This morning, I would like to present a chronology of national preservation planning, describe some notable developments in the area of regional cooperative conservation efforts, and suggest the types of activities that are feasible on a cooperative basis.

In 1964, Gordon Williams conducted a study for the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) to plan for a national program for the preservation of research library materials. The Williams report, endorsed in principle by ARL in 1965, recommended that libraries establish a central agency to "insure the physical preservation of at least one example of every deteriorating book and make photocopies of the preserved originals readily available to all libraries." The proposal went over like a lead balloon. It was still the boom years of the sixties, money was easy, and libraries were intent on building collections. So what if a few dusty volumes lay crumbling? Furthermore, the logistics of establishing a central agency were overwhelming. The 1964 report was definitely ahead of its time.

In 1972, the Association of Research Libraries came out with a second report, written by Warren Haas, and entitled *Preparation of Detailed Specifications for a National System for Preservation of Library Materials*. It had been eight years since the 1964 ARL report. Those intervening years had seen the culmination of research efforts at the Barrow Research Laboratory in Richmond, Virginia, with the publication of a series of studies investigating the permanence and durability of the book. This concrete evidence, printed in black and white, had helped to heighten an awareness of the problem of paper deterioration. After all, statements such as "97 percent of the book papers produced during the first half of the twentieth century have a life expectancy of fifty years or less" could not help but turn
a few heads. Also between the two ARL reports, in 1969, the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago held their thirty-fourth annual conference on the topic of "deterioration and preservation of library materials." It was clear from the nature of the papers presented, that the profession of librarianship was determined to be optimistic. It was not until much later that librarianship faced the frightening realization that they had perhaps waited too long to act.

The catastrophic floods in Florence, Italy, in November 1966 also occurred between the two ARL reports. The ensuing destruction and damage focused international attention on the preservation of cultural materials. Conservators from all over the world rushed to Florence to aid in recovery and reclamation efforts and the experience of working together to solve conservation problems gave the field its first taste of the powers of collective action.

So by 1972, it seemed the time was ripe for more planning by ARL. In its second report, ARL dropped the idea of a "central agency" and prepared instead "Suggestions for Action" including the topics of Research, Education and Training, Preservation and Conservation Efforts in Individual Libraries, and Collective Action. The gist of the report was that preservation should be viewed as part of the broader goal of access to information. Presumably, libraries made a conscious decision to preserve by collecting the material in the first place. By allowing materials to deteriorate beyond the point of usability, libraries were limiting access to information. Under the topic of Collective Action, the ARL report called for a group of ten to fifteen libraries to join together to carry out certain specific preservation projects as a model for an eventual national plan. Paramount would be the development of a coordinated system of individual preservation collections based on well-defined subject areas. The report maintained that "by not aspiring to preserve everything, and concentrating instead on discrete subject areas, some real progress becomes possible."

ARL had good reason to assume that the timing was right for such collective action. The oldest and largest research libraries had begun, in the late sixties (with much wringing of hands), to tackle the problem. In 1967, the Library of Congress unified preservation and binding activities into a single Preservation Office, promising greater emphasis on the application of scientific principles and sound administrative methods. In 1970, the Newberry Library established a Conservation Laboratory under the direction of Paul Banks. Exemplary leadership and an unerring sense for pinpointing the important issues made the Newberry program an early moving force in the field, though a separate Conservation Department did not emerge until 1975. Also in 1970, the New York Public Library published its Memorandum on the Conservation of the Collections and launched a Conservation Division. The Memorandum was the first
attempt to formally to assess conservation needs and determine priorities. Yale followed suit in 1971 with a Preservation Office. 8 Columbia was laying the groundwork for preservation reorganization as a result of a study completed in 1970 by the management consulting firm of Booz, Allen, and Hamilton. Its Preservation Department formally made the organization chart in 1974. 9

The second ARL report received serious attention because libraries were beginning to act. They were beginning to act because they were no longer able to ignore the awesome prospect of millions of simultaneously deteriorating documents. However, the ARL report also wisely pointed out that success would ultimately hinge on “finding a permanent way for research libraries to take effective collective action,” and that in the “final analysis, the research libraries of the country lack a capacity for collective action that is suitable to the dimension of the job to be done.” 10

In 1973, a significant vehicle for national preservation planning was established. With broad representation from the conservation field, the National Conservatory Advisory Council (NCAC) emerged to provide a “forum for cooperation and planning among institutions and programs concerned with the conservation of cultural property in museums, historic properties, libraries, archives, and related collections.” An original mandate of NCAC was to consider the advisability of creating a national institute for conservation. In its role as an advisory body, NCAC has sought to identify national needs in areas such as training, research, and standards. By issuing and distributing reports, NCAC has expanded an awareness and understanding of conservation problems.

