Building and Promoting Unique Collections:
The History of the Study & Practice of Architecture in the U.S. at the University of Notre Dame Architecture Library

Jennifer Parker
ARLIS/NA Annual Conference
Boston, MA
April 24, 2010
The School of Architecture

Established 1898, Current Home - Bond Hall, built 1917
Rome Studies Center

Via Monterone, 76, 00186
Roma, Italy
The Architecture Library
The Rare Book Room
Rare Book Room Collections

The Helen Park List – Architecture Books Available in the US Prior to the American Revolution

Palladio
*I Quattro Libri dell’Architettura…*
1570
The Hitchcock List - The First Architecture Books Published in the US, 1775-1895

Benjamin, Asher
*Practice of Architecture*
Boston, 1833

Gardner, E.C.
*The House that Jill Built...*
Springfield, 1886
Rare Book Room Collections

The Classical Collection - books related to the study of architecture in the classical world

Adam, Robert
The Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian...
1764
Naming the Collection

The History of the Study and Practice of Architecture in the United States
The Rare Book Room at the University of Notre Dame Architecture Library

The Helen Park List – The First Architecture Books in America, prior to the Revolution

These books include important architectural treatises such as 1st editions of Palladio's I Quattro Libri... (1570) and Leoni's Alberti (1726), and pattern books by James Gibbs, William Halfpenny, and Batty Langley.

The Hitchcock List – The First Architecture Books Published in the US, 1775-1895

The Hitchcock List contains the pattern books, price guides, and materials used by America's early builders including Asher Benjamin's The American Builder's Companion... (1806) and The Country Builder's Assistant... (1797).

The Classical Architecture Collection – Essential Texts for the Study of Classical Architecture

This collection includes all five volumes of Stuart and Revett's The Antiquities of Athens (1762-1810) for which Benjamin Franklin was an early subscriber and Thomas Jefferson was known to possess and Robert Adam's The Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian... (1764) containing stunning 18th-century engravings.

http://architecture.library.nd.edu
Building the Collections
Use of the Collections

Professor Thomas Gordon Smith working with one of our latest acquisitions.
Use of the Collections

Professor Thomas Gordon Smith leads his Grecian Architecture and Furniture class of in the Rare Book Room
Use of the Collections

Professor Carroll
William Westfall
working with 4th year
Architecture Student
Clarissa Barrientos
The Sketchbook Assignment

ARCH 73221, Architectural Treatises

The final assignment requires that you play the role of Thomas Blackburn. You are to select two (not one and not three) books you believe will assist your professional development as an architect and use them as sources for your own sketchbook.

The form this exercise is to take should follow that of your predecessors, such as Francesco di Giorgio Martini and Thomas Blackburn, that is, a sketchbook. Their circumstances were different from yours: they had only very limited access to books, and you have them in abundance...
The Sketchbook Assignment

Graduate Student Michael Meszeros working with Desgodets’ *Les Édifices Antiques de Rome*… (1682) and Owen Biddle’s *The Young Carpenters Assistant*… (1805)
Promoting the Collections

Current Display – Selections from the Park and Hitchcock Lists

In the Library…
Promoting the Collections

Rare Book Room - The History of the Study and Practice of Architecture in the United States

Inside the Architecture Library
- About the Library
- Rare Book Room
- Rome Architecture Reference Library
- Staff
- Floorplan
- Map
- School of Architecture
- Architecture Library Policies

On the website...

Now on Display

The Development of Perspective
Perspectives on perspective drawing over time.
Promoting the Collections

Architects See Book Collection As a Cornerstone of Reputation

The library at the center of Bond Hall, a critical core of words and renderings for Notre Dame’s School of Architecture, is pursuing a goal that goes to the heart of the school’s unique character.

“We are aspiring to become a research destination for the history of the study of architecture in the United States,” says assistant librarian Jennifer Parker, who has been architecture librarian at Notre Dame for a little more than a year.

The specialized library she oversees, one of nearly a dozen dotting the Notre Dame campus, reflects the architecture school’s interest not only in the study of classical architecture, she says, but in “the classical study of architecture”—that is, learning from (and drawing in emulation of) the first editions of great books of architectural instruction.

The Architecture Library nurtures that respect for authoritative sources and basic know-how by hosting classes in its rare book room, cooperating with faculty who assign plenty of library-based research, and adopting goals like this latest “research destination” initiative, Parker says. Her goal is for the library, while of course remaining up-to-date to meet all hard-copy and digital needs of current scholarship, to obtain usable copies of every book on what is called the “Helen Park List.” That is a compilation of the architectural titles available in America before the Revolution. The oldest book on that list was published in 1483.

Notre Dame already has a big head start toward this goal from a benefactor’s gift that established the Ryan Family Collection of the Park List and yielded 65 of the titles. With the updated Park List’s 166 titles representing the ultimate goal, more than a dozen more books have been purchased since Parker took her position last year, and rare book dealers acting on Notre Dame’s behalf are on the lookout for high-quality copies of the remaining books comprising the list.

Other architecture libraries have copies of books on the Park List, but “we’re the only one promoting these books as a unique collection,” says Parker. Of course Notre Dame’s architecture reference collections go beyond the Park List and include books about classical and traditional architecture, a separate facility in Rome where all Notre Dame architecture students spend their third year of study, and books written about architecture in the early United States.

You can hear the excitement in Parker’s voice when she talks about Notre Dame’s recent purchases of classics like first editions of the work of Andrea Palladio’s (1508-1580) I Quattro Libri Dell’Architettura... Venice, 1570, a core text for the School of Architecture; Robert Adam’s The Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian, London, 1764, purchased this fall with the help of benefactors Matthew and Joyce Walsh; and all five volumes of The Antiquities of Athens, a monumental collection of “amazing drawings” of the classical world.

The School of Architecture, Dean Michael Lykoudis, and the entire faculty have been very supportive of the initiatives to pursue library treasures, Parker says.

“You couldn’t ask for better book people to work with.”

Learn more at architecture.library.nd.edu/ssi/rbr.shtml.
What I have learned…

• Rare Book School is amazing
• Collaboration is crucial
• Donors like buying books
• Deep down, architecture students love books!
• Don’t have to be unique to promote in a unique way
What’s Next?

• Continued Collecting
• Expanding our scope to include early French publications
• Promotion through articles and presentations
• Further study in Rare Book School
Thank you.

Questions?

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The other way architecture students use the library...