

**CONSERVATION UNIT**  
**ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1, 2002 – JUNE 30, 2003**  
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**I. Narrative Summary of the Year's Activities**

**I.A. Core Processes**

The Conservation Unit serves the entire Library system by providing book repair, pamphlet binding, and conservation services for new and existing collection materials, as well as guidance and tools for proper handling, storage and care of their collections. The main service functions in the unit are:

- Book Repair
- Conservation
- Pamphlet Binding
- Oak Street Materials Preparations and Packing

**I.A.1. Services and Access**

The Conservation Unit has four main sub-units that perform services and promote continued access to library materials:

- *Book Repair* provides basic through complex repairs on non-special collections materials, as well as constructs protective enclosures. These tasks are completed by faculty, staff, and students in the unit. In the past fiscal year, 3,874 books were repaired and 396 enclosures were completed in house.
- *Conservation* provides complex, reversible repairs for special collections materials. Typically these repairs require between 3 and 10 hours of bench work per item, and are completed by faculty and staff only. In the past year, 69 items were conserved.
- *Pamphlet Binding* supplies thin, unbound library materials with a protective, economical cover. Pamphlet binding is completed by staff and students and volunteers (see IV Involvement with Other Units in the Library and on Campus or Beyond). Five-thousand nine-hundred and twenty-six (5,926) items were pamphlet bound in the last fiscal year.
- *Oak Street Preparations and Packing* assesses the physical stability of all items selected for transfer to off-site storage, performs minor repairs and stabilizes damaged or fragile materials. Since October of 2002 when this service began operation, 59,387 items have been assessed and 7,843 volumes have been repaired or stabilized by student employees.

**I.A.2. Collection Development**

N/A

**I.A.3. Support/Ancillary Activities**

The unit fulfills many roles outside of the core processes listed above. These services include disaster recovery, exhibit preparations, determining books to be sent out for commercial binding, marking, and ordering supplies.

- In the past year, the unit has managed the drying, cleaning and stabilization of over 1,144 water damaged volumes, including mold removal, binding repairs, and the separation of blocked paper, as well as managed the loan of HEPA vacuums to facilitate collection cleaning efforts in other Libraries.
- The Conservation Unit has additionally undertaken the roll of acting as an exhibit preparations unit, creating window mats, encapsulating posters and other fragile materials, hinging art into window mats, and reframing materials to be displayed for other Library units.
- As part of our daily routine, the unit triages all damaged bound materials and determines what can be treated in-house and what should be sent out for commercial binding (10,173 books were triaged in FY0203). As an added service, we determine what type of binding style the materials sent for commercial binding should receive. This reduces the time required by Bindery Preparations handling materials.
- In addition to the marking duties required by book repair performed in the unit, Conservation also remarks many of the books and enclosures found to have incorrect spine information.
- Lastly, Conservation orders, sometimes distributes, and consults on all preservation supplies and enclosures purchased by the Library System.

#### **I.B. Training and Staff Development**

The Conservation Unit has offered a number of training and staff development opportunities to the Library. These workshops were open to all Library faculty and staff, and included three simple repair workshops (36 total attendees, Oct. 29, Nov. 11, and Dec. 18) and a book snake workshop (40 attendees, March 3). Both gave attendees hands-on experience in repair or book handling and tools to better care for their collections. Additionally, the Unit designed and mounted an exhibit on book structure and design, on display from April 1 til June 30, 2003 in the main hallway of the Library. In cooperation with Acquisitions, members of the unit authored a guide sheet for the appropriate application of tattle tapes to Library materials to help standardize their use and attachment.

Members of the Conservation Unit have also attended staff training and professional development opportunities offered both on and off campus. All staff in the unit attended "The Changing Workplace" seminar offered by the UIUC Office of Human Resource Development. As well, members of the unit attended the Microsoft Word training offered through the Library's Staff Development and Training office, received training on the proper use and care of respirator equipment, and attended a lecture on how to avoid work place injury, presented by the UIUC Office of Environmental Health and Safety. Additionally, members attended "Enzymes and Their Use in Conservation", a lecture and workshop series presented by the American Institute for Conservation and the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education, and a 20-hour, multi-day workshop on book binding taught by Richard Baker, Private Conservator, St. Louis, MO.

### **I.C. Innovative Ideas, New Initiatives**

Beginning in October of 2002, Conservation began the oversight of the stabilization and packing of materials being transferred to high-density storage. This service consists of an initial condition assessment of every item selected for transfer, as well as basic stabilization of broken or fragile materials and packing for transfer. All work is completed by student employees and overseen by the Conservation Librarian.

### **II. Measurement, Evaluation, and Assessment Activities**

Similar to previous years, the Conservation Unit has kept detailed statistics pertaining to the number and types of treatments performed. These statistics are then compared to other ARL institutions as a determination of the productivity and skill of our unit. Under the oversight of the Conservation Librarian, these statistics have been simplified and now offer a better indication of the volumes repaired and processes undertaken by the Conservation Unit.

An annual conservation and preservation supplies inventory was undertaken in January of 2003. Similar to previous years, this inventory was used to update our supplies and indicate how our supply monies should be budgeted in future years.

### **III. Public Relations and Promotional Activities**

During the past year, members of the Conservation Unit have consulted with members of the community (both on and off campus) about conservation treatments and the care and handling of book and paper materials. Also, the unit launched a website, shared with the Preservation Unit, to further promote and explain our services.

