The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

Program & Selected Presentations

Wednesday, June 27, 2001
John Hay Library
Brown University

Opening Reception

ARL Special Collections Conference Welcome
Merrily Taylor, Joukowsky Family University Librarian, Brown University

Welcome on Behalf of Brown University
Kathryn T. Spoehr, Executive Vice-President and Provost

Thursday, June 28, 2001
Smith-Buonanno Hall—Pembroke Campus
Brown University

Welcome
Joe A. Hewitt, Director of Libraries University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and Duane Webster, Executive Director, ARL

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Developing an ARL Action Agenda for Special Collections

Merrily Taylor, Joukowsky Family University Librarian, Brown University
Joe A. Hewitt, Director of Libraries, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Plenary Discussion

A Proposed ARL Action Agenda for Special Collections:
Recommendations to the ARL Research Collections Committee

Closing Remarks
It's my pleasure to welcome you to the Brown University Library—some of you may recall President Kennedy's remarks to the Nobel Prize winners visiting the White House, namely that there hadn't been such wit and intelligence gathered at the White House since "Thomas Jefferson dined alone." Well at Brown we might prefer to make the analogy to John Hay dining alone, but nonetheless we're delighted to have such a distinguished group of colleagues on our premises, and honored to be the site for a conference that I believe holds great promise for the future of special collections in ARL libraries and accordingly, for scholarship.

As visitors to Brown, you may have learned a few things about the university already, but one thing you probably don't know is that, if you stand on the steps of the Rockefeller Library, you can see every building which was, at some point in history, the home of the Brown University Library. I've always thought it appropriately symbolic that the libraries have grown and changed as has the University, and that as each building was added the libraries remain circled at the heart of the campus.

Brown was founded in 1764 as Rhode Island College, in Warren, R. I. After the move to Providence in 1770, a second floor room in the "College Edifice" (now University Hall) was designated as a library. When you leave the John Hay tonight, look directly across the street and you'll see University Hall, a red brick building.

In 1775, that collection of books was sent to Wrentham, Mass., to the home of William Williams, a graduate of Brown's first class for safe-keeping during the Revolutionary War. We like to think of William Williams as the first member of Brown's Friends of the Library; the books remained in his home (supposedly the collection was small enough to fit on his kitchen table) until 1783.

By 1835 the Library was "crowded to excess and totally unsuited" for its designated purpose. (Does this sound familiar?) Nicholas Brown donated the land and funds to build Manning Hall, which was to serve as a chapel and library. (For those of you who want to spot these buildings as you cross the campus, Manning Hall is right next door to University Hall) Not long after, President Wayland hired Charles Coffin Jewett in 1842 to be the country's first full-time professional university librarian. Jewett later became librarian of the Smithsonian Institution.

By 1878 the Library had again outgrown its building and thanks to the generosity of the another Brown (John Carter), a new library was built—now Robinson Hall, the home of the Economics Department. Robinson Hall is on the corner of Prospect and Waterman—you may pass it as you walk to the Smith Buonnano building tomorrow. At the time of the move to this new facility, the library had grown to 40,000 volumes.

The recent history of the Library and the growth of the collections says a good deal about the information explosion in the Twentieth Century. In 1906, Andrew Carnegie offered
$150,000 toward the construction of a new library building to be named after his friend, John Hay (Lincoln's secretary, a former Secretary of State, and a member of the Brown class of 1858). When the library moved into the new building—this building, the John Hay Library—on August 23, 1910, it contained 140,000 volumes, having grown by over two-thirds in the approximately 30 years since the construction of the previous building.

In 1964 the John Hay building was "crowded to excess and totally unsuited" for its designated purpose, and the John D. Rockefeller Library was built next door. Of course, the Library collections have long since grown beyond the capacity of any one building and there are now seven library buildings. The irony, of course, is thanks to the advent of digitization the Library is now simultaneously too large for one building and yet small enough, via a laptop, to again sit on Rev. Williams' kitchen table. And the implications of that for special collections and for the original artifact bring us right back to the central purposes of this conference.

I'd now like to introduce our Associate University Librarian for Special Collections, Sam Streit, who served on the ARL Research Collections planning subcommittee and who has provided both important ideas on content and done yeoman's work on what we simplistically call "local arrangements." Sam will pass on some important information both for tonight and tomorrow.
The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

Welcome on Behalf of Brown University

by Kathryn T. Spoehr, Executive Vice President and Provost, Brown University

Remarks for “Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections,” Brown University, June 28, 2001

It is quite an honor to welcome such a distinguished group of librarians to our own John Hay Library and to Brown University. I hope that your stay here at Brown is both productive and stimulating.

I would like to thank the two co-chairs, Joe Hewitt of the University of North Carolina and Brown’s own, Merrily Taylor, for all the work that they and their committee have expended on behalf of this conference and on behalf of the cause of research libraries throughout the country.

I am sure that, in preparation for this conference—and at many other times in the past—you have all received e-mails from Merrily Taylor. I’ve served for a long time in the Brown administration, and over the years as Dean of the Graduate School, Dean of the Faculty and now as Provost, I have had quite a large number of her e-mails sent my way. Merrily always appends to her e-mail a quote from Archibald MacLeish: “The existence of a library is an assertion, a proposition nailed like Luther’s to the door of time.” While I am sure that Mr. MacLeish felt the pressing need to defend libraries during his own lifetime, whether he was speaking as a poet or as the Librarian of Congress, I think that we have come upon an even more pressing moment where we need to re-assert the importance of libraries and re-affirm our commitment to their support.

It seems like just a few years ago when the new communication and computing technologies seemed to offer universities the answers to any and all of our Library problems. Technology was going to fill in any gap in our collections. With new storage capacity, computers were going to put any resource our faculty and students needed right on their screens in their offices or residence halls. Technology was going to solve every library budget problem, every cataloging need, and every library staffing need. We wouldn’t need to borrow books or get them through inter-library loans. It even seemed that we would one day reach the point where we really didn’t need libraries anymore. We just needed the right computers and the right wires to transmit and receive information.

But to quote another, later, Librarian of Congress, Daniel Boorstin, writing on the computerization of libraries back in 1983, “Technology is so much fun but we can drown in our technology. The fog of information can drive out knowledge.”

