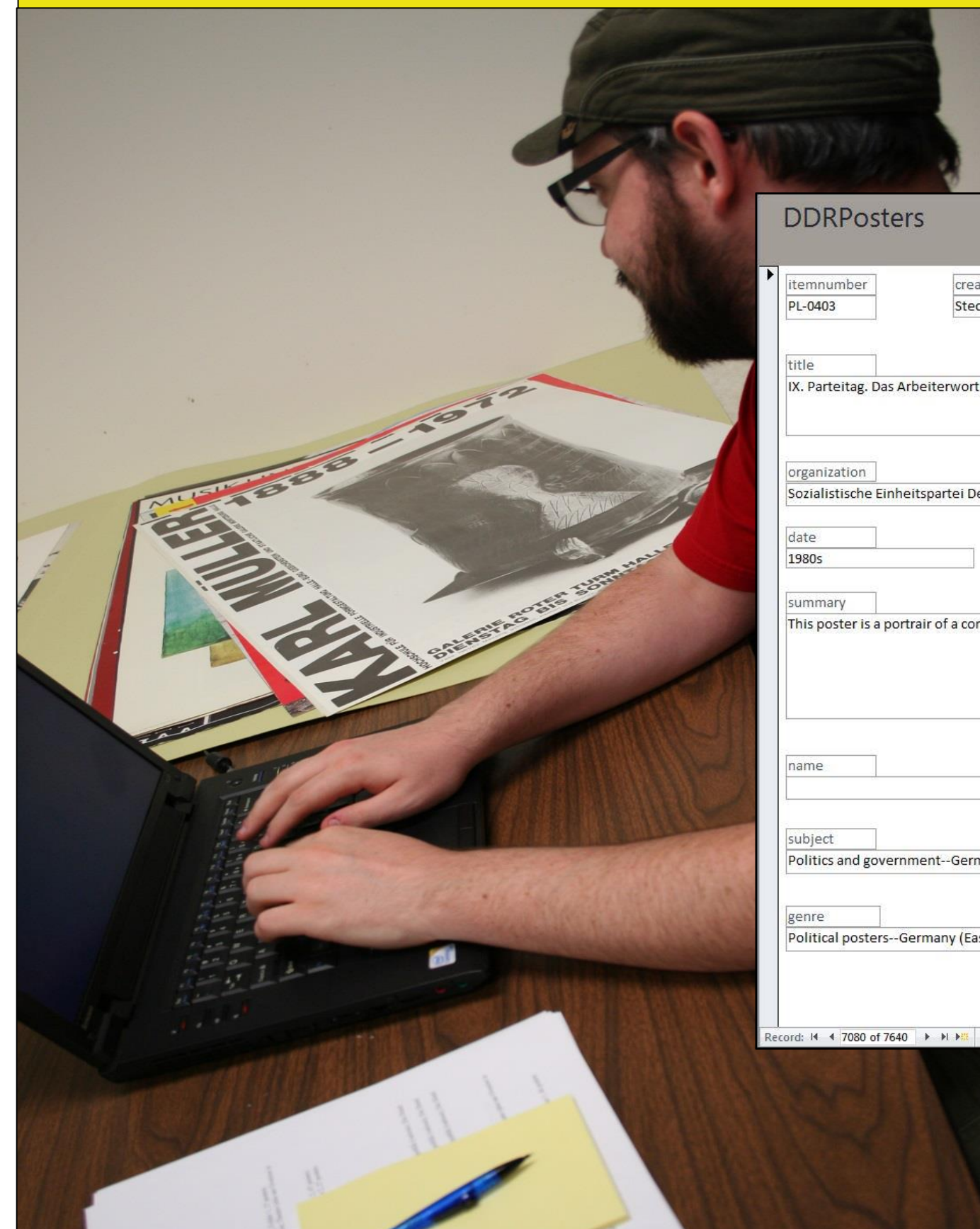


PROBLEM

In 2009, George Mason University Libraries purchased over 7,500 posters documenting the history of East Germany from just after World War II through the first free elections in the early 1990s. Although the collector shipped the posters in groups, library staff sought out funding for item-level cataloging. CLIR awarded the Libraries' Special Collections & Archives a Hidden Collections Grant for a two-year project, "Uncovering a Forbidden World: Providing Access to East German Art, Culture, and Politics." The grant provided funds to hire staff to item-level catalog the posters and to create series-level finding aids based on the major groups: political, film, theatre, art exhibitions, performing arts, and culture and science.



DDRPosters

PL-0463 Stecher

Titel: DK Partitag: Das Arbeitervortritt

Organisation: Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands

Datum: 1980

Summary: This poster is a portrait of a construction worker on a red background.

