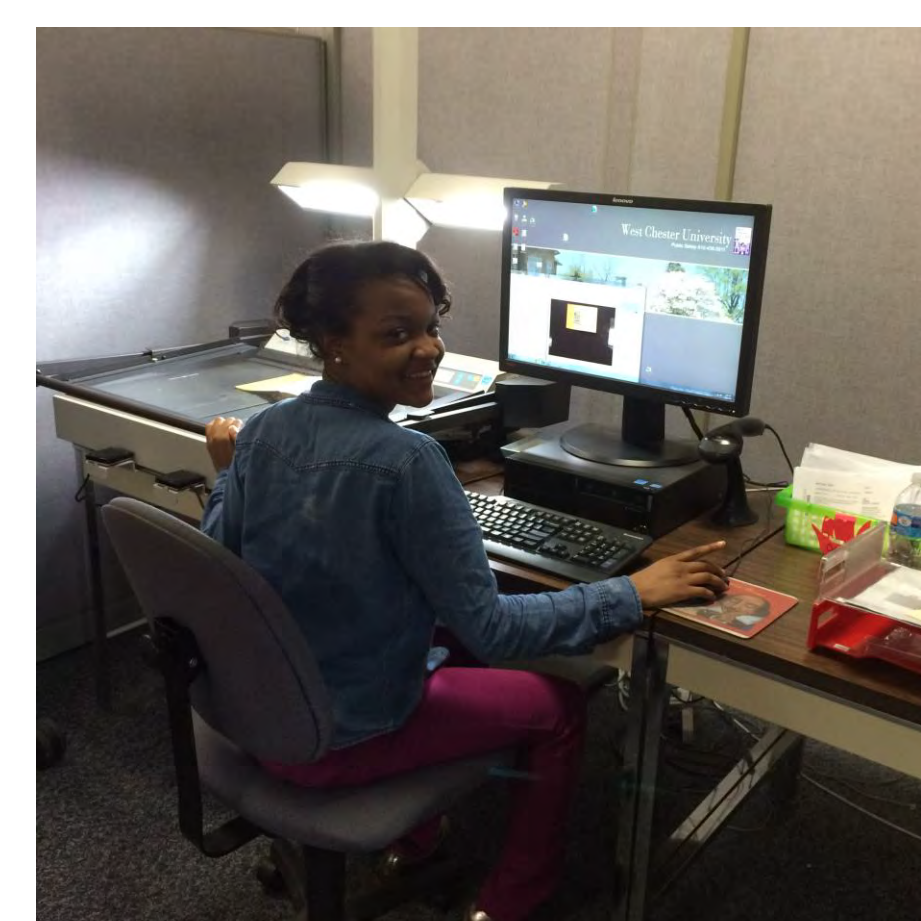
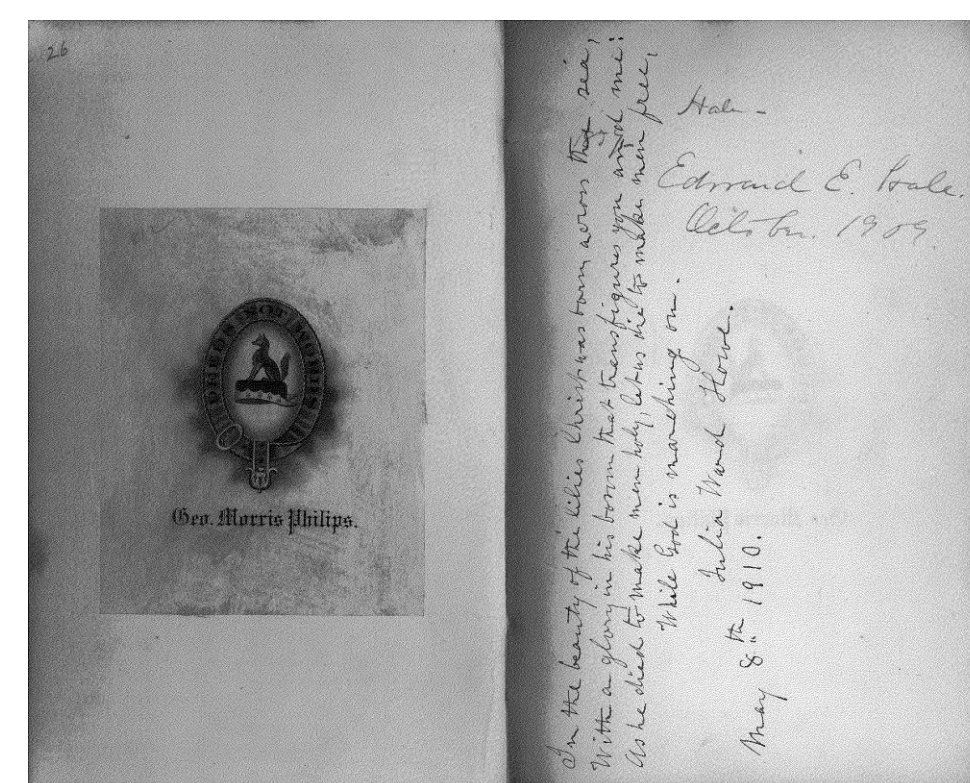
Robinson, Edwin Arlington. *The Children of the Night: a Book of Poems*. New York: Charles Scribner's, 1910.

