

Manuscript Collections

Manuscript Collections in the Columbia University Libraries: A Descriptive List. New York: Columbia University Libraries, 1959. 109p. Paper. \$3.50.

Descriptive lists of manuscript collections are of utmost value to scholars and librarians, and we have too few of them. The collections at Columbia University, particularly as they have developed during the past ten or fifteen years, must be reckoned with as a force among the great repositories of manuscripts in the United States. This list, compiled by Columbia staff members under the direction of Mr. Roland Baughman, head of special collections, fills a great need; it is economical in entry but informative to a commendable degree.

The great need will immediately be apparent from an examination of a few of the 294 entries in this catalog. Columbia, strong and growing ever stronger in gifts of distinction from faculty and degree holders, has also pursued an intelligent acquisitions policy in general gift and purchase. The days when the editors of the Columbia Milton wrote to Sotheby to trace the Milton "Letterbook," which had for some years actually been Columbia's property, should now be over.

The approach here is by collection rather than by individual item. Each is described by author or subject, depending on its nature; the extent is indicated by the number of items, boxes, files, or shelves, and gifts and bequests with dates are listed. In addition

there is a descriptive paragraph on the contents of each collection. A seven-page index brings together most but not all of the names mentioned in the text.

A few of the collections, such as the John Jay and Stephen Crane papers and the manuscripts of Herman Wouk, will be known to many librarians, but there are surprises. Letters of Tolstoy, Mme. Curie, Hart Crane, Randolph Bourne, and Otto Rank are here in considerable numbers; also papers of Frances Perkins and Henry A. Wallace, closed to use during the lifetime of the donors. *Columbiana* is strongly represented, from the papers of the first president, Samuel Johnson (1696-1772) to those of Governor DeWitt Clinton, a graduate, and Dean Jacques Barzun. The entry for Columbia's Oral History Research Project is all too brief, considering the scope and uniqueness of these records.

It is unfortunate that Columbia's important Thomas Chatterton notebook in the Phoenix Collection could not have been mentioned in this list. And while the list was being printed the Columbia Class of 1923 presented to the Library the autograph manuscript of Arthur Golding's translation of Aesop's Fables [c. 1590], certainly a worthy addition to a great university library.

Curators of manuscripts will want to keep this list on the shelf with those of the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, the University of Rochester and the William L. Clements Library, and it is good to see that shelf expanding.—*Herbert Cahoon, Curator of Autograph Manuscripts, The Pierpont Morgan Library.*

Comment

Scientists and Information

The March 1959 issue of *CRL* reviewed an unpublished pilot study report¹ for which I carried the major responsibility. I find the work, on the whole, accurately described and unfavorably evaluated. Without attempting to catalog my many agreements

¹"The Flow of Information Among Scientists: Problems, Opportunities, and Research Questions." Prepared by the Bureau of Applied Social Research, Columbia University, 1958 (mimeographed).

and few disagreements with the review, I would like to take issue with one particular charge which is characteristic of an understandably common confusion: the confusion between a poll and an interpretive statistical analysis of data secured by interview. The reviewer says: ". . . this type of approach . . . attempts to derive reliable data from the consensus of a group that does not include specialists in the field in which they are being queried. This, like asking visit-