Purpose – An online search of the Harvard University Library System – which includes the Baker Library, Houghton Library, and the Radcliffe Institute’s Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America – reveals nearly 1,000 archive and manuscript holdings on advertising and related topics. The purpose of the research described in this paper is to investigate the extent of these holdings and to assess their value to advertising and marketing historians.

Approach – Described are the extensive and valuable special collections and other holdings related to advertising, business, and marketing of the Harvard Library System. Also described are the availability of the holdings and recommendations for accessing and studying the collections and artifacts.

Findings – The Harvard University Library System is confirmed to be historically significant because it contains some of the most topically valuable collections of 19th century advertisements and ephemera in North America, especially in regard to the role of women in the history of advertising; some of the collections are international in scope; and the collections address a wide variety of products, services, and advertising objectives.

Contribution – A prior search for the world’s largest and most historically significant archives and collections of advertisements and marketing ephemera (promotional objects or media executions created for a one-time, limited purpose) revealed a handful of library and museum collections of exceptional size or topical importance meriting further investigation. This paper adds to the line of research focused on revealing the breadth, depth, and historical value of the world’s important collections of historical advertisements and ephemera.

Key Words – marketing history, advertising history, advertising archives, marketing ephemera

Paper Type – Research Paper

Introduction

Many historians date the dawn of modern advertising and branding to around the year 1900 and tend to fixate on the philosophies and practices of the period’s influential Americans, such as Albert Lasker, John E. Kennedy, George Rowell, Francis Wayland Ayer, Harley Procter, James L. Kraft, and J. Walter Thompson. This fixation has directly encouraged two limitations in advertising’s historiography, which Schwarzkopf (2011) – who reviewed historical studies published between 1980 and 2010 and synthesized the findings with several of the classic historical works – labeled the “Americanization” and “Modernization” methodological-theoretical norms. America, as Schwarzkopf (2011: 534) argues, “is talked up by historians into the embodiment of a new stage in the development of humanity, a stage dominated by modern consumer capitalism. With the takeover of European culture by the American advertising industry, thus goes the story, history had finally arrived at the level of a globally shared consumerist consciousness.”

Beard (2016) confirms, however, that advertising similar to that of the 20th century in design and intent existed much earlier, that it came into use for similar reasons, and that much the same pattern of reasons occurred around the globe, including among the ancient civilizations of the Middle and Far East. Economically, even in its earliest uses, advertising was linked to trade specialization, affluence and discretionary income, marketplace economies, competition, and new forms of goods distribution. Other important themes in the development of advertising and related forms of commercial communications are the use of trademarks; advertising’s early use with persuasive intent; the importance of spectacle; the appearance and evolution of early aural and visual media; the influence of technology on media.
development; the use of fine art; the use of emotional appeals and appeals to social status; and the regulation of advertising practices and practitioners, often with the goal of consumer protection.

The Modernization bias has also partly occurred because many historians have often focused on the earliest newspaper advertising. One notable exception has been the study of advertising trade cards, which were one of the earliest widely circulated forms of advertising combining images and printed text. Appearing as early as 1622, “tradesman’s cards” were typically used to reinforce a shop’s image and reputation, were eagerly collected, and would often change hands many times. Implicitly referencing the Modernization bias characterizing advertising history, Berg and Clifford (2007: 146) challenged “the assumption that pre-19th century advertising was primitive. We argue trade cards, where text and image are interdependent, had a wider impact (via the range of trades represented and the complexity of the messages conveyed) than purely text-based newspaper advertising.” Indeed, some of Europe’s best-known artists and illustrators – such as Cruikshank, Hogarth, and Gravelot – produced art for early trade cards. In the fledgling US, prominent engravers such as Paul Revere and Peter Maverick also turned their talents to producing them (Landauer, 1935). Early display advertising, combining text and visuals, also appeared in England as early as 1587 in the form of theatrical playbills. These were posted throughout London in huge numbers, mainly because they were cheap and the theater district was located outside of London and far from where most patrons lived (Stern, 2006). Few of the tactical features of these early forms of printed display advertising made their way into the newspapers of the period (Presbrey, 1929).

