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# New lamps for old: the magical Aladdin approach to our Special Collections

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# We took over the care and curation of the Special Collections at Staffordshire University in late 2016

We had the same aims:

- to make it more relevant to current students and staff
- to make the Collection better known within the University and local area.

# What was new for us?

- Four projects have been significant and innovative



# What is The Favia Collection?

Housed within Special Collections (and out of public view) in the depths of the library are a large collection of original film soundtracks on vinyl LPs.

These were produced on American labels and imprints, as the collection was purchased in the United States, dating from c.1960-1985 and donated to the University by Donna and Sally-Ann Favia.



# Why did we decide to do something?

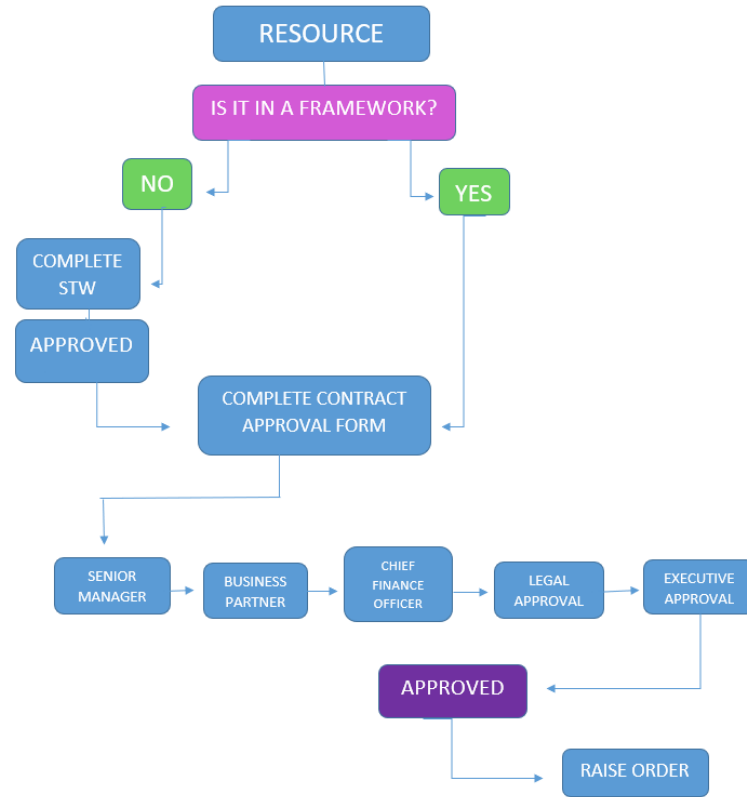
The items are not catalogued, with no previous publicity. This collection was a 'dead duck' as it stood. We decided to exploit this collection as there were opportunities to:

- Show off the contents
- Attract non-traditional library users to visit
- Introduce students to other resources, such as Box of Broadcasts
- Support student wellbeing
- Have a good time!

# What did we do?

- Began planning a Listening Club. This would be held every fortnight in the library
- Open to everyone
- Would comprise of listening to a selection of the vinyl in themed weeks
- First we had to buy a record player....

# The purchasing process



# Before the event - publicity

- Contacted Cartoon and Comic Arts
- Their students designed posters for the events
- Advertised on Twitter, Facebook, TV Screens and posters across the Campus



# Advertising material –student created!



**The Favia Collection Listening Club**

**Time: 2pm-3pm**

**Dates: 20th April, 11th May, 25th May**

**Location: Group Study Ground Floor  
(B49/B50)  
(Staffordshire University Library)**



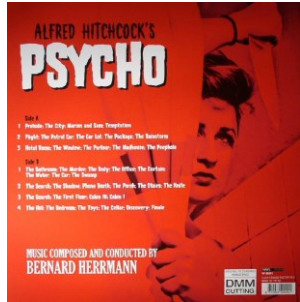
**FAVIA COLLECTION LISTENING CLUB!**

Friday 20th April - Bernard Herrman  
Friday 11th May - Ennio Morricone  
Friday 25th May - The Musical  
World of Disney

Held in Group Study Ground Floor  
B49/B50

**2 - 3pm!!**

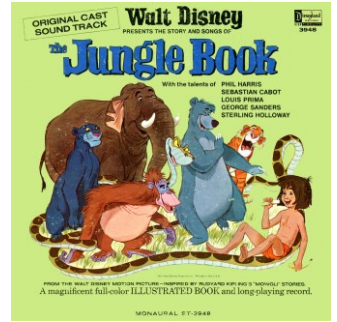
# Before the event – curating ‘the playlists’



- Selecting the vinyl – had a theme, now needed to pace the event



- Selecting visuals and clips  
(Note: Box of Broadcasts currently do not carry over subtitles on their clips)



# Listening Club in full swing...



Events formed part of our wellbeing programme, and popcorn was served!

# Student feedback

Great to hear these records  
and see the collection

## Observations:

- Did not know about 2 sides to a record
- Asked how you could tell one side from the other?
- Where to put the needle? (plonked it in the middle of the record!)
- What are the grooves between each track?
- Were amazed by gatefold sleeves and picture discs...