So once again we are looking to our libraries to lead us—this time in helping us create tools for knowledge out of information technology. There is no better organization than the Association of Research Libraries to set the agenda, and no more interesting domain than the one that will occupy your attention over the course of this conference: namely the role of Special Collections in the scholarly community, how we can better integrate such collections into the general library collections, how we can coordinate our collecting and cataloging within our own institutions individually and across our various
institutions, and how information technology can be used creatively and supportively to enhance scholars’ abilities to learn and teach from such materials. To the lay observer it might appear that Special Collections may hold the one type of scholarly materials that are simply not amenable to the digital age. Yet we already know that technology affords us the opportunity to open these collections to more scholars and students, and to use them in ways that have not been possible up until now. These rich collections open up our unique histories and to reveal the hidden corners in the annals of humanity. In the words of one of my previous mentors here at Brown, Vartan Gregorian, who was once himself a librarian, “Libraries keep the records on behalf of humanity, the unique and the absurd, the wise and the fragments of stupidity.” We hope that your work here will better help us use our Special Collections more wisely to parse out the unique from the absurd.

Many of the special collections that Brown has assembled are housed in this wonderful old library, the John Hay Library, named after a man who served as Abraham Lincoln’s personal secretary and later Secretary of State and Ambassador to Great Britain under William McKinley. John Hay arrived at Brown University in 1855 with enough prior education that he could have completed his studies in two years. He decided, however, to stay for the full three-year course because, as he said, “if I go through hurriedly, I will have little or no time to avail myself of the literary treasures of the libraries.”

In addition to holding over 9,000 manuscripts by Hay and his associates, this library holds McLellan Lincoln collection. I would be remiss, therefore, if I didn’t evoke the former President and Civil War leader. Speaking before the Springfield Library Association in February 1860, Lincoln stated that "Writing, the art of communicating thought to the mind through the eye, is the great invention of the world...enabling is to converse with the dead, the absent, and the unborn, at all distances of time and space."

What we now have are new ways that libraries can reach across "all distances of time and space" in ways that certainly Lincoln could never have conceived but would certainly appreciate.

I look forward to hearing from Merrily about the work you will be undertaking over the next two days. And I know I speak all universities and all scholars when I wish you good luck with this endeavor. Not only are our faculties and our students relying on you and your good work, but tomorrow’s faculty members, researchers and students are relying on you as well. I offer the welcome and hospitality of Brown University and our best wishes for your important work.

Thank You.
The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

So What’s So Special?

by David H. Stam, University Librarian Emeritus, Syracuse University

Keynote address presented at “Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections,” Brown University, June 28, 2001

This is not the first time I’ve been asked to be provocative and irritating on the subject of special collections but it is the first time I’ve done it before an integrated audience of directors and curators. In 1992 on the 60th anniversary of this Association, I gave an address that made only one serious point, that the association and its members were, in its statistics and its agenda, largely ignoring those collections that distinguish ARL libraries from each other, and that provide elements of uniqueness separating them from most other libraries, i.e., their Special Collections. Ten years earlier I had been inveigled into addressing the 1982 Rare Books and Manuscripts conference on the topic of “An Administrator’s View of Special Collections,” designed to irritate the complacency of some special collections librarians and to address some of the issues that recur in the current debate. I also participated in the RBMS navel-gazing of 1987 on the effects of new modes of humanities scholarship on special collections. In the intervening years, both as an active librarian and now in my foundation work and as a regular user of special collections, I’ve given a good deal of thought to these collections and how they might reach their full potential. It’s very gratifying that the Association is doing the same in sponsoring this symposium and in bringing the responsible parties together to share in the discussion.

Recent developments have placed a much-needed spotlight on these collections, not least in the thrust toward digitization of unique resources, just at a time when proliferation of electronic resources has homogenized our other collections. The rhetorical success of Nicholson Baker in demanding that the most mundane of our collections be treated as special has further compounded the issues involved. So have the pressures to use these collections as fund-raising tools, the problems of retooling existing staff to meet new demands and recruiting new staff with new kinds of skills.

Just so you’ll know where we are here’s a brief outline of what follows: first the hypothesis; then some conundra and contradictions involving the hypothesis; a brief critique of the survey; and then some ideas for the rest of you to kick around for the next 28 hours.

I want to put my main thesis fairly forcibly for purposes of debate, not dogma. Little of this is new, as a humbling review of the literature shows; variants of the title have appeared recently in American Libraries and in RBM. Neither is there consensus among curators and directors on my main point, but I offer it here boldly and boldly:

Our special collections must be democratized, must overcome their exclusionary origins in the monastery or aristocratic library, must shed their image of aloofness and preciousness, must get their precious treasures and scholarly ephemera into the sometimes dirty hands of potential users, must place a higher priority on access to unprocessed material, and must build a wider audience including the traditional scholar (whom we’ve always tried to serve), the innovator in new uses of old stuff, and most importantly for survival, the
inquiring student. To quote a Christie’s dictum from the new credo of that auction house: “As the face of the client changes, so do we, or we will have no clients” (New York Times, June 8, 2001, p. E28). All of this and more is needed if these collections are to achieve some element of centrality in the university and move beyond the marginality we all decry and yet perpetuate. To achieve the support these collections deserve, they must break down the barriers to full use. Both scholarship and survival demand no less.

The very term Special Collections is an albatross, as many have noted; it sounds grand but divides rather than unites, separating the prima donnas from the chorus. In my experience special collections personnel often lead schizophrenic lives, enjoying some isolation from the fast track, while trying to integrate closely with parent institutions. They are in fact psychologically and physically separate in a Sanctum Sanctorum that other staff think of as alien and irrelevant, far removed from the front lines of library service. The phrase itself is a tautology; they are special because we call them so.

No doubt there are some misperceptions here, but others share them. For example, I recently learned of a proposal for a digital project to address “the ever-decreasing availability of historical documents from the 1700s and 1800s. They are being ‘locked away’ from public access in private collections, and in museum and university libraries.” Some of you have shared similar views with me.

Looking at the year 2001 as a possible turning point for Special Collections, the assignment of this symposium, is rather like looking at the earth from outer space—there are no clear borders or dividing lines except between land and water, or in this case between the open stacks and the locked doors of special collections. Much of what needs to be done is being done already (as demonstrated by the survey), but the survey does not measure the attitudes of library administrators: they will correct me if I’m wrong but they convey the sense that they have not adequately defined the territory, have not clearly established the responsibilities and jurisdictional scope of our treasure houses, have not made clear what old skills we value or what new ones we require, and have not sufficiently justified our investments in these offshore wells of oil and sludge. Of all areas of our professional activity, special collections can least be described as meeting the currently popular objectives of “unfettered access” or responding to “accelerated change,” to use the current clichés of the trade. But those clichés represent real objectives from which special collections cannot be aloof?

