

# Rare Book MARC Data as University Archives: New Directions for Special Collections Collaboration

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**Abstract:** This poster showcases a collaborative, year-long Collections as Data project to analyze the rare book holdings of the George Washington University Libraries. A team of four librarians from different units harvested MARC data from more than 70,000 rare book catalog records with the goal of learning more about the strengths, coverage, and gaps of the collection and to learn new technical skills related to writing code and data analysis. This poster will illustrate the steps of the project both technical and organizational: the technologies and skills we used and developed at each phase, the role of project partners, what challenges we encountered and how we adapted, and finally what we learned about our rare book collection and our ability to support collections as data research. What we learned about the collection that was most surprising was how much institutional history is contained in the descriptive catalog records for rare book holdings and how valuable this descriptive data is for researchers. The experience and findings of this project while informative and practical also revealed the immense potential of our collections and our colleagues: potential for cross-departmental collaboration, potential to learn new skills, and the potential for metadata to do more than describe.

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