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## Introduction

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I WAS PLEASED TO ACCEPT F. W. Lancaster's invitation to add to the legacy of Michèle Cloonan's 1987 *Library Trends* issue, "Recent Trends in Rare Book Librarianship," with a 2003 version, "Special Collections in the Twenty-First Century." Professor Cloonan and Dr. Sidney Berger graciously agreed to write a reflective, transitional piece for this issue. I will be happy to do the honors for my successor.

Professor Lancaster was apparently intrigued by my August 2000 *American Libraries* article, coauthored with Paul Saenger, about the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)/Newberry Library joint acquisitions program for medieval manuscripts. I remember how pleased I was at the time to enter into such an agreement. It felt innovative but sensible, and included much of what I find "new" about the special collections field at the beginning of the twenty-first century. We managed to craft this agreement—between a private independent research library and a huge, bureaucratic public university—and agree on a means to transport the fully insured manuscripts back and forth securely. These three shared manuscripts benefit the book history programs at the Newberry and the medieval studies program at UIUC. Students have already embarked on detailed studies of these manuscripts. An April 2000 joint reception at the Newberry Library to celebrate this collaboration was attended by Chicago-area UIUC alumni. Dr. Saenger, the architect of this innovative program, has brought the manuscripts to campus on two occasions, to make them available for an international medieval studies conference and to lecture on early Biblical manuscripts and concordances. Happily, Dr. Saenger agreed to describe the Newberry program more fully for this issue. Aside from the fact that these manuscripts are obviously a rich addition to our collection, they

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are being *used*—for traditional scholarship, for exhibits, and for public programs to inspire our alumni to support our library’s mission.

The philosophy of resource-sharing inherent in such agreements has the potential to build bridges and influence the perceptions of library colleagues in other research library units. Special collections, too, can control acquisitions costs by implementing our own version of interlibrary loan. While I believe that special collections need to remain “special,” twenty-first-century fiscal and political realities mandate that they be integral to the larger institution. After all, many special collections materials don’t start out as “rare,” but as part of the general collections. One envisions a continuum of books, steadily moving from the central stacks to special collections as they deteriorate physically, become scarce, or are subject to theft or vandalism. More than ever, we are part of the whole.

#### SPECIAL COLLECTIONS AS AN INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Special collections libraries in many institutions still need to justify their existence to administrators, legislators, and donors, not to mention other library colleagues. We can no longer assume—if we ever could—that every research library can afford the stewardship and time-intensive labor required by special collections. Acquiring the rare book, manuscript, or archival collection is only the first step; following is storage, conservation, security monitoring, and processing. That is why the Association of Research Libraries’ statement, “Research Libraries and the Commitment to Special Collections,” endorsed by the ARL Board of Directors in 2003, is so important; it underscores the tremendous institutional responsibility related to such collections. The catalysts for renewed focus on special collections have been the “Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections” conference at Brown University on 27–29 June 2001 and the energetic Task Force on Special Collections. Joe Hewitt and Judith Panitch’s article on the ARL project describes our ongoing efforts and the optimism that we will be able to realize significant changes.

#### INFORMATION AS CULTURAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL ARTIFACT

One of the most intellectually exciting trends is the current revival of interest in the history of the book. This field, of course, is far from new; but it has been embraced by critical theorists and social historians in such a way that the traditional descriptive bibliographical analysis can be embedded in historical and cultural context. On my campus, the revived interest in book history has led to a multidisciplinary faculty and graduate student reading group: “The Book as Artifact in the Twenty-First Century,” funded by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. Similarly, SHARP (The Society for the History of Authorship, Reading, and Publishing) pre-

sents cutting-edge and wide-ranging research at extremely popular international conferences. Faculty, librarians, and students can deepen their knowledge of book history at summer programs at the American Antiquarian Society, Rare Book School at the University of Virginia, the new program at UIUC, and many others. As Joanne D. Chaison's article demonstrates, "Everything Old is New Again" as scholars mine old research collections and discover new synergies for emerging academic fields.

Underlying the history of the book is the concept of "information as artifact," which has made us reflect on the relative importance and nature of the "real thing." Abby Smith's intelligent and provocative article, "Authenticity and Affect: When is a Watch not a Watch?" is a must-read.

UIUC's 10 millionth volume celebration will take place in Fall 2004. Each millionth milestone has been marked by the donation of a rare book by a Library Friend. This year will be no different, but the library is creating the "10,000,001 Book," designed by Jennifer E. Hain and authored by campus library-lovers who want to contribute. It will be a true reflection of the early twenty-first-century representation of "information as artifact," because it will include a CD!