Early in 1974, the New York Public Library and the libraries of Yale, Columbia, and Harvard joined forces to form Research Libraries Group, Inc. (RLG)—a separate corporation owned and operated by its members. RLG is dedicated to solving the “double problem of rising costs and dwindling funds for the operation of research libraries by coordinating activities and pooling resources.” The significance of RLG is that it represents an integration of preservation with dissemination and access—in part fulfilling the recommendations of ARL’s second report.

By 1976, the National Conservation Advisory Council had issued their first major report, Conservation of Cultural Property in the United States. The report outlined national needs in conservation and made recommendations for national conservation planning. Those recommendations included a call for a nationwide cooperative effort to preserve our national artistic and historic heritage; establishment of a permanent national advisory council, a national institute for conservation, and a network of regional conservation centers; increased training for conservators and education for curators and administrators; increased scientific support; and the development of standards. The report projected that a national
institute could fulfill much of the national need by providing information, training, education, and coordinating research and the development of standards.

Optimism about the possibility of cooperation in the specific arena of library and archives conservation reached a peak in December 1976 with the National Preservation Planning Conference held at the Library of Congress. For two days, forty-one invited participants and nineteen LC staff members struggled with the “what,” “who,” and “how” of preservation. Frazer Poole, chairman of the conference, summed up their major objective when he said, “After years of worry and talk, we must establish a plan of action.”

Much of what went on before 1976 in the area of national preservation planning stressed that since libraries do not have the resources to preserve everything, they must first decide what needs to be preserved. This was where collection development was supposed to meet preservation and decide what would have the chance to survive for the users of the future. By 1976, a decade of experience in national planning for preservation had shown that libraries were bogged down pondering the “what.” Warren Haas, author of the 1972 report (where he urged libraries to determine discrete subject areas worthy of preservation) found himself saying in 1976 at LC, “don’t worry about selection and priorities,...” they will “take care of themselves once we have developed a national capacity that provides a set of preservation options.” He called for a small steering committee to steer us “towards action, not planning.” Following the Planning Conference, in July 1977 the Library of Congress formally named a National Preservation Program Officer and began to plan for those services that LC could provide in the way of national direction to aid a nationwide preservation effort.

No small amount of change and reorganization at the Library of Congress (not to mention moving) has stymied the National Preservation Program these last several years. However, the new chief of the Preservation Office and National Preservation Officer, Peter Sparks, plans to spend the next six months exploring the future direction and emphasis of the program. Assistant Chief Lawrence Robinson will administer the day-to-day mechanisms of the Preservation Office.

According to Dr. Sparks, a revived National Preservation Program will definitely expand its publications program and continue its intern and education program. It will also continue the encouragement of cooperative microfilming projects. New components to the program will probably include a formal technical consulting service and information center.

LC’s preservation program has always been in a sense, national; exploring theoretical and managerial solutions to the Library of Congress’s own preservation problems and developing applied technology has
worked for the benefit of all libraries. The National Preservation Program will enhance LC's national role and provide national direction to preservation by actively communicating the methods and technology explored at LC and putting out models that other libraries can work from.

Following the landmark planning conference in 1976 at LC, 1977 and 1978 were busy years of workshops, seminars, and more workshops. Although not formal cooperation, these sharing and expanding experiences strengthened the informal people network that kept conservation awareness and efforts growing. The publication Conservation Administration News, for example, grew out of a 1978 Columbia University institute and has become a significant information sharing tool.

In 1977, the American Library Association, Resources and Technical Services Division (RTSD) formed a Discussion Group on the Preservation of Library Materials to "informally discuss common problems concerning the preservation of library materials." By the annual meeting in June 1980, Preservation of Library Materials Section (PLMS) was launched as a new section of RTSD. With PLMS, preservation has an official voice in the national organization of librarians.

In 1978, the National Conservation Advisory Council published two significant documents having implications for national preservation planning. The Report of the Study Committee on Libraries and Archives: National Needs in Libraries and Archives Conservation sought to "identify and describe the problems existing in the field as a necessary first step to seeking solutions to these problems." The committee concluded with seven recommendations for national action in the area of preservation and called for the "proposed national conservation institute, the national preservation program of the Library of Congress, and other bodies" to address them without delay. The recommendations included: (1) formulation of guidelines for environmental and condition surveys, (2) increased education and training efforts, (3) increased research, (4) a flow of sound and balanced conservation information, (5) establishment of regional or cooperative centers, (6) a vigorous program to preserve the intellectual content of deteriorated materials through reproduction, and (7) the development of standards. Today, it is gratifying indeed, to note that there is progress on every front.

