

**Revised Final Paper**

**Week 13: 07/26/23 – 8/1/23**

MMLIS Graduate Student Intern: Linda Huynh

Internship Site: USC Special Collections Library

Internship Site Supervisor: Rare Books Librarian, Derek Christian Quezada Meneses

LIM595: Research and Professional Applications: Internship

Dr. Melissa L. Miller

University of Southern California

Marshall School of Business

Summer 2023

### Abstract

USC's Special Collections Library is an academic research library that collects, preserves, promotes, and fosters access to primary source materials. Derek Christian Quezada Meneses (USC's Rare Books Librarian) created the Rare Books and Assessment Internship position to support the library's purpose. In particular, the prospective intern will assess uncatalogued rare materials and communicate their qualities to Mr. Meneses and a catalog librarian through spreadsheets. The information provided in the document will inform Mr. Meneses of whether USC Special Collections should keep the material and then have it cataloged. If there is no identifiable worthiness, they could discard the material. Assessing rare materials was a skill set I was hoping to learn about and practice. Therefore, the internship was a good fit for me. Although I am still deciding if I want to pursue the archival field, the skill of assessing monographs is one of the foundational learnings I need to know about. The guidance of the design of the LIM 595 course helped me become familiar with the special collections profession. I realized this during the one-to-one meetings with Dr. Miller, drafting the MOU, researching relevant professional competencies, and drafting weekly reports. Internship engagement activities that furthered my skillsets were assessing, handling and caring, and outreaching for rare items belonging to USC Special Collections. It was a meaningful internship and internship course that fitted well together and could benefit anyone.

## **Statement of Purpose**

### **Memo of Understanding (MOU) Goals and Objectives**

For my summer 2023 internship, I was the Rare Books and Assessment intern at USC's Special Collections Library, an academic institution. I was to assist my supervisor, Derek Christian Quezada Meneses (USC's Rare Books Librarian), in assessing uncatalogued rare materials stored in USC's Doheny Library. The purpose of the assessments was to provide relevant information about the materials in the form of spreadsheets to inform Derek if these materials are worthy of USC ownership. Then, if they are of value, the spreadsheet information briefs the catalog librarian when they create a database entry of the material in USC's library catalog. There are several reasons why I chose his internship. The internship offered hands-on learning in which I will work closely with library materials and interact with librarians face-to-face. It also presented a mentorship aspect in which I was to learn from Derek as he shared professional advice and his past professional experiences. I appreciated that, during our first meeting over Zoom, Derek reviewed his past library positions at UCLA, UCI, and the Getty. As a result, I felt assured that I would gain a mentor from the internship. Another reason I chose this internship was to fulfill my goal of expanding my archival knowledge because it's a career field I'm interested in pursuing. Accessioning is part of an archival process and one of the first processes. Therefore, I wanted to gain more hands-on knowledge in accessioning as I build archival skills. Understanding USC's Special Collections mission statement informed me why the creation of the internship was valuable. The mission states,

Our mission is to lend intellectual excitement and vitality to the campus and community through access to our collections of archives, rare books, and other unique materials. We accomplish this by offering public programming, exhibits,

and instructional support, and preserving, promoting, and fostering access to primary source materials in our main areas of strength: Holocaust and Genocide Studies; Iberian and Latin American Studies; Lewis Carroll and Alice in Wonderland; Lion Feuchtwanger and the European exiles of the 20th century in Southern California; Natural History; Southern California Regional History; and USC history. This provides USC faculty, students and staff, and others outside the university community the opportunity to explore our unique primary source collections for their research and creative projects. (USC, 2023).

In my interpretation of the mission statement, the mission seeks to sustain and expand access to Special Collections materials for USC faculty, staff, students, and researchers outside the university. Therefore, this internship is relevant in which I will contribute to expanding access to uncatalogued rare materials. In terms of sustaining access, I did not contribute to that. However, Derek assigned readings to give me insight into other academic library institutions' sustainable methods of providing access to researchers. By the end of my training, I gained enriching experiences due to the drafting of the MOU goals and objectives. The drafting process was a brainstorming activity in which I synthesized internship and academic goals. I will know to specify what those MOU goals and objectives are.

**MOU goal/objective: Recognizes the different handling and security needs of diverse materials.** The site supervisor and the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Competencies for Special Collections Professionals inspired this goal. Mr. Meneses indicated in his internship posting that the goal is a skill that he wants the Rare Books and Assessment intern to learn. Therefore, I referred to the post when developing the MOU goal/objective. Both Mr.

