

## **Turning A Challenge into Education: MA Museum Administration students undertake a real-life collections management project**

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**Abstract:** In advance of the Spring 2019 semester, a Professor in the MA Museum Administration Program and the Archivist at St. John's University met to plan an educational assignment for the upcoming Collections Management course. The goal was for students to examine objects from the collections and learn about how they were organized, described, stored, preserved, and utilized for research, teaching, and exhibitions. The Professor and the Archivist discussed artwork and artifacts that students might study. At about the same time, Special Collections received a seemingly disparate group of paintings, posters, and other artifacts from a donation made to the university. It was immediately clear that while many of these nearly 100 objects had educational or historical value, they would require a significant amount of research. The Archivist decided to present this collection as an option for the Collections Management course, and the Professor readily agreed. The students spent a semester analyzing the objects to determine whether they should be formally accessioned into Special Collections. Potential educational, research, historical, and exhibition value were taken into consideration. At the end of the semester, each student completed a report on their findings along with individual condition reports. All of this was submitted to the Archivist to aid in making a final decision for each item in this collection. Educational outcomes, challenges, and opportunities for future collaborations between the MA Museum Administration Program and the University Archives & Special Collections will be discussed.

### **About the Author:**

*Alyse Hennig* received her Master's in Library and Information Science and Master's in Public History from St. John's University, and a Certificate in Archival Studies from Queens College. She currently serves as the Interim University Archivist at St. John's University in New York.