Inscription: "My dear Mr. Philips, There is much in this book that I should not print today, but I am glad to know, or to infer, that parts of it give pleasure to you and a few others. Yours Sincerely, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Letourette, Richmond, N.Y. March 29, 1913"

Right: Example of an original 2007 scan.

Howe, Julia Ward. *The World's Own*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1857.

Inscription: In the beauty of the lilies Christ was born across the sea, with a glory in his bosom that transfigures you and me; as he died to make men holy, let us die to make me free, While God is marching on. Julia Ward Howe May 8, 1910 [Also on page: Hale-Edward E. Poole, October 1909]

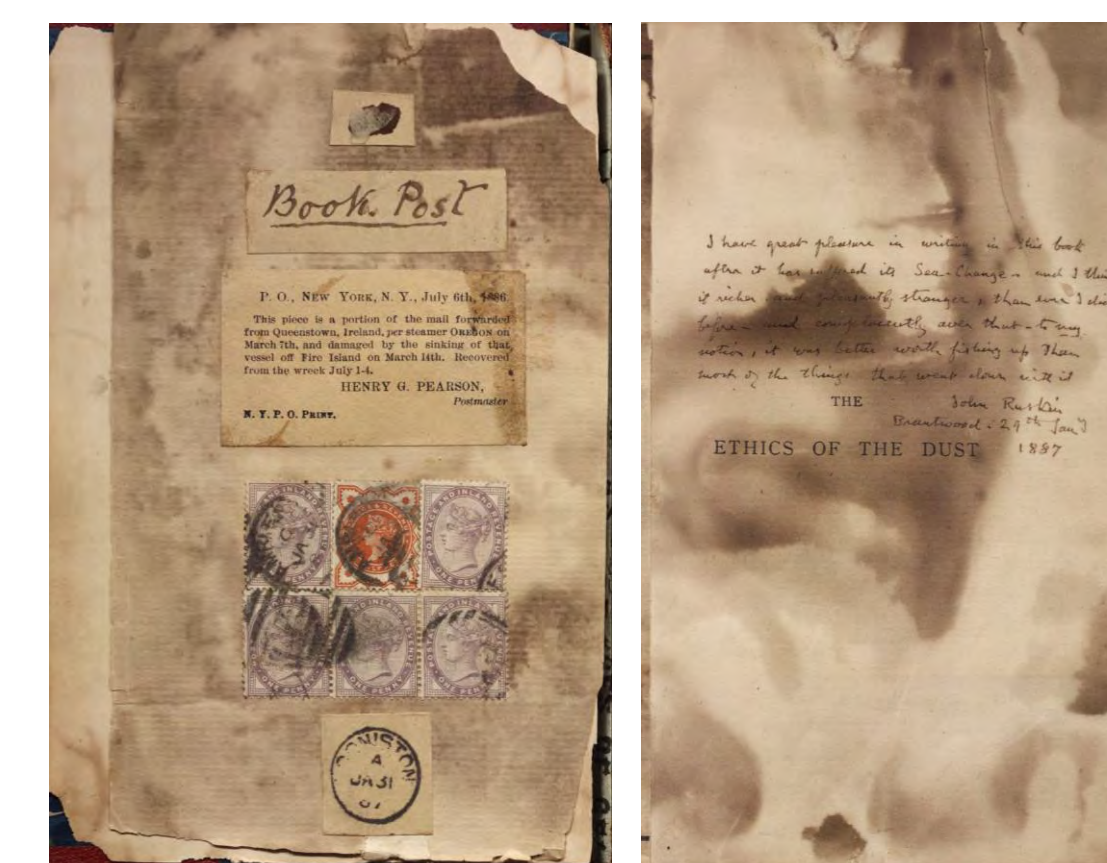


This project included student workers, staff and faculty members. Pictured is Shirlesia Hunt, Class of 2015, scanning a copy of Sherwood Anderson's, *Winesburg, Ohio*.

The scanner used in this project is the Minolta ScanDVA overhead large book scanner purchased in 2014. Global 360's, Imaging for Windows, is also the software being used for scanning. Books are scanned in color at 600dpi and saved as archival tiffs. Jpegs are then created as use copies for upload into CONTENTdm.

Process

1. Retrieve batch of approximately 200 Philips books. Cataloging department creates excel spreadsheet of titles.
2. Interlibrary Loan department retrieves batch of 30 books from cataloging and scans the cover, autograph page, all title pages, copyright page, any extra ephemera such as letters, newspaper clippings, stamps, envelopes, and postcards.
3. Books are saved as a multi-image Tiff file onto an external hard drive.
4. Once scanning is completed, Cataloging or Special Collections staff extracts individual Tiff and JPEG files using IrfanView software.
5. Cataloging staff upload images and relevant metadata into CONTENTdm.
6. Sometime after upload into CONTENTdm, book titles, author name, and inscriptions are added to an ARCHON Finding Aid as individual items. A link to the CONTENTdm surrogate is also included in the item-level description; allowing users in ARCHON access to the digital collection.

