

From Treasure Room to Research Center: Special Collections in the United States

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In 2003, the Association of Research Libraries Board of Directors endorsed a statement entitled “Research Libraries and the Commitment to Special Collections.”ⁱ The document, prepared by the ARL Special Collections Task Force, affirms the critical role played by special collections in fulfilling the mission of research libraries. To meet their obligation to provide primary sources to scholars, members of the Association of Research Libraries – the 123 largest in North America – should:

- Provide reliable funding for the support, staffing and preservation of Special Collections;
- In communications, characterize Special Collections as fundamental to the mission of the Library;
- Make information about all Special Collections visible online within a reasonable time period, following established guidelines for what constitutes adequate access;
- House Special Collections in secure, environmentally sound space;
- Provide functional, welcoming space for the use of these collections;
- Include Special Collections in overall strategic planning and library development;
- Work collaboratively with appropriate partners to build collections in emerging areas of scholarly interest, to enhance access to Special Collections, and to design the most effective, standards-based digitization projects.

As a manifesto, these recommendations are not controversial or provocative. What is radical, however, is the consensus on the part of research library directors that special collections is not only central to the mission of the research library, but a defining characteristic of it: “one of the critical identifiers.”ⁱⁱⁱ This attitude signals a dramatic shift in the status and role of special collections in the United States, which is the subject of my talk this morning. As my title suggests, I will trace the development of special collections in the United States “From Treasure Room to Research Center” -- from an exclusive and formidable repository to a vital force in scholarship, teaching, and learning – a journey that took place over the course of the 20th century and is closely tied to broader trends in higher education and libraries and a changes in the culture within special collections itself.

The progressive development implied by my title is somewhat misleading. Special collections has always provided research materials and supported scholarship; and it continues to possess, and must nurture, characteristics of a treasure room. Cultivating this multifaceted identity is, in fact, crucial to exploiting the full potential of special collections and developing needed support for it.

The question of definition arises early in any discussion of special collections. Are these collections “special” in the sense of exceptional and superior in quality to other library materials; are they “special” because they are fundamentally, identifiably different in form or content; or do they simply have “special needs” of management and services? More specifically, are we speaking of certain types of materials, or an organizational structure?

In 1998, the Association of Research Libraries conducted a survey of members’ special collections (based on 1996-97 data). The purpose of the survey was to provide a basis for local decision-making by making available comparative data, and to establish benchmarks that would make it possible to track future progress. [As you know, this was the model for the survey of “Special Collections in German Libraries” on which Jürgen Weber reported.] For the survey, ARL defined special collections based on the nature of the materials (“library materials which, in addition to supporting research, are often characterized by artifactual and monetary value, by uniqueness or rarity, and by a long-term preservation and access commitment on the part of the library”).ⁱⁱⁱ Respondents to the survey, however, reported data from “established rare book and manuscript units or similar units.”^{iv} This reflects the fact that budgets are allocated, and personnel and use statistics are maintained, by separate units within the institution’s organizational structure.

In the United States, administrative units that house special collections materials go by a variety of names, of which special collections is just one. Others include rare book room and rare book and manuscript library. As Alice Prochaska has pointed out, there is no “special collections” division at Yale; and, in addition to the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, there are numerous “special collections” units throughout the Yale Library system. In the mid-20th century, when academic libraries consolidated independent units for the sake of efficiency, the term special collections was sometimes

used to indicate that the new entities included rare books, manuscripts, and separate subject collections.^v At Chicago, for example, the Department of Special Collections was formed in 1955 by bringing together several separate units including an Abraham Lincoln collection and the Harriet Monroe Modern Poetry Library. We changed our name in 2001 to the Special Collections Research Center to emphasize the activities we support, and since then several institutions have made this same change. At others, formats are highlighted: Cornell University's new Kroch Library houses the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections; while at Emory University, the former Department of Special Collections has just become the Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library (MARBL).^{vi}

Even more important than variations in names, the characteristics according to which materials are located in special collections units differs greatly among institutions. Items in circulating or general collections at one library will be in special collections at another, depending on institutional history and mission. The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL/ALA has established "Guidelines on the Selection of General Collection Materials for Transfer to Special Collections" that include criteria based on date of publication and physical characteristics such as illustrations and original publishers bindings.^{vii} But local transfer policies are influenced by the priority each institution places on providing researchers direct access to materials through browsing in open stacks, as well as by pragmatic considerations such as staff to implement transfer projects and available stacks space. The need for transferring items to special collections may be less of an issue now, since offsite, non-browsable storage facilities provide protection for "medium rare" materials without allocating limited special collections stacks space and staff resources. But the definition of special collections materials will always be institution-specific.

