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Some reflections on the role of the archivist-mediator in today's and tomorrow's world:

An example of the treatment of a famous Belgian play, The Magnificent Cuckold, by Fernand Crommelynck, through several different archival fonds

The Magnificent Cuckold, by Fernand Crommelynck, is one of the most famous French-speaking Belgian plays. It tells the story of how Bruno, who believes himself to be a cuckold, imagines the most self-destructive responses to his anxieties, while Estugo, his dumb confidant, gesticulates. It is an expressionist play in which the overly stylized feelings are nonetheless pathetic and thus capable of arousing emotion. Meyerhold's biomechanical staging of the play in 1922, in Liubov Popova's famous constructivist stage design, made Crommelynck part of the avant-garde of the 1920s. The Magnificent Cuckold was subsequently staged many times in a wide variety of styles, periods, countries, and cultures. By collecting archives and documents on all these performances, one could almost write a history of stagecraft in the 20th century. Les Archives et Musée de la Littérature has many archives relating to this play, from many different archival funds and collections. This paper, therefore, proposes to reflect on the way(s) in which these documents could be valorized transversally, through several collections. With this concrete example of The Magnificent Cuckold, the idea discussed here is the place of mediation in our information society. What is the role of the archivist as a mediator, at a time when free access to information on search engines and databases meets a marked need for public autonomy? Paradoxically, the systematic information retrieval is becoming more complex when faced with the mass of data available today. In this sense, doesn't the mediator-archivist play a role that is all the more important, even necessary? For example, when he or she presents the collections from other angles than a simple list of holdings or when he or she proactively shares his or her transversal knowledge of the wealth contained in distinct archival collections. This raises the question of the tools to do this. This is why today we speak not only of enhancement but also of editorialization, in the sense of formatting and structuring digital content. Is this not the way to enrich access to our collections to enhance them in today's and tomorrow's world?



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