Meneses and I agreed on this goal. In addition, I noticed it was similar to a professional competency listed by ACRL. Accordingly, it confirmed that it is a goal relevant to add to the MOU. To carry out this goal, I read and watched readings and videos (provided by Mr. Meneses) to proficiently learn how to handle USC's Special Collections' rare materials.

**MOU goal/objective: Identifies materials, in all formats, appropriate for a special collection, based on criteria documented in institutional collection development policies, and based on the institution's mission.** The goal was borrowed from ACRL's *Competencies for Special Collections Professionals*, which the site supervisor and I agreed to add to the MOU. I engaged with zines, books, and palimpsests, assessed the characteristics of each, and recorded their values on spreadsheets.<sup>1</sup> In this assessment process, it was valuable to note these characteristics because they will be given to the site supervisor to view. Then he will determine if USC should keep and catalog the material. To track the progress of this goal, my site supervisor and I held weekly informal reflection discussions.

**MOU goal/objective: Implement the principles and methodologies of collection development.** The goal was borrowed from ACRL and the site supervisor, which the site supervisor and I agreed upon. Both described similar professional skills. Hence, they were combined and simplified. To achieve this goal, I read about the value of provenance and how it relates to special collections from readings the site supervisor provided. I learned that provenance indicators include first printings, first editions, bookplates, stamps, labels, and other ownership labels found on the book's cover interior. In a reflection conversation with Mr. Meneses, I understood that the principles of provenance are relevant to collection development in

---

<sup>1</sup> Huynh, L. (2023). *USC special collections internship working doc summer 2023* [Google Sheets]. [https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1l09ticrXyTc3qc7vhR\\_kQ6TP6O3qPk\\_k\\_s\\_mG7fNH1M/edit#gid=1105890072](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1l09ticrXyTc3qc7vhR_kQ6TP6O3qPk_k_s_mG7fNH1M/edit#gid=1105890072)

that it relates to expanding access to these original materials to library users. He confirmed my comprehension of provenance during our informal check-ins.

**MOU goal/objective: Implement preservation assessment activities within a collection development and management program.** The goal stemmed from ACRL and the site supervisor's internship posting and was agreed upon between the site supervisor and me. Mr. Meneses informed me of readings and videos to learn from about preservation implementation. During this internship, I came upon monographs that needed preservation support. Preservation needs included securely fastened cotton strings to wrap monography with deteriorated hardcovers, sealed plastic bags for paperbacks, and acid-free envelopes for monographs made with sensitive chemical properties. Both the site supervisor and I would review my preservation implementations during reflection meetings.

**MOU goal/objective: Promotes the use of special collections through a variety of outreach and advocacy methods; is committed to integrating special collections into broader institutional and community environments through collaboration, outreach, and infrastructure development.** The goal was borrowed from ACRL, which the site supervisor and I agreed upon. I produced outreach drafts of two social media posts to achieve this goal. My process included discovering fascinating rare materials, capturing them by photographing and recording them, researching the monographs featured, drafting a caption, and then sharing them with the site supervisor. Mr. Meneses reviewed the drafts and said they appeared great. He will create social media posts when he is ready.

**Evidence for the MOU Goals and Objectives**

The weekly papers provided evidence of how I achieved the MOU goals, and it was through the selection of competencies from a professional library institution, which the site supervisor and I agreed upon. They reflected what I observed and contributed to my professional learning. Recording and describing the internship activities was a brainstorming method to remind me of the established goals, and it motivated me to review my weekly learnings with my site supervisor to confirm my newly gained knowledge. I will share how I achieved those goals.

In understanding the handling and security care of rare materials, I gained knowledge from relevant readings, watching videos, and hands-on training. From the learnings and practice, I used book pillows, cotton-weighted snakes, and cotton gloves to adhere to the delicateness of the rare materials. I learned that to avoid the snake strings rolling away and covering the page contents, specific placement of the snakes on the pages must be considered (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2022). Another lesson learned is understanding when it is necessary to wear gloves. It is appropriate to wear gloves when the covers of a book leak ink dye when touched (see Appendix A). When there are intentions to turn the pages, the handler should remove their gloves to prevent transferring ink from the gloves to the pages (Robertsons Davies Library, 2021). Mr. Meneses and I would participate in reflection discussions of what I learned from the readings, videos, and hands-on practices to ensure that I fully understood handling skills. In addition, the site supervisor would share the context of why caring for the materials has specific procedures. For example, he shared the reason why to use gloves. It is due to the maturity of the rare material when publishers of the time envisioned an intended aesthetic of the book and dipped the covers in dye.

