

SETON HALL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES:

DIGITIZATION OF D'ARGENIO COLLECTION OF COINS AND ANTIQUITIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Seton Hall University Libraries, in cooperation with the Classical Studies department of Seton Hall University, seek to digitize the D'Argenio Collection of Coins and Antiquities. This collection contains over 300 coins from the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods as well as other artifacts such as terracotta heads, various bronze objects, and Byzantine textiles, none of which have been published. While the collection is a permanent part of the Monsignor William Noé Field Archives & Special Collections Center, and as such can be viewed at Seton Hall University, the lack of ready accessibility diminishes its educational and scholarly usefulness. Digitization will make the collection available to university classes, individual students, and scholars around the world, enhancing the studies of classicists, historians, art historians, and archaeologists.

The first step of the project is to fully digitize and catalogue the collection in order to display the items in the Seton Hall University Library's digital collections website. Utilizing emerging technologies, the project will follow the examples of previous artifact digitization projects such as the American Numismatic Society and the ongoing coin digitization project at Cornell University. Seton Hall Librarians Alan Delozier and Maura Kenny will photograph the collection, Classical Studies professors Raymond Capra and Sean Lake will add scholarly commentary to the individual artifacts, and a Classical Studies student will be hired to perform the data entry. In addition the collection will also be moved to appropriate archival storage and display to preserve the original artifacts. The collection will be used in pilot courses and specific surveys of students and pertinent faculty and librarians will take place in order to evaluate the

database and its use in undergraduate classes specifically. To complete this first phase of the project, \$8,800 is being requested.

THE SETON HALL UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Community:

Seton Hall University (SHU) was founded in 1856 and from the beginning has endeavored to be a home for a wide diversity of cultures, faiths, and backgrounds in both faculty and students, something its Catholic roots have helped to encourage. SHU currently enrolls around 5,300 undergraduate and 4,500 graduate students in over 80 programs with 63 different countries represented (“Fast Facts,” n.d.). The University Mission Statement pledges to focus “on academic and ethical development” while its students “are challenged by outstanding faculty, an evolving technologically advanced setting and values-centered curricula” (Board of Regents, 1996). Across the board, faculty and staff place a high value on the integration of technology in the learning environment in order to better facilitate learning and to prepare students for life in an increasingly digital world.

Collections:

The University Libraries play a crucial role in this goal through their print and electronic resources including nearly 750,000 books, over 1,100 print periodical subscriptions, electronic access to over 25,000 e-journals, multiple microfilm collections, and a variety of audiovisual aids and collections (“About University Libraries,” n.d.). In addition, the University Libraries are also a selective depository for various New Jersey, U.S. and U.N. publications. Within their own collection, the University Libraries are home to the Valente Italian Library and the Walsh Gallery which displays a rotating exhibition of works from artists around the world. In addition,

the Libraries house the Msgr. William Noé Field University Archives and Special Collections Center (Special Collections), which contains various historical artifacts and documents ranging from ledgers, manuscripts, reports, and other items documenting the history of the University, the local Archdiocese, and several local and national political leaders. The Special Collections also include rare books, religious artifacts, and the D'Argenio Coin and Antiquities Collection. In addition, the Libraries have also developed Digital Collections which contain databases for collections such as the Ace Alagna Photographs, historical University and athletic photographs, historical postcards, and a variety of religious artifacts.

Patrons and Staff:

All of these resources are made openly available to the student body and faculty of SHU as well as alumni, visitors, and members of Friends of the Archives. In 2011 more than 400,000 people visited the University Libraries. At present the Libraries have a staff of around 40 including a faculty of 13 full-time professional Librarians, as well as administrative and clerical staff and work study students.

