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## Library and Archives Conservation Discussion Group 2021

### Library and Archives Conservation: Priorities of the Past, Present, and Future

#### INTRODUCTION

The Library and Archives Conservation Discussion Group (LACDG), newly formed with the vote of the Book and Paper Group (BPG) membership to merge the Library Collections Conservation Discussion Group (LCCDG) and the Archives Conservation Discussion Group (ACDG), held their first annual meeting presentation and discussion session. Randy Silverman and Hilary Kaplan, two early co-chairs of LCCDG and ACDG, respectively, were invited to share memories and reflections on the creation of the individual discussion groups officially established by AIC in the early 1990s. The session shifted from honoring the past to focusing on the future priorities for libraries and archives with four different and informative presentations. The presentations included reconsidering microfilm collections, creating training videos for library student workers during the pandemic, returning exhibition loans during the COVID-19 pandemic, and initiating anti-racist approaches to library and archives conservation. The session concluded with ideas for future LACDG panel discussions.

#### SUMMARY OF PRESENTATIONS

Randy Silverman (LCCDG Co-Chair 1990–1998) and Hilary Kaplan (ACDG Chair 1995–1998) joined the panel to answer questions regarding the LCCDG and ACDG. Their responses have been paraphrased.

*LACDG Co-Chair:* Please tell us about the early discussion group days and why it was important to create the discussion groups.

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This open discussion took place *virtually* on May 21, 2021, during AIC's 49th annual meeting. The moderators organized and led the discussion and recorded notes. Readers are reminded that the moderators do not necessarily endorse all comments recorded, and although every effort was made to record proceedings accurately, further evaluation or research is advised before incorporating any observations into practice.

*Silverman:* Back in the 1980s, the BPG didn't have room for discussions about library book repair. Book repair units were often governed by conservators, so at some meetings there were informal discussions. I remember one specific meeting in a hotel cul-de-sac that ran until 10:30 or 11:00 at night with 20 people in attendance. Jim Stroud passionately said that if AIC requires documentation, we just have to do it. The counter to that was that the Association for Research Libraries (ARL) was asking for statistics on book repairs that included things like 0 to 15-minute repairs. What kind of documentation could be created for 15-minute repairs? In fact, what were our standards of practice? Maria Grandinette and I co-chaired the LCCDG from 1991 to 1998 with this burning question: How do we establish professionalism in operations that have been going on for years, sometimes 100 years? We had to have context for that discussion because some labs were very small, maybe one person or two with technicians up to very large labs that were made up of student repair technicians. So the question of how you could train a technician to do a respectable cloth rebacking was key. Equally important was what materials warranted a split board binding versus a case binding, and why were we lining the spine of general collections books with polyvinyl acetate (PVA) when we knew that was going to cause a long-term problem for collections care? At the 1992 meeting in Buffalo, we staged the first-ever smorgasbord of ideas. People from 25 different libraries brought examples of the repairs that they were doing in their book repair sections and people set them out. We circulated and talked about the different techniques, and it was an eye-opener because there had never been an opportunity to see that much repair work in one place. It was kind of staggering. For the first time, we got to see what we were doing in the flesh, and we repeated the process the next year in Denver. By 1993, we had a beginning idea of what we were doing nationally.

*Kaplan:* In the early 1990s, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) received a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) for archives preservation training. It was known as the Preservation

Management Training Program. A group of conservators, mostly from government agencies, were very much involved in this program. We had state representatives Maria Holden in New York and Kathy Ludwig at the Minnesota Historical Society, and at the time, I was at the Georgia Department of Archives and History. There was also a whole crew of folks from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), including Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, Karen Garlick, Diana Alper, and Jane Klinger. Apologies if I have omitted anyone, but I don't think I have. Evelyn Frangakis led this project for SAA. This group of conservators working on this program never had a chance to talk about conservation treatment. We were always talking about preservation. So, a group of archives conservators decided it would be a great idea if we could get together and talk at AIC about conservation. We wanted to discuss issues specific to work in government archives. And there are challenges, not unlike those in libraries, such as handling issues. Materials get used. They don't sit behind glass untouched. We were operating within a parent organization, so there were politics and organizational operations to be considered. The big issue was that we were dealing with large groups of related records. When we called for this meeting in 1992, it was inclusive and everyone was invited. The focus, of course, was on paper, a natural expectation of the parent Book and Paper Group (BPG). The scope was a little hard to iron out at first. It was easy to say what our discussion would not include. Even though we have books at the archives, we weren't going to talk about books. Even though we have beautiful drawings and posters, we weren't going to talk about art on paper. We have presidential libraries with some manuscript collections, but we weren't going to talk about manuscript collections either. The ultimate focus of the group was going to be on practical batch treatments rather than individual item treatments. This is a general focus of archives. Some of the topics we explored reflected that focus: humidification, flattening, surface cleaning, several years on mold, hazardous holdings, how to document environmental monitoring, and mending. We talked about factors driving conservation treatment and how they revealed vulnerability such as when items are requested by a researcher for use, or when items for exhibition may need stabilization. We never want to put anything on exhibit that is not stable because exhibitions make records vulnerable. We always want to show the public that we do our very best to make sure the records displayed are in good condition. If something is going on exhibition, it might need conservation treatment to both stabilize and convey the sense it is being well cared for. Another major driver of conservation intervention is reformatting. In the early days, that was microfilming; today, it is more likely to be digitization.

*LACDG Co-Chair:* What were the most memorable moments for the groups, and what were the groups' greatest contributions?

*Silverman:* Once we had the smorgasbord of ideas, we could talk intelligently about what is possible to train staff to do. It was clear we had to know how the books were being used by scholars who were using them as physical objects. So we invited Sue Allen to address publishers' cloth bindings at the 1994 Nashville meeting. The following year, we invited Thomas Tanselle to address the Modern Language Association (MLA) statement on the significance of primary records in St. Paul in 1995. This was key because the MLA scholars were using books as physical objects in their scholarship, but they were collectively saying libraries were mindlessly destroying the evidence they needed for their research. Out of those two meetings, we crafted a document called the *Checklist of Primary Bibliographical Evidence Contained in 19th and Early 20th-century Publishers' Book Bindings*. This document proved useful in December 2004 when the University of Michigan began participating in the first Google book search library project. The library wanted to cut the spines off the general collections books to speed up the digitization process. Shannon Zachery called me desperately seeking guidelines for physical evidence that would allow her to transfer books from the general collection to special collections in order to physically protect them from the guillotine.