In gaining the skill to identify relevant rare materials that adhere to USC's Special Collections Policies, I conducted assessments and reviewed them with my site supervisor. For

example, I reviewed a donated collection of uncatalogued Budd Schulberg writings and discovered unedited proofs (advanced publishing copies) of a few of his novels. The unedited proofs are valuable in that they are considered first prints; therefore, they are rare (Regency, 2023). However, further reasons are needed for USC Special Collections to keep it. The site supervisor shared that a substantial indicator is if the material has research value. In other words, if there is a desire from the research or scholarly community to utilize Schulberg's unedited proofs, then USC should hold on to the copy.

To implement the principles and methodologies of collection development, I first learned about the principles of providence and discussed them with my site supervisor. One aspect of providence emphasized during the internship was differentiating the difference between the first edition and first print and how those relate to collection development. First print refers to the first printed material. However, a first edition is a first printed material and then becomes a sellable item. Therefore, not all first prints are for profit purposes Rennicks (2023). The edited proof mentioned prior would be an example. Many of the monographs of the Budd Schulberg collection were not first editions. Therefore, it was easy to state in the spreadsheet and recommend not keeping them.

In implementing preservation assessments, I relied on educational resources and hands-on training to achieve this goal. The site supervisor shared internal document slides and tutorial videos that reviewed how to carry out preservation methods. In addition, I independently found other preservation articles to enhance my learning. One described why molds grow on organic materials such as paper monographs and how to identify them. Molds thrive when the host item is in an environment with high temperature, high relative humidity, and low air (National Archives, 2016). I came across a couple of books with mold and placed them aside to prevent



them from touching other monographs. The preservation protocol was that I separate the items and let my site supervisor know. Another preservation protocol is, if I discovered books with covers coming apart, I was to secure their entirety with cotton strings to prevent further risks of material damage. A warning lesson I learned is not to use rubber bands to protect damaged monographs if the purpose is for long-term security. According to Wahl (2014), rubber bands are for short-term solutions. However, if used long-term, the rubber can dry out or become sticky. The remnants of each result could damage the material even more.

To promote USC Special Collections through outreach methods, I compiled pictures and videos of fascinating rare materials I took, and a written draft of captions meant for the library's Instagram account. One of the drafts introduced me as a Special Collections intern and described the discovery of The Royal Scroll A: Complete Panorama of Sacred Story, a religious panoramic teaching scroll (see Appendix B). The material was fascinating because of the pop-up religious imagery, self-display stand, and secured, unique case. As it turned out, the catalog entry of the scroll already existed in the USC library database. My goal in the draft was to promote the material through social media. Hopefully, an interested library user or researcher will come across it and want to see the scroll in person.

### **Importance of the MOU Goals and Objectives**

An MOU's purpose is to keep parties accountable to the amendable and mutually beneficial terms they agreed upon (Felix & et al., 2021). MOU components include the named parties, a brief background of the parties, goals/objectives, roles/responsibilities, a timeline to achieve goals, evaluation assessment, and party signatories. It is valuable to view drafting an MOU as mutually beneficial between parties because it is the drive to complete the agreements successfully. An MOU section that supports that motivation to focus most on the goals and objectives. Achieving

the MOU goals and objectives pertain to developing useful Library and Informational Science (LIS) skills compatible with professional job responsibilities. I will discuss how establishing MOUs is relevant to LIS professions and the link to how MOU goals support job skills.

Drafting MOUs are a skillset relevant to the LIS field and, for some LIS professions, a required one. According to Jank et al. (2013), there have been shifts for 21st-century library professionals to participate in collaborative partnerships due to changes in society like economic climates and social behaviors. MOUs are models used to demonstrate collaborative partnerships (Walters & Gordon, 2007). Therefore, the knowledge and practice of crafting one is relevant to strengthen LIS professional skills. Thus, preparing for the internship MOU is an experience I can refer to when I work at a library institution and enter collaborative partnerships.

The internship MOU goals are the direct connection to help the intern gain LIS professional skills. Inspired by ACRL's *Core Competencies for Special Collections Professionals*, the MOU goals facilitated achievable expectations that the site supervisor and I agreed on. According to ACRL (2023), the guidelines, prepared by the Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, ACRL/ALA Task Force, aimed to "define professional practice and to foster a sense of community and common identity among special collections professionals." As I read through the potential competencies to add to my internship MOU, I gained exposure to the professional expectations and scope of work of the special collections field. For the ones I selected, my whole internship experiences came together when my site supervisor would share stories of his professional experiences that aligned with the MOU goals.

