



Creating a Popular Romance Collection in an Academic Library

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Abstract: Over the past few decades, there has been a growing critical mass of scholarly interest in the study of popular romance fiction as a literary form in its own right. While much of the scholarship is available in academic libraries, few of the actual romance novels are. In response to curricular and faculty demand, two librarians decided to start a collection of popular romance novels at their academic library. This article discusses their rationale, methods, and process in creating the collection. Future directions and recommendations for other libraries are also given.

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Jen Stevens is the Humanities Liaison Librarian at George Mason University where she works with the English and Communication Departments, as well as the Women and Gender Studies Program. She holds an MA in English from the University of Colorado and an MLIS from the University of Texas. Jen has published articles on literary studies that range from J.R.R. Tolkien to e-zines, and is the co-author (along with Dorothea Salo) of *Fantasy Authors: A Research Guide*. She was also the series editor for Library Unlimited's Author Research Series for several volumes.

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Introduction

“Who will we be studying in 100 years?”

– question from the audience at the opening keynote panel presentation at the 2013 Popular Romance Author Symposium (Princeton University, October 24, 2013)

Over the past few decades, there has been a growing critical mass of scholarly interest in the study of popular romance as a literary form in its own right. Scholars such as Pamela Regis, Laura Vivanco, Sarah S. G. Frantz, and Eric Selinger, among many others, have begun to publish scholarly and/or literary criticism of popular romance novels in the last two decades. Other indications include the establishment of the *Journal of Popular Romance Studies*, several symposiums, the Popular Romance Project, and the fact that schools and universities such as the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, DePaul University, and George Mason University have begun offering courses that focus and/or incorporate popular romance novels (“Teaching Popular Romance”).

As Crystal Goldman argues in her 2012 article “Love in the Stacks: Popular Romance Collection Development in Academic Libraries,” access to research materials is vital for romance scholars and students:

With no cohesive vision for which materials to collect and little justification for fiscally supporting popular romance studies materials, vital monographs, papers, and articles are not being preserved by libraries for future researchers’ use and may, indeed be lost from the record entirely (2).

Although Goldman does mention primary sources, her main focus is on secondary materials, i.e. materials about romance and related fields, and the issues that have previously prevented many academic libraries from systematically collecting them. Goldman also identified a list of 37 core secondary sources for popular romance scholarship (17-18). Secondary materials are definitely important, but the systematic collection of primary sources, the actual popular romance novels and short stories themselves, is vital.

Identification of Need

Academic libraries have long had an uneven record of collecting so-called popular contemporary literature. Although historical collections of items such as dime novels are not uncommon, popular contemporary literature is often not collected until it is, so to speak, no longer contemporary. Academic libraries that do collect it have often done so as part of so-called “leisure reading collections.” As Pauline Dewan notes, leisure reading collections have been making a comeback in recent years:

Three recent trends in university and college libraries have prompted academic libraries to rethink their ideas about popular literature collections....Trend towards user-focused libraries, revitalization of the library as place, and promotion of literacy and lifelong reading (45).

These are all worthy goals and purposes, but they do not necessarily align with the systematic collection and preservation of primary source materials. Leisure reading collections are often leased from companies such as McNaughton. Based on the library's desired profile, McNaughton sends a selection of books that the library may choose to purchase at the end of the lease period. Materials retained from such collections can be a source for popular fiction such as romance, but as in the University Libraries' case, this often results in spotty collections – a title from one author's series, two from another, and so forth. Moreover, materials that might work best for a leisure reading collection (and attract student attention) may not necessarily be those desired by future researchers.

As more colleges and universities begin to offer popular literature courses, there are indications that some academic libraries are starting to change or adapt their practices. In a 2007 exploratory study, Justine Alsop found that a majority of her literature librarian survey respondents did collect some popular contemporary literature. In addition to student "need" for light reading, her respondents cited reasons such as supporting the curriculum (most reported that their institutions offered courses in popular fiction), faculty requests, and preserving primary sources for future scholarly study (Alsop 583). However, there were still many barriers, including "budgetary constraints, the expectation of having 'canonical authors' in the collection, and lack of demand," as well as an expectation that public libraries, rather than academic libraries, should be the ones collecting contemporary fiction (Alsop 583).

