

## **Collecting Popular Culture Material: Minor League Team Publications as “Fringe” Material at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library.**

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Librarians and archivists often need to reassess what types of items are necessary to include when documenting and collecting popular culture subjects. Many areas of popular culture are documented less by conventional resources such as books and serials, but by “fringe” material, such as programs, brochures, pamphlets, that often fall outside the scope of traditional collections. In other areas of scholarship, this type of material can fall under the category of “grey literature,” that has been defined as:

That which is produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers. (GL’ 99)

Even in cultural institutions such as historical societies and halls of fame, collecting material of this nature is not always done with any regular method or scope. In 1997, at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, I started a two-year collecting initiative to collect from Minor League Baseball teams team publications and ephemera, vital for documenting the history of teams and their interaction with community. During those two years, the collection of minor league team publications at the Baseball Hall of Fame Library increased fourfold. For many libraries, including the Hall of Fame, these types of publications represent “fringe” material and were not pursued with great vigor. While the program was a great success, its life cycle as a two-year project showed a great deal about the success and failures associated with these types of programs.

Minor League Baseball is a term used to describe professional baseball not played at the Major League level. There are two types of Minor Leagues, those affiliated with Major League teams (National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues) and those completely independent from the Major League systems. The affiliated teams are all members of a Major League team’s “farm system” that allows players to move up (and down) the ranks in preparation for a career in the Major Leagues. The players typically start in the Rookie or Class A leagues and work their way up to the AA or AAA leagues before arriving at the Major Leagues. In 2002, there are 15 Minor Leagues (including the Mexican League which is not affiliated with Major League teams), plus the Rookie leagues that play at Spring Training sites. All told, there are around 150 affiliated Minor League teams playing in just about every small to mid sized city in the United States and Canada. In addition, there are seven independent minor leagues with over 60 teams. These independents include the Northern League, the subject of a number of books in the mid 1990s. Minor League baseball does not include

collegiate leagues (Cape Cod League), semi-pro teams, or the old Negro Leagues.

For cultural institutions like the Hall of Fame, broad-based collection development policies can be interpreted to include just about anything. Librarians and archivists balance their priorities, time, interests, and their interpretation of what is important when adding items to the collection. Frank Hoffman, in his *Popular Culture and Libraries*, gave a very useful warning to people starting on this type of collecting:

If the decision is made to incorporate popular culture artifacts on a large scale within the library setting, however, librarians must deal with a considerable number of problems. The area of selection and acquisition is no exception to this general rule posing the following dilemmas (Hoffman, 17)

He later went on to add two important considerations for collecting these types of publications: “An overwhelming abundance of materials to choose from” and “Rapidity with which popular culture materials go out-of-print. Many items are of an ongoing nature...that are superseded by a more timely issue on a weekly or monthly basis. Accordingly, librarians must purchase these materials almost immediately after the date of release or else face the likelihood of their being unavailable or carrying an inflated price tag via the collectibles market.” (Hoffman 17-18)

In 1994, Barbara Moran made a case that academic libraries did not seek popular culture material on the basis of what constitutes culture worth documenting and saving. She said “academic librarians have been wary of collecting popular materials because it goes against the grain of what they have been taught.” (Moran, 4). While this is certainly a strong case made for the content of material, the dynamics are similar to what we were doing at the Baseball Hall of Fame. However, instead of the content not being collected, it was the format of the material that was not collected. While the Hall of Fame always collected mainstream library items documenting all levels of the game, the role of more ephemeral documents such as programs, yearbooks, scorebooks for non-major league baseball were not collected as thoroughly. At the Hall of Fame and many repositories, the collecting of ephemeral material documenting popular culture, even at a popular culture focused repository, are rarely done with consistency. Few libraries will be able to devote the resources to fully collect material sitting on the ‘fringes’ of their collecting scope. As with the Hall of Fame, the minor league team publications initiative brought in a great amount of material, but unfortunately, it was not sustainable. The lifecycle of this initiative makes a perfect subject for a study into the effectiveness of this type of collecting by a library or archival repository.

