Ohio State Witch Hunt: Rooting Out Occult Texts and Historical Witchcraft Materials in OSU’s Rare Books and Manuscripts Library

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Throughout history, the topic of witchcraft has interested theologians, medical doctors, and laymen. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Library at The Ohio State University contains materials from the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries that touch upon these witchcraft and occult subjects, but so far these materials have never been fully analyzed or codified as a coherent research and teaching collection.

To redress this deficiency, in this project, I will perform a research-based collection assessment and formal descriptive bibliography of the diverse witchcraft, magic, and occult-related materials in OSU’s collection. To achieve this goal, I will complete a collection overview and produce an annotated descriptive bibliography based on a detailed codicological analysis of each artifact that will account for their provenance and publication history, generic content and context, and reader reception. My project will combine a number of research approaches including linguistic, historical, and literary analyses as well as the scientific evaluation and description of books as physical objects. The types of research required for this project will give me invaluable knowledge and experience that will help to further my specific career goals in the areas of library science and special collections management. My research will also provide Ohio State University Libraries’ Rare Books and Manuscripts Library with an essential reference tool that will present the library with a precise, annotated and full accounting of its important collection of witchcraft-related materials.