*Kaplan:* The nature of archives is important, and we strived to distinguish archives from elements such as manuscript collections. Archives document the mission and purpose of its parent. Government archives focus on records that provide evidence of the organization's functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and operations. It also includes any other activities that will enable citizens to exercise their rights and responsibilities. The Federal Records Act came into being in 1950 under President Harry Truman. There were amendments added in 2014, which extended the Federal Records Act to specifically include Presidential Records. Tied in with the nature of government archives is an element called *records management*. Within records management, longevity is dictated by a document called a *records schedule*, which focuses on enduring historical or informational value. According to record schedules, many government agency records are destroyed. In fact, most records are destroyed. The ones that are kept are the permanent records retained for the life of the Republic. These are the records deemed worthy of preservation because they have enduring historical or informational value. I've been at NARA for almost 20 years. I used to work in preservation, but now I conduct training and records management. Only 2% to 5% of records are saved as permanent records. Temporary records are likely to be destroyed, though in some rare cases, they might be donated to an

academic institution. Decisions on whether or not to keep records are never based on politics or condition. The records schedule determines whether records are kept permanently or destroyed. It also determines how long certain records are kept. Regarding condition, I used to complete numerous preservation assessments, and I recall encountering one institution that had a rusty film canister. It did not meet their collection criteria but was accepted as a political decision. They had no equipment to play the item, and even if they did, its condition was unsalvageable. Even though its condition was unstable, they decided to keep it. In a private institution, holdings can be deaccessioned. If it doesn't fit collection policies and isn't playable to access information, there's no reason for it to take up valuable space. We cannot do that in government archives because the records retention schedule dictates what we can do with the records.

*LACDG Co-Chair:* Is there any other information you think our participants today might be interested in hearing about?

*Kaplan:* The idea of government archives may sound boring, but we have more than paper-based records. We have three-dimensional objects as well. For example, Alan Johnson at NARA constructed a creative housing for a bicycle petition that had resulted in legislation related to paving roads. The petition looks like a bicycle. We have the most unusual and amazing documents at NARA. The first item I treated when I arrived was rolled and brittle. I had no idea what it was. When I could get a peek inside, it looked like a very sketchy pencil drawing. I humidified and flattened it so it could be safely opened. This item turned out to be the original drawing for the pulley designed to haul stones to build the Washington Monument. You might think, what is this old drawing and why is this important for us to have? It has significance because it shows us how a prominent architectural structure, which everyone who comes to the DC area sees, was built. This is just the tip of the iceberg of the gems in government archives.

*Silverman:* We frequently think of the origins of modern book conservation as rising out of lessons learned from the Florence Flood. Today, however, we're collectively experiencing a different formative event shrinking budgets and downsizing preservation staff. The golden era during the 1970s when preservation was first being adopted into research libraries, largely funded by collection development monies, has been displaced by digitization that is now diminishing many budgets, certainly mine. So today, rather than worrying about which techniques are most appropriate for the general collection books, my library deaccessions most damaged books because it's cheaper to simply replace them than to repair them. That policy has focused my department work back almost exclusively on the Special Collections. Libraries need

to remain relevant, and, accordingly, the smaller research libraries' conservation labs need to remain focused on the changing environment. But this change of emphasis, which is largely hinging on the idea that if it's digital why are we going to need the original materials at all, is going to put the weight of maintaining the largest research libraries' general collections back on those libraries themselves. The smaller institutions are no longer going to be able to participate in the burden of repairing books for general use through interlibrary loan. I'm concerned that the use of physical materials will be necessary for certain types of scholarship. And yet, the departments that are scattered around the country doing the bulk of that work are going to evaporate, leaving the work with the huge libraries. I fear their budgets aren't going to be able to keep up, which will place interlibrary loans at risk, which is a change I'm not sure anybody's talking about at this point.

*Kaplan:* One of the comments I neglected to state emphatically in my presentation is that all archives records are unique. Randy talking about replacement reminded me that we can't replace archives records. Recently, I believe in 2019, there was a directive passed by the federal government stating that all records generated by the federal government must be digital by December 2022. By this date, the archives will no longer take in paper-based records. So a lot of agencies are busy digitizing records. This creates all sorts of issues, particularly issues that personally concern me. There will be obstacles to potential access by people with disabilities because you can't scan everything and anticipate access for all. Blind people using screen readers may not be able to make sense of the scanned document without extra steps to make it accessible. This is something that is addressed by the Rehabilitation Act section 508, and the government is required by law to meet its requirements. Does everyone do that? No. But it is the law for those in the federal government. A lot of very interesting actions are probably going to be forthcoming as this change is made from paper to electronic recordkeeping.

*Hilary Kaplan, Training Specialist, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

*Randy Silverman, Head of Preservation, Marriott Library, University of Utah*

FLETCHER DURANT  
ANALOG TO DIGITAL TO WHAT? RECONSIDERING  
THE ROLE OF MICROFILM COLLECTIONS IN THE  
21ST-CENTURY LIBRARY

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From 1982 to 2007, American research libraries committed to a massive series of preservation projects to microfilm printed cultural heritage. During that period, more than 60 million pages of historic newspapers were microfilmed through the

U.S. Newspaper Program, more than 1 million books through the Brittle Books Program, and 12,000 titles in the Center for Research Libraries' Foreign Newspaper Library Partnership. Today, microfilm collections take up shelving space in libraries, little used by researchers, but now serve as the basis for large-scale digitization projects such as the National Digital Newspaper Project. Preservation copy microfilms reside in cool or cold storage and are promised to last more than 500 years. If the past of microfilm was the preservation of brittle paper, and the present is digitization, what might the future of this much-maligned format be?

The University of Florida Library (UF) is responsible for 17,453 reels of unique preservation microfilm of newspapers, 40,407 monograph titles, and 4613 reels of serials, archives, and "other" collections. With each reel holding somewhere between 600 and 1600 pages, this represents a lot of history worthy of being preserved. Over the past 25 years, the UF has been committed to digitizing microfilmed newspapers, and today the digital collections hold almost 3 million pages of Florida newspapers and more than 1.6 million pages of Caribbean newspapers. Although UF has not digitized much of their monograph, microform, and government document collections, they recently became a Google Books partner and will soon send out unique holdings to be digitized.

In newspaper digitization, libraries remain the major players. Selecting for recent Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR), United States National Digital Newspaper Project (NDNP), and the Library Services and Technology

Act (LSTA) grants allowed a closer look at the digital availability of titles for which UF is the repository of record. For Florida newspaper titles published pre-1923, 96% (1422 out of 1486 reels) will have been digitized by UF by July 2021.