## **Nature of Team Publications:**

The focus of this project was to go after minor league team publications and increase our collection of these items as a resource for historians on the history of baseball in America. During the collecting initiative, we requested any type of team or league publication that minor league teams produced. These items included: scorecards, programs, yearbooks, media guides, and newsletters. Typically the organizational size of the franchise was a greater indicator of the variety and number of team publications that they would produce in any given year. While Minor League teams are often judged by their professional level (AAA is the highest and A is the lowest), the size of their organizational staff (general manager, public relations staff, sales professionals, etc.) depends a great deal on the population from which they are drawing. Certain lower classification teams, such as the Class A Lansing Lugnuts of the Midwest League, might be in a large city and have a staff as large as a team in a higher classification. This was especially true of the growing suburbanization of the sport where Class A teams moved into suburban markets of Chicago, Baltimore, and New York. Typically, as the staffs increase, the number of team publications increases as well. For the most part, teams offered a single yearbook or program, while the teams with the larger staffs also offered newsletters, media guides and different editions of their programs.

The novelty of going after these publications for a collecting initiative may seem odd when it appears that the material's value is self-apparent. However, these items can easily be treated as fringe elements in the collections because they do not fall neatly into one of the main collecting categories pursued by the libraries. In writing about an outsourcing project at the Indiana Historical Society on similar material (the trade literature collection), Ellen Crosby wrote:

During the 1990s, staff at the William Henry Smith Memorial Library of Indiana Historical Society (HIS), located in Indianapolis, Indiana, have concentrated on developing their collection of trade literature published by Indiana businesses. As a historical resource, according to the library's curator of printed collections, 'trade catalogs are indispensable not only to the study of business, but also to research in other areas, such as consumerism, artifact study and dating, architectural history, and fashion history' (Darbee 1996 1). These pamphlets constitute a significant intellectual and historical resource. However, only a portion of the collection was cataloged by 1994, because the rate of acquisition had far outpaced the rate of cataloging over the years. (Crosby 179-180)

And

Collection development librarians have targeted the business history of the state as a focal point, a curators have acquired corporate archives and ephemeral publications as part of this plan. (Crosby 180)

The article goes on to discuss the methods not in collecting, but in outsourcing the cataloging of these items. Libraries have not actively collected programs or ephemeral items as they might have books or archival material. Insofar as the value of these minor league team publications, they mirror the sentiment and worth just like the ephemeral business documents cited above. In addition, these baseball publications provide a great deal of information for people doing research on all aspects of minor league history. They are critical for understanding the role of the team and the way that they interact with the community. The information that can be taken from these publications includes:

- **History of the team;** history sections are very common and provide brief overviews of the history of the franchise or baseball in that community. While these are not sufficient in and of themselves, they provide a strong background on the history of the team and can provide clues to important events that might otherwise be missed.
- **Stadium Information;** stadium photographs, ticket prices, seating charts, concession prices, etc.
- **Team Information;** providing the names of the different employees and trustees of the club. Through looking at this information, you can get a sense of how big the operation was and get the names of people who you might want to contact. This is particularly important with the names of the people on the board of trustees or ownership group.
- **Player Information;** you often get strong information on the team's players.
- **Supporters in the Community:** by looking at the advertising and the promotions that the club is having over the year, you might be able to draw solid information on who is supporting the team in the community.
- **How is the team presenting themselves to the community:** In the 1970s & 1980s, a document was going around the minor league publications telling the fans how the money spent by the club goes right back into the community and what an important civic asset the team is. That has continued to a great deal into the 1990s.
- **Basic news from the community.**

The historical value of these documents varies a great deal from volume to volume and from team to team. However, taken collectively, these publications provide excellent documentation and historical material on the team and their role in the community.

While it is easy to identify a value and purpose of these documents, the problems associated with collecting them are great, but not insurmountable. Barbara Moran in her essay in Popular Culture and Acquisitions, quoted B. Lee Cooper on this dilemma:

The nature of popular culture study requires the examination of materials that are often atypical, ephemeral, oversized (motion picture posters), under-sized (postage stamps), technologically oriented (compact discs) and seldom cataloged in standard formats. From fads (hula hoops) to folktales, from antique radio programs to contemporary television commercials, from baseball broadcasts to taped interviews with children's text writers-the requests are invariably mixed and seemingly unmanageable. (Moran, 9)

Even a repository that is founded just to collect material of a popular culture nature still will have problems collecting, identifying and arranging the non-traditional or fringe material that could be viewed as necessary to fully document the subject. This was the case at the Baseball Hall of Fame Library.

