

[Slide 1] Title—**One Fandom to Rule Them All: Collecting Tolkieniana at the Marquette University Archives.**

[Slide 2] Marquette University here in Milwaukee has a student population of roughly 8,000 undergraduates and 3,000 graduate students. Our Department of Special Collections and University Archives stands on three pillars: University Records, rare books, and manuscript collections. All three come together to form our department.

[Slide 3] Among our manuscript collections, arguably the most notable is the J. R. R. Tolkien Collection. At the heart of this collection are the manuscripts that Marquette purchased from Professor Tolkien in 1957, some of which came into Marquette's possession around that time; others arrived much later, sent by Tolkien's son and literary executor, Christopher. This remarkably comprehensive collection of manuscripts documents the creation of four of Tolkien's imaginary works: in order of their publication, *The Hobbit*, *Farmer Giles of Ham*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *Mr. Bliss*.

A question cries out here for an answer: Why is this collection at Marquette University?

[Slide 4] The 30-seconds sound bite answer is because of the vision of this man – William B. Ready, pictured here in front of the then brand new Memorial Library on Marquette's campus. In 1956 Marquette hired Ready from Stanford to be its library director and to stock this new library with books and manuscripts. Ready identified Tolkien as somebody whose manuscripts he wanted. He asked Tolkien if he would consider selling them to Marquette. Tolkien agreed. The sale was made. That's it in a nutshell. Essentially, the collection has been in Milwaukee for nearly sixty years and has drawn researchers here from all over the world. It has also made Marquette into a kind of pilgrimage site for Tolkien fans. On average we have 800-900 visitors per year passing through the department, wanting to make some connection with the manuscripts. We keep a permanent display of reproductions of selected manuscripts on display in our reading room.

Ready did not collect Tolkien because Tolkien was a fantasy author. As insightful as Will Ready was, I don't think he had any inkling that Tolkien would—more than any other single person—be responsible for the spawning of MODERN FANTASY: an enormously popular genre of literature and cinema with many attendant

fandoms. Ready seems to have pursued Tolkien because Marquette University is a Jesuit school and Tolkien was a devout Roman Catholic. I think this partially explains why, as far as fandom goes, Marquette is a one-trick pony. We collect Tolkien. At no point over the years did Catholic Marquette see the Tolkien manuscripts as the nucleus for a broader archival collecting area in modern fantasy authors or the fandoms they attract.

Tolkien's manuscripts *were* the collection in 1958, but over the years the Tolkien collection grew, or was allowed to grow, to encompass secondary works and expressions of what we today might call Tolkien fandom—a term used at the time was Tolkieniana.

[Slide 5] Chuck Elston, the collection's curator from 1977 to 2000, consciously chose to broaden the collection to include Tolkieniana: books, fanzines, artwork, games, puzzles, some 3-dimensional objects. Not long after Chuck became curator of the Tolkien collection, he decided to actively seek books and fanzines.

[Slide 6] Here is an advertisement published in a 1982 issue of *Amon Hen*, the bulletin of The Tolkien Society in Britain, where Marquette is soliciting copies of "early fanzines, other writings on Tolkien, and theses and dissertations (published or unpublished) about Tolkien and his creations." These written sources were Chuck's main focus. Other, perhaps more ephemeral, aspects of Tolkieniana—artwork, three-dimensional objects—tended to drift into the archives. I've talked to Chuck about this, and I think it worked this way: The manuscript collection attracted certain important Tolkien fans. These people had Tolkien-related stuff. Chuck was willing to accept some of the more unconventional archival items in order to get the things he really wanted.

[Slide 7] Of the important Tolkien fans who gravitated toward Marquette's collection, three stand out in particular, and would become important donors to the collection:

[X] The first was Dr. Richard E. Blackwelder. Dick Blackwelder was a retired entomologist who fell in love with *The Lord of the Rings* and devoted his remaining years to collecting basically anything he could find related to Tolkien. Blackwelder pursued Tolkieniana and Tolkien scholarship with a scientist's passion and tenacity. He and Chuck became close friends, and Chuck acquired Blackwelder's enormous collection.

[X] The second was Taum Santoski, for many years the unofficial ‘Tolkien scholar in residence’ at Marquette. Taum died tragically young, in 1991, only 33 years of age. He donated many items to Marquette.