For international newspaper collections, the digitization picture is more complex, as until the generous support of CLIR, UF has had limited grant support for conversion. However, the international nature of the 10,000 reels means that there is a much larger pool of stakeholders involved in the preservation of these newspaper titles. Taking advantage of a socially distanced work arrangement during the COVID-19 pandemic, the speaker conducted a review of what newspaper content had been digitized at UF. The survey revealed that 70% of pre-1924 global titles and 12% of post-1924 global titles had been digitized (fig.1). Additionally, it was discovered that 50% of all French Caribbean newspapers and 43% of all Dutch Caribbean newspapers had their microfilm preservation copy holdings digitized through efforts of the French National Archives, the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BNF), and Delpher in the Netherlands. Only 15% of UF's English Caribbean Newspapers have been digitized, with almost all of those done by UF and Digital Library of the Caribbean (dLOC) partners.

When we think about mass digitization in the library world, we tend to think of Google Books, which is a program that is not interested in newspapers or microfilm. Google Books is about books, monographs, bound serials, and pamphlets. So, if 18% of UF's newspaper preservation copy microfilm have a digital surrogate freely available, and 81% are out of copyright

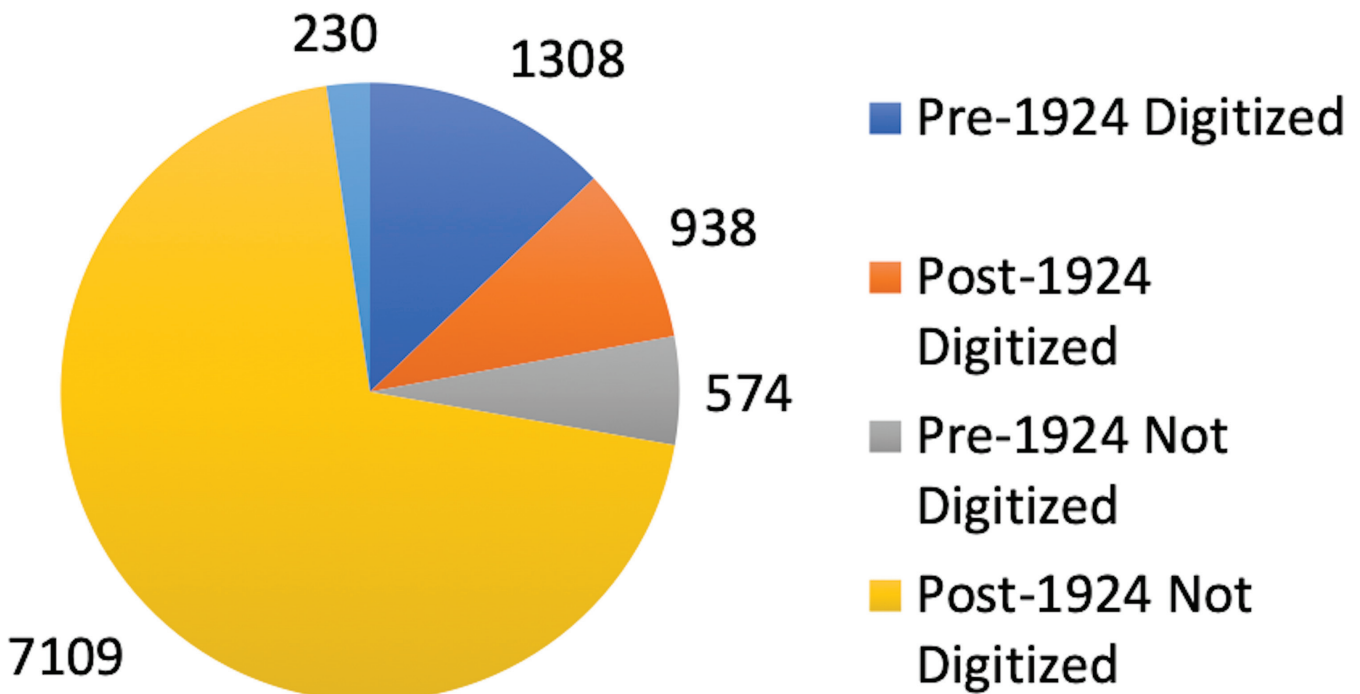


Fig. 1. Digitization of UF international newspaper microfilm reels.



reels, what about UF's 40,407 brittle book titles? The beauty of newspaper titles is that a single search can provide information on 5, 10, 100 reels of newspapers.

For the filmed monographs titles, a survey was devised and a random sample of 522 titles was selected for 95% confidence. The UF catalog was first searched to locate the title, taking note of the existence of a print version, a microfilm version, or a digital version. The inclusion of HathiTrust titles for controlled digital lending helped facilitate this search. If no digital version was listed in the catalog, subsequent searches were performed in HathiTrust, Google Books, WorldCat, and then Google to determine if a digital version was available.

The survey revealed that 72.61% of the monograph titles, although not always an exact edition match, had a digital or digitized version readily available online. Of the 51.9% of titles in the catalog that had a linked digital version, 13.28% were UF's digital collections. Another 60.89% were HathiTrust, 72.32% were Google Books, and 16.24% were "other" subscription databases. Of the versions with nothing linked in the UF catalog, 20% were in HathiTrust and 35% were in Google Books. Additionally, the survey also revealed that only 78.9% of the monograph titles surveyed still had a print version in the catalog and that these titles without print versions were predominantly from UF's Latin American and Caribbean Collection. Only 93.68% of the titles, which UF microfilmed and listed in their inventory of preservation copy film, have microfilm versions listed in the catalog, and 1% of the titles had no entries of any kind in the UF catalog.

These are preservation copy microfilm. The preservation back-ups for our at-risk cultural heritage. UF contracts with two vendors to store film in cool storage but has seen their storage prices rise in recent years. In recent years, one vendor contract rolled off of a grandfathered pricing agreement and costs rose 310%. Good storage is worth any price, but in the past two years, several large duplication orders were placed to only discover that the vendors didn't have the necessary supplies and that the orders could take up to six months to complete. It is costing UF an average of \$0.48 to store a physical reel with a vendor but only \$0.12 to store digital packages of TIFF, JP2, PDF, and XML files for that same reel, with no access charges.

Ultimately, this is a question of priorities and values. If the content is digitized and stored in a repository, what are we saving this film for? Are we preserving the film because we don't trust our digital repositories? If we don't trust our repositories, what does that say about how we are valuing all of our born-digital content, for which we have no analog back-ups? Setting aside thoughts of deaccessioning the film, what if we just stored this film in our high-density storage facility for \$0.25 per reel per year? Perhaps the lifespan for the polyester film base falls from 500 years to 200 years? What disaster are we planning to befall us over a 500-year horizon that necessitates preserving 60 million pages of regional

newspapers that we didn't need to worry about for the first 200 years of storage? Could the \$20,000 a year in storage costs be better used? Would our collections be better served by taking that money and hiring another conservation technician or funding audiovisual collections conversion?

