

CONSERVATION UNIT
ANNUAL REPORT, JULY 1, 2004 – JUNE 30, 2005
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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, 4,281 books and flat paper artifacts were repaired, 167 custom enclosures and 162 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, 27 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. Five thousand, nine hundred and fifty nine (5,959) 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 427,176 items have been assessed from the main stacks as well as 28 departmental libraries and 80,510 volumes have been repaired or stabilized by temporary staff, student employees and contributors from throughout the library system.

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 89 volumes, including drying, mold removal, binding repairs, and the separation of blocked paper, as well as managed the loan of HEPA vacuums and other cleaning supplies to facilitate collection cleaning efforts in other Libraries.
- The Conservation Unit acts 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 (12,113 books and pamphlets were triaged in FY0405). This year, the Unit fully integrated the salvage of all educationally illustrative endpapers and donor bookplates from books being sent for commercial binding. Endpapers of this type were frequently lost in the binding process previous to this practice.
- 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. This year the Unit has worked with several vendors to receive custom designs for supplies to better meet the needs of our collections, including small four-flap binders and specialty boxes.

I.B. Training and Staff Development

The Conservation Unit has offered a number of training and staff development opportunities to the Library. Offerings consisted of one book snake workshop held on December 8th, which gave library staff a tool to better care for their collections, attended by over 50 library staff members. In addition, the stabilization of materials selected for transfer to Oak Street has nearly doubled in volume, and a great deal of student training and training of the continuous influx of library contributors has taken place in the unit to help with this project.

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 2004-2005 fiscal year:

- *Removal of Pressure Sensitive Tape and Tape Stains* a “Current Issues” workshop co-sponsored by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works and the Smithsonian Center for Materials Research and Education, Suitland MD, Oct. 25-29, 2004.

- Office of Public Affairs “Toolbox” training for use of their survey instrument, February 17, 2005.
- 20-hour, multi-day workshop on book binding taught by Richard Baker, Private Conservator, St. Louis, MO, April 2-June 4, 2005.
- *Supervisor, Know Thyself* workshop held by the Library Human Resources Office, May 17, 2005.

I.C. Innovative Ideas, New Initiatives

A new practice of working with materials being processed in the Technical services division was undertaken during the 2004-2005 fiscal year. Previous to this year, materials could be brought to the Conservation Unit at any point during the acquisitions and cataloging process. Due to our adoption of the repair tracking database, however, we have asked that only materials that are fully cataloged be sent to the Conservation Unit. This allows for better tracking of materials and far fewer lost items. To aid in the identification and protection of fragile materials during processing, the Conservation Unit supplies both Acquisitions and Cataloging with protective bags with support boards to temporarily house materials until they can be properly treated by conservation staff.

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. Manual statistics were logged and compared to the statistics generated by the repair tracking database initiated fully in July 2004. Results from the two methods show some discrepancy (about 7% higher on manual statistics than logged through the database), which we hope to correct over the coming year. At this time, both methods of statistics tracking will be maintained.

In addition, the Conservation Unit met with the staff of the Technical Services Division to assess how our Unit is meeting the needs of the division. Overall, there were very few comments or complaints.

III. Public Relations and Promotional Activities

The Conservation Unit participated in both the first annual Book Market on the Square, as well as the Library’s inaugural Fall Festival. For both festivals, members of the unit assisted in set-up and manning a table showing interested attendees how to make simple pamphlets in both Western and Asian styles. For the Fall Festival, the Conservation Unit also assisted in the creation of a display describing library preservation practices and challenges.

Members of the unit additionally manned the “welcome desk” during the first week of both the fall and spring semesters.

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 and 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

- GSLIS LEEP students (March 4, approximately 20 attendees)

