

Institutional Profile: Julia Rogers Library, Goucher College
Sydney Roby, Preservation Librarian & Elora Cunningham, Preservation Assistant
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Background (excerpted from the 1992-93 Academic Catalogue)

The Julia Rogers Library includes a collection of 258,000 volumes and over 1,000 periodical subscriptions, along with extensive audiovisual materials and computerized reference tools. The library houses its collection on three floors of open shelves. The Decker Center for Information Technology's computer facilities are on the second floor. Open 94 hours a week, the library includes space for 350 people at tables, at carrels, and in group study rooms. Librarians offer research assistance to students, faculty, and staff, and training is available in the use of on-line data bases.

There are several special collections located in the Rare Book Room. These include the Jane Austen, Mark Twain and H. L. Mencken Collections, the college archives, and the history of costume. The library is also a U. S. Government Depository, with over 100,000 documents.

Goucher participates in OCLC, an international data base that provides computer access to the resources of 13,000 member libraries. Materials may be borrowed on interlibrary loan or used in the libraries of most area institutions.

History of preservation at Goucher

In the early 1950's the Friends of the Library initiated a volunteer book mending group, the Monday Morning Menders. There were standing presses, board shears, sewing frames and other equipment on hand (source and use unknown), and early repairs were made using book cloth and "Magic Mend" (casein) adhesive. As they became available, self-adhesive book cloths were used to cover damaged spines and corners, and stiff gummed cloth strips were used inside the books to hold in loose pages. When the building was renovated in 1986 the volunteer mending program was phased out and the bindery equipment was discarded. Oversight of mending operations was added to the many responsibilities of Lillie Brinkley, Technical Services Assistant. She trained the students to apply a better quality of tape to the books, and these repairs were carried out until late 1989. A new Director, Nancy Magnuson, arrived in 1987 from Haverford College where there was an active preservation program under the guidance of Don Rash, so she was sensitive to preservation issues. She made sure that books were shelved and handled properly, and began the long campaign to install an HVAC system in an old wing of the library. Nancy began to remove especially shabby books from the shelves, but it soon became apparent that a larger operation was needed. She initiated the current policy of repairing damaged books as they circulate, and a substantial backlog (about 2,000 volumes) ensued. Nancy contacted Sydney Roby, a Preservation Consultant, in 1989 and hired her to conduct a condition survey and to train the students in book repair. The library bought the necessary equipment and supplies, and students began to mend books. Sydney became the Special Collections/Preservation Librarian and the program expanded. The staff has mended about 2,000 books since June 1991.

The program

The Preservation Program incorporates all departments, but is primarily run by Sydney, who has both an M. S. in Library Science and the Advanced Certificate in Preservation Administration from Columbia University, and has been a bookbinder since 1974. She trains and oversees the students who do the mending, but most of the teaching and supervision is currently performed by an alumna, Lori Cunningham, who received intensive training by Sydney for over a year. The Program was designed to be self-perpetuating, so that after a few years each student should have learned all aspects of the program and be able to train incoming students. We hope to find a student out of each group of trainees who is particularly interested in preservation and has the ability both to teach and supervise – so far this approach has worked out.

Sydney is ultimately responsible for treatment decisions and routing, but the more advanced students learn the decision process and most decisions are made by Lori with the students-in-training. Individuals are encouraged to question the initial decisions, especially since unseen structural problems may be uncovered

during mending.

There are two mending areas. The main bindery, upstairs, is roomy, light, and airy with a great view. The second one, in the Rare Book Room, incorporates the personal equipment of the Preservation Librarian, who is also the Special Collections Librarian and Archivist. A third area, used by Technical Services, processes books sent to the commercial binderies, laminates or puts materials into pamphlet covers or book jackets, letters spines and applies call numbers. This operation is separate, although the Preservation Librarian specifies binding instructions for older materials sent to commercial binderies. Technical Services staff make decisions about the treatment of new materials.

The routing slips were developed by the library Director, Nancy Magnuson, and are color-keyed for efficiency. Blue slips are used for quick repairs, to be done immediately so that the books can go back to the shelves. We keep loose track of the order in which books come in to be mended so they don't sit around too long. Also, if a book is needed we mend it immediately. Golden yellow slips signify more extensive repairs, light yellow designates boxes, and green slips route materials to Technical Services to be sent to the bindery or to be re-lettered.

Damaged materials are pulled out of circulation as they are re-shelved, by the Readers Services staff, or sometimes before they are added (as in the case of gift books) by an Acquisitions person. Books are mended before they are sent through Interlibrary Loan. If books borrowed from another institution are damaged they are mended before being returned, with the institution's permission. Some books are transferred from the general collections to the rare book room. If they have been repaired with tape before, and need to be mended again, then we repair them before transfer. For the most part the rare books are safely housed and left alone.

We don't throw very much away. Badly deteriorated volumes are boxed in lightweight cardboard, but few of the older ones can be replaced. This problem will have to be addressed, particularly where reference materials and journals are involved. We would like to initiate a cooperative microfilming process in the future. Photocopying is an option, but time consuming, so we consult a subject specialist to determine the suitability of retention. We routinely photocopy mangled pages rather than mend them, unless there is any reason to believe that the volume may have artifactual value.

Pamphlets continue to be problematic. They have been put in envelopes, but they flop around. We have stuck them into pam covers with the traditional gummed cloth, but the covers detach and the text falls out. In addition, pages break along the hard edge of the cloth, so we have used pinking shears to soften the edge. It is better not to apply the adhesive directly to the pamphlet. Sewing through the fold eliminates the problem of detaching covers, and if a blank outer cover is included, the adhesive can be stuck to it. These measures are time-consuming and not really satisfactory. In the future we are going to try a new product—a clear mylar pamphlet cover with narrow adhesive strips at top and bottom. The strips turn-in and are affixed to the middle of the pamphlet. The covers are clear so titling will be unnecessary, but the self-adhesive strips cannot be removed without damage to the pa treated by Widener's facility.