Newspaper and brittle books microfilming projects once drove the growth of research library preservation programs and offered a solution to the storage of growing collections of newspapers and access to the information stored in 19th and early 20th-century books that could no longer be safely handled. We are at a point where we need to start a discussion on what the impact of 15 years of mass digitization may mean for library microfilm collections and explore what is needed to feel confident moving from one preservation paradigm fully into the next.

*Fletcher Durant, Director of Conservation and Preservation, University of Florida*

KIM HOFFMAN

HANDS-ON, VIRTUALLY: SHIFTING TO STUDENT TRAINING VIDEOS DURING A PANDEMIC

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the preservation and conservation department at the Miami University Libraries faced the two-fold challenge of figuring out how to virtually train student employees in a new socially distanced work environment with limited supervision and finding meaningful work for these students to complete while working from home. The answer was a creative shift to student training videos.

The preservation and conservation department at the Miami University Libraries falls under the special collections department, which relies heavily on the help of student assistants, most of whom are undergraduates. In preservation, they are allowed to hire three or four student employees but are sometimes required to share them with the rest of the special collections department. Student assistants support preservation efforts for both special collections and circulating materials. For special collections, students mostly make boxes and for circulating materials they can perform a variety of repairs, such as tip-ins, paper repairs, pamphlet binding, pockets, and spine repairs.

On March 17, 2020, the Miami University campus closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Student workers were let go for the remainder of the semester, and the only student trained in conservation graduated. When the preservation and conservation department returned to campus in August 2020, staffing was limited to an alternate week rotation, with one cohort working remotely while a second cohort worked from campus. The department was approved to hire new student assistants but was faced with the problem of needing to hire all new students who had no prior conservation training. How can one observe social distancing while conducting the

kind of one-on-one training relied on in the past? In addition, what remote work projects could the students work on during their scheduled work-from-home weeks?

Transitioning to filmed training videos was identified as the best solution. The benefit was that videos could be watched alone, at home, or in the office, and could be repeated as necessary and serve as a learning aid for the students. Videos could also reduce, although probably not eliminate, the need for face-to-face training, and might facilitate solo problem solving to further support independent work. In addition, the videos could be edited, and maybe even shot, at home to create a remote work project for the students to contribute to.

The first attempt was a toolbox introduction video, with the idea that walking through the common tools used in conservation work would be both an easy video to film and would help new students become comfortable with the project. Working on this video helped to identify some initial issues with the process and allowed for adjustments to be made to the process. A YouTube account was identified as the easiest place to host the videos and to aid filming at home. The toolboxes became reserve items so that the students could check them out from the library to take home. Although the primary audience for the videos was internal to the university, the library decided to make the videos public to allow more flexibility for their future use. Miami University branding was added to all the videos (Miami University Preservation, n.d.). During the session, snippets from some of the videos were played to give the audience a sense of their approach to the project. All the videos are fully captioned to improve accessibility.

After the toolbox introduction video, students worked on a pamphlet binding video, which was their first true procedural training. This video presented some new challenges to work through. For one thing, it became clear that if students were going to be filming at home, they needed better lighting. A ring light was ordered and made available as another reserve item for students to check out and take home. The ring light included a phone mount, which also made it easier to film overhead shots. The pamphlet binding video required a little more planning than the toolbox video since it needed to be scripted in advance, but this conveniently provided another task that could be completed remotely. Portions of the video that required special equipment, such as a board shear, were filmed on campus.

After the success of the pamphlet binding video, students shifted to creating a series of videos on box making (fig.2). Since the box-making process was a little more complex and time consuming, they opted to break it up into multiple shorter videos instead of one long video. Over time, one student became more involved in the filming and took increasing ownership of this video. The box-making videos gave this student the chance to apply all the skills learned during the semester. It also provided the student with the opportunity to work independently, do some creative problem solving, and figure out how to make the videos work.

Overall, the training videos ended up being an excellent student project. They helped the department successfully train students in various tasks and increase their comfort level with treatment procedures. The project also provided student assistants with the opportunity to develop

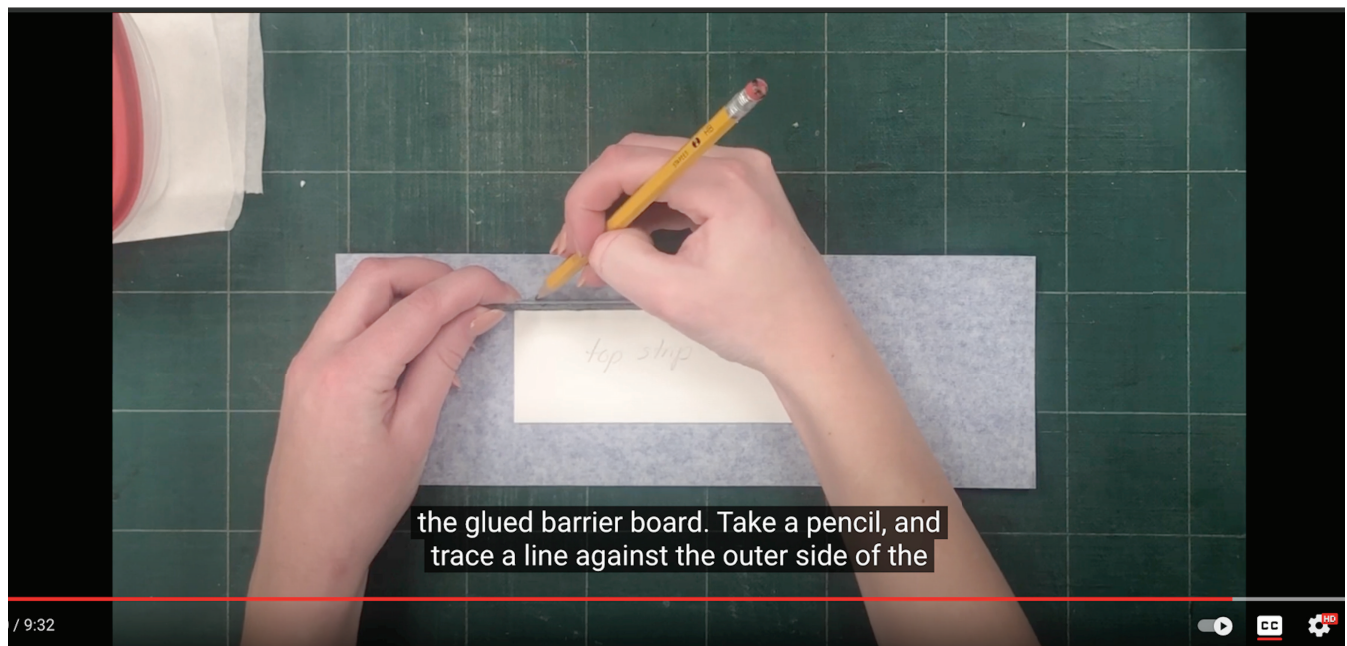


Fig. 2. Still image from the box making a video on Miami University Preservation's YouTube channel.

marketable skills in video creation and editing to add to their resumes. The department now has a library of fully captioned training videos that can be used as training aids with future students and content for social media campaigns. Additional videos are being planned for future filming to add to the series.

