

## Introduction

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THE LAST ISSUE of *Library Trends* devoted to conservation of library materials was published in 1956. In that issue the editor, Maurice F. Tauber, entitled his introduction "Conservation Comes of Age." From this perspective, some twenty-five years later, the title seems a bit premature. The past twenty-five years have seen much progress in conservation. This has been surveyed in an excellent article by Pamela Darling and Sherelyn Ogden in the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *Library Resources & Technical Services*.<sup>1</sup>

A number of significant events took place soon after the 1956 *Library Trends* issue was published which were to have a major impact on development of library conservation. Certainly one of the most important events in 1956 for conservation of library materials was the founding of the Council on Library Resources (CLR). The history of the Council on Library Resources is very well related in a recent article by Gwinn.<sup>2</sup> The Library Technology Project of the American Library Association, begun in 1959 with support from CLR, while not exclusively concerned with preservation, has contributed much in this area over the years.

The year 1960 saw the formation of a Standing Committee on Preservation of Research Library Materials of the Association of Research Libraries. The early work of this committee resulted in the funding of a project which was conducted by Gordon Williams, director of the Center for Research Libraries. The report of this project—*The*

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*Preservation of Deteriorating Books: An Examination of the Problems with Recommendations for a Solution*<sup>3</sup>—did much to move libraries to action. In large measure due to the Williams report, the Library of Congress began in 1965 its Preservation Project, which evolved into the Library of Congress Preservation and Testing Office in 1972. This office, headed by John C. Williams until his recent retirement, has become the major national center for research in preservation of library materials. Williams is the author of the article on paper in this issue.

Another major event in 1961 was the founding of the Barrow Laboratory, where, with funding from CLR, William J. Barrow (an author for the 1956 *Library Trends* conservation issue) and coworkers did extensive research on paper aging and degradation processes, and methods for combating these processes. The Barrow Laboratory closed in 1977, ten years after Barrow's death. Much of the research in conservation of paper is being done now at the Library of Congress, the National Bureau of Standards, and the National Archives.

The publication of the National Register of Microfilm Masters begun by the Library of Congress in 1965 was a recognition of the importance of this approach to conservation, as had been recommended by Williams and by Simonton.<sup>4</sup> In this issue, Don Avedon surveys the present state of microforms in conservation.

The Book Testing Laboratory at the Rochester Institute of Technology, established in 1976, is conducting very important work in testing and standards for binding methods and materials. The director of this laboratory, Werner Rebsamen, has written the article on binding in this issue.

Probably more influential than all the committees and reports in raising librarians' consciousness to preservation was the disastrous flood in Florence in November 1966. A lot was learned the hard way in the efforts to recover from that event. Many more disasters on a smaller scale have reinforced the lesson. Sally Buchanan, Preservation Officer at Stanford, has had firsthand experience in dealing with disasters in her own library. She has written the article on disaster planning for this issue.

An indication that preservation has indeed come of age is the growing number of libraries which have established offices of preservation within their organizations. These administrative positions have far-reaching involvement in library operations. Pamela Darling, a pioneer in this area, has been on leave from her position at Columbia University to study the problems of conservation administration. She is the author of the article on conservation administration in this issue.

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The creation of conservation offices in the major libraries in the country has raised several issues regarding the education and training of qualified people to fill these positions. Paul Banks addresses these in his article on conservation education. The growth in the number of library schools offering at least some courses in conservation is an indication of its becoming an established part of librarianship.

Preservation of nonbook materials has received less attention compared to books and paper, but librarians and archivists are becoming increasingly aware of the value and importance of photographs and sound recordings. Alice Swan addresses the topic of preservation of photographic materials. Walter Welch and William Storm write on the issues relating to preservation of sound recordings.

Whether or not Tauber's title was anticipating events, it seems clear that conservation has grown and matured significantly in the intervening twenty-five years.

The editor would like to thank all of the authors who contributed to this issue. In all cases, it was an additional burden on an already heavy load of commitments.

## References

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