

**RBMS Conference Development Committee**  
**ALA Midwinter Meeting (Boston) \* Sunday 17 January 2010**  
**8:00 am – 10:00 am \* Hyatt Regency, Martha's Vineyard Room**

**Members Present:** Elizabeth Johnson (chair), Dawn Childress, Martha Conway (recording), Maggie Kopp, Jane Gillis, Erika Dowell, Christian Dupont, Ruth Hughes, Mary Lacy, Deborah Leslie, Arvid Nelsen, John Overholt, Henry Raine, Nina Schneider, Elaine Smyth

**Others Present:** Joe Barkley, Lois Black, Mark Dimunation, Ellen Ellickson, Margaret Nichols

### **Welcome and Introductions**

Johnson welcomed the group and we introduced ourselves.

### **Selection of Recorder**

Conway volunteered to serve as recorder.

### **Approval of Agenda**

We approved the agenda.

### **Review of Summer Action**

Last August the committee recommended to RBMS Exec that we co-sponsor (in name only) the Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Studies (AAMES) Section program at ALA annual (in Washington DC): "Teaching Asian, African, and Middle Eastern Resources by Using Primary Source Materials from Special Collections: An Innovative Approach to Library Instruction."

### **Approval of Minutes: 2009 Annual Meeting**

We approved the minutes of the 2009 annual meeting.

### **Preconference 2009 (Charlottesville VA) Evaluations**

Nelsen shared highlights from the evaluations of the 50th annual preconference. 62% of the preconference participants completed an evaluation. Overall the evaluations were very positive; 94% of the respondents indicated that they would attend another preconference. Additionally:

- Nearly 70% of respondents identified themselves as special collections librarians, with almost 60% working as administrators, curators, or in reference/public services/outreach.
- 29.9% of the respondents have been in the profession for 1-5 years; 28.6% for 20+ years.

- 28% of respondents were attending their first RBMS preconference.
- The Booksellers' Showcase was considered an important part of conference with over 70% agreeing that it contributed positively to the preconference.
- Remarks about the plenary sessions included wanting more time for questions and answers and perhaps limiting the number of plenaries.

Nelsen pointed out that the perception that there were "too many plenaries" might have been caused by the number of participants during each session. Five plenary sessions were offered with one to two official plenary speakers, as usual, but additional pressure was placed on time because so many people wanted to participate in the 50th anniversary event by offering congratulatory and/or historical remarks prior to official speakers.

Nelsen acknowledged the concern about the lack of time for Q&A and requested that official guidelines may be developed to present to prospective plenary speakers when they are first approached, and to which they can be directed throughout the development of the program. Nelsen commented that establishing hard and fast rules for plenary speakers is a bit delicate, because they are often specially invited to attend, may not be a part of the library or special collections communities, and could be seen (or see themselves) to be doing the section a favor by attending. Nevertheless, time limits are essential and respectful of other preconference attendees. In the same way that seminars have benefited from guidelines, program chairs may benefit from the support that can be provided by a document outlining expectations and guidelines endorsed by the section.

We discussed briefly how registration for the preconference unfolded and its effect on budget expectations. Approximately 250 participants registered right away; by late April we had approximately 300 registered participants. It was not until very late in the game/immediately preceding the start of the preconference that the number of registered participants jumped to – and past – 400.

We raised more money in donations than we spent [approximately \$14,500] on scholarships for the 2009 preconference. This may in part be due to the fact that contributions to the RBMS Scholarship Fund can now be made at any time (not just when registering for the preconference) via the [Friends of ACRL](#) site. Individuals who make a donation during the preconference registration process have an opportunity to let us know that they do not wish to be acknowledged publicly (i.e. in the printed preconference program) for their donation. The [Friends of ACRL](#) site does not include a way for donors to indicate that they do not wish to be acknowledged publicly (i.e. listed as a Friend on the site).