## THE DIVERSE COMMUNITY OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARIES

Susan M. Allen's "Special Collections Outside the Ivory Tower" highlights the extraordinary riches housed in independent research libraries. The past twenty years has brought increased collaboration among different types of libraries on acquisitions, digital projects, exhibitions, and preservation initiatives. While Dr. Allen is correct in her assessment of independent research libraries being particularly vulnerable to financial exigencies, the "up" side is that these libraries can be very organizationally agile and creative and can get things accomplished quickly. This is clear from Paul Saenger's organization of the Newberry Library's medieval manuscripts project and from Joanne D. Chaison's description of the American Antiquarian Society as a "research spa."

## TECHNOLOGY

The Berger-Cloonan article demonstrates that special collections are, arguably, the most technology-intensive areas of libraries. Abby Smith's article explores the philosophical impact of digital projects. John F. Dean's article provides much-needed guidance on standards for digital imaging, so that these records can be shared and reflect the contributing institution's dedication to quality control of reproductions. He also clarifies the much-debated issue of whether digital imaging can be construed as "conservation" of the original artifact. The next issue of *Library Trends* on this topic should include examples of how digital projects have stood the test of time. By then, there should also be (we hope!) clarification on the com-

plex intellectual property issues associated with digital imaging, the Web, and the Internet.

### SINGING FOR OUR SUPPER

The first article I invited was Lisa Browar's and Samuel A. Streit's article on fund-raising. Nobody told us in library school in 1977 (and I went to a good one!) that we would be spending so much of our time on fund-raising and donor and public relations. Special collections libraries are increasingly expected to depend on endowed funds for acquisitions and staffing, and this takes time. And this time commitment will only increase, as donors envision special collections libraries as a worthy recipient of their generosity and deeds of gift are monitored and redrafted carefully in an increasingly litigious society. Librarians entering the special collections field in the twenty-first century must understand that their job will require lots of "people skills." I will never forget supervising the movers hauling away dozens of boxes from the garage of a donor, who watched and commented, "I feel as if my guts are being torn out." At the same time, of course, one meets some of the most interesting people in the world. I am still searching for a way to publish the wonderful stories shared among special collections librarians about fund-raising and donor adventures and misadventures. It would be a "best-seller," at least among librarians. The stumbling block is the confidentiality and sensitivity surrounding all our negotiations and relationships.

Special collections librarians must also be prepared to negotiate with development officers who are understandably eager to bring in gifts in order to cultivate alumni and other potential big donors, even if these gifts do not fit institutional collecting parameters. There are a lot of PowerPoint presentations to local service clubs and interviews with the press. All this, of course, can yield some unexpectedly wonderful financial support.

### THE TEACHING MISSION OF SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARIES

I hope that the next *Library Trends* issue on special collections will include an article on teaching with primary resources. Based on the presentations at the 2002 Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) preconference in Atlanta, more and more of us are collaborating with teaching faculty to incorporate rare books, manuscripts, and archives into student research and coursework. The president of the University of Illinois Foundation stopped in the other day and saw a class interacting with rare treasures in the history of architecture. This lively class will be included in the video presentation for donors during Foundation Weekend. In another instance, we team-taught with a history professor a seminar on the Spanish Civil War. The students spent the last part of the semester in the library using Abraham Lincoln Brigade manuscript correspondence for their research

papers. And, most special collections libraries now include K–12 and Elderhostel participants in their teaching and public service mission. This will only increase as we continue to build digital collections. As one RBMS/Atlanta audience member remarked to a presenter of a high-school teaching project: “It is so wonderful to see this happening in our field. Twenty years ago you would have been laughed out of the room.” It is crucial that we teach new generations the concept of stewardship of cultural resources. Special collections librarians should also participate in their library’s information literacy program and become more aware of teaching methodology and ways to measure effectiveness and learning outcomes.

### AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT AND PUBLIC SERVICE

An essential accompaniment to special collections teaching is the reference and public service mission. Daniel Traister’s “Public Services and Outreach in Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Libraries” is a comprehensive survey of the wide range of activities in a twenty-first-century special collections library. It is refreshingly candid and based on many years of professional experience.

Dr. Traister reminds us that many potential patrons are intimidated by special collections libraries. Despite the fact that the UIUC Rare Book and Special Collections Library has always been open to the public, alumni from twenty or so years ago report that they always assumed they were prohibited from using the collections. We need to attract a new generation of scholars to our collections. Our colleagues in the performing arts call this “audience development,” as they try to build a new audience for classical music and symphony orchestras.

### GLOBAL REACH

The recent news of the destruction of Iraq’s National Museum and the National Library of Iraq in the aftermath of the war is but one instance of how special collections around the world are increasingly a concern for all special collections professionals. This issue contains two papers from librarians with considerable experience in the international arena. Alice Prochaska, the chair of the IFLA Rare Books and Manuscripts Section, provides here an invaluable background on recent trends in international special collections librarianship. And Ekaterina Genieva, director general of the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature, has contributed an important assessment of the often painful and controversial issue of book collections that have been displaced during times of war and used as “war booty” and of the emotional issues surrounding “repatriation” of materials. The United States press has covered the repatriation problems in the art world, but in fact the same legal issues arise in libraries as well. This problem begs for more attention and scholarly research, and I hope that Dr. Genieva’s article will inspire some of you to pursue it.