*Kim Hoffman, Preservation Librarian, Miami University*

JENNIFER K. HERRMANN AND DONG EUN KIM  
RETURNING LOANS SAFELY DURING THE COVID-19  
PANDEMIC

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, canceled courier trips over the past year have made virtual condition reports and virtual deinstallations necessary to retrieve loans. New guidelines have been developed for quarantine periods and the disinfection of materials and surfaces. NARA and the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) worked together virtually to safely return an important map to the United States from England. That experience and research then guided the safe return of the Treaty of Point Elliott at the Hilbulb Cultural Center (HCC) in Tulalip, Washington.

The map, "United States Systems of Highways 1933," has annotations by Franklin Roosevelt and was loaned to the V&A in London in November 2019 for the exhibition *Cars: Accelerating the Modern World*. The map has significant historic value requiring specific conservation, preservation, security, and transfer measures including a courier for installation and deinstallation. NARA exhibits conservator Dong Eun Kim accompanied the shipment to the V&A, where she unpacked the document and installed the map with assistance from a V&A colleague. The exhibition, *The Power of Words: A New Chapter in Tulalip History*, displayed the Treaty of Point Elliott at the HCC in Tulalip, Washington. Herrmann and Kim acknowledge the Duwamish, Suquamish, and other indigenous people's past, present, and future of Washington State affected by the treaty, which returned to its original signing location after 160 years. The treaty was only shown from January 2020 until the center's closure in mid-March due to the pandemic. Improved safety procedures allowed the exhibition to reopen safely in August until a scheduled return in October 2020.

During the closure, the exhibits were protected from light exposure with security and environmental systems fully operational. However, concern about pandemic viral transmission and travel restrictions had changed daily routines and deinstallation plans. When the decision regarding handling the returned loan needed to be made, there was little information about how the virus spread or how infectious or deadly the virus might be, so the risk from surface contamination was considered high to protect the staff. Masks were required for combating airborne transmission, and viral attenuation research of different common materials was used

to guide best practices for keeping staff safe in shared spaces and helped inform loan practices. NARA partnered with other cultural heritage organizations, universities, the Institute for Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), and Battelle Research Labs to develop and share science-based information and best practices to reduce transmission in the Reopening Libraries, Archives, and Museums (REALM) Project.

REALM published surveys of scientific literature related to airborne and surface transmission, and several rounds of research were conducted on material surfaces important to daily functions at cultural heritage institutions and libraries. Cells were monitored after coming in contact with different surfaces infected with the virus. Based on the REALM data, NARA conservation scientist Jennifer Herrmann made plots for NARA to show how the virus naturally attenuates or disappears off of surfaces that multiple staff was going to need to touch during the return of the loans. For packing, the acrylic sandwiches contained the encapsulated documents that were wrapped in Tyvek, a high-density polyethylene fabric, and then placed in a polyethylene foam enclosure within a composite wood-based crate lined with polyester urethane foam. The crate also contained the original paper report. Monitoring the decrease in the number of cells on the specific surfaces that staff would touch, including paper, polyester film, Plexiglas, and Ethafoam meant NARA could understand how long a quarantine period might be needed to keep staff safe. The use of disinfectant was not recommended so close to cultural heritage materials. Disposal of all the packing material to reduce the potential of surface transmission was unacceptable from a sustainability standpoint, so quarantine seemed the best option to mitigate surface transmission risk. REALM had created easy-to-use visual aids to summarize information for libraries, archives, and museums, as well as the general public, including plots similar to those created by NARA. More detailed and nuanced information can be determined from the actual plots. NARA determined that one week of quarantine would be acceptable before staff should open the crates and unpack the returned items. As it turned out, with building occupancy protocols, the crates sat for longer than a week. The REALM website has useful tools about different surface materials tested as well as the literature reviews, the last of which includes information on the importance of the vaccine and social distancing to end the pandemic.

With the pandemic restrictions making courier travel impossible, NARA needed to attempt virtual deinstallation. Given the obstacle of working in different countries, time zones, and daily schedules, the virtual deinstallation plan had to be discussed numerous times before confirmation. Effective visualization of the object during deinstallation was difficult due to a less than optimal computer camera system and the requirement that no awkward objects, such as laptop computers, could be held above the document. However, whenever the NARA



team asked a question to check something during the virtual deinstallation, V&A staff immediately complied, working together as if in person. Working with the highly professional and trusted team at V&A allowed a smooth deinstallation with only slight technology issues with no conservation concerns and no negative impact on working relationships. Subsequent deinstallations with smaller institutions such as the HCC were informed and aided by the experience with the V&A. That experience allowed NARA to spell out a specific methodology for borrowing institutions to follow and hold practice sessions before the deinstallation takes place. A practice run with HCC was carried out in July, and the actual virtual deinstallation occurred in October. NARA supervised all movement including loading the crate into the truck (fig. 3). Thanks to careful planning, the practice run, and cooperation, this deinstallation also went smoothly and successfully.

This ongoing global crisis has created a need for new protocols and possibilities, establishing the ability to respond and maintain effective procedures in emergency circumstances. Stakeholders can use these developments toward cooperative decision making about exhibition-related activities. Future considerations include:

- Reconsideration with all stakeholders of courier activities requiring physical proximity/incorporation of “virtual courier” duties to lessen travel requirements—tracking devices and software could compensate if couriers are not required to travel;
- Development of new software programs and/or dedicated apps designed for remote monitoring of exhibition-related activities, possibly dedicated secure virtual live monitoring while maintaining the security locations being filmed;
- Condition reports conducted remotely, with supporting technical resources—upgraded networks, improved Wi-Fi, and audiovisual equipment;

- Improved encryption for digital file sharing (loan, condition, courier, and facilities reports);
- More development in digitization technology with a rise in virtual exhibitions.

