

## Unit Annual Report Instructions

*Due: August 31, 2023*

*Submit to: Christina Bonse (bonse2@illinois.edu)*

### I Unit Narrative

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The Unit Narrative should be **no more than 5 pages** in length and should:

1. review the major activities and accomplishments of the unit in FY23 (July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023), and discuss the impact these activities had on Library users, departments served, and your colleagues, with a particular emphasis on university research, teaching, and student success, where appropriate;
  - RBML has experienced a significant uptick (24%) in reference queries and digitization requests.
  - RBML provided approximately **6300 hours of direct contact active instructional and outreach services** (Instruction, outreach, and events) last fiscal year. This included **65 formal individualized class sessions and 40 group visits**, plus eight public outreach and engagement events, from scholarly lectures to a holiday open house and print crawl. **Our group services reached 1382 people**. Approximately **3000** hours of preparation was involved in this work. We had to decline about a dozen requested group visits and classes due to lack of staffing capacity.
  - RBML opened the correspondence series of the Gwendolyn Brooks papers to researchers. Descriptive work on the Brooks collection is nearly complete at the box level, and we expect to upload a much more full finding aid to Archon this coming fall.
  - **The RBML reading room welcomed 1311 research visits last year** (876 unique visitors); 707 (54%) of them were first-timers, and 66% were from the University of Illinois. A total of **2400 items were circulated** to our reading rooms.
  - RBML public services staff answered 447 reference queries last year, up from 361 last year (~24% increase) (Statistics from Ask-a-Curator) We referred an additional 11 questions to other units, and 74 queries for in-house digitization.
  - RBML catalogers added **3,313 new item records** and **1,687 holdings records** in the catalog during the reporting period. Over 2,000 of these were sales and auction catalogs, a project that Tony Hynes has been working on for the past year. For many of these periodical titles, no physical holdings were represented in the catalog and some titles were not even in the catalog at all. The items added represent **13 different formats**, including audiovisual materials, serials, artworks, manuscripts, maps, and realia. Items cataloged represent **22 different languages**, the vast majority in English, Latin, and Romance languages. RBML catalogers created **287 original records** in OCLC and **enhanced or updated a further 1,471 OCLC records**. Additionally, **1,140 legacy records were replaced** with updated OCLC records.
2. review the major challenges faced by the unit during that period;

After three years of pandemic experience, RBML's public and technical services staff all report significant burnout and exhaustion. We continue to provide hybrid events, along with taking up a full in-person instruction docket. The barcoding project continues to uncover cataloging irregularities that are being addressed on the fly as much as possible. Descriptive work on our literary manuscripts collections was minimal due to the lack of anyone in the ALMS role (search completed July 2023). Public services staffing remains challenging as we navigate numerous medical issues across the unit in addition to vacations, conferences, etc. Our current staffing on the descriptive side also does not allow for reparative/remediating descriptive metadata work and collection management work to happen routinely, nor do we have the capacity to digitize at any sort of scale. The lack of current, accurate, publicly available descriptive metadata for our most well-known manuscript collections continues to create a significant burden on our public services folks when they attempt to provide access or answer reference queries.

3. identify significant changes to unit operations, personnel, service profile, or service programs;

The Head of the RBML was on family and personal medical leave from July-October 2022 and again December 2022-January 2023. Cait Coker was named Associate Head of the Unit in Spring 2023 to help provide day-to-day managerial continuity to prepare for the Head's upcoming bereavement absence when that happens.

4. articulate (with appropriate examples) the ways in which the unit and/or its members contributed to University and/or academic college goals, directly or through Library-wide programs, including:

The RBML primarily contributed to Library-wide programs through our instruction calendar and public engagement activities. Our contributions towards digital content creation, collection management, scholarly communications and publishing, and staff training and development include the following:

- RBML staff answered 447 reference queries last year, up from 361 last year (~24% increase) (Statistics from Ask-a-Curator) We referred an additional 11 questions to other units, and 74 queries for in-house digitization.
- RBML held **65 formal instructional class sessions** last year, each individually tailored to the course in question. We provided class sessions for undergraduate and graduate coursework in ENGL, HIST, ARTD, IS, THEA, FRN, JAP, GRK, Integrative Biology, and MATH, as well as a group of 5<sup>th</sup> Graders from Leal Elementary School.
- RBML hosted **40 group presentations last year**, each tailored to the requesting group. These include 8 public events listed below, as well as several OLLI sessions, and non-instructional visits for the UIPD, visits for donors, campus visitors, and campus units (e.g. Greek Consul, University of Singapore, NEH, CARLI, Professional Staff Leadership Academy) as requested.

