

Cornell University:
The Department Of Preservation And Conservation
Outline Of Development
Shannon Zachary, Book Conservator
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The establishment of the Conservation Committee in 1982 began a program of steadily increasing support for preservation within the University Library. Under the leadership of Richard Strassberg, the committee was responsible for a number of initiatives, including surveys of portions of the collections, and the development of a disaster plan. It was not until the New York State landmark library legislation of 1984. However, that the strong recommendations of the committee for the creation of a preservation/conservation department could be implemented. The legislation provided for the annual funding of eleven comprehensive research libraries in the State, with each library receiving \$90,000 to establish and maintain a preservation program. Each library was required to submit a Five-Year Plan by March 1985, and by August of the same year, a Conservation Librarian position was established at Cornell and filled by the present Director.

The first task of the new librarian was to begin to reorganize existing resources by designing new commercial binding styles and procedures, retraining staff to repair damaged library materials, establishing in-house prebinding operations, and instituting changes in handling and security marking. A proposal for preservation education and training was quickly submitted to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and in early 1986 the grant award permitted the positions of Conservation Liaison Librarian, Paper Conservator, and Book Conservator to be established. Anne Kenney, Tatyana Petukhova, and Shannon Zachary were soon appointed to the positions respectively, and another timely grant from the new State Coordinated Grants Program enabled a fully-equipped conservation facility to be opened at the Library Annex.

From the beginning, the overall strategy of the Department has been to approach the preservation of the collections in two ways: first to preserve materials that are damaged through use, to quickly process all new unbound acquisitions, and to have periodicals commercially bound; second, to begin a collection by collection approach starting with those collections considered to be of great national significance and utilizing, where possible, grant funding. This bipartite strategy has resulted in the present configuration of preservation units and the continued development of the program, as articulated in the 1990 Five-Year Plan to New York State, and it is not anticipated that there will be any substantial changes in the near future.

At the present time there are ten distinct units within the Department, divided between the Director, John Dean, and the Associate Director, Anne Kenney. Those units concerned with conservation treatment,

consisting of: Collections Conservation, Book Repair, Preparations, Conservation Liaison, Book and Paper Conservation, are the direct managerial responsibility of the Director. Those units generally concerned with reformatting, consisting of: the Brittle Book Program, Scanning and Digitization, Preservation Microfilm, and (a slight anomaly) the Commercial Binding Office, are the direct responsibility of the Associate Director. The Department's administrative office represents the tenth unit, and is the source of all preservation grant writing, materials specification and ordering, and preservation reference. Dorothy Halgas is the Department secretary, and, in addition to her other duties, helps keep track of the many grant budgets administered by the Department.

A further successful Andrew W. Mellon grant award in 1991 enabled the appointment of Barbara Berger to the position of Reformatting Librarian, and Susana Harris to the position of Book and Collections Conservator. Barbara supervises the Preservation Microfilming unit and the project staff within it – currently Xiaoju Wang and Maria Cilveti – and the Brittle Books Technician, Joseph Sweet. Susana supervises the Book Repair unit with Judi Clark (head), Roger Clearwater, and Pat Fox, and the Preparations unit, staffed by Pat Teeter and Sherry Hubbard. She is also responsible for the conservation treatment of groups of pre-1850 books within the Outline Collection. A recent federal grant award places Susana as the conservator/director of a project to restore the French Revolution Collection with the assistance of three additional technicians.

The Book Repair Unit deals with the full repair of books damaged by reader use, as identified after circulation, and the unit directs books that have brittle paper to the Brittle Book Replacement Unit. Book Repair staff are trained to make a range of protective enclosures and to carry out a program of cloth rebinding for pre-1850 books under Susana's direction.

The Preparations Unit prebinds by the stiffening process large numbers of paperbacks prior to first-time shelving, and must work productively to keep pace with the books processed by Central Technical Services. As the staff numbers only 1.5 FTE, the unit is often supplemented by other Department staff to keep pace and to produce more than 4,000 items per month.

The Commercial Binding Office is headed by Susie Cobb, who is assisted by Laura Smith, Pam Clearwater, and Sharon Ray. The task of this unit is to prepare materials for commercial binding by collating all periodicals, retrieving the standard data from the binder's data base and generating binding instructions on-line to the binder, and carrying out quality control checks when the completed binding has been returned. As with Book Repair, this Office processes materials from all the endowed libraries, with the exception of Law.

The Conservation Facility, currently at the Library Annex, is staffed by the Paper Conservator, Tatyana Petukhova, and the Book Conservator, Shannon Zachary. Both are assisted by a conservation technician, Jane Foti. The conservators are responsible for the conservation and restoration of rare and unique library materials – generally those kept in the special collections of the University.