A fifty-five page Discussion Paper on a National Institute for Conservation of Cultural Property was also issued by NCAC in 1978. Its purpose was to further delineate the possible functions of a national institute and stimulate interest and input from the conservation profession. Members of the American Institute for Conservation (AIC) (the professional organization of conservators) discussed the proposal at annual meetings in 1979, 1980, and 1981. Concerns expressed by the profession were that a national institute would drain already depleted funding sources, that it would
require major support from the federal government and yet be unduly restricted by government controls, and that it would perhaps unfairly limit the access of private conservators to services in favor of institutions. The unseemly, but practical question of how funding would be obtained in an era of shrinking federal support for the arts was also raised. Conservators further expressed concern that the proposed institute would not advance the high standards adhered to by the conservation profession and promulgated in AIC's *Code of Ethics*. 

After nearly eight years of discussion and revision, NCAC published in April 1982 a detailed *Proposal for a National Institute for Conservation (NIC) of Cultural Property* and has begun to seek funding. NIC is conceived as a private organization with some government support, but receiving at least one-half of its funding from the private sector. It will serve the three major functions of information, education, and scientific support. Information Services will include a reference and research library, consulting, dissemination, and publication. Education Services will encompass training of new conservators, seminars to educate the users of conservation services, continuing education opportunities for conservators, and communication of conservation concerns to the public. Scientific Support Services will concentrate on developing standards for testing materials, devising analytical tests, and conducting basic and applied research according to the priorities established by the field. It is not envisioned that the NIC will duplicate or supplant already existing facilities or capabilities, but rather will have a strong coordinating and contracting element. NIC will, however, absorb NCAC at its inception. The proposal for NIC includes details of staffing, equipment and space needs, and budget and calls for a phased implementation of services over a three-year period.

At the beginning of 1979, the Research Libraries Group amended its charter and began to expand its membership. Today, with twenty-five full members throughout the United States, RLG's potential for effective cooperative action in the area of preservation is greatly enhanced. Most recently, RLG's Preservation Committee is developing specifications for inputting master negative information into RLIN (Research Libraries Information Network). Enhancements to RLIN allow members to enter item-specific information about the existence of master microforms and service copies and the intent to film specific items. RLG's Preservation Committee recommends that enhancements to RLIN be compatible with other automated systems and that the system be capable of furnishing an RLG list of microfilm masters. The implementation of RLG's plan to share preservation microfilming information is truly reflective of a national preservation program. They have received a grant from NEH (Oct. 1982) to begin inputting. The basis of the project, of course, is the New York Public Library's present project to input its master negative file. RLG also plans
to institute a cooperative filming program and is currently studying possible categories of materials to be filmed and operational details such as bibliographic control and standards for filming, processing, and storing master negatives. Future activities of the committee may include a resource manual of standards and designation of preservation responsibility in conjunction with primary collecting responsibility. Simply by addressing preservation and conservation concerns, however, RLG engages in a very basic form of cooperation, peer group pressure, and is undoubtedly responsible for increased and upgraded preservation efforts in some of the largest research libraries in the country.

A discussion of the chronology of national preservation planning begins to sound rather repetitive. Words such as information, coordination, training, support, and standards occur again and again in the planning documents of the last decade. Many of us with a sense of urgency may wonder: When will there be some action?

It may be that ten years, or even twenty, is not very long to address such a mammoth and complicated task as preservation of the nation's intellectual resources. We have made real progress in developing conservation awareness and sophistication among those in a position to act and we are moving toward responsible collective action-albeit slowly. It might be useful, even uplifting to ask: What do we have today, in 1981, in national preservation action that we did not have even five years ago?

We have at Columbia University the first academic program to train library conservators and preservation administrators. We have a detailed proposal for a National Institute for Conservation that includes the concerns of libraries and archives. We have a National Preservation Program at the Library of Congress that promises to be responsive to the needs of the nation's libraries. We have in the Research Libraries Group a vehicle for cooperative action that will provide a model and a beginning for national cooperative activities. We have important work going forward in the area of standards (for example, permanent/durable paper, binding, and environmental storage). We have real breakthroughs in the application of conservation science to preservation problems (for example, mass deacidification, cold storage of photographic materials, and vacuum-drying of water-damaged library materials). We have exciting possibilities in new technology that can be used to record and preserve information. We have an official section of the American Library Association dedicated to addressing preservation concerns. And finally, we have a steady increase in preservation activities and commitment in the nation's libraries. We have a lot of action on the national preservation scene.