- facility management;

In cooperation with Library Facilities and Preservation, we've handled at least two small water events this year, both related to our aging HVAC system.

- collection access and management

RBML catalogers added **3,313 new item records** and **1,687 holdings records** in the catalog during

the reporting period. Over 2,000 of these were sales and auction catalogs, a project that Tony Hynes has been working on for the past year. For many of these periodical titles, no physical holdings were represented in the catalog and some titles were not even in the catalog at all. The items added represent **13 different formats**, including audiovisual materials, serials, artworks, manuscripts, maps, and realia. Items cataloged represent **22 different languages**, the vast majority in English, Latin, and Romance languages. RBML catalogers created **287 original records** in OCLC and **enhanced or updated a further 1,471 OCLC records**. Additionally, **1,140 legacy records were replaced** with updated OCLC records.

The barcoding project began in Fall 2018 (work started summer 2019), with approximately 115,000 items in the book collections that needed to be barcoded. In the past 4 years we have managed to barcode over 87% of the unbarcoded part of the collections, averaging 27,000 volumes per year, and are on track to complete the project before making the move to the new Special Collections building. As of the beginning of August 2023, less than 15,000 unbarcoded items remain in Alma, including several thousand microfilm and microfiche items.

- digital content creation;

In addition to the recordings of several public programs being made available on our YouTube channel, one of our graduate assistants, Nora Davies, worked to complete the conversion of the RBML's very first online exhibition (ironically, originally produced by Lynne as a grad student in 1999) to the OmekaS platform. As our ongoing digitization time in Digitization Services was taken up by the Brooks project, only a handful of digital books were added. Our in-house digitization completed **63** digitization requests, bringing in a total of \$3,350 in cost recovery. The William Allingham Papers are now fully digitized with an updated finding aid, and we published our digitization (<https://www.library.illinois.edu/rbx/collections/rbml-digitization-services-policy/>) and exhibit loan (<https://www.library.illinois.edu/rbx/collections/rbml-exhibit-loan-policy/>) policies on our website.

- diversity, equality, inclusion and accessibility;

RBML continues to implement our updated collection development policy that is explicitly committed to campus DEIA goals. We work to implement inclusive DEIA practices into all of our work, both descriptive and public-facing.

- outreach and public engagement

RBML hosted 8 public events, as detailed below:

- **Fall Exhibit Opening Reception: The Viceroyalty of Peru and the Times of the Conde de Montemar.** Friday, September 16, 2022. In-person event with remarks by Ana D. Rodríguez and Dr. Antonio Sotomayor, and Professor Emeritus Nils Jacobson. Refreshments were served and ~60 visitors attended.
- **In search of Marcel Proust.** Friday, October 7, 2022. In-person event with remarks by Caroline Szyłowicz, and Prof. François Proulx (FRIT). Materials shown and guests invited to read favorite passages. Refreshments were served and ~40 visitors attended.
- **Hysteria: Tracing Early Modern Witchcraft.** Wednesday, October 26, 2022. Online webinar event. Ruthann E. Mowry and Dr. Cait Coker hosted a live, interactive presentation of materials documenting the history of European witchcraft. Co-hosted by the RBML and the Lewis & Clark Library in Helena, Montana. ~230 registered (registration was through the MT

library's side) and 103 viewers attended live. Recording posted on RBML's YouTube channel currently has 123 views.

- **RBML Holiday Open House and Print Crawl** – Thursday, December 8, 2022. Collaborative event between RBML and Skeuomorph Press at the Fab Lab, with interactive printing of holiday cards featuring creatures from the Topsell book which was also on display. Other activities included button-making, coloring sheets, and temporary tattoos. Refreshments were served, and ~75 visitors attended.