New software developments, upgraded networks and encryption, and improved digitization technologies can all contribute to the field beyond the current crisis. Progress has already been seen in these categories. As difficult as this past year has been, it has also been a time of potential for collecting institutions and for the field of conservation.

The pandemic has changed how work is accomplished, and more continues to be learned about COVID-19 and its transmission. Scientific research of viral attenuation on surfaces helped inform cultural heritage decisions and staff safety. Procedures were influenced by the need for quarantine times to allow the virus to naturally attenuate before surfaces were used by different staff or contractors, especially early in the pandemic prior to new research determining that the virus spread mainly through airborne transmission pathways. REALM continues to update its toolkit and research summaries as new information is learned about keeping people safe during the pandemic. Travel restrictions and complications from the pandemic required more virtual work and therefore put even greater emphasis on good communication with all stakeholders, maintaining positive working relationships, trust, and collaborative practices. But together there is an ability to protect each other and cultural heritage during the crisis and hopefully influence more sustainable practices for the future.

*Jennifer K. Herrmann, Conservation Scientist, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

*Dong Eun Kim, Exhibits Conservator, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD*

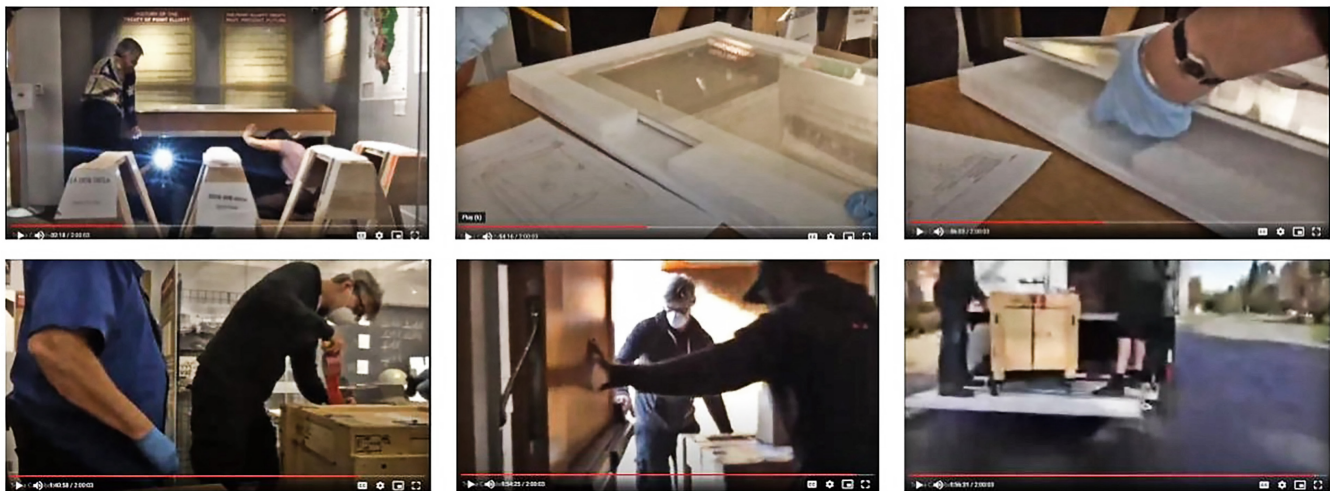


Fig. 3. Deinstallation at the Hibulb Cultural Center.

CONSUELA (CHELA) METZGER AND MICHELLE  
C. SMITH  
WORKING TOWARD ANTI-RACIST APPROACHES IN  
LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CONSERVATION

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In the wake of a nationwide reckoning with racism and racial violence, the Preservation & Conservation Department at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) Library initiated a dialogue between their department and colleagues in the library to expose and understand how systemic racism may operate within their workplace and the field of library and archives conservation. These conversations revealed the need for the department to (1) develop new policies for handling racist materials, (2) identify and correct preservation prioritization practices that perpetuate racism, and (3) incorporate anti-racist approaches into their in-lab training and education.

In discussing the development of new policies, Metzger and Smith first shared some context around the department's conversations around anti-racism. The UCLA Library is an encyclopedic research library based in a public university, and its Preservation & Conservation Department is small. Staff come from different ethnicities, age groups, and backgrounds. Like many universities, UCLA has its own history as a site of social struggle, and there have been groups engaged in ongoing anti-racist work at UCLA for decades.

When the UCLA Library announced an anti-racism initiative, the Preservation & Conservation Department began thinking about how they as a department wanted to change the way they did things. In weekly and monthly reports, the department head encouraged everyone to include a section for anti-racism-related activities and emphasized that reading articles and attending webinars on these topics was an important part of work as conservation professionals. It was also decided that the departmental blog would focus on anti-racist approaches in preservation for at least a year. The department head published the first blog post about anti-racism on July 31, 2020, entitled "Inner Meditations and Outer Resources for Understanding Library Conservation and Preservation as Racist or Anti-Racist" with feedback from colleagues. This first post included the following list of actions viewed necessary to build an anti-racist initiative within the department:

Here at UCLA Library, we are in the process of building an anti-racism initiative. This initiative must become a program, and the program must not have an end date. Within the Preservation & Conservation Department, our first actions are:

1. We support a union environment with union action to ensure a living wage and benefits for pre-program, post-graduate, and other preservation and conservation colleagues. We cannot accept unpaid interns.
2. We assess all new job descriptions in the department to be as inclusive as possible, with the goal of removing unneeded barriers to applicants.
3. Within the department, on-boarding and orientations include safe, responsive reporting options for racist incidents and aggressions.
4. We will not ask job candidates to complete Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Statements unless we first do the work of completing our own statements. (Metzger 2020)

Developing new anti-racist policies for the department involved a lot of watching and listening. While working at home during the pandemic, the department used Slack to interact daily. They found that they shared a lot of common ground with their colleagues in the department during conversations about anti-racism over the past year, especially during local and national uprisings last summer that followed the murders of George Floyd and so many other Black people by police—horrific tragedies that brought renewed attention to very old problems. As a department, they read the many statements on anti-Black racism released by UCLA and others, and they especially noted the statements and open letters by Black colleagues within the field of conservation. The Black Art Conservators' statement released in July 2020 was particularly impactful (Black Art Conservators 2020).