Consequently, in the 1800s, job printers successfully competed with periodical media by creating advertisements and ephemera with high-quality typesetting, engraving, and lithography. In addition to trade cards and playbills, a flourishing tradition of poster advertising soon appeared in 19th century England, France, and Italy. France’s Jules Chéret and England’s Aubrey Beardsley substantially influenced the work of American poster artists, whose work would eventually migrate to outdoor and magazine advertising later in the century (Wood, 1958). In France, Czech-born Alfons Maria Mucha is credited with launching the Art Nouveau poster style in the late 1800s. The artistic quality of posters also had a positive influence on other printed display advertising, and their continued development was boosted by the long-standing refusal of newspaper editors to accept and print visuals (Presbrey, 1929; Wood, 1958). In Great Britain, 1866 saw the beginning of one of advertising’s “fine art” periods when Thomas A. Barratt obtained the rights to reproduce Sir John Millais’s painting “Bubbles” in advertising for Pears’ soap. By the end of the century, an elementary appreciation for segmentation occurred as magazines finally emerged as another important advertising print medium and some advertising agents, such as J. Walter Thompson, began using them to reach middle- and upper-class women (Foster, 1967). Many newspapers in the US also began in the 1890s to vary their design and content to appeal to women (Laird, 1998).

An earlier search for the world’s oldest, largest, and most historically significant archives and collections of advertisements and marketing ephemera (promotional objects or media executions created for a one-time, limited purpose) revealed several library and museum collections of exceptional size and scope meriting further investigation (Beard, 2018). A summary of these important collections includes the History of Advertising Trust (HAT), the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History (NMAH), the Hartman Center at Duke University, the British Library, the Hagley Museum and Library, the Advertising Museum Tokyo, the University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, ReclameArsenaal, and the Harvard University Library System.

Efforts to explore, describe and assess the advertising and marketing holdings of some of these museums and archives has already begun. Crew and Fleckner (1986), for instance, described some of the holdings of the Smithsonian’s NMAH. As they reported at the time, the NMAH’s Archives Center held some 242 collections and 4,500 cubic feet of original business records, personal and professional papers, photographs, business ephemera, and advertisements. The Manuscript Collections, one of the Archive Center’s two program areas, consisted of business firm records, professional papers, and other business-related collections. Among them were the business records of an anonymous 18th-century storekeeper; the Allen B. Du Mont Collection (the company that introduced the television receiver to the
American consumer in 1937); and the papers of William J. Hammer, an accomplished inventor who also served as an assistant to Thomas Edison.

At the time, Crew and Fleckner (1986) reported that the most important holdings in the Collection of Advertising History, the Archive Center’s second major program area, were the N.W. Ayer Advertising Agency proofsheets and the Warsaw Collection of Business Americana. Donated in 1975, the N.W. Ayer collection consisted of more than 400,000 advertising proofs, representing hundreds of advertising campaigns created between 1889 and 1970 for some of the US’s largest corporations and brands. Crew and Fleckner noted the importance of studying the work of one of the oldest and most influential ad agencies in the country, which some have suggested pioneered the full-fledged advertising campaign and the agency’s role in creating it with the launch of the National Biscuit Company’s Uneeda Biscuit in the late 1890s (Wood, 1958). They similarly concluded that the Warshaw Collection of Business Americana’s some 900 linear feet of trade cards, posters, print advertisements, trade catalogues, labels, packaging, and outdoor signs offered business historians the opportunity to explore the practices of thousands of businesses from the late-19th century to the mid-20th. The scope and variety of images contained in the collection, especially, offer historians the opportunity to examine the relationship between advertising and American culture as it evolved over more than a century (Crew and Fleckner, 1986).

More recently, Moir, Read and Towne (2017) contributed a similar exploration and description of the UK’s HAT as part of the recently initiated “Sources of Historical Research in Marketing” series in the Journal of Historical Research in Marketing. With ads dating from 1800 to the present, the HAT is the most complete collection of British advertising and marketing communications in the world. In addition to archives of ad agencies and industry professional bodies, the HAT includes “ephemeral press, poster and commercials collections” (Moir et al., 2017: 535). Large collections of the work of most of the UK’s largest and most influential ad agencies are available (e.g., Ogilvy and Mather, Young & Rubicam, and JWT London). Moir et al. propose that the JWT London files, containing items dating from the 1920s to the year 2004 likely constitute the most comprehensive ad agency archive of its kind in Britain. The archive consists of more than 450 boxes containing “guard books,” which include printed advertising proofs and TV/radio commercial scripts; market research reports; competitive activity reports; advertising plans and strategy documents; and client correspondence for almost 200 JWT London agency clients.