### **IV. Involvement with Other Units in the Library and on Campus or Beyond**

Due to the very nature of our services, the day-to-day operation of the Conservation Unit involves constant interaction with other units in the Library. In addition to those daily interactions, the unit held two special repair workshops for members of the Central Circulation Bookstacks Office, to improve the tools and knowledge they use for minor repairs and simple pamphlet binding, trained the Biology Library staff and students on cleaning and basic stabilization of their rare book collection, trained the History Library student workers on basic stabilization of low-use unbound serials in their stack areas, trained GAs in the Map and Geography Library on deacidification, mending and encapsulation of map materials for as part of an LSTA grant, and trained staff and graduate assistants from the Law Library on how to perform a rare book condition assessment, as well as provided training, supplies and equipment for the production of protective enclosures found necessary through that assessment. Lastly, the unit successfully applied for NEH Challenge Grant monies to employ an hourly GA for one year to complete a condition assessment of the uncatalogued backlog in the Rare Book Room. The findings from this sample assessment will prove valuable as the Library participates in the ARL Hidden Collections Initiative.

Members of the unit have networked with the campus through leading lectures in graduate courses at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (Nov. 15, 2002: LIS 380, 160 students, and Feb 18, 2003: LIS 437, 25-30 students), accepting volunteers from the GSLIS program which afforded interested students the opportunity to receive hands-on experience in pamphlet binding other preservation/conservation activities, leading a LEEP workshop on simple book repairs (March 8, 18 attendees), presenting a one hour lecture to

Mortensen Center Associates about the role of conservation in libraries, (July 2, 2002: 12 attendees), and leading a talk to the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) Reading Group (March 6, 2003: 30 attendees). The unit has also been involved in education outside of the University of Illinois campus, leading a simple repairs workshop sponsored by the Illinois Cooperative Collection Management Program (ICCMP), held at Illinois State University (May 16, 2003: 35 attendees).

## **V. Additional Topics Deemed Unique to the Unit in Question**

N/A

## **VI. Goals and Planning**

### **VI.A. Last Year's Plans**

*Book Repair's* goals were to increase turn-around time for most repairs to under 2 months, with no minor repairs taking longer than 4 months, as well as to reduce or eliminate conservation backlog, and eliminate all redundancy of operations in the unit.

Currently, the longest turn-around for book repairs is five months, with most repair taking under three months, and the conservation backlog has been significantly reduced to under forty items.

*Pamphlet Binding* investigated the possibilities of beginning comprehensive pamphlet binding upon of new acquisitions, as allowed by the budget, but was unable to staff such an endeavor. However, all un-bound pamphlet materials that have circulated three or more times are now being pamphlet bound as they are identified.

Goals in the area of *Education and Training* included increasing the availability of staff training on simple book repair methods as well as launch a website to assist in staff education and promotion of the Unit. Two different workshop programs and an exhibit were held during the past year, and the website was successfully launched on May 2, 2003.

*Administrative* goals included the development of long-range conservation planning, including consultations and assessments, the completion of the Library disaster plan, emergency response booklet, and planning for the Oak Street Facility. Several long-range conservation assessments are underway or completed in the Biology, Law, and the Rare Book Room libraries. Some conservation action has already been taken as the result of all three of these assessments. Although the disaster plan and emergency response booklet have not been distributed to the public, they are almost completely finished and awaiting approval or printing. Lastly, since the Oak Street Facility has been greatly delayed, no significant progress has been made in that area.

## **VI.B Next Year's Plans and Goals**

*Book Repair* plans and goals include the complete elimination of the conservation backlog, as well as to further reduce the turn-around time for book repairs to 4 months or under. With the addition of a GA appointment, and the re-thinking of some student hourly monies, we hope that repairs will be further streamlined and consistently of high quality. As well, the unit hopes to begin tracking all incoming and outgoing repairs (both book repair and conservation, as well as brittle books, library binding, and mass deacidification in the Preservation Unit) on an Access database. This database will allow for more easily compiled repair statistics, as well as permit staff to easily search our unit for books and locate them on our shelves more quickly.

*Pamphlet Binding* plans to investigate the possibility of purchasing pre-tattle taped pamphlet binders, this will reduce completion time for each item bound, and will also reduce theft by making the tattle tapes non-removable from the bound item.

In the area of *Conservation*, the unit seeks to begin taking on more conservation treatment as time allows. As the unit acquires more specialized equipment and materials, our ability to perform these highly detailed repairs is greatly improved. However, staff and faculty availability for such treatments may be a great limitation.

The upcoming year's goals for *Oak Street Preparations* include the full move of all operations to room 7A of the basement, as well as to improve the consistency of treatment decisions made by the student employees.

*Education and Training* plans for the coming year are to integrate conservation activities and workshops both inside and outside the library, focusing mainly on including GSLIS students, as well as to offer not only repeats of the workshops presented last year, but also introduce new workshops building on those offered last year.

*Administrative* goals include an integration of an annual supply inventory with the fiscal year's supply orders to better project the actual use of materials, allowing the unit to order in bulk for supplier discounts. Similarly, a thorough inventory and organization of disaster supplies should be completed in the next year, as well as a training session provided for staff that may be required to do some immediate disaster response in libraries. Over the next year, we hope to improve some of the lab equipment and furniture to better advance the functionality of the space and ergonomics for our staff and student workers. Lastly, the unit head will make more efforts to improve staff communication and better utilize existing staff skills, as well as broaden those skills to better work in the existing, networked environment.

**VII. Other**  
N/A