Lack of space and money are very real issues for many academic libraries, especially given the vast amount of popular fiction that is published. According to the Romance Writers of America, the romance genre alone generates 1.08 billion dollars in sales from over 9,000 titles in 2013 ("Industry Statistics"; Bosman). In a 1987 book chapter, Charles W. Brownson suggested one way of dealing with the mass influx of popular contemporary fiction for those collecting at a "Research Support" level:

Selection criteria are seldom based on the quality of the literature, so that statistical methods can be used. Wanting a sample of romances, for example, which the industry produces at the rate of about four a day, one might decide to buy those published on the first day of every month. They are alike, after all (or rather, their differences are statistical) (105).

Leaving aside the question of whether romance novels really are all alike, buying materials in this fashion, while it might result in good representation of the romance genre as a whole, would make it very difficult for researchers to study individual authors or even subgenres such as paranormal romance since there would be little continuity aside from date of publication.

However, leaving popular romance collecting to public libraries is not necessarily the best alternative. Public libraries have very different missions than do academic libraries. Aside from public library systems that include research branches such as the New

York Public Library, most public libraries do not collect for the long term needs of researchers and students, but instead, focus on the present reading interests of the populations that they serve. Collection development policies of public libraries should be guided by local reading tastes that may favor certain authors and sub-genres versus others. In Amy Funderburk's 2004 Masters' paper reviewing the number of award winning romance novels in North Carolina public libraries, she found that the relatively small number of reviews in standard library review sources of award winning popular romance novels resulted in a smaller number of titles being collected compared to the other popular fiction genres (19). Many standard library review sources, such as *Library Journal*, only publish popular romance on a quarterly basis. In 2008, the American Library Association publication *Reference and User Services* did publish an article on collecting romance genre fiction in public libraries, but it only listed five titles per romance sub-genre (Wyatt et al. 120).

In public libraries, as titles become less popular or simply wear out, they are often withdrawn in order to make room for newer titles. Again, the role of most public libraries is not to preserve items, but rather, focus on current patron needs. In fact, the growing adoption of e-book databases such as Overdrive makes it even less likely that public libraries will be able to offer long term preservation of romance fiction since those e-book database titles are often leased rather than owned. In the early 1990s, collection development in public libraries underwent a shift from collecting "the best" to a collection philosophy of "give them what they want," as articulated by Charles Robinson, the director of Baltimore County Public Library system. Robinson's philosophy encouraged public libraries to purchase multiple copies of popular titles, fiction or non-fiction, to meet the current reading needs of the county library's patrons. These multiple copies would be kept until they wore out or the library needed the space for the "next" hot titles. The expectation that public libraries will have research-worthy collections of popular romance novels just is not realistic in these days of shrinking budgets, public demand, and a now longstanding collection development philosophy (Baltimore County Public Library).

There are a few academic libraries that do systematically collect popular romance materials, mostly through their special collections. A prime example is the Browne Popular Culture Library at Bowling Green State University, which currently holds over 10,000 volumes of category romance series. Another is the University of Melbourne Library in Australia, which began collecting romance novels as early as 1997, with an emphasis on authors from Australia and New Zealand. One of the arguments used for establishing the collection at the University of Melbourne Library was that other Australian libraries were already collecting other genres of popular fiction (Flesch 120). Other schools, such as the University of Wisconsin, have focused on specific sub-genres such as nurse romances. These collections have an immense value in regards to long-term preservation of these materials. However, all three of these collections are housed in their respective library's Special Collections, which means that the materials can only be used on site. While locating these materials in Special Collections may be desirable from a preservation standpoint (especially in the case of mass market paperbacks), it does limit student and researcher access. Moreover, these collections are set apart from the "main" circulating literature and literary criticism collections.

Circulating collections provide greater physical access for faculty and students as well as researchers and students at other institutions who have Interlibrary Loan access.

They can also enhance access to related secondary materials since most academic libraries in the United States use the LC (Library of Congress) classification system, which results in books both by and about a given author being shelved together.

The authors of this article would argue that there is value in systematically collecting popular romance fiction for circulating academic library collections. As no established collection development model exists specifically for this type of collection, the authors created a strategy using other genre collections such as science fiction as a model, and their skills as established liaison librarians in crafting the collection. Stevens' long term experience as the English Liaison Librarian and Sheehan's knowledge of the popular romance genre as both a reader and researcher (she had previously published *Romance Authors: A Research Guide*, which focused on primary and secondary sources for popular romance writers) was a unique combination that allowed this collection to be created in a relatively short time. In this article, the authors will describe how they established a popular romance collection at George Mason University Libraries, as well as discuss various issues that were encountered.

