

## Special Collections and Archives Department

**Overview:** The Special Collections and Archives (Spec) department supports stakeholder access to unique and rare materials that are crucial to studying the history of the university, the state, and the region. A significant portion of Spec's holdings are not duplicated anywhere else in the world, and the archives are curated to serve the needs of students, faculty, and the community. Users of Spec holdings apply their findings to scholarly research projects, industry-driven inquiries, university storytelling efforts, personal or family studies, and more.

### Library KPIs:

#### Primary Responsibility

- Special Collections and Archives
  - Fall = Aug. 15 to Dec. 31, 2024; Spring = Jan. 1 to June 11, 2025

	FALL	SPRING
# of extant finding aids	1,274	1,352
Newly created finding aids	70	78 <sup>1</sup>
Modified finding aids	14	43 <sup>2</sup>
# of visits to Archives West	10,243	11,872
# of patron interactions	105	164
University/non-university	32/73	46/118
# of linear feet added through new accessions	98.75	206
# of GB added to digital archive drive	0.11	3.76**
# of linear feet currently in use	Not yet avail*	Not yet avail*
# of linear feet vacant for future use	Not yet avail*	Not yet avail*

*\*We are working to get better starting measurements of our space so we can more thoroughly report on this in the future*

*\*\*Not included is 167MB of data captured from U of I web properties using Archivelt*

#### Relevant

- Digital Collections
- Exhibits
- Fellowships
- Instruction
- Research and Reference Assistance
- Workshops and Presentations

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<sup>1</sup> Total Spring Extant FAs minus Fall Extant FAs

<sup>2</sup> Total number of modified FAs from period, minus # of newly created FAs

## Stats to Reference

[Accessions Aug24-June25.xltx](#)

[SpecPatronInteractions\\_Aug24-June25.xlsx](#)

[Finding Aids Modified\\_Aug24-June25.csv](#)

[AW Views\\_Aug24-June25.xls](#)

## Objectives (includes timebound goals and projects):

### 1. Curate collections that are unique and useful to patrons

- **Why:** Patrons to Spec are best served by collections that are thoughtfully arranged, are related to the department's collecting priorities, and are comprised of materials that are not redundant to other repositories
- **How:** Bring intentionality to each step of the curatorial process – from donation acceptance to weeding to arrangement; cultivate donations of materials that are unique and compliment other holdings in the archives; use patron feedback and collection usage data to make informed choices about what to collect in the future
- **Success looks like:** Developing a more detailed scope of collections that empowers members of Spec to make decisions during processing that support departmental, Library, and university priorities; the ability to connect patron inquiries to relevant collection resources in Spec
- **Fall Update:** Over the fall semester, Spec acquired several notable collections as well as a broad variety of materials that add to the strengths of our archive. The Kolln book collection, that consisted of more than 1,000 volumes, is a remarkable assemblage of books written by and about American women. For scholars of women's history, it will be a significant asset once fully catalogued. We partnered with the National Forest Service to save nearly 10,000 historic images from the Kooskia Ranger Station from destruction. Several extension offices have asked us to take possession of important records related to 4-H and other programs organized through the University of Idaho. We added almost 100 linear feet in new accessions between Aug. 15 and the end of December.
- **Spring Update:** Our department continued to add meaningful collections to the Library archives throughout the semester. One major focus of our efforts was gathering materials from offices that were forced to close in January due to changing state rules around diversity programs. Both physical and digital materials were gathered from now-shuttered offices like the Women's Center and the Office of Multicultural Affairs. Another time-sensitive collecting initiative involved archiving U of I web properties that are likely to be cut from the University's website during a forthcoming redesign. The Library purchased a subscription to Archivelt in order to document webpages quickly and securely. Between December and June, Rebecca archived 167MB of data. The process for turning that

material into accessible public-facing items is under development. Most of our collecting in Spring '25 was in service to documenting University history.

