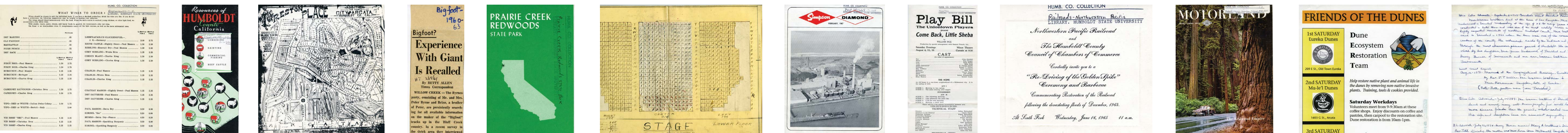


Permanence in an Ephemeral Collection

The history and future of the Pamphlet Collection at Humboldt State University Library

Pamphlet Collection: Ephemeral material related to Humboldt County, organized in folders by subject classification. Related Terms: Subject Files, Pamphlet Files, Information Files, Vertical Files

Examples from the Collection: Newspaper Clippings, Obituaries, Brochures, Menus, Maps, Government Reports, Flyers, Invitations, Newsletters, Magazines, Play Bills, Letters, Postcards . . .



Research Questions

- Are institutions still maintaining vertical files?
- Is the vertical file still relevant in the digital age?
- What are the best practices?
- How can archivists and librarians continue to encourage student and researcher use of ephemeral materials, whether paper or digital?

Project Goals

- This project consisted of seven major activities:
 - Conduct a Historical Analysis of the Collection
 - Complete a Literature Review
 - Analyze Use Statistics
 - Create a Collection Development Plan
 - Increase Use and Access
 - Update Processing Procedures
 - Process Backlog
 - Explore Pamphlets in a Digital Age

The outcome is to create a better understanding of how pamphlet material will be acquired and maintained in the digital age.

To Maintain or Not to Maintain?

Online searching has replaced “ready reference” vertical files. Both the Natural Resources Pamphlet Collection and General Pamphlet Collection at Humboldt State University (HSU) have been dissolved due to the shift from print to online ready reference.

Ephemeral collections with a regional collecting scope are still an important facet of an academic Special Collections. Pamphlet collections make newspaper articles on a particular topic findable when there is not complete indexing for local newspapers, as is the case with the local newspaper publishing industry in Humboldt County. The Humboldt County (HCC) Pamphlet Collection also contains primary sources documenting regional history that may not be found elsewhere.

Teaching with the Collection

Search and Seizure Projects

History 210 course uses the Pamphlet Collection as an example of using primary source material.

- What types of material do you have?
- How could you determine if the information is accurate?
- What would these contents lead a researcher to conclude?

Assignment encourages students to consider the role of archivist as curator to the collection.

Speed-dating in Special Collections

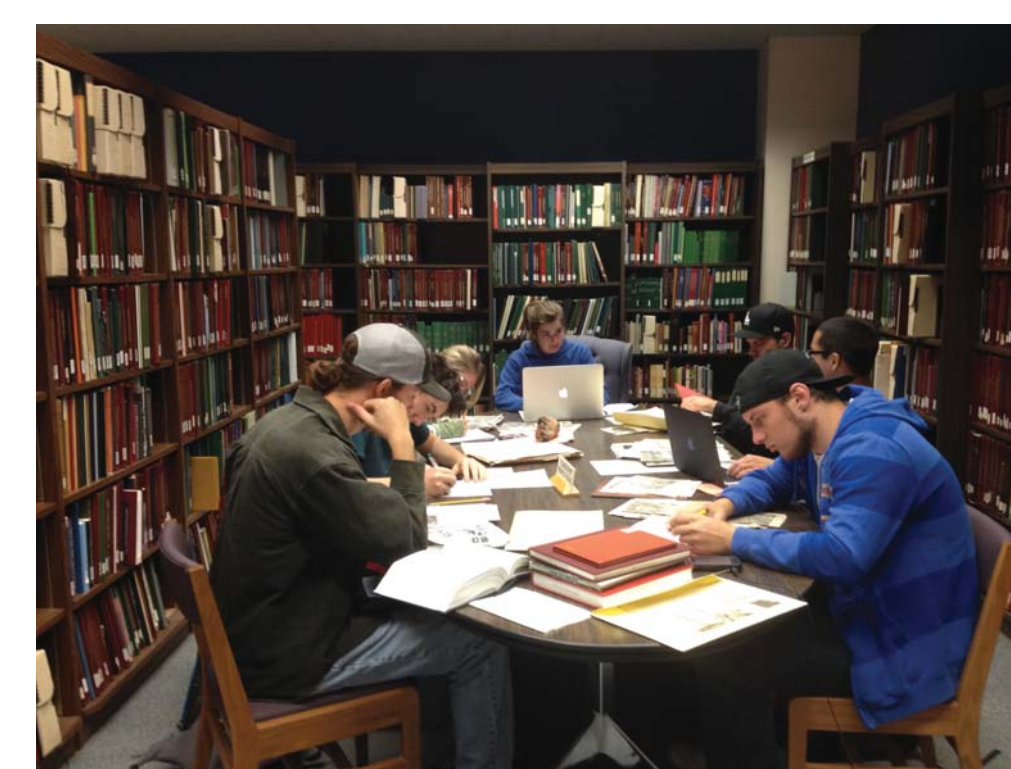
- Have students work in groups and look at a file for 5 minutes.
- Opportunity to see the diverse types of material in files.
- How have the contents of a subject file changed over time?