Other important archives and collections held by the HAT include the H.J. Heinz Company archive, the Hovis archive, the Butlin’s Heritage Collection, and the Vimto archive. H.J. Heinz merged with the Kraft Foods Group in 2015, after being in business in the US for nearly 150 years. In addition to historical photographs, labels, sales records, and other materials related to Heinz food production and factories, the archive includes a large collection of TV commercials, company film footage, a collection of brand merchandise and images, and other public relations materials from the “Heinz News” photographic library (Moir et al., 2017). Hovis is a 130-year-old British flour brand and its archive contains records ranging from the 1880s to the 2000s. The Butlin’s Heritage Collection includes a wide variety of advertising and marketing ephemera items related to resorts and holidays in Britain, dating from 1936. Vimto, an iconic non-alcoholic soft drink and British brand, was launched in the early 20th century and is currently exported to more than 65 countries. This collection contains accounting records, annual reports, and advertising.

This paper presents a similar examination and detailed description of the Harvard Library System’s collections of records and artifacts focusing primarily on advertising and other marketing-related topics. One of the advantages of Harvard’s collections is that many are international in scope. Thus, researchers in the US have the opportunity to avoid the Americanization limitation and conduct comparative international studies without having to search for primary sources elsewhere. In addition to describing the scope of Harvard’s holdings, emphasis is placed on assessing the collections containing 19th century print artifacts of special importance (e.g., trade cards, posters, and theatrical playbills and notices), with the goal of encouraging research that avoids the Modernist theoretical and philosophical limitation in advertising’s historiography.

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Methodological Approach

Originally founded as the “New College” in the year 1636, Harvard University holds the claim to be America’s oldest institution of higher learning. Renamed “Harvard College” in 1639, the institution was originally established in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to educate future members of the clergy. The Harvard Library System of today consists of 76 libraries, archives, collections, reading rooms, and centers. Among the largest are the Baker Library, Houghton Library, and the Radcliffe Institute’s Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. Harvard Business School’s Baker Library was formally established in 1927. It was also the first graduate business research library in America, and the value of its holdings for business historians was previously assessed more than 20 years ago (Linard and Sverdlof, 1997). Harvard’s 75-year-old Houghton Library is the university’s primary repository for rare books, manuscripts, and related special collections. Houghton Library maintains a Special Collections Request System, which allows researchers who are unaffiliated with Harvard to access the collections in various ways. The Radcliffe Institute’s Schlesinger Library also recently celebrated its 75th anniversary. At the library’s Website, researchers are encouraged to contact library staff with questions regarding the availability of its special collections, prior to visiting the library.

Online searches of the Harvard Library Systems began with HOLLIS+ (hollis.harvard.edu). HOLLIS+ offers unrestricted access to almost all the content from Harvard’s print and digital collections, including books, articles, images, manuscripts, data, and sound recordings. A search of “Everything” and then limited to archives/manuscripts using the search term “advertising” retrieved 989 results as of April, 2018. The records reflect a variety of items such as Harvard Business School working papers, unpublished book manuscripts by former Harvard faculty members, dissertations completed by Harvard students, and even individual ephemera items, such as a Hampden-Harvard Brewery thermometer. Other records, however, reveal many collections that are obviously of great interest as primary sources for marketing and advertising historians, as well as researchers of consumption and consumerism, ethnic studies, graphic design and printing, health and recreation, political science, popular culture and women’s studies. Although some of the items in the collections have been digitized and are available for viewing online, researchers traveling to Cambridge to study any of the collections should assume they are stored off-site and that access will require at least a 36-hour advance request.

