Postcards from the Edge: Reference & Instruction for Theatre Studies

Nedda Ahmed
Fine Arts Librarian
Denison University

Greg Hatch
Theatre Librarian
University of Utah
Workshop Agenda

1:00 – 1:15  Introductions
1:15 – 1:45  What Art Librarians need to know about Theatre Studies
1:45 – 2:45  Reference Materials
2:45 – 3:15  Coffee Break
3:15 – 4:00  Books, Journals & Collection Development
4:00 – 5:00  Databases & Indexes
What Art Librarians need to know about Theatre Studies

Who are we talking to???

– Theatre Scholars/Historians
– Practitioners:
  • Actors
  • Directors
  • Costume Designers
  • Set & Lighting Designers
– Dramaturgs/Literary Managers
– Playwrights

What are their goals for research & writing?

What are their research needs?
What Art Librarians need to know about Theatre Studies

Drama = the work of a playwright
Theatre = a performed play

5 Types of Writing:
1. performance reviews/dramatic criticism
2. text analysis
3. theatre history
4. dramatic theory
5. theatrical essay

Taken from:
Thaiss, Christopher and Rick Davis. Writing About Theatre.
Performance Reviews & Dramatic Criticism

Comprised of 3 elements:
1. Reportage
2. Analysis
3. Judgment

2 types of Authors:
1. Theatre Reviewer
   - Publishes in newspapers/magazines
   - Heavy on reportage w/ some opinion
2. Scholar of Dramatic Literature
   - Publishes in journals
   - Heavy on analysis & judgment
Text Analysis

2 forms:

1. Literary Analysis
   - Formally constructed
   - Author/audience is academic/scholarly
   - Examines themes, images, language, context, or other defining characteristics

2. Functional Analysis
   - Informally constructed (note-like)
   - Author/audience is artists & practitioners
   - Communicates one's understanding of a play to those involved in the production
Theatre History

Type of writing MOST dependent on research...

RESEARCH SOURCES:
- Recordings (modern)
- Reviews (since 18th century, mainly)
- Diaries
- Paintings/engravings
- References in literature

3 Types:
1. Physical Theatre
2. Social Theatre
3. Performing Theatre
Dramatic Theory & the Theatrical Essay

Theory:
• Rigorous, scholarly
• Written for people in the field
• Focused on single issue

Essay:
• "leisurely stroll through a garden of ideas"
• Non-specialized audience
• Synthesizes musings/observations

Framing Questions:
1. Why do we make theatre?
2. What constitutes a "good" play or performance (or "bad")?
3. What is the value of drama?
4. How do plays & performances communicate meaning?
5. How are plays & performances organized?
6. What is the nature of representation?
7. What is the relationship between text & performance?
8. How does drama interact with society?
Reference Materials

Types of Theatre Reference

1. General
2. People
3. Genre
4. Cultural Groups & Women in Theatre
5. Costume Design
6. Stage Craft
7. Play Indexes
Reference Materials

Hands-on Time

Questions to consider:

• Why would a student need a resource like this?
• What type of user would need this resource?
• How “far” does this resource go?
• Does this resource give options for further investigation?
• What are the limitations of this resource?
• How can this resource help me:
  – At the reference desk
  – With collection development
  – In an instruction session
• In a class setting, how would I explain the use of this resource?
Reference Materials

Online Hands-on Time

• Oxford Encyclopedia of Theatre & Performance
  – User name: nedda ahmed
  – Password: 25108001016858

• Play Index
  – H.W. Wilson
  – www.hwwilson.com/arisna.htm

• Inter-Play (free)
  – www.lib.pdx.edu/systems/interplay

• Morton Grove Public Library Play Index (free)
  – www.webrary.org/ref/searchplays.html
TAKE 5!
Books

6 Major Types of Books:

1. Scripts* & Prompt Books*
2. Biographies, Memoirs*, Interviews*
3. History & Analysis
4. Design: Costume, Scenery, Lighting
5. Acting (“How To”)

Check out the catalogs!

* Indicates primary source material
Full Text Plays: Licensed Content

• **ProQuest**
  
  Password: easteregg
  – Twentieth-Century Drama
  – American Drama
  – Editions and Adaptations of Shakespeare
  – English Prose Drama/English Verse Drama

• **Alexander Street Press**
  
  North American Theatre Online

  Login: reviewer   Password: 5flamboyant37
  – Asian American Drama
  – Black Drama - 1850 to Present
  – Latino Drama
  – Twentieth Century North American Drama
  – North American Women's Drama
Full Text Plays: FREE Content

- Project Gutenber
  http://www.gutenberg.org
- Complete Works of Shakespeare
  http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/works.html
- Alex Catalogue
  http://www.infomotions.com/alex
- Electronic Text Center
  http://etext.lib.Virginia.edu
- Online Books Page
  http://onlinebooks.library.upenn.edu/subjects.html
Periodicals

5 Major Types of Periodicals:

1. Scholarly Journals
   • Cover all types of theatre writing
2. Stagecraft
   • Useful for theatre history researchers & practitioners; sometimes contain interviews w/ directors & actors
3. Trade publications
   • Public reception facts & figures
4. Newspapers
   • Reviews, reviews, reviews!
   • NY Times, LA Times, The Times (London)
5. Popular magazines
   • Document intersection society + theatre
Indexes

• **Gale Literary Criticism Series**
  – Literature criticism from 1400 to 1800
  – Shakespearean criticism
  – Drama criticism
  – Nineteenth-century literature criticism

• **National Theatre Critics’ Reviews** (formerly New York Theatre Critics’ Reviews)
  – Full-text reviews of New York and regional productions culled from U.S. newspapers.
  – Coverage: 1940-1996.

• **A Guide to Critical Reviews**
  – Index to reviews of New York City productions published in U.S. and Canadian periodicals.

Not an index, but a good bibliography...

*How to Locate Reviews of Plays and Films: A Bibliography of Criticism from the Beginnings to the Present* by Gordon Samples
Databases:

Theatre-specific

• **International Bibliography of Theatre & Dance:**
  
  http://search.ebscohost.com
  Login: theatre  Password: workshop
  – From EBSCO
  – 1984-present
  – Available with or without full text

• **International Index to the Performing Arts:**
  
  http://trials.proquest.com/ptc?userid=2210298
  Password: easteregg
  – From Chadwyck-Healey
  – 1864-present
  – Available with or without full text
Databases:

Theatre-related

- ARTstor
- Avery Architectural Index
- Jstor
- Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature
- Literature Resource Center*
- MLA International Bibliography*
- Shakespeare Collection*
- Historical newspaper collections (such as America’s Historical Newspapers)
- History databases (such as Hist. Abstracts or America: History & Life)

* Trial Access:
http://trials.galegroup.com/pubacd/
Login: discovering   Password: authors
Questions?

Comments?

Other ideas to share?

Powerpoint slides & handouts will be posted to the ARLIS/NA Web site, under “Conference Proceedings”