

How Should Special Collections Address Local Railroad History?

And how can the local railroad community help?

How Did We Get Here?

The Cleveland Union Terminal Collection and Gerry Adams

- The gift of the C.U.T. Collection put CSU on the local RR history map
- Led to later C.U.T. donations by Bob Linsey and the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority.



Other Collections Followed.....

For example:

- The Newburgh & South Shore Collection
- Bruce Young Collection
- The Gerald E. Brookins Collection (Trolleyville)

CSU Became Home to Archives

- Nickel Plate Road Historical & Technical Society (1999)
- Akron Railroad Club (2000)
- Erie Lackawana Historical Society (2009)

NOARS Created in 1998

- Midwest guys suggested I call a meeting of interested parties to discuss a local collaboration around RR topics.
- First meeting held here in Special Collections in 1998. Fourteen attended.
- Modeled on the Cleveland Railway Historical Society's idea of all lines coming into NE Ohio.

Support from NARF

- In the early years, Special Collections' RR holdings were funded to the tune of \$100,000 by a series of grants from the North American Railway Foundation.
 - Map cabinets
 - Display boards
 - Processing collections
 - Mounting C.U.T. exhibit
 - NKP Negative Collection
- Big meeting to thank NARF in November of 2002
- Nothing funded since 2006

Philosophy of the Years to Date

- CSU would provide a home for donated collections and deposited archives, service reference requests, and mount resources to the Web, notably the Cleveland Memory Project.
- The local railfan community would be encouraged to participate by using the collections, helping to process them, find new collections to be acquired, and generally forming a support group, through NOARS, to help in CSU's mission.

Current Situation

Issues That Have Developed

- NARF seems to have cut off the spigot, but not enough attempts have been made to get grants.
- Difficulties in parking and weekday hours have limited ability of railfan attendance and volunteering.
- Special Collections has proved to be a popular place to donate things and space is becoming an issue.
- The Governor's budget not only limits what we can do, but puts a closer university eye on what we are doing. We increasingly have to justify our programs in terms of how they further the success of our students, but it hasn't addressed RRs yet.

Divergent Paths to History

- The railfan community tends toward these themes in approaching history:
 - Modeling
 - Equipment
 - Routes and schedules
 - Photographing trains
- The academic community looks for these things:
 - Railroad facilities and yards
 - Relationship between local industries and railroads
 - Neighborhood interactions
 - Social history of railroad employees

Railroad History Resources

- Areas of agreement on what resources are useful:
 - Historic photos of local facilities and of equipment – often streetcars – operating in area.
 - Valuation maps.
 - Track plans.
 - Implementation of scheduled runs locally.
- Not as useful to the academic community:
 - Roster shots of locomotives and cars.
 - Detailed information about equipment.
 - National magazines in print format.
 - Resources that are hard to access and expensive to use.

Where To Go From Here...

Questions and suggestions for how to deal with the current situation

Collection Management Decisions

- What do I do with? Do I even accept?
 - Books about particular lines, esp. not NEO ones?
 - National RR and traction magazines (e.g. Trains)?
 - Timetables?
 - Big collections of locomotive photos?
- How much can I afford to do by way of processing the collections which, without finding aids, aren't very useful to anyone?

Recommendations To Consider

- Seek out collaborative projects with member societies, such as the AMC drawing inventory
- Focus on obtaining and digitizing regional rail history information of types useful to students and others not of the railfan community necessarily.
- Support CSU's attempts to reshape our collections.
- Finish processing collections on deposit.

Recommendations To Consider

- Work with CSU in developing a railroad history section of the Cleveland Memory Project, emphasizing photos, maps, and text on the history of the lines coming into NEO.
 - Use the material Shel and others have provided on the yards and facilities and on the major accidents in NEO.

Questions?

THANK YOU!!