Mission Statement:

At the beginning of the 2012 fall semester, the University Libraries updated their Mission, Vision, and Goals:

The Librarians at Seton Hall University Libraries envision an environment that includes an ever flourishing wealth of resources for knowledge building

To Enhance the University's resources by the management of scholarly information and the judicious integration of information technology into the curriculum

To Manage resources that will enable students to develop and master the professional skills that are necessary on a regional and global level

To Provide information literacy instruction and reference service to educate life long learners in using information resources

To Create seamless access to information resources for the SHU curriculum, and maintain an ongoing assessment of the libraries services, technologies and collections

To Serve as a vital link to our students and faculty for their information and research needs

To Support the Seton Hall University Libraries Catholic Collections and unique materials for future scholarship that integrate spiritual concepts with a focus on a tradition of service. (2012)

STATEMENT OF NEED

As a home for the Msgr. William Noé Field University and Special Collections Center, the University Libraries offer a variety of collections for individual research and small group seminars. However, the accessibility of these items is limited by hours of operation, available space, and necessary precautions that must take place to preserve these artifacts.

The D'Argenio Coin and Antiquities Collection was added to the Special Collections through the bequest of Ronald D'Argenio, alumnus of SHU School of Law. The impressive collection contains over 300 coins from the Greek, Roman, and Byzantine periods as well as a variety of other small antiquities including bronze buttons, terracotta heads, and Byzantine textiles. None of the items in the collection have been published and only very basic

identification cataloguing has been completed. In addition, the coins are currently in a binder rather than in archival quality displays or storage.

This valuable collection has the ability to enrich the classes, research, and experience of the Seton Hall student body as well as to inspire and interest students, scholars, and researchers around the world. However, in its current state, the collection, while accessible, is not anywhere close to reaching its full potential. Digitization will make this collection available for classroom and individual use allowing these important historical artifacts to become useful tools in academic study and research over many disciplines including Classical Studies, History, and Archaeology. Preserving this collection in an accessible format is more than just an academic necessity, however. There is also a “moral value of having access to knowledge from the past, in its authentic and unmediated form” (Smith, 2007, 18).

This project fits in well with the Andrew W. Mellon’s Scholarly Communications and Information Technology Program and its goal “to support libraries and archives in their efforts to preserve and provide access to materials of broad cultural and scholarly significance” (“Overview,” n.d.). Since the D’Argenio Collection encompasses such a wide range of cultures and time periods, making it available through a digital database will provide an important scholarly resource for many college students as well as other interested scholars and researchers.

PROPOSED INITIATIVE

Digitization of the D’Argenio Collection will not only make the artifacts accessible on a much broader scale, it will also allow them to be preserved and catalogued in a way that is not possible in their current state.

Project Goal:

The University Libraries propose to photograph the items of the D'Argenio Collection from several different angles in order to preserve the details and enhance study and research. These photographs will be included in a database along with scholarly commentary geared toward an undergraduate audience. A history of the collection will also be included in order to preserve, not only the individual item relevance, but also the importance and background of the collection and collector and a basic introduction to the study of ancient coins. Librarian Alan Delozier worked closely with Mr. Ronald D'Argenio on presentations of the collection both at SHU and at other conferences and universities and as such has valuable insight into the development of the collection and its significance.

Expected Outcome:

The digitization will provide a useful and readily accessible tool to be used immediately in undergraduate classes at SHU. In addition, the database will be available for use in other universities and colleges. The documentation and commentary will allow for individual study for smaller projects or assignments outside the classroom. The use of the database in the classroom will help to expand student's understanding of and spark greater interest in ancient history and cultures as well as the study of numismatics. In future, the commentary and database will form the foundation for an eventual book monograph as well in order to provide availability to the collection in yet another format.

Required Resources:

Archival storage for the artifacts is still necessary to preserve the artifacts during and after the digitization process. In addition, neither the University Libraries nor the Classical

Studies department currently carries any literature on numismatics. Select book titles and additional coin databases would be purchased to help with the development of the D'Argenio database and to enrich the ongoing undergraduate study for students using the database to gain knowledge and understanding in the manufacturing, history, and significance of ancient coinage.