Straightforward as my thesis of “more open access” is, it is encumbered by a number of conundra and contradictions that confuse the mission and make it easy to claim that nothing can be done. They have to be acknowledged but not allowed to paralyze. Here are a few:

Item: The present versus posterity—which must be served? Preservation for posterity impedes utility to the present; we have to ask whether the balance between use and protection is out of kilter. When will we admit that posterity has arrived?

Item: Another paradox: quality is sought in special collections; yet most scholars seek the obscure, the materials of history unknown to others, hoping to raise that material to a level of accepted importance. But behind much of our special collecting is Chester Beatty’s injunction: “Quality, quality, always the quality,” not an easy task in areas of obscurity. For others, research materials are not fixed in either their materiality or interpretation, but demonstrate what Stephen Greenblatt calls the “volatility of texts.” Why else would 7,000 editions of Shakespeare have appeared in a mere 400 years? Will the tyranny of the canon survive the digital age, as our fetishized documents are now changed and redistributed in new forms, authorized or not, and the “fluidity of cultural objects” challenges the authority of the original?
Item: Our institutional collecting is often competitive but much of scholarship must be collaborative. The irony is that we work hard to win collections of quality for local institutional purposes while their primary users are often from outside our institutions. The processing of those collections, dissemination of information about them, and making them available to outsiders is our ultimate collaboration: the sharing of our users.

Item: the obsession with possession needs rethinking. Preservation of works of “quality” cries out for a different kind of collaboration (in rare books at least), but contradicts pride in possession. Why does everybody’s Audubon need preservation, when there are so many unique deteriorating materials to be preserved? Is it only the institutional ego that distorts these priorities? Perhaps it can be justified pedagogically, but over what alternatives?

Item: the artifact and the surrogate. Much evidence lies in the original artifact; yet much of that evidence cannot be seen or heard without technological enhancement. That enhancement requires funds that diminish resources for conventional collecting or other needs, resources that in any case are beyond our collective or individual capability. Why should the recreation of the sound on Edison cylinders, to take a Syracuse example, take precedence over unprocessed archives of state politicians? Who should set these priorities: the administrator, the curator, the user, or the donor? How can the user dictate the digital priorities when so much is inaccessible.

Finally a personal obsession: we posit a utopian world in which we believe we can preserve the essentials of the human record; yet we live in a real world of disappearance, decay, and memory loss. The history of library loss, since well before Alexandria, exceeds that of library survival. Any vision affected by historical hindsight will embrace the inevitability of loss. Yet we pretend with considerable hubris that we can prevent the decay. When George W. said that the past was over, he spoke better than he knew. But so may have William Faulkner when he said that the past wasn’t dead, it wasn’t even past.

Thomas Jefferson once said, “A library in confusion loses much of its utility” (March 31 1825). Feeding the confusion in these times is a shared disquietude among administrators and special collections librarians. Tensions over support, the genuine desire to get things done and the inability to provide sufficient support to do them, exist on both sides. The frequent reliance on soft money for special collections adds to the insecurity, as has a spate of personnel changes among the higher ranks of special collections curators. We don’t have a good handle on these issues, but for me the ARL survey presents a rather more positive picture than the situation warrants. Perhaps that reflects the views of the respondents, mainly the directors of special collections who naturally view their work with approval and would like that approval shared. It is true that the report modestly raises a number of concerns and unanswered questions, and the Committee on Research Collections deserves high praise for making this attempt to assess the landscape. I hope they will forgive a few critical comments about the findings.

It seems to me counter-intuitive that 87% of respondent’s should claim that they are progressing or holding steady on conservation, when we know from elsewhere in the survey that many are adding collections which bring new preservation problems: manuscripts and archives acquired as gifts, video and film collections of volatile materials, sound recordings, and other materials that must be preserved if they are to be heard or used. Perhaps “holding steady” was the misleading phrase, if it meant no more than coping along as we always have. And surely we are not holding steady on digital preservation.

Similarly, the problem of uncataloged and inaccessible unprocessed materials is passed over far too lightly. This is perhaps the greatest obstacle to easy access and deserves far greater emphasis than the report conveys.
Especially striking was the section on Canadian research libraries that showed consistently lower statistics in support, staff, presentations and exhibitions, in fact in every respect except readership, where their numbers of users exceed the norm. They must be doing something right up north, compared to some of the more lonely reading rooms south of the border.

Particularly perplexing and difficult to interpret in the survey are appendix 4, which lists new and discontinued collections, and appendix 5, which covers digital projects at the responding institutions. Neither shows any real coherence of activity addressing a wider scholarly world. What does it mean that Michigan has discontinued Shakespeare? No more first folios? Arizona State's withdrawal from Rubaiyat of Omar Khayam collecting is easily picked up elsewhere. That Harvard has diminished its collecting of Chinese and Japanese gray literature, and that Berkeley has demoted Herman Hesse should leave few tears among special collection enthusiasts, though others might lament the Harvard decision. I especially liked the idea of a “Reinvigorated Alabama Authors Collection,” though it is hard to guess which noun was being modified in that construction. The expansion of local and regional collections is encouraging, responding to what I believe is a clear responsibility of individual institutions to collect and preserve local and regional sources. Less convincing is the list of recently established collections on Populations and Social Issues that reads like a glossary of the politically correct. Is it crucial that we be so imitative in those areas? Wouldn’t aggregations of digital materials be a more effective collaborative option? Other expansions in collecting seem to be situational accidents motivated by an interested faculty member (e.g., popular television at Syracuse), the blandishments of, to, or by particular individuals (e.g., Mayor Tom Bradley at UCLA), or the desires of interested organizations (e.g., Hawaiian Sugar Plantation Assn. Archives at Hawaii). On occasion some discontinuations are in effect transfers (e.g., the Arnold Schoenberg Institute which moved from USC to Vienna).

Equally baffling are the lists of digital projects where, apart from photographs and images, there seems little coherence of effort. Several members cite finding-aid conversion as digital projects, when in fact that category needs its own survey question. Many other projects seem no more than demonstration projects with little wider rationale for scholarly dissemination, though they may have some marketing appeal. This is not a topic that I have followed closely since leaving ARL three years ago, and in fact there may be greater coordination than the survey indicates, but it does not show up there, and appears to be an area ripe for ARL collaboration or at least rationalization among its members and beyond.