I will be speaking about special collections as distinct administrative units with dedicated housing, services, and staff, because it is within these separate physical spaces and organizational structures that the culture of special collections is defined. The transition from "treasure room to research center" is, essentially, a cultural change effected by special collections staff and manifested in programs for developing, providing access to, and promoting use of special collections. My focus is on special collections in academic

research libraries, although many of the points I will make apply to other types of institutions.

In fact, the term “special collections” was first used in the United States to describe comprehensive subject collections located in large public libraries such as the Boston Public Library and the New York Public Library; independent research libraries such as the Newberry Library in Chicago; and historical societies such as the New-York Historical Society and the Historical Society of Wisconsin.^{viii} These collections were formed in an era when American researchers were not affiliated with academic institutions, and college and university libraries were very modest.

The circumstances for scholarship in the United States began to change at the end of the 19th century, with the concurrent emergence of the research university and the research library.^{ix} Germany, of course, was the model for these developments: “During the final quarter of the nineteenth century, few academic Americans who embraced the ideal of scientific research failed to acknowledge an intellectual debt to an explicitly German style of educational experience.”^x Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1873, is usually cited as the earliest manifestation of this phenomenon. For the purposes of my talk, however (to say nothing of institutional loyalty), the University of Chicago provides the strongest example of the relationship between the growth of research libraries and the development of special collections as “research centers.”

In the summer of 1891, William Rainey Harper, who had just been appointed president of the new University, arrived in Berlin. Harper had already formed his vision of a research university on the German model, and he was determined to put his ambitious plan into place by the time the University opened its doors in October 1892. Harper had hired a number of leading scholars, and he realized that books were needed to support their work and to confer scholarly credibility on his entire enterprise. Soon after his arrival in Berlin, Harper learned that the inventory of the distinguished firm, S. Calvary and Company, was for sale. Founded in 1852, the firm combined publishing with the sale of antiquarian and second-hand books, supplying scholarly collections in Europe and North America in the fields of classical philology, archaeology, and the natural sciences. Its antiquarian book catalogues covered many subjects, including oriental literature, linguistics, zoology, and botany. When G. Heinrich Simon made an offer to

Harper, the stock was described as containing 300,000 volumes and 150,000 pamphlets.^{xi} While there would be considerable debate about the actual size of the purchase, the scope and significance of the collection were never disputed. This acquisition instantly made Chicago the third largest academic library in the United States, with a research collection far deeper in many areas than peer institutions founded 250 years earlier.

Harper aimed at providing the university with a research collection – he was not buying “special collections” in anything like the sense we understand the term today. The so-called “Berlin Collection” contained printed works renowned as scarce at the time and important manuscripts, but it was the depth of holdings in individual subject areas that made the offer so compelling: “palaeography (2,000 volumes), periodicals (25,000), Greek and Roman archaeology (80,000), Greek and Latin classics (80,000), Greek and Latin authors of modern times (3,000), Greek and Roman philology (2,000), general linguistics and Orientalia (2,500), modern languages (4,000), history, the “auxiliary” sciences, and varia (3,000), art, including a collection of illustrated works (1,000), philosophical sciences (6,000), natural history (6,000).”^{xii}

The Berlin Collection was never segregated as a “special collection,” and we are no longer able to reconstruct its original contents. It became part of a working collection that set the tone for special collections at Chicago to this day. The extent to which Chicago has always placed the highest priority on direct access to materials is illustrated by the fact that one of the most valuable works in the Berlin Collection – a “unique” copy of the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, a collection of engravings of Rome and antiquities numbering nearly 1,000 engravings – remained in our circulating, open stacks until the 1960s.