[X] The third was Sumner Gary Hunnewell—Hildifons Took among the Tolkien fan community. Hunnewell has collected the world’s largest Tolkien-related fanzine collection—at least 241 titles from 27 countries, encompassing thousands of pages. Over the years Marquette has received the collection on loan from Hunnewell for microfilming. So, it is available to our patrons on microfilm. The original zines will all come to Marquette at some point down the road.

These individuals were crucial in developing the collection’s fandom side. Chuck’s nurturing of these friendships proved very beneficial to the archives. Taum would play an important role in Marquette’s acquisition of additional manuscripts from the Tolkien Estate, and he would be of invaluable assistance to Christopher Tolkien in the writing of his multi-volume *The History of Middle-earth*. Dick Blackwelder, who died in 2001, willed much of his estate to our department. This became the Tolkien Archives Fund, which annually pays out money for Tolkien-related acquisitions, processing, and programming.

[Slide 8] And Hildifons Took would help facilitate a wonderful acquisition: the original screenplay from 1958 for a proposed animated film version of *The Lord of the Rings*. An American named Morton Grady Zimmerman wrote the screenplay, and it had been sent to Tolkien for comment. With the help of Hildifons Took, Marquette acquired the original screenplay from the Zimmerman family. It contains Tolkien’s annotations. If you’re wondering what Tolkien thought of this screenplay, he provided a summary of his feedback in a polite but scathingly critical letter that he wrote to the film’s producer, expressing his overall displeasure with the screenplay.

[Slide 9] The Tolkien collection at Marquette continued to grow after Chuck Elston’s retirement. My predecessor as curator, Matt Blessing, purchased, for example, the Grace Funk Collection in 2004. Grace Funk was a Canadian librarian whose life hobby was amassing a large collection of written secondary sources related to Tolkien. For a discrete collection such as Funk’s, the material was made to stand on its own: i.e. The Grace Funk Tolkien Collection.

[Slide 10] But in the case of isolated, sporadic items—either individual items or small groups of items—that trickled into Marquette’s possession, much of it tended to get dumped into Series 5: Secondary Sources Related to J. R. R. Tolkien.

Matt Blessing shared Chuck’s openness to collecting Tolkien fandom. He saw value in documenting the nexus of Tolkien with popular culture.

[Slide 11] But Matt faced something Chuck never had to contend with: the Peter Jackson films, and the tsunami of merchandizing and fan output that these movies generated.

[Slide 12] Matt settled on the following language, which he attached to Series 5:

One of the objectives in developing this series is to document the impact of J.R.R. Tolkien's fiction in popular culture. The department welcomes donations. Due to the sheer volume of ephemera and other three-dimensional items available in the global marketplace archivists must be selective in accepting materials.

Put another way: We’re open to collecting a variety of expressions of Tolkien fandom, but acceptance is ultimately the judgment call of the archivist.

[Slide 13] This was where the collection stood when I became its curator at the beginning of 2012. I’d been at Marquette since 2003. As chance would have it, I stepped in as interim curator for the Tolkien collection when Matt left Marquette to become State Archivist of Wisconsin. Eventually we received our new department head, Amy Cooper Cary. After observing my work with the collection, Amy decided to make my interim role permanent. At present up to 50 percent of my time is devoted to the Tolkien collection; the remainder is spent working with other collections and on other departmental projects.

[Slide 14] After becoming curator, I focused first on some low-hanging fruit. I reprocessed the sprawling Series 5 by splitting it up into sub-series, based on format. This makes the inventory easier to navigate and provides room for growth.

[Slide 15] I also expanded our effort to capture websites with Archive-It. If you’re not familiar with Archive-It, it’s a web-archiving service developed at the Internet Archive that allows repositories to harvest, build, and preserve collections of digital content. Matt had subscribed our department to Archive-It in 2011, and he

began harvesting selected Tolkien-related sites under the collection title “Tolkien Scholarship & Fandom.” I broadened our Archive-It collection to include several new sites.

[Slide 16] Regarding guidelines on what to collect, I have found myself most drawn to material that captures a sense of community. I think this lies at the heart of fandom, and it has emerged as a guideline for how I appraise Tolkien-related material that crosses my path. To quote from the *Cambridge Companion to Science Fiction* published last year: “*Fans* are people who actively engage with something – a text, objects such as coins or stamps, favored sports teams – and *fandom* is the community that fans self-constitute around that text or object.” In archiving fandom then, we’re documenting a subculture. Ideally, the emphasis should be more on capturing a community than on just acquiring artifacts.