Professor Raymond Capra and Librarian Alan Delozier will be responsible for coordinating and completing the photography and commentary over the course of the summer and as such will receive a summer stipend. Both librarian Maura Kenny and Classic Studies professor Sean Lake will be offering in kind support, research, and evaluation. In addition, a student worker will be hired to complete the data entry.

A \$500 grant was received from the Classical Associations of the Atlantic States to purchase the photography equipment and materials last year. In addition, the database and website building will require no additional funds as both are being provided through the already established University Libraries Digital Collection.

Implementation Schedule:

Work on the database would take place during the summer of 2013 with an initial launch of the database for the fall 2013 semester. During this period the entire collection would be photographed with multiple photos being taken of each item for fullness of documentation and usefulness for study. Research on the pieces of the collection would also be developed with identification and commentary provided for each. A working and usable database would be ready for launch in fall 2013 with the potential for further research and commentary to be added in the future.

During the fall 2013 semester the database will be used in SHU's undergraduate program for several specific courses. This includes Professor Raymond Capra's in-translation courses, *Epics and Novels of Greece* (CLAS 2301) and *Rome and Greek and Roman Drama* (CLAS 2302), as well as his introductory Greek course (GREK 1205). It will also be used as a significant part of Professor Sean Lake's course on Greek Civilization, a multi-discipline course for Classical Studies, History, and Archaeology students (CLAS 2319/ HIST 3220/ HIST 6220/ ARCH 2112). Each course will include an introduction to the database, the significance of the artifacts, and the importance of the field of ancient coin studies.

Evaluation:

As a part of the course survey for each pilot undergraduate course, specific questions will be asked concerning the usefulness of the database and its relevance to the course. A specific survey will also be given in each course asking students to evaluate the database's ease of use, helpfulness in supplementing the other course material, and its effectiveness in conveying the culture, concepts, and ideas presented in the course.

In addition, a brief survey will be administered to select faculty and subject librarians to evaluate the database for access, effectiveness, and usability. This would include faculty from the Anthropology, Art History, Classical Studies, History, and Italian Studies departments of SHU as well as the subject librarians for the same areas. Not only will this allow for helpful feedback on the database itself, but it will also raise awareness among the faculty and librarians as to the availability of the database for class and student usage. See Appendix D for suggested survey questions for all three evaluation surveys.

PROPOSED BUDGET

Faculty Summer Stipends	
Faculty Coordinator	\$3400
5% of \$68,000	
Library Consultant	\$2700
5% of \$54,000	
Student Worker Stipend	\$1200
\$8/hr x 15hrs/wk – 10 wks	
Total Stipend	\$7300
Archive storage and research materials	\$1500
Total proposed budget	\$8800

Additional Grant from the Classical Associations of the Atlantic States
\$500

Contributions in Kind	
2 nd Faculty Coordinator	Additional commentary and database testing
2 nd Library Consultant	Additional photography
Database building and website dissemination	

CONCLUSION

As important as historical artifacts are, their value can only be increased by additional use. While it isn't always possible to allow every interested party to physically examine the D'Argenio Collection of Coins and Antiquities, an electronic database of the items will allow greater access and, therefore, add greater value to the collection. There have been many studies showing that "direct engagement with primary sources ... increase[s] awareness of authority of original text" causing "disciplinary transformation and innovation," (Dalbello, 2011, 491). In many cases the only access to those primary sources, whether print or not, is through digitization. This project would allow students, faculty, and other researchers the opportunity to view and study a unique collection as well as provide awareness of the historical culture and context and increase interest in the field of numismatics. Utilizing emerging technologies to preserve the past

and inspire students is a core belief of the Seton Hall University Libraries and this project will further both goals while also providing new and valuable access to a rare piece of world history.

RESOURCES

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APPENDIX MATERIAL

Appendix A: Inventory of D'Argenio Collection of Coins & Antiquities

Appendix B: Resumes for Key Project Personnel

Appendix C: University Libraries Annual Report

Appendix D: Survey Questions for Evaluation of Database