DDRPostersImages

Guide to the East German poster collection political series, 1943-2009

East German poster C0173

Published by George Mason University Libraries

Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary

Repository: George Mason University, Special Collections and Archives

Creator: Thomas Hill

Title: East German poster collection political series

Date: 1943-2009

Physical Characteristics: 632 posters

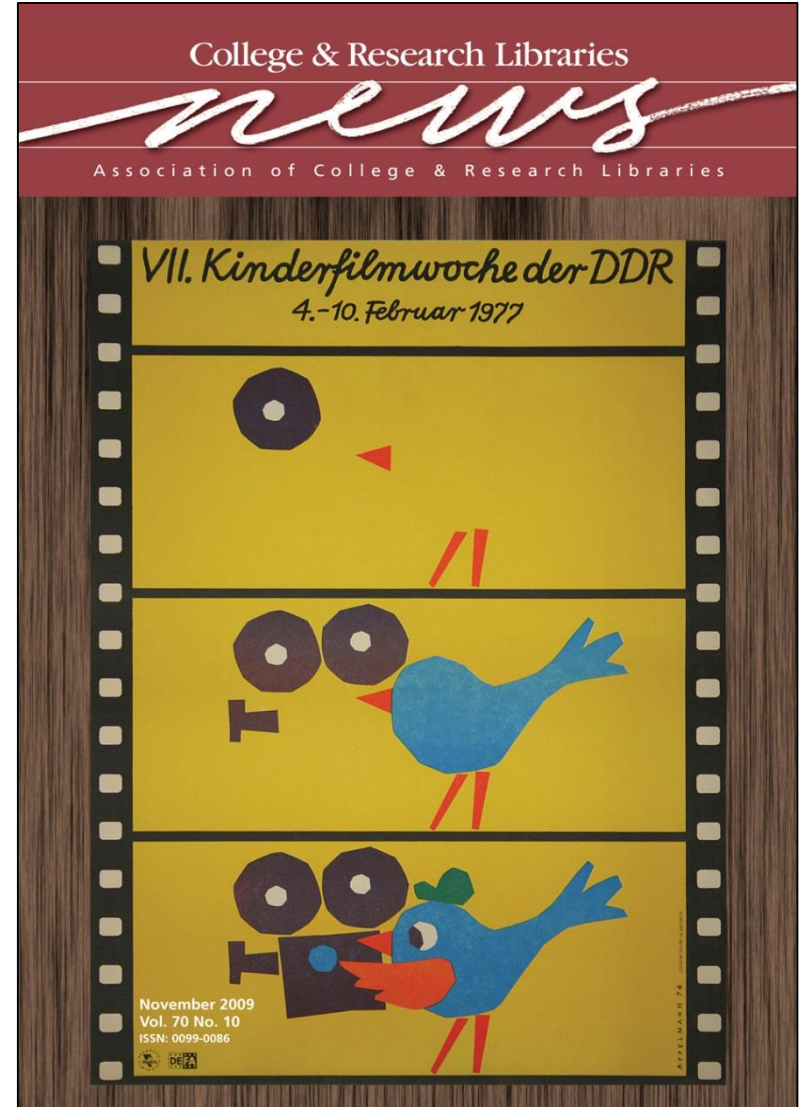
Abstract: This series contains posters relating to political persons, events, and organizations from the Deutsche Demokratische Republik. The series contains 622 posters of various sizes. The posters range in size from 90 x 60 cm to 141 x 212 cm. The average poster size is 37 x 45 cm.

