

Library Collections Conservation Discussion Group 2017

Unexpectedly Expert: Diversifying Your Skills to Cover All the Bases

INTRODUCTION

The program theme for this year's session was "Unexpectedly Expert: Diversifying Your Skills to Cover All the Bases." This topic was selected because it is a common experience that many library and archives conservators share. We are often the one and only conservator employed by our institution. Or perhaps we work with other book and paper conservators but our institution has extensive holdings that are not book and paper based. Having to learn and master new skills on the job encourages us to stretch and grow to rise to the challenge.

A panel of emerging, mid-career, and highly experienced conservators was assembled to share their experiences facing a variety of professional challenges that fell outside of their immediate areas of expertise. As a result, a diverse range of subtopics emerged: examples of single-item treatments, collection care projects, construction of new conservation labs, and innovative ideas for lab workflows and collaborative strategies, as well as theoretical and ethical considerations inherent in our decision-making process. The engaging audience-driven discussion session that followed the presentations took many different and unexpected directions.

PRESENTATION SUMMARIES

SONYA BARRON

THREE-DIMENSIONAL OBJECTS IN THE ARCHIVES

At Iowa State University Library, dealing with a large number of high-priority three-dimensional objects in archival collections is a pressing issue. Some common hurdles that many

This open discussion took place on June 1, 2017, during AIC's 45th Annual Meeting, May 28-June 2, 2017, Chicago, Illinois. The moderators organized and led the discussion and recorded notes. Readers are reminded that the moderators do not necessarily endorse all comments recorded, and that although every effort was made to record proceedings accurately, further evaluation or research is advised before putting treatment observations into practice.

conservators must overcome are lack of adequate training, lack of funding to hire a qualified professional, and lack of time to deal with the whole issue. It is desirable to maximize the effectiveness of preventive conservation measures and to avoid performing invasive item-level treatments on the artifacts.

The presenter conducted several consultations with Marilyn Pool, an objects conservator at Arizona State Museum. These conversations shed light on the bigger picture of collections care in an ethnographic objects museum and archaeological repository. The museum's approach to preservation is collection-level oriented, much like in libraries and archives. Some of the preservation strategies for their large grant-based projects include doing condition assessment surveys, opting for supportive housing in lieu of conservation treatment, performing targeted structural repairs for high-priority objects, and assessing preservation actions after a period of five years. Some go-to online resources Pool recommended were the Society for Preservation of Natural History Collections, National Park Service Conserve-O-Grams, the Canadian Conservation Institute, and Connecting to Collections Care Online.

Two examples of perishable artifacts were presented to illustrate an effective minimalist approach to preservation of objects in an archives setting. Both items bear cultural significance to Iowans and are popular with the Iowa State University campus community. The first was an ear of prize-winning corn from 1907 called the *Grand Champion*. It was mounted precariously in a heavy historic display case with rattling glass. The second was a small slice of the Biggest Rice Krispie Treat™ Ever Made, dating from 2001. Because both of these food items are potentially highly attractive to pests, they were taken through a standard freeze-and-thaw cycle, described in detail in the NPS Conserve-O-Gram 3/6, 1994. The process eradicates insects, their larvae, and eggs, as well as deactivates mold spores. After being removed from its original display case, the ear of corn and the display case were rehoused side by side in separate compartments of the same box. The new storage enclosure served as an

attractive temporary display solution. Both the corn and the Rice Krispie Treat were sealed in heavy-weight polyethylene on all sides, using a Polyweld unit and a Colibri machine, respectively. Other materials and techniques for rehousing included using Volara foam and lining an Ethafoam cut-out with Teflon film.

Sonya Barron, Iowa State University

DEBORAH HOWE

REACHING OUT: HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Conservation labs located in remote rural areas face particular challenges in finding resources. The presenter, collections conservator at Dartmouth College Library, reflected on the resources and options available to conservators in such a position. There are tangible resources beyond a campus setting, such as the AIC Directory and other networks of experts, that a conservator may make use of. Often overlooked are the on-campus facilities and services outside the conservation community. The Dartmouth campus is home to experts in a variety of fields, such as science, art, theater, and engineering, whose knowledge can potentially aid and inform the work of conservators.

