

PAPR—Preserving America’s Printed Resources

The Role of Repositories and Libraries of Record Conference, July 21, 2003, Chicago, Illinois

Bill Sleeman

Preservation is an un-funded mandate! So wrote Abby Smith and Stephen Nichols in their report “The Evidence in Hand: Report of the Task Force on the Artifact in Library Collections.” Smith and Nichols were elaborating on the now familiar disparity between increased spending by libraries on digital and electronic resources and decreased spending for preservation. This shift in funding priorities is often at the expense of un-reformatted hard copy material that libraries are expected by their users to maintain.

Responding to this challenge was the impetus for the July 21, 2003 Conference in Chicago, attended by over 200 special collection librarians, archivists, historians and a couple of government documents librarians (including Aimee Quinn of the University of Illinois Chicago and GPO’s Judy Russell). Keynote speaker Robert Martin, Director of the Institute of Museum and Library Services, explained that “large scale digitization has weakened the imperative to preserve print copies” and the library community needs to develop an agenda to preserve the nation’s print collections. According to Martin, the challenges in developing this agenda are many: how to evaluate what to keep; should format be more important than content; what conservation methods (if any) to employ; how to fund preservation initiatives; and how to work collaboratively are just some of the questions that need to be answered.

For the second speaker, Abby Smith, Director of Programs at the Council on Library and Information Resources, collaboration was the order of the day. Her presentation, *Common Cause: Taking Care of Print Collections* challenged participants to consider the success of collaborative digitization projects to see how the models employed in those projects might be applied to collaborative preservation of print collections. This is imperative Smith claimed because the public “expects that libraries are protecting resources.” If that proves untrue she believes that we will have failed our users and our profession. Smith urged PAPR Conference participants to work toward a greater understanding of already established repository efforts and to develop a consensus within the library community that would facilitate the long-term preservation of printed materials.

Following Abby Smith, the remainder of the morning was devoted to three speakers all of whom focused on repository building: Brian Schottlaender, University Librarian

at University of California, San Diego; Jim Neal, University Librarian at Columbia University; and Willis Bridegam, Librarian of the College, Amherst Colleges.

Schottlaender began the session by reviewing the University of California libraries’ history of collaborative development beginning with their shared purchasing agreement for materials in the 1970s, through the familiar Melvyl catalog of the 1980s, to today’s California Digital Library. He explained how librarians at USCD are working with other UC colleagues to take what they learned from the California Digital Library project and to apply it to a new organization to coordinate selection and collection management across UC institutions.

Jim Neal discussed his work with New York Public Library and Princeton University to develop a repository of hard-copy versions of the titles represented in JSTOR. He compared and contrasted the needs for a “light” archive (a collection of working titles) and a “dark” archive (a collection of copies that would not be available for use, stored in a closed environment). By choosing to focus on titles already re-formatted and widely available in electronic form the Research Collections and Preservation Consortium (ReCAP) project offered an example of a collaborative effort that is already positioned to be of benefit to the larger library community. For Neal and his collaborators the next challenges are how to “ramp up” the ReCAP Project to include other institutions and how to make it self-sufficient.

Bridegam provided one of the more entertaining presentations as he outlined the process by which Amherst College came into possession of a former Strategic Air Command bunker and converted it to storage for the library. In what was clearly a case of “build it and they will come,” once the facility was in place other traditional partners of the Five Colleges (Amherst, Hampshire, Mount Holyoke, Smith College, and the University of Massachusetts-Amherst) began to approach him about using the facility. Bridegam outlined how this group created a legal entity (an approach also advocated by Neal in the ReCAP project) to take possession of the material transferred and how they have begun exploring how the Five Colleges might create mechanisms for collaborative collection development.

Following this group of speakers Catherine Murray-Rust, Dean of Libraries, Colorado State University provided

comments on the three projects, asking conference participants to consider what factors were necessary for these efforts to succeed and what aspects of the traditional, familiar library process could create barriers to the success of collaborative efforts. One concern Rust expressed was the sense of ownership—in part forced on libraries by the various accreditation boards—that require retention of hard volumes to evaluate a library's value.