2. Make collections easy to find and use

- **Why:** Our work is only meaningful when patrons can engage with it. Barriers to accessing archival information should be dismantled where possible.
- **How:** Invest time and energy into processing collections with robust finding aids, then sharing those via Archives West; commitment to good customer service and helping patrons to the best of our abilities; collaborate with colleagues across the Library to think creatively about expanding digital access to archival materials
- **Success looks like:** Processing all new accessions measuring less than 3 cubic feet before shelving; devote student staff and regular staff time to processing backlog accessions; publishing new finding aids and making updates to existing finding aids; working closely with the Digital Collections Team to make Spec materials available online
- **Fall Update:** We continue to make significant progress on processing our backlogged material. The majority of recent donations have been processed quickly, and at least one large legacy donation was finally cataloged in the fall. A major benefit of processing older accessions is the reduction in size of their footprint. The Lauren Fins donation, which was originally acquired in 2008 and totaled more than 40 boxes was reduced by nearly 50%. Over the course of the semester 70 new finding aids were added, representing newly accessible material, and another 14 were updated for increased usability. A major effort this fall involved creating finding aids for book collections that were otherwise absent from Archives West, the platform we are most often directing patrons to use.
- **Spring Update:** During the spring, with the help of student workers and a fully staffed department, we added 78 more finding aids to Archives West and updated more than 40 more. Many of those new finding aids reflected very recently acquired materials. We are making good progress on decreasing lag time between donation acceptance and public access. A few examples of complex donations that were quickly processed include a collection of more than 1,000 political campaign buttons as well as a large set of letters belonging to a Vandal alumnus (MA2025-03/MG 660 and MA2025-15/MG666, respectively).

3. Demonstrate the importance of archiving and the relevance of our collections

- **Why:** Potential users of the archive are more likely to engage with materials if they understand their importance and the basic principles of archiving (a.k.a. *archival intelligence*)

- **How:** Offer instruction for students and community members; participate in workshops both on and off campus; create displays using archival materials; publish writing in public-facing mediums about archiving or archival materials in our collection
- **Success looks like:** Build and maintain relationships with faculty who integrate archival instruction into their course; pursue outreach opportunities to connect with the campus community and beyond; develop topical displays and write articles that highlight parts of our collections
- **Fall Update:** We created two new displays during the fall to highlight archival material – one on the Library’s 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and one in the University house. We once again provided printed materials for the university’s Veterans Day dinner. Four more pieces were submitted to the *Moscow-Pullman Daily News* for their “Nearby History” column. The ETIL workshops led by Dulce and Kelley both highlighted the importance of archival material, and a Graduate Student Essentials workshop also focused on archival resources. There were 6 classroom instruction sessions offered.
- **Spring Update:** In a variety of ways, faculty and staff in Spec promoted the value of the Library’s special collections and more broadly the relevance of historical primary sources. ETIL workshops led by all three of the department’s faculty focused on archival or primary source topics. Six classroom instruction sessions touched students in the History, English, and Math departments. Another four profiles of U of I archival material were carried by the local newspaper. Ten new posts were added to the *Harvester* blog. The department collaborated with the Lionel Hampton Jazz Festival for a display of materials belonging to Leonard Feather, located on the Library’s second floor. Dulce took on leadership roles in two interdisciplinary efforts – one to see the Moscow campus designated on the NRHP and one to coordinate America250 commemorations at the university. Both opportunities will provide venues to highlight the Library’s unique historical collections. Lastly, the sudden closure of long-standing campus offices brought the value of historic records to the forefront of many people’s minds. It was beneficial that Spec had a standing relationship with some of those offices, and a reputation for good work that made it easy to connect with those who had not interacted with our office in the past.

**Additional Reflection:** Objective 1 calls for us to “use patron feedback and collection usage data to make informed choices about what to collect in the future,” while Objective 2 calls for a “commitment to good customer service and helping patrons to the best of our abilities.” In service to these two objectives, we used AI to mine the data we collect in our Patron Support Report form. Spec faculty and staff use the form to report on their interactions with patrons, and the Reading Room interactions our student staff have are input into the form as well.

