

CONSERVATION UNIT
ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1, 2003 – JUNE 30, 2004
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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 Stabilization 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, students and volunteers in the unit. In the past fiscal year, 4,445 books and flat paper artifacts were repaired, 155 custom enclosures and 219 commercially produced enclosures were utilized or 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, 20 items were conserved in house.
- Pamphlet Binding supplies thin, unbound library materials with a protective, economical cover. Pamphlet binding is completed by staff, students and volunteers. Four-thousand seven-hundred and two (4,772) 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, stabilizes damaged or fragile materials and constructs custom protective enclosures for exceedingly damaged materials. In the past fiscal year 238,530 items have been assessed and 35,201 volumes have been repaired or stabilized by temporary staff, student employees and contributors.

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 which books

should be sent out for commercial binding, marking, and ordering preservation related supplies.

- In the past year, the unit has managed the drying, cleaning and stabilization of over 611 volumes, including drying, 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, what should be treated as a brittle book, and what should be sent out for commercial binding (9,951 books and pamphlets 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 consisted of two book snake workshops held on October 15 and November 11, which gave library staff a tool to better care for their collections. The unit also organized a small fieldtrip to Twin Rocker Handmade Papers in Brookston IN, in which all interested preservation and conservation staff and students learned about the process of hand papermaking on July 18. In addition, the stabilization of materials selected for transfer to Oak Street has reached full production levels, as noted above, and a great deal of student training, as well as the training of an academic hourly supervisor has taken place in the unit. To facilitate this, full documentation for this process was written.

Members of the Conservation Unit have also attended staff training and professional development opportunities offered both on and off campus. Members of the conservation staff attended the following during the 2003/04 fiscal year:

- ARL Working Conference titled "Exposing Hidden Collections" Washington, DC, September 8-9
- Library Fire Extinguisher training, October 3
- Future of the Library Conference, October 30
- OCLC/Fidelity Insurance Conference on Disasters and Risk Management, Cincinnati, OH, December 12

- 20-hour, multi-day workshop on book binding taught by Richard Baker, Private Conservator, St. Louis, MO, March 20-May 29, 2004
- Faculty/Staff Assistance Program supervisor training, June 8

I.C. Innovative Ideas, New Initiatives

In the past fiscal year, the Conservation Unit has undertaken several new or unique initiatives. Perhaps the most publicized was that of the creation of the Library's ten-millionth volume in October. This project involved the creation, including editing text submissions and selecting images, working with paper makers and letterpress printers out of state, hand-binding, and detailing the volume, including a trip to Chicago's Columbia College for the Book and Paper Arts to use their specialized book binding equipment.

Of more day-to-day importance, however, is the implementation of two new in-house procedures. Since fall of 2003, we have worked with vendors to purchase pamphlet binders that have been pre-tattle taped within the structure of the binder, thus reducing the amount of work necessary by the in-house pamphlet binding staff as well as making the resulting pamphlets more secure by reducing the visibility of the security strips. Lastly, the unit has initiated a MS Access database to track incoming and outgoing repairs. The use of this database will allow for prompt location of books temporarily transferred to the Conservation Unit, as well as track repair types and turn-around time.

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.

In addition to the manual statistics kept traditionally by the Unit, the Conservation Unit has also developed an MS Access database to track all incoming and out-going repairs (see *I.C. Innovative Ideas, New Initiatives*, above). The database will eventually allow for automated statistics generation, though that aspect was only begun in July 2004.

III. Public Relations and Promotional Activities

In relation to the binding of the 10-millionth volume, members of the Conservation Unit gave local newspaper and television interviews, spoke to the Library Friends Board, and made presentations to both the Campus Development Officers and the University Board of Trustees.

As an ongoing activity, members of the Conservation Unit continued to consult with members of the community (both on and off campus) about conservation treatments and the care and handling of book and paper materials, as well as paintings, globes and other objects.

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 the following tours, projects, lectures and specialized workshops.