#### Spring 2023

- **Eat Your Heart Out, Valentine** – Tuesday, February 14, 2023. In-person event featuring an open house, showing of collection materials, and various hands-on craft activities including coloring sheets, button-making, and valentine-making. ~75 visitors attended.
- **Kate Ozment: The Hroswitha Club and the Impact of Women Book Collectors.** Tuesday, April 11, 2023. Virtual event, lecture via zoom webinar. Speaker discussed the history of the Hroswitha Club, a group of women book collectors who met from 1944-2004. Membership included 100 collectors, librarians, and bibliographers whose collections and labor have contributed to more than 75 institutions in the United States and Great Britain. 146 participants registered for the webinar, 71 attended live. Recording posted on RBML's YouTube channel currently has 175 views.
- **RBML's First Folio Fête.** Friday, April 21, 2023. In-person event featuring refreshments, displayed materials from the collection, buttons and temporary tattoos, and live sonnet readings by participants. ~85 visitors attended.
- **Gwendolyn Brooks's Birthday Party.** Wednesday, June 7, 2023. In-person event featuring display of favorites from the collection, button-making station, and refreshments including the famous orange cake. ~70 visitors attended.

#### 5. briefly summarize progress made on Unit Annual Goals for FY23 (as enumerated in the FY22 Unit Annual Report);

- RBML continues to manage outreach, instruction, and public programming goals on a hybrid model that reflects our current staffing levels; we had to decline about a dozen requested group visits and classes due to lack of staffing capacity. (1,2,3)
- The RBML Barcoding project is approximately 90% complete on its first pass, and we have begun our second pass which deals with more complex problems. (2)
- While our comprehensive collection description document is not quite finalized, public descriptions for most of our distinctive collections are now incorporated into our website.
- We are working with MPAL to facilitate a transfer of special collections materials from there to RBML this year [collaborative relationships across both the Special Collections Division and the Library]. (3,4)
- Data remediation and digitization was completed on the William Allingham Papers. [data remediation and descriptive projects on our archival finding aids]. (2)
- Our Digitization Policy and Exhibit Loan Policies were completed and posted to our website (1,2, 4)
- The Library Building Project has completed its design phases and gone out to bid. (1,2,4)
- The Save America's Treasures grant for digitizing materials from the Gwendolyn Brooks

collection will be completed in September 2023.

6. briefly articulate proposed Unit Annual Goals for FY24.
  - Completion of the Barcoding project
  - Onboarding of Archives & Literary Manuscript Specialist; setting priorities and goals for archival processing projects
  - Begin collective policy and planning conversations towards figuring out how RBML, UA, and IHLC will staff and service the new building once renovations are complete.
  - Examine opportunities and begin baseline planning for near-term grant applications.
  - Continue amplifying access to rare books in the Digital Library; possible rehousing and exploration of data remediation strategies for the Grant Richards Papers for digitization.
  
7. What your unit needs to support your goals and your overall mission (training, facility needs, IT, etc.)

**Staffing levels continue to be an issue in RBML.** Public services staff handle significant instructional and public services loads, leaving little time for growth, development of new projects, completing long-standing projects, or innovation. Between illnesses and leaves, vacations, and conferences, we have had challenges keeping our public services area staffed beyond a skeleton crew this year. We have been without anyone in an Archival role full time for nearly three years, which has significantly impacted our ability to service our manuscripts collections, and our ability to create digital projects of any scale, as the metadata gap between what we hold and what is adequately described for easy use or large-scale digitization is significant.

RBML employed 7 Graduate Assistants ( 2.47 FTE) in FY23. All RBML GAs help with answering reference questions, staffing the RBML front desk, and public events activities, in addition to their ongoing projects.

