

Initial Hitchman Exhibit Notes:

This document is intended to serve as an initial starting point, which will serve as the basis for further discussion of the proposed exhibit with Nicole Bouché, Kate Leonard, and others. It is in the form of notes taken during the surveys I have made of the collection as I plan for the exhibit.

Possible exhibit titles:

Robert Hitchman: Northwest collector

Robert Hitchman: Bibliophile, historian, collector

Robert Hitchman: a collection of Northwest history

Robert Hitchman: a life of collecting Northwest history

Robert Hitchman: Humble Historian

Robert Hitchman: A Northwest Life

Robert Hitchman: A Life in Northwest History

Currently I am leaning towards this one:

Robert Hitchman: Sighted from the Crow's Nest - A lifetime of Pacific Northwest history "merely as a hobby." [or "purely for the fun of it.", both are quotes describing his view of his activities from his own letters.]

Thoughts on the theme of the exhibit:

Robert Hitchman was an important figure not only because of the historical materials he collected, but because of the position he created for himself in the local historical and bibliographic communities. He contributed to and participated wholeheartedly in the rising local history movement in the Pacific Northwest – a movement which was also national in scope during the 1960s and 1970s, and which has profoundly shaped our current understanding of history. Despite his full-time career in insurance, and his avowedly amateur status as a historian, he managed to make significant contributions to the study of historical place names in Washington State. Besides making these specific contributions himself, and developing an extensive collection of books, papers and ephemera, he was instrumental in helping and encouraging the work of many others – serving as a mentor, patron, researcher, editor, and go-between for numerous students, authors, academics, and other 'amateurs' similar to himself, as well as fostering interest in Pacific Northwest history in the public at large. His collection reflects this wide range of connections within the history of the region, and even more so within the story of the study of and

interest in that history. Hitchman was a central figure in this story – though he was far too humble to have ever identified himself as such.

Potential items for exhibit, with reasons, notations, etc.:

Related to place names:

Meany source material notebook (3/1). This is large and impressive, not too fragile but possibly problematic for display (maybe open to a single page (pick a good one) in a book cradle? Would this require a custom cradle, given the size of the item?). It would illustrate Hitchman's connection to Meany (and therefore to the UW), and could also reference Hitchman's own book in a placard, allowing people who are interested to follow up. It might help to create a sense of continuity - where Hitchman's interests arose, and where they ended up, especially since his book was published posthumously. On the other hand, it might be too specific to place names material, and exhibit will not focus on this. However, this was Hitchman's major area of publication...so I think it makes sense to include this book and an explanatory note.

Next to the Meany notebook, I could place a selection of some of Hitchman's notecards on placenames that he kept in many of his books (folder 6/7), maybe even one of the ones written on an old envelope (for color). This shows some of his work process (disorganized as it seems to have been!). While these are probably all acidic to some degree, they are not particularly fragile, and I would imagine that one short exhibit would not hurt them too badly. If necessary, a rotating selection would work if the lights are going to be too damaging to these scraps of paper.

At least one of his notebooks, potentially the one on 'Site Markers' (folder 3/11 or 3/12) open to one of his maps of a site, would also serve to illustrate his work in this area. These are also probably acidic and somewhat fragile (torn punched holes in places), but laid flat and opened to a single page it would probably be fine. Almost certainly it would need a strap to hold it open.

Given that this exhibit doesn't focus on the place names aspect of Hitchman's work, I think that one small shelf devoted to these items should be sufficient. My goal will be to tie all of this together around the theme of Hitchman's personal involvement with all these disparate aspects of historical and bibliographic work. This probably will mean a lot of little explanatory plaques, but perhaps there are other ways of doing this - I plan to ask Nicole for advice.

(1 exhibit group/shelf for this section)

Related to Pacific Northwest history/collecting:

I think it is important to include both evidence of Hitchman's substantive collection of original source material (the contents of box 1, 2, etc., in the vault) and also his collection of later and 'less valuable' ephemera related to Pacific Northwest history. This would demonstrate the actual mix of material in the collection, and remind people that (now) contemporary ephemera will eventually be rare and valuable parts of historical collections because they are rarely pre-

served on a large scale, and rarely survive in good condition. Rather than exhibit a selection of just the most valuable materials, even though there are sufficient quantities of them to design an exhibit around, it seems more appropriate to provide a more accurate cross-section of the entire collection in order to make this an exhibition more about Hitchman and his methods than about the historical materials he happened to acquire. Along these lines, it make sense to select a representative few subject or individual collections that will serve to illustrate and suggest the full range of materials Hitchman collected. The only downside to this approach is that I want to avoid the appearance of a random and mismatched pile of items - I looked at the AYPE exhibit upstairs (in Suzzallo 102), and was struck by the apparent uniformity of the collection on display, an appearance that the Hitchman material decidedly does not present. Hitchman's materials were so much more various in type and kind, that I really wonder how this will look...I guess one of the things I really have to do is to lay it all out together and just see what it looks like. That will be a step to embark on later in this process, when I'm determining the layout of items in the case.