In a September 2020 blog post (Smith 2020) about conserving racist materials, a draft "standard operating procedure" was included to outline procedures for how to handle racist materials when they enter the lab. This procedure, which was based on discussions within the department, included identifying racist content when discovered, documenting it, discussing it with the curator, determining the priority level for the material, and ensuring that all preservation staff has the option to recuse themselves from treating racist materials. Since they were already in the middle of creating a JIRA ticketing system for incoming conservation work, they decided to add a category for sensitive content. It is expected that procedures will evolve as they encounter new projects and have more conversations.

Beyond thinking about the treatment of racist materials, they are also thinking about how racism is perpetuated in their work by inequitable prioritization practices. What defines "research value" in our institutions? How does that definition impact what items "need" conservation? In a *Book and Paper Group Annual* article on the politics and of use and value in research libraries, Jan Paris (2000) notes, "The cultural biases that influence decisions about which artifacts will receive conservation treatment are often invisible. Both conservation training and the culture common in many of the institutions that employ conservators reinforce this invisibility. Materials that libraries and archives have historically undervalued are often the most valuable resources for the study of non-traditional subjects and overlooked groups." What do we value? How is "value" determined?

Inequitable prioritization practices take place in our organizations, and it is the responsibility of conservation professionals to speak up. Quoting from a statement by Black Art Conservators (2020) released last July: “Conservators help shape what our society values by making decisions on what to preserve, whom to include in our work, and therefore whose stories we remember. We, conservators, must hold ourselves, our field, and our institutions accountable for the long-term, systemic failure to uplift Black voices and document the Black experience truthfully.”

There is a need to ask more questions about our work practices. What kinds of materials are being prioritized for treatment in our institutions? Who sets the priorities? How can we work with our curatorial colleagues to establish anti-racist prioritization practices together? Are there Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) cultural heritage collections in our institutions that are currently underutilized because of preservation needs? Are there curators or subject-area specialists in our organizations who are not familiar with our department and the services we offer? If they knew that we wanted to prioritize the treatment of collections from underrepresented communities, would they be interested in working with us? How can we expand our services?

The talk ended with a discussion of education and training in the lab, which they think will need to shift along with our treatment priorities. How can we address gaps in our knowledge that may be preventing access to collections? If, for example, your organization has a large collection of Islamicate manuscripts in need of treatment but no one in your lab has experience in this area, perhaps you can hire an instructor to teach a workshop.

How can we incorporate anti-racist principles into pre-program training? What kind of projects do we assign to preprogram interns? We might have an idea of “standard treatments” that everyone needs to have in their portfolio—how might this notion need updating? There is a need to create space for conversations, decentralize early modern European library materials, and give a well-rounded vision of what this work can look like to those entering the field. At the UCLA Library, it is expected that there will be increased use of their East Asian, Islamicate, Armenian, and Ethiopic bound materials in the future. What kinds of book models do we tend to make, and what kinds do we expect to see in the portfolios of potential interns and fellows? How can we all prepare ourselves and our colleagues for a different future?

Openly acknowledging that this talk was “long on questions, short on answers,” Metzger and Smith expressed a hope to open a broader discussion on these issues with colleagues in the library and archives conservation field. They encouraged the audience to use their voices within their organizations to raise concerns about racist practices, even if there is not yet a clear avenue for doing so, and to collaborate with others outside of conservation who are doing anti-racist

work. Topics not covered in this talk and important for future discussion include facilitating repatriations of materials and exploring the opportunities presented by community archives and noncustodial collecting.

*Consuela (Chela) Metzger, Head of Preservation and Conservation, University of California at Los Angeles*

*Michelle C. Smith, 2019–2021 Kress Assistant Conservator, University of California at Los Angeles*

#### QUESTIONS FOR SPEAKERS

After the presentations, the co-chairs took questions and comments from the Q&A and chatbox. They were read to the panelists. The answers to the questions have been paraphrased.

*Question for Kaplan and Silverman:* Do you think there is enough common ground between libraries and archives to establish meaningful discussion group content that will benefit all LACDG members?

*Kaplan:* I don’t know. Archives and libraries are very different. They’re probably more similar from a policy standpoint if the focus is on electronic material.

*Silverman:* It’s a difficult question. The LCCDG was created out of a need. There was a lack of opportunity for people to get together for some specific types of discussions. I think that the driving force should precede the question of whether or not the two groups together can address meaningful content to benefit all. I’m not sure we know what the focus should be, and maybe we need to go in a different direction altogether that hasn’t been invented yet. There was a proposal by Seth Irwin for the last AIC meeting to do a hands-on workshop dealing with varnished wall maps. It’s a complex topic, and the workshop would have involved experienced people in the field. Wall maps exist in small historical societies that don’t have a budget for repair and in the largest libraries that collect them and can perform a variety of treatments on them. As Hilary noted, the idea of stabilization for items that people really can’t afford to treat is a national problem. We don’t see it because we’re not focused on it unless we see this particular type of object come to our lab. It’s not really a crisis, although the maps are probably rare and kept in a back room disintegrating. We don’t know how obscure some of these pieces are. The idea is to get together with conservators, perform hands-on treatment, experiment with techniques, and actively talk about what they’re doing to come up with conclusions. This might lead to a panacea of treatment options that would be very useful. That’s an interesting model to have participants working through a problem, solving it, and publishing it in some way. We could look at these kinds of issues and the ideas Chela and Michelle raised today. Our concerns could

be addressed in some ways that we haven't thought of yet. We need partners in some of this discussion.

*Kaplan:* A long time ago, NEH was reluctant to fund any type of treatment-specific object project if that item was going to be returned to an unstable environment. We want to keep in mind what the ultimate goal is. Is it individual item treatment only to be placed back into a vulnerable circumstance, or do we want to work toward the betterment of the whole?

*Question for Durant:* Are you planning on deaccessioning your microfilm?

*Durant:* No, it's easier to do nothing. The money to pay for our storage vendors doesn't come out of a budget that I see directly. If I said that I can save us \$20,000 a year, I don't know if that money would come back to me in a way where it could be spent in a meaningful way. Because of the survey and this project, it's more likely we will take a closer look at the space we have on campus for our microfilm access copies. The preservation copies are held off-site. We have newspapers and other microfilms that we acquired mixed in. Half of our Humanities and Social Sciences Library floor is taken up with microfilm collections. I've asked questions about how much of that microfilm is used. There are always a few reels of microfilm waiting to be reshelfed. How much of that content has been digitized and is accessible through online databases? It's going to be a pressing issue for on-site space the next time they decide that they need to add more study areas for students. Maybe the answer is that the microfilm access copies can go into storage instead of printed books and our limited selection of print journals can remain on-site. I don't think it's unreasonable to think we may have another economic downturn as we saw in 2009 and 2010 with shrinking library binding budgets. The historic budgets show we were spending \$100,000 a year on library binding in 2008. We're spending \$1000 a year on library binding currently. If my unit had to make big cuts again, there's nowhere else to cut. Potentially, we could stop paying vendors \$20,000 a year. We own our high-density storage facility, and if we transfer the microfilm into this storage, we're saving. We wouldn't see this cost for high-density storage until we had to build an extension. The short answer to the question is no, but I'm open to it.