### **Existing Collection of Minor League Team Publications at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library**

The collecting initiative at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library started as a simple idea. The library, which recently began the process to further define itself in 2002, has always been caught between two conflicting forces: the desire to collect everything documenting baseball and the abilities of a relatively small staff to carry out so broad a directive. The collection development policy is open ended, allowing the library staff to collect any material that documents the history of baseball as it is played at every level both in the United States and other countries. While this focus is broad enough to cover just about anything related to the sport, the vast majority of resources available at the Library document Major League Baseball. The reason for this is clear. The vast majority of books published on baseball document the Major Leagues. First, the largest donors and supports of the library are Major League Baseball teams and people associated with the same. So to that end, a steady stream of Major League material is added to the collection. Also, the greatest interest in the history of baseball from fans and historians alike is for baseball at the Major League level. However, given the broad mandate to expand the collecting to every possible subject on baseball, I decided to expand the scope of active collecting and pursue building the collection of material documenting Minor League Baseball.

Shortly after arriving at Cooperstown in late 1996, I noticed that we received a great number of major league publications from nearly every team. On the other hand, we had practically nothing coming in from Minor League teams. While it is my own personal interest, it is also the way that professional baseball connects with the smaller cities in the United States and Canada. To that degree, it is my contention that Minor League Baseball has a potentially closer link to the community than Major League Baseball. To see that connection, it is important to have resources at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library to conduct this research. Furthermore, while a great deal of research is done on Major League baseball, we had numerous visitors to the baseball hall of fame who were looking

for baseball in their home town or were following the exploits of a relative who did not make the Major Leagues. For these researchers, the minor league programs and other team publications are essential.

Previous to my arrival, the collection included a fairly large number of minor league publications. The collection consisted of some minor league programs from the 1950s and a strong collection (nearly comprehensive) from 1973 to 1978. This appears to be a period of previous initiative undertaken at the Library. A previous librarian recounted stories of throwing out “tons of the old minor league programs.” I did not know if he was referring to additional copies of the programs that were already in place or for other ones that arrived after the end of the initiative. The programs were mostly unusable, organized alphabetically by team name and tied in groups. Given the fact that they appeared to not have been untied in some time upon my arrival, it was clear that either the patrons or the staff at the Hall did not use them. I viewed as an equally important part of the project to organize and catalog these items so not only would these items be collected, but they could be used in the future.

### **The Minor League Publications Collecting Initiative Project**

(Purpose and Role of Collecting initiatives would be expanded in what I hope to be a published version of this paper).

The origin of collecting initiatives seems to come from a variety of impetuses at the organizational level. A collecting initiative is often undertaken to support a new program or exhibit, upon the guidance of the board or advisory committee, or, if personal freedom is possible in the collection of material, the personal wishes of a librarian or archivist. Sometimes, a collecting initiative is not formally launched, but substantial material is collected through the success and subsequent donations of material on a similar subject. Seeing that we received Major League team publications routinely, I was of the strong opinion that we could do the same thing for Minor Leagues and Minor League teams. The goal, as I pitched it to the Library Director at the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library was to attempt to collect every Minor League team and league publication and create a permanent repository for its history. Not only would this initiative bring these important documents into the library, it would also be a hook to connect with these teams and leagues for future and additional collections. What I wanted (for the library) was a record of the Minor Leagues in 1997, and ideally before. My intention with this initiative was to begin a relationship between Minor League Baseball and the Hall of Fame Library that would create a comprehensive body of research material in a central repository.

The Hall of Fame, in its well-recognized capacity as the center for baseball history, was in a very admirable position. Our name recognition and reputation would allow me to ask for publications to be sent to the Hall at no charge to the library. This would not always be the case, but it is possible for many non-profits

to pursue. In all the calls and contacts that I made over the two years of this initiative, only one intern working at a team asked for payment for their publications. Since we ended up receiving those publications for no charge, I can only imagine that a person with higher authority approved the give to the library!.