Two projects in particular, the treatments of a collection of papyri and an oversized antiphonal binding, were discussed as examples of the preceding strategies. For the papyri project, the presenter sought the help of Papyrus Conservation Expert Leyla Lau-Lamb and her information network, *University of Michigan Information System: Guidelines for Conservation of Papyrus*. When planning the conservation treatment of an extremely large antiphonal binding, the presenter took advantage of a lab visit by Giselle Simón, conservator at the University of Iowa, who has extensive experience in working with antiphonal material. Although visiting experts might only be available in person for a short period of time, their visits provide the opportunity to form a long-term plan and strategy for the object or project at hand. Activities that could be performed ahead of time, such as photographic documentation, were done by local staff to free up the expert's time to do the work that only he or she could provide. In addition, while collaborating with other departments on campus may come at an added financial cost, it is a convenient and effective way to access highly specialized knowledge, studio space, or additional resources and materials needed to complete a project. For example, the Woodworking Workshop and Jewelry Studio at Dartmouth were used for the treatment of the antiphonal boards and in the fabrication of metal hardware for the binding. Available funding, visiting experts, and on-site resources are best utilized through careful organization and an openness to collaboration, allowing conservators to help fill in the gaps in their knowledge.

Deborah Howe, Dartmouth College Library

ELIZABETH STONE AND JANET LEE
SIX DOLLS, FOUR SHOES AND A TIGER

Conservators are often confronted with challenging treatments outside their comfort zone. Many conservators do not have local experts to consult and may have to rely on assistance outside their geographic region. There are strategies and creative ways to overcome the problems that distance may pose, as was the case with the preservation of a small collection of textile objects at the University of Iowa Libraries. The textile objects—Chinese mission dolls, children's shoes, and a tiger pillow—were collected by a missionary in China. When it came time to strategize about treatment and rehousing for the unusual objects, the Presenter reached out to Janet Lee, conservation assistant at the New York Historical Society with an expertise in textiles, to gain more information about the nature and historical background of the objects themselves, as well as to consult on how to best preserve them. Texting, video chat, digital file exchanges, and other modes of communication were employed to facilitate long-distance collaboration. The conservators combined online research with direct examination of similar collection objects accessible to Lee at the New York Historical Society to gather necessary background information on the history and cultural significance of the objects.

Condition issues included pest damage and soiling. The presenter consulted with Lee to determine the best approach to the treatment. When unexpected issues arose during the treatment process, such as the discovery of sawdust coming out of one of the dolls, Lee helped the presenter determine that the sawdust was the doll's stuffing and not additional pest damage. To avoid any ambiguity that might result from long-distance communication, Lee created clear and simple instructive diagrams to share. The diagrams offered detailed representations of Lee's housing design and basic textile treatment techniques such as the "sew-mend" and provided enough direction for the presenter to execute them independently. Working knowledge of both textiles and library collections was blended together to design a custom storage enclosure with movable compartments appropriate for storage of the objects in a library setting. Further work on the remainder of the objects will be completed in a similar manner between these two collaborators.

Elizabeth Stone, University of Iowa Libraries
Janet Lee, New York Historical Society

ASHLEIGH SCHIESZER

DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP SKILLS IN CONSERVATION

Acquiring managerial and administrative skills in a new professional role is a challenge that many emerging conservators face. The presenter, conservator and co-manager at

The Preservation Lab, a hybrid collaborative lab, admitted to having little training or experience in the management of staff or in large-scale collections preservation at the time she began in the position. The Preservation Lab provides conservation services to more than 50 libraries within the lab's network and includes professional staff, technicians, student employees, and volunteers. To be successful in her new role, the presenter sought out training and resources to develop her professional management skills. She graduated from an 18-month leadership course through the Public Library, attended local university workshops and retreats, and utilized training opportunities offered by AIC. These educational resources provided different perspectives on leadership to help shape a personal leadership style and inform responses to various management situations. Interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence can also be cultivated through one's own personal reading and research. Emerging professionals were encouraged to cast a wide net when seeking to develop their own management expertise, making use of local and regional resources, professional organizations, and mentors.

