

RBMS Seminars Committee
ALA Annual Meeting
Palmer House Hilton
Saturday July 11th, 2009
1:30-3:30 p.m.

Committee Members in attendance: Erika Dowell, Indiana U., edowell@indiana.edu (Chair); Susan Walker, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale U., susan.walker@yale.edu; Sarah Fisher, Beinecke Library, Yale U., sarah.fisher@yale.edu; Donia Conn, NEDCC, dconn@nedcc.org; Lynne M. Thomas, Northern Illinois U., lmthomas@niu.edu; Gerald Cloud, Columbia U., gc2339@columbia.edu; Jennifer MacDonald, U. of Delaware, jsmacdon@udel.edu; Jennifer Nelson, Robbins Collection, UC Berkeley, jnelson@law.berkeley.edu.

Committee Members absent: David Faulds, Emory U.; Ken Giese, Goucher College; Eileen Heeran, Cornell U.; Martha Lawler, Louisiana State U.

Guests: Ruth Hughes, Library Company of Philadelphia, hughes@librarycompany.org; Jason Kovari, U. of Mississippi, jakovari@olemiss.edu; Danielle Culpepper, Rare Book School, dculpepper@virginia.edu; Barbara Heritage, Rare Book School, beh7v@virginia.edu; Francis Lapka, Yale Center for British Art, francis.lapka@yale.edu; Riva Feshbach, unaffiliated, rfeshbach09@gmail.com; Elaine Smyth, Louisiana State U., esmyth@lsu.edu; Molly Schwartzburg, Harry Ransom Center, UT, schwartzburg@mail.utexas.edu; Jennifer Lowe, Saint Louis U., jlowe3@slu.edu; Seanna Tsung, Library of Congress, stsu@loc.gov; Larry Creider, New Mexico State U., lcreider@lib.nmsu.edu; Emily Epstein, UC Denver Health Sciences Library, emily.epstein@ucdenver.edu; John Cullars, U. of Illinois at Chicago, jcullars@uic.edu; Mary Lacy, Library of Congress, mlac@loc.gov; Doug Denné, Hanover College, denne@hanover.edu; Agnes Widder, Michigan State U., widder@mail.lib.msu.edu; John Overholt, Harvard U., overholt@fas.harvard.edu; Jackie Dooley, RLG Programs, OCLC Research, dooleyj@oclc.org.

1) Call to order

2) Introductions

3) Selection of recorder for minutes (Jennifer Nelson)

4) Approval of minutes from Midwinter meeting in Denver

PDF of minutes here: <https://www.slashtmp.iu.edu/public/download.php?FILE=edowell/151243dSjHN>

Corrections for minutes: Spelling of Sarah Fisher's name (Sara to Sarah)

Minutes approved

5) Changes in seminars committee membership

Dowell thanked members who would be leaving the committee at the close of the Annual Conference: David Faulds, Sarah Fisher, Eileen Heeran, Ken Giese, and Jennifer Nelson. Gerald Cloud will be returning to the committee for another two year term. Four new members will be join the committee at the close of the Annual Conference: Douglas Denné, Emily Epstein, Megan Lewis, and Agnes Widder.

6) Old Business

Call for outstanding on-site coordinator data sheets to be turned in.

Review of seminars presented in Charlottesville 2009.

General comment that both UVA- and Omni Hotel-based tech support was excellent.

General comment about pod casts: Sessions on important topics such as “Unhidden Collections” should definitely be captured as a pod cast. It should not be optional. RBMS should just go ahead and do it. Pre conference planning going to talk about costing it out to have professional help to do web/pod casting.

- A. Taking the Shifting Gears Challenge: No feedback provided at meeting.
- B. Can an Effective Transfer Policy be Achieved?: Went well, very well-attended. Room was tricky to use but UVA tech support was excellent.
- C. Partners in Processing: No feedback provided at meeting.
- D. Mold Outbreak!: Went very well. Great Q&A portion that had to be cut short. Suggestion that it be a regular seminar because it's an important and helpful topic. Number count for report might not be accurate.
- E. Islands in the Bitstream: Session was packed. Very popular.
- F. Finding Common Ground (CLIR): No feedback provided at meeting.
- G. Public Services and 'Un-Hidden' Collections: Went very well. A/V went smoothly. Organizers recommend making sure what Microsoft version is on the computer. Jennifer MacDonald has PowerPoint presentations and papers and will make sure to get them to the RBMS web team to put on the site. Attendance was great. Topic dealt with subject that is on lots of people's minds.
- H. Citing Bibliographies in Rare Book Cataloging: Went very well.
- I. The Library and Its Friends: Attendees would have liked it to be more discussion-based and less local practice-based.