- Karina Cooper (.50FTE, funded through the Velde Public Services Endowment,) served as our Public Services GA, providing instruction and researcher support.
- Nora Davies (.25 FTE, centrally funded, shared with Scholarly Commons), served as our Digital Projects GA. She worked on creating metadata for the Brooks project, as well as converting legacy online exhibitions to the OmekaS platform.
- Anna Wondrasek (.35 FTE, centrally funded), served as an Archival Processing GA. She worked on processing the Engstrand Collection, as well as contributing to processing the Brooks Collection
- Heather Wiegert (.35 FTE, centrally funded) served as a Cataloging GA, working on new acquisitions and gifts.
- Mariagabriella Stuardi (.17 FTE, funded through the Simpson Chair fund, shared with Italian Dept), served as a Cataloging Grad Hourly, working on early manuscripts cataloging.
- Katie Coulson (.35 FTE, funded through the Simpson Chair fund) served as a Cataloging GA (working on the Nina Baym Western Women Writers Collection) as well as hourly on the Barcoding project
- Helena Van Ness Moot (.50 FTE, funded through the Chatterjee Fund), served as an Audiovisual Preservation GA for the Perry Miller Adato collection through Preservation Services.

## II Statistical Profile

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## 1. Facilities

- Reading room seating for patrons: **19** (22 for class visits mostly standing)
- Seminar Room can accommodate: **15**
- Exhibit/main area can be reconfigured to accommodate up to **60** for a lecture, **100** for a reception.
- RBML is open to the public **40 hours per week (9-5, M-F)** year round when the University is open.

## 2. Personnel

- Lynne M. Thomas, Head, Rare Book and Manuscript Library and Juanita J. and Robert E. Simpson Rare Book and Manuscript Professor (faculty: 1.0FTE)
- Caroline Szylowicz, Curator (faculty: 1.0 FTE)
- Cait Coker, Curator (began March 16, 2019) (faculty: 1.0 FTE)
- Ruthann Mowry, Curator (began Nov. 1, 2018) (faculty: 1.0 FTE)
- Chloe Ottenhoff, Rare Book Cataloging Coordinator (academic professional: 1.0 FTE; *reports to MJ Han in ACS but is sited in RBML*)
- [TBD], Visiting Archival and Literary Manuscript Specialist (academic professional: 1.0 FTE; search underway)
- Ana D. Rodríguez, Registrar and Digitization Coordinator (began March 1, 2019) (academic professional: 1.0 FTE)
- Tony Hynes, Library Operations Associate / Public Services Manager (civil service, exempt: 1.0 FTE)
- Carrie Lingscheit, Office Support Specialist and Public Events coordinator (civil service: 1.0 FTE)
- [Lynne also supervises Krista Gray, Archives Program Officer for IHLC (academic professional, 1.0 FTE); Krista submits a separate annual report.]

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**In FY23 RBML spent \$16,757.41 on student hourly wages, and an additional \$13,532.26 on grad hourly wages through the RBK17 (RBML general gift fund); From the Simpson Fund, \$17,467.32 was spent on Extra Help wages and \$1043.68 on graduate hourly wages.**

**All FY23 hourly funding was through gift, grant, and endowment funds; no central funding was allocated.**

### 3. User Services

Most of the following data has been generated and will be available at G:\Annual Report Stats\StatsForAnnualReport2023 by mid-August.

- Gate Count (RBML maintains daily Gate Count statistics; these do not include registered users or group instruction/activities)
  - Gate Count: 174
  - Exhibit visitors: 321
- Circulation (from Alma fulfillment reports)
  - According to our Aeon Software, we checked out 2400 items to patrons in our reading rooms.
- Reference interactions
  - RBML staff answered 447 reference queries last year, up from 361 last year (~24% increase) (Statistics from Ask-a-Curator). We referred an additional 11 questions to other units, and 74 queries for in-house digitization.
- Presentations (from the Instructional Statistics database)
  - Number of presentations to groups (synchronous) 104
  - Number of presentations to groups (asynchronous) 298 (YouTube views)
  - Number of participants in group presentations (synchronous) 1321
  - Number of participants in group presentations (asynchronous)

### 4. Other statistics (optional)

Units may report any additional data that is collected within the unit and is illustrative of its activities in FY23. Examples might include website analytics, training sessions provided within the Library, LibGuides usage, tallies of materials processed or transferred, and so on.

## III Appendices (optional)

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### Notable acquisitions:

Out of about 100 acquisitions last year, a few items stand out.