The unique nature of The Preservation Lab gives rise to a special set of management challenges that the co-managers have developed strategies for addressing. The facility is shared by two institutions with distinct missions and cultures; staff employed by either institution work equally on materials from both. The co-managers—a conservator and a preservation librarian—focus on transparent communication and clearly defined priorities, and make use of the lab's open layout to encourage collaboration among staff. They balance the potentially competing workflows for general and special collections by employing standardized treatments for general collection materials and holding regular meetings with selectors to discuss special collections treatments. They also look for ways to maximize both productivity and staff job satisfaction. Collaborative team learning activities, for instance, achieve both of those goals and also help to create a unified lab culture.

Ashleigh Ferguson Schieszer, Public Library of Cincinnati & Hamilton County and the University of Cincinnati

SUZANNE MORGAN

"I LEARNED IT BY WATCHING YOU!"

A search for resources to inform a textile rehousing project prompted the presenter, a book conservator unfamiliar with textile preservation, to consult the literature for help. Although many written and photographic resources on the subject were available, none depicted the process in the desired level of detail. Research on the Internet eventually led to a step-by-step textile housing video produced by the Minnesota Historical Society. That video enabled the presenter to finally visualize, take on, and successfully complete the project.

Building on that experience, the presenter used videos as a teaching tool to conduct a week-long workshop on library preservation through the Myanmar Librarian Training Consortium. Enrollment in the workshop was high, so workshop organizers planned to divide the participants into three groups. One group would receive hands-on instruction while the others watched training videos in a separate room. Following the successful experience with the textile video, the presenter expected to find existing library preservation training videos available on the Internet and to supplement them with some original video content. However, this proved difficult; searches for the keyword "conservation" yielded many hits on the subject of *ecological* conservation. In addition, some topics within library preservation and conservation, such as care and handling of materials or videos of conservators at work, were very well covered, whereas other areas were underrepresented or missing altogether. After eventually locating enough online material for the bulk of the training, the presenter used equipment available in the Arizona State University (ASU) makerspace to edit excerpts from existing videos together with original content to create the workshop training videos. Although the process was labor intensive and time consuming, the resulting videos were well received at the workshop. The "magic of video" as a training tool was praised, and those in the audience were strongly urged to produce their own preservation and conservation training videos for the benefit of other conservators and the general public alike.

Suzanne Morgan, Arizona State University Library

JUSTIN JOHNSON

HOW DO I BUILD THIS? UNDERSTANDING AND COMMUNICATING THE LANGUAGE OF DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

At the University of Washington Libraries, conservators gained valuable experience working with architects, contractors, and consultants on the planning and design of a new conservation lab. Early on in the process, it was clear that the different parties involved did not share the same vocabulary or perspective on the project. Conservators found it challenging to effectively communicate to the architects exactly the kind of space that they needed, and because some terms can have multiple interpretations, it was essential to establish very clear and open communication. Design versus functionality, for instance, or a seemingly simple matter of whether to refer to the space as a "lab," a "center," or a "studio" were areas where confusion or miscommunication could occur, possibly resulting in unintended features in the new space. The conservators came to realize that what seemed like minor design changes to them—adjustments of just a few inches—were perceived very differently by architects who saw the ripple effect that those changes would have on the design and construction process.