The Preservation Microfilming Unit under Barbara Berger, is responsible for the identification and preparation of library materials for filming and for the detailed inspection of all processed film. As the efforts of the unit are directed primarily to grant-funded projects for the Library's most important collections, it is essential that careful accounting and scheduling be maintained in this office. As the national preservation program initiatives are concerned with reformatting, the unit will continue to operate through grant funding into the future, and the size of its staff will always be determined by the nature of the project.

The Brittle Book Replacement Unit is related somewhat to the reformatting units, but its role is concerned mainly with the processing of recently-circulated library materials found to be brittle. Joseph Sweet is responsible for collecting data on the availability (reprints, microreproductions, etc.) of brittle books and their possible duplication in the collections before seeking replacement or discard decisions from selectors. Generally a book which needs to be replaced in the collection and is not available in some other form is photocopied onto archival paper and bound to produce a facsimile volume.

The most innovative unit is Scanning and Digitization, which has been the subject of a great deal of national interest. The two scanning technicians, Michael Friedman and Susan Poucher, are responsible for the electronic scanning of brittle materials that are ultimately reproduced in paper facsimile form after being stored and made available as electronic images. Activity has been largely research and development in cooperation with the Xerox Corporation, the Commission on Preservation and Access, and Cornell's Center

for Information Technology, but it is anticipated that eventually scanning production will begin to build a mass of digitized images from deteriorating library materials.

The Conservation Liaison Specialist, Joan Brink, organizes surveys of the collection in order to identify preservation candidates, and with the help of the curators, selects groups of materials for treatment by the conservation treatment staff. She closely monitors materials "in process" through a central documentation system, and is able to retrieve information on past work carried out by conservation staff. Furbishing at the shelf is also a part of Joan's responsibilities. Regular programs of leather dressing and vellum cleaning will be combined with at-the-shelf surveying following the move into the Kroch Library.

Over the last six years, the Department has been successful with a number of grants from a variety of sources, and all the projects have been designed to further the realization of the 1990 Five-Year Plan. The two Mellon grants have provided the Library with five vitally important positions without which the Department would not be able to progress. In return, the Department performs a series of preservation workshops and consultancies for libraries and archives throughout the country, and works with interns from other institutions for six-month sessions. New York State Coordinated Grants have placed Cornell in a position of regional leadership through: the "Central New York Emergency Mutual Response Team", which provided funds for the construction of a freezer building at Cornell adjacent to the Library Annex; the "New York Technician Training Program", a three year program under which Cornell trains book repair staff from smaller libraries for two-week periods and, in return, is able to support a conservation technician salary; the "Cornell as a Regional Resource" grant, which provided funding for most of the equipment and furnishings at the Conservation Facility in return for our willingness to serve in an advisory capacity to other libraries in the region; and a variety of other grants that have enabled Cornell to carry out specific preservation/conservation projects.

The Department has also been extremely successful in gaining grants to preserve the Library's collections by microfilm and scanning and digitization. Cornell has just completed a 3 year grant to microfilm 4,000 volumes from the Echols Collection as part of a Research Libraries Group (RLG)-sponsored, National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)-funded Great Collections Microfilm Project. The Great Collections Project will be extended for another 2 years and Cornell will film an additional 1,000 volumes from the Echols Collection. The largest preservation grant is that awarded by NEH for the microfilming of 10,000 volumes of Southeast Asian materials to begin early 1992. An additional RLG-sponsored, NEH-funded project is to microfilm important archival collections from the Department of Manuscripts and Archives and Labor Management Documentation Center. A New York State grant has enabled Cornell to microfiche 1,000 Political Pamphlets from the Labor Management Documentation Center.

In December, Cornell in conjunction with Xerox Corporation, completed a 2 year project which was funded in part by the Commission on Preservation and Access to test a prototype system for recording Brittle Books as digital images and producing, on demand, high quality and archivally sound paper facsimiles. The project also investigated some of the issues surrounding scanning, storing, retrieving, and providing access to digital images in a network environment. The Commission has funded an additional year's worth of work to investigate the production of microfilm from digital files and to provide direct access to the digital images on common computer platforms, such as the IBM PS/2, Apple MacIntosh, and Sun work stations.

Part of the result of this crucial microfilming activity has been the Library's ability to send film copies of threatened or missing materials to countries like Cambodia to help rebuild their national bibliographies lost through neglect or war. The Department has also assisted these countries more directly by staff involvement in conservation training on site in Cambodia, help in setting up preservation microfilming units abroad and in the rapid inspection at Cornell of film exposed in Cambodia in hazardous conditions. Because of the international importance of Cornell's activities in the preservation of these materials, Cornell will influence the future direction of the development of national preservation programs throughout Southeast Asia through the establishment of an international preservation/conservation center for the entire region.

The preservation and conservation program at Cornell has faithfully followed the course laid down for it by the original Conservation Committee, and, as resources become available, will achieve the goals set by the most recent Five-Year Plan of 1990.