Projects Involving Other Units

- Continued work with the campus' Cultural Engagement Council, now as the formalized Asset Preservation Sub-Committee whose charge is to assess and provide assistance to the preservation needs of the campus.
- Committed ten hours per week of our most skilled graduate assistant and supervisory time by the Conservation Librarian to assist in the conservation repair of Carl Sandburg's book and manuscript collection, as part of the "Save America's Treasures" grant, begun in January of 2005.
- Maintained monthly maintenance of hygrothermographs in Bookstacks to monitor temperature and relative humidity.
- Created a custom drawer insert for musical instrument storage and created one operational model and full directions for construction for the Sousa Archives and Center for American Music.
- Assisted in a large-scale pamphlet binding project for the Library Science Library.
- Created a basic guide for the processing and basic preservation of scrapbooks for the Student Life and Culture Archive.
- Began a condition assessment of the reference collection in the Rare Books and Special Collections Library.
- Trained graduate students from both the Sousa Archives and the Rare Book Room to perform polyester encapsulation of flat paper objects.
- Trained graduate students from the Sousa Archives to construct large custom boxes for realia and window mats for heavily displayed photographs.
- Performed Oak Street preparations or transfers to the Main Stacks in all departmental libraries with a minimum of intrusion or inconvenience. For two libraries, performed extra-ordinary transfers of materials (10,000 items from Law Library and 35,000 items from the Chemistry Library) due to upcoming construction.

Lectures and Specialized Workshops (both on and off campus)

- One and a half-hour lecture for LIS 581 (Administration and Use of Archival Materials) on preservation and conservation of archival collections (October 19, 2004, approximately 20 attendees)
- Panel member for GSLIS Career Workshop (November 1, 2004, approximately 30 attendees)
- Two-hour lecture for LIS 501 (Information Organization and Access) on preservation and conservation (December 3, 2004, approximately 70 attendees)
- Panel member for GSLIS forum on ALA attendance (February 28, 2005, approximately 12 attendees)
- LEEP book repair workshop (March 4, 15 attendees)

- Presented RPC brownbag to interested faculty (March 8, 2005, approximately 6 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

All book repair goals for last year (maintain or improve current turn-around, decrease conservation backlog and increase use of access database) were met, though turn-around time and backlog reduction were not greatly increased or static. Database usage, however, has been embraced by the unit and all book repairs for the past year have been tracked using this mechanism, yielding accurate statistics.

Conservation

The number of items taken in for higher level treatment has increased by 35% and basic leather paring training has been begun, though has not yet been integrated into regular repair routines. One graduate assistant was fully trained in flat paper conservation and a large-scale project was completed which involved 25 hours of paper conservation treatment.

Pamphlet Binding

New methods for sewing pamphlets were investigated and, where relevant, introduced into the repair routine. No formal procedures were written for the processes, however, two articles for publication were completed that will offer an excellent starting place for more formal procedure documentation.

Oak Street Preparations and Packing

Oak Street Preparations maintained the incoming workflow from the Main Stacks and the Departmental Libraries with only a few temporary exceptions. Full documentation for assessing, repairing and packing materials in departmental libraries was completed.

Education and Training

Only one workshop was offered through the Conservation Unit this year, which did not meet our goal of two or more. However, interaction with GSLIS was increased through lectures, workshops and panels, as well as an ever-increasing number of volunteers and practica (4 reliable volunteers and 3 practicum students in the past year).

Administrative

Staff knowledge of alternative repair methods and computer skills continued this year, as well as improved organization of disaster response supplies. No full

inventory of preservation supplies was accomplished. The Unit reached out to the Technical Services division in a number of ways, mentioned earlier in this report. Although the Unit has not begun to supply the library with guidelines or cradles as we had hoped, all supplies have been ordered and some exemplary guidelines from other libraries have been collected.

VI.B Next Year's Plans and Goals

Book Repair

- Add new repair types (tissue hinge repairs, internal hinge repairs, etc) into procedures manual
- Continue to try to increase turn-around time for general repairs

Conservation

- Continue to reduce backlog of conservation repairs
- Continue learning leather repairs and begin finishing and tooling work
- Continue to increase number and level of conservation repairs, especially from Rare Books and Special Collections.

Pamphlet Binding

- Prepare formal documentation for procedures manual.

Oak Street Preparations and Packing

- Keep up with flow of materials from STX through December 2005
- Modify management of stabilization after December to reflect the lower, continual workflow and the eventual move of Conservation to the Oak Street building.

Education and Training

- Evaluate success rate of previous repair workshops to better serve library staff. Ideally offer at least one repair workshop following this evaluation.
- Continue to increase staff training in areas of computer literacy for specific programs (specifically MS Access and Voyager)
- Continue to hone bench skills of all staff
- Continue to increase interaction with GSLIS through workshops, lectures, volunteers, and practica.

Administrative

- Complete exhibit guidelines and learn to make custom Plexiglas cradles
- Assess success of Conservation Unit's services throughout the library
- Complete planning of Conservation Lab and hopefully move into new lab within FY0506.

VII. Other N/A