Tours

- Mortenson Associates (September 17, 14 attendees)
- GSLIS LEEP students (October 1, approximately 25 attendees)
- GSLIS ALA Student chapter (October 29, 10 attendees)

Projects Involving Other Units

- Took over maintenance and monthly changing of hygrometers in Bookstacks to monitor temperature and relative humidity.
- Performed preservation assessment of Sousa Archives instrument collection
- Completed conservation assessment of uncataloged backlog in Rare Book and Special Collections
- Continued work with the campus' Cultural Engagement Council members to further preservation awareness and cooperation on campus
- Trained Rare Book and Special Collections practicum student to encapsulate posters
- Trained and managed GA from Law Library for 5 hrs/wk performing repairs and boxing for Law special collections materials

Lectures and Specialized Workshops (both on and off campus)

- Mortenson Associates Basic Book Repair (October 10, 14 attendees)
- Mortenson Associates Salvage of Water Damaged Library Materials (October 17, 14 attendees)
- Three-hour lecture for LIS 380 (Information Organization and Access) on preservation and conservation (November 14, approximately 80 attendees)
- Presented on in-house pamphlet binding to LIS 437 (Technical Service) class (February 17)
- LEEP book repair workshop (March 5, 12 attendees)
- Illinois Cooperative Collection Management Program preservation workshop (March 14, 22 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 plans and goals included the complete elimination of the conservation backlog, as well as the further reduction of turn-around time for book repairs to 4 months or under. As well, the unit hoped to begin tracking all incoming and outgoing repairs. Although the conservation backlog has not been eliminated, it continues to be slowly reduced in number. At present, the Unit has maintained a 5 month turnaround for almost all incoming items, though at peak return times, and with current staffing levels, we cannot maintain a lower turnaround for some more complex repairs. The Unit has successfully mounted the Access tracking database, as mentioned earlier in this report.

Pamphlet Binding planned to investigate the possibility of purchasing pre-tattle taped pamphlet binders, which was accomplished and established into the routine pamphlet binding procedures.

In the area of Conservation, the unit sought to take on more conservation treatment as time allowed. However, given the low staff levels and heavy workflow, only a limited number of pieces were conserved.

Oak Street Preparations goals included 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. The move was accomplished and consistency was improved by completing full, written documentation for stabilization procedures for all materials being transferred to high-density storage.

Education and Training plans for the previous year were to integrate conservation activities and workshops both inside and outside the library, focusing mainly on including GSLIS students, as well as inner-library workshops. Through several lectures, workshops, and tours, these goals were met.

Administrative goals included an integration of an annual supply inventory with the fiscal year's supply orders, a thorough inventory and organization of disaster supplies, as well as a training session provided for staff that may be required to do some immediate disaster response in libraries. Several of these goals were met, including the organization of disaster supplies and some basic disaster response training for select staff. However, due to the pending release of the Library's *Disaster Plan*, further training is being delayed. A thorough supply inventory was not accomplished this year. Lastly, the unit head strove to 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. Since the time that goal was set, regular staff meetings have successfully been established and cross training of staff on computer and repair skills has begun.

VI.B Next Year's Plans and Goals

Book Repair

- Maintain a 5 month maximum turn-around for all repairs, with most repairs being accomplished in less than 3 months.
- Continue to decrease the number of books still in the conservation backlog
- Further utilize the Access database to track statistics and possibly spine label formats, as well as its current use for tracking incoming and outgoing repairs

Conservation

- Increase number of items taken in for conservation treatment
- Begin undertaking leather spine repairs
- Train graduate assistant to do flat paper conservation repairs

Pamphlet Binding

- Hone new methods of sewing pamphlets
- Establish written procedures for all methods of pamphlet binding undertaken in-house.

Oak Street Preparations and Packing

- Meet anticipated volume of outgoing materials set up by Betsy Kruger and the Oak Street Rapid Accessioning Team
- Set up guidelines and procedures for safely packing large quantities of outgoing materials

Education and Training

- Offer *at least* two library workshops, potentially including simple repairs, booksnakes, advanced repairs, or disaster response training.
- Continue interaction with GSLIS students at current level or higher (lectures, workshops, tours, volunteer program, etc.)

Administrative

- Continue cross-training of staff to better utilize existing staffing levels
- Complete supply inventory and continue to better organize disaster response supplies
- Reduce the unit's isolation by incorporating conservation more into the day to day functions of technical service functions
- Implement conservation-minded guidelines for all Library exhibits, including the construction of custom plexiglas book supports

VII. Other N/A