If we accept, as we must, that we will never have enough time, money, or staff to preserve everything that has deteriorated or is deteriorating now, then we must have coordination of preservation activities on the national
level. However, as we all realize, planning, or even action, on the national level (however encouraging, or even grandiose as in the case of the proposed National Institute for Conservation) does not solve today’s nitty-gritty, down-home problem with deteriorating collections. These are problems that for years librarians have affectionately been calling book confetti, yellow snow, or (as a librarian in my library is fond of saying) peanut brittle. Pamela Darling put it best in introduction to Library Journal’s 1979 series on preservation when she said, “A ‘national’ preservation program decreed and directed from some central source of power/knowledge/funds is neither practical or desirable at the present time.”17 Instead, she suggested a nationwide effort emphasizing communication and cooperation. She went on to say, “Only after learning how to create viable preservation programs on a small scale are we going to build an effective large-scale program.”18 As we heard this morning from Pam [Darling], both the Association of Research Libraries and the Society of American Archivists have put this philosophy into action. Likewise, in the last decade, significant regional and local activity has moved us much closer to the level of knowledge and sophistication needed to grapple effectively (and efficiently) with today’s and tomorrow’s preservation problems.

The most notable development in the area of cooperative or regional conservation has been the experience of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC). NEDCC was formed (as the New England Document Conservation Center) in 1973, but was conceived as early as 1965 by Walter Muir Whitehill and George Cunha at the Boston Anthenaem. The center was established under the New England Interstate Library Compact with start-up funds from the Council on Library Resources. It is administered by the New England Library Board, which consists of six state library agency heads or their designated representatives.

Today, NEDCC has evolved into a successful cooperative venture.19 In new larger quarters in Andover, Massachusetts, they serve several hundred clients and provide professional treatment for a wide variety of materials. They also offer field services such as mobile fumigation, disaster assistance, on-site consulting, surveys and collection evaluations, and workshops.

From its inception, it was hoped that NEDCC would serve as a prototype for other regional centers to spring up around the country. Eight years later, they are still the only treatment center devoted to library and archival materials. Why? Mainly because the development of a treatment center is a complicated and expensive undertaking and because experts have vigorously warned against the too rapid rise of multiple centers before there are enough people to staff them. Additionally, NEDCC is essentially devoted to highly specialized item-by-item treatment of materials.
Although conservation has traditionally been associated with the treatment of rare books and unique materials, raising the conservation consciousness of librarians and administrators has resulted in a shift in focus to the long-term maintenance of whole collections and preservation of the intellectual content of deteriorated materials. Can an administrator in good conscience support a regional treatment center when the library can only afford to send a few special items for treatment each year and when the bulk of the collection is in desperate need of preservation attention? NEDCC itself has responded to this shift in focus by expanding its consulting and training activities and by working closely with clients to help them select materials for treatment within the framework of a rational overall plan. Fledgling cooperative and regional efforts around the country are emphasizing those activities that can help libraries develop viable local programs to cope with the preservation problem.

Demonstrating what can be accomplished in cooperative conservation in a very discrete region is the Book Preservation Center serving the New York metropolitan area. Hosted by the New York Botanical Gardens Library and using the facilities of its workshop, the center has, since 1979, built a very successful cooperative program. The center's purpose is to "help librarians plan and implement in-house preservation programs within the very real limitations of space, money, and staff."

After visiting the participating libraries, the center developed its package of services based on common needs. A series of workshops was held to demonstrate very basic procedures followed by a second series to teach more complex techniques. Participants were furnished with information sheets and illustrated instruction sheets. These handouts formed the basis for a manual to be published in 1983. The center has also compiled an extensive information file and even provides assistance to libraries in setting up in-house work areas. A three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) is enabling the center to continue its workshops in New York, as well as hold workshops in other locations around the country. To date, the center is entirely supported by grant funds and provides service free of charge to participating libraries. From modest, but highly effective beginnings, the Book Preservation Center hopes to expand to include cooperative purchasing of supplies and restoration work on individual items for other libraries.

A notable example of regional cooperative planning was the Western States Materials Conservation Project. The project began as a year-long saga to determine conservation needs in the states west of the Mississippi River and to develop a coordinated plan for conservation in the West. At twenty state meetings, 454 people participated to identify existing conservation programs, define needs, and suggest action. Three areas of concern were identified: conservation information and education; conservation
services; and research, standards, and legislation. These three concerns formed the themes for discussion at the two-and-a-half-day Feasibility Colloquium at Snowbird, Utah. Two representatives from each state meeting attended the colloquium where the group voted to form the Western Conservation Congress and adopt a three-phase plan for regional cooperation.