Process of Creating the Collection

George Mason University is a highly diverse, state-funded, growing institution, and has recently become one of the largest universities in the state of Virginia. The University Libraries encompass four libraries, in addition to a separately managed Law Library. Two of the libraries are on the large Fairfax Campus while the other two libraries serve the research and service needs of our distributed campuses. The Fenwick Library is the largest library and is generally considered the main research library of the University. The majority of the 1.27 million volume collection, including most of the literature and literary criticism books, is located in Fenwick Library.

Like many academic libraries, the University Libraries had sporadically collected romance novels, mostly through a leased McNaughton collection, gifts, and faculty requests. It had also collected secondary sources to support the courses in the English Department and other programs, and had 78 per cent of the core popular romance scholarship titles identified by Goldman (Goldman 17-18).

Sheehan and Stevens decided to begin systematically collecting popular romance novels at George Mason University in response to several campus developments. The first was an English department class: "Why Women Read Romance Novels," created by Professor Jessica Matthews. Matthews created the course partly in response to the degree and depth of engagement that she observed on web-based forums devoted to reader discussion of popular romance novels (Ramage). First offered in 2011, it was successful enough to be offered again in 2013, with 38 students registered (George Mason University). In addition, Professor Matthews regularly teaches a "Marriage Plots" class that also incorporates several popular romance novels as part of the class' required readings.

The second was the creation of the Popular Romance Project web portal, hosted by the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media at George Mason University with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. Part of the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media's mission is to "encourage popular participation in

presenting and preserving the past” in a digital environment (Roy Rosenzweig Center). In addition to the documentary film *Love Between the Covers*, the Popular Romance Project included a symposium hosted by the Library of Congress Center for the Book. Given that the Library of Congress is ready to highlight popular romance novels, academic libraries now have an opportunity to acquire resources that may have been previously considered fringe or not appropriate for scholarly study.

After learning about the Popular Romance Project, Sheehan contacted the coordinators and arranged to become a blogger for the site. One of the faculty members involved with the Popular Romance Project turned out to be Jessica Matthews. Over the summer of 2013, Sheehan met with Professor Matthews to discuss ways the University Libraries could support her research and teaching and whether there were specific popular romance titles that the University Libraries should acquire. As a result Sheehan asked Stevens to order several titles by Diana Gabaldon, an author Matthews studies.

Based on these developments, Sheehan and Stevens began discussing how they might best support faculty and students by acquiring a representative sample of additional popular romance titles, with the knowledge that this could never be a truly comprehensive collection. They decided early on that they wanted it to be a “teaching collection” that students and faculty could readily access and check out. Because of the way that Library of Congress Classification (the schema used by most academic libraries) treats literary materials, both the primary and secondary sources for a given author (i.e. books by and about Georgette Heyer) would be shelved together, which would facilitate browsing for secondary sources. Although anthologies with items by multiple authors may be shelved separately, libraries using Library of Congress classification generally shelve literary works by single authors by language, historical period, and then alphabetically by the author’s name, with the aim of keeping all of the literary works by a given author together, regardless of their genre (Literature Classification). The Library of Congress classification does have a specific subject heading, Love Stories, for any titles that involve romantic themes or stories, but that subject heading does not determine the shelving position – it facilitates finding the information in the catalog.

Sheehan and Stevens also decided that the materials should be accessible via Interlibrary Loan in order to facilitate access to students and researchers at other institutions. Libraries can choose to limit Interlibrary Loan access to materials in order to prevent loss; few if any Special Collection materials tend to be accessible via Interlibrary Loan.

After Sheehan and Stevens had a preliminary discussion with the Head of Collection Development, Sheehan wrote and submitted a formal proposal (see Appendix 1). This proposal included the following elements:

- rationale (the academic programs, curricula, and faculty that would be served)
- parameters (types of materials that would be collected)
- who would make the selections and have control of the funds
- the criteria used to select materials
- materials and formats that would be excluded.

The proposal was accepted and a temporary fund was created that would allow both Sheehan and Stevens to purchase romance novels for fiscal year 2013/2014. Although

Stevens, as the English librarian, would have signing authority after the first year, selections would continue to be made by both Sheehan and Stevens. This way, the continued growth of the collection would not be dependent on one librarian. Instead of being a short term “special project,” it would become a standard part of the collection development process for literature. Once the proposal was approved by the University Libraries administration and Sheehan and Stevens were given a budget, they began the selection process.