Before moving on to some possible approaches to all these dilemmas let me just say a word about the contents of special collections. The survey alludes to the practice of transferring materials from general collections and there are good protective reasons for doing so. But I suspect that there is ample reason to move some materials in the opposite direction, that many collections, often constrained by conditions that should not have been accepted, contain many items that are not particularly special and would be better used in open stacks. I would make a case for cleaning these Augean stables, at least with twentieth-century secondary literature and other accidental detritus. The numbers game we tend to play in ARL doesn’t make much sense in the rare book world—it certainly doesn’t measure quality (see for example the miniscule statistics of Chester Beatty’s library in Dublin).

Some similar dispositive work could address the segments and fragments of manuscript and archival material that most of you possess that could appropriately be united with more substantial collections in other institutions where they could get better care and more likely use. Of course there are a lot of limits to such activity but I would argue that such collaborations are mutually beneficial, as they have been at Syracuse with the
transfer of Michigan Railway archives to the Bentley Historical Collections in Ann Arbor, of fragmentary archives of the American Institute of Architects to their originator, and of radio prayer letters, thousands of them, to the Norman Vincent Peale Center. Call it the obverse side of the “building to strength” metaphor.

More difficult are the archival collections split down the middle between two or more institutions, but there too collaboration in preparation of dovetailing finding aids would be the best aid to scholarship. An interesting project of that nature, preparing finding aids for Irish studies collections at Boston College and Emery University would be worth imitation.

What other remedies can we pursue to assure some semblance of special collections health in the 21st century? Here are a few suggestions—others will come from all of you. Drop the “Special” and move to the “Essential”. I don’t want some cute and trendy formula but what we’re talking about is making these collections vital centers of primary research and preparation for it. Call them Centers for Primary Research, or some other name that conveys their mainstream importance. If Indiana University can rename its Oral History Research Center the Center for History and Memory, you can come up with something equally imaginative, suited to your own individual situations.

Make access happen—the amount of unprocessed material, much of it unique, documented in the survey is reprehensible. Make that access available more hours of every day and don’t abandon the place on every weekend and holiday when potential users can take best advantage of your facilities, especially the non-resident ones. Demand more flexibility from your staff. Exhibitions can help lead into the collections, but should they have the priority we give them? What are we doing putting treasures into hermetically-sealed exhibition cases when we can’t put the raw materials of scholarship into the hands of users? Finding aids for unknown materials are surely a higher priority. Without giving up our vaunted independence, create some collaborative coherence in the rush to digitizing research resources, creating substantial bodies of cohesive materials (e.g., ArtStor) rather than the isolated tidbits of curatorial fancy. Abolish keeper and curator from the vocabulary. Explore collaborative acquisitions to reduce competition and expand potential use. Focus those acquisitions on current academic programs; build on their strength rather than the dubious strength of unused collections. Use what you do have in faculty recruitment. Within limits, don’t use the acceptable surrogate excuse, whether facsimile or digital, to preclude handling the original; use the surrogates whenever possible to lead back to those originals. Diminish the barriers to student handling—white gloves and the aura of the untouchable may have their place, but do little to gain the support needed. In any case, we have to accept that use has a certain price in decay. The transforming potential for the student of touching the rare and unusual could be worth the price. That is the answer to the question, what’s so special; for me personally and for many students I’ve observed over the years, it is the palpable connection to history that comes from the tactile experience of touching the rare book or unusual manuscript. It’s a conversion experience: seeing them under glass with unturnable pages just doesn’t do the same thing.

How do we respond to the most difficult question, what staffing skills will be required to change the vision? If our criteria of employment emphasize such trendy qualifications as digital dexterity, fund-raising finesse, and entrepreneurial expertise, will we be sacrificing the intellectual focus of the enterprise or the ability to communicate with scholar and student alike on the educational and scholarly potential of these collections? To what extent do we need subject knowledge to exploit these collections? Will its absence affect our credibility among faculty? What programs of continuing education would benefit a new vision of open collections fostering the best of the conservative and the risk of the innovative? Would job rotation of more staff in and out of special collections help reduce
the sense of isolation? Above all, what are the primary purposes that these staff must pursue? There are no easy answers but these questions have to be addressed to realize the purpose of this symposium. The best answers will come from Special Collections librarians themselves, but it is unfair to ask them to do it alone since they neither control the resources nor have the institution-wide responsibility.

In presenting these questions, largely devoid of nuance and deliberately underplaying security issues, it is easy to anticipate the objections, the arguments why it can’t be done, the reluctance to yield status and the desire to protect satrapies, the retreat behind the shield of past practice. But I have tried to make the case in extreme terms in order to force the debate and move toward a clearer sense of purpose and balance. Hindsight may provide some insight, but it should not decelerate change.

After the indulgences of our special collections past, it is clear that we are ready for reformation, so I give the last word to The Reformed Librarie-Keeper, John Dury’s 1650 description of the thoughtful librarian, resurrected from my 1982 RBMS speech:

The proper charge then of the Honorarie Librarie-Keeper in an Universitie should Bee…too keep publick stock of Learning, which is in Books and Manuscripts, to increase it, and to propose it to others in the waie which may be most useful unto all; his work then is to be a Factor and Trader for helps to Learning, and a Treasurer to keep them, and a dispenser to applie them to use, or to see them well used, or at least not abused.

That charge, updated for a new era, would provide the balance needed to resolve some of the conundra and contradictions of the research librarian’s work. I’ve raised enough questions—now the rest of you can move on to the answers. In a word, my vision is standing room only in the Centers of Primary Research and Training. Go for it!
The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

Siberia, Shangri-La, or Center for Scholarship: Achieving the Vision for Special Collection

by Sarah Thomas, Carl A. Kroch University Librarian, Cornell University

Presentation for "Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections," Brown University, June 28, 2001

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Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

People, Policies, and Politics

by William J. Crowe, Spencer Librarian, University of Kansas

Notes for remarks for “Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections,” Brown University, 27-29 June 2001

I. Introduction

From what vantage do I address these issues?

