

Proposal to Host Library History Seminar XII

Committee Chair: David B. Gracy II, Governor Bill Daniel Professor in Archival Enterprise, and Editor, *Libraries & the Cultural Record*

Address: School of Information
SZB 564, D7000
University of Texas at Austin
Austin, Texas 78712-0390

Email: gracy@ischool.utexas.edu
Telephone: 512-471-8291
Fax: 512-471-8285

Committee Members (Proposed)

David B. Gracy II, Chair

All of the following are members of the Editorial Board of *Libraries & the Cultural Record*

Hermína Anghelescu, Assistant Professor, Library and Information Science Program, Wayne State University

John Y. Cole, Director, The Center for the Book, Library of Congress

Ellen Cunningham-Kruppa, Lecturer and Director, Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record, University of Texas at Austin

Robert S. Martin, Professor of Library Science, Texas Womans University

Mark Tucker, Director of Libraries, Abilene Christian University

And two individuals, yet to be chosen, who are not members of the Editorial Board. One of these should be an educator, the other a practicing librarian.

The goal of constituting the organizing committee in this manner is to produce a selection process informed by the library history community broadly.

Institutional Sponsor

School of Information and three components:

Libraries & the Cultural Record

The Governor Bill Daniel Professorship

The Kilgarlin Center for Preservation of the Cultural Record

University of Texas Press

University of Texas at Austin libraries and departments (all of which have sponsored and supported history-oriented programs, including the 2006 RBMS Preconference Program, and can be expected to contribute both funding and staff in planning and hosting the event):

Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center
Center for American History
Tarleton Law Library
University of Texas Libraries

Potential Co-sponsors

Potential co-sponsors off campus have not yet been explored.

Planned number of days

2 1/2 days: If in the facilities of the School of Information: Friday, Saturday, and Sunday morning. Elsewhere: Thursday evening, Friday, and Saturday.

Proposed dates

October 7-9, 2010, or the following weekend, whichever is the weekend of the UT-University of Oklahoma Football game, which is an away game.

Conference Location

Three conference sites are available, two on the University campus and one outside of town:

1. The School of Information is housed in the George I. Sanchez Building adjacent to the Perry-Castañeda main unit of the University of Texas Libraries, one of the five largest academic libraries in the country. The School is three blocks from the Humanities Research Center and somewhat farther from the Center for American History, the Benson Latin American Collection, the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, the Tarleton Law Library, and the Architecture Library housed in the magnificent 1912 free-standing library building designed by New York architect Cass Gilbert, which became the inspiration for the architectural harmony of the early, and now central campus of the University.
2. The Joe C. Thompson Conference Center located a stone's throw from the Center for American History, the Benson Latin American Collection, the Lyndon B. Johnson Presidential Library and Museum, and the