Wikipedia Flash Mob

The HSU Pamphlet Collection is regionally oriented. Using the files to update Wikipedia entries for rural town and locations in Humboldt County is an ideal assignment. This is also an opportunity for students to understand the limits of Wikipedia as a ready reference tool.

Class as Curator Project

Create a course assignment with a broad local topic found in the Pamphlet Collection. Example: Geography class working on a history of Humboldt Bay from a variety of our subject headings.

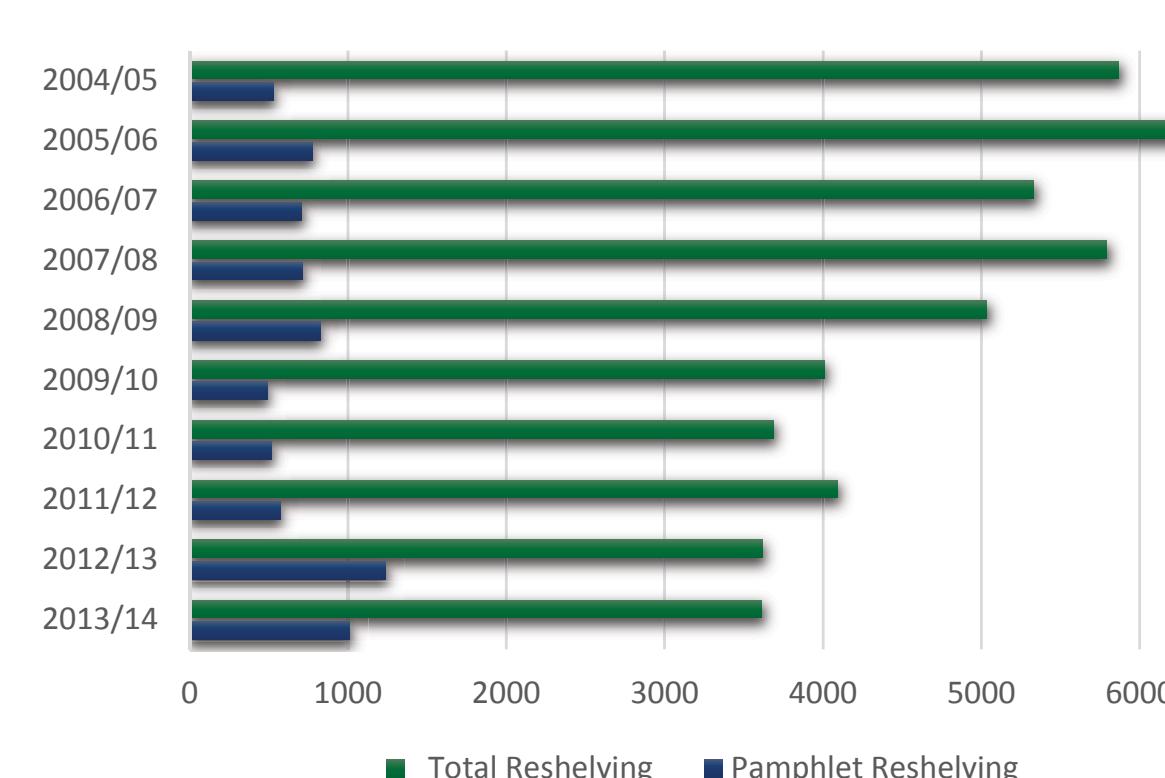


Search and Seizure History Class

Pamphlet Collection Use

In the Spring of 2008, the library tallied use of particular subject files. Below are the results:

Total Subject Files 2100+
Used Once 284
Used Twice 60
Used Three+ 35



What is the vertical file of the 21st century?

- Newsletters → Listservs
- Letters → Emails
- Brochures → Web Pages
- Maps → GIS
- Newspapers → Blogs
- Flyers → Facebook

Recommendations

Web Archiving: Explore potential for web archiving, using the same collection scope as the Pamphlet Collection. Link crawls to subject heading list.

Collection Policy: Update collection procedures. Catalog local newsletters and larger documents. No longer clip majority of newspapers.



Left: Pamphlet Subject List
Center: Archive-It, web archiving service from the Internet Archive.

Increase Access: Update subject heading list. Create LibGuide. Highlight student work through online exhibits. Hold instruction workshop for fellow librarians. Strive for inclusion on California Ephemera Project or the Online Archive of California (right).
Preservation Plan: Rehouse pamphlet files in acid free expansion folders. Photocopy most requested files and create use copies.