# Future Plans

- Further listening clubs
- Tours of Special Collections
- Student feedback to suggest themes and be Guest DJs
- Listening club during new International students Induction

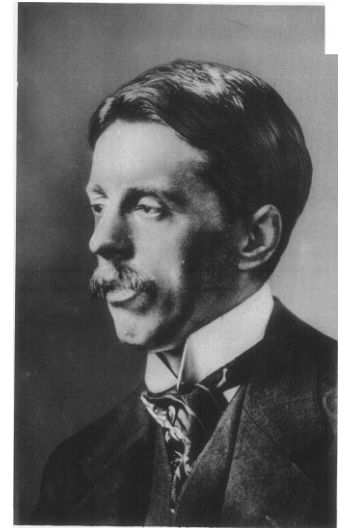


# What is the Jean Potter Memorial Arnold Bennett Collection?

- The Arnold Bennett Archive was bequeathed to the Thompson Library, Staffordshire University in 2007 by John Potter, former Chair of the Arnold Bennett Society. The collection amounts to many hundreds of items, containing first and limited editions of Bennett's novels, plays and pamphlets, original journal articles, letters from Bennett to family members and professional acquaintance, newspaper clippings, photographs and other ephemera.

# Why did we decide to do something?

- We decided to mark the 150th anniversary of the Potteries' most famous author with a showcase taken from the Jean Potter Memorial Collection of Arnold Bennett-related material.





# What did we do?

- Worked with an expert from the Creative Arts and Engineering School
- We had a go at digitizing some of the papers from the Collection.
- See <http://libguides.staffs.ac.uk/ArnoldBennett>
- Actual exhibition located in the Special Collections itself.



# Before the event - publicity

- Contacted University's Marketing and Communications team.
- Created a press release and appeared on BBC Radio Stoke to talk about the exhibition.
- Featured in the local press.
- Profile raising

# Future Plans

- Further exhibitions to focus on the range of materials in the Collection. For example, some Chartist materials or the Victoria Theatre Collection.

# What is The Bumpus Collection?

- Judith Bumpus was a BBC producer and writer who died, aged 70, in 2010.
- After gaining her MA at St Andrews, Judith decided to study history of art for her postgraduate scholarship at the University of Madrid. She became a junior curator at London's Victoria & Albert Museum in 1963. She was also a visual arts lecturer for the Open University before joining the BBC in 1968.
- Her collection of books & exhibition catalogues, newspaper clippings and other ephemera were bequeathed to us for the advancement of artistic knowledge.

# Why did we decide to do something?

- The collection was not organised and there were hundreds of boxes.
- Fine Art students were studying the curation of exhibitons and compilation of exhibition catalogues
- There was material that would be of interest to a wide variety of staff and students in made available

# What did we do?

- Worked with an expert from the Creative Arts and Engineering School
- We moved books into our Art Collection
- We added exhibition catalogues into the collection
- We gave Fine Art students the opportunity to have books that we already owned

# Future Plans

- Fine Art students to use exhibition catalogues, newspaper clippings and other ephemera to create new works
- These collections are further organised so that more material is added to our library collections (still a work in progress!)

# What is the Iris Strange/WWA collection?

- The Iris Strange collection of war widows' letters and the War Widows Association Archive and are kept at Staffordshire University.
- This exhibition showcases a number of letters from war widows and graphically illustrates their plight. Most of the letters date from the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s.



# Why did we decide to do something?

- We were *asked* to make an exhibition to coincide with the visit of the Weeping Window to Middleport Pottery as part of 14-18 NOW.
- A small collection of specially selected letters has been chosen to display at the Thompson Library until Friday 14th September.
- Put together by Dr Jan Lomas, independent historian, and Alison Pope and intended to coincide with the visit of the Weeping Window to Middleport Pottery.





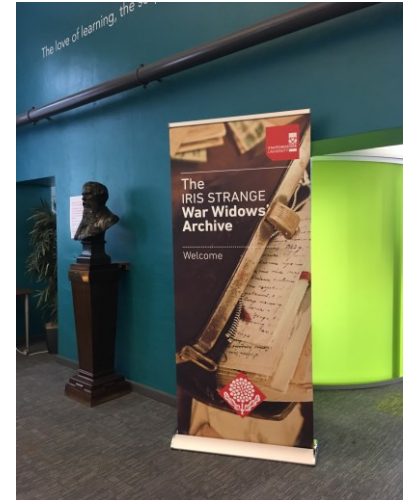
# What did we do?

- Worked with an expert who had links to the University.
- Could not digitize due to age/sensitivity of the letters.
- Created a narrative which ran alongside the letters.
- Involved University Marketing and Communications.
- Involved War Widows Association.



# Before the event - publicity

- Contacted University's Marketing and Communications team.
- Created a press release and a website to tie in.
- Located the exhibition in a public area.



# Future Plans

- An exhibition of student art work, inspired by the letters, to be displayed at the time of the 1918 centenary.
- Professor of Fine Art wants to work with us.

# Why did it matter?

- These 4 small projects have given us the opportunity to work with staff and students and even the locality in a different way.
- They have allowed us to show that our collections can be interesting and relevant to present times.

# What were the lessons learned?

- Great to raise the profile of the Collection but, like Aladdin, be careful what you wish for...
- There is now some real demand for portions of our collection to be digitized but there are many current constraints.
- Take advice from the professionals: JISC Archive Hub and the National Archives.
- Marketing will be interested.
- If you don't do it, no one else will!

Thank YOU for listening!



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