Two landmarks, both written by women, from completely different worlds: first editions of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The modern Prometheus* (London : Printed for Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mayor & Jones, Finsbury Square, 1818) and Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (Boston: Published for the Author [by Thayer & Eldridge], 1861). Both of these works were purchased through a generous gift from Jim & Lionelle Elsesser.

Two screenplays, *The Spy Who Loved Me* (London: Eon Productions, 1976, Van Blaricum fund) and James Jones' *From Here to Eternity* ([Hollywood?]: Columbia Pictures Corporation, 1953) made nice additions to our existing Bondiana and James Jones collections, while also complementing a sizeable collection of movie and TV scripts

We continue to expand the voices and perspectives reflected in some of our areas of strength, with such examples as a 16<sup>th</sup> c. hunting treatise from Spain that also depicts hunting practices in South America; a 17<sup>th</sup> c. study on air pollution in London, a 17<sup>th</sup> c. volume of letters by a nun who founded the first girls' school for girls in the New World, an 18<sup>th</sup> c. medical treatise on the menopause; a volume of *Sketches of the Reconstruction Era American South* (1873); and many more.

## **RBML CATALOGING Academic Year 2022-2023 Project Narrative**

### Staffing

RBML cataloging staffing: one 1 FTE Academic Professional (RBML Cataloging Coordinator, Chloe Ottenhoff), two .375 FTE Graduate Assistants (Heather Wiegert and Katie Colson (donor funded)), and one .17 FTE Graduate Assistant (Mariagabriella Stuardi). Other contributions to RBML cataloging came from 1 LOA (Tony Hynes). Additional contributions to RBML cataloging came from staff in ACS to catalog Japanese-language materials, SSHEL items for RBOS, and the Michael Broomfield Collection of W.S. Merwin (summer-fall 2022). A graduate assistant in IAS (Tabitha Cochran) has also contributed by cataloging Slavic materials, both backlog items and those on brief MARCette records. The RBML Cataloging Coordinator facilitated these cooperative cataloging efforts, arranging for transport of materials between the RBML and ACS, developing workflows for the materials, and advising on problem books. Transfers from departmental libraries, including Ricker Library, the Math Library, and MPAL (forthcoming) were also managed, with cataloging remediation done for some portions of the collections.

Additionally, Chloe Ottenhoff served as the NACO coordinator for the library, compiling and submitting statistics for the University to the Program for Cooperative Cataloging and contributing 45 name authority records to this national program.

### Cataloging

RBML catalogers added **3,313 new item records** and **1,687 holdings records** in the catalog during the reporting period. Over 2,000 of these were sales and auction catalogs, a project that Tony Hynes has been working on for the past year. For many of these periodical titles, no physical holdings were represented in the catalog and some titles were not even in the catalog at all. The items added represent **13 different formats**, including audiovisual materials, serials, artworks, manuscripts, maps, and realia. Items cataloged represent **22 different languages**, the vast majority in English, Latin, and Romance languages. RBML catalogers created **287 original records** in OCLC and **enhanced or updated a further 1,471 OCLC records**. Additionally, **1,140 legacy records were replaced** with updated OCLC records.

Significant progress was made cataloging several unprocessed gifts and important purchases over the course of the year, in addition to new acquisitions (circa 500 new titles) and problem books. A significant proportion of cataloging work stemmed out of the barcoding project, enhancing records,



replacing MARCetite records, and correcting machine mis-match records (MARs).

Highlights include:

- Gift: Nina Baym Western Women Writers Collection (~400)
  - A comprehensive research guide to the collection was also created by GA Katie Colson
- Gift: Michael VanBlaricum (James Bond/Ian Fleming, ~100 titles (ongoing))
- Purchase: Frankenstein first edition
- Purchase: Manuscript collection on Brazilian woods
- Purchase: Bohemian medical recipes manuscript
- Purchase: Book of Hours, use of Rouen manuscript
- Purchase: Michael Broomfield Collection of W.S. Merwin (~1100 titles)
  - A finding aid was also created for ephemera and programs included in the collection, not cataloged individually (~2 cu. feet):  
<https://archon.library.illinois.edu/rbml/?p=collections/controlcard&id=1823>
- Archival collections finding aids created:
  - Chicago Sheet Music Collection, 1845-1871
  - LGBTQ Club Flyers from San Francisco, 1989-2001
  - WWI Photographs of the Section Photographique de l'Armée
  - John Robert Moore Collection of Defoeiana
  - WWI and WWII Pamphlets, Ephemera, and Propaganda