An even more dramatic illustration that special collections at Chicago has always been a “working” collection is the Goodspeed New Testament Manuscript Collection. These 65 New Testament Manuscripts in Greek, Syriac, Ethiopic, Armenian, and Latin, of great textual and artistic significance, dating from the 7th to the 19th century, were purchased in the 1920s and 1930s to support the work of Edgar Goodspeed and other faculty members in the Divinity School. Goodspeed also used the manuscripts as teaching tools. He wrote a mystery novel, *The Corpse in the Colophon*, whose main character -- a

thinly disguised self-portrait -- keeps a trunk of manuscripts outside his office door so that his students can consult them at any time. This may not be a literal description of how Goodspeed provided access to the manuscripts, but it certainly reflects the spirit of his approach. I will return to the *Speculum* and the Goodspeed New Testament Manuscript Collection later in my talk.

In the first decades of the 20th century, often called the “Golden Age” of private collecting, the price of rare books and manuscripts was rising rapidly; and libraries (including Chicago) began to recognize the need to isolate valuable materials already in their collections for safekeeping. Yale segregated its “rarities” in the 1890s; Harvard established a Treasure Room when Widener opened in 1915. The proliferation of treasure rooms and rare book collections was also fueled by donations from private collectors who felt that “special” collections (in this context, the term implied exceptional and superior) would enhance the prestige of their alma mater. The desire of institutions to honor the donor’s generosity – or meet the conditions of a donation – sometimes resulted in separate rooms, even entire buildings, to house the gifts.^{xiii}

The chief motivations in establishing treasure room collections were safekeeping and individual philanthropy. Access and use were not important factors. Physically separate and remote, often intimidating, these collections were more like ecclesiastical treasuries than part of a research library. Considered jewels in the crown, treasure room collections conferred institutional prestige and solidified relationships with wealthy alumni and private collectors. The content of the collections reflected the collecting tastes and scholarship of the day in their emphasis on early printed books and first editions of canonical texts. The operations were run by curators who often came from the faculty or the booktrade and cultivated close ties to private collectors; and the materials were available for use on a limited basis by advanced scholars who happened to know they existed, usually because of a personal relationship with the donor or curator. It would be difficult to argue that special collections contributed to the university’s teaching or research mission in the first half of the 20th century.

American universities grew at an astounding pace in the two decades following World War II, and resources to support research were considered essential. Money was plentiful; and in a rapid rush to attract scholars, libraries became an important recruiting

tool and status symbol. Special collections were newly established, especially at state institutions aiming to raise their research profile.^{xiv} The universities of California, Texas, Indiana, and Illinois are only a few of the best-known examples. Gordon Ray characterized the environment for special collections in this period as one of “affluence, institutional involvement, and the knowledge explosion.”^{xv}

This expansive era was short-lived, and it left special collections in an especially vulnerable position. Funds for staffing never kept pace with acquisitions, so large cataloging arrearages accumulated as collections arrived far faster than they could be processed. The labor-intensive nature of cataloging and describing rare and unique materials meant that vast quantities of it remained invisible, while the need for security and preservation measures created significant barriers to use. Thus, when library budgets were cut in the 1970s, administrators began to question the value of acquiring and maintaining high-cost, low-use collections. In 1980, historian Neil Harris called special collections “atavistic”: “they are fussier, less accessible, more resistant to rationalization than other parts of the academic library. They are costly to operate, seemingly inefficient and unpredictable; they present special preservation, storage, and cataloging problems.”^{xvi} In 1982, Gordon Ray declared that the “privileged status” of university rare book libraries was “now threatened”; and in 1984, William Matheson noted that “justifying our existence” was a necessary preoccupation of special collections librarians.^{xvii} But just ten years later, in response to an informal survey I conducted for a talk on special collections at the turn of the 21st century, one colleague captured the spirit of many in observing, “factors that once kept us out of the mainstream of research and library activities are now thrusting us into the center.”^{xviii} I would like to turn now to these factors.

Technology, of course, is the most obvious force for change in special collections, as it has been throughout libraries, making it possible to share the cultural and intellectual treasures in special collections far and wide, to reach entirely new audiences, and to create new research and teaching tools. But we know that it is how tools are used that really matters. Special collections librarians embraced technology early on, exploiting it to envision and implement an entirely new role for special collections. Given the longstanding and not entirely unjustified stereotype of special collections as an isolated outpost in research libraries, how did this new culture emerge?