As with literature as a whole, the question of canon is a vexed one for popular romance. The flurry of blogs and twitter posts in response to Noah Berlatsky’s *Salon* article about the need for a popular romance “canon” is a wonderful example of the difficulty of establishing a one-size fits all collection of popular romance novels (Berlatsky; Crutcher; Selinger). Although this discussion occurred well after the authors’ initial proposal, it exemplifies the types of questions that academic libraries face in selecting in romance and other popular genres. Sheehan and Stevens knew that it would probably be impossible to determine a “single” group of “best” authors for researchers and students, but decided that for the purposes of teaching and research, they wanted a collection that would reflect the historical development of the genre, as well as its range. Judging the quality of writing or story can be very subjective. By using their established knowledge of collection development skills, they anticipated creating a collection that, while not answering the question of canon, will contribute to the ongoing discussion. Sheehan and Stevens also knew this was a long term project, and that purchasing the foundation or historical collection would take many years to accomplish.

Sheehan and Stevens were fortunate, however, to have something of a head start. Since Sheehan’s work on *Romance Authors: A Research Guide* had itself involved selecting a group of authors to include, she had already done quite a bit of research in the area. Updating the resources was easily accomplished and provided the initial list of authors and in many cases identified works that would help demonstrate the variety and changes found in popular romance novels. Another important source was Jessica Matthews’ “Why Women Read Romance” syllabus (Matthews). As part of the proposal, Sheehan and Stevens had determined that the initial purchases for the first several years would focus on the “classics,” which they defined as winners of the RWA Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award. These “classic” novels represent authors and works that made a long term impact on the genre and continue to be highly regarded by readers and writers. These are the authors that helped define the genre for the last 30 years. Likewise, authors who produced current works that made “notable lists” such as the *New York Times* Best Sellers list or *Library Journal’s* “Best Books: Romance” would be collected. In November 2013, the website All About Romance released an updated Top 100 Romances Poll which also helped identify popular titles and specific authors to purchase (Top 100 Romances).

A number of authors overlapped on all the collecting criteria, which suggested places to start. Sheehan and Stevens also decided to focus the collection on individual authors rather than publisher series (i.e. the Harlequin Intrigue or Silhouette Special Edition series), which would help set Mason’s collection apart from what the Bowling Green Browne Popular Culture Library was already doing.

As with almost all other collection development done by academic librarians, reviews from trusted sources played a large role in the decision making process of what to buy. Often times the reviews are written by specialists in the field, such as RWA’s Librarian

of the Year winners, Kristin Ramsdell reviewing for *Library Journal*, and Wendy Crutcher on her own blog, The Misadventures of Super Librarian. Additionally, online resources such as the well regarded Smart Bitches, Trashy Books, Read-A-Romance Month, and the long running All About Romance websites provide non-traditional (for the academic librarian) resources for identifying upcoming authors and reviews for titles.

Diversity of characters is an ongoing concern in what has historically been the white, heteronormative nature of much of popular romance genre. Recently, there have been several efforts, such as the Love in the Margins and the Queer Romance Month websites, that strive to publicize diverse authors and works. As they move forward with the collection, Sheehan and Stevens will continue to monitor the changing nature of the romance genre, including new sub-genres, and will adapt the collection appropriately. Faculty and students research interests at Mason will also help in crafting the collection based on what diverse authors are being studied.

Considering the prolific nature of many popular romance novelists, Sheehan and Stevens decided to vary the collecting levels for various authors – for some authors, collecting would be limited to a well curated selection, while in the case of other authors, their entire body of work, as available, would be included. In some cases, this was decided partly on a pragmatic basis. For instance, authors such as Jayne Ann Krentz and Julia Quinn had recently published new titles that were from a series of connected books, so Sheehan and Stevens decided to purchase all books in those specific series. Jayne Ann Krentz's *Arcane Society* and *Harmony* series titles have the added benefit of encompassing the three current pseudonyms used by Krentz – Jayne Ann Krentz, Amanda Quick, and Jayne Castle. This allowed the University Libraries to readily collect works across a wide variety of romance genres, i.e. romantic suspense, historical, contemporary, futuristic, and paranormal, within one author's body of work.

Format is an ongoing issue. For the foreseeable future, Sheehan and Stevens decided to select items in print format instead of e-books. This decision may seem counterintuitive for a 21st century library, but in the case of popular romance novels, few academic e-book vendors actually include romance in their collections (most academic libraries collect e-books as part of larger databases; libraries may purchase or subscribe to individual titles depending on the vendor and the title). In fact, most of the e-book vendors that include fiction, such as Overdrive, are actually based more in the public library market, and often lease rather than sell their collections. While some academic libraries such as Texas A&M (Clark 147) have experimented with using e-book readers for their circulating collections, the University Libraries have not undertaken such a project. That means that popular romance novels available via Kindle, Nook, or self-published on other electronic formats cannot be collected at this time by the University Libraries. The decision to stick with the print format may be reconsidered as technology changes and the University Libraries updates its collection development policies. For preservation purposes, Sheehan and Stevens also decided to acquire hardbacks instead of paperbacks as much as possible. Although paperbacks may be less expensive to purchase initially, they often ultimately cost more because of binding and/or eventual replacement costs.