The afternoon session focused on alternative models of shared collection building. Presenters consisted of Pentti Vattulainen, Director, National Repository Library of Finland; Steve O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, CAVAL Collaborative Solutions; Nancy Davenport, Director for Acquisitions, Library of Congress; Ellen Dunlap, President, American Antiquarian Society; Mary Jane Starr, Director, Centre for Newspapers and the News. Winston Tabb, Dean, University Libraries, Johns Hopkins University, moderated the afternoon session.

O'Connor offered an interesting perspective pointing out how the Australian experience in creating a national library and repository post-WWII gave them the opportunity to benefit from all of the work that has gone on before. This allowed them to pick and choose from a variety of collaborative models and to develop a highly decentralized system—the CAVAL (Cooperative Action by Victorian Academic Libraries) project. O'Connor also posited that the "digital library doesn't really exist." Adding, "We should instead be talking about how to deliver in digital forms, including conversion and print on demand."

American Antiquarian Society (AAS) President Ellen Dunlap titled her presentation "A Comprehensive Repository of Pre-1876 American Imprints" and proposed that the AAS experience could serve as a model for a national *last-copy* collection, particularly if the larger library community were to emulate the highly focused collection development effort engaged in by AAS librarians. A focused collection development effort is also central to the successful efforts of the National Library of Canada's Centre for Newspapers and the News. Directed by Mary Jane Starr the collection has its mandate to preserve one copy of all original material published in Canada.

Preserving the national publishing heritage of the United States is the mission of the proposed Library of Congress Heritage Copy Preservation effort discussed by Nancy Davenport. At the Library of Congress (LC) one of the major challenges is storage, and while this has been addressed by the use of facilities at Fort Meade, Maryland, the question remains about the feasibility of retaining one copy of *everything* submitted to the Library for copyright purposes. Other

questions that need to be addressed: should traditional preservation practices be performed, should LC retain material that would normally be outside their collection scope, and should material retained be digitized or microfilmed?

Following this group of presenters Daniel Greenstein, University Librarian and Executive Director of the California Digital Library, discussed the preservation needs of digital products—both converted and born digital. Greenstein elaborated on the LC's National Digital Information Infrastructure Preservation Program and how it is both similar and dissimilar to traditional library repository structures.

It was intriguing that, although based in the host city, one of the oldest, collaborative preservation efforts being run by a library organization—the very successful preservation efforts of the American Theological Library Association—was not represented on the program. Also missing was any mention of efforts by the law library community to grapple with these issues. It should be noted, however, that collaborative preservation of hard-copy legal materials was the focus of a conference held at Georgetown University in March of 2003 (see: "Georgetown Conference Outlines Preservation Agenda." *AALL Spectrum Magazine*, June 2003, 18–19.). Nevertheless, the PAPR Conference was only a first step and hopefully efforts to develop a national agenda for collaborative preservation will also take into account other efforts underway in the library community avoiding duplication of effort and ensuring a fuller examination of the issues.

The government documents community has much to offer in the effort to build shared repositories for preservation purposes. The Federal Depository Library Program has long been engaged in the type of collaborative repository building and shared collection development that many of the speakers at the PAPR Conference were proposing, yet these "library leaders," many of whom were from institutions with a government documents collection did not even mention this! The Regional/Selective structure of the FDLP would seem to be an ideal model for creating shared housing arrangements for non-document materials.

Documents librarians should seize this new opportunity to take the initiative on their campuses and make contact with library leadership and collection management staff to share the FDLP experience and how that experience can play a role in facilitating collaborative preservation repositories for all types of materials. ■

Bill Sleeman, *Bibliographic Control/Government Documents Librarian, University of Maryland School of Law;* wsleeman@umaryland.edu