7) New Business

i) Report on Preconference 2010 (John Overholt, Chair, Preconference Program Planning 2010)

Preconference 2010 will be held June 22-25 in Philadelphia. The title is “Join or Die: Collaboration in Special Collections”

The programming for the Preconference de-emphasizes plenary sessions and places more importance on smaller-scale, diverse, and interactive sessions.

- 3 plenary sessions.
- 12 seminar slots, 9 unique seminars, three repeating (gives people more opportunities to do the things they're interested in)
- 5 concurrent discussion sessions
- Case studies structured like short papers (panel of 2 or 3 people) on a topic that reflects the theme of collaboration. They will be specific, practical, focused; something they did at home institution, what worked and didn't.

There could be overlap with the topics. Distinction between the types of sessions: If you have a specific instance or project that you did and want to report on it, you have a case study. If you have topic that want to share and discuss you have a discussion session. If you want to teach a “generalizable” set of skills, that's a seminar topic.

ii) Review of proposed seminars for Preconference 2010 (Dowell)

See the “SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR 2010 PRECONFERENCE” appended to the minutes for seminar proposals

Proposal A: Inspired by the Library

Jessica Pigza is the proposer and has agreed to be a presenter at this seminar. She will discuss NYPL’s collaboration with working artists in NY, with help from the blog **design*sponge** and NYPL’s digital projects staff. They produced an online exhibit and a series of 5 videos that can be viewed on YouTube. Initiative was publicized using Web 2.0 in this project and others. Seminar would also cover issues of permissions, copyright, etc. Third speaker is to be determined. SCA (Soc of Calif Archivists) had a seminar on a similar topic, called “Arts and writers in the archives: creative uses and conceptions of the archive.” Jessica should contact Tanya Hollis at the Calif Historical Society (thollis@calhist.org) for more information.(follow up info provided by Jackie Dooley.) Approved to be on schedule.

Proposal B: very similar to proposal A

Proposal C: Heresies

Will be public services-focused and covers the topic of the prudent breaking of rules: taking patrons back into stacks, bringing materials to classrooms, etc. Point was raised that these kinds of decisions are based to a large extent on the physical configuration of a particular space. Can the topic be expanded to address a larger teachable point? For example, some stacks lend themselves to patron visits because they are easier to navigate. Questions: What is the teaching aspect of this seminar? Would this be more appropriate for a discussion group or a case study? Can the topic be more generalized to address which kinds of rules need breaking or bending? Cameras in the reading room? Pencils vs. pens? A minimum age for using the collection? Breaking rules vs. changing rules. When is a rule a rule and when is a rule a guideline? Why are rules there in the first place and when are they getting in the way of scholarship? As currently presented, it seems similar to proposal A and to proposal E. It is important to differentiate it. Proposal E team to get in touch with Proposal C team and discuss whether they could work together or whether, with more supporting information, it’s clear they are different. More work needed.

Proposal D: Collaborative exhibitions

No speakers lined up yet and proposal not yet completely fleshed out. Riva Feshbach and Molly Schwartzburg—both with the Leab Exhibition & Awards Committee—suggested the angle of how we can use collaboration to advocate on behalf of sustaining exhibits programs in a time when they are beleaguered. We can get people to think about how they use collaboration within their own exhibition environment. Identify partners, the genesis of a project, how collaboration contributed to success of project. The goal would be give people ammunition to advocate on behalf of exhibition programs and bring back some data about the results. Takeaways would be to learn a) models of successful collaboration between library and faculty; library and museum (e.g. codex Sinaticus); b) how to articulate goals and results in terms of serving the institutional mission; c) how to use idea of collaboration to advocate for continuing institutional support for exhibitions. We are facing major economic threats in which exhibitions might be cut back, but at the same time there is increasing pressure on being visible. How can collaboration help you be successful in navigating between these two? Could Lynne Farrington of Proposal D work together with Molly and Riva to create a seminar with both practical and theoretical aspects? Could be presented as a two-part seminar. More work needed.

Proposal E: What can we stop doing? (working title)

Merrilee Proffitt's suggestion, with Shannon Supple as liaison. Look at CLIR grant winners to see if they’re doing anything novel. Who is doing what in radically different ways. Worth pursuing, needs fleshing out. See

comments on Proposal C above.

