Preservation as a State of Mind in the Small College Library

Integrating Preservation into Technical Services

Help! I'm Damaged and I Can't Circulate!
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Background and Context

- Grinnell College
  - Four year liberal arts college
  - 1350-1400 students
  - 400,000-500,000 volumes on the shelf
  - Founded in 1846
Libraries at Small Colleges

- Money not earmarked specifically for preservation
- Staff position not designated for preservation alone

Place each area’s work within a preservation context

- Preservation is everyone’s responsibility
- Each area within the library contributes to good health of collections
“When preservation is viewed narrowly, it gets separated from mainstream functions, becomes identified as someone else’s domain, and is considered a luxury...” (p. 7)


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**Grinnell’s Path to Preservation**

- 1989--staff members attended Library Binding Institute Conference in Seattle
  - Library members introduced to the 8th Edition of the *Standard for Library Binding*
  - Concepts of permanence and reversibility

Grinnell’s Path, cont.

- Grant project with Franklin & Marshall and Amherst Colleges
  - learn to conduct a condition survey
  - compare surveys with other four year liberal arts colleges
  - compare survey with major research institutions

Survey results:

- Four year college library collections contain many unique items
- Four year college library collections in good condition when compared to research library collections
Study published as:


Grinnell’s Path, cont.

- Using the Franklin & Marshall model assign responsibilities of preservation librarian or officer to the collection development librarian
  - Pro: position already integrated into library institutional fabric
  - Con: another important responsibility added to a full time position
Grinnell’s Path, cont.

- Called in specialist to give lecture demonstration to entire staff
- Hands on workshop in book repair techniques for selected staff

The Library:

- Reconsidered all aspects of the handling and treatment of the collection
- Reviewed our environmental conditions
- Wrote a detailed bindery contract
- Revised monographic binding policy
- Selected a new binder
- Instituted brittle books review
A Walk Through the Library Departments

Repair

- Spine repairs
- home made wheat starch paste
- C cloth
- hinge tightening
- paper repair with Japanese tissue paper
Staff redirection . . .

- Currently students work with library assistant to sort books into categories to send to the bindery or to preservation librarian for brittle books review. Choices are to:
  - Rebind
  - Recase
  - Place in boxes or custom folders

Brittle Books review

- Decide whether or not to withdraw
- Return to shelf as is
- Create enclosure (box or folder)
- Reformat (preservation photocopy)
- Designate as “last copy in Iowa”
- Restrict circulation
**In House Repair Consists of:**

- Hinge tightening
- Paper repair using
  - Japanese tissue paper using pre-made wheat starch paste
  - Heat set Japanese tissue paper
  - On occasion, for rush purposes, document tape.

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**Circulation**

- Knowledge of fragile book structure informs everyday handling of books
- Staff watch out for damaged and vandalized material
- Erase pencil marks using approved erasers (e.g., Sakura or Staedtler)
- Remove sticky notes
- Watch for missing parts
- Search for missing books
Stack Maintenance

- Instruct shelvers to
  - Handle books properly
  - Load book trucks
  - Place books onto shelf
  - Avoid overcrowding of shelves
  - Look out for damaging conditions such as dust, mold and pests

Cataloging

- Grinnell’s catalogers are
  - Our strongest advocates for preservation
  - Collaborate in binding and enclosure decisions
  - Provide access to material (a basic preservation activity!)
  - Add notes to records about condition, treatment, use restrictions
Acquisitions

- Follow guidelines regarding condition when ordering used material
- Set up policies and profiles to use with vendors or at Web sites
- Review gift materials for condition
- Supervise students in cleaning used and gift material
- Follow guidelines about when to order paperback or cloth covered books

Serials Acquisitions

- Decide when to order in paper only
  - Electronic and paper
  - Electronic only

Although more and more libraries are choosing to buy journals in electronic only, this is a decision that may not be viable for the long term. It is important to remember that we are building our collections for future users as well as today’s users.
Serials and Monographic Binding

- Binding is a primary preservation activity!
- Rely on a detailed binding contract to ensure proper treatment
- Use guidelines provided by the *Standard for Library Binding*
- Review material as it returns from the bindery
- Consider possibilities for handling paperbacks.

We apply Mylar to most of our paperbacks. This preserves the margin and leaves us the option of binding later when/if the book shows wear.

Processing of New Books

- Procedures for handling new books should be reviewed regularly
- Time saving methods may not be the best choice for the long term health of the collection
- Make sure that you use appropriate materials--pH neutral papers, no animal glues, no paper clips, no sticky notes.
Interlibrary Loan

- Invest in a quality photocopier for interlibrary lending. We use a cradle scanner.
- Encourage interlibrary lending staff to check with preservation librarian before sending out material in questionable condition (brittle paper, damaged structure)
- Work hard to get material back from borrowing libraries
- Treat borrowed material with the same care and respect as your own material

Photocopying

Photocopying in public areas will always be problematic. “Book friendly” copiers are only minimally effective.
General All Library Preservation Activities

Disaster Planning

• Provide each member of your library staff (and other designated individuals outside the library) with a copy of your disaster plan
• Stage a disaster response workshop
• Review plan and disaster responses regularly

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Disaster Plan, cont.
Library-wide discussion of a disaster plan and hands-on workshops are great ways to ignite enthusiasm and interest, and for each person in the library to see how they are part of protecting the library collection.

Education
• Preservation orientation for all new staff
• Brief orientation for student assistants
• Required viewing of preservation oriented videos
• Book marks!
• Food and drink policy
Cleaning and Environmental Control

- No preservation without a stable and clean environment
- Make sure all involved with cleaning understand value of the collection
- Make sure that your cleaning staff feel as though they are part of the library team. SHOW APPRECIATION and RESPECT
- Develop a good relationship and maintain communication with your facilities maintenance people.
- BE VIGILANT about day-to-day conditions

Conclusion

You may not have new money or staff to launch your preservation program, but you can still do it if you define your actions and budgets within a preservation context.
Conclusion, cont.

Smaller libraries share the responsibility of preserving their collections along with the larger academic institutions.

Conclusion, cont.

Make preservation part of the fabric of your institution. Define preservation broadly and it is everyone’s responsibility. An Enthusiastic and well-informed staff will be the primary ingredient in a successful preservation program.

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