As conceived at Snowbird, the Western Conservation Congress would, in its first phase, provide information to its members through a clearinghouse. Components of the clearinghouse program would include directory information (such as people and services), notices of training and education offerings, development of conservation administration tools and information packets, and a consulting service. The second phase calls for creating a more sophisticated package of services, and the third phase for creating a network of conservation laboratories in the West.

To date, the Western Conservation Congress, under the guidance of a steering committee, is exploring avenues for funding and using volunteers to maintain contact with its two hundred members. A catalog of conservation reference materials in the West that can be loaned has been compiled. If the Western Conservation Congress can either obtain outside funding or muster a significant monetary commitment from its members, it will have a chance to survive and fulfill its potential.

Similar in design to the Western States Materials Conservation Project, but on a smaller scale, the Midwest Regional Study for Materials Conservation was conducted to identify persons interested in conservation in a six-state region of Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia. Planning meetings were held at three locations and the study’s final report outlines possible avenues for cooperation.

With direction and encouragement from the state libraries, statewide cooperative planning and activities are going forward in Colorado, Illinois, and Kentucky.

In Colorado, a statewide plan, Towards a Cooperative Approach to the Preservation of Documentary Resources in Colorado was completed in 1981 by Howard Lowell under contract with NEDCC and with funding from the Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA). The published plan is the culmination of a planning and survey process that started with recommendations made during the Colorado meeting of the Western States Materials Conservation Project and included development of a self-assessment manual for libraries, conservation education and training experiences conducted in Colorado, and surveys of a representative sample of libraries to determine common problems and needs. The plan calls for a separate preservation position in the state library to be responsible for the coordination of preservation activities in the state. In the interim, the staff
position charged with collection development has had the preservation responsibility added to it.

In Illinois, as the result of a formal Needs Assessment Survey conducted in fall 1980, Southern Illinois University at Carbondale developed a proposal for an Illinois Cooperative Conservation Program (ICCP) and was successful in the fall of 1981 in securing LSCA funds on the recommendation of the Illinois State Library Advisory Committee. The program takes advantage of the cooperative mechanism that exists in ILLINET (the Illinois Library and Information Network) to enhance long-range library development by the addition of a conservation component.

ICCP has built upon the outreach activities of Morris Library's conservation program and, with input from a Program Advisory Committee, is bringing conservation services to all types of libraries in Illinois. The program offers an information service, publishes posters and information sheets and held eight workshops around the state. Other components of the program include an emphasis on disaster preparedness, the development and dissemination of training materials, and coordination of conservation and preservation activities throughout the state.

In Kentucky, George Cunha is at it again as chairman of a Conservation Advisory Committee appointed by the state librarian. The committee is surveying libraries and archival repositories in the state to gather information on existing conservation resources as the first step toward a long-range program for Kentucky. The committee has recommended and had approved both an expanded disaster assistance service and the establishment of a Conservation Clearinghouse as part of the Public Records Division of the Department of Library and Archives.

All libraries face the need to preserve the mass of deteriorating materials as well as arrange for the physical treatment of special items. Based on our experience in cooperation to date, it may be that the most viable arrangement for providing conservation services is a regional treatment center that can also dispense information, engage in training and consulting activities, and coordinate regional cooperative projects.

An important concept in cooperative conservation is that, whatever services are available cooperatively, they must be in addition to activities taking place at individual libraries. With organizations such as ALA's Preservation of Library Materials Section, innovative programs such as ARL's Preservation Planning Project and SAA's Basic Archival Conservation Program, and cooperative ventures such as the Book Preservation Center and the Illinois Cooperative Conservation Program, we are assured of having the tools needed to direct conservation activities and a forum for discussing common concerns. What is also vital to the preservation effort is informed library administrators who are willing to reorganize and upgrade the preservation and conservation function within their own
libraries and commit funds. Cooperation is not a substitute for local action but an enhancement. Cooperation enables libraries to avoid needless duplication of effort, share scarce expertise, and afford services that may be unfeasible or prohibitively expensive on their own. For example, a group of libraries might cooperate to provide centralized cold storage for important but little-used research materials, but each individual library should also have proper environmental conditions for the rest of its collection. Training materials developed by a cooperative conservation center would greatly facilitate the implementation of sound conservation procedures at individual libraries.