- I am no longer an ARL director, but neither am I a curator, even as I have been administratively responsible since mid-1999 for a large special collections library. In this company, my mix of experience may make me a strange bird, indeed.
- I speak as a librarian who has worked closely with librarians and archivists in special collections at five ARL libraries over a period of more than 30 years. (Now, I understand better, of course, what they had been trying to tell me for so much of that time!)
- I speak as a sometime user of such collections for my own research.
- I speak, of necessity, largely from my Kansas experience, and here I am acutely aware of the great legacy of the late Robert Vosper, who established the Department of Special Collections at Kansas less than 50 years ago, and of the still strong influence of the highly respected Alexandra Mason. Sandy was my immediate predecessor as Spencer Librarian, and her 40+ year stamp on our shop is still—and long will be—strong, even as we change.
- I speak as a seven-year member (four of them as chair) of the ARL Committee on Statistics and Measurement, and so can comment with some added weight on ARL’s excellent effort in the special gathering—and good analysis of—statistics on special collections—thanks in large part to superior work by our colleagues at UNC-Chapel Hill. I also am reminded of what those of us close to this ARL program always emphasized to others about the value of the kinds of statistics that ARL gathers. These data may answer some questions, but more often they allow us to ask better questions.
- Last, and perhaps somewhat awkwardly, I speak as the father of an undergraduate student who has astonished me (and her librarian mother) with the news that she is eager to become a librarian, a special collections librarian, no less! She has abandoned a long planned career as a herpetologist, planning now not to work not with snakes, but with manuscripts! So, I have a more than professional interest in the future of special collections.

I draw on all of these experiences to offer some specific suggestions for an ARL agenda.

II. Suggestions for an ARL Agenda

I have clustered my suggestions into three topical areas: PEOPLE, POLICIES & POLITICS...

People:

We need to know even more about the people now working in special collections, not only in ARL libraries, but also in our sister research collections, especially in the IRLA
group. We need more facts, but also more evidence of the expert opinions of the people now at work in the special collections community. And—beyond this forum at Brown—we need access to the opinions of other library leaders, leaders of scholarly societies, and of universities. This meeting is a very important step toward achieving these goals, as we must test our proposed agenda with other stakeholders . . . soon.

There is much useful information—fact and opinion—now available, of course, not only from ARL, but also from RBMS, CLIR (consider the work of the Task Force on the Artifact), and even some of the scholarly organizations. We need to tap aggressively into this body of information . . . to synthesize and share it with the ARL and wider community, perhaps with the help of a Visiting Program Officer at ARL. The scope of this task may be beyond the time and energy of one person, but I am concerned that we and the several communities we represent must make informed decisions quickly . . . decisions based on good analysis of a large body of reliable information about the environment.

If we do not require a summa, we may need something close to it to hold a place for special collections on our collective agenda. We have given only sporadic attention to the future of special collections during the last quarter century. Now, we cannot afford once again to let the issues fall out of our sight.

I have two more specific "people" suggestions:

First, we should look closely at the knowledge base of our general collections staff, many of whom, especially librarians of the younger (under age 40, say?) generation, seem not to have been prepared by education or experience to understand the various roles of special collections in the capturing and making available of primary sources. As more of our general collections staff must give more and more time to the transitions to the digital age, many seem not to have a developed a foundation, an understanding, say, of the role of primary source collections and services (in shorthand, knowledge of "the book," in all its manifestations), which I once took almost for granted. I say this knowing that there seems long to have been a gulf between many general collections library people and those who work in special collections. That gulf has become too great for us to allow it to persist.

How can we engage library/information science educators on this topic? My suggestion is not to attempt promotion of some wholesale re-vamping of the graduate library and information science curriculum, but to seek ways to help library educators to know more about the context of special collections - in all kinds of settings beyond the research library community . . . and so begin to look for newly-minted librarians at least to have been exposed to this sphere.

Second, on the assumption that data collected by ARL do show an aging of the current staff in special collections, how can we find ways better to expose special collections librarians to enterprising undergraduate, but especially graduate, students to help promote this as a career option for some of them?

If we do this and accomplish nothing else, we may have helped prepare some members of the next generation of scholars to understand the challenges and rewards of the field, and so stimulate their call on special collections in their work as teachers and researchers.... We can make new friends and advocates . . . and perhaps bring over a few.

ARL leaders know the paths here very well . . . the Council of Graduate Schools, the learned societies, the funding agencies. Tapping into the planning for the education and acculturation of the next generation of scholars, in this area as so many (not least, the future of scholarly communication), is vital.
Policies

Here, I see at least two areas that warrant ARL’s attention:

We should encourage, again in close cooperation with RBMS, but also with the Society of American Archivists, and perhaps also the museum community, opportunities for information exchange, especially of emerging changes in practices. Cross-fertilization does occur now, of course, but I hope we can find ways to expose a wider group of special collections practitioners to more intense building of community, including learning about the work of some in communities now perhaps seen as far afield . . . in the public schools perhaps. Many of us are working now on research and demonstration projects with librarians, teachers, and technologists in these other communities (in my case, with the local school district) and can be reminded quickly (and sometimes in humbling fashion) of the value of entirely fresh perspectives.

I make this suggestion, even as I cannot speak with any authority about the state of information exchange, because I sense a more persistent tradition of “local practice” in the special collections community, perhaps more than in many other sectors of the research library community.

Second, and fundamentally so, we must find ways to help our staff create wider/deeper/faster means of promoting intellectual access to our holdings, especially to our great manuscript collections and to the kaleidoscope of other media in our care. David is right on target here!

How do we address these issues in forming an action-agenda?

First and foremost, we need to engage RLG, OCLC, and local online systems vendors to work more aggressively with each other and with the special collections, archives, and museum communities to promote adoption of newer standards for the creation of metadata. Too, we need software that can ease local staff effort and promote innovations that can lead to wider sharing of information about such things as innovations in work flow. I cringe when I think of the 2.5 million photographic images held in the Spencer Library, about which many people on our campus, much less those in the wider world of scholars and the general public, know so little. Our staff need this help, and because ARL has a long tradition of advocating standards in bibliographic control and a spirit collaboration its voice should be heard here!

Politics

By “politics,” I mean the need for ARL to engage in aggressive advocacy/promotion of the importance of special collections to our wider community of interest . . . to the AAU, to NASULGC, to the scholarly societies, to government, to the foundations. ARL does very well here in advocating for attention to many specific areas . . . in preservation, in digitization, in international cooperation . . . that are core to special collections issues. But I see the need for a coordinated, broad scale program that can excite, entice, and encourage the leaders of the institutions in which we operate . . . and of the scholarly organizations with which we share so many values . . . and whose current and long term interests can be assured only with vital special collections programs.

Here, I have benefited from the example of a certain former Governor of Kansas, now become Archivist of the United States, in developing means effectively to capture anew the attention of national political leaders about the vital importance of securing, preserving, and providing imaginative means of access to archival collections. Money follows.

To be sure, library leaders have the greatest share of the responsibility to call attention to the needs of the great collections of original records of human experience for which
research libraries, with our sister and brother institutions in the archival and museum communities, have a bedrock responsibility to capture and transmit to this and succeeding generations. Still, we need ARL’s help to carry the message.