During the 1970s, a generation of special collections librarians – many with recent Ph.D. degrees – entered the profession through programs aimed at developing specialized skills within library schools. At Columbia University’s School of Library Service, for example, Terry Belanger launched a program in the mid-1970s to train rare book and special collections librarians. He established Rare Book School at Columbia in 1983 and moved it to the University of Virginia at Charlottesville in 1992, where it now flourishes, after Columbia closed its library school. As many of you know, Terry recently was named a MacArthur Fellow – the so-called “genius” award – for his contributions as a rare book preservationist and educator.

This cohort (of which I am a member) sees the potential, as well as issues and needs, of special collections in the context of the broader academic research library environment. As members of this new generation assumed positions of responsibility, we made the “integration” of special collections a very high priority, out of both philosophic and pragmatic conviction. We view special collections as a part of, not apart from, the research library. And we realize that – especially in an environment of financial constraints and increased demand for “accountability” -- we must demonstrate our contribution to the university’s mission in order to advocate effectively for needed resources. Increasing use became the chief priority in making this case.^{xix}

Our strategies focus on improving access and establishing fruitful collaborations with library colleagues, with other institutions, with allied professions, and above all with members of the faculty. External funds (chiefly from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute for Museum and Library Services) have supported major bibliographical access initiatives including retrospective conversion; cataloging projects for rare books, manuscripts, and archives; launching online finding aids; and developing digital collections. Consortial partnerships and funding agencies encourage projects that build interoperative systems and create virtual collections of digitized materials from several institutions. Efforts to overcome physical or psychological barriers to using special collections include new public services positions dedicated to outreach and instruction; designing technology-equipped classrooms to facilitate the presentation of original objects alongside digital resources; and expanding hours of service. Our

collection development activities, too, are much more user-focused, emphasizing sources in all formats and areas that support new directions in scholarly inquiry.

The success of these efforts was confirmed by the 1998 ARL survey, which provided “reassurance about the vitality and centrality of these collections.”^{xx} Survey data revealed fairly high and growing levels of use, especially by undergraduates; collections that were growing in both size and scope; stable or growing staffing levels, and stable or growing budgets. At the same time, areas of concern were noted, chiefly large amounts of uncataloged and unprocessed material, especially in nonbook formats; and increasing demands on special collections staff as a result of digitization.

At a symposium held at Brown University in 2001, special collections librarians and library administrators agreed on the need to “find ways to use information technology more effectively to explore and expand the value to research and teaching of these important resources.”^{xxi} This occasion marked the beginning of a joint effort to strengthen the ability of special collections to realize its potential, a partnership that would have been impossible to imagine just a decade earlier. To this end, the ARL Special Collections Task Force, formed later that year, was charged to:

- Enhance access to collections and backlogs, surface “hidden collections.” Advocate for and administer funding for projects, and collaborate with RBMS to develop and endorse guidelines for what constitutes adequate access.
- Promote special collections as fundamental to the mission of the research library.^{xxii}

Under the auspices of the Task Force, several initiatives have been launched to advance the goal of reducing processing arrearages, especially for manuscript and archival materials and other non-book formats, where they are highest. In a white paper written for the Task Force on “Hidden Collections, Scholarly Barriers,” access is defined as “the processes followed to make materials of all formats available to users: the tools used to publicize materials to potential users; and the openness with which we allow our collections to be used by the public.”^{xxiii} Moreover, the document recognizes that “access needs to be electronic, especially because of the global nature of our services.” Rare book catalogers have produced standards for bibliographic description of rare

materials, with several options for collection-level records.^{xxiv} Archivists are engaged in a vigorous debate about the nature of processing and how it can be substantially streamlined.^{xxv} A multi-institutional cooperative grant project proposal developed as an ARL Special Collections Task Force initiative seeks to test new processing strategies in the field.

Special collections librarians have also forged alliances with library colleagues in response to the collaborative nature of digital work. These interactions increase the visibility of special collections in the library and increase colleagues' knowledge of our collections and areas of expertise. Special collections remains the chief source of "content" for digital collections; and we have skills in selection, presentation, and interpretation that are essential for building effective interfaces and online presentations. Our understanding of archival arrangement and description is crucial to digital archiving programs; the EAD/DTD was among the earliest, widely-used metadata schemes; and our experience dealing with intellectual property issues for unique materials helps us to understand these issues as they relate to electronic resources. In many instances special collections librarians have assumed leadership roles in building and maintaining digital collections.