Findings

Advertising Ephemera Collection (c. 1800-1970). Located in the Baker Library Historical Collections, the Advertising Ephemera Collection is possibly Harvard’s largest and most important collection of advertising and marketing artifacts. It includes eight series and an additional collection of advertising trade cards printed between 1870 and 1900 (Trade Cards, Bulk, 1870 – 1900). A finding aid for the entire collection is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=bak00232. Series I (Advertising Trade Cards and Other Advertising Ephemera, 1860-1910) consists of 21 boxes and approximately 2,900 mostly American trade cards and other small advertising print ephemera. Included among the trade cards are custom-designed cards for specific products and businesses and blank stock cards that were purchased and used for a variety of products and retailers. Series II (Advertising Trade Cards, 1875 – 1899) contains another 1,100 cards, most of which are illustrated chromolithographs (i.e., color). The collection includes many trade cards advertising major national and international brands, such as Figure 1’s advertisement for New York businessman James Pyle’s multi-purpose Pearline soap. The Series III collection (Clipper Ship Cards, 1850-1870) contains 283 cards used by shipping lines to advertise departures of clipper ships, usually from Boston or New York, and usually to San Francisco. The cards, most of which were printed in the 1850s and 1860s, represent the first prominent use of color in American advertising (Wikimedia Commons, 2018). According to Collectors Weekly (2018), Victorian-era clipper ship cards are among the rarest and most valuable of advertising trade cards. An analysis of the cards and the sales messages they contained was reported in the academic research literature as early as 1934 (“Clipper Ship Trade Cards,” 1934). See Figure 2 for an example of a clipper ship card from this collection.
Series V consists of one box and seven folders, including some “silked” cigarette cards, which were printed on silk rather than paper and given away mostly during the 1920s and 1930s as promotional collectibles inside packs of cigarettes. Series VI (Labels, ca. 1870 – ca. 1970) consists of one box of product labels for liquors and wines, cloth, and other commodities. Series VII (Business Cards, ca. 1800 – 1890) contains 1,571 business cards, mostly from the late 1800s, for a variety of products, services, and industries. Series VIII (Advertising Posters, ca. 1860 – ca. 1960) is a collection of 19th and early-20th century mostly American advertising posters contained in 23 map cases. The collection also includes 37 Italian posters from the 1950s for several American products and brands. Some of the posters have been digitized and are available for viewing in Harvard’s HOLLIS Images dedicated images catalog (https://images.hollis.harvard.edu). Finally, the Advertising Ephemera collection includes an additional 15-box collection of trade cards (Trade Cards, Bulk, 1870 – 1900). This collection includes some 8,000 mostly American cards for a wide variety of products, such as transportation, foods, biscuits, soap, canned goods, and cereals. See Figure 3 for a card from this collection for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad.
All the trade cards in Series II have been digitized and are available for viewing in HOLLIS Images. Most of the clipper ship cards are also available for viewing. Digitized items are often identified as such when the collection includes a finding aid. However, none of the rest of these series has been digitized.

Figure 3: The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe R.R. Trade Card (Source: HOLLIS Images)

W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan Cigarette and Trade Cards, 1879 – 1927 and W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan Additional Printed Ephemera, c. 1815 – 2008. The Houghton Library holds two significant collections devoted to the Victorian-era musical partnership of Englishmen William Schwenck Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan. The first, and smaller of the two collections (.5 linear feet, 2 boxes), includes four series of cigarette cards, collecting cards, and advertising trade cards, many featuring images inspired by scenes and characters from Gilbert and Sullivan operas, such as *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *The Mikado*. A finding aid for this collection is located at [http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02247](http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02247). Mostly printed in English, although some cards are in Afrikaans, they include advertisements for some of the major international brands of the late-19th century, such as Clark Thread Company, J. & P. Coats, John Player & Sons, Nicolas Sarony & Co., and Ogden’s Cigarettes. The second, and much larger of the two collections (8.5 linear feet, 17 boxes), includes cigarette cards, posters, press kits, advertising trade cards, and some non-printed ephemera (e.g., toy theaters). Also among the 697 items in this collection, which is identified as part of the Houghton Library’s Fredric Woodbridge Wilson Collection of Gilbert and Sullivan, are book jackets, catalogs, news clippings, maps, newsletters, photographs, sheet music, programs, and ticket stubs. A finding aid for this collection is located at [http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02297](http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02297). Although most of these items are in English, some are printed in French, German, and Italian. While none are available for viewing in HOLLIS Images, the Baker Library’s Advertising Ephemera Collection (c. 1800 – 1970) contains some similar trade cards, such as Figure 4’s *Mikado*-themed advertisement for Tricora Corsets.
Other Houghton Library Collections. Houghton Library also holds several additional collections of trade cards, posters, and theatrical playbills of interest. Consisting of eight linear feet and 16 boxes, the Fredric Woodbridge Wilson Collection of Printed Ephemera, c. 1702 – 2007, includes ephemera and printed materials on various topics and is part of the much larger Fredric Woodbridge Wilson Collection of Theater, Dance and Music, c. 1700 – 2009. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02370. Among the extensive variety of printed ephemera are advertisements, catalogs, photographs, playbills, portraits, promotional materials, and advertising trade cards dating from the mid-1800s. The trade cards in the collection can be located in the finding aid by searching with the terms “advertising” or “trade cards.” Another smaller collection, also listed as part of the Fredric Woodbridge Wilson Collection of Theater, Dance and Music, is titled American Advertising Trade Cards, c. 1877 – 1887 and Undated (.25 linear feet, 1 box). This collection consists of advertisements for various American products such as soaps, tobacco products, a dental office, and boat travel. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02268.