III. Conclusion
Two years ago I left a satisfying (well, almost always satisfying) role as an ARL director of nine years experience and some twenty years before that time as a general library administrator to move to special collections. Among other things, this move is a test of the validity of my conviction that all of us should consider refreshing and renewing our roles from time to time (that is a story for another day).

I made this change by taking an opportunity that came along at the right time for me (and, I hope, for Kansas). My goal is to serve as a transition leader or change agent, building on the work begun in the halcyon era of Bob Vosper, to reach a still difficult to discern future for the Kenneth Spencer Research Library. In this, I am optimistic, not least because of the good people I work with at the Spencer Library and in the KU Libraries at large, but also because of the renewed interest of ARL and such bodies as CLIR, the Mellon Foundation, and the Delmas Foundation. I am especially encouraged to see so many of my former colleague ARL directors who have worked on these issues over the last three and years have trekked to Brown at this vacation season to listen and to share their knowledge and their questions.

Like Bob, I choose to close with words from a poet. A poem written in 1924 by a sometime resident of Lawrence, Kansas, the young Langston Hughes, conveys with eloquence my conviction about our future, one that I believe is held also by most ARL directors and special collections leaders alike:

   We have tomorrow
   Bright before us
   Like a flame.
The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

"One Day...It Will Be Otherwise": Changing the Reputation and Reality of Special Collections

by Robert L. Byrd, Director, Duke University Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Library

Remarks for “Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections,” Brown University, June 28, 2001

David Stam and Sarah Thomas have set forth a number of ideas and suggestions for shaping the nature and future of special collections in ARL libraries. From my perspective as director of the special collections operations in one of the Group 2 libraries [responding institutions with holdings of 3 to 5 million volumes] in the 1998 survey, I want to comment on their recommendations and add a few suggestions that I believe are in line with the vision and strategies they have described. Like David, I feel that little if anything I say will be new. I know that many of you could offer more insightful observations and recommendations than I will be able to provide. I recognize also that circumstances and resources differ so greatly among ARL members that few, if any, suggestions will have universal applicability. Nevertheless I hope these remarks will contribute to what will be a stimulating and productive discussion as the day progresses.

Promoting Access and Use

In my experience the key to eliminating, or at least decreasing, the marginalization of special collections has been actively promoting access to and use of those collections. I agree with Daniel Traister’s observation that for special collections departments and libraries to thrive it is necessary for them "to come to grips with [the] fundamental drive toward increasing openness" (RBM 1, no. 1, p. 76).

Sometime in the late 1980s a colleague told me that in the special collections library of a major ARL institution on the west coast the research room seated 30 people and was often full and the staff handed out numbered tags to researchers waiting for a vacancy in the room. We adopted that scenario as a model. We have not in fact achieved quite that degree of demand, but our research room is normally busy, often full, and sometimes overflowing. I know the situation is similar for many other libraries. Encouraging, even promoting, use by students (undergraduate as well as graduate), scholars, and the general public is already standard practice in many special collections.

How do special collections encourage use by students? The staff members do not wait to hear from faculty who may wish to bring their classes to the library. Rather they examine course offerings, visit academic departments, get to know faculty members, and request copies of syllabi so that they can identify courses that might make use of the library’s special collections. They also identify particular holdings of the library that are relevant to these courses and provide information about these holdings to the faculty. They invite the classes to the library and offer to make presentations or provide displays of materials for the classes.

The best uses of special collections for undergraduate courses often require some selection and examination of materials in advance to be sure that a particular assignment can be successfully completed. Faculty often do not have or make the time to do this
work. So the special collections staff members do it for them. Assignments need not involve writing research papers or producing original scholarship. Some undergraduates are ready for such work but others are not, and many faculty members are not willing to grade scores of research papers. Other types of assignments-choosing and editing a document from a pre-selected group of manuscripts; writing a brief interpretive essay or assessment about a primary document or text-serves the purpose of bringing the students in touch with primary sources and providing them with opportunities to develop their analytical and interpretive skills. No, this is not scholarship; but it is learning-a powerful form of learning-and special collections exist to support teaching and learning as well as original scholarship.

Some special collections--for example, the Clark Library at UCLA--also encourage student use by offering competitive fellowships to undergraduates, with faculty sponsors, for doing course-related papers using special collections. Others offer annual awards for the best student papers produced on the basis of research in special collections. Different faculty members can be invited each year to participate in judging the submissions. Establishing and advertising the awards communicates to students that the library wants them to make use of special collections. Inviting faculty to participate in evaluating the papers gives them an opportunity to see how special collections are used in other courses and encourages them to do the same if they are not already committed to doing so.

Grants and awards are useful tools for encouraging use by other researchers as well as students. At Duke we offer modest research grants on a competitive basis annually to visiting faculty, graduate students, and independent scholars in three of our specialized collecting areas-women's history and culture, African-American studies, and advertising history. Numerous other libraries offer similar grants. It's remarkable how many researchers can be brought in with very little funding. In each area we offer small grants to six or eight researchers, but meanwhile in the application process, perhaps thirty or so students and faculty members have had to make a case to us-and in the process, to themselves-about how essential our holdings are to their research projects. Consequently, many of the applicants who do not receive awards end up coming anyway.

Special collections also use public programs to raise visibility and encourage use. Staged readings, panel discussions, informal talks, exhibition openings-a steady stream of such programs can create a sense of openness and accessibility for special collections while exposing the student body and the general public to the library's holdings. At New York University, for example, I believe special collections has hosted or sponsored more than fifty such programs a year.

With respect to exhibits, I would suggest that for most of us the challenge is not to give them less priority but to make them more appealing and more relevant to university and community interests. Sometimes we in libraries speak of the danger of having special collections become "museums" as though that were a pejorative term. Anyone who has observed hordes of people swarming through a blockbuster exhibit at a major art museum-or for that matter the recent exhibit on utopias at the New York Public Library-knows that the exhibition of culturally or historically significant objects can be remarkably popular, entertaining, and educational.

Another way in which special collections can promote, and have promoted, access and use is by expanding their hours. Evening and weekend hours are essential for extensive use by undergraduates and the general public. I say evening hours, but perhaps we should be considering late night or early morning hours. This past academic year, when the undergraduate members of our Library Renovation Committee wanted to show University Librarian David Ferriero and me how undergraduates use the library building, they said we should meet them at midnight or 1:00. Fortunately, they had mercy
on us and scheduled the tour for 10 to 11 p.m.