*Comment and Question for Hoffman:* The videos should be considered for embedding in the BPG wiki. Did your library allow your students to take home library materials to treat offsite, and if so, did you have to coordinate with others for liability purposes? How did you manage that?

*Hoffman:* The students only took home circulating materials, and those materials would be checked out to the students directly. The tools were also made a reserve item able to be checked out. The only thing they were taking home that

wasn't being tracked directly was barrier board and book cloth. When they needed to work on boxes related to a special collections item, they would take home pre-cut pieces of board and book cloth. Because of that, we didn't worry much about the liability. I cleared it with my department head in advance and made sure we were on the same page. The system worked well.

*Question for Herrmann and Kim:* How would you relate your experiences and your findings to the AIC position statement on virtual courier oversight?

*Kim:* I agree with the AIC position statement that these measures were a necessary compromise in a crisis, but they don't constitute best practice for the safety and preservation of collection items. There are many stakeholders and considerations in executing virtual courier activities. The newly gained confidence that this is possible in emergency situations is what is important. This gives us the opportunity and the ability to move forward in a future crisis.

*Question for Metzger and Smith:* Could you say a little more about flagging sensitive content in your ticketing system? Is this something that curators or others requesting a treatment flag, or something that conservation staff flag, or both?

*Metzger:* It's a very new JIRA ticketing system. The way it is set up is that the curators, collections managers, or processing archivists will be the ones initiating the JIRA ticket. If they know of sensitive content issues, there are boxes that they can check. We also have boxes that indicate why it is being prioritized. We just need to find out more about the context, and because we haven't been using JIRA that long, I can't give you an actual use instance. If we notice something during documentation, we have lines in our forms for this as well and then we can add it to the JIRA ticket. Right now, we're not doing a JIRA for our circulating collections.

*Smith:* We expect that there will be times that we see things that a curator would not have seen. The preservation department at UCLA includes audiovisual preservation, and they're often digitizing films and things that no one has seen. It might just be one line describing what might be on it. They may see something that a curator didn't know was there, so we expect it to be a dialogue where we are letting them know things that we see as well.

*Question for Hoffman:* Did you consider using camera equipment other than a phone, and can you talk a little bit about editing the videos?

*Hoffman:* We did consider using other equipment besides phones, and the department had purchased a GoPro for filming projects. When we realized that we were going to be doing



the filming work remotely, we looked into checking out the GoPro, but due to liability concerns, the department wasn't comfortable with that. The other thing that I didn't anticipate was that the student was already comfortable using her phone to make videos, and she was not interested in learning how to use the GoPro. We were getting great results, so we decided to not add another layer of complication. But I do think that's something I would consider again in the future, particularly as we have ended our remote work for students, so anything we do with this will be in the lab. For editing, I didn't have a great idea going into this of what we would end up wanting to do. That was something else that was driven by what the students were comfortable with. The student who was doing the editing was already comfortable with iMovie, which is the standard editing tool that comes with Apple products. Because that was working really well, we just kept using it. I have used iMovie many times on a laptop, but she was editing directly on her phone, which was foreign to me. I can't believe she was sitting there editing the videos on her phone, but her process worked great, so we went with it.

*Question for Metzger and Smith:* Could you talk more about your experience at UCLA talking with your curatorial colleagues and library administrators about establishing anti-racist treatment prioritization practices? What advice do you have for colleagues who may be embarking on similar conversations?

*Metzger:* A lot of our conversations were initiated by our Black colleagues within conservation and other fields. Our procedural work was fostered by the anti-racist initiatives that the UCLA Library is embarking on. These initiatives have many committees with representatives from all over the library, including things like changing cataloging terms for groups and topics, hiring practices, retention practices, and digitization prioritization. So, there was a framework already there that was helpful for us. I didn't feel like I had to initiate these conversations. With Special Collections, they were already developing a matrix for prioritization to deal with backlog issues and acquisitions. These issues were part of their matrix already so, to be in alignment with Special Collections, it made sense for us to begin these conversations. I think there's going to be more conversations, because we've just started with the JIRA system, and more use is going to confirm if it gets used the way we hope. It will bring these conversations to the forefront.

*Smith:* A slide we ended up cutting was about familiarizing yourself with any EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion) statements and mission statements within your organization at all the different levels. If you're expecting pushback or receiving pushback, these statements can be introduced when you raise concerns. It's a compliance issue. They've made these statements naming these priorities, and these are actions you need to take to go along with what they've stated they want to do.

*Question for Herrmann and Kim:* Do you envision a change to the established requirements of borrowing institutions if virtual deinstallations persist? For example, might a lender have to meet the minimum technology criteria needed in the event of a virtual installation or deinstallation?

*Kim:* The answer is complex. I don't think we know yet. Currently, we are relying on our good working relationships with colleagues at other institutions to make virtual loans work effectively, but we will also consider each loan on a case-by-case basis. I hope that in the end, it's people and trust in relationships that get us through difficult moments.

#### DISCUSSION

The session concluded with a discussion of where the newly formed LACDG should head next and what topics are important to explore going forward. Past BPG discussion group sessions were highlighted as having provided an important space for library and archives professionals to connect and learn from one another. It was suggested that there should be an effort to collaborate more with allied organizations, such as SAA and the American Library Association (ALA) since they are often addressing similar concerns within the field.

Many participants in the discussion referenced the impact of recent changes in commercial library binding practices on their work in libraries. These changes have been precipitated by declining binding budgets, a shift to collecting more electronic materials, and a new replacement for F-grade buckram book cloth. Other suggestions for future topics included reimagining exhibitions of entirely digitized physical archives, exploring ways the field of conservation could engage in more environmentally sustainable practices, and focusing on increasing inclusivity and diversity in our conversations.

There was a hope that future sessions could continue to bridge the gap between the more specialized special collections treatments often presented in other BPG sessions with the more day-to-day work typically done in archives and library collections. The audience indicated a desire to move away from presentations in future sessions to allow more time for discussion. Being able to talk with and learn from colleagues is important. Some missed past sessions where there was an opportunity to discuss specific treatment techniques or batching treatment procedures and looking at examples of work.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## FURTHER READING

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