Western Books Exhibition Collection MS.2017.004

Rebecca Fenning Marschall
William Andrews Clark Memorial Library
2017
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URL: http://www.clarklibrary.ucla.edu/
Language of Material: English
Contributing Institution: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library
Title: Western Books Exhibition Collection
Creator: Rounce & Coffin Club
Identifier/Call Number: MS.2017.004
Physical Description: 106 Linear feet106 boxes
Date (inclusive): 1938-2005
Abstract: This collection contains the Rounce and Coffin Club's collection of books submitted to and included in their Western Books Exhibition from 1938 to 2005.
Housed off-site at SRLF. Please notify Clark Library staff at least 2 weeks in advance to request items from this collection.
Custodial History
Processing Information
Collection physically processed by Rebecca Fenning Marschall and Alejandro Sanchez Nunez. Previous processing, arrangement and contents listing by Occidental College Library Special Collections and College Archives Department.
Arrangement
Materials are arranged in chronological order by year of exhibition.
Scope and Contents
This collection consists of the Rounce and Coffin Club's record set of books submitted to and included in their annual Western Books Exhibition, from 1938-2005. Some books include their original labels from the exhibition, but otherwise, books contain no unique information or data.
A inventory of the books, sorted by year of exhibition and their exhibition number, is available in pdf form or as a downloadable spreadsheet.
History of the Rounce and Coffin Club
The Rounce & Coffin Club, originally called the "Thistle Club," was founded in the fall of 1931 by Jake Zeitlin, Grant Dahlstrom, Gregg Anderson, and Ward Ritchie. A "rounce" and a "coffin" are two parts of a hand press. The first few meetings were held at Zeitlin’s residence in Echo Park, and the club's members included printers, librarians, and booksellers. Well-known librarian, author, and bibliographer Lawrence Clark Powell joined the club in September 1933. He describes the club's mission in "Ten Years (Almost) of Rounce & Coffinism" (published in 1941 by the College Press at Los Angeles City College): "Our message? Our mission? To raise the standards of printing here in the West and to teach the layman—even the librarian—what we hold to be excellence in printing. And among ourselves to breed good fellowship." As time went on and the club's membership grew, meetings were held at different hotels and restaurants in Pasadena, Hollywood, and other parts of East and Central Los Angeles. Members began to take great care designing and printing letterpress keepsakes, meeting and event invitations. The meetings of the Rounce & Coffin Club would sometimes include talks by guest speakers, including visiting professors from UCLA and other universities. Experts on printing would present on the work of well-known printers like John Henry Nash and Aldus Manutius. Members would also present on their own work. Some of the members of Rounce and Coffin fought in the second World War (founder Lt. Gregg Anderson was killed in Normandy in 1944), and as a result, meetings became slightly less frequent. To compensate, Lawrence Clark Powell (along with other members), circulated a newsletter, "The Flying Hiatus," to keep the club apprised of news and goings-on. In the 1950s and 1960s, the club had between 30 and 35 resident members for any given year. By the mid-1970s, women were allowed to join the club. Accordingly perhaps, in the seventies and eighties, membership grew slightly to 40 resident members in 1976, and 55 by 1983. In the later eighties, membership fell slightly. By 1999, there were still 43 members of Rounce & Coffin, and the club was still active. In the mid-2000s, many of the most active members (including Secretary-Treasurer Mike Sutherland, Muir Dawson, Vance Gerry, and Regis Graden) passed away. In June 2007, a meeting of the Rounce & Coffin Club Board of Governors dissolved the group, and it was decided that Occidental College would receive the Club's Archive and collection of Western Books. 1938 marked the first year of the Club's Western Books Exhibition, initially conceived by Grant Dahlstrom. As of the 1950s, the selection committee was made up of a representatives from the Rounce & Coffin Club, the Zamorano Club, and the Roxburghe Club. The committee judged the books on their design, the quality of printing, the paper and binding quality, scholarship of subject matter, and overall appearance and feel. The books selected (as of the 1953 Western Books Exhibition) had to have been published in Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Washington, Wyoming, Utah, West Texas, Alberta, British Columbia, Alaska, or Hawaii. The selected books formed a traveling exhibition, displayed for a week at a time at
different libraries all over the Western United States. A catalog would be printed every year. Most years, the Club would auction off the books after the exhibition took place. In the 1950s, roughly thirty books were chosen each year, out of about eighty submissions, representing about fifteen printers and publishers. By the 1980s, the Western Books Exhibition had expanded into nearly fifty books per year. The Western Books Exhibition ran until 2005. Some information sourced from http://socialarchive.iath.virginia.edu/ark:/99166/w61g6z2q. Most information sourced from the records themselves.

Itemized inventory of the Western Books Exhibition books.