

Northwestern University Library
Preservation Department
Annual Report
2002-2003

Introduction

This year the Preservation Department began a long process to review, evaluate and evolve operations in order to improve operational effectiveness and efficiency. And yes, the Department made changes: in brittle books and reformatting programs, digital operations (inside and outside Preservation), commercial binding, mass deacidification, environmental monitoring, record keeping, statistics and staffing assignments.

Current Year's Activities

The Preservation Department began to evaluate workflows, the brittle book program, conservation lab procedures and products, commercial binding, the mass deacidification program as well as film, hardcopy and digital reformatting programs. The Department has subsequently begun developing ways to more effectively allocate, deploy and expend preservation resources. Toward this end we have begun developing Departmental budget accounting systems to better track and control spending toward our goal to develop formal Preservation Department budget plans and yearly spending reports that will tie costs to accomplishments.

We developed, within the Materials Processing Unit and the Conservation Lab, the foundation for statistical and reporting systems that will better reflect program contribution, development, effectiveness and efficiency. While these new systems for gathering or reporting statistics are still evolving, we've achieved a new shape to our statistics that better reflects quantities of materials flowing into, and out of, the whole Department. We've made a good start at putting the pieces into place that will reflect (statistically) the work of the Preservation Department as an integrated whole, rather than as groups of seemingly disconnected sub-units.

We have changed or modified "Brittle Book" operations, already vastly improving this program's efficiency. Changes include criteria used to determine brittleness and select collections for time-consuming searching and bibliographer review. We also have improved (by streamlining) our ability to guarantee we determine "best solutions" for preserving brittle collections. In the past this program has drawn heavily on staff time for conducting bibliographic searches and bibliographer reviews. We have refined selection criteria which has cut, by more than 50% the number of books judged to be brittle and so consequently all subsequent work and decision making has been reduced proportionately. In addition, we have reduced the number of individuals present during brittle book review sessions from five to three; next year we will reduce this number to two. In addition, we are currently putting brittle book related information onto a database to make materials tracking and recordkeeping (which, heretofore, has not been done) possible. We also still need to improve brittle books searching effectiveness and efficiency.

This year marked the first ever that NUL could not afford to bind every item added to the collection due to a “tsunami” (as unprecedented as it was unexpected) of newly cataloged backlog materials. Preservation effectively brought the “crisis” to within manageable proportions by designing and initiating a program to defer binding many new materials until after their initial circulation.

Digital Technology projects progressed along. The IMLS Curtis project progressed reasonably on schedule except that the project will face requesting an extension to 2004 due to the fact that the company owning the search software was sold and new software was loaded onto the NU server too late to guarantee on-time project completion.

The Digital Library Committee Project Management Group (PMG) was created, a new digital project infrastructure was developed and projects are being reviewed and revived. Preservation’s Digital Technology Unit completed digitizing the final group of World War II posters and initiated final work on the already digitized, but not cataloged or mounted, Afri posters.

The Materials Processing Unit outsourced, for mass deacidification, 6,781 acidic music scores and Africana Collection items. Since 1992, NUL has deacidified 67,781 items destined for eventual embrittlement and loss.

This year we reviewed the Conservation Lab’s labor intensive mass deacidification testing protocols, determined that much of the testing was either unnecessary or was insufficiently sophisticated to produce valid, and therefore useful, results and subsequently streamlined the program significantly. While due diligence testing of materials (upon return from the vendor) remains necessary to evaluate the immediate viability of the process, mid-range (and even much longer term) testing adds little information and therefore has largely been eliminated from the program.

We were able to begin examining existing preservation outreach and education programs and planned for their revision or further development. So far we have reviewed our website, outlined revisions and have planned for Mimi Head to get training to work on developing a new Preservation Department website. The site’s “Care and Handling of Library Materials” education program continues to receive rave reviews from users around the world. While we were able to outline areas we want to develop further in the site (e.g., pest prevention and specific practices that damage collections) we will accomplish these during 2004, as we have time. The Preservation Department Head accomplishes quite a bit toward educating staff (and herself) during meetings with bibliographers and collection curators. This has been, and will continue to be, useful in beginning to understand needs specific to different collection areas, especially as the Preservation Department begins to undertake the NUL preservation survey strategic initiative.

During 2003, we continued to work to raise funds to support preservation initiatives. We wrote the NUL portion of a CIC-8 grant proposal to preserve U.S. Railroad collections

We began to work with collection curators to develop lists of large preservation projects possibly worthy of pursuing funds to support.

Finally, we developed, and presented to a potential donor, a program that presents an overview of preservation, from conservation to digital technology, and links it all to current and future user access. Even though this presentation was new, it worked quite well in presenting and explaining, in a way that was designed for the individual donor, a logical continuum and connection among and across these, sometimes difficult to bridge, conceptual spans of collections and information management within today's library. The whole Preservation Department enjoyed creating and presenting this program; we look forward to refining it in the future.

Program and Project Development:

Digital Reformatting

--Continued to develop the digital preservation program in cooperation with the Digital Library Committee

 Within Library and collections units

 Within CIC Preservation Officers group

--Continue digital reformatting project development and project completion

 Complete Africana poster project

 Continue Curtis project

 Develop program to enable digitally reformatting NUL collections on a routine basis, including developing pilot project for digitizing brittle books

 Identify new projects in collaboration with collections units and the Digital

Library Committee

This year the Preservation Department joined with Digital Media Services and IT, to propose creating a digital library production services group that could focus combined expertise and resources to develop and advance NU's digital library project management and production capabilities.

