

Mount Holyoke student works to catalog Joseph A. Skinner's book collection

alumnae.mtholyoke.edu/blog/mount-holyoke-student-works-to-catalog-joseph-a-skinner-s-book-collection



Photos by Laura Shea/Mount Holyoke College Art Museum

The project was an ambitious one: to establish a digital catalog of the book collection of Joseph A. Skinner, until recently only available for viewing at Mount Holyoke's Skinner Museum. To do so, each of the 684 books and manuscripts would need to be carefully packed and transported from the museum to Williston Library. From there, each volume would be handled with gloves and culled for data: author, title, volume, date, edition.

Phoebe Cos '16 stumbled into an early conversation about the project when, early in her sophomore year, she arrived at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum to introduce herself to Aaron Miller, associate curator of visual and material culture. She was hoping for an internship. She came away with a project. Cos spent a year and a half of her remaining time on campus methodically cataloging volumes of books. She was one of a team of several students who did

the detailed work of not only logging each volume but also looking for matches in the Five College Catalog and WorldCat, an online catalog that lists items found at libraries around the world and is accessible worldwide. More than once Cos found that a book in Skinner's collection was one of only a handful of copies on record.

Cos, who is now in graduate school for museum studies, continues to be energized by the project. "The collection has been part of Mount Holyoke for almost a century," she says, "and now it's available to anyone."

The books themselves have long been returned to the Skinner Museum, where visitors can view them from May to October. They can be accessed by anyone, anytime, at alumnae.mtholyoke.edu/skinnerbooks.

—By Jennifer Grow '94

This article appeared as "Cataloging the Collection" in the winter 2019 issue of the Alumnae Quarterly.

February 22, 2019

Tags: [departments](#), [on display](#), [quarterly](#), [winter 2019](#)