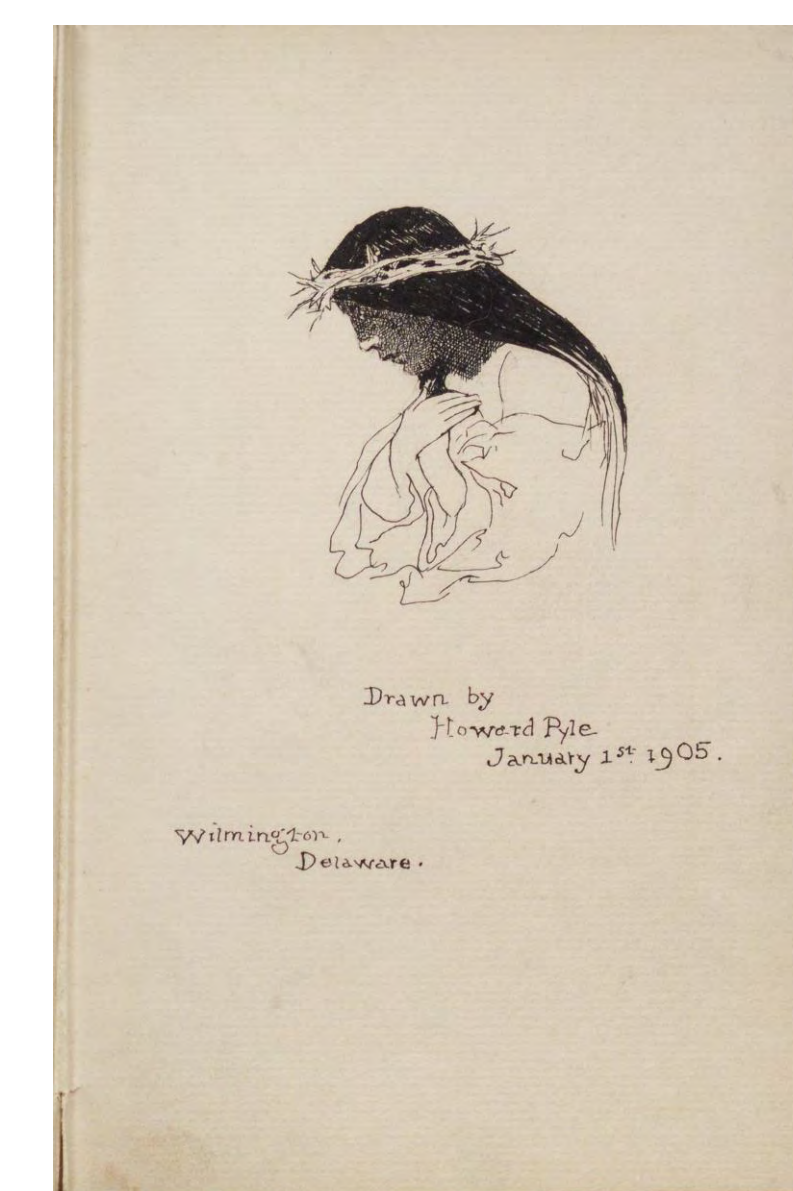


Left: Example of 2015 scan.

Ruskin, John. *Ethics of the Dust: Ten Lectures to Little Housewives on the Elements of Crystallisation*. Kent, England: George Allen, 1877.

Inscription: "I have great pleasure in writing in this book after it has suffered its Sea-Change, and I think it richer, and pleasantly stranger, than ever I did before- and complacently aver that to my notion, it was better worth fishing up than most things went down with it. John Ruskin, Brentwood-29th Jan'y 1887."

[This book includes the following notice: "P.O., New York, N.Y., July 6th, 1886. This piece is a portion of the mail