### **Preconference 2010: Philadelphia PA (ALA in Washington DC)**

Overholt and Hughes reported on the 51st annual preconference, which will take place June 22 through June 25 in Philadelphia. Inspired by the close and productive relationship among the 33 member institutions of the Philadelphia Area Consortium of Special Collections Libraries (PACSCL), the theme of the preconference is "Join or Die: Collaboration in Special Collections." The preconference features three plenaries (one each on

Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday); three workshops (offered on Tuesday); ten seminars; the Booksellers Showcase (also on Tuesday); and a special reception (sponsored by PACSCL) at the Union League of Philadelphia (on Thursday).

Overholt reported that Wednesday’s schedule of events includes the opening plenary (“The Philadelphia Consortium of Special Collections Libraries”), seminars, discussion sessions, and four panels of presenters reporting on real-world collaborative projects within the special collections community. These “case study” panels will be organized around four themes: outreach, teaching, digitization, and the profession. Thursday’s events include seminars; tours of the Chemical Heritage Foundation the American Philosophical Society, the Independence Seaport Museum, the Athenaeum of Philadelphia, and the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies and a late-afternoon plenary (“Digital Collaboration in Special Collections”). Friday features additional and the closing plenary (“Collaboration Between Scholars and Special Collections Librarians”).

Hughes reported that a total of 18 tours have been arranged: seven on Wednesday, five on Thursday, and six on Friday. Two of the Friday offerings are all-day excursions (one to Historic Germantown in Philadelphia; the other to Special Collections and the Mark Samuels Lasner Collection at the University of Delaware and the Winterthur Museum & Country Estate) that conflict with the closing sessions of the preconference. Many have expressed concerns about the implications of allowing these conflicts in the preconference schedule, especially if by so doing we are in any way setting a precedent for future preconferences. It was generally agreed that, because it has been more than 20 years since Philadelphia has been a preconference site, and since PACSCL has contributed so generously and in so many ways to the preconference, it is reasonable to allow these tours to be offered.

Hughes let us know that the preconference website is almost ready and the Philadelphia Rare Books & Manuscripts Company is sponsoring the production of a very cool tote bag. Fundraising for the preconference is proceeding extremely well. The following reflects pledges and contributions as of 1/29/2010:

University of Pennsylvania		\$5,000
Temple University		\$5,000
Antiquarian Booksellers' Association of America		\$3,000
Bruce McKittrick Rare Books		\$3,000
Atlas Systems, Inc.		\$3,000
Philadelphia Rare Books & Manuscripts Company		\$2,000
National Archives and Records Administration		\$1,500
Library Company of Philadelphia		\$1,000
Rosenbach Museum & Library		\$500
College of Physicians of Philadelphia		\$500
Kirtas Technologies, Inc.		\$500
TOTAL		\$25,000

Hughes reported on sponsorships and benefits. Folio Circle donors (\$3,000 and above) receive a complimentary one-day admission to the preconference. Donors can now sponsor a plenary for \$4,000 and coffee breaks for \$2,500. Finally, Hughes let us know that there are more than 100 applications for the 30-or-so spots in the Booksellers' Showcase. At \$500 apiece, this will bring in approximately \$15,000 in preconference support.

### **Seminars**

Dowell reported that 10 seminars have been scheduled for 12 spots (two will be offered twice). Four of these have titles: Inspired by the Library: Artists in Collaboration with Special Collections;" "Digital Tools for Collaboration;" "Bridging the Gap: Communication between Archivists and Catalogers;" and "Recruiting Members -- of Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups -- to the Special Collections Profession." The six without titles yet are Collaborative Exhibitions; What Can We Stop Doing?; Born-Digital Materials; Report on the OCLC/RLG Programs Special Collections Survey; Manuscripts: The State of the Market; and Using Undergraduates in Cataloging and Processing.

### **Future preconferences**

#### **2011: Baton Rouge LA (ALA in New Orleans LA)**

The preconference is scheduled for June 21 – June 24. Steven (Steve) Escar Smith has been appointed chair of the Preconference Program Planning Committee; Elaine Smyth is chair of the Preconference Local Arrangements Committee. A theme for the preconference has not been determined; current thinking is circling around something like "this is our time" and/or "what we collect," both of which would allow a focus on diversity. Twitter feeds and live blogging from the preconference are also being considered. Excursion possibilities include a visit to the archives of the McIlhenny Company, founded in 1868 on Avery Island, Louisiana, and a tour of their TABASCO factory.

