Retrospective Appraisal – a case study: or, how to throw away one fifth of your archives

University of St Andrews Library, Special Collections Division

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Outline

• Background to Special Collections
• Background to the project
• Method and challenges
• Results
• What next?
University of St Andrews Library’s Special Collections

• Rare Books
• Photographic Collection

• Manuscripts
  • Personal papers
  • Church of Scotland records
  • Burgh (Town Council) records
  • Business records
  • Society records
  • Individual manuscripts

• Muniments
  • Institutional archive of the University
University Librarian, James Maitland Anderson appointed ‘Honorary Keeper of the Muniment Room’, 1925
ANALYSIS OF
UNCATALOGUED ARCHIVES

University of St Andrews

152 collections
1409.8 linear metres
Logjam Survey Results

34% of collections uncatologued and inaccessible to readers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>Number of archivist years required to eliminate the backlog of boxed items</td>
<td>29.86 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of paraprofessional years to eliminate the backlog of boxed items</td>
<td>2.58 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional cataloguing time</td>
<td>17.38 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of archivist/paraprofessional days required to eliminate the backlog</td>
<td>140.2 days</td>
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<td>of volumes</td>
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Total: 49.82 years and 140.2 days
Collections Appraised

- 24% of material appraised removed through transfer or disposal
Senate and Court

- Duplication of minutes and supporting papers
- 14.4 linear metres of space created
- More efficient access
Student lecture notes from classes taught by zoologist D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, 1929-1930
What next?

- Continuing discussion about policies, procedures and documentation
- New Eden campus for University staff
- More active management of our collections