forwarded from Queenstown, Ireland, over steamer Oregon on March 7th, and damaged by the sinking of that vessel off Fire Island on March 14th. Recovered from the wreck July 1-4. Henry G. Pearson, Postmaster N.Y.P.O.Print"]



Right: Example of 2015 scan.

Pyle, Howard. *Rejected of Men: A Story of To-day*. New York: Harper, 1903.

Inscription: "Drawn by Howard Pyle, January 1st, 1905. Wilmington, Delaware."

Hand drawn original image by famous local artist.

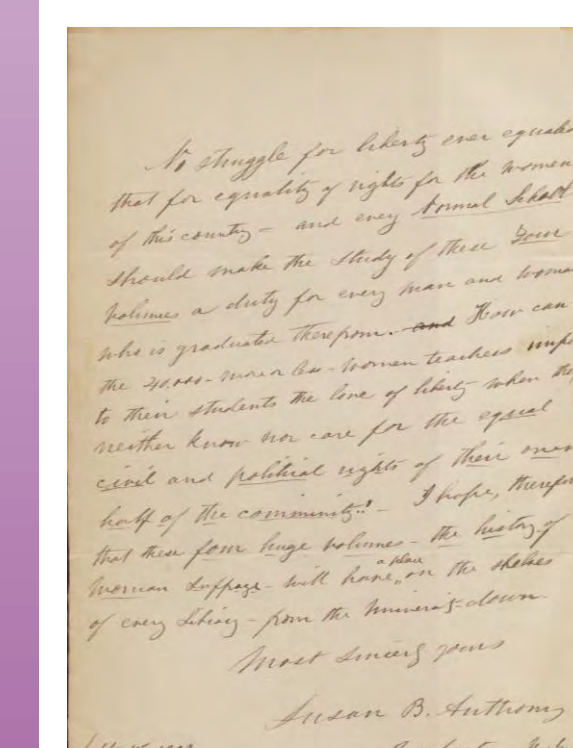


Left: Photograph of Philips Memorial Hall, ca. 1945. The Philips Autograph Library completed in 1928, is housed in this iconic WCU building.