## **The Process**

In discussing this initiative with the Library Director, I received the approval to start during the 1997 season. With the support of our public relations department and their contacts in professional baseball, we launched the initiative with an announcement in a newsletter published by the National Association of Professional Baseball Teams (the overseeing body of the minor leagues) for the teams and the leagues. In the announcement, we stated that we were looking to collect any team or league publication and that they were encouraged to send any current and previous year's publications to the Hall for permanent inclusion in the library. The irony is that the National Association of Professional Baseball Leagues was the major force behind the building of the library with significant contributions in 1930s when the Hall of Fame formed and in 1964 when the library obtained its own building. Through this first announcement, we launched the project with successfully with two results. First, we received material from a significant number of teams through this means. Second, we were able to broadcast to the Minor League Baseball Community that we were interested in them. This was, ironically, a Major League surprise to the Minor League teams. We repeated the announcement in June as a reminder to teams that did not respond and to notify the short season teams (that started league play in the middle of June).

In the Library, I became a bit of a joke at the Hall of Fame as overstuffed envelopes and mailers arrived on my desk. As was the practice with the Major League team publications, we decided not to acknowledge each arrival one with a letter of donation to the Baseball Hall of Fame along with all the required documentation. This tended to be a lengthy process that would have deterred me from allocating the resources on the project. Instead, I sent a standard thank you letter to each team or league sending material during the first year. In the letter, I not only thanked them for their contribution, but also asked if they would consider sending other material including older publications and the like. If I could identify the person who sent the material, I sent it to them. Otherwise, it was directed to the General Manager of the team. The letter-writing portion of the initiative was time consuming, but important to make the people who donated feel good and to let them know that the Hall of Fame really cared about their role in baseball history. So upon receipt of each program, a basic letter was sent out to the team thanking them for their assistance. I remember someone telling me during year two that they remember my name from the letter that I sent to the team. Through these thank you letters, I did receive a number of additional items as people were happy to send them along. As the numbers started to wane, I

knew that I needed to follow up and continue the momentum. Again with the support of my boss "Go For It", I moved to a fairly unexpected, by necessary phase of the project...the personal appeal (please excuse the fund raising notion)

In July, I started calling and writing the teams that did not respond to the general solicitation for publications. Since approximately 20% of the National Association teams responded to the initial and subsequent request in the newsletter, this represented nearly all but 50 of the 180 minor league teams in the National Association. If teams had a listed e-mail address (not a large percentage had one at the time), I sent a solicitation from my personal e-mail account. This was a bit problematic because it did not identify myself in the e-mail address as being with the Baseball Hall of Fame. However, I was able to provide the address (which is well known) and provide enough information to make them feel that they were not being scammed. To that end, I directed them to the street address of the Hall of Fame, not the PO Box to ease any apprehensions that might exist for a solicitation of this type. For the other teams, I got on the phone. Over the course of the season, I called nearly every team in the National Association. The range in office sizes varied greatly over the teams that I called; allowing me to talk with the general manager, directors of marketing, marketing interns, and just about everyone in-between. The response was very positive and we saw a second wave of documents arrive over the summer.

I also contacted the Independent Leagues for their publications. The Independent leagues were minor leagues not affiliated with any major league team. With the growth of the Northern League in the early 1990s, these leagues sprang up and often out, with great speed. As a phenomenon, they were very interesting and something that needed to be documented. This represented a larger challenge because there was no central clearing house as there was for the affiliated leagues. For these teams and leagues, a call to each was necessary. However, the response was fantastic as many of them were all too happy to oblige when finding out the Hall of Fame was interested in them. Many of the people were very happy that their items were "going into the Hall of Fame." This phenomenon was very common, whereby people donating just about anything, felt that they were going into the Hall of Fame. While this speaks volumes for the special place that the Hall of Fame had in the minds of baseball fans, it was truly annoying as a person working there. Some of the teams did not respond, even after the personal appeal. For those teams, which numbered around 10, we did not have anything in the collection.