### Training and Workflows

Cataloging staff and graduate assistants attended several webinars and training opportunities throughout the year, including:

- Cataloging Rare Materials with the Official Toolkit and DCRM (ALA/RBMS)
- Cataloging Artists' Books webinar (ALA)
- Best Practices for Cataloging Objects using RDA and MARC21 (ALA)
- A community developed BIBFRAME profile for the description of Rare Books (LD4 conference)
- Authority Toolkit for Identity Management: Demonstration LOC/PCC)

Additionally, Chloe provided several workshops for graduate assistants wishing to gain more experience with authority work.

### **Barcoding Project Status Report**

**Overall project status:** On-track

#### **Top Level Summary**

The barcoding project began in Fall 2018 (work started summer 2019), with approximately 115,000 items in the book collections that needed to be barcoded. In the past 4 years we have managed to barcode over 87% of the unbarcoded part of the collections, averaging 27,000 volumes per year, and are on track to complete the project before making the move to the new Special Collections building. As of the beginning of August 2023, less than 15,000 unbarcoded items remain in Alma, including several thousand microfilm and microfiche items. Concurrent with the barcoding project is other collection maintenance work, including phase box measuring and ordering (nearly 500 volumes). Additionally, a full inventory of the

archival collections has been created, including box lists and barcodes, with the exception of several large collections that are in current rehousing/reorganizing phases (e.g. Adato, Brooks, Madhubuti). One third of the collections' shelf location and barcode information has been uploaded into Archon. Now that RBML's vacant archivist position has been filled, hopefully the work to get this information into Archon can continue, as it requires a fair amount of rehousing, relabeling, and reorganization before the data can be uploaded.

The first phase of the project is almost complete; and the second phase began in earnest fall of 2022. The second phase consists of identifying items not barcoded in the first pass of the collections and correcting bibliographic and holdings problems. Dewey ranges 100-400 have been completed, as well as quarto serials (OXX). The range of problems encountered include:

- Items on Main Stacks or Tech Service error/missing locations
- Typos and discrepancies in call numbers
- Items not in Alma at all
- Serial numbering issues
- Bound withs/analyzed serials
- Multi-part monograph and serials item records not in the system (example – a 92 volume set with only 1 item record in the system)

#### Quality

In a recent quality check, the only major issue that has been identified is instances where a barcode was placed on a book, but not entered properly into Alma. This issue will be corrected when an expected complete shelf-reading is conducted, using Alma's shelf-reading utility, and is easily correctable.

Additionally, a student recently went through and rescanned over 500 barcodes that were improperly entered in Alma (e.g. extra or missing digits or other characters mistakenly entered).

Additionally, while many items have been marked as "Not on shelf," most of these items are being located in different size ranges (e.g., octavo volumes shelved as quarto, quartos as folios) or are part of named collections and are lacking the collection prefix in Alma. Some have a location in Alma other than RBML (items from Main Stacks never fully transferred or in an error location).

#### Roadblocks

Many bibliographic issues have been identified in the course of the project, such as discrepancies between the number of volumes on the shelf versus what is in the catalog for multi-volume sets; bound-with volumes not cataloged as bound-withs; and serial runs not represented in the catalog. These issues are flagged by the student worker and addressed by the cataloging team, who corrects the bibliographic errors. This is not a trivial process, often involving original cataloging or extensive, time-consuming reworking of holdings records. In order to complete the project on time, either a substantial increase in cataloging staff will be required, or compromises made in minimum cataloging standards. As it stands, the work of 1 extra help hourly (senior library specialist equivalent) is exclusively focused on cataloging work for books flagged as issues by the barcoding project, with an additional extra help coming on in this fall semester.