Here is comprehensive analysis: [AI Analysis of Patron Interactions.docx](#)

The key takeaways that are most useful to consider moving into the next year are as follows.

- **Metadata accuracy:** the highly varied, user-supplied collection labels argue for tightening controlled vocabulary in the inquiry form (auto-suggest or drop-downs) to reduce ambiguity.
- **Outreach:** with scholarly researchers, genealogists, and students comprising most activity, tailored online guides for those segments could reduce reference e-mail volume and speed triage.

**Final Outcomes:** The biggest measurable achievements of the Spec department over the last year include the number of new finding aids added to Archives West, the number of new donations we accepted and processed, and the number of patrons we served with a wide variety of needs. Important efforts were made to better organize our archival storage so that like materials were housed together. Student staff were trained and managed to increase our processing productivity as well as maintain robust public hours in the Reading Room. New investments in digital archiving allowed for important acquisitions and the ability to respond quickly to the needs of campus partners.

The most important achievement of the department, however, is more difficult to measure. As a group of faculty and staff, we have developed strong working relationships that support collaboration and collegiality. There is open communication which makes problem solving not just routine but enjoyable. The trust and respect that is being built in Spec makes it easier to tackle long-standing challenges and approach projects with enthusiasm and a plan.

**Challenges and Opportunities for Next Year:** A recent report from the state's insurance provider outlined some significant changes that need to be made to our physical storage spaces within the next several months. This will take teamwork, both to find a solution to the identified problems and physically because of the volume of shifting that will need to take place. Space – how much we have, how we use it, and how we can augment it to make it safer for our collections – continues to be one of the biggest challenges we face in Spec.

A great deal of work has been completed over the last year to establish how we preserve and access digital archival material, and that should be counted as an accomplishment. As we wrap up our second year of having a full-time Digital Archivist (and Rebecca marks one year on the job), we have opportunities to refine our collecting and management protocols for born-digital materials. We also have an obligation to consider how to integrate AI tools into our department's work. Having a representative on the Library's AI working group/team will help us meet that obligation.

**Link to [Annual Objectives 2025-26](#)** *(in progress)*

**Unit/Team Metrics:**

- # of extant finding aids
  - Fall (Aug. 15-Dec.31): 1,274
  - Spring (Jan. 1-June 11): 1,352
- # of finding aids added or updated
  - Fall: 84
  - Spring: 121
- # of patron interactions (see Reference and Research Assistance)
  - Fall: 103
  - Spring: 164
- # of visits to digital assets (see Web Properties)
  - <https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/44b06426-d596-4e51-9d5a-81c1ab7bc641>
  - Archives West views:
    - Fall: 10,243
    - Spring: 11,872
- # of displays created and exhibited within building (see Physical Spaces)
  - Fall: 1 – “Foundations for Learning: Reflecting on University of Idaho’s Historic Campus”
  - Spring: 1 - “Leonard Feather: Legend of Jazz,” partnership with Jazz Fest
- # of displays created and exhibited outside building (see Physical Spaces)
  - Fall: 1 – University House display on alumni veterans
- # of exhibits hosted (see Physical Spaces)
  - Fall: 1 – Smokey Bear paintings
- # of workshops offered (see Workshops and Presentations)
  - Fall: 5 – Exploring the Information Landscape, Kelley x2 and Dulce x2; UI New Employee Orientation presentation on history of university
  - Spring: 7 - Exploring the Information Landscape, Kelley, Rebecca, and Dulce x2; UI New Employee Orientation presentation on history of university
- # of classroom instruction sessions offered (see Instruction)
  - Fall: 6
  - Spring: 6

**Membership:**

- Dulce Kersting-Lark, Department Head
- Kelley Moulton
- Rebecca Hastings
- Ariana Burns
- Zoe Stave (Beginning Jan. 2025)

- ~~Erin Gestani~~ (Until Sep. 2024)

**Reporting to:**

- Ben Hunter, Dean