## HIDDEN COLLECTIONS: UNPROCESSED BACKLOGS IN OUR NATION'S SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARIES

The Brown conference participants' consensus was that uncataloged backlogs are the most urgent special collections problem. The backlogs will be thus addressed in a 2002–03 white paper, "Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers," available on the ARL Web site, and they were the subject of a conference at the Library of Congress (LC) in September 2003. Uncataloged backlogs are a security threat and a barrier to comprehensive coverage of a scholarly topic. The LC conference planners expect an action plan to emerge, involving reallocation of institutional resources, creativity and flexibility in applying cataloging rules, and external funding.

The year 2003 brought another key event in the special collections world: The Yale Conference to Revise the Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Materials (DCRM). In March, Yale University and the Beinecke Library hosted an invitational twenty-five-person conference to update the DCRB (Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books) rules, and to enhance the guidelines for "collection-level records" as a strategy for attacking backlogs more efficiently. Included in this issue is conference organizer Deborah J. Leslie's report of this historic meeting.

## CONSERVATION AND PRESERVATION

Jennifer E. Hain has provided a concise, general overview of twenty-first-century trends in conservation and preservation. Then Paula De Stefano's article targets one of the most challenging formats for the twenty-first century: film. I think that a great deal of energy and resources will need to be focused on what one of my colleagues calls the "funny formats"—including tape and film—that are often set aside and forgotten in the backlog of materials we don't have the time, money, or expertise to preserve. John F. Dean offers a helpful background on the complex environment of digital preservation.

## SPACE

There is never enough of it, and it now needs to be reconfigured not only to hold more books but also to house a variety of activities: group study, exhibitions, lectures, receptions, digital project preparation, processing, and conservation. Donald G. Kelsey's welcome article tells the story of the University of Minnesota's much-touted storage facility that also created a distinguished special collections space, the Elmer L. Andersen Library. Kelsey is much too modest about this important project. The strategy of tying special collections to storage, and getting the Minnesota legislature to pay for it, was brilliant and a great gift to the people of Minnesota, despite some environmental and political problems.

## FOR THE NEXT ISSUE—SOON, I HOPE

Not everything is covered in this issue of *Library Trends*. I am particularly sorry there isn't an article on the development of educational opportunities for special collections librarianship. I taped Terry Belanger one afternoon last summer at Rare Book School, intending to transcribe his remarks about his role in developing education for rare books and special collections librarians over the past thirty years. I realized I was not up to the task at this point. We will need to wait for Professor Belanger's own account. In the meantime, I am delighted that he agreed to write the afterword to this issue.

We need an article on exhibits, as they are an increasingly important part of public relations. I think that good design principles are crucial, and many of us need guidance on how to attain or hire this expertise.

As mentioned earlier, we need an article on teaching using rare books and primary resources.

We need an article on security. Miles Harvey's book *The Island of Lost Maps*, makes us all painfully aware of how easy it is for thieves to decimate library collections.

We need an update from ARL's Task Force on Special Collections—especially to see if their "Hidden Collections" initiatives will make a dent in research library cataloging backlogs.

As mentioned previously, legal and intellectual property issues, including ethics and intellectual freedom, will be a major complexity for the special collections profession.

Many special collections libraries have close relations to museums, art galleries, and performing arts centers. The next issue should highlight collaborations with other cultural institutions to create joint programming.

As the Berger-Cloonan article points out, researchers today are probably using more manuscript and archival materials than rare books. And, catalogers looking for solutions to backlogs are turning to archival principles for handling printed materials. The next issue should include more about archives as an integral part of the special collections endeavor.

Thank you, authors and contributors. I want to say I asked some of the best and the brightest, who are also the busiest, and yet they said "yes." I am so gratified. I also remember fondly a "power" lunch at Berkeley's RBMS preconference with Dan Traister, Sam Streit, and Lisa Browar to help shape and plan this issue. Thanks, too, to Marlo Welshons on the *Library Trends* staff, for all her encouragement, patience, and cheerful assistance.

As we face a decade of increasing fiscal and professional challenge, let's try to cherish the rewards and fun times of being a special collections librarian. Remember the awestruck sixth-grader looking at a medieval manuscript in an exhibit case and whispering, "Is that real gold on those pages?" The freshman running out of the classroom for a Kleenex because viewing

Shakespeare's First Folio "has changed my life." The seasoned scholar jumping up and down in the reading room because he has just found a manuscript fragment matching one in a Viennese library. A television crew taking over the library for several days to film "The Song and the Slogan," a documentary about Carl Sandburg (even if we did trip over cords). And please collect these stories for me, because one of these days I would like to include them in an unabashedly optimistic book about being a special collections librarian.