### **Summary**

Besides being a library patron, my only experiences with libraries were when volunteering at my local library's bookstore and collaborating with the Chinatown Branch Public Library librarian to host produce distribution series through work. Therefore, assessing books,

such as rare materials, was new territory for me. I had a basic knowledge of assessing materials from completing my archives course through the MMLIS program. However, I wanted to bring confidence to my understanding and expand them through an internship. Thus, I thought the Rare Books and Assessment internship opportunity would be a great fit. This internship was a fruitful and meaningful experience for me because of the design of the LIM 595 course, mentorship led by my site supervisor, and hands-on training; I believe all these elements could benefit future LIS student interns. I will review how the academic course engagement that contributed to the profound learning experiences includes the MOU, weekly papers, and one-to-one meetings with Dr. Miller. In addition, I will discuss how the internship engagement - the internship activities and informal meetings with my site supervisor - impacted my internship learning experience.

Drafting the MOU and reviewing it with my site supervisor was part of the academic course engagement activities that enriched my internship participation. As previously mentioned, the purpose behind an MOU and its formulated goals/objectives guided me to thoughtfully consider the skills and knowledge I wanted to acquire while considering the capacity of the site supervisor to shape my understanding of the professional skills of a special collections librarian. To reiterate, drafting MOUs is relevant to LIS professionals because, according to Jank, et al. (2013), collaborative partnerships are becoming more common in the field. Therefore, MOUs are impactful tools, for the involved parties, in establishing strategic guidelines. Secondly, the ACRL's *Core Competencies for Special Collections Professionals* inspired the MOU goals, which align with typical role and task expectations for a special collections librarian position.

One of the academic course engagement activities valuable to receive a rewarding internship experience were the one-to-one meetings with Dr. Miller. She explained her vision in designing the course was to connect writing with meta-cognitive learning. According to The

Huberman Notes (2021), the benefits of cognitive writing can boost your brain's performance. Results include *becoming a better thinker* (increasing self-expression and knowledge of self and how you inhabit the world), *controlling attention* (anchoring focus on a page), *activating your mind* (through thorough writing), *slows your mind* (to manage your feelings, thoughts, and perceptions in own pace), *recovers working memory* (externalizing internal thoughts kept by an overwhelmed cerebral thinking), *organizes the mind* (externalizing ideas in a formalized structure for logical interpretation), *improves writing clarity* (modify passive understanding to active engagement), *recognizes errors in your thinking* (identify implicit bias, faulty assumptions, fallacies, and irrationality), *progresses creative writing* (diverse viewpoints, alter self-assumptions, and open to new perspectives), *sustain thinking as you age* (consistent writing to prevent cognitive decline), and *promotes lasting change* (what you write now will keep you accountable of your beliefs for the future). Dr. Millers' explanation of applying metacognitive writing to internship experiences helped reaffirm my learnings when I drafted the weekly papers.

The weekly papers were another part of the academic course engagement activities that also influenced my learning experiences during the internship. They were strong examples of cognitive writing described by The Huberman Notes (2021). Of the benefits mentioned that I believe will support my pursual of a LIS career, recovering working memory and sustaining thinking as you age stood out to me. The weekly papers allowed me to recover working memory when I transferred all my newfound knowledge from that week onto writing. The saying "a brain is like a sponge; it absorbs information" is true, but it is notable to consider how the brain processes it, especially if there's loads of new information it must sort. Writing can help organize thoughts through logical processing. For sustaining thinking as you age, the continuation and consistency of the reflections also aided in my cognitive learning. Recalling what I learned

during the week and writing it down is a great method to preserve active memory. It was applicable when friends asked me about what I learned from my internship, and I quickly could recall what I learned. In addition, consistent writing will help me in the long-term when I am in a LIS career position and rely on the cognitive memory that I stored based on my weekly reflections.

Learning about and practicing assessment procedures were part of the internship engagement activities I gained skills in. Assessment is

the process of developing an objective understanding of the state or condition of a thing through observation and measurement. Assessment should be based on systematic, consistent, and purposeful gathering of information/data (metrics) to support successful outcomes, promote continuous improvement, and enable strategic decision making. (Harvard, 2023).

