

The Magic Box: A Case Study in the Collection Management of Objects in Archives and Manuscript Collections

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Abstract: This poster documents the development of Best Practice Guidelines for the Collection Management of Objects at New York University's Fales Library and Special Collections, using David Wojnarowicz's Magic Box as a case study. The management of the Magic Box represents two fundamental archival principles at odds with one another: the need to preserve the intellectual or physical arrangement of collections, and the need to preserve the artifactual integrity of the physical objects themselves. The development of the Fales Best Practice Guidelines was guided by the understanding of objects as both conceptually and practically equivalent to other archival documents. The research consisted of a literature review on the description, visual documentation, and public presentation of objects within an archival context; a survey of thirty-one repositories on their collection management of objects, and the creation of metadata and digital surrogates for the Magic Box and their incorporation into an EAD finding aid.

About the author:

Lisa Darms is Senior Archivist at the Fales Library and Special Collections at New York University. She holds an MA in History and Advanced Certificate in Archival Management from New York University, and an MFA in Photography from the University of Washington. She has worked as Project Archivist for the New York City Mayor's Office, and as a processing archivist at the Fales Library and archival aide at the American Civil Liberties Union. Before coming to archives she taught photography and new media, worked as an imaging technician at the Washington State House of Representatives, and exhibited solo and collaborative artworks.