The conservators also learned that communicating their priorities was equally as important as communicating their vision and purpose. Conservators expected that a portion of the new space that was designated as a conference room would also be used for assembling enclosures. This dual purpose was not fully understood by all on the design team, which inevitably led to complications in how lighting engineers would treat the space. Fortunately, an expensive mistake was avoided when conservators noticed this discrepancy. They carefully reviewed the lab plans to ensure that the intended use of each area was clearly conveyed by its label on the plan. However, the conservators admitted to some difficulty in maintaining this level of focus on details large and small over the years-long course of the project. Inevitably some things were lost in translation as successive iterations of the plans passed between conservators and architects and back again. The conservators found it useful to keep track not only of what they wanted in the new space but also of what they had *communicated* that they wanted to avoid situations where architects could “fill in the blank” in the absence of clear instruction from conservators. As both sides learned to ask more questions of the other and became better versed in the language of each other’s disciplines, the plans took clearer shape and became a more accurate representation of the conservators’ vision.

Justin Johnson, University of Washington Libraries

SUSAN RUSSICK

WHAT COULD POSSIBLY GO WRONG? RISK MANAGEMENT
WHEN PROPOSING TREATMENTS

When library and archives conservators are faced with collection materials to treat, the objects may not always fall neatly into the conservator’s area of specialization or any well-defined category, and hiring a specialist to perform treatments on materials that are often peripheral to the collection is rarely an option. The AIC core document *Essential Competencies of a Conservator* can be helpful in determining which resources to turn to so that an informed decision about treatments can be made.

Meeting with and listening to curators as a first step can shed light on the priority and significance of an object by placing it within the context of the institution’s collection. A conservator may take a cautious approach to working with unfamiliar materials while determining what degree of intervention is needed based on existing expertise and available resources. Some helpful strategies to be considered in decision making and in the process of treatment are understanding the physical materials in their most basic form, revisiting what is known rather than what is unknown, employing basic conservation techniques, and focusing on the “big picture.”

The presenter shared several case studies illustrating how these strategies were applied to objects in the Northwestern University Libraries conservation lab. The conservation literature and web-based resources such as the AIC Wiki, ConsDistList, STASH, and webinars can offer consistent and reliable information when approaching conservation in unfamiliar territory. When multiple resources show a consensus on the treatment of a type of material, that confirms that the objects and therefore the treatments are more predictable. The conservator can move forward with greater confidence. Where the literature includes more qualifications or disagrees, a specialist is more likely to be required.

Online research into preservation of glass plate negatives served as an effective tool in helping the conservators cross over from rehousing into minor treatment. Sometimes applying book and paper conservation skills to an object with similar characteristics can make the challenge of treatment less daunting. In evaluating the challenge posed by a Nobel Laureate’s oversized chalkboard with writing that needed consolidation, it became clear that it was not the specific task or material that was not well understood but rather the large size of the board that complicated the treatment. The chalk writing was consolidated with funori using an ultrasonic mister. Specialists can be consulted or contracted to help with challenges that are beyond the expertise of a book and paper conservator. Cynthia Kuniej Berry, local paintings conservator, engaged the Northwestern University Library conservation staff in a workshop on the care of paintings, which helped them improve housing and storage for a group of paintings in their collection. When a high-priority taxonomy object needed treatment, Lisa Goldberg, an objects conservator in private practice, performed the bulk of the complex work while library conservation staff provided support. This enabled them to observe the expert at work and to expand their expertise by learning from her. Sometimes a conservator may decide that attempting treatment on a vulnerable object is too risky, regardless of expertise, and simply housing the object is the best approach. Book and paper conservators will continue to work on objects that stretch their expertise; taking on these challenges is a way to increase knowledge and improve skills for future treatments.

Susan Russick, Northwestern University Library

DISCUSSION

After the last presentation, the moderator opened up the floor for questions, comments, and answers. Due to the speakers’ coverage of a diverse range of topics, the discussion took several different directions. The contents of the discussion are summarized and paraphrased in the following.

CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CONSERVATION FACILITIES

Commenter: In your experience, from an architect's perspective, what is the functional difference between calling your conservation facility a "lab," a "center," or a "studio"?

Justin Johnson: I think it best to be as ambiguous as possible in the beginning. The architectural firm immediately hired a lab consultant, which may have been more than we needed. While we were using laboratory equipment, what we were building was not a conventional scientific *lab* with the associated chemistry apparatus. We ultimately went with the word *center* because it was felt that it was the most appropriate for potential fundraising and naming opportunities. Right now, our sign reads as "Blank" Conservation Center. The word *studios* seems to convey a different meaning, and the word *lab* may be inaccurate by giving the impression of a facility that is more sophisticated than what we have.

