



Next Steps in Accessing Hidden Collections: Status of ARL Efforts

PACSCL SYMPOSIUM

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ARL

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Exposing Hidden Collections

- A conference sponsored by ARL and involving key players: CLIR, NEH, IMLS, IRLA, NHPRC, LC, OCLC, PACSCL, Oberlin Group, SAA, ACRL/RBMS and RLG
- To address a series of questions:
 - How to expand access to un-cataloged archival, manuscript, and rare book resources
 - How best to galvanize responses from a variety of concerned agencies



ARL Task Force on Special Collections

- Joe Hewitt, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (Chair)
- Nancy Baker, University of Iowa
- Susan Brynteson, University of Delaware
- Mark Dimunation, Library of Congress
- Chris Filstrup, SUNY at Stony Brook
- Peter Graham, Syracuse University
- Barbara Jones, Wesleyan University
- Bill Joyce, Penn State University
- Alice Prochaska, Yale University
- Catherine Quinlan, University of British Columbia
- Martin Runkle, University of Chicago
- Alice Schreyer, University of Chicago
- Sam Streit, Brown University
- Winston Tabb, Johns Hopkins University
- Merrily Taylor, Brown University
- Sarah Thomas, Cornell University
- Judith Panitch, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and
ARL Visiting Program Officer



ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

- Significant special collections dispersed among research libraries and archives with no easy access
- A volume of additional material flowing into libraries and archives
- Insufficient resources available to process in traditional fashion
- Unrealistic goals exist for the level of cataloging
- New technologies make electronic access feasible
- Scholars and Students unwilling to navigate complex or local non-standard access tools



1998 ARL Survey of Special Collections

- Lack of empirical data on special collections in ARL members
- Survey demonstrated that special collections are a vast and varied resource with significant growth potential
- There are major unprocessed or uncataloged collections
 - 15% of printed volumes
 - 46% of artifacts
 - 27% of manuscripts
 - 31% of university archives



Areas of Concern

- Backlogs leading to a lack of access to special collections are a priority concern calling for immediate attention
- Staffing shortages and widespread needs for staff with subject knowledge and service skills must be addressed
- Special collections need to connect to other parts of the library's service capabilities
- Need to extend investment in preservation
- Find ways to extend the effective use of special collections in teaching and research



ARL Statement on the Role of Special Collections

- A formal acknowledgement of the critical role of special collections in the research enterprise
- There are obligations to collect, preserve, and provide access to these resources



Conference Themes

- **Help libraries and archives address the challenge:** Secure national/regional support for local action
- **Some access is better than none:** Encourage libraries and archives to rethink how they are deploying resources to address the access challenge
- **Encourage use of special collections:** Collaborate with scholars and teachers who use special collections to help establish cataloging priorities and new applications



Conference Recommendations

- Make the situation more transparent
- Develop models and best practices
- View the description of content as a continuum
- Cooperation and inter-institutional collaborations
- Find funding via re-allocation, local commitment, and external agencies



ARL Special Collections Web Resources

- Survey report
- ARL Statement on Commitment to Special Collections
- Task Force Status Reports and White Paper
- Conference Reports and recommendations
- <<http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/>>



The Association of Research Libraries

- Mission:** Shaping and influencing forces affecting the future of research libraries in the process of scholarly communication.
- Members:** 124 major research libraries in North America.
- Ratios:** 4% of the higher education institutions providing 40% of the information resources.
- Users:** 3 million students and faculty served.
- Expenditures:** \$2.35 billion annually, \$727 million for acquisitions of which 16% is invested in access to electronic resources.