Definitely the letter to Mrs. Whitman (folder 1/37), perhaps paired with the periodical showing the Whitmans' departure for their 'fields of labor' (folder 22/12). These original materials could then be complemented with some material from Hitchman's Whitman ephemera (folders 17/24-29), such as some of the pamphlets and maybe the 1960s map of the Whitman Mission historic site. Ideally it would also be good to find a letter between Hitchman and someone else about the Whitmans - I'll check in the collection (both in the Whitman files and in the Letters on NW History file) and see if I can't come up with one (I found one in folder 17/24, the Whitman correspondence folder - a good sign that my initial sorting was appropriate and will actually help people to find what they are looking for!). This grouping would make a nice demonstration of the wide variety of Hitchman's collection, as well as revealing Hitchman's place in all of this. After deciding this, there is another letter in 17/24 which is interesting, a letter from one author to Hitchman, critiquing another author's work and making recommendations that he intended for Hitchman to pass on (in a more diplomatic manner, of course!). This contributes to my picture of Hitchman's position in the community, but I don't know that it is appropriate for exhibit, given the poor handwriting, the familiarity readers would need to have with Hitchman's friends and acquaintances in order to get the references, etc. Just interesting to note...

Another figure who would be readily recognizable for exhibit viewers would be Isaac Stevens, and his original quartermaster's chit for expenses incurred during the Indian War of 1855/56 would display well (with an explanatory placard, of course). Again, to illustrate the mix of materials, this could be paired with the scrapbook containing clippings by Elwood Evans (folder 30/13) about the Indian war of 1855-6. This scrapbook has a very rigid binding, and would require something sturdy to keep it open. Does this disqualify it from exhibit? It would probably be best to leave it open to the first page, with the headline about the Indian War. There is also the scrapbook clippings of the 1902 contest essay written on Stevens as another possibility. There are certainly more materials in the book collection - I seem to recall an uncut pamphlet published during his time as governor, which ended up in the vault. However, maybe this is a less appropriate example of Hitchman's collection, and I'm not at all sure it makes sense at this point. I'll keep this grouping as an alternate.

Seattle fire pictures (folder 28/1), paired with some of Hitchman's later ephemera such as the 1964 Seattle Times Rotogravure cover (15/3), and the Washington Mutual 1939 brochure

(15/2, now really outdated by the failure of WM). The letter telling of his assistance of another researcher (15/1) would be great to again highlight the position of Hitchman in helping others out in the historical community. Depending on room, the copies of original letters from the days following the fire which are contained in his scrapbook (21/10) would be excellent to display as well. How to display this sort of grouping of disparate materials, and still make them obviously connected? This is a small case, and I can't simply rely on physical separation of each individual grouping...

Along these lines, I'm going to need to be very selective about which materials are chosen for the exhibit. I'm going to have to go and look carefully at the case to make sure of the size and shape of the display area available.

I want to do a selection from his Lewis and Clark collection, and I especially want to do this so I can use the Eastern Airlines trade bead ad (12/8). Is that a good enough reason? He did have a pretty good collection of materials, and I'll have to go through them to find if there is enough other stuff to merit using this. A later note: there is certainly enough material there, and creating a display of L&C ephemera from various periods would not be hard.

There is plenty of material in the HMS Beaver collection to merit an exhibit, including the medallion, souvenir coin, the prints/photos, and perhaps even the shipwrecks notebook/scrapbook. I think it would be a good idea to utilize the collections that include artifacts for the purposes of this exhibition, just to increase the variety and visual interest in the case. This will make an easy group to organize, and should be of interest.

What about James Christie? There is such a large amount of material that it would be a shame to leave him out - but a recent exhibit did feature his scrapbook, and space is at a premium. This one I will discuss with Nicole.

Beside these selections, there will have to be a plaque or note that emphasizes that these are simply examples of the sorts of material that Hitchman collected. They do not represent the entirety of the collection, or the only focuses he had. Essentially, they are a sampling of his collection, intended to give an idea of the extent and sorts of material included.

(4 exhibit groups and 2 alternate groups)

Related to Hitchman's interest in book culture/collecting as well as art:

I need to find a good way to identify Hitchman's books in the catalog. Nicole had mentioned that the notes fields are not searchable, but there must be a way. Of course, I can remember various books that would be good for exhibit, but it would be better if there was just a way to search. Note: I did later try searching with 'Robert Hitchman' as a keyword in the UW only catalog, and it worked! It does turn up lots of the books that include that note (though maybe not all? I don't see any of the rare books in this list). This will make it much easier to identify these books. Would it be OK to use a book that is meant to be in circulation for an exhibit? I could just check it out, I suppose...