I would suggest that the need for longer and later hours is a strong reason for consolidating special collection units, or at least their research rooms, in institutions that have multiple, small-staffed special collection operations. The greater the expectations are for outreach, use, and availability for special collections, the more inefficient and unrealistic it becomes to maintain multiple research rooms.

As David and Sarah have indicated, promoting access and use involves also dealing with the backlogs of uncataloged and unprocessed materials in special collections. One approach some libraries have taken is to catalog all manuscript and archival collections at the time of accessioning by creating a preliminary container list for each collection without processing or organizing the collection, and then creating an on-line catalog entry on the basis of the accession record. Likewise with some printed materials it is possible to provide access by creating searchable databases and archival-like cataloging at a collection or series level when item-level cataloging is not feasible. These approaches are not fully satisfactory substitutes for fuller processing or cataloging, but they do permit researchers to learn about all the collections a library holds and about the main topics documented in these collections. They also enable the library to consider actual user interest in determining processing and cataloging priorities for accessioned collections.

Encouraging student use, encouraging use by other researchers, expanding hours, eliminating backlogs--these are some of the steps special collections are taking and should take to promote access and use and thus play a central rather than marginal role in the life of the research library. In addition to promoting access and use, it is essential that special collections reexamine their collecting focus. For special collections in academic research libraries it is critical that current collecting be linked to the sense of identity, goals, ambitions, and academic programs of the university.

For more than fifty years--from the 1930s to the 1980s--the main, though by no means only, focus of manuscript, and to some degree rare book, collecting at Duke University was the American South. By the 1980s, however, Duke no longer saw itself as a southern university but rather as a national or international university; southern history and literature were no longer central interests for faculty in the history and English departments. Special Collections needed to change its focus or be increasingly marginalized. We were able to continue to build on our strengths by acquiring southern materials in the context of focusing on women's history and culture, African American studies, documentary photography and other subjects tied to current academic programs at the university.

It is important to distinguish between research interests of current faculty and on-going institutional commitments to academic programs. Of course it is not always easy to determine what the latter are, and they too have a way of changing, but not as rapidly as interests of individual faculty members. At Duke, for example, we had acquired the records of numerous businesses in the course of documenting the American South, and from time to time there were faculty members in history or economics who taught business history. However, there was no on-going commitment to that field in either department. In contrast, the Economics Department has several faculty members who conduct research in the history of economic thought and has had an on-going commitment to that sub-field of the discipline of economics. Consequently history of economic thought is a much more viable and institutionally useful concentration for us than is business history.

In rethinking collecting focuses for special collections, it is desirable to find areas of congruence between these on-going institutional commitments and opportunities for
regional, national, or international distinctiveness. Serving the former assures the usefulness of special collections to a primary clientele from the home institution, while responding to the latter attracts visiting researchers and makes the library a center for scholarship in its field. As Werner Gundersheimer pointed out in his keynote address to the May 1999 ARL meeting, special collections offer an opportunity to combat the increasing duplication or overlap in research libraries. He quoted the CLIR report, Scholarship, Instruction, and Libraries at the Turn of the Century, which expressed concern about the "trend towards collections which resemble one another to the detriment of amassing collections of unique materials, manuscripts, archives, and rare books." But special collections are useful in avoiding this homogenization only to the extent that their holdings are distinctive. Distinctiveness can of course be achieved even in collecting areas shared with other institutions, by emphasizing different aspects of the subject or focusing on manuscript or archival materials, but it also true that special collections can short-sightedly build duplicative collections in areas already well documented elsewhere. Perhaps this is what David Stam has in mind when he refers to twentieth-century books that should be moved out of special collections into the open stacks. I trust that his concern is with lack of distinctiveness rather than with lack of age. A former director of the Bodleian Library once told me he thought the best way to build extraordinary special collections was to acquire contemporary materials and then to keep them for a long, long time. Generally speaking, I believe special collections need to be focusing on acquisition of 20th and 21st century materials--but again with specialization and distinctiveness based on geography, language, ethnicity, subject, or other collecting criteria.

Actions taken to promote access and use and to reexamine and redefine collecting focus in conjunction with institutional priorities will go far toward repositioning special collections on the library playing field. There are other actions that heads of special collections or library directors can take to break down barriers between special collections and the libraries in which they function. Both parties can seek to increase the involvement of special collections staff with the rest of the library system and library staff. Special collections staff can develop partnerships with general reference librarians or bibliographers for conducting bibliographic instruction and outreach programs. Special collections librarians can participate in discipline groups or other forums for bibliographers or subject specialists throughout the library system. Collecting responsibilities can be shared across boundaries of format and chronology so that individuals or teams have responsibility for both special and circulating collections in particular subject areas.

There are, I believe, ARL libraries--though perhaps none represented here--in which special collections remain isolated and marginal because the heads of those units are not interested in increasing access, promoting use, or reexamining collections and the library directors are not willing to commit additional resources or staff to special collections under those circumstances. It is possible of course just to ignore the problem and wait for a retirement or death--there are certainly plenty of other issues demanding attention. Another approach may be to add a new staff position--not by exiling a problem employee to special collections but by transferring or recruiting an energetic, service-oriented librarian who understands the larger library’s mission and goals. Often the quickest way to change the dynamics of an operation is to add a different person to the mix.

David Stam suggested that another step toward breaking down barriers would be eliminating use of the term “special collections.” I agree but am not aware of a satisfactory replacement. Cultural heritage collections, distinctive collections, historical collections, primary sources, and other such terms have both advantages and disadvantages. Individual institutions have found more useful names for their own special collections operations--as historical libraries or research centers--but a satisfactory generic term for
these types of collections and operations eludes us.

One useful way to summarize some of the recommendations we've heard this morning may be to think in terms of what library directors should expect from special collections and what special collections should expect from library directors. Creating the centers for primary research and training that David and Sarah described requires collaboration between library directors and heads of special collections. I believe library directors should expect the following from their special collections:

- outreach to students, faculty, and classes;
- collecting that is tied to institutional priorities and academic programs;
- distinctiveness in collections;
- public programs that contribute to making the library a center of intellectual activity on campus;
- goals that support the library’s strategic plan.

Special Collections, if they are providing these things, should be able to expect the following from library directors:

- budgetary support for acquisitions—not just the occasional special request for opportunistic purchases but a regular portion of the materials budget (If special collections are in fact building distinctive collections with enduring value that are actively promoted for use in teaching and research, they deserve reliable support from the materials budget.);
- more adequate staffing (Sarah Thomas suggested that as libraries are increasingly known for their unique holdings and their service effectiveness, “staff to support the growing use of special collections will expand.” The increased access and the expanded use that both she and David Stam have called for will not occur without more staff.);
- opportunities to participate in library-wide planning, programming, and leadership.