Therefore, there was a need to determine if the items I came across should remain to be kept and processed in the library catalog or discarded. I assessed zines, uncatalogued books, and boxes of donated rare materials and recorded the characteristics of each material as brief descriptions in spreadsheets. My goal was to provide relevant and enough information to inform both the site supervisor and the catalog librarian. Since Mr. Meneses is a Rare Books Librarian, he will use the information to take a closer look at a rare item and determine if it's worthy to add to Special Collections. If so, the catalog librarian will use the spreadsheet to create a catalog entry for the material in the USC library database. The readings the site supervisor shared with me and from our informal, end-of-the-day meetings guided my judgment of assessment procedures.

Another internship engagement activity was the handling and caring of rare materials. According to the Library of Congress (2023), proper care and handling prolongs the life and usability of monographs and is most cost-effective. As mentioned, I came across books with detached book covers or had mold. I tied acid-free cotton strings to securely wrap detached hard coverings or placed ripped ones of paperbacks into sizable plastic bags (see Appendix C). If the cotton strings are inefficient in securing the whole item, I would use an acid-free envelope, or a sizable box would be the alternative. I learned how to use these preservation materials from the video tutorials and readings Mr. Meneses provided. Practicing preservation procedures is valuable to me because the skill of preserving books is one of my career goals. One day I hope to repair books for a living, and these precautions are a good start.

Promoting special collections usage through outreach and advocacy methods is another internship engagement activity that enhanced my internship experience. According to the Society of American Archivists (2023), outreach activities promote the use of the highlighted materials by expanding access to it and improving the awareness of the collection value. The two social media post drafts were examples of outreach. I intended to bring awareness that the religious scrolls exist within the USC library catalog and suggested interested researchers contact Special Collections to book an appointment to view it in person. It was the same idea for the second post. I wanted to bring awareness that USC has a book collection of dried species of algae collected in North America between 1895-1916, and an appointment is required to view the books.

Overall, all the lessons learned from the internship, guided by the LIM 595 course, were a valued experience for me. Thus, it will also be appreciated and relevant for prospective LIS student interns because of all they will learn. One, it is crucial to draft MOUs with the site supervisor to determine gaining skills and can base their goals on the competencies of a

profession they are pursuing. Second, student interns participating in one-to-one meetings with Dr. Miller will give a broader understanding of how to forgo the internship through thoughtful learning. Third, the weekly papers are a form of meta-cognitive writing. Lastly, the internship offers skills to build assessment, handling and caring, and outreaching of rare items belonging to USC Special Collections. It was a splendid internship and internship course that fitted well together and could benefit anyone.

Appendix A



Hands stained with red rot. Photo credit: Katie Daughtry (Chaletzky, 2022)