As important as these collaborations have been in furthering integration of special collections, it is partnerships with faculty that define the new role of special collections as research centers within libraries. If a "center" is a point of intersection, a place to which things are attracted and from which they emanate, then special collections is becoming a true "center" for teaching, scholarship, and learning. Our collections and our staff serve as a magnet for students, faculty and researchers. Special collections is where human and intellectual resources are connected with those who use them to create and disseminate new knowledge. These exciting developments are taking place onsite and online, in our classrooms, in our reading rooms, and via our Web sites.

New directions in scholarship have brought new users into the center. The most important influence comes from book history and print culture studies, with their focus on the materiality of books as material artifacts and sources for the history of reading. There is also far more interest in fugitive and ephemeral materials, always an important part of special collections, from social and cultural historians. Visual culture studies draws

researchers from many disciplines to investigate relationships between text and image in illustrated books. As research grows increasingly multidisciplinary, traditional materials are being used in very different ways. For example, illustrated anatomies once studied chiefly by intellectual and art historians are primary sources for gender studies.

Though the emphasis on research has by no means diminished in American universities, there is also renewed interest in teaching, in improving the quality of the undergraduate experience, and in asking undergraduates to conduct research. These developments may be driven by the highly competitive environment in higher education for recruiting the best students. But they also result from pedagogical changes. Describing higher education during the 1990s, Scott Bennett, Yale University Librarian Emeritus, wrote: “A long-gathering understanding of students’ most effective learning behaviors was making itself felt in the adoption of active learning practices. Students everywhere were increasingly working in collaborative study groups of their own making [and] many faculty members built experiential and problem solving materials into their courses and shaped assignments around the expectation of collaborative study.”^{xxvi}

Responding to these developments, libraries have become spaces for teaching and learning. Special collections is uniquely well suited to enrich the undergraduate experience, since our collections are filled with teaching “treasures” that immediately engage students. Separate history of printing courses have long been offered in special collections, often by the curator; and they play an important role in cultivating future generations of bibliophiles and donors. Now use of special collections is integrated into courses across the curriculum.

At most private, and some public, institutions, in the United States, the number of students in non-lecture courses (25-30) is small enough to make class visits to special collections feasible. Traditionally, classes in special collections consisted of students viewing items related to a course that were set up on tables. The sessions are now much more likely to be interactive conversations between student, teachers, librarians, and materials. As one scholar expressed it, “of course, we are now using digital resources to teach, but even more important is that we are also using other kinds of traditional special collections in ways that we have seldom done before ... The combination of the availability of source materials in digital forms and the focus on active

learning based on real-life experimentation with research data [is the basis for what we are doing]. This emerging conjunction provides an entirely new environment in which there is no longer a distinction between scholarship and teaching. And special collections are likely to be one of the crucial sites for this process to take place.”^{xxvii}

Special collections librarians are full partners in this enterprise. No longer content to host “show-and-tell” sessions, we work with faculty to develop semester-long courses specifically designed around unique materials. We identify and contact individual faculty who are teaching courses related to our holdings, select materials, co-teach sessions, post examples of courses that have been taught in special collections and lists of items that have been used in them on our Web sites. We suggest paper topics and assignments that bring students into our reading rooms as researchers. A number of special collections have created sophisticated online tutorials to introduce students to research skills using primary sources.^{xxviii}

The success of these efforts has brought some unexpected challenges. How comfortable are we about materials being “used” in a classroom setting, as opposed to being “read” in a reading room? Some books and manuscripts are obviously too fragile – or valuable -- to be handled by a group, but bringing students into special collections and then instructing them to “look but don’t touch” can send a very offputting message unless expectations are carefully managed.^{xxix} At Chicago we have a high-resolution document camera that goes a long way towards easing this tension. Class discussions focus on texts, images, or bindings that are projected on a plasma screen and can be seen clearly and at the same time by everyone. During the class visit, students examine the original as an object on a cradle and are encouraged to return to consult the item individually in the reading room. The staffing demands of a full-fledged instructional program are considerable: large quantities of materials must be paged and reshelfed, 25 or 30 students arrive for a class session at once needing orientation to procedures, staff need time to prepare for classes and teach them, and their other duties must be covered. In addition, our traditional services and hours are not designed to support the way that undergraduates work on assignments – at the very last minute and late into the night. Digitization provides a solution to some of these concerns, especially the potential wear-and-tear on frequently used materials. Documents can be scanned and presented on a faculty member’s course Web site and used by students in assignments 24/7. But there

is no doubt that offering new and expanded services to increasing audiences, without reducing any traditional functions, is very demanding for staff and poses some risks to the materials in our care.