Library description:
• 8 shields across the ceiling depicting important educational and powerful people and institutions
• William Penn's Shield, founder of Pennsylvania, hangs prominently over doors
• Commonwealth of Pennsylvania shield hangs prominently over a fireplace in the front
• 9 influential Printers' marks in wood

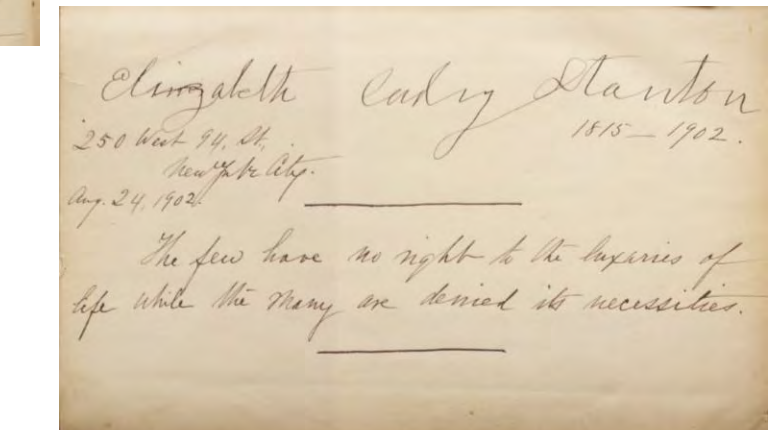
Noteworthy Inscriptions

- Helen Keller (in her own hand): "Let us be content to do the thing we can and not presume to fret because it's little."
- Eden Phillpotts (in response to Philips' request with his name misspelled): "When asking a man for the trifling favor of his autograph, always spell his name correctly. It chills him to see that you are not really interested enough in him to pay him that small compliment. With all good Wishes, Sincerely yours, Eden Phillpotts."
- George Bernard Shaw (in response to an illegally printed U.S. Copy of his book): "Contraband copy smuggled into the United Kingdom by an enterprising American, who sent it to the author with a request to autograph it and smuggle it out again. America is quite welcome to the book, but to demand autographs into the bargain is not reasonable. Sincerely, George Bernard Shaw."



Above: Letter from Susan B. Anthony
Right: Elizabeth Cady Stanton
Both in *History of Women's Suffrage*.

Left: "No struggle for liberty ever equaled that for equality of rights for the women of this country - and every Normal School should make the study of these four Volumes a duty for every man and woman who is graduated there from. How can the 40,000 - more or less - women teachers impart to their students the love of liberty when they neither know nor care for the equal civil and political rights of their own half of the community! I hope, therefore, that these four huge volumes - *The History of Woman Suffrage* - will have a place on the shelves of every library - from the university down. Most Sincerely yours, Susan B. Anthony Rochester-N.Y. Sept. 15 1902"



Left: "The few have no right to luxuries of life while many are denied its necessities" Elizabeth Cady Stanton, 250 West 94th St., New York City, Aug. 24, 1902."

Results

- During academic year 2014-2015 over 500 titles were re-scanned.
- In that same year over 300 titles, that had not previously been available digitally, were added to the digital collection.
- More consistent digital surrogates are now available in CONTENTdm.
- Projected completion is 2017.
- Interdepartmental communication has been strengthened and a deeper understanding of the duties and responsibilities of the departments involved has been established.
- Greater internal knowledge of Special Collections holdings.

Links

Philips Autograph Library Digital Collection:
<http://digital.klnpa.org/cdm/search/collection/philips>

Philips Finding Aid:
<https://archon.klnpa.org/wchester/index.php?p=collections/controlcard&id=11>

