There and back again: Archivists retracing paths of university teaching collections

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The C&U collecting mission and impulse

• Colleges, Schools, Departments, and individual Faculty: history of collecting
  – What is the acquisition story?

• Faculty and Archivist collaboration
  – Provenance research

• For purposes of formalizing postcustodial praxis and decentralized custodianship
  – Perhaps not by design! But to bring clarity to complex pedagogical traditions

• The Collections: The University of Texas as original research
University Museums & University Archives

- 17th century universities are among the first collecting institutions: 100-400 years!
- Parent inst. role departure from collections care to research in the 1980s
- Refocus toward identity and promotion (mergers, moves)
- Reveal relationships with object biographies (Kozak, 2016)

- Formation of C&U committee in SAA in 1949 (Cook, 1988: 431)
- About 564 university archives were founded between 1960-72 (Burckel, 2008: 4)
- C&U archivists (~1814) are the largest % of SAA members per A*CENSUS
- Increasing alignment with student learning & success

Both professionals ask, “what goes on in the classroom?”

A Teaching Collection

- The University of Texas counts 170 million cultural objects in 80 collections on campus (Bober, 2016 “The Collections”)

- Swenson coin donation in 1891; Greek Prof. J. Sterrett made first purchases in 1893 which became the Museum of Ancient Art in 1904 (plaster casts and lantern slides); Dept Chair J.E. Pearce’s Anthropology Museum in 1934 (TMM ‘39) & tablets’ purchase in 1938

- Two collections transferred from Texas Memorial Museum in 2005: cuneiform tablets (2100-1600 BCE) and sigillography (Frucht gem casts, 550 BCE-200 CE & 1670-1830)

- RTI & provenance research w cuneiform in Fall 2014 (see CDLI); Digital Archaeology Lab with coins since 2016