#### **2012: ALA in Anaheim CA**

We hope to, but don't yet, have a proposal from Mandeville Special Collections Library, UCSD to host the preconference in 2012. In the absence of the hoped-for proposal, we again discussed several possibilities for both the location and the dates for the 2012 preconference. Options include a hotel-based preconference (which can be scheduled at any time in any location), having the preconference at a site unrelated to the location of the ALA annual conference, and/or scheduling the preconference in conjunction with a conference/meeting other than ALA annual, such as the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists or the ACRL National Conference. Discussion turned to archives and/or entertainment as possible themes for the preconference, noting the proximity to Anaheim of The Walt Disney Studios. Eventually, reminded of the fact that usual practice allows the program planning committee and the host institution to select the theme, plan the programs, etc. for the preconference, we agreed to have Johnson and Nelson follow up to find out if UCSD is a possible site for the preconference.

### **Virtual options**

RBMS has two digital [audio] recording devices. These will be used to record the plenary sessions at the preconference in Philadelphia; we will provide links to the audio on the preconference website. We have not yet

considered options for archiving and/or meeting the long-term preservation needs of the recordings. Barkley reminded us that virtual conferences are very expensive. We agreed that we do not know what the RBMS community wants, expects, or is willing to pay for regarding virtual conference content. We agreed that we need to know more about the virtual conference options and their associated costs.

## **Conference Programs**

### **2010 Washington DC**

Schneider reported that the RBMS program at ALA annual is titled "To Catch a Thief: Cataloging and the Security of Special Collections." The program, which takes place on Sunday from 1:30 pm – 3:30 pm, will feature four speakers: Travis McDade (author, *The Book Thief: The True Crimes of Daniel Spiegelman*) will provide historical context; Mark Dimunation (Chief, Rare Books and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress) will discuss cataloging and security from the curatorial point of view; Bonnie Magness-Gardiner (Director, FBI Art Theft Program) will address collection security and law enforcement; and Jennifer Shaffner (Program Officer, OCLC/RLG Partnership) will describe the "proof-of-concept" policies and procedures that were developed to use the network effects of WorldCat.org to broadcast centralized information about missing and stolen unique and rare materials.

### **2011 New Orleans LA**

Ellickson reported that the topic of the RBMS program at ALA annual in 2011 centers on tough economic times and the challenges they present for special collections in a large university library, a small college library, and an independent, privately-supported research library. The program will take the form of a moderated discussion; questions from the audience will be invited and encouraged.

## **Old Business**

### **Survey (Future of the Preconference)**

Johnson has comments from Jackie Dooley on the draft survey instrument. She will review the comments and distribute a revised draft to the members of the committee.

### **Regional Workshops**

Gillis has been appointed chair of a new committee charged with bringing successful preconference workshops to a wider audience. The committee will focus its initial efforts on a fall workshop from the Philadelphia preconference.

### **Manual Revisions**

Johnson reminded us that additional revisions to the *Preconference Planning Manual* are needed.

## **New Business**

### **E-Forums**

We discussed briefly the recent ALCTS e-forum on hidden collections. An e-forum is basically a mailing list to which individuals subscribe. It provides an opportunity for the moderated, online, discussion of a particular topic, issue, or concern for a limited period of time. The ALCTS e-forum, like all all ALA e-forums, is an implementation of the open-source Sympa mailing list management software.

### **2012 Midwinter Meeting: Program Proposal**

Johnson shared a proposal from Daniel Slive for an SMU-sponsored program in conjunction with the ALA mid-winter meeting in Dallas in 2012. Slive's proposal describes the "mini-conference" as a most-of-the-day-on-Friday event that would include two or more presentations/sessions, tours of the Bridwell and DeGolyer libraries, opportunities to view exhibitions at both, and a reception. Participants will be asked to register in advance; there will be no charge for participating in any of the program activities. We – the Conference Development Committee – are being asked for general advice regarding session content/presentation topics; RBMS will be asked to assist in promoting the "mini-conference." We agreed that the program described in Slive's proposal provides a welcome complement to the mid-winter meeting.

### **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 am.