The Houghton Library’s Kurt Gänzl Collection of Posters for Musical Theater is part of the collection of John M. Ward, 1884 – 1991 (2 linear feet, 4 boxes, 1 drawer). The collection consists of approximately 300 musical theater playbills, posters, and window cards advertising performances of musicals in mainly London and other English theaters, but also including some from Australia, Austria, Denmark, France, Hungary, New Zealand, Spain, South Africa, Scotland, Wales, and the United States. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02533. They were collected by Kurt Gänzl – an author, historian, and former theater performer and casting director – who used the collection as source material in his extensive writings about musical theater. None of these items is available for viewing online. The Houghton Library also holds a much larger collection of theatrical posters. The Artcraft Lithograph & Printing Co. Theatrical Posters, 1905 – 1970 and Undated (5 linear feet) contains 1,387 posters advertising theatrical performances for many theaters located in New York City. Only one poster dates from 1905, while the majority are from the 1930s to 1960s.

Houghton Library also holds a small collection of French advertising trade cards, The French Advertising Trade Cards, c. 1882 and Undated, which consists of 44 19th century (.25 linear feet and one box) illustrated cards for a variety of mostly Paris-based tailors, perfumers, pharmacies, chocolatiers, theaters, and department stores. A finding aid for this collection is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02270. This collection is also listed as part of the Fredric Woodbridge Wilson Collection of Printed Ephemera, c. 1702 – 2007. The Moll Flanders Memorial Collection of Trade Cards of Enterprising London Businesswomen, 1996 – 2018 (1.5 linear feet, two boxes) consists of some 2,000 printed “tart cards,” which were placed in mainly London phone booths to advertise the services of call girls. There is no finding aid for this collection. Finally, the Artcraft Lithograph & Printing Co. Window Cards, 1941 – 1979 collection (.08 linear feet) consists of 19 window
cards advertising plays performed in Boston theaters. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/deepLink?_collection=oasis&uniqueId=hou02891. Like many of Houghton Library’s collections, none of these are housed at the library but are shelved offsite at the Harvard Depository. In addition, none of these artifacts have been digitized.

Israeli Ephemera Collections: Commercial Ephemera. Harvard’s Widener Library currently holds 82 collections of Israeli print advertisements and promotional brochures. Each collection consists of approximately 100 to 300 items, with the oldest dating from the early 1990s. Focusing on a wide variety of consumer products and services advertised in Israel, the most recent collections include advertisements from 2018.

Holdings Devoted to Women in Advertising. Women currently make up nearly half of those employed in advertising in both the US and the UK, although there are far fewer in top executive positions (Shearman, 2016). This lack of female leadership is prevalent among Fortune 500 companies in the US, where women hold only 19 percent of senior management positions (Adweek Staff, 2017). Significant attention was brought recently to some roles that many have contended is a long-standing gender bias prevalent in the ad agency business (Ember, 2016), when J. Walter Thompson’s chief communication officer accused chief executive Gustavo Martinez of continuously subjecting her and other female employees to a variety of racist and sexist behaviors. Although Martinez denied the allegations, he eventually resigned. Between just three and 11 percent of agency creative directors in the UK and US are women, 25 percent of women working in ad agencies report having personally experienced gender discrimination, and 23 percent believe they have experienced or witnessed sexual harassment (Ember, 2016; Knight, 2015). For historians and other scholars interested in the history of women in advertising, the Radcliffe Institute’s Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library holds several unique and valuable collections.


Founded in 1912 as the League of Advertising Women of New York, the club was devoted to providing women with the encouragement and educational opportunities the early male-oriented advertising clubs, such as the Sphinx Club (later The Advertising Club of New York) didn’t. By the 1930s, the members of the Advertising Women of New York were offering classes on advertising and awarding scholarships that enabled young women to pursue advertising degrees. Combined, the holdings represent a vast collection of club activities, press and publicity, speeches, letters, newspaper and article clippings about the progress of women in advertising, photographs, lists of officers and directors, awards, membership lists, conferences, and copies of the Ad Libber (a club newspaper).