The Digital Technology Unit began managing a two-year IMLS funded project to digitally reformat Edward Curtis' 20 volume text, The North American Indian. This project will ultimately provide access and searching capabilities to text and integrate 2,200 previously digitized images of Curtis' North American Indian photographs, currently accessible on the Library of Congress' Making of America website. This project is being accomplished in collaboration with Special Collections Curator Russell Maylone.

This year we continued to work, along with many other NUL staff, to strengthen digital library collections. The IMLS funded League of Nations digital image files were sent to the University of Michigan for OCR conversion to minimally marked-up text files so that they can be archived for future access or enhancement. We also continued the two-year IMLS grant to digitize NUL Special Collection's 20 volume Edward Curtis North

American Indian text. In the process, we have learned much that will enable us to undertake many text and image projects.

We have worked within the DLC and, in the process, continue to develop our capacity to collaborate, plan, manage and implement digital projects---on a broad, organizational level as well as on a technical level. We have worked collaboratively and cooperatively with many Library units and individuals, developing policies, solving problems, communicating challenges and establishing procedures.

Finally, this year we worked with Digital Media Services and IT to develop a proposal that will align all our activities more closely in order to better focus NUL's combined strengths and resources to provide digital production services. Our program and our staff are evolving. We are committed to cooperation and achieving positive growth and contribution, along with others, within the Library.

Commercial Binding

This year we reformatted fewer volumes than the previous year because we have begun digitizing many of our brittle volumes, as they are photocopied. Digitizing these collections enables us to obtain a permanent hard copy replacement for the collections as well as share, print, or provide alternative access (via the web or FTP transfer) to these otherwise unavailable collections.

Next year we will explore offering mass deacidification options for individual items of special merit.

Conservation

The Conservation Lab reported 7992 general repairs and temporary bindings completed this year (22% of these contributed by the Music Library and SEL).

Environmental Monitoring and Control

--Contribute to planning efforts to move collections to Kresge offsite storage facility

--Further develop the environmental monitoring program

Develop formal reporting program that will take full advantage of the PEM monitoring, documentation and reporting tools.

The Lab continued to monitor environmental conditions within the Library and continued its participation in pilot study of the Image Permanence Institute's Preservation Environment Monitors (PEMs) and environmental evaluation software. The Lab reports that environmental conditions within the Library should be improved. This next year the environmental monitoring program will be expanded in order to document and report

environmental conditions more thoroughly to identify the most serious problems and develop prioritized recommendations for attention and action.

Emergency Response and Recovery

- Continue to improve NUL collections emergency program capabilities
 - Added to the emergency program handbook and distribute to staff
 - Developed emergency reporting procedures
 - Discussed improving communications systems for response teams
 - Need to improve library staff awareness of emergency program and procedures

The Library suffered the effects of one major downpour on August 22, 2002. The Conservation Lab staff worked alongside other library staff to respond internally to leaks and to help recover affected collections.

We did update the Disaster Handbook and continued to evaluate the disaster program. In the process we determined a serious need to educate and prepare staff, optimize our ability to respond to emergencies, document them and produce reports that will help us identify ways to prevent or better respond to future problems.

Library Preservation Supplies

Summary

Last year I stated that, except for the relatively young digital program, the preservation program had not changed significantly within the past years and needed a thorough review and evaluation. This year we began this process in order to assess internal effectiveness and efficiency and evaluate the Department's role and responsibility to contribute to the Library to serve current and future users.

PRESERVATION DEPARTMENT GOALS FOR 2003

Planning Goals:

- Conduct the 2003-2004 NUL Strategic Plan Initiative Preservation Survey
 - Work with collection curators to develop lists of large preservation projects
- Continue to raise funds to support preservation initiatives
 - Develop program or project "wish list" for prospective donors or endowments
- Incorporate environmental monitoring
- Continue Preservation Department operational evaluation and development:
 - Preservation Department materials workflows
 - Brittle Books Program
 - Conservation Lab
 - Commercial Binding Program
 - Mass Deacidification Program

Digital Reformatting Program

Administrative Goals:

- Make most effective and efficient use of preservation funding resources
 - Develop new plan for resource allocation within the Preservation Department
 - Develop more efficient program for library-wide preservation supply ordering
- Continue to develop statistical and reporting system that reflects program contribution and development and measures program effectiveness and efficiency

Education and Outreach Goals:

- Continue to develop preservation outreach and education programs
 - Revise the Preservation Department website
 - Deliver education programs for library staff

Digital Reformatting Goals:

- Continue to develop the digital preservation program in cooperation with others
 - Within digital production group
 - Within Library and collections units
 - Within CIC Preservation Officers group
- Continue digital reformatting project development and project completion
 - Submit proposal for continuing annual phased Africana poster digitization
 - Complete Curtis project
 - Begin digitally reformatting NUL collections on a routine basis, initiate pilot project for digitizing brittle books
 - Identify new projects in collaboration with collections units and the Digital Library Committee

Facilities and Environment Goals:

- Further develop the environmental monitoring program
 - Develop formal program that will make environmental reports available online for use by curators and facilities staff.

Emergency Response and Recovery Goals:

- Continue to improve NUL collections emergency program capabilities
 - Complete the emergency program handbook and distribute to staff
 - Improve communications systems for response teams
 - Improve library staff awareness of emergency program and procedures