Another guideline that has emerged for me centers on the question of who created the material and why. Was it created for commercial consumption or did a fan produce it out of genuine regard for Tolkien? I tend to put greater value on things that were not simply mass-produced merchandise intended to make a profit.

[Slide 17] I accepted this 2013 photograph into the collection because it is an interesting grass-roots expression of Tolkien Fandom. The donor is a Boy Scout leader. This image is from a Boy Scouts’ National Youth Leadership Training event in California. The Tolkien fans there transformed this stump into a kind of One Ring totem. Somebody brought his replica Glamdring sword along to show everyone. I am hoping to acquire from this same donor a collection of Tolkien-related Boy Scout patches he has assembled from across the country. In some instances, Boy Scout troops have given themselves names based on Tolkien’s fiction. So, within the subculture of the Boy Scouts lives a self-constituted sub-sub-culture centered on Tolkien, one that I think is worthy of documenting in some form in our collection.

[Slide 18] Another example: In 2011 a team of researchers decided to name a genus of lizard after the dragon Smaug from *The Hobbit*. Genus *Smaug*, with *Smaug giganteus* as the largest species in the genus. By happenstance, I met a scientist who is a good friend of the chief researcher on the team. Through him I’m trying to gather documentation on the naming event. I’m looking for sources

(probably emails) that describe the process and capture the dialogue that went into it. For me, this is an expression of Fandom. A group of Tolkien fans celebrating his work through their own work. And what I find particularly appealing is that this is about the production of something and not just consumerism.

[Slide 19] Much of the Tolkieniana out there *has* been produced for mass consumption. Since 1976, Tolkien merchandising can be traced back to Saul Zaentz. Zaentz was a Hollywood mogul who produced the Oscar Award winning films, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Amadeus*, and *The English Patient*. In 1976 Zaentz acquired the film and trademark rights to *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* from the United Artists Studio. Tolkien had sold these rights to United Artists in 1969. Zaentz established Tolkien Enterprises—not to be confused with The Tolkien Estate, which is the family. In 2010 the name changed to Middle-earth Enterprises. It was Zaentz who granted Peter Jackson permission to make his films, and it was Zaentz who became a multi-billionaire through all of the licensing opportunities they spawned.

I agree with my predecessors that it would be unwise and unfeasible to attempt to collect every commodity since 1976 that Saul Zaentz permitted to be branded with *The Hobbit* or *The Lord of the Rings*. My policy has been to complete some areas that were begun by Chuck and Matt and to gather a representative sampling of the rest.

[Slide 20] I have been aided in this regard by a connection I made in 2012. Kristin Thompson is a noted film scholar at UW-Madison. In 2007 she published *The Frodo Franchise: The Lord of the Rings and Modern Hollywood*. I befriended her in 2012 when she visited Marquette to do research in the collection. In her years spent researching *The Frodo Franchise*, and since then as well, Thompson accumulated a significant collection of Tolkien-related merchandise. She scoured eBay and monitored fandom communications to track down and acquire interesting and rare items. Kristin was willing to donate her collection to Marquette.

[Slide 21] It forms the Kristin Thompson Tolkien Fandom Collection. I've arranged her collection into 6 categories based on the nature of the item:

[Slide 22] Promotional Materials created to promote the Peter Jackson Films and not intended for commercial sale.

[Slide 23] Brand Partner relationships between major companies and the filmmakers.

[Slide 24] Licensed Merchandise during the era of the Peter Jackson Films that was the result of a formal agreement between the manufacturers and Tolkien Enterprises.

[Slide 25] Unlicensed Material that was created and distributed by companies or fans *without* the approval of Saul Zaentz.

[Slide 26] Book-related Material—in other words, Tolkien material that predated the era of the Jackson films.

[Slide 27] And finally, Foreign Products created outside the United States.

As a whole, the Kristin Thompson Collection provides an excellent sample of the diverse merchandising that has been generated *for* Tolkien fans, and in some cases *by* Tolkien fans without the permission of The Saul Zaentz Company.

Kristin Thompson *donated* her collection to Marquette, and so the cost associated with it has been limited to processing and housing of the items. With the exception of the Grace Funk Collection that Matt acquired in 2004 and the annual subscription we pay to the Archive-It service, I don't believe that Marquette has been compelled to *purchase* any of its holdings relating to Tolkien Fandom or Tolkien in popular culture. I've noticed a kind of life-cycle at work in some fans. At one point in their lives they are zealously collecting or producing material that appeals to them. But later in life they reach a point where they ask "Well, what am I going to do with this stuff?" Selling it off might be an option, but many are open to gifting it to a place like Marquette. In this regard, the Tolkien manuscripts are a powerful draw. Fans like the idea of donating material that will reside in the same repository where the manuscripts live.