Research grants and fellowships are another way we are bringing new users into special collections. Library research fellowships are now routine in independent research libraries such as the Newberry Library and the Huntington Library. In the past decade, a number of academic research libraries have established similar programs, chiefly supported by private donors. The programs encourage use of the collections and raise the profile of the institution among scholars who might otherwise not be familiar with its strengths. Some institutions, such as the William Andrews Clark Library at UCLA, use prizes and fellowships to attract undergraduates. Others offer annual awards for the best student papers produced on the basis of research in special collections.

Physical exhibitions remain important opportunities to attract new audiences to the center. As one colleague observed, “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 ... knows that the exhibition of culturally or historically significant objects can be remarkably popular, entertaining, and educational.”^{xxx} Exhibitions are integral to special collections’ role as museum, wunderkammer, or treasure room. They perform an invaluable function in presenting and interpreting our collections and providing the basis for scholarship. Incorporating video, scanned images, and other aspects of technology into exhibitions can broaden the appeal, but the chief objective of exhibitions should be to enhance appreciation and understanding of the authentic original, which is a chief responsibility of special collections in this digital age.

A far broader array of public programs, often but by no means always connected to exhibitions, also attracts new audiences and presents a more open and accessible identity. In addition to the familiar lecture-and-reception, we host informal talks and panel presentations. At Chicago we hold an open house on the first day of orientation each fall at which we show selected highlights from the collection. The average number of new students and their families who visit is 600. They are amazed at the items they see, but

even more important is the chance for staff to communicate that these materials are here to be used. Having just paid their first tuition bills, parents are especially impressed to find out that this is one benefit of a Chicago education. At the Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin, “Poetry on the Plaza” readings provide a regular presence of poetry on campus and create a public face for the collections. In conjunction with a Hans Christian Anderson centennial conference and scholarly symposium, the Cotsen Library at Princeton presented “Andersen’s works in various forms, including live storytelling, films, a dramatic production, and even an operatic adaptation.”^{xxxix}

When new library buildings are designed or existing ones remodeled, much thought is being given to making special collections more welcoming and visible. Placing special collections on the first floor, often near the front door (along with the now-ubiquitous café) for example, makes a strong statement about accessibility. Allocating such prime real estate to special collections confirms its centrality to the library. In these contexts, the display of “treasures” announces their availability to all who come into the building. Thus, architecture is another tool in creating the special collections research center.

Special collections in the United States has always recognized its responsibility to a global community of researchers. This obligation is traditionally met by welcoming visiting researchers and providing microfilms and photocopies to those unable to travel. Digitization has given us completely new ways to fulfill this role. We are collaborating with researchers and with other institutions to create a global network of digitized resources and interactive Web sites that function as “virtual” research centers.

The Library of Congress’s American Memory Project provided many special collections in the United States with their first experience in building digital collections. In the mid-1990s, LC offered grants (funded by Ameritech) to enable institutions to digitize American historical materials; and provided guidelines for describing and presenting the material. At first, it looked as if these efforts -- “incunabula” of the digital era –might turn out to be online treasure rooms – selected high-spots rather than in-depth, comprehensive research collections. And, because the target audience was kindergarten through 12th grade, some of us, especially in private institutions, felt uneasy about devoting energy to a group we had not previously viewed as our primary constituency. But it quickly became apparent that online resources serve multiple

purposes, discovered and put to use in ways and that simply cannot be foreseen. American Memory also demonstrated the importance of standards for cross-collection searching. RLG's Cultural Resources and the Open Archives Initiative are more recent examples of our commitment to supporting searching across collections. Digital collections and presentations of special collections materials on Web sites are the "front door" to our treasure rooms, satisfying the needs of some and beckoning others to explore in person the vast amounts that are unlikely to be digitized.