## **Cataloging**

As a person who worked through a few collecting initiatives where the only emphasis was on collecting the material, I wanted to make sure that the minor league team publications that were collected were useable. I did not envision simply creating a larger pile of minor league publications that no one was using.

As the material started coming into the Hall of Fame, it dawned on me that I needed to get these items organized and described and accessible. To this end, I started working on how I might classify these items (using Library of Congress Call Numbers) and, subsequently, how I might catalog them. This process evolved out of the necessity to do something with the items that we were collecting. Additionally, I wanted these materials cataloged along side the books and other material that were being entered and included in the Hall of Fame's Library Catalog. Too often, secondary databases are established for control of ephemeral material, increasing the probability that researchers, especially those doing research on the Internet, may not learn about these items when conducting their initial searches. The public catalog at the Baseball Hall of Fame was envisioned to include all the items from the library, to allow the research to move seamlessly from book to archival material to photographs to team publications.

### Physical Organization

I embarked on modifying the Library of Congress (LC) classification scheme to manage these documents as they arrived. Through my work with the books, I knew that each Major League Team had its own somewhat standard "Cutter Number" to group like material together. The reason why it was only somewhat standard is that it often changed over time (slightly). The Cutter Number (on a technical note) is an alphanumeric string designed to place something alphabetically in a range. I felt that the same thing could be done for the Minor Leagues to have easy access to the material. The classification scheme that I adapted was intended and designed to grow as new items and types of items came into the collection. For this, I used the LC Call Number range GV878, which was not really used in and of itself by LC. It is common to have blank numbers reserved for future use. Furthermore, I decided to classify the entire Major League publications as well to best utilize this organizational work. The basic structure of the system was setup as follows:

#### GV878 Team and League Publications

Document Cutter	Document Type
	<b>Major League Publications</b>
.A1	Major League Media Guides
.A15	Post Season Media Guides
.A18	Major League Spring Training Pub.
.A2	Major League Yearbooks
.A21	Major League Programs/Magazines
.A22	Major League Scorecards
	<b>Minor League Publications</b>
.A25	National Association Publications
.A3	Minor League Media Guides
.A4-Z	Minor League Yearbooks and other Team Publications; organized by league, then by team.

So once these basic groups were setup, and then it was easy to expand and organize like material together. Furthermore, in an effort to keep the numbers standard and consistent, I kept a running document and guide for this process so we did not end up with different numbers for the same team. Implementing the Call Numbers was very easy. For example, if I had a 1997 Toronto Blue Jays Yearbook and a 1996 Toronto Blue Jays Program, they would be classified as follows:

To create a call number for the 1997 yearbook, the document cutter would be GV878 .A2; the team cutter would be .T67 (for Toronto Blue Jays - .T49 was for Texas Rangers & .T36 was for Tampa Bay Devil Rays); and the last element (year) would be 1997. The ensuing number would be:

GV878

.A2 → Document Type

.T67 → Team Cutter

1997 → Year (if there were multiples in any year, a letter would be added)

For the 1996 Program, the number would be GV878 .A21 .T67 1997

With the Minor League items, I wanted to approach this a bit differently. Since a great deal of minor league research is conducted at the league level, I did not think it was wise to have essentially a single alphabetical list of all the cities. This is particularly true when you have franchises that remain constant, but change their names (Quad City vs. Davenport). So to this end, I decided to classify everything in the Minor Leagues by League first, then by the team. This would also make it easier for retrieval if someone wanted to know about everything that we had for the Midwest League or the International League.

So on this basis, I would organize the incoming (and existing) Minor League publications as follows. In the guide, I listed teams as I processed the publications. So for the International League, this is a sample of what the guide looked like:

.I58 International League  
    .A85 Atlanta Crackers  
    .C53 Charlotte Knights  
    .C65 Columbus Clippers  
    ...*skip*...  
    .S93 Syracuse Sky Chiefs  
    .T65 Toledo Mud Hens  
    .T67 Toronto Maple Leafs

To create a call number for the 1998 Toledo Mud Hens yearbook, the document cutter would be GV878 .I58; the team cutter would be .T65; and the last element (year) would be 1998. The ensuing number would be:

GV878

.I58 → Document Type (League Cutter)

.T65 → Team Cutter

1998 → Year (if there were multiples in any year, a letter would be added)

Minor League Media Guides were constructed the same way, except that they had a “.A3” at the beginning. So the 1998 Mud Hens Media Guide would be classified as follows: GV878 .A3 .I58 .T65 1998.

