

# SPECIAL COLLECTIONS: LEADERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 16, 2008

2:00 P.M.–3:00 P.M. • PLAZA C

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## Discussion Leaders

**Nicole Bouché**, Pacific Northwest Curator, University of Washington

**Lisa Carter**, Head of the Special Collections Research Center, North Carolina State University

*Includes a presentation by*

**Alice Prochaska**, University Librarian, Yale University Library, and Chair, ARL Special Collections Working Group

## Background

As general research collections have become more analogous, special collections are increasingly seen as the truly unique and distinguishing resources within a research library's collection. The special significance and opportunities embodied in special collections have gained new recognition and attention from senior administrators in research libraries, as well as from faculty and students pursuing enhanced methods of instruction, engagement and research. Primary sources, rare books and other unique collections assume new meaning in the rapidly changing environment of research intensive universities, both as scholarly resources and as tools in library development and outreach to donors and funding agencies.

Yet, most research libraries hold pre-existing backlogs of "hidden" special collections that still need to be exposed. As these collections are uncovered and digitized, increased visibility brings not only increased use from within the campus but also from the broader public. In addition, the opportunities and challenges in managing born digital materials have raised a new level of awareness about the need for enterprise-wide collaboration to ensure effective long-term management of electronic records of enduring historical and research value. Issues around new forms of content, provenance, ethics, records management, metadata and description, and preservation are but just some of the challenges faced by the research library community.

ARL's Special Collections Working Group, chaired by Alice Prochaska (Yale) has been preparing a report on current issues for special collections in ARL libraries. She will share observations about the report. Lisa Carter and Nicole Bouché, Fellows in the ARL Research Library Leadership Fellows Program, have not only had an opportunity to join the Working Group in some of their discussions, but have also witnessed how these dynamics are playing out in research libraries across the country. The ideas expressed in the Working Group's draft report were highlighted and reinforced throughout the ARL RLLF Program experience. The Fellows will identify major themes facing research libraries and their special collections based on these experiences and engage session attendees in a discussion about how to begin thinking about archives and special collections in a new and different way. Copies of the draft Special Collections Working Group report will be made available to those interested in a preview.