These decisions, especially the print-only decision, do have larger ramifications for the University Libraries' ability to collect popular romance genre novels. Many authors and publishers have begun to reissue older (and difficult to find) titles as e-books. Some authors, such as Eileen Dreyer, have even issued titles in e-book format only (i.e. Dreyer's *It*

Begins with a Kiss). In turn, hardbacks can often be more difficult to find than paperbacks, especially once they are out of print. In many cases, there is no hardback edition available since the title was only published in mass market format. Fortunately, many publishers are reissuing major authors' books in hardback.

Informed serendipity also played a role in what authors' works were collected this first year. In a recent *Library Journal's* "Romance Reviews" column by Kristin Ramsdell, Sheehan noted in the "Second Time Around" section that Carla Kelly's *Reforming Lord Ragsdale* was being reissued (Ramsdell). A quick look in the online ordering tool GOBI from YBP Publishing Services identified several titles by Kelly, long out of print, that had been reissued. This allowed the University Libraries to then collect those popular romance titles far more easily. While Carla Kelly was not originally on their "short list" for the first year, Sheehan and Stevens decided that her "classic Regencies" would be a worthy and welcome addition to the collection.

Serendipity also played a role in what titles were purchased by specific authors. If a specific title by a given author was available as a hardcover in the online ordering system GOBI, that title was selected for purchase. For author Loretta Chase, the obvious title collected is the number one ranked book on the All About Romance website, *Lord of Scoundrels*. As *Lord of Scoundrels* is part of a series of connected books, the titles *Lion's Daughter*, *Captives of the Night*, and *The Last Hellion* were also selected for purchase. As that series was checked in GOBI, both titles from Chase's latest series *The Dressmakers*, *Scandal Wears Satin* and *Silk is for Seduction*, were also identified as available in hardcover, albeit in large print format. While that latest series had not initially been a high priority for purchase, the fact that the titles were available as hardcover upgraded its position. The fact that they could be ordered as part of the regular ordering process also meant less work for the Acquisitions department. As the semester unfolded, authors who met the initial criteria and had released new titles, especially in hardcover, were purchased, including Elizabeth Lowell, Jayne Ann Krentz, Debbie Macomber, and Sandra Brown.

The final way that serendipity played a role in building the popular romance novel collection was through gift books. The remainder shelves at local book stores became very useful collecting tools as well. Many popular authors' current but not latest releases can be found on these remainder shelves for under \$5.00 for a hardback book. While this might not be a consistent long-term collection development strategy, it did provide an initial cost effective way to add books to the collection. The books were purchased and then donated to the University Libraries as a gift. Jayne Ann Krentz, J.R. Ward, and Suzanne Brockman's recent but not latest titles were purchased and then added to the collection as gifts. Several Susan Elizabeth Phillips titles were obtained at thrift stores for \$1.00 each in hardcover and then added to the collection as well. Although remainder shelves and thrift stores are non-traditional sources for building an academic library collection, they will likely continue to be utilized in the future as a cost-effective way to add more titles to the collection. Similarly, as word of the collection was shared, fellow librarians and others began asking if their romance novels would be useful for the collection. Nine Kathleen Woodiwiss titles, all hardback, were donated as gift books to the University Libraries by a fellow librarian.

During the period that Sheehan and Stevens were selecting these initial titles, Sheehan contacted another institution that was also building a popular romance collection, the Hoover Library at McDaniel College in Maryland, only 65 miles away from George Mason University. As part of the establishment of the Nora Roberts Center for American

Romance, the Hoover Library received funding to build a collection of popular romance novels. After Sheehan talked to Hoover Library Director Jessame Ferguson, the authors decided to try to avoid duplicate efforts in such a close geographic region. Thus, during the first year of the project, they chose not to purchase materials written by Nora Roberts due to McDaniel's focus in collecting Roberts' works. Although they do plan to eventually collect Nora Roberts' titles, Sheehan and Stevens will probably leave the more exhaustive Roberts collecting to McDaniel. As the collection grows, additional collaboration between the Hoover Library at McDaniel College and the George Mason University Libraries may be appropriate. If other academic libraries choose to collect romance novels, broader collaborative efforts could be useful for avoiding duplication and allowing libraries to collectively acquire a greater number of authors' works. A complete list of authors and titles collected by the George Mason University Libraries during the first year is available in Appendix 2.