[Slide 28] As in most every archives, space is at a premium at Marquette. I have tried to make use of the wide array of Hollinger archival containers, especially those that provide compartmentalization, to pack items as efficiently as possible. I have politely declined some offerings in part because we do not have space for

them. An extreme example here is a certain fan who created several minutely detailed dioramas of places from Middle-earth. They were remarkable, several feet long on a side—the sort of miniatures that a filmmaker would use for aerial shots. There was no way I could accept them. They seemed to cross the line between archives and museum, and ultimately we are not a museum. In hindsight I wish I had at least documented them with photographs.

[Slide 29] To what extent have our Tolkien Fandom and popular culture holdings been used? The historical fanzines have received the most attention. Scholars of Fandom have discovered them in recent years and are mining them for information. The zines capture the Tolkien fan communities from the mid-1960s to the end of the twentieth century better than any other source. Also drawing attention is the documentation we have on various screen adaptations of Tolkien's works. Scholars interested in audience reception have studied other textual sources in Series 5 and the Funk Collection.

[Slide 30] Thus far, the material culture—the artifacts—in the collection, have garnered less interest. I have put some of this material to very good use in exhibits we have set up in the library. But, truthfully, how many Tolkien exhibits does an archives or library really need? I can honestly think of only one reference request since 2012 regarding the 3-dimensional objects in our collections: a woman called in a panic because her father's 1992 Barnes & Noble coffee mug with Tolkien's image on it—the one she gave her dad for his birthday twenty years earlier and that he uses every morning—had shattered on the floor when she was emptying the dishwasher. She searched eBay in vain. Then she found the mug listed on our finding aid, and she called, literally begging me to allow her to purchase Marquette's as a replacement. I gently explained to her how archival collections work and I suggested other avenues for tracking down a mug.

[Slide 31] Given the lack of interest in the 3-dimensional objects, I have to admit being haunted at times by the question, why have we collected this stuff? I look at the action figures and the like and wonder about their value. Collecting these seemingly ephemeral aspects of Tolkieniana has constituted a kind of 'leap of faith' for me. Saint Paul described Faith as "the substance of things hoped for." I would describe it here as "the substance of scholarship hoped for."

Yet I do have hope. One of the foremost scholars of material culture, Yale University's Jules Prown, has written that "human-made objects reflect, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, the beliefs of the individuals who commissioned, fabricated, purchased, or used them, and, by extension, the beliefs of the larger society to which these individuals belonged." These things may have something to tell us. Albert J. Bergeson at the University of Arizona recently wrote a book titled *The Depth of Shallow Culture: The High Art of Shoes, Movies, Novels, Monsters, and Toys*. One of his chapters is titled "A Sociology of Toys: How Transformers and Spiderman Embody the Philosophies of East and West." So, maybe my guarded optimism about scholarly interest in these things is not misplaced.

Having described where we've come from and where we currently are, I'd like to close briefly with three thoughts on where I would like to be.

[Slide 32] First, since our historical fanzines have received the most attention from scholars, I would love to improve access to them by digitizing the Tolkien fanzine collection built by Hildifons Took. Copyright emerges, however, as a huge obstacle to sharing these amazing publications directly with researchers in an online environment. I have been keeping tabs on the work being done at the University of Iowa with the digitization of its enormous science fiction fanzine collection donated by Rusty Hevelin and I look forward to learning from their experiences.

Secondly, I have wondered about growing our holdings of fan fiction related to Tolkien. The historical fanzines contain fictional works, but we have little material from the generation of fans that were introduced to Tolkien (and hopefully led to his books) by the Peter Jackson films. I'm not really certain how to pursue this—or even if I should—given the amazing success of the Organization for Transformative Works, working (I believe) in conjunction with the University of Iowa. Their "Archives of our Own" site preserves over 35,000 pieces of Tolkien fan fiction submitted to it by the authors.

Third, and finally, I would like to become more in tune with scholars studying fandom and popular culture. Instead of wondering if something might be of interest to them, I need to develop a better sense of their methodologies and the questions that interest them. In part, this requires that I read more of the

literature, but it also demands my making connections with scholars of pop culture and fandom and learning from them.

[Slide 33] Thank you very much! I look forward to whatever questions you may have at the end.