The Schlesinger Library also holds the papers of Dorothy Dignam, an active member, historian, and biographer of the Advertising Women of New York (The Papers of Dorothy Dignam (1876 – 1960) [1.46 linear feet, 3+1/2 file boxes]). According to the collection’s finding aid (http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch00553), Dignam started working in advertising in Europe during the 1920s, eventually relocating to Philadelphia and then New York, where she specialized in fashion, beauty, and homemaking. As the finding aid also notes, “Her compilations of Advertising Women of New York histories, papers related to women in advertising, and the collections of her own work illustrate the history of women’s involvement in advertising.” In 1947, Dignam collaborated with another N.W. Ayer female copywriter, Frances Gerety, to launch a national campaign for DeBeers with the tagline “A Diamond is Forever.” Gerety’s tagline, proclaimed by Advertising Age to be the slogan of the century (Ad Age Advertising Century, 1999), appeared in every DeBeers diamond advertisement from 1948 to 2014 (Sullivan, 2014).
The Papers of Margaret Divver, ca. 1943 – 1977 collection (1.25 linear feet, 3 file boxes and 1 folio), held by the Schlesinger Library, contains biographical information, press clippings, correspondence, speeches, and photographs devoted to the career and accomplishments of the first female vice-president of the John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co. Divver began her career with the company as an advertising copywriter in 1932, eventually moving up to the position of advertising manager, in 1944. A finding aid for this collection is located at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch00555. According to the finding aid, among the items are reports of discussions Divver led on the role of women in the workplace. Divver served in significant leadership roles outside of advertising as well, serving as a member of the Boston Chamber of Commerce in the 1950s and as head of the Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services, which was established by the US Defense Department in the 1950s to encourage women to seek careers in the armed forces.

The Schlesinger Library also holds the Jean Wade Rindlaub Papers, ca. 1848 – 1991 (24.16 linear feet, including several file boxes, folio boxes, folios and folders, audiotapes, and one DVD), which contains records devoted to another prominent member and director of the Advertising Women of New York. Advertising Hall of Fame inductee Jean Wade Rindlaub began her career as an award-winning copywriter in the 1920s and was elected ad agency Batten, Barton, Durstine & Osborn’s first female vice-president in 1944. A finding aid for this collection is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch01371. The papers include speeches, articles, market research, recipes, writings, proofs, and published advertisements. Her Advertising Hall of Fame (2018) bio notes that “BBDO’s long commitment to advertising and marketing research can be traced to Rindlaub. The innovative methods she developed to sound out consumers were adopted by BBDO and became widely modeled within the business.” She became the first female member of BBDO’s board of directors in 1954. Series II, III and IV of this collection include proofs and published ads written by Rindlaub during the 1940s to 1960s on behalf of many of the US’s major brands, such as Betty Crocker and General Mills, Armstrong, Campbell’s Soup, Ocean Spray, and Oneida.

The Schlesinger Library’s Papers of Hazel Bishop, ca. 1890 – 1998 collection (4.59 linear feet, including several file boxes, folios, photograph folders, and one audiotape) documents the professional life of chemist and cosmetic entrepreneur Hazel Gladys Bishop. While working on the development of high-altitude fuels for airplanes in the 1940s, Bishop also began working on improved formulas for lipstick in a laboratory she set up in her kitchen. Bishop achieved a significant place in advertising history when, on the recommendation of New York ad agency principal Raymond Spector, she placed an ad on the back page of a national newspaper in 1950 to advertise her newly established company’s non-smear, non-drying Lasting Lipstick. A finding aid for this collection can be found at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch00355. Included in the collection are press clippings, legal papers, correspondence, speeches, articles, autobiographical writings, meeting minutes and programs, course material, photographs, lipsticks, and a scrapbook. Sales for the Lasting Lipstick brand soared from $50,000 in 1950 to more than $10 million in 1953, driven substantially by Spector’s strategy of massive advertising spending on, first, radio, and then television, subsequenly establishing the Hazel Bishop Corporation as the nation’s largest television cosmetic advertiser at the time (Hazel Bishop, 2018).

The Schlesinger Library also holds the Records of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company, 1776 – ca. 1985 collection (272.76 linear feet, including 203 file boxes plus dozens of cartons, folio boxes, and volumes). According to the finding aid (http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch00017), Lydia Estes Pinkham began brewing home remedies and other concoctions containing herbs and alcohol to treat menstrual pain and other women’s health-related problems in the early 1870s. Realizing the profit potential of the remedies, Pinkham and her family started running the first newspaper advertisements for Lydia E. Pinkham’s Vegetable Compound one year after they founded the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company in 1876. The company eventually expanded its distribution and advertising globally and registered its trademark, featuring the image of Lydia E. Pinkham, in Europe, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Asia. Series II of the Pinkham collection (Advertising Records, ca. 1844 – 1968) contains several ephemera items, while Series IV (Oversize and Supersize Items, 1896 – 1951) contains advertisements, posters, counter displays, railroad car advertisements, photographs,
architectural drawings, audiotapes, and actual products in their original packaging. Some 289 images from the collection – such as the Spanish language advertisement for the Vegetable Compound shown in Figure 5 – are available for viewing in the HOLLIS Images digital catalog.