One issue that Sheehan and Stevens also wanted to address was bibliographic access. As mentioned earlier, the Library of Congress classification can enhance "browsable" access to related secondary materials. However, since authors are generally shelved by nationality and chronological time period rather than by genre, they can be difficult to browse for, especially in larger collections. Unlike public libraries, there is no "romance" or even "popular genre" section – instead, romance authors may be scattered throughout the literature collection. In order to make it easier for students and faculty to at least find items in the catalog, Sheehan and Stevens requested that their colleagues in Cataloging add the phrase "Popular Romance Novel Collection" as part of the MARC field record, field 710, so that students and faculty would be able to use it as a keyword search string in the catalog.

Future Considerations

Although it is too early to assess the results of the first year efforts via means such as circulation records, faculty and student reactions have been positive. Sheehan and Stevens also plan to monitor Interlibrary Loan request statistics. One title that had been previously purchased prior to establishing a systematic popular romance novel collection has already been quite popular on the Interlibrary Loan circuit. In 2009, while writing *Romance Authors: A Research Guide*, Sheehan had needed to consult Laura London's 1984 *The Windflower*, a title that had long since been out of print. Since it was not available via Interlibrary Loan, Stevens ordered the title for the University Libraries collections as a faculty request. From 2009 through 2013, *The Windflower* was requested 14 times through Interlibrary Loan, with five of the requests coming from college and university libraries. The University Libraries was actually unable to fulfill five of the Interlibrary Loan requests because the title was already checked out. Demand for *The Windflower* may go down in the future since it was re-released in 2014 (RT Book Reviews). However, the large number of Interlibrary Loan requests for *The Windflower* does suggest that there could be interest in the popular romance collection outside of the boundaries of the George Mason University community.

Future steps for the collection include

- Developing a formal collection development policy for the romance collection that includes author selection criteria and preferred formats as part of the overall literature collection development policy. This is important partly for the sake of continuity for future selectors.
- Outreach to faculty and students. This could include an InfoGuide, similar to ones that the Mason Libraries already has for the Juvenile Collection.
- Usage assessment via circulation records and Interlibrary Loan requests. Since this collection is intended to serve the long term needs of future researchers and students, it may take some time to see results.
- Discussion with the University Libraries' Special Collections regarding the possibility of pursuing primary source materials from popular romance authors (i.e. manuscripts, correspondence, and other materials).

For those who would like to start (or help their librarians start) an academic romance collection, here are some suggestions:

- Look at your curriculum and programs. What classes and programs might use or need these materials? What authors and/or sub-genres are they focusing on?
- Assess what you already have. What can you build on? (The University Libraries already had a strong secondary collection with some scattered primary sources).
- Look at Interlibrary Loan requests data. Have many popular romance novels been requested? Is there a larger author or sub-genre pattern that you can identify?
- Identify colleagues and other allies that can help you make a case for establishing a collection.
- Consider what the purpose of the collection would be. What special format issues might come up? Would you allow the titles to be requested via Interlibrary Loan?
- How can you help patrons access the collection? Are there notations that could be added to the catalog records?
- Look to see what other libraries in your area are doing (including public library research branches), and how their efforts might overlap, or, alternately, complement yours.

Conclusion

Many academic libraries are already starting to collect literary scholarship on popular romance novels. This is a significant development. However, only purchasing the scholarship and not the primary texts themselves does a disservice to the researchers and students studying the genre. Imagine a library, for instance, that collected literary scholarship written about Eugene O'Neill, but not *The Iceman Cometh*. Such a situation is currently the case for popular romance at many academic libraries. Although there is a vital place for popular romance Special Collections (just as there is for Eugene O'Neill Special Collections), circulating popular romance collections can also play a vital role in promoting

teaching and scholarship. In effect, it would mean treating popular romance novels like any other literary genre currently in circulating collections. Popular romance would not be the first popular genre to be treated so; over the past several decades, science fiction and other popular genres have slowly become more readily available in libraries as their scholarship has developed. The same should be true for popular romance.

Although it is unlikely that any one research library would have the funds, let alone the space, to comprehensively collect all of the popular romance authors that might be needed by future researchers, libraries can at least collect a limited number of authors based on their own curricular and faculty needs. Alternately, they could choose a few local authors to focus on. Groups of libraries could also work together in a complementary fashion. Doing so will ensure future researchers access and enable future scholarship.