Another important concept behind successful cooperation is that librarians and curators must be well informed about conservation in order to arrive at intelligent decisions about the best use of cooperative services. For example, a book that is extremely fragile and brittle should not be sent to a conservation treatment center for restoration unless the paper format is essential to understanding the work, or the physical book is important as an artifact. Even more basic, a certain level of sophistication about conservation is necessary for libraries even to recognize the potential benefits of cooperative conservation.

Based on the experience of cooperative ventures to date, it seems that a key to success is the existence of an already established vehicle for cooperation. A formally organized and politically and financially secure basis for cooperation will lend itself to fewer problems of funding and long-term commitment. The sanction of an official body such as a state library, or regional system or network, can insure a broad base of support for cooperative action and can help keep momentum going in lean times. For example, the Northeast Document Conservation Center is authorized by the New England Interstate Library Compact, a regional political subdivision whose purpose is to plan and implement cooperative projects between libraries in a six-state region. NEDCC receives 10 percent of its annual budget from the Compact. The Research Libraries Group is an independent corporation formed by its members and dedicated to sharing resources; it concerns itself with preservation as a part of the total goal of dissemination and access.

On the other hand, a regional or cooperative center can be organized solely for the purpose of providing conservation services to its membership. Its success then depends on the members' continuing commitment to the venture, its businesslike operation, and the quality of the work generated by the conservation staff. For example, the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts in Philadelphia is an independent, nonprofit treatment laboratory that specializes in the treatment of art and historic artifacts on paper. Its nonprofit status also allows it to receive grant funds.
The benefit of a supportive host institution is often crucial to the initial development and continued success of a cooperative conservation venture—providing that the host does not impose undue restrictions or interfere with policy or operations. Part of the success of the Book Preservation Center can undoubtedly be attributed to its having a “home” at the New York Botanical Gardens Library. Likewise, the Illinois Cooperative Conservation Program would in all probability not have made a beginning without the support of Morris Library and Southern Illinois University.

Regardless of formal organizational structure, the services offered by a cooperative venture must reflect the members’ needs, their willingness to pay for services, and the peculiarities of the region. If members are concerned with the maintenance of audiovisual materials, then a center must address their concerns. Members’ willingness to pay a reasonable fee for services is a reflection of their commitment to the concept of conservation; a center that relies entirely on grant funds for support fosters unreal expectations and may have a difficult time getting even modest support if grant funds disappear. The cooperative mechanism successfully employed by a Book Preservation Center located in the Bronx and serving libraries in a 625-square-mile area would probably not work for a Western Conservation Congress that plans to serve libraries in a 1.8 million-square-mile region.

What kinds of services are feasible on a cooperative basis? Basically, they can be divided into five different types: information, consultation and surveying, cost-sharing, coordination, and treatment.

Information

Every planning document and needs assessment survey that has explored cooperative conservation has emphasized the need for basic and specific information. People want to know: What are the optimum storage conditions? How can environmental conditions be improved? How do I monitor the environment? What standards exist for library materials? What is the state of the art of mass deacidification? Who has conservation expertise in my region? Where can I locate vacuum-drying facilities? What is needed in a disaster preparedness plan? What are the best supplies and who sells them? Where can I get more training?

Information can be offered in a variety of ways and, as the most basic service, costs for providing information are most logically absorbed in membership fees. A newsletter can keep libraries up to date on techniques, opportunities, and research. An on-line directory can match needs with people and services. Training materials such as slide/tape shows and manuals can be compiled and distributed. A lending library can make a
reference and research collection available to all. And perhaps the most satisfying and expedient...“Hello, this is x library, can you tell me...?” Likewise, regional conservation centers would have a need for reliable technical information that would be developed and dispersed by the National Preservation Program or the proposed National Institute for Conservation.

Consultation and Surveying

Shared expertise in the form of a consultant service can help members of a cooperative venture identify problems and determine directions. Collection surveys define and quantify individual situations and the accompanying report can suggest improvements and serve as a basis for rationalizing increased funding for the local preservation effort. An inspection of the building might reveal the most economical plan for improving air exchange, upgrading systems for filtration of airborne pollutants, or adapting existing air-conditioning systems for humidity control. A consultant could survey present treatment practices and make recommendations for upgrading and expanding routine repair operations. A specific, valuable collection might warrant piece-by-piece examination by a conservator with recommendations for treatment, discussion of options, and cost estimates.

Consultation services can be a routine task of staff employed by a cooperative center. Costs can be prorated depending on the complexity of the consulting task, or consulting and surveying services included as a privilege of membership. Or more simply, a cooperative center could serve a liaison function and arrange for fees and services from outside consultants, or merely put libraries in touch with appropriate experts.