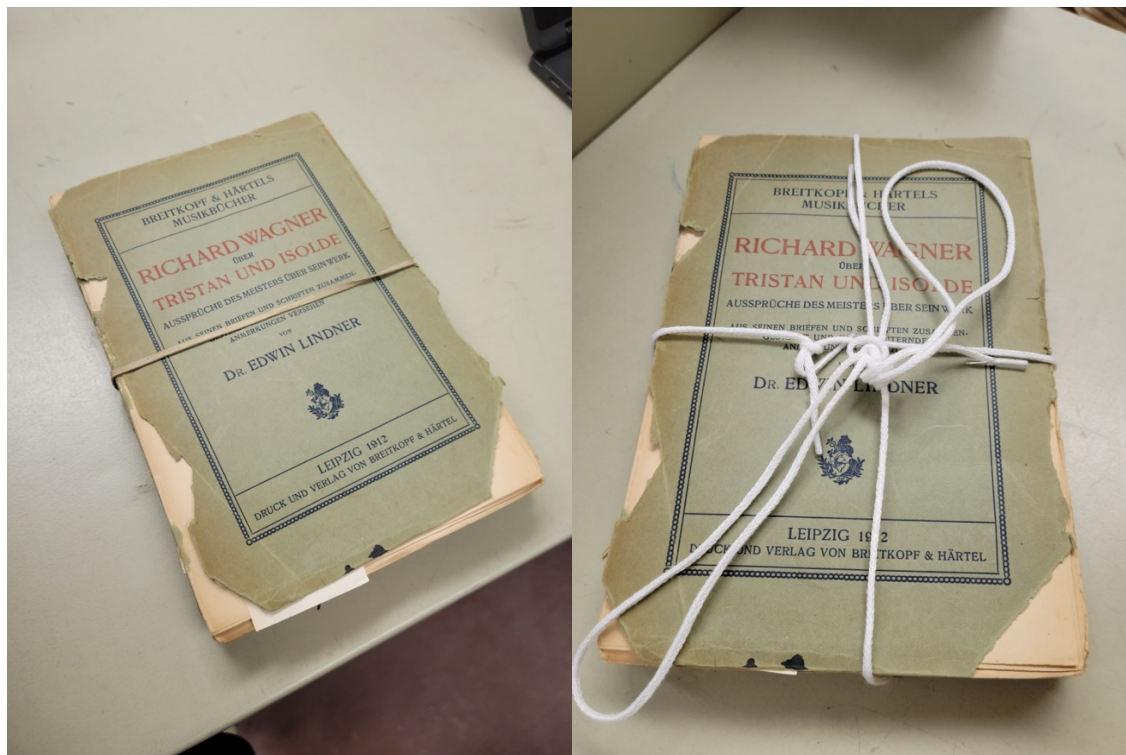


Appendix B



*The Royal Scroll A Complete Panorama of Sacred Story*

## Appendix C



*Replaced rubber band with cotton strings to reduce chemical contamination and reduce deterioration.*

## References

ACRL. (2023, May 23). Guidelines: Competencies for special collections professionals.

<https://www.ala.org/acrl/standards/comp4specollect#pres>

Chaletzky, A. D. (2022). Take that you filthy red rot! Library of Congress.

<https://blogs.loc.gov/preservation/2022/10/red-rot/>

Felix, V., Coffey, K., & Varghese R. (2021). *Facilitating internship partnerships through formal agreements*. NSU Florida.

<https://nsuworks.nova.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1062&context=elthe>

Harvard. (2023). Joint processing guidelines at Harvard Library.

<https://projects.iq.harvard.edu/jointprocessingguidelines/assessment>

Huynh, L. (2023). USC special collections internship working doc summer 2023 [Google Sheets].

[https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1109ticrXyTc3qc7vhR\\_kQ6TP6O3qPk\\_k\\_s\\_mG7fNH1M/edit#gid=1105890072](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1109ticrXyTc3qc7vhR_kQ6TP6O3qPk_k_s_mG7fNH1M/edit#gid=1105890072)

Jank, D. A., Chu, H., & Koenig, M. E. (2013). Mergers, collaborations, alliances, and partnerships in LIS education. In *Advances in Librarianship* (Vol. 36, pp. 185–222).

Emerald Group Publishing Limited. [https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830(2013)0000036010)

[2830\(2013\)0000036010](https://doi.org/10.1108/S0065-2830(2013)0000036010)

Library of Congress (2023). Care, handling, and storage of books.

<https://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/books.html>

National Archives. (15 Aug 2016). Mold Damage.

<https://www.archives.gov/preservation/holdings-maintenance/mold.html>

Pearson, D. (2019). Provenance research in book history: A handbook. Bodleian Library  
*University of Oxford*.

Rennicks, R. (2023, May 22). Identifying first editions. Antiquarian Booksellers Association of  
America. <https://www.abaa.org/blog/post/identifying-first-editions>

Regency (2023). How to identify a first edition book – It's not so easy!

<https://www.regencyantiquebooks.com/blog/first-edition/>

Robertsons Davies Library (2021, September 30). How to handle rare books in the library  
[Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6DJ0PIIPIMM>

Society of American Archivists. (2023). *Outreach*.

<https://dictionary.archivists.org/entry/outreach.html>

The Huberman Notes. (Oct. 14, 2021). *Why write? The cognitive benefits of writing*. Medium.  
<https://medium.com/@henrik.moe.eriksen/why-write-the-cognitive-benefits-of-writing-202a73ec458b>

University of Southern California. (2023). Special Collections.

<https://libraries.usc.edu/locations/special-collections>

Victoria and Albert Museum. (2022, September 27). ASMR at the Museum | Library experience:  
handling and care of precious books | V&A [Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ez3hPtjwvs&t=85s>

Wahl, C. (28, October 2014). Banding together with rubber bands. Iowa State University.

<https://parkslibrarypreservation.wordpress.com/2014/10/28/banding-together-with-rubber-bands/>

Walters, C. M., & Gordon, E. A. V. (2007). *Get it in writing: MOUs and library/IT partnerships*. Reference Services Review, vol 35 no. 3, pp 388-394.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/00907320710774265>