

COLLECTING THE LOCAL HISTORY OF CLIMBING IN UTAH: LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

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Abstract

Discovering and utilizing special collections and archives in the North America can be a challenge for many reasons. Most archives and special collections at academic institutions are fragmented since these collections are normally developed around a specific person, rather than subject area. Most people do not realize that there are special collections based on geography, activity, strengths, and scope. For this and other reasons, finding and using unpublished rock climbing materials can be complicated for students, researchers, and historians. Based off successful ski and river-running collections, this project presents one library's attempt to continuously build and sustain a rock climbing collection. These collections are necessary to track knowledge and perspectives of the sport over time.

Keywords: rock climbing; library; archive; special collections; outdoor recreation; intermountain west

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Résumé

Découvrir et utiliser des archives et des collections spéciales en Amérique du Nord peut être un défi pour plusieurs raisons. La plupart des archives et des collections spéciales des institutions académiques sont fragmentées puisque ces collections sont normalement développées autour d'une personne spécifique, plutôt que d'une thème. La plupart des gens ne réalisent pas qu'il existe des collections spéciales basées sur la géographie ou les activités. Pour cette raison et d'autres, trouver et utiliser des matériaux d'escalade non publiés peut être compliqué pour les étudiants, les chercheurs et les historiens. Basé sur des collections de ski et de les sports d'eau vive, ce projet présente la tentative d'une bibliothèque de construire et de maintenir en permanence une collection d'escalade. Ces collections sont nécessaires pour suivre les connaissances et les perspectives du sport au fil du temps.

Mots-clés: escalade; bibliothèque; les archives; collections spéciales; loisirs de plein air; Amérique du Nord

Introduction

Library and museum collections tend to reflect their city and region. To find published rock climbing related materials, one can search WorldCat, a world-wide catalog of library holdings (WorldCat, 2018). In North America, many public libraries collect rock climbing guides to local areas and biographies of famous climbers. Depending upon the location, academic libraries also collect climbing books. Unpublished materials are collected by archives and special collections. These archives usually focus on materials from a specific person, such as oral histories, photos, letters, and diaries. Due to copyright, these materials are not always available online, but will be shared upon request to students and researchers.

In the case of the J. Willard Marriott Library at the University of Utah (Marriott Library), there is a large emphasis on outdoor recreation. Outdoor recreation is a major economic industry in Utah; moreover, over 60% of the state is public land. The two well-known components of the Marriott Library's outdoor recreation archives are skiing and river-running collections; however, the rock climbing collections continue to expand (J Willard Marriott Library, 2018a; J Willard Marriott Library, 2018b). The collections include oral histories of local climbers, scrapbooks of local clubs, photos, maps, and published materials. The published materials include autobiographies, non-fiction books, guidebooks, and climbing-related magazines, concerning both regional areas and rock climbing in general.

Methods

This case study presents one library's attempt to secure, build, develop, preserve, and sustain rock climbing collections focusing on Utah and the intermountain west of the United States. Based on successful collections building in the ski and river-running areas, this case study explains the process for developing and maintaining climbing collections. Comprehensive collections should include the most important books, journals, and magazines. Additionally, collections building includes audio-visual materials, maps, oral histories and interviews, realia, and other resources ranging from climbing gear, clothing. Furthermore, librarians and curators talk to experts and practitioners in the discipline to continuously build these collections.

The Marriott Library employs both a top-down and bottom-up approach in building collections. Once collections are well established, the library must be aware of strategies to promote, preserve, and sustain these collections and build the knowledge of climbing. Based on the Marriott Library's with the ski and river-running collections, we will provide strategies for accomplishing this task.

Results

It is hoped that this case study provides insight into the theoretical and practical process of archival and collections development. Additionally, participants will learn about other important collections in North America. The climbing research community will understand how to approach their local libraries and museums to advocate for similar collections.

Conclusion

Rock climbing collections are needed for historians, researchers, and climbers. This case presentation will provide IRCRA participants with the knowledge of special collections development and strategies to use and develop their own local climbing collections.

References

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