Appendix 1: Popular Romance Novels Collection Development Proposal

To: Head, Collection Development & Preservation

From: Sarah E. Sheehan
Liaison Librarian, College of Health & Human Services

Re: Popular Romance Novels Collection Development Proposal

Date: October 30th, 2013

I propose that the University Libraries collect popular romance novels in a considered and systematic way. As with all genre fiction, the study of popular romance novels has been increasingly recognized as a serious scholarly pursuit. Examples of this, include classes taught at multiple universities, consistent and ongoing programming at the Popular Culture Association conference, a scholarly, peer reviewed, open access journal (*Journal of Popular Romance Studies*), and at least three scholarly symposia held in the last four years.

The English Department currently offers several classes on popular genres including a class on marriage plots and a 200 level survey class on popular romance novels. Professor Jessica Mathews has been very supportive in suggesting titles and is an active scholar studying the popular romance novel genre. As more faculty find popular romance novels a valid area of study, it becomes important that the University Libraries be able to support that research.

In addition, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media in partnership with Library of Congress Center for the Book, the American Library Association and others is sponsoring the Popular Romance Project (<http://popularromanceproject.org/>). The Popular Romance Project will include a feature length film funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, Brandeis University and others, as well as a website supported by the Center for History & New Media. In 2015, the Library of Congress Center for the Book will host an academic symposium on the past and future of the popular romance novel. Moreover, the American Library Association will host a traveling exhibit and a series of programs about the popular romance novel in conjunction with the Library of Congress programming.

Scholarship on the popular romance genre is a growing field and providing the actual romance novels to study the genre is important in moving the scholarship forward. The English Department, the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media, the Cultural Studies Department, and the Women & Gender Studies Department could all use this collection for faculty and student research.

There is an overwhelming amount of popular romance novels published every year, and some of the most popular authors are highly prolific. Using a well-established criteria and focusing on faculty research are steps that can be taken to establish a collection that

provides a good representation of the genre. I would like to propose that I work with Jen Stevens, Humanities Liaison Librarian, in creating collection development criteria in order to build a research appropriate collection of popular romance novels.

Elements of the criteria will include,

- Novels published by American and International romance novel authors from the 20th and 21st century.
- Select novels from all the RWA Nora Roberts Lifetime Achievement Award winners.
- Collecting influential novels listed on the *All About Romance* and *The Romance Reader* Top 100 lists.
- A limited number of category novels. Category novels are the short novels that are written for a specific book line. An example is the Harlequin Romantic Suspense novels will focus much more on mystery and adventure than other Harlequin lines.
- Hardback or trade paper formats are preferred, but novels that are only available in mass market paperback may also be added to the collection.

Appendix 2: Popular Romance Novels Purchased for 2013/2014

Author	Title
Amanda Quick	Second Sight
Jayne Ann Krentz	White Lies
Jayne Ann Krentz	Sizzle and Burn
Amanda Quick	The Third Circle
Jayne Ann Krentz	Running Hot
Amanda Quick	The Perfect Poison
Jayne Ann Krentz	Fired Up
Amanda Quick	Burning Lamp
Jayne Castle	Midnight Crystal
Jayne Ann Krentz	In Too Deep
Amanda Quick	Quicksilver
Jayne Castle	Canyons of the Night
Jayne Ann Krentz	Wildest Dreams
Balogh, Mary	At Last Comes Love
	First Comes Marriage
	Secret Affair
	Seducing an Angel
	Simply Love
	Simply Magic
	Simply Perfect
	Simply Unforgettable
	The Arrangement
	The Escape
	The Proposal
	Then Comes Seduction
Brown, Sandra	Deadline
	Led Astray
	Low Pressure
	Standoff
	Crush
	Envy
	Fat Tuesday
	French Silk
	Not Even for Love
	Where There's Smoke

Chase, Loretta	Captives of the Night
	Last Hellion
	Lion's Daughter
	Lord of Scoundrels
	Scandal Wears Satin
	Silk is for Seduction
Crusie, Jennifer	Agnes and The Hitman
	Anyone But You
	Bet Me
	Charlie All Night
	Crazy for You
	Dogs and Goddesses
	Don't Look Down
	Faking It
	Fast Women
	Getting Rid of Bradley
	Manhunting
	Maybe This Time
	Strange Bedpersons
	Tell Me Lies
	The Cinderella Deal
	The Unfortunate Miss Fortunes
	Trust Me On This
	Welcome to Temptation
	What the Lady Wants
	Wild Ride
Dare, Tessa	Any Duchess Will Do
	Lady by Midnight
	Romancing the Duke: Castles Ever After
	Scandalous, Dissolute, No-Good Mr. Wright
	Twice Tempted by a Rogue
	Week to be Wicked
Kelly, Carla	Carla Kelly's Christmas Collection
	Double Cross
	Enduring Light
	In Love and War: A Collection of Love Stories
	Marian's Christmas Wish