Two current projects at Chicago illustrate the convergence of teaching, research and outreach; and the role of special collections as a center for these activities. Several years ago Margaret Mitchell, a University of Chicago New Testament scholar, was planning to teach a course on the Gospel of Mark, focusing on a curious manuscript in the Chicago collection known as "Archaic" Mark, which is either a very early prototype or a later "forgery." Professor Mitchell realized that with a "digital codex" to study, her students would come to Special Collections far better prepared for their direct encounter with the artifact. In fact, she first described her goal as a logical extension into the digital age of the trunk in Edgar Goodspeed's novel. But as she developed the project with information technology and library staff, Professor Mitchell's vision expanded dramatically. The digital codex became an interactive learning tool supporting commentary and annotations, as well as a vehicle for examining parallels between the electronic media revolution and the one that characterized early Christianity. The success of Professor Mitchell's course led us to aim at digitizing the entire Goodspeed New Testament Manuscript Collection, so that scholars worldwide can investigate these magnificent manuscripts and use them in similarly innovative ways. I am delighted to report that we have just received a National Leadership grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services for this work.

Rebecca Zorach, an art history faculty member at Chicago, has been studying the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, teaching classes based upon the collection, and organizing a major *Speculum* exhibition for 2007. She is particularly interested in the collecting history of this work, the core of which is a group of engravings published in the 1560s and 70s by the Roman print publisher Antonio Lafreri and subsequently enlarged by additions. The Chicago copy (the one that came to us with the Berlin collection and remained in the circulating collection for 75 years) is the largest collection by far. But

Professor Zorach knows that other copies contain images not present in the Chicago copy and different, sometimes altered, impressions of the same images. She has set as her goal a virtual *Speculum* – starting with the digitization of all the images in the Chicago copy and the creation of a searchable interface, for which we have already received funding. The next step will be a large-scale collaborative project to add digital images from *Speculum* copies around the world to the database and serve as an interactive site for scholarship. The Goodspeed and *Speculum* projects serve local teaching and research needs. They also make unique resources available to a global network of scholars and lifelong learners who will use them in entirely new ways to create new knowledge.

In the 21st century, special collections librarians in the United States are performing multiple roles, some of them traditional and many of them new. We will talk more about these expectations, and the skills they require of staff, at this afternoon's session devoted to competencies, education, and training. At the same time, our enduring role as stewards must be unwavering. In the digital age, our obligation to the artifact – its authenticity and its preservation -- is more important than ever; and this responsibility now extends beyond printed books and manuscripts to encompass audio, visual, and digital media. Special collections is still very much a treasure room: indeed, in a world of surrogates, the “aura” of the original has been heightened, not diminished. In a recent article on the “sweet smell” of T. E. Lawrence's copy of the first edition of Joyce's *Ulysses*, which helped prove that the book was read by many of his Royal Air Force comrades, Rich Oram of the Humanities Research Center remarked that in special collections, “you read with all your senses.”^{xxxii}

Special collections librarians promote appreciation of the research, aesthetic, sensory, and emotional value of artifacts. These activities engage people with our materials and help develop the funding support we need to fulfill our multiple responsibilities. We display our treasures on site, as in the “American Treasures” exhibition in the magnificently renovated Thomas Jefferson building at the Library of Congress, or online, via collaborative Web sites such as American Memory and “Treasures of the National Libraries of Europe.” We must continue to treasure our collections, for these treasures are at the center of everything we do in special collections.

THANK YOU.

ⁱ [Hhttp://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/principles.html](http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/principles.html)H

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Judith M. Panitch, *Special Collections in ARL Libraries; Results of the 1998 Survey Sponsored by the ARL Research Collections Committee* (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 2001), 14.

^{iv} Idem.

^v William L. Joyce, p. "Special Collections," in *Encyclopedia of Library History*, ed. Wayne A. Wiegand and Donald G. Davis, Jr. (New York: Garland, 1994), 597.

^{vi} *College & Research Libraries News*, September 2005, vol. 66, no. 8 (September 2005), 567.

^{vii} [Hhttp://www.rbms.nd.edu/H](http://www.rbms.nd.edu/H)

^{viii} Neil Harris, "Special Collections and Academic Scholarship: A Tangled Relationship," in *Libraries and Scholarly Communication in the United States; The Historical Dimension*, ed. Phyllis Dain and John Y. Cole, Beta Phi Mu Monograph, no. 2 (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), 64-5.

^{ix} Phyllis Dain, "Scholarship, Higher Education, and Libraries in the United States: Historical Questions and Quests," in Dain and Cole, 5.

^x Arthur T. Hamlin, *The University Library in the United States; Its Origins and Development* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 48; Laurence R. Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1965), 126.

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