This section would be perfect for exhibiting a few copies of 'Sighted from the Crow's Nest.' (8/1-2). These could set the tone for this area, or even form the central piece. One of the

letters from Hitchman explaining that he does this only as a hobby, and that he hopes it stimulates sales of books about our part of the world might be good as well (7/14). There is another wonderful letter from Hitchman in 1957 (6/8) that would be excellent, saying that he issued the newsletter 'purely for the fun of it.' This one might even serve as a statement of the theme of the exhibit, though I think it will also need an explanatory plaque or some sort of card that describes the exhibit.

Certainly some of the reprints and such from Ye Galleon Press, such as *Ten Years in Oregon*, *The Oregon Territory* (with his introduction), and others. Perhaps some of the local histories that he encouraged and assisted with - I know there are a number of these in the collection and it might make a nice crossover between the books and the history.

There is a nice letter from the J. W. Todd at the Shorey Bookstore (6/12) which connects up a lot of things: Hitchman's help behind the scenes on other writer's books, his own research, his interest in historical explorations, and his own actual tracking down of James Christie in B.C.. This letter might make a nice piece among the books to demonstrate all of these connections.

Maybe some elements of the Hewitt Jackson materials for an art/history connection - these are highly visual, and there are lots of possibilities there. Specific items might be: Robert Hitchman's letter to Bailey's Bookshop, highlighting Jackson and describing his own role (very good to show how Hitchman functioned in this community, folder 16/42), OHS newsletters (folder 16/46), the originals of Jackson's art including his sketch of the design for Hitchman's bookplate (16/47), photo of Hitchman and Jackson (16/45), and maybe the signed copy of *American West* magazine cover (16/46). Perhaps even Hitchman's cancelled checks to Jackson (16/47). This would represent a decent cross-section of Hitchman's collecting. One preservation question: how vulnerable are the original drawings on onionskin paper? I'm not familiar with the stability of this particular type of paper, and this stuff dates from the 1970s. Question for Nicole and Kate.

Need some other books as well - possibly some of his historical/rare collection that went into the vault. These didn't seem to come up with the search in the UW catalog, for whatever reason. Then again, I may not have room for much. I should pick one that is visually arresting, and makes for a more varied display. One of the leatherbound, fancy 19th century editions? It would probably be exhibited closed, more to display the binding than anything else. This will be a question for Nicole.

(3 exhibit groups)

Random items to demonstrate the sometimes eclectic nature of Hitchman's collection:

This section would also require a small explanatory plaque, just describing how broad Hitchman's interests were, and how eclectic his collection is!

The T. Wiedemann manuscript book (folder 1/36) would make a cool display, opened to one of the poems with an accompanying cartoon. The book is in good condition, and would probably be best mounted on an angled cradle with a strap of some sort to keep it open.

The scrapbook on the 'Praying Machine' would be interesting to put out there: especially given how intriguing the handwriting and letters would be. I have no idea where Hitchman came across it, or how it fit in, but it certainly shows how he was interested in many things. Some of the letters are very intriguing, too...

Speaking of which, I would need to pick out some Sasquatch items - maybe the letter he allowed Peter Byrne to circulate to his address list (folder 18/1). This could be accompanied by some other clippings or ephemera, and maybe his copy of the famous film for good measure. This roll of film is not really useful for preservation, since it is available in so many places, and it is more of interest simply that Hitchman acquired a copy. I wouldn't worry about putting it in the exhibit, even if it speeds deterioration, but I should check on whether others in Special Collections agree with this.

(1-2 exhibit groups)

Space constraints:

The case for the proposed exhibit is currently set up with the AYPE Photography exhibit, and that is essentially divided into roughly nine groupings, each one fitting on a small glass shelf. There is one place for a decently sized plaque describing the exhibit as a whole, and then there is a banner above the case for the title. I like the layout in general - it's not cluttered, and I prefer the spare look to the cluttered, even though cluttered might be a fairer representation of Hitchman's style! What I would probably do is keep the shelves concept, because I believe this would make it easier to display the broad variety of materials that I plan to use. I will plan to keep the displays of books down to four or five total (at least for books of any sort of size), just so I can fit plenty of archival and ephemeral materials. My goal is to display a real mix of materials, but keep the focus so that it doesn't end up seeming like a jumble.

It makes sense to limit myself to nine selected groups of material, for planning purposes, and to include a few other potential selections in case I end up with room for optional items.