Commenter: At the Holocaust Museum, we recently opened a large, brand new Collections and Conservation Center. I was fortunate that the museum already has an architect on staff for specific projects, so he and I have been working together for over 20 years. He has been to the conservation labs and knows of our work, but I realized that there was still a lot of educating to do. I adopted a useful that came from a conservation scientist at the National Gallery. When they redid their labs, she organized a "functional visit" for the architects. Our visit was not as detailed as I would have liked, and it happened in short spurts over a few weeks. We invited the architects and designers to come in and see us work. Sometimes it was staged, and other times it was actual work. They could see and understand how we moved around a table or a piece of equipment, how the function of that piece of equipment related to other activities in the lab. This enabled them to see what we do in a holistic sense.

JJ: We went through the same process when we had the architects come in. Unfortunately, the space that we had going into the project was so bad that it was hard for them to envision the potential of what it could be. It would have been nice to send the architects to other labs to actually see the spaces where conservators work.

Commenter: Yes, we did that as well. The visits to other labs were a great help in moving the project forward.

Commenter: Even sending your architect to see other labs, or working with an architect who has already designed other labs, is not proof against getting some very strange results. You still need to check all the little details of their output.

Commenter: At the Indiana State Library, we chose to use the word *lab* because we felt it gave us more legitimacy in the eyes of the state. We wanted to be seen as important and irreplaceable to the institution, in view of potential state funding cuts in the future.

JJ: In the beginning of the project, we talked about the same thing and it probably led to too much legitimacy, in a sense. The university's Environmental Health and Safety Office became involved to make sure that all regulations were followed. Representatives came to do a safety inspection and said, "You are not a lab, don't call it a lab."

Commenter: Penn State is in the process of building a new lab. The word *center* has been suggested so that Environmental Health and Safety would not have to be involved. In regard to the functional tour idea, it would be very costly to have an architect travel from central Pennsylvania to Washington, DC. I have been to many labs over the years, but my notes were not detailed enough to be able to pass on to the architect. Considering the videos that have been mentioned in this panel, would some of you be willing to put together videos of your lab spaces? They could go up on YouTube, where they can be accessed by the architects and the design team. We are looking to have all of our work stations be adjustable height and hopefully ADA accessible.

Suzu Morgan: I really love that idea. I would suggest putting those videos on the Wiki.

JJ: There was a great live video tour done by the Smithsonian a couple of weeks ago. It was informal but very illuminating in terms of how their space was laid out and why.

Sofia Barron: It would be important to identify specifically which conservation labs you would want to see on a list of these video tours.

Ashleigh Schieszer: Justin, could you talk about the three-dimensional representational tool that you used to build a virtual model of your lab, which you had discussed in your talk during the Sustainability session?

JJ: Live Home 3D Pro is a commercially available app that people use to design their bathrooms and kitchens. We were able to plot all of our design specifications into the program, which allowed us to do a live vetting of our space. We were able to move furniture around in real time, to stand at our own height, and to reach for things in the space. The software is connected to a virtual warehouse of three-dimensional models of furniture, lighting fixtures, and specialized equipment, including humidification domes and board shears. It's

a powerful tool for people who want to experiment without spending a lot of money.

Commenter: Coming from the State Library of New South Wales in Sydney, Australia, I would like to express my support for the Wiki idea. It would be very beneficial to have access to international online resources on new lab construction, since sending architects to the UK or the U.S. would be out of the question for us.

Commenter: When working to construct the first-ever conservation lab in Trinidad and Tobago, I tried to help administrators understand what preservation and conservation actually are. Throughout my years of graduate study, I took pictures of every single lab that I visited. I created a Facebook album with captioned photos and walked the designer through the images. I pointed out features that I liked and asked whether those would be possible to include in the newly constructed work environment. With new emerging technologies, [the] sky seems to be the limit. I am even more excited about being able to share videos, live video tours, and 360 virtual tours of lab spaces.