Jackie Dooley proposed a seminar on the topic of born digital materials and personal archival collections. How do you change the culture of people who may become donors but have no idea how to manage their born-digital materials. Some names proposed. Agreed that it's great proposal and to go ahead. Jennifer Schaffner will head it up. Lynne Thomas is liaison. Hot topic, candidate for repeat seminar. Needs fleshing out but agreed it is a great idea.

Seanna Tsung proposed a seminar on digitized maps, but it's perhaps more appropriate for a discussion session. Topic: is it useful and/or possible to give patrons visual access to maps without having to do the scan yourself, i.e. direct people to other collections. Special issues regarding access through digital materials. How do we make use of other institutions' digital collections?

Jackie Dooley: OCLC/RLG is going to follow up the ARL 1998 survey of special collections with an updated survey that includes RLG, ARL, IRLA, Oberlin, and CARL (Canadian academic and research libraries). It will include issues about user services, archival collections, backlog, among other things. By next spring analysis would be done on this survey and ready for a possible discussion session, seminar, or even repeating seminar (provided it's available beforehand for people to read ahead of time). Topic needs fleshing out, but generally well accepted.

Bibliographic Standards Committee proposed the topic of catalogers and archivists working together for the benefit of their users, public services staff, conservators, and the collection in general. How can they both use the catalog better? Issues discussed would be differing practices, cataloging/archiving practices, and so forth. Question: Will it deal with subject headings? Cataloging/archive interface? Is MARC dead? Approved as seminar idea. Jennifer MacDonald has some possible presenters. Jennifer Nelson is the BSC liaison to the Seminars Committee and will assist.

Online tools for collaboration. This garnered a lot of excitement but the topic needs a lot of fleshing out. It also needs an organizer. However, there is agreement that this topic should go forward. Approved.

Other topics proposed in very brief form but need fleshing out:

- Diversity committed: Using Diversity Toolkit.

- Fields unique to music.

- Instruction. Creating modules to integrate in curriculum.

8) Other

9) Adjournment

SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS FOR 2010 PRECONFERENCE

PROPOSAL A

Inspired by the Library: Artists in Collaboration with Special Collections
Jessica Pigza (New York Public Library) (jessica_pigza@nypl.org)

Description:

As special collections pursue novel ways to promote and support the use of their materials, they often turn to artists whose work can highlight and interpret a collection in fresh and unexpected ways. This seminar will explore the varied ways artists and libraries collaborate in programming, projects, exhibitions, and more. Topics to be addressed will include:

---how and why a collaborative project might be considered ---results or outcomes that arose from particular collaborations: perhaps institution-wide, perhaps for a specific collection ---lessons learned regarding staff involvement and institutional support ---resources one might expect to draw on ---ideas on related outreach or programming or pr ---if/how web 2.0 can play a part in the collaboration ---practical advice or how-to information for attendees considering embarking on similar projects ---ways that collaborative projects might be built on both small budgets and large

Panelists:

1. Confirmed: Farrar Fitzgerald, Education Coordinator, Rosenbach Museum and Library, Philadelphia. Since 1998, the Rosenbach has commissioned artists to bring its collections to life. Most recently, 21st Century Abe (<http://www.21stcenturyabe.org/>) has brought together a variety of artists who explore and interpret (online, in music, onstage, and more) thirty Lincoln documents, ranging from Lincoln's explanation of his family history to the manuscript of the Baltimore Address. Among other topics above, Farrar will discuss some of the reasons the institution has reached out to artists in this way, as well as what goals and outcomes were most important to them institutionally.

2. Not yet confirmed: Asa Peavy, Program Manager, Marjorie G. & Carl W. Stern Book Arts & Special Collections Center, San Francisco Public Library. SFPL has an active exhibitions program that draws upon different collections within the institution, and often includes the work of contemporary artists whose work has connections to collections. Most recently, the exhibition Shelfless (which just closed 7/2/09) showcased the work of emerging artists, architects and designers from The California College of the Arts who explored the collections in the S.F. History Center, Rare Books, Music, etc., and then created new works in response to their discoveries. I hope that Peavy, or one of his colleagues, can discuss the challenges and rewards of working with artists whose interests and approaches to collections can be unlike those of traditional researchers. I also hope that his presentation might offer some ideas for working with members of a neighboring arts institution as well.