Cost-Sharing

The dictionary definition of cooperation stresses economic cooperation and mutual profit. Conservation services that are financially unfeasible for the individual library or infrequently needed can be made available through cost-sharing or a pooling of resources. Cooperative purchasing of supplies or equipment can reduce costs. For example, there is no reason for every library to own a $8,000 fumigator that may be used only a handful of times in a year. Likewise, polyester encapsulation could be performed more efficiently at a cooperative center that owned the $12,000 machine that neatly and quickly seals the edges of the envelope. Specific research contracted for by a cooperative center would be for the benefit of all libraries. Cost-sharing activities can be as simple as sharing the cost of an information service, or as elaborate as a cooperative preservation microfilming project or regional cold storage facility.
Coordination

Coordination of regional preservation activities is a logical role for a cooperative center to assume. Preservation microfilming projects can be coordinated so that duplication of filming is eliminated. A cooperative center can also coordinate training and education opportunities. For example, staff from member libraries can attend intensive, short-term training sessions at a center. General workshops can be periodically offered at convenient locations. The technology of conservation is often at a level that overpowers local expertise and new developments are continually being offered as the panacea for all our problems. A cooperative center could screen new technology and coordinate specialized services such as vacuum-drying, conservation rebinding, and mass deacidification.

Treatment

The literature of cooperative conservation is replete with warnings about the establishment of regional treatment centers. This cautionary stance is advanced for a number of very valid reasons. First, fully-trained conservators are scarce; there are simply not enough qualified professionals available to direct the workshops of very many regional centers. Second, technical support staff must be trained in-house—a time-consuming and costly undertaking. Third, the cost of equipping a full-scale treatment facility is great. And fourth, "at-cost" treatment sounds great, but at-cost can still cost a lot. For example, some economies of scale are possible for some types of treatments; however, many operations take a given number of hours to complete satisfactorily regardless of whether it is on a profit or not-for-profit basis.

Not to be all discouragement—some simple operations can be performed at a cooperative treatment center as a prelude for more complicated treatments after the center is fully staffed and functioning. For instance, protective enclosures such as rare book boxes, portfolios, simple wrappers, and polyester film envelopes can be an appropriate and inexpensive option for libraries. Or, like NEDCC, a center might offer a microfilming service to provide archival-quality film for difficult-to-film materials. This type of basic conservation work can be done by conservation technicians trained and supervised by a conservator. More complicated restoration treatments for very valuable books, manuscripts, maps, and photographs could be gradually added to the repertoire of a center. Actually, it has been convincingly argued that the scarcity of trained professionals is all the more reason for the existence of regional centers. Otherwise only the few and lucky elite will have access to these specialized services. 23

Except for NEDCC, existing cooperative treatment centers are primarily for the treatment of museum materials. Most centers, including NEDCC, have been established with the assistance of a large start-up grant
to defray the cost of equipment and give the center a grace period of several years. Ann Russell, Director of NEDCC, has suggested that realistically, a treatment center should receive some form of partial subsidy on a continuing basis.

A center normally charges for services on an hourly basis. Overhead is included in the billing rate. Most centers charge higher fees for work done for nonmembers. For example, the Rocky Mountain Regional Conservation Center charges a 25 percent higher rate for nonmembers. There are many possible arrangements for billing treatment services. The Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts offers contracts with members for single item treatments, intermittent treatments, or annual or multiyear arrangements.

At NEDCC there are no "fixed" costs for treatment because of the wide range of damage that can accrue to materials due to variations in the physical properties of paper, leather, etc., the environment in which the item was stored, and the use or abuse to which the item was subjected. A member first submits a document for pre-examination and the center prepares an estimate which is in turn submitted for the member's approval. The success of a center may depend on the ability of its conservators to estimate the cost of each individual job accurately.

What is standing in the way of the development of multiple cooperative regional centers that offer a variety of information, education, coordination and treatment services?

The number one impediment is cost. Since libraries are impoverished these days, they exercise extreme caution when advised that they will have to pay for a new (even if it is vital) service. The bottom line is, of course, priorities. But who can blame the library administrator faced with the rapid rise in the cost of serial subscriptions and the rapid fall in the morale of staff who receive inadequate salary increases? With standstill budgets, an administrator is wanting to commit even modest funds to preservation would be forced to take funds away from something else.

On the other hand, libraries have found money to improve bibliographic access to resources. And some would say that to plan and implement an elaborate and expensive automated system for bibliographic access without also providing for preservation is shortsighted. It may be that once we have perfected systems to identify and locate bibliographic items exactly, we will go to the shelves (or in a cooperative system send someone in some distant library to the shelves) only to find the physical item disintegrated. Then we have to go back and update the file, right?

