
RARE FILIPINIANA RESOURCES IN THE UP DILIMAN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY: CURRENT CONDITION AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

EIMEE RHEA C. LAGRAMA
Filipiniana Section, Main Library
University of the Philippines

1. DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF FILIPINIANA MATERIALS

Filipiniana can be defined as materials that are about the Philippines and Filipinos, written in any language, regardless of place of publication or authorship. This definition, which is a loose translation of Jose Toribio Medina's, has guided the acquisition policy of many libraries regarding their Filipiniana collection. Some have modified it to better fit their institution's thrust or needs, but the core definition remains the same.

Included in the abovementioned definition are materials that are not in document form; modifying a few words, Filipiniana can cover a wide variety of formats so long as the identity of the material or its creator is Filipino. For this paper, the focus is on documentary Filipiniana, given the nature of the institution.

2. THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES

The University of the Philippines (UP) is a leading tertiary institution in the country. Established in 1908, it has positioned itself as a center for excellence in the fields of arts and humanities, science and engineering, social sciences and law, among others.

As of 2008, there are seven different campuses scattered all over the archipelago, with each campus having a "specialization". The Diliman campus is known for its arts, sciences, law and engineering courses; Manila for the health sciences, Visayas for fishery courses, Los Baños for agricultural sciences and forestry; Davao and Baguio for social sciences and the arts. The campus in Diliman is the flagship campus, as well as the campus with the most degree courses offered and the largest student population. The student population in Diliman of more than 21,000 in 2007 is a diverse group coming from all social strata and originating from all points in and out of the country.

3. UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

This diverse group of students, plus faculty members and employees are served by one central university library and 33 unit libraries. The University Library, which is headed by the university librarian, serves as the central technical and service node of all the unit libraries. The university library is under the central administration of the university and it occupies its own building within the campus. It is central to the university's academic thrust, as well as serving as the geographic heart of the university, due to the libraries central location within the campus. The library collection amounts to around one million volumes and this is augmented by journals, periodicals, AV materials and archival materials. The library caters to all members of the university, regardless of college or unit. The collection is general in nature, as opposed to more specialized collections in the various unit libraries. The library also places great emphasis in the acquisition of Filipiniana materials.

During World War II, the original University Library collection in Manila met the same fate as many buildings in the area at that time. It was bombed, looted and the collection destroyed. Out of the 147,000 volumes, only 3,000 were returned by borrowers after the liberation (Hernandez, 2001). Gabriel Bernardo, the Father of Philippine Librarianship, was instrumental in the rebuilding of the library's collection. Through generous donors, grants, and aid, the library was able to increase the collection again, albeit through a long and harrowing journey.

4. THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS SECTION

Initially part of the Filipiniana Serials (Fi-Serials) Section, it used to be housed in the basement of the library. The materials in this section separated from the rest of the general collection because *“they are of a certain/distinct form, about a particular topic, or a geographical area, rare, fragile or valuable. The materials consists of books and other types of Filipiniana materials that do not fall into any of the conventional categories of research materials like books and periodicals. They may be rare, unique, out of print, unpublished and non textual”* (Special Collections Flyer, 2007).

The Special Collections serves as an auxiliary to the general collection of the library and offers information on various subjects that are not usually found in the other sections.

The arrangement of the collections was problematic; it was located in one of the rooms at the basement, while the rest of the collection that could not fit in there were scattered elsewhere in the library. The rare book collection was placed behind the microfilm stacks and the vernacular collections were located in the archives on the 3rd floor. The space allotted was cramped and not very conducive to scholarship, it was more akin to a dungeon than to a library.

In the late 2005, the Humanities Section in the second floor moved to the College of Arts and Letters building and the Special Collections Section took its place. Its new home was more than six times bigger than its former home. Special Collections materials that were located in the archives and other sections were now housed in one convenient location. The Rare Book Collection, Vernacular Papers and Personal Papers were given their own rooms. The library’s art collection were also housed within these two adjoining rooms. There was a reading area and reading alcoves. One alcove became a listening nook for the music collection. Its large and open space was ideal for holding events and activities in the library like book launchings, talks and exhibits, which we have had several times before.

From 2005 to 2007, this was the arrangement. It was well suited for big events and lectures. But for ordinary days, the room seemed imposing and empty. Users were intimidated by the size of the room. For the entire year of 2006, less than 200 users used the collection. If small and cramped was not good for the section, then large and spacious seems to pose its own problems too.

