CREATING A POPULAR ROMANCE COLLECTION IN AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

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“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 24th, 2013)

Source: http://www.princeton.edu/prcw/
“Well unless you already have it in your own personal library, you won’t be able to.”

- My response
MISSION OF THE ACADEMIC LIBRARY
This is like having all the literacy criticism on Eugene O’Neill’s *The Ice Man Cometh* but not actually owning *The Ice Man Cometh*

The **Nurse Romance Novel Collection** consists of over 425 novels held in the UWM Libraries’ Special Collections that have nurses as central characters. These works were written for both young and adult audiences from the 1950s to the 1970s, often reflecting stereotypes about nurses, usually negative, that are held in the popular imagination. These works raise issues concerning the image of nurses and the nursing profession in popular culture, and the books that serve to reinforce not only popular misconceptions of nurses, but of women generally, and professional women in particular. They also raise more general questions of gender construction in Western society, reader expectations, and societal/historical contexts that allow for such presentations to persist to this day.

The bulk of the collection of nurse romance novels was donated to Special Collections in 2005 by artist, photographer, and former UWM Art Professor Leslie Bellavance (currently director of the School of Art and Art History at James Madison University). Professor Bellavance started collecting these publications as part of her own research on popular-culture presentations of nurses for her visual work. The Nurse Romance collection augments the UWM American Nursing History Collection in Special Collections, which was established in 1995 through a donation from the UWM Center for Nursing History.
Leisure Reading Collection
Why Mason?
WHY MASON?

- Support from Literature Subject Liaison and Head, Collection Development
- Emphasis on print monographs
- Dr. Jessica Matthews
- Popular Romance Project hosted at the Roy Rosenszweig Center for History & New Media
- Already owned a few titles
NOT OPERATING
IN A VACUUM

The Nora Roberts Center for
American Romance
McDaniel College

Image: https://blog.mcdaniel.edu/intech/files/2011/02/library_redsquare_med.jpg
HOW WE DID IT

Proposal to Head, Collection Development & Preservation

• Rational
• What we would collect
• Criteria used to select materials
• Exclusions
Criteria and Collecting
INITIAL CRITERIA

- 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.
- Collect influential novels listed on the All About Romance and The Romance Reader Top 100 lists.
INITIAL CRITERIA

- A limited number of category novels. Category novels are the short novels that are written for a specific book line.

- Hardback or trade paper formats are preferred, but novels that are only available in mass market paperback may also be added to the collection.
CRITERIA ADDITIONS

- Additional titles/authors from RITAs, *Library Journal*
  Best Romances, LAMBDA Awards, *Curve* Rainbow Awards

- Syllabi

- Widen Review Sources:
  - Love in the Margins
  - Sistah’s Sizzlin’ Reads
  - Romance Novels in Color
  - Smexy Books
HOW WE DID IT

- Alibris: out of print book wholesaler
- Gifts
- Serendipity purchases
AUTHORS

- Mary Balogh – some
- Suzanne Brockmann - some
- Sandra Brown – some
- Loretta Chase – some
- Jennifer Crusie – all
- Tessa Dare – some
- Jude Deveraux – some
- Linda Howard - some
- Carla Kelly – some
- Jayne Ann Krentz, Amanda Quick, Jayne Castle – some
- Eloisa James – some
- Beverly Jenkins - some
- Elizabeth Lowell – some
- Debbie Macomber – some

- Linda Lael Miller – some
- Susan Elizabeth Phillips – all
- Mary Jo Putney – some
- Julia Quinn – some
- Radclyffe – some
- Rosemary Rogers – all
- Nilini Singh – some
- Beatrice Small - some
- Mary Stewart – all
- Anne Stuart – some
- J.R. Ward – some
- Jennifer Weiner – some
- Phyllis A. Whitney – all
- Susan Wiggs – some
- Kathleen Woodwiss - all
Next Steps
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- Closer ties working with McDaniel College
- Create Romance InfoGuide
- Create formal collection development policy and fund code
- Discuss with Special Collections Librarian outreach for pursuing primary source material from popular romance authors
- Collection Assessment
KEEP CALM AND ASK A LIBRARIAN
REFERENCES


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