Cooperative preservation and conservation can and should exist on a number of levels. Preservation planning and coordination on the national level is imperative, as is the measured development of a network of regional centers that are responsive to regional needs and that reflect national
priorities. There is no simple or cheap answer to the preservation problem, but if we accept the preservation challenge, then perhaps cooperation can be an important enhancement to our efforts.

NOTES

12. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
21. Ibid.
Conserving and Preserving Library Materials

DISCUSSION

Gerald Lundeen (Graduate School of Library Science, University of Hawaii, Honolulu): I think I heard you say that the NEDCC was the only regional treatment center. The Pacific Regional Conservation Center does offer treatment and services to libraries and museums in the state of Hawaii and the Pacific region.

Carolyn Clark Morrow: Yes. So does the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts. What I said was "devoted to"; that was begun on that basis.

Lundeen: Right. That I believe is its primary mission.

Morrow: In Hawaii?

Lundeen: Yes.

Morrow: I'm mistaken then, if you say its primary mission is library materials.

Lundeen: Library and museum.

Morrow: Museums tend to have what they consider more precious materials, so even NEDCC, especially because its conservator comes from a museum background, has attracted a lot of museum work.

Tom Kilton (Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign): You were mentioning the RLG (Research Libraries Group) plan to have a list of microform masters that would go into RLIN. First, is there any cooperation planned between this effort and the present National Register of Microforms records at LC; and secondly, if it does go on-line into RLIN, will libraries who are not members of RLIN have access to the information, to maybe offprints or some other means?

Morrow: Yes, the plan I saw talked about at least the potential for a published list. They also emphasized that the system will be compatible with other automated systems so that they would be able to be used by other RLG members. I know there are RLG people here and maybe they would like to speak to that.

Nancy Gwinn (Research Libraries Group): What Carolyn has said is correct. The design requirements for enhancing the RLIN data base with regard to microforms called for the ability to retrieve records for master negatives and produce, from that, a union list in some form of hard copy, either COM or paper—it's uncertain. The requirements are just that—requirements. Our systems people are now looking at that document and beginning to work on the specifications that would allow for that to happen. It's still unknown what the cost will be. It's still unknown what the demand is. So there are a number of questions to be answered but the
Preservation Committee is well aware of the need to disseminate this information outside the partnership. RLG doesn’t think it can solve the preservation problem alone any more than can any other institution or group of institutions, so they are looking at this as a national responsibility and hoping that, in fact, it can be meshed with other efforts. If we can make our programs and plans known, then other people can use that in deciding what they want to do, and perhaps we can carve the problem down to manageable size. As far as the National Register is concerned, it would be very nice if we could take the whole file that exists there in the Register office (and I’ve been to look at it and have seen it—it’s a nice alphabetized, integrated file), and just convert it through a retrospective conversion process to machine-readable form. It would be a mammoth project to do that and it would require a lot of editing of the file before it could be easily converted. It’s not something that can be scanned like the card stock in the Card Division which is all nice and clean with a nice access number. The RLG Board has now stated that, as a priority for RLG, members will look to converting their own files of master negatives and contributing the cataloging to R LIN. We would like to draw the Library of Congress into this, if not for the whole register file, then at least for the files that exist in LC’s own preservation microfilming office, of the things that it has itself filmed, which, of course, is a substantial amount of material. And we do have, as a member of our Preservation Committee, Peter Sparks, who is the new Preservation Officer at LC, and we are exploring with him the possibilities of doing this. I do not know what the prospects are because it involves LC’s agreeing either to produce tapes or to input directly into R LIN through terminals and they do not now have the capacity to do that. But we are talking about it. That’s for the retrospective part. As far as the future of the National Register itself, I’m sure that you’ve all seen announcements of the possible automating of the National Union Catalog which would incorporate the National Register in some form. There is a lot of work going on now among the utilities talking about contributing records to the National Union Catalog in tape form. Those records, of course, would include any cataloging of microforms or master negatives that is done, so through that circuitous route, those records would eventually reach the National Union Catalog, and one might say that that would become the union catalog for master negatives as well as everything else. But how quickly that might, in fact, transpire is still a question and it’s unclear. Also, whether there would be a product like the National Register produced from the National Union Catalog or if everything would be in one grand list of some sort is still not determined. So there are still lots of questions. But RLG is really looking at the retrospective problem of capturing the records that exist. We at least do have the published volumes
of the *Register* that have been produced so far. It will be up to the Library of Congress, to a certain extent, to determine the future and whether or not this can be worked into the *National Union Catalog*. 