Preservation Recommendations for Special Collections

Executive Summary of Recommendations: Conservation Needs Assessment Project (CNAP) Preservation’s Facility Survey

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Executive Summary

This is a summary of recommendations to improve the preservation of the University Libraries’ Special Collections (SPC). It is based on information gathered during the Conservation Needs Assessment Project (CNAP) and Preservation Facility Surveys. Expanded comments and material specific recommendations may be viewed in those individual reports.

Relocation to a collection storage area specifically designed for rare and fragile research materials is first among any recommendations. Such a facility, regardless of location, must include climate controls appropriate to different material types as well as storage equipment designed to house the various materials held by this collection. Although the Norlin Renaissance plans include a new facility for the Libraries' special collections, relocation does not appear to be imminent. All of the following recommendations should be weighed against any potential move(s) of the collections.

Recommended actions are listed below in priority order. Some of these recommendations are in various stages of implementation.

➢ Improve emergency planning and ability to respond to emergencies that threaten this collection.
  • Vigorously continue the ongoing effort to complete cataloging of the collections. Lack of an inventory of rare and valuable materials that is backed-up offsite makes recovery or insurance claims in the event of a disaster very problematic. We recommend continued exploration of the value of short records (such as More Product Less Processing) towards achieving this goal.
  • Provide and maintain a shelf plan to be included in the Emergency Plan, with priority salvage materials. In addition, the shelves should be marked to speed recovery.
  • Conduct a systematic review of the values provided annually to University Risk Management for our Fine Arts and other insurance. Then make a consistent effort to track acquisitions and add these each year.

➢ Using the Conservation Needs Assessment Program (CNAP) and the Facilities Survey, work with the Preservation department to develop a preservation plan that will do the most good for the largest number of items, especially the high value and unique materials.
  • Verify that there is a clear set of collection priorities so that, as much as possible, resources are being applied for the greatest good. Salvage priorities for Special Collections is one starting point for establishing general preservation priorities.
  • Identify and prioritize services and treatments that can be provided with existing staff and facilities and to identify methods to expand conservation services. This
may include developing plans for additional training of existing staff or establishing plans to provide regular conservation services through staffing or the Preservation budget.

- Long-term solutions for improved environmental storage of these most sensitive and valuable materials must be found. Special Collections should for the most part be kept in much cooler conditions. Collections storage should be separate from staff work areas so that staff comfort is not a consideration for environmental conditions as it is now.

- Improve storage practices and shelving equipment.
  
  - Review space usage.
    
    - The Main stacks are overcrowded. Some aisles are so narrow they present a health/safety risk and increase the likelihood of damage to holdings. These conditions greatly exacerbate the difficulties for any emergency response to collections.
    
    - There is a strong need for oversize shelving, flat document cabinets and shelving for smaller items.
  
  - A large percentage of the collection would benefit from new or improved “enclosures” such as custom fit archival boxes; “four-flap” enclosures (especially in lieu of stiff envelopes); portfolios; Mylar or CoLibri book covers; archival matting; or other types of enclosures appropriate to the type and condition of the item.
  
  - Continue moving materials off-site to the special location at PASCAL (SL@P) to gain shelving space and to take advantage of the superior environmental conditions in PASCAL.
  
  - All SPC stacks should have canopies to reduce dust, light and especially potential water damage. Since the collections on the third floor are directly under the roof (and cooling towers) this is especially important.
  
  - The Walnut Distribution Center (warehouse) is not an acceptable mid or long-term storage location for Special Collections, especially if material is packed in single-ply cardboard boxes on pallets.

- Improve storage conditions and emergency planning for vellum bound books.
  
  - Ideally, these should be provided separate climate controls since optimal conditions for vellum differ from those for the majority of the books in this collection. (see Vellum Report)
  
  - Cataloging should include a notation for vellum binding so that these materials can be tracked and quickly located if necessary.
  
  - Vellum bindings should be among the types of materials given priority for enclosures.

- Preservation should establish, with Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a systematic monitoring for insects.
Reports

Special Collections CNAP Report

Special Collections Facilities

Vellum Report