Figure 5: Lydia E. Pinkham Vegetable Compound Spanish-language Advertisement (Source: HOLLIS Images)

The Collection of Sally Fox, c. 1575 – 2005 (15.26 linear feet, including 15 file and folio boxes, folios, folio boxes, and a videotape), held by the Schlesinger Library, represents a large and global collection devoted to images of women from many countries and cultures engaged in domestic life, work, recreation, and other nontraditional activities, mainly during the late-19th and early-20th centuries. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch01175. Fox was one of the first to advocate the inclusion of images in historical research and a major contributor to the early practice of picture research. The library’s collection includes 10 series, organized by theme, and including posters, magazine covers, advertisements, trade cards, postcards, etchings, and photographs. A search of the finding aid revealed the inclusion of many ads and trade cards in multiple languages for international brands such as Singer Sewing Machines, Liebig’s Extract of Meat Company, Friends Oats, Gilbert and Graves Starch, C.C. Parsons Ammonia, Highland Evaporated Cream, Clark’s Thread, Vinolia Company, and Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Co. A search of HOLLIS Images, however, suggests that few, if any, of the collection’s artifacts have been digitized.

The Schlesinger Library also holds two additional collections of trade cards devoted mainly to products and other topics related to women. The oldest is the Advertising and Trade Card Collection, ca. 1880 – 1944 (.83 linear ft., 2 file boxes, plus 1 folio+folder). In addition to trade cards for Demorest sewing machines, hose supporters, corsets, millinery, Kotex, beauty aids, and labor-saving devices, the collection includes a variety of promotional recipe booklets, pattern books, catalogs, and numerous other ephemera items. The Trade Card Album, 1897 – 1921 (inclusive) consists of a single folder containing trade cards for coffee, chocolate, and medicinal remedies in English, French, and German. There are no finding aids available for either of these collections.

Two poster collections held by the Schlesinger Library are devoted to women’s issues. First, the Poster Collection of the Schlesinger Library, 1911 – 2004 (5.42 linear feet, several boxes, folders, and folios) includes more than 250 posters. The oldest dates from the early 1910s and most are in English, with some in Dutch, French, German, Spanish, and Turkish. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch01208. Although all of these posters have been digitized, online access is restricted to members of the Harvard community possessing a HarvardKey. Second, the Poster Collection of Alice Park, 1903 – 1926 (66 posters, one banner, one pennant) consists of 55 unduplicated posters, mostly British, and devoted to the women’s suffrage movement. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch00846. Most of the posters have been restored and all are available for viewing online in the HOLLIS Images digital catalog. See Figure 6 for an example from the Alice Park collection.
The Memorabilia Collection of the Schlesinger Library, 1886 – 2017 (372 objects) consists of a wide variety of ephemera items, such as buttons, pins, banners, games, stickers, and t-shirts. A finding aid is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=sch01554. According to the finding aid, the ephemera focus on “women’s suffrage; gay, lesbian, and transgender rights; efforts to pass the Equal Rights Amendment; women candidates’ political campaigns; women’s and girls’ organizations; demonstrations for reproductive rights; movements to end violence against women; and other women’s issues.”

The Schlesinger Library’s Rebecca Folkman Collection of Liebig Trade Cards, 1890 – 1920 (3.4 linear ft., 3 cartons and 1 file box) consists of approximately 3,600 chromolithographed trade cards in English, French, German, and Italian for Liebig’s Extract of Meat. Founded in 1865, Germany’s Liebig’s Extract of Meat Company marketed one of the first truly global brands built on a foundation of modern advertising strategies and tactics, beginning in the 1870s (Ciarlo, 2011). The company often issued thematically focused cards in sets of six or 12, which included advertising or recipes on the back. The Rebecca Folkman Collection of Advertising Ephemera, 1860 – 1940 (.4 linear feet, 1 file box, plus several folders) contains an additional, smaller collection of advertisements for a variety of products, mostly in English but also French, German, and Italian. There are no finding aids for these collections and none of the images has been digitized.

The American Minstrel Show Collection, 1823 – 1947. The Houghton Library’s minstrel show collection (11 linear feet, 23 boxes and six flat file drawers) consists of images of minstrel performers and troupes, playbills and programs of performances, advertisements, sheet music, drawings, and other ephemera devoted to the popular 19th century form of entertainment called minstrelsy. A finding aid for this collection is available at http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/primo?id=hou02063. The minstrel show portrayed stereotypical features of African-American life in the form of music, dance, and both comedic and dramatic recitations and vignettes. It was born in 1828, in a New York City theater, when Thomas Dartmouth “Daddy” Rice first performed a song-and-dance routine in blackface (“Blackface!”, 2018). Minstrel shows remained popular throughout the 19th century and into the first two decades of the 20th. Series II of the collection’s four series contains hundreds of playbills, almost all of which have been digitized and are available for viewing online in the HOLLIS Images catalog. Figure 7’s playbill for Happy Dick Wilson’s Minstrels (1871) is a representative example, revealing, for instance, that the performances were reasonably priced (with an adult admission of 50 cents, or approximately $15 in 2018 US dollars), that they were viewed as appropriate entertainment for children, and that at least some playbill printers signed their work at the bottom.

