

## **Newberry Library Collecting Policy for Postcards**

### **Historical Background**

The Newberry historically collected postcards that fit within the scope of our specialized subject collections, rather than as a distinct, printed format or genre. For example, we have postcard collections about Chicago, the Century of Progress Exposition, hotels, and travel; in addition, postcards are included in a number of Modern Manuscript Collections. There is no special funding for postcards, and nearly all were acquired as gifts. Occasionally a selector has purchased postcards that are a significant addition to a core collecting area: sets of postcards were recently purchased for the Native American and Indigenous Cultures and Polar regions collections.

### **Current Postcard Collections**

In 2016, the Newberry accepted the donation by the Lake County Forest Preserve District of the [Curt Teich Postcard Archives Collection](#) (CTPAC). With this gift the Newberry became the largest public collection of postcards and related materials in the United States. When it arrived, the collection consisted of approximately 2.5 million postcards, including 400,000 different images. The core of the collection is the [Records](#) of the Curt Teich Company, which includes over 360,000 images produced by the company between 1898 and 1978, over 110,000 production files documenting the creation of the company's postcards, and additional company records. Additional postcard collections and archives were added to the CTPAC over the past 35 years, while it was located at the Lake County Discovery Museum, including the [Detroit Publishing Company Collection](#), the [Dexter Press Records](#), the [John High Collection](#), the [V. O. Hammon Company Collection](#), the [Leonard A. Lauder Raphael Tuck Collection](#), and many others.

The CTPAC supports a Newberry collecting goal by strengthening the visual dimension of many of our core subject collections – most notably the history of printing, travel and exploration, local and family history, Chicago and the Midwest, and Native American and Indigenous Cultures. In addition, the CTPAC enlarges and enhances aspects of Newberry collecting in terms of format and topic. For example:

- With the records of the Curt Teich Company, the Detroit Publishing Company, and the Dexter Press, the library is now a recognized research center for the study of the postcard and its production, distribution, and impact. In fact, the life span of the Curt Teich Company (1898-1978) coincides almost exactly with—and is in many ways linked to – the enormous expansion of postcard production, distribution, and impact in the first half of the twentieth century, and its slow decline in the second half, when it was eclipsed by new technologies of communication.
- Several collections, in particular the Leonard A. Lauder Raphael Tuck Collection of “Oilettes” and the John High Collection of “stevengraphs” or woven silk, as well as art nouveau, postcards enlarge possibilities for the study of postcards as art and as examples of unusual production and printing technologies.
- The Richard Juvinal Amusement Park Collection and the James R. Powell Route 66 Collection illustrate the importance of postcards for the study of twentieth-century American popular culture.
- While the Curt Teich Company produced some images of non-American subjects, added collections strengthen the Newberry's holdings of foreign postcards substantially.

Postcards today are a very popular collecting area, with a number of active dealers, clubs, newsletters, and postcard shows. In addition, many people have saved postcards written by friends and family members over the course of the twentieth century for sentimental and historical reasons. We will regularly receive offers of collections from individuals of family collections, from collectors, and from dealers. In such instances, our decision must be guided by a policy that identifies areas in which we are interested in collecting and those types of collections that are not in scope for the Newberry.

This Postcard Collecting Policy will change as our knowledge of the CTPA collection grows and reveals areas of strength which we may wish to develop further.

### **Postcard Collecting Policy**

- The Newberry will acquire postcards that illustrate in a significant way the history, production, and use of postcards as a medium of communication and advertising.
- The Newberry will acquire selectively collections of postcards that have been systematically developed around a specific topic, location, printing company, or printing technique.
- The Newberry will acquire miscellaneous postcard collections accumulated by a family only if they form part of a collection of family papers in which we are interested.
- The Newberry will acquire focused collections that relate to our specialized subject areas or are of significant historical value. Examples include:
  - postcards recording experiences of or reactions to major historical events
  - postcards relating to Chicago and the Midwest or written by Chicago travelers
  - postcards created by notable designers, printers, or publishers
  - postcards in novel formats or printed by unusual techniques
  - artist- or designer-signed postcards (not reproductions of museum art works)
  - early international postcards and postcards from geographical areas in which we do not collect, for example Asia

### **General Considerations**

- The Newberry will consider focused postcard collections that include ephemera and artifacts related to the subject of the collection.
- The Newberry will consider the physical condition of the materials in evaluating postcard offers.
- The Newberry will consider the likely percentage of duplication in evaluating postcard offers.
- Except in unusual circumstances, the Newberry will accept only unrestricted donations.

April 2017