Grand programme *Faire collection*
Research Directions on the PSL Librairies, Archives and Museums

1. *Give existing collections a new voice*

"Institutional" collections—those whose formation, description, preservation and accessibility have been structured within libraries, archives and museums—are neither fixed nor monolithic. As potential objects of research, they bear witness to both the contexts of their development and the history of the values ascribed to them by their users. Questioning them and viewing them in a new light helps to illuminate their various meanings. Two processes, in particular, merit attention:

1.1. Resemanticizations and shifts of status

For example, in 1835, the Ecole des Chartes created a unique collection of facsimiles of ancient written documents for the study of palaeography and diplomatics. This material was designed strictly for educational purposes. Today, however, other characteristics may take precedence over its educational function: first, a material heritage value, as it is a collection representing exceptionally the history of reproduction techniques; second, an epistemological value, as it is indicative of a method of teaching history and its auxiliary sciences during the 19th and 20th centuries, as well as a way of conceptualizing textual sources.
Many other examples exist within PSL institutions, and 3D digitization techniques, when necessary, enable these objects to be studied, highlighted, and editorialized.

1.2. Supporting emerging scientific communities

Collections intended to support teaching and research are a key component of the identity of a community of students, teachers, and researchers. PSL institutions allow this process to be observed at various point in history. The inventory registers of the École des Mines library, along with the school's collections of objects and mineral specimens, accompany both the growth of an industry and the establishment of a specific field of study, ultimately leading to the formation of a professional body More recently, the formation of the Dauphine University Library collections reflects the scientific and political choices and objectives that accompanied the structuring of management sciences as an academic discipline. AI and data mining techniques now facilitate the exploration of catalogues and inventories in support of this approach.

2. *Discussing collections*

2.1. Moving towards the margins

The management and conservation of collections often involve grey areas, which research could help to clarify:

- The porous boundaries between public and private is an underlying issue in the status of researchers' archives, for example, but also in the integration of "atypical" documents into public collections (offprints, photocopies, etc.), or the appropriation of specific collections for teaching and research purposes, or objects brought back from foreign countries personally but which could be subject to restitution claims. A strictly legal approach cannot resolve these issues; it must be combined with a sociological and anthropological approach in order to outline practical solutions.

- The history of collections has sometimes led to their dispersion. Alternatively, the movement of researchers and the dissemination of knowledge have meant that what could/should have been a collection never existed as such: traces, writings, and objects belonging to the same intellectual corpus were produced in different places and at different times and remained disconnected. This raises the duality between the fantasized or ideal collection and its material reality, which is topographically limited. Digitization is a way to virtually reconstruct physically scattered collections and recontextualize them. At the scale of PSL, such programs could enable tracing personal trajectories or disciplinary adventures.

-   The increasing production of archives, data, and documents in exclusively digital formats requires adaptations in archiving and conservation processes. However, the challenge goes beyond technical aspects; it also involves cultural and epistemological considerations. What status do these digital productions hold for their creators, and what potential do they offer for transmission and dissemination? What strategy do they use to organize and exploit them? Do they support a new relationship with publishing and knowledge, or do they function as an avatar of paper? Analyzing both personal and institutional practices would provide deeper understanding of the environment.

2.2.   Through the prism of vocabulary

The terms "collection", "gathering", "conservation", etc., take on very different meanings depending on whether one is a producer of objects or documents, a collector, a curator, an archivist, or a librarian. These differences highlight contrasting representations of the act of collecting and the intention behind it. Curiously, these distinctions have never been explored, as if the meaning of collection were a universally understood concept. The lexicon entry serves first to establish the link between the collection's definition and a professional or disciplinary community, and then, above all, to foster dialogue between these communities and build a common approach.