While this appears overly technical, I felt that it was important to talk about this in conjunction with the collecting initiative. Without this influx of additional documents into the collection, the need to organize these new and existing items in a logical format and scheme might not have been raised.

### **Intellectual Organization**

While the physical arrangement was critical, I also decided to devote the resources to get the items cataloged as soon as they came in. Through the process, I created full cataloging records for the media guides, programs and created item records to provide information through our public catalog. Since these items were cataloged on OCLC (the primary national database), they were also searchable in World Cat. In cataloging the items, I wanted to ensure that they were accessible for the people conducting searches and that they would be index in a manner that would facilitate their retrieval. To this end, I focused on two primary forms of subject indexing and was both thorough and consistent.

Besides the name of the team, the league and the other team names that were being cataloged with the same record, I provided access points for the ways that people were looking for this information: state names, community names, minor league systems and chronologically. This mirrored the questions from the researchers (at all levels) who came to the Hall of Fame Library: they wanted to know about baseball in their town or they asked about a relative, neighbor friend who played in a minor league system at some point.

So to this end, we added extensive subject headings into these records to facilitate retrieval. In the main topical subject headings (650), we constructed them as follows: Minor League Baseball – State – City – Decade. We added the Decade at the end of both types of subject terms to help refine the abilities of the researcher in the public catalog. If they were looking for Ohio Minor League Baseball prior to World War II, this might help them skip only to the records that they needed to look at. As we added new programs, we added additional subject headings to address the inclusion of new date ranges.

So the above-mentioned Mud Hens programs would look like this:

SUBJECT Minor League Baseball – Ohio – Toledo – 1990-1999.

Because of subject heading rotation in our online computer catalog (Innovative Interfaces INNOPAC), searches for “Ohio” and “Toledo” would also pull up these records. So people looking for baseball in Ohio, and typed Ohio as a subject, would not only get these documents, but also publications from Akron, Columbus, Dayton, Canton, etc.

Furthermore, we created a locally defined subject heading specifically designed to help document the role of the Minor Leagues as producer of Major League talent. People often came looking for a neighbor, family member, friend who reportedly played for a Major League organization. The question might be posed as “My brother played for the Pirates Organization in the 1970s, do you have anything on him?” The process to get to a program was truly long and painful prior to organization this way. However, with the additional subject headings, the search became quite easy. The subject entry would look like this:

SUBJECT Detroit Tigers (Baseball Team) – Minor League Affiliate – 1970-1979.

(Samples of the entire cataloging records are attached at the end of the paper.)

## **Lessons**

When I started the process in 1997, I intended to establish it as a new way of collecting at the Baseball Hall of Fame Library and as the basis for a new relationship with the Minor Leagues. I was prepared to make the time commitment year after year to ensure that this collection continued to grow. However, my participation was stopped in 1998 when I left the Hall of Fame for family reasons. While I am still associated with the Hall of Fame for the Induction Weekend, I really am not doing any collecting work with the library. So with two three years removed from the collecting initiative, I have been able to look at the process and the results and evaluate the lessons from the process.

## **Staff Time to Manage the Collecting Initiative**

When we embark on programs in libraries and archives, we sometimes poorly judge the amount of time that the project will take. This was very much the case with this collecting initiative. This work consumed a great deal more of my time than I expected, though I enjoyed the work and the contacts. A very valid question to ask is whether or not a library or archival repository can fully devote the time of a person to undertake this type of initiative. If the case can be made to bring these items into the collection and a person can be assigned who has an

affinity or interest in the project, then the library doubly benefits. While during 1997 and 1998 we collected nearly every team publication from the Minor Leagues, the cost in staffhours was great (but, in my opinion, worth it).

I would suggest that people undertaking these initiatives subscribe to the law of diminishing returns and use that concept as a way to gauge participation in the program. If it takes four calls to get the smallest item, it may not be a program that can sustain the amount of work put into it. As for my program, nearly every extra call resulted in a new package of material arriving at my desk. So the extra time was nearly always reciprocated with additional publications.