Commenter: At Rutgers University, having Environmental Health and Safety involved in testing our fume hood was helpful because the facilities staff came and fixed it free of charge, bringing it up to spec. Yes, there is the added burden of maintaining MSDS sheets, proper labeling and tight records of chemicals, regular scheduled respirator testing, and such, but that may be an acceptable trade-off when weighed against the benefits.

MANAGEMENT: COMMUNICATION, WORKFLOWS, AND STAFF

MANAGEMENT: COMMUNICATION, WORKFLOWS, AND STAFF

Commenter: Question for Ashleigh. How does your lab remain accountable as you split your work between two institutions?

AS: We use an Access database where we record treatment time spent, among other things. The time spent is weighted based on who is performing the treatment. The cost to the institution is determined by whether the work is done by a technician, a conservator, an intern, or a volunteer. We also track the percentage of special versus general collections work that is done for each institution.

Commenter: In most labs, the time spent on general collection book repair has been decreasing. There is a shift toward doing more special collections treatment. How do you work with technicians to help them acquire these skills?

AS: We utilize the specialized skills that our technicians already have, such as knowledge of photography for developing

expertise in conservation photographic documentation. I have taught workshops to the technicians on topics like matting and hinging and encapsulated bindings. Teaching helps me reach a deeper understanding of procedures. As technicians acquire and master new skills, they can in turn teach interns and volunteers, which saves me time and provides them with the opportunity to gain the skill of training others.

SM: I have delegated many tasks to student workers. The distinction that only I can work on special collections materials made my workload impractical. Projects can be broken down into chunks, where some parts are appropriate for the conservator to do, such as treatment, and other aspects can be dealt with by a student or a technician, such as rehousing or documentation.

Commenter: How do you facilitate effective communication within your institution?

SM: As the only conservator at ASU, I find so-called house calls to be an effective communication strategy. I walk around the building and talk to staff, which is how I have discovered many “problem areas.” Doing this gives Conservation a physical presence in the building.

SB: When working on collaborative projects, my solution has been to hold group meetings, where all the stakeholders are present in the same room and are able to comment in real time. In order to remain accountable, it helps to have an electronically accessible editable meeting agenda, meeting notes, and action items, as well as scheduling a next meeting in advance. When taking in items for treatment, I meet with all of the archivists together every four to six months. They transfer a group of objects to the lab, and we talk together about the available options. They bring no more items for me to treat until these treatments are completed, not unless there is an emergency situation or a donor event. In the interim between meetings, the curators compile a prioritized list of objects that they want to have treated. This is a workflow for collections maintenance treatments, not for digitization or exhibits.

AS: We have similar workflows. It makes it easier for librarians to know that they can count on that meeting to bring over their objects. I have a corresponding intake meeting for the technicians. I come up with a treatment plan and divide up the work into segments. I fill out a photo documentation sheet for an assigned technician to perform photography. A set of paperwork travels with the object so that work steps can be recorded by different technicians as the project progresses. We put all of our tasks on the whiteboard so everyone can see which actions are assigned to whom.

Commenter: I have started to do Faculty Hours in Special Collections. The preservation librarian and myself spend an hour answering questions and looking at items. Questions come to us from library assistants, curators, catalogers, and members of the community. We divide up the inquiries based on our expertise or filter them through to our digital preservation librarian.

FACING LIMITATIONS OF COLLECTIONS STORAGE

Commenter: At the University of Virginia Libraries, we often encounter items that we are not used to dealing with in the conservation lab. One of the struggles that we have is to find additional storage space, when items that had been folded up become unfolded and grow in size, so to speak. Could the panel speak about this issue and how you deal with it in your own institutions?