3. I've not yet approached a third person, because I was waiting to see if SFPL was on board. For a third, I thought that ideally someone with a university-based special collection perspective would be useful. Or, as a second option, perhaps an artist who has been part of a collaborative project. Promising possibilities I've gathered from colleagues so far include:

FIRST CHOICE---Marianne Hansen, Special Collections Librarian, Mariam Coffin Canaday Library, Bryn Mawr College. She worked on an ambitious collaborative project called Picturing Women that became a book, traveling exhibition, and website (http://www.picturingwomen.org/about_pw.php). In Picturing Women, contemporary artists' creations were juxtaposed with their historical counterparts, encouraging a "call and response" between the library materials and artists' works.

SECOND CHOICE---Barbara Hodgson, an artist and author whose work draws upon the evocative images and inspiring text found in rare books. Her writing and book design work has led to extensive work with rare books collections at UCLA.

PROPOSAL B

Redefining "Research" in Special Collections: Working With Unconventional, Unusual, and/or Challenging Patron Groups

Anne Bahde, San Diego State University

This seminar idea explores issues surrounding our service to unconventional patron bases (such as visual artists, poets, or performers), and aims to provide practical solutions to the particular challenges these patron groups present. Special Collections departments usually hold a wealth of potential material for projects in the arts. However, these patrons often face dilemmas in accessing our materials, due to cataloging conventions, outdated definitions of "research," and our traditional restrictive use guidelines. How do we support these patrons when they approach us and allow them to get the most out of our collections?

This idea comes from a series of projects I did with a book artist/professor at my institution. For the first project, her book arts students chose a book from the general stacks (not special collections) in compact shelving section, which is made up of outdated or little-used titles. They created a new dustjacket for it in response to its contents. We reshelfed these books in their original call number locations to create an interactive "gallery," where attendees could browse the stacks to discover the projects and speak with the artists at the same time. For the second project, I selected various items from special collections in the history of science and pseudoscience (astronomy, botany, natural history, phrenology, etc.), and her students came in for a class session to learn about and examine them. Over the semester, students researched these historical topics further and created "responses" to these selections in book form. Both of these projects brought up challenges and questions--how do we teach students to find potential visual material hidden in bad cataloging? Is browsing the stacks permissible under certain conditions? Can we look at our collections through artists' eyes, to discover and identify what might be of use to them? Why should "serious" research take precedence over these uses of the collections?

Will Hansen at Duke had a similar project with a poet/professor there, where her students examined provocative special collections materials and responded to them in poetry. He expressed interest in this seminar idea when I chatted with him about it, and may be willing to share. His short paper at ALA, in which he discussed some of these issues, was what prompted a seminar form of this idea for me.

PROPOSAL C

Committing to Heresies: Reconsidering Our Rules for New Results

Anne Bahde, San Diego State University

This seminar idea reexamines our traditional use guidelines and explores situations in which the benefits of "breaking the rules" outweigh their caution. Most of these long-standing rules are common sense in the profession and serve honorable purposes; but many can be reconsidered in certain circumstances with admirable results. These rules include not taking materials off-site for instruction, not allowing browsing in our stacks under any circumstances (as Will said during the Q&A at his short paper presentation, "I've met very few patrons who I think might mug me then start ripping pages from books, should I accompany them into the stacks"), and being reluctant to allow non-Special Collections library staff to work in our department. (There must be others that people are experimenting with?) Wisely taking risks and prudently bending our rules can result in new audiences, productive collaborations, and improvements in public relations.

The idea for this seminar stems from a class I did with a journalism professor at SDSU. Her class was 120 students large, our instruction space was far too small. Our normal workarounds for large classes wouldn't work: an outside-of-class small-group project would have too much of an impact on our small reading room, and digitization of materials would have defeated her goal of having them physically examine the primary sources. I decided to take materials off-site to her on-campus classroom after carefully considering the multiple potential problems. The class resulted in a very positive primary source experience for a group of students who wouldn't normally have gotten it, and an ongoing collaboration with an enthusiastic and supportive faculty member. There are benefits derived from pushing our boundaries!

PROPOSAL D

Collaborative Exhibitions

Lynne Farrington, Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Pennsylvania

The idea is for a seminar on collaborative exhibitions, what they look like, what they involve, how they work, what one can expect, as well as how to avoid the pitfalls and make the process work to everyone's advantage.