Many of the actions I and others have proposed this morning can be carried out in particular libraries by individual directors and heads of special collections. What is ARL’s role in changing the reputation and reality of special collections? I would like to offer a few suggestions.

1. ARL might develop a program similar to the collection analysis project developed in the late 1970s by what was then, I believe, the Office of Management Services to assist individual libraries in reviewing, describing, evaluating, and analyzing their collection programs. There are self-study materials already available at least for archival and manuscript programs through the Society of American Archivists, but I believe a self-study process, tied to on-site consultations, developed for special collections by ARL could have a transforming effect.

2. ARL might initiate further study of special collections in the context of the global resources program. What role should ARL libraries play in preserving and promoting access to international research resources such as ephemeral publications and manuscript collections?

3. ARL might increase the emphasis on special collections within its preservation program, working to stimulate and coordinate conservation activities for distinctive collections.

4. ARL might establish or support programs for collaboration in digitizing
distinctive collections so that digitization efforts lead to a critical mass of complementary materials.

5. ARL might develop a management training workshop for special collections, perhaps as a module associated with its management institutes. Merrily Taylor and Sam Streit of Brown have for a number of years taught a week-long course on management of special collections at Rare Book School at the University of Virginia. I'm sure their experience would be useful if ARL were to take action in this area. Recruiting staff and developing the needed skills for special collections leadership, as David pointed out, are critically important for implementing the vision he described.

I am sure there are numerous other possibilities for coordinated action by ARL that various ones of you will suggest as we begin to discuss these matters. I am sure too that together we can reinforce the already emerging reality of distinctive collections as research centers and change the lingering reputation of special collections as Siberia or Shangri-La. I'm sure that one day it will be otherwise.

The poet Jane Kenyon wrote a poem entitled "Otherwise." It appeared in her book Constance in 1993 and then after her death in 1995 was included in a book of new and selected poems published by Graywolf Press under the title Otherwise.

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.

At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed
in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

The poem reminds me that everything changes, even that which is so ordinary and commonplace that we fail to appreciate it or even note it. This fact encourages my commitment to documenting the recent past and the present, knowing that the future will be different in ways we cannot entirely imagine. You may hear in the poem a fear of change. I think otherwise. I believe Kenyon realized that the future emerges in part at least through the death of the present and that she was willing to greet that future. One
day the perception of special collections as a backwater of inactivity will be replaced by the reality of distinctive collections as centers for learning and scholarship. I trust that this meeting will further that end.
The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

ARL Programs and Approaches: Getting on the ARL Agenda

by Shirley K. Baker, Vice Chancellor for Information Technology and Dean, University Libraries, Washington University in St. Louis

Presentation for "Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections," Brown University, June 29, 2001

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The Unique Role of Special Collections

Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections

A Proposed ARL Action Agenda for Special Collections: Recommendations to the ARL Research Collections Committee

The agenda below was discussed in the final session of the June 27-29, 2001, symposium held at Brown University, "Building on Strength: Developing an ARL Agenda for Special Collections," by Joe A. Hewitt (Director of Academic Affairs Libraries, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill) and Merrily Taylor (University Librarian, Brown University), former and current chairs of the ARL Research Collections Committee, respectively. This agenda will be discussed by the committee at its October 2001 meeting and next steps will be determined.

As context for the committee discussion, comments on this proposed agenda are invited, from conference participants as well as those who were unable to attend.

1. ARL should promote special collections as a fundamental and indispensable part of the research library mission in the modern university through a statement of principles describing the obligation of research libraries to collect, preserve, and make available the primary historical and cultural record. Concurrently, a demonstrated institutional commitment to special collections and related services should be a criterion for membership in ARL.

2. ARL should initiate appropriate collective action related to special collections as it has in areas such as scholarly communications, copyright, global resources, and diversity. In doing so, ARL should seek to work as a facilitating organization that mobilizes member libraries and other organizations to address the general issues of special collections in research university libraries.

3. At a time when the traditional role and priority of special collections in the university library are being questioned, ARL should provide programs to members that assist them in developing, managing, and supporting special collections in the contexts of modern scholarship and pedagogy, and trends in higher education.

4. ARL should ensure that its other projects and programs address special collections whenever appropriate. A special collections liaison, similar to the preservation liaison, should be considered for ARL as an ongoing advocate for special collections interests in ARL.

5. ARL should work with others to develop a coordinated approach to the collecting and preservation of the voluminous records of the 19th and 20th centuries and to the challenges of new formats and sources of archival data in the modern age. ARL and its member libraries should work with each other and with other agencies to inventory, map, and, where appropriate, define responsibility for collecting and preserving primary materials of all types.

6. Ongoing statistical efforts relating to special collections should be established under ARL auspices. This effort should focus on the gathering of core longitudinal data on an annual or biennial basis, as well as on occasional special efforts as needed through the SPEC process or a similar mechanism.
7. ARL should encourage individual institutions to provide shared intellectual access to their frequently substantial backlogs of special collections materials without such access. ARL can assist in this effort by advocating for and administering funding to support access projects, and by developing or endorsing model guidelines for adequate access. ARL should also acknowledge the importance of access in any statement of principles. This item was cited by the participants in the conference at Brown as of primary importance.

8. ARL should assume a coordinating role or should support external efforts to ensure that information regarding digitization projects is appropriately shared among institutions in order to foster collaboration and prevent duplication. ARL should also advocate for the continued importance of original materials in the digital age and should participate in or endorse the articulation of reasonable expectations for the ongoing stewardship of these materials following reformatting.

9. ARL should encourage further investigation into the status of preservation efforts for special collections materials and should develop model guidelines for preservation programs which will be effective in addressing these materials. The ARL preservation liaison should be invited to participate in these efforts or to propose appropriate representation from the special collections community. ARL should also advocate for and, when appropriate, endorse guidelines and standards for the preservation of information in electronic form.

10. ARL should support the education of the next generation of special collections librarians and determining core competencies. ARL should sponsor further systematic research into the changing nature of the profession and assist member libraries in creating opportunities to develop special collections professionals. Models similar to those developed for the training of area studies librarians should be considered.

11. ARL should incorporate into its portfolio of legal concerns the problems created by the Tax Reform Act of 1969, which does not allow a charitable deduction for self-created works, and work actively for the repeal of this provision of the Federal Tax Code.