SM: The large wedding dress that you saw in my presentation is now stored on top of a cabinet nowhere near the collection that it is associated with. There is definitely a shortage of space, so we store the oversized items where we can find room. I, too, am designing a lab in the renovated library space, and I am pleading for wider doors and more space in general. There is still the mentality that we are just a library, but I believe that with all the artifacts that we have, we are no longer a library but a small museum.

Susan Russick: We measure all of the shelves, and we have a maximum enclosure size that we adhere to. If at all possible, we will fit the item on the shelf. If we can't do that, we have to accept that the oversized item will be precariously balanced on something or sitting on pallets on the floor. We have a number of dresses, which we decided to pad out and fold to fit into a box smaller than the ideal size in order to store them on shelving in the stacks.

SM: There is potential for creating hanging garment storage in the stacks, for garments that can withstand appropriate hanging storage. There may be more room to install a textile rack rather than trying to find additional spaces where more boxes can be balanced on top of boxes.

SB: Artifacts storage in the stacks is very tricky, particularly with oversized items. In order to get ideas, I have found myself looking for images online. I used the Google search engine, putting in terms like "oversized artifacts collection storage" and "archival storage artifacts," and I was able to find many useful images on blogs and Pinterest pages of conservators and collection managers. These were either photos they took of their own storage solutions or photos they took while visiting other people's labs, which they posted online.

It would be great to be able to access that kind of visual reference information on the Wiki.

Commenter: Both when working at New York University and now at the University of Florida, I would often go out with the archivist on appraisal trips. We would either see a collection that the archivist really wanted or one where [he or she] felt unable to say no to the donor. I would remind the archivist that it is much harder to deaccession something than to not bring it in. With special collections stacks being at the top of their capacity, if a large collection is brought in, something would have to be moved out to off-site storage. I feel that it is a part of my job to communicate with special collections selectors and with donors in order to get in front of collections before they come in.

JJ: One of the challenges that we've had is the unfavorable perception that cherry picking can give to a donor. Even though we may be trying to preserve space on the shelves, it is often a stipulation of the gift that we have to take the entire collection of items. Most of the time, we've had to say that we will take it all and then deal with the space problem later.

Commenter: I won't disagree with that, but I will say that donors like conservators to pay attention to them, since we are behind the scenes people in the library. It is possible to communicate to the donor that if we accept the entire collection, the donor may want to find ways to provide financial support for its preservation and rehousing. Even though I am not working for Development, asking for funding is an opportunity that is on the table if you are present in the room.

Commenter: I have worked at the University of Kansas for a long time and have a great relationship with the curators. Which is why I feel that I can ask the kinds of questions about selection that may transcend the traditional role of the conservator. It is important to know what the value of the item is to the overall institutional collection before spending the time to construct a labor-intensive fancy box for it. With the prevalence of the More Product Less Process approach, I find that the curators are often accepting collections without having the opportunity to find out precisely what is there. Moreover, we often have student workers processing collections, so the tough questions about selecting and editing do not get asked.

OTHER TOPICS

Commenter: Question for Deborah Howe. When you host a workshop, who do you open it up to? The whole library or the whole campus?

Deborah Howe: Our aim is to open the workshops to other conservators. That is our main focus. We really want colleagues in our area to come and participate. The only workshop that I mentioned, which was not marketed to conservators, was the one taught by the university professor. The rest are for our colleagues in the field. We want to share the wealth, so to speak.

Commenter: Question for Suzy. When and how can we get our hands on your videos?

SM: I was expecting somebody to ask me that. There is a reason I haven't put them up on the web. I had incorporated other people's materials into my videos, so I didn't feel comfortable posting them online without asking for permission first. For fair use in a classroom setting, I thought it was okay. I also need to re-edit them. I would like to make shorter versions of these videos and to share them in the future.

ANGELA ANDRES
Special Collections Conservator
University of Kansas
Lawrence, KS
andresa@ku.edu

SOFIA (SONYA) BARRON
Collections Conservator
Parks Library
Iowa State University of Science and Technology
Ames, IA
sbarron@iastate.edu

ANAHIT CAMPBELL
Book Conservator
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Milwaukee, WI
anahitmarina@yahoo.com