Over the years I have spent a significant amount of time working on a wide range of exhibitions curated in many different ways. These include exhibitions I myself have curated, those where I served as a mentor to a guest curator (student, faculty, or other) or co-curated with a guest curator, exhibitions which are truly a collaborative ventures involving multiple institutions, and traveling exhibitions which I have brought in or sent off to other institutions.

I imagine other institutions have either done the same or are considering doing so in this time of increasingly diminishing resources and ever expanding duties to reduce the staff time and institutional costs associated with exhibitions. Moreover, in addition to such considerations, there are often major benefits to these different modes of collaboration, not least of which are the interactions and long-term relationships they can foster, both within and outside the institution.

At Penn, we consider exhibitions an opportunity to collaborate on a variety of levels. We collaborate with collectors who have recently given us collections and with those whose collections we would like some day to come to Penn, either with the collectors acting as guest curators or as consultants during the process. We collaborate with other institutions, large and small, with local consortia, with foreign institutions. Some collaborations combine materials from different institutions into a single exhibition (University of the Arts/Penn), some involve many institutions contributing to a larger theme (Benjamin Franklin Tercentenary), some involve traveling exhibitions coming to Penn (book artist Werner Pfeiffer) or Penn exhibitions travelling (Enid Mark and the ELM Press), some involve international exchanges of collection-related exhibitions (Penn/Katholieke Universiteit Leuven).

In addition to faculty and staff, we have worked with Penn undergraduates (i.e., Brooke Palmieri on "Textual Spaces") and graduate students (i.e., Simran Thadani on "John Milton at 400"), developing their skills and sometimes inspiring them to consider careers in special collections librarianship. We are currently planning a major exhibition and symposium on American artist and designer Wharton Esherick with a number of local institutions at multiple venues. We are also exploring a multi-faceted exhibition, at multiple campus locations, on maps and mapping, which pulls together various disciplines to explore different aspects of the theme. I feel that the range of experiences has taught me a great deal about the process which I would be happy to share. I would also like to hear what other institutions have done, and learn from their experiences as well.

PROPOSAL E

What Can We Stop Doing?

Shannon Supple, University of California, Berkeley & Merrilee Proffitt, OCLC RLG Programs

"What can we stop doing, or do in a radically different way, in the face of budget pressures and shifting user expectations?" The idea would be to garner speakers from smaller institutions (perhaps more agile and able to innovate more swiftly), outside of the usual suspects.

BACK-UP, EXTRA AND/OR POSTPONED IDEAS FROM LAST YEAR (my current notes in brackets)

Exhibitions: Suggested by Tom Bolze, Yale University, based on changes observed by the Exhibition Awards Committee. [I have very brief word that the committee is bringing something forward this year]

Online tools for collaboration: Suggested by Kathleen Burns, Yale University, as a follow to this year's Blog Boot Camp seminar. Topic would make this seminar a perfect fit for 2010. [Kathleen has left the field, but this would still be a good seminar (or workshop)]

Cataloging in a global environment: Suggested by Veronica Reyes-Escudero, University of Arizona. What are the issues related to really providing world-wide access, e.g. providing access in Spanish for digitized collections.

Preservation of digital objects: Suggested by Lynne Thomas, Northern Illinois University. She is interested in open source options, and solutions appropriate to different levels of available funding.

Circulation in special collections

Future of the profession (leadership development, hiring, core competencies)

Cross-cultural competencies

Local History/Local Collections/Americana – J. MacDonald

Social Movements and Popular Culture – J. MacDonald

Indigenous cultures/Repatriation Act – A. Jackson

Diversity Toolkit – A. Jackson

Digital Preservation/Lifecycle curation – L. Thomas

Cataloguing and Security – D. Faulds

New Trends in Instruction/Collaborative projects in classes, exhibits – E. Guggemos

Funding Sources – Thinking outside the box – S. Fisher

Collaborative Exhibits/Guest Curators – Small and Large – S. Supple and S. Walker

Foreign Acquisitions – Cultural patrimony, cataloguing and access – V. Reyes-Escudero

Access to Digital Images – Various Methods – D. Faulds

20th C. Materials – Different approaches – L. Thomas

Handling Special Collections materials during digitization – D. Conn

Effect of Collections from Google Books project – R. Hughes

Small and Midsized institutions – How they differ (single person shop vs. many staff) – L. Thomas

Inspiration in the Library – Artist in Residence programs in libraries – R. Hughes