Collection number: C0173

Language: German

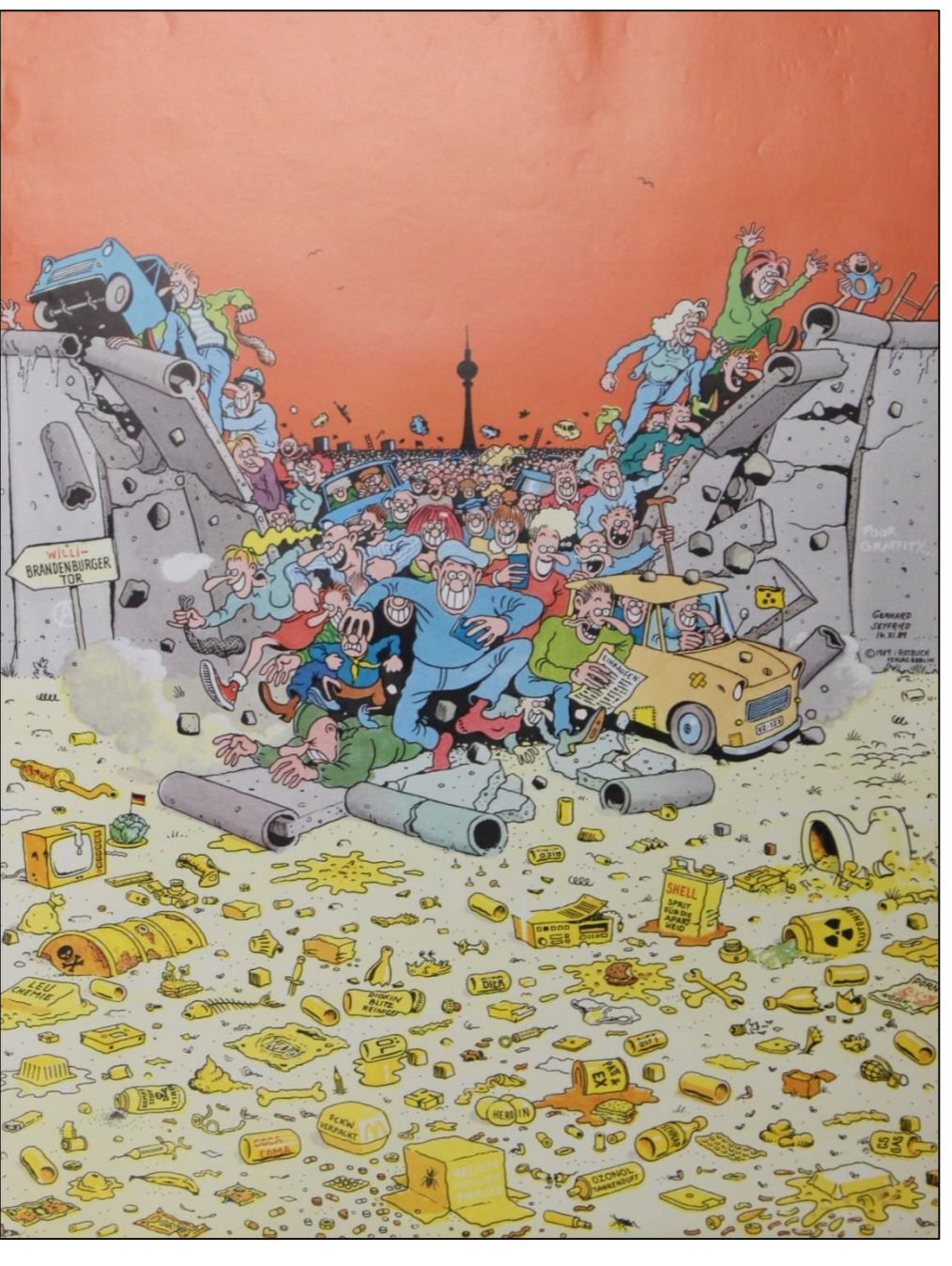
From left to right: Student working with a poster, example of an item-level catalog record, and an example of a finding aid.

In addition to cataloging, the project also included an outreach component. Initially, the outreach was conceptualized as a task that largely for the end of the project, but it became clear that outreach would be ongoing and encompass more than just updating cataloging progress on the blog. In fact, some outreach began prior to receiving the grant.



A poster from the collection appeared on the front cover of College & Research Library News before the grant project began.

PROJECT



The project began with the hiring of two graduate students with reading knowledge of German and training them on basic item-level visual cataloging. Initially, they worked on the same group, the political posters, which was not as large as some of the other groups, but the cataloging work required more attention to detail. For instance, some of the posters lacked words and obvious titles. This same problem arose later on with the art exhibition posters.

On the left, a political poster that depicts East Germans escaping to West Germany. On the right, an art exhibition poster advertising a Bertolt Brecht event.



One of the unexpected outreach activities was an invitation to contribute an article to *Theatre Survey*. The editor read a press release online that discussed the collection and the grant award. The project manager worked with the editor on image copyright issues and the final copyediting, but he turned over the bulk of the writing to the project students. Following the political posters, the students worked on the theatre and film posters. Although more numerous, those posters turned out to be much easier to catalog because, unlike the political posters, they all had easily discernable titles and other information.

University News

University Acquires Unique East German Poster Collection

By Catherine Pridmore

George Mason University Libraries has acquired a unique collection of over 7,500 posters from the German Democratic Republic (DDR), from 1943 to 1990. The posters were produced and distributed by the state. They depict a wide range of subjects, from political and social issues to art and culture. The collection is the largest of its kind in the United States.

RE: SOURCES
BETH A. KATTELMAN
Lauren Shelt and Sam Tombar

On the left, a press release describing the collection and the author page from the *Theatre Survey* article. Below on the left, a poster advertising for "A Yankee in King Author's Court" used for illustration in the *Theatre Survey* article. Below on the right, a film poster advertising for "All the President's Men."

OUTCOME

The outreach and cataloging work proved valuable with two important events. In the fall of 2010, SC&A hosted German artists who were on campus for a German unification celebration. In the fall of 2011, SC&A worked with a Mason German language professor to identify posters for her class to use for an exhibition during "Do Deutsch" week.



On the left, Mason gallery with a poster exhibition curated by students. On the right, German artists visit Special Collections & Archives to view and discuss the poster collection.