### **Exposure and Interest**

Collecting initiatives are often viewed (sometimes with distain) as simply sales pitches to let people know that you are interest in their material. I believe that this is certainly true as libraries reach out to new audiences or by trying to collect more information. The same mechanism for disseminating information on your interest in collecting material can be used to get the word out that you have these materials in your collection.

During this project, one aspect of this that was very clear was that the Minor League teams and leagues felt that they had a friend in Cooperstown. While they had a contact with our public relations department who supplied a one page quiz for their program on a near annual basis, they did not have a personal connection nor did the teams feel that they had someone that they call if they wanted something. In contacting these teams, they were first thrilled by the attention and interest by the Hall of Fame in their operation. Second, some teams began to use us as a reference, allow us to fulfill our role as librarians of baseball. We did some work for the International League and a few teams based through contacts established with this program. The initiative was successful in establishing the Baseball Hall of Fame as a place where the Minor Leagues could go for their own research and support. On one occasion, in calling on a team the second year, I heard that the thank you letter I wrote the previous year went up on a bulletin board and that my name was familiar. Those kinds of connections cannot be made by having a passive collecting policy.

### **Fragility of Collecting Initiatives**

Most collecting initiatives are designed around the current needs or interests of a library or an archival repository. Many of these programs are initiated and interpreted by people in a management capacity and are sustained as long as they are able, or as long as the person who started it is in position of authority.

Even when you have a institution-directed collecting initiative, collecting scope or focus, the ability and success of any such endeavor lies with the people who are managing the effort. Whereas an archivist for a Jewish Collection at a historical

society might have a general focus, the material that they bring into the repository will depend a great deal on their interpretation of what is important and needs to be collected. While the material might all document Jewish life in the community, the items collected could reflect their own specific interests within the large context of Jewish history. At the Baseball Hall of Fame, I had the ability to initiate collecting in any area, but opted, out of my own interest and ability to recognize the deficiency, to pursue material documenting Minor League Baseball. Equally important to the history of baseball in the country was Collegiate Baseball and Little League (and other youth leagues). I made a conscious decision to pursue one line of collecting over the others at the beginning of my service at the Hall.

When pursuing a line of collecting slightly off the main mark and driven by personal interpretations, it is very likely that as the position goes, so goes the initiative. When I left the Hall of Fame in 1998, the program effectively stopped. The new person hired to take my position decided to focus more on the printed collection (a worthy task) than follow up my work with the Minor League teams. While material did continue to arrive at the Baseball Hall of Fame Library from Minor League teams, the numbers were far less than what was collected in 1997 and 1998. These programs, and their interpretations, are driven by individuals and ultimately, the success of the program lies on their ability to carry it forward.

### **Measuring Success of a Collecting Initiative**

It seems safe to say that all but the simplest collecting initiative is doomed to fail. When libraries and archival repositories embark on such a program, they typically set the sky as the limit. The tasks are often Herculean: collect all the minor league publications produced in 1997; document the automobile industry in Indiana, collect technical manuals documents the steel industry in Western Pennsylvania. It seems that with these programs, depending on one's interpretation, they are all doomed to fail. How can a repository or library, regardless of the size of their staff or storage area, truly document any subject? (Add comments from Richard J. Cox on the Ethnic Collections at the Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania – He is very critical of the “collecting as sales” approach).

With this notion, it seems that most libraries would do best not even to try these broad-based collecting initiative. However, I have a different view of the success. These stated goals of documenting and collecting are simply that, targets to aspire to. While there is little likelihood that one could collect 100% of everything they set out to do, by collecting something, and proactively putting themselves in the community, they will find themselves somewhere between two extremes. On the one hand, a library could do nothing and settle at 0% of a goal. On the other hand, a library could attempt to enact a program and move in the direction of the goal of 100%. While they would never truly be able to attain 100%, they would certainly be greater than 0%. If the collecting area represented needed material

or a different format, then any material brought into the collection would be useful and help increase the collection. I am reminded by the logo for Leo Burnett Advertising. It shows a hand reaching for the stars. Clichéd but a nice thought, the idea is that you reach for the stars with everything you do. You will not touch them, but you will not end up with a handful of mud. This is the philosophy that you need when undertaking these programs.