Summary and Conclusions

Both periodical and non-periodical advertising have been prevalent features of commerce, culture, and the daily lived experiences of people around the world for hundreds – and, in some cases, thousands – of years (Beard, 2016). Consequently, advertisements and ephemera are valuable primary sources for marketing and advertising historians, as well as researchers interested in many other subjects. As historical researchers continue their efforts to discover the breadth and depth of the world’s collections and archives of historical advertisements and marketing ephemera, such as those held by the libraries of Harvard University, additional support may emerge for media philosopher and theorist Marshall McLuhan’s contention that “historians … will one day discover that the ads of our time are the richest and most faithful daily reflections that any society ever made of its entire range of activities” (as cited in Heitmann, 2009: 70).

The investigation reported in this paper contributes to this line of research and confirms that the Harvard Library System holds an important place among the world’s repositories of valuable historical advertisements and marketing ephemera. Moreover, it is equally clear the collections are especially strong in four areas. First, some of the collections offer access to artifacts and items from a somewhat
under-investigated period – the first half of the 19th century. Second, many of the collections are international in scope. Those that offer opportunities for comparative international analyses or the study of advertising on behalf of the earliest global brands include Series II of the Advertising Ephemera Collection (c. 1800-1970), both the W.S Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan trade card and printed ephemera collections, the Kurt Gänzl Collection of Posters for Musical Theater, the Collection of Sally Fox, c. 1575 – 2005, the Schlesinger Library’s Trade Card Album, 1897 – 1921, the two Rebecca Folkman collections, and the Records of the Lydia E. Pinkham Medicine Company, 1776 – ca. 1985. Third, the collections represent a wide array of 19th century non-periodical advertisements and ephemera, such as trade cards, posters, and theatrical playbills. These three strengths of the Harvard Library System’s special collections highlight the potential for historical research that could successfully overcome the Modernization and Americanization paradigmatic limitations evident in much of the historiography of advertising.

A fourth and timely strength of Harvard’s holdings, due substantially to the mission and collections of the Radcliffe Institute’s Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, is that they offer significant potential for addressing the under-investigated role of women in the development of modern advertising. Published scholarly research on the history of women in advertising, especially before and during the first half of the 20th century, remains quite limited. The *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* devoted a special issue in 2013 to women’s contributions to marketing theory, thought, and practice. The historical biographies of four pioneering African-American women, who embarked on careers in advertising during the 1960s, were published not long ago (Davis, 2017). Yet notably absent from the history of advertising are insights into the contributions of women to advertising principles, theories, and practices. Perhaps more important, gender bias and sexist behaviors in the ad agency business, at least from the perspective of many women, continue to manifest themselves in such forms as instances of demeaning language, unwanted comments about physical appearance, and the prevalent use of traditionally male activities to conduct business (such as golf dates and outings to major league sports events).

Other critics and observers point to ads themselves, and their arguably often-stereotypical portrayals of gender roles, as “examples of how the industry’s sexism manifested itself beyond office walls” (Ember, 2016). Here, again, absent from the literature are historical insights into how and why such a workplace culture apparently persists, despite the facts that one pioneering ad woman, German immigrant Mathilde C. Weil, opened her own agency in New York as early as 1880, and many women made their way through the agency secretarial pool and into the creative ranks as early as the 1910s and 1920s by way of copywriting.

Researchers interested in pursuing these and related questions and topics could follow the lead of Horsley (2009) and her investigation of the contributions of female public relations practitioners to the development of that field and profession. Finding that both PR textbooks and the historical research literature rarely mentioned women, beyond whom they worked for or were married to, she sought practical and theoretical explanations for “why women were essentially invisible in public relations publications and historical records” (Horsley, 2009: 100). Waiting among the Schlesinger Library’s special collections for advertising and marketing historians are the complete papers of the first women’s advertising club in the US, the papers of three prominent and accomplished early-20th century female agency and corporate copywriting pioneers, and those of two historically significant female business entrepreneurs, Lydia E. Pinkham and Hazel Bishop.
References
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