

Letters

COLLEGE & RESEARCH LIBRARIES

Characteristics of Collections

To the Editor:

I feel I should call your attention to a possible error of fact in the article, "Characteristics of Collections Added to American Research Libraries, 1940-1970: A Preliminary Investigation," by Grant T. Skelley (*C&RL*, Jan. 1975). The apparent error appears in Table 4, page 60 (though the consequence of it would be pervasive), where—if I read correctly—William and Mary is placed in the "Private" column.

Although it may occasionally comport itself after the private school-high prestige model, it was purchased by the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1906 and has been—for better, or for worse—a state institution ever since.

Henry Grunder
Curator of Rare Books
College of William and Mary
in Virginia

Response

I appreciate receiving Mr. Grunder's advice about the fiscal support status of The College of William and Mary, and I apologize herewith to the people of the state of Virginia.

Perhaps my assumption that this college belonged in the "private" category was a result of an image created by the "comporting" Mr. Grunder mentions in his letter; perhaps not. But for whatever reason, it never entered my mind to check (as it did

for a couple of dozen other libraries), so the image was well fixed.

Spurred partly by abashment and partly by curiosity, I subsequently have taken an informal poll of thirty-six people, all of them "academics" of one kind or another. I asked whether William and Mary is a "private" or a "public" college. Every one of these people said "private," a few even thought I was pretty dumb to have to ask the question, and some said "Oh, it's got to be private." I may feel that because of this I was not alone in my ignorance, and, for that matter, that I was even in good company. But this does not alter the fact that I was in error.

The consequences of the error are more or less "pervasive," as Mr. Grunder suggests. They are also statistically trivial. Ten collections (the number recorded for William and Mary) amount to approximately 0.0068 percent of the total number of collections involved in the study (1,454), and 0.0078 percent of the total number of academic library collections involved (1,283). Percentages reported in the text of the article that involve "Academic/Public" and "Academic/Private" increase or decrease on the order of 1 or 2 percent.

Besides the obvious changes (plus and minus ten) in total number of "Academic/Public" and "Academic/Private," to readjust the figures, the information given in Table 1 about William and Mary's ten collections should be applied where appropriate.

Grant T. Skelley

TABLE 1
COLLECTIONS ACQUIRED BY THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

Year	Type of Collection	Means Acquired	Source of Gift
1942	3 MS (3 Authors)	3 Gift	3 Unspec.
1943	1 MS (Subject)	1 Unspec.	1 Unspec.
1945	1 Book (Subject)	1 Gift	1 Unspec.
	1 MS (Hetero.)	1 Gift	1 Unspec.
1947	1 Book (Subject)	1 Gift	1 Alumnus
	1 MS (Subject)	1 Gift	1 Unspec.
1950	1 Book (Hetero.)	1 Gift	1 Unspec.
1967	1 Mixed (Hetero.)	1 Gift	1 Unspec.



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