This work is also continuous and will almost never become something that works on “autopilot.” As I left the Hall of Fame in 1998, the number of Minor League team publications that came to the Library dropped dramatically. Without the reminders, the calls, the e-mails, the contacts, they were not reminded that the Hall of Fame was still interested in their material. In turn, the leagues and teams did not send the material in. This remains a constant struggle to obtain personal connections between the library or repository and the organizations, as any staff change at that level will require a renewed sales pitch on the part of the library.

Projects such as these can make a tremendous contribution to the resources of a library. Through this two year program, we were able to increase by four times the number and scope of Minor League team publications, providing the library with an excellent foundation to document this area of baseball history. As with any great endeavor, there are costs associated with it and a library must be willing to dedicate resources to them if they are to succeed. Those costs are everything from money for phone calls, printing costs for promotional literature, and, most importantly, staff-time to undertake the process.

#### Works Cited:

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Hoffman, Frank W. Popular Culture and Libraries. Hamden, Conn. : Library Professional Publications, 1984.

## Examples from the ABNER catalog (National Baseball Hall of Fame Library)

**Author** [St. Catherines Stompers \(Baseball team\)](#).  
**Title** St. Catherines Stompers program.  
**Imprint** St. Catherines, Ont. : St. Catherines Stompers , 1995-.  
**Description** v. : ill. ; 28 cm.  
**Frequency** Annual.  
**Pub date** 1995-.  
**Note** Description based on: 1998.  
**Subject** [St. Catherines Stompers \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[New York-Penn League \(Baseball league\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Canada](#) -- [Ontario](#) -- [St. Catherines](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Canada](#) -- [Ontario](#) -- [St. Catherines](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Toronto Blue Jays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).

**Author** [Utica Blue Sox \(Baseball team\)](#).  
**Title** Utica Blue Sox program.  
**Imprint** Utica, N.Y. : Utica Blue Sox , 1977-.  
**Description** v. : ill. ; 28 cm.  
**Frequency** Annual.  
**Pub date** 1977-.  
**Note** Cover title.  
Description based on: 1998.  
**Subject** [Utica Blue Sox \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Utica Blue Jays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[New York-Penn League \(Baseball league\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [New York \(State\)](#) -- [Utica](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [New York \(State\)](#) -- [Utica](#) -- [1970-1979](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [New York \(State\)](#) -- [Utica](#) -- [1980-1989](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [New York \(State\)](#) -- [Utica](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Toronto Blue Jays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1970-1979](#).  
[Chicago Red Sox \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Boston Red Sox \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Florida Marlins \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
**Add title** Utica Blue Sox souvenir program.  
Utica Blue Sox souvenir scorecard.  
Utica Blue Sox yearbook.  
Utica Blue Jays official souvenir program.

**Author** [Orlando Rays \(Baseball team\)](#).  
**Title** Orlando Rays souvenir program.  
**Imprint** Orlando, Fla. : Orlando Rays , 1973-.  
**Description** v. : ill. ; 28 cm.  
**Frequency** Annual.  
**Pub date** 1973-.  
**Note** Cover title.  
 Description based on: 1997.  
**Subject** [Orlando Rays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Orlando Twins \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Orlando SunRays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Orlando Cubs \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Southern League \(Baseball league\)](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Florida](#) -- [Orlando](#) -- [Periodicals](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Florida](#) -- [Orlando](#) -- [1970-1979](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Florida](#) -- [Orlando](#) -- [1980-1989](#).  
[Minor league baseball](#) -- [Florida](#) -- [Orlando](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Minnesota Twins \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1970-1979](#).  
[Minnesota Twins \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1980-1989](#).  
[Minnesota Twins \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Chicago Cubs \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
[Tampa Bay Devil Rays \(Baseball team\)](#) -- [Minor league affiliate](#) -- [1990-1999](#).  
**Add title** Orlando Twins souvenir scorebook.  
 Orlando SunRays souvenir program.  
 Orlando Cubs souvenir program.