	Miss Billings Treads the Boards
	Miss Grimsley's Oxford Career
	Mrs. Drew Plays Her Hand
	Reforming Lord Ragsdale
	Safe Passage
Lowell, Elizabeth	Autumn Lover
	Blue Smoke and Murder
	Dangerous Refuge
	Death Echo
	Enchanted
	Forbidden
	Innocent as Sin
	Only His
	Only Love
	Only Mine
	Only You
	Pearl Cove
	Untamed
	Winter Fire
Macomber, Debbie	Blossom Street Brides
	Back on Blossom Street
	Christmas Letters
	Christmas Wishes
	Good Yarn
	Hannah's List
	Knitting Diaries
	Shop on Blossom Street
	Starting Now: A Blossom Street Novel
	Summer on Blossom Street
	Susannah's Garden
	Turn in the Road
	Twenty Wishes
Miller, Linda Lael	A Lawman's Christmas
	A McKettrick Christmas
	High Country Bride
	McKettrick's Choice
	McKettrick's Heart
	McKettrick's Luck

	McKettricks of Texas: Austin
	McKettricks of Texas: Garrett
	McKettricks of Texas: Tate
	McKettrick's Pride
	Secondhand Bride
	Sierra's Homecoming
	Shotgun Bride
	The McKettrick Way
	Women of Primrose Creek (anthology)
Phillips, Susan Elizabeth	Ain't She Sweet
	Breathing Room
	Call Me Irresistible
	Dream a Little Dream
	Fancy Pants
	First Lady
	Glitter Baby
	Great Escape
	Heaven, Texas
	Honey Moon
	Hot Shot
	It Had to be You
	Just Imagine
	Kiss an Angel
	Lady Be Good
	Match Me If You Can
	Natural Born Charmer
	Nobody's Baby But Mine
	This Heart of Mind
	What I Did for Love
Putney, Mary Jo	Angel Rogue
	Dancing on the Wind
	One Perfect Rose
	Petals in the Storm
	River of Fire
	Shattered Rainbows
	Thunder and Roses
Quinn, Julia	The Sum of All Kisses

Rogers, Rosemary	Bound by Desire
	Bride for a Night
	Dark Fires
	Lost Love, Last Love
	Savage Desire
	Scoundrel's Honor
	Sweet Savage Love
	Wicked Loving Lies
Singh, Nalini	Angel's Flight
	Kiss of Snow
	Tangle of Need
Stewart, Mary	Airs Above the Ground
	Madam Will You Talk?
	My Brother Michael
	Nine Coaches Waiting
	Rose Cottage
	The Gabriel Hounds
	The Ivy Tree
	The Moon-Spinners
	The Prince and the Pilgrim
	The Stormy Petrel
	Thornyhold
	Thunder on the Right
	Wildfire at Midnight
	Wind off the Small Isles
Stuart, Anne	Black Ice
	Breathless
	Chain of Love
	Cold as Ice
	Fire and Ice
	Heart's Ease
	Ice Blue
	Ice Storm
	Nightfall
	On Thin Ice
	Reckless
	Ruthless
	Shameless

	Silver Falls
	To Love a Dark Lord
Ward, J.R.	Dark Lover
	Lover at Last
	Lover Avenged
	Lover Awakened
	Lover Enshrined
	Lover Eternal
	Lover Mine
	Lover Reborn
	Lover Revealed
	Lover Unbound
	Lover Unleashed
Weiner, Jennifer	Fly Away Home
Whitney, Phyllis A.	Amethyst Dreams
	Daughter of the Stars
	Domino
	Feather on the Moon
	Golden Unicorn
	Lost Island
	Rainsong
	Seven Tears for Apollo
	Silverhill
	Snowfire
	The Quicksilver Pool
	Thunder Heights
	Woman Without a Past
Wiggs, Susan	Just Breathe
et al	More Than Words: Stories of Courage Anthology
Woodiwiss, Kathleen	A Rose in Winter
	A Season Beyond a Kiss
	Ashes in the Wind
	Come Love a Stranger
	Everlasting
	Forever in Your Embrace

	Petals on the River
	Shanna
	So Worthy My Love
	The Elusive Flame
	The Flame and The Flower
	The Reluctant Suitor
	The Wolf and The Dove

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