In late 2007, in preparation for the centennial of UP, the basement of the University Library was assigned to be the location for UP’s Centennial Heritage Center. The Fi-Serials was transferred from the basement to share the room with the Special Collections Section. With a little creativity, engineering, planning and a lot of elbow grease, the reading alcoves used by the Special Collections were reduced to two, but the Rare Book Room and the Vernacular/Personal Papers stayed where they are. This compact arrangement apparently suited the collection well as it was easier to maintain and monitor. Users have also increased since students can now consult two collections in one location.

5. RARE BOOK COLLECTION

The Rare Book Collection is one of the “crown jewels” of the University Library, and is just one of the many materials that can be found in this section. Materials in this collection were published or printed in the 17th century to the early part of the 20th century. There are quite a few manuscripts in this collection, as the library decided to incorporate them here because it is not part of the circulation collection. In addition, the Special Collections have better storage condition. Like in many special collections in other research libraries, use of them are restricted to better protect the collection for posterity. Readers are encouraged to use the microfilm version of the book; the digitized copy is still being organized, although it will not be long before this can be made available to the readers.

One of the first tasks we accomplished after the transfer to our current location is to update our inventory of the collection. In addition, we also assessed the physical condition of the volumes based on the established guidelines by the library. As of 2007, the collection numbered

about 5,400 volumes and 4,000 titles. The subject Language and Literature has the largest number of titles, followed by History, Social Sciences and Religion respectively.

Although the section still pursues the acquisition of more materials for the Rare Book Collection, the foremost concern is preservation of the materials.

The following are some of the titles that are in the collection. All of them are available in microfilm and are also listed in the library's WebOPAC.

- Almodóvar del Río, Pedro Jiménez de Góngora y Lujan, Duque de. (1784-1790). *Historia política de los establecimientos ultramarinos de las Naciones Europeas*. Madrid: Antonio de Sancha. 5 v.
- Álvarez de Abreu, Antonio José. (1736). *Extracto historial del expediente que pende en el Consejo Real, y Supremo de las Indias, a instancia de la ciudad de Manila, y demás de las Islas Philipinas, sobre la forma en que se ha de hacer; y continuar el comercio, y contratación de los tejidos de China en Nueva-España...* Madrid: J. de Ariztia, 1736. 324 p.
- Blanco, Manuel. (1837). *Flora de Filipinas*. Manila: Imp. de Sto. Tomas por C. López. 887 p.
- Chirino, Pedro. (1890). *Relación de las Islas Filipinas*. Manila: Imprenta de D. Esteban Balbas. 247 p.
- Gonzalez de Agueros, Pedro. (1791). *Clamores apostólicos dirigidos a todos los religiosos del Orden de nuestro padre San Francisco en estas provincias de España...* [Madrid]: con real permiso: en la oficina de Don Benito Cano. 88 p.
- Medina, José Toribio. (1896). *La imprenta en Manila desde sus orígenes hasta 1810*. Santiago de Chile: casa del autor. 280 p.
- Murillo Velarde, Pedro. (1749). *Historia de la provincia de Philipinas de la compañía de Jesús*. Manila: Imprenta de la Compañía de Jesús, por D. Nicolás de la Cruz Bagay. 2 v.
- Paterno, Pedro Alejandro. (1885). *Ninay (costumbres Filipinas)*. Madrid: I Impr. de Fortanet. 352 p.
- Ramusio, Giovanni Battista. (1554-86). *Delle navigationi et viaggi raccolto gia da m. Gio. Battista Ramvsio, et hora...* Venetia: Appresso i Giunti, 3v.
- *Relación verdadera del levantamiento de los Sangleyes, en las Filipinas, y de las vitorias que tuvo contra ellos el Governador do Sebastia Hurtado de Corcuera, el año passado de 1640 y 1641*. [Madrid : Catalina de Barrio y Angulo, 1642]
- Retana, Wenceslao E. (1906). *Aparato bibliográfico de la historia general de Filipinas deducido de la colección que posee en Barcelona la Compañía general de tabacos de dichas islas*. Madrid: Imprenta de la sucesora de M. Minuesa de los Ríos. 3 v.
- San Antonio, Juan. (1738). *Chronicas de la apostólica provincia de S. Gregorio de religiosos descalzados de n. s. p. S. Francisco en las islas Philipinas, China, Japón ...* Imprenta del vso de la propia provincia, afta en el Convento de Nra. Señora de Loreto del pueblo de Sampaloc, extra-muros de la Ciudad de Manila : por Fr. Juan del Sotillo, 1738-44. 3v.
- Vermejo, Juan. (1739). *Recurso humilde, y religioso, que en defensa de sus apostólicos privilegios, vulnerados por la sentencia, que Nro. Rmo. Padre Fr. Juan Vermejo, Ministro General de todo el Orden Seraphico...* Provincia de San Gregorio. 46p.
- *Visita a la provincia de Ylocos*. (1788?). [Batac]: s.n. 8 p.
- Xaranillo, Antonio. (1688?). *Memorial al rey nuestro señor por la provincia de la Compañía de Jesús: en satisfacción de varios escritos y violentos hechos, con que a dicha provincia ha agraviado el reverendo arzobispo de Manila*. 150 p.

These are just a few of the many other titles in the rare book collection. There are other works in Spanish, especially travel books, history, language and bibliographies.

6. CURRENT CONDITION AND CONSERVATION INITIATIVES

The three staff members (one full-time, 2 part-time) of the Special Collections worked on the inventory and condition report of the Rare Book collection in approximately 14 months. The condition report was based on a guideline judging the physical qualities of the paper, binding and the print. We placed a special emphasis on the condition of the paper as it is the main component of the book, i.e. if the pages are brittle and brown, despite having a good binding, it is considered in fragile condition. Volumes that are extremely fragile are placed in enclosures or phase boxes to prevent further handling. We try to give a detailed description of the condition report as much as possible. The phase boxes are also meant to house them until such time as the library can have them properly conserved.

The room where it is housed is kept air-conditioned for 9 hours. Despite the need to maintain a constant temperature round the clock, the library, which is a government entity is ordered to turn off all air conditioners and electricity after office hours as mandated by law. The fluctuation in temperatures in between office hours have not been measured yet.

Since the establishment of the Special Collections Section in the early 60's, the library has been conscious of the measures to extend the life of its materials. The earliest, simplest and still most effective method of preserving the information within the books is microfilming. If stored properly, they can last for 500 years and does not need computers to read the information. It has some limitations, but it still is a reliable medium, as far as preservation is concerned.

In 2003, the library began the process of digitizing Filipiniana materials. Called the Philippine e-Lib project, this has a two-fold objective: 1) as a means of preservation; and 2) increase access to the collection. Five government agencies provided the materials for this database, and the University of the Philippines Libraries comprise the largest chunk of the materials. It eventually aims to provide full text information to all the entries in its database; for now only a fraction of the entries has full text options.

In addition to these measures of preservation, the library also actively pursues the training of its library staff in the preservation and conservation of its materials.

7. FILIPINIANA OUTSIDE UP

Other leading tertiary institutions that also maintain sizeable Filipiniana resources include the University of Santo Tomas (UST), Ateneo de Manila University and the De La Salle University. The UST is in possession of some valuable incunabula, as their collections were spared from the destruction suffered by other universities during WWII. Ateneo de Manila is in possession of the Pardo de Tavera Collection, which has rare and unique materials in donated by various prominent Filipinos. De La Salle too has rare books in their antiquarian collection, although I have not the pleasure of researching there, unlike in the other two institutions.

8. ISSUES AND CONCERNS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF FILIPINIANA MATERIALS

The importance of preserving these materials cannot be emphasized enough and yet the awareness about the condition and continuing care for these materials is almost non-existent, except in academic circles.

Preservation is still the main and most serious concern for Filipiniana materials. Institutions share the anxiety for the condition of these materials but many balk at the expense of maintaining them. Consequently, the responsibility rests on large academic libraries (like UP) and research libraries who have the capacity to care for them more than smaller libraries. Lack of proper training for library professionals and lack of institutional support are secondary issues but all have a direct effect on the state of these materials

The bright side is that awareness is slowly but steadily increasing as well as the funding and support from local and international agencies in the preservation and conservation of these materials.

WORKS CONSULTED:

- Arlante, Salvacion M. (2005). *Preserving national heritage for the future: access, preservation and restoration of materials in the University of the Philippines Library*. Paper delivered at the International Council of Libraries, 14 March 2005, Penang, Malaysia.
- Arlante, Salvacion M., & Tarlit, Rodolfo Y. (2001). *The State-of-the-Art of Filipiniana Collections in the Philippines*. Sanghaya 2001.
- Filipiniana Special Collections Section [brochure]. (2007). University Library, University of the Philippines Diliman, Quezon City.
- Hernandez, Vicente S. (2001). Trends in Philippine Library History. *Libraries & Culture*. 36 (2), 329-44.
- Pardo de Tavera Collection. Retrieved February 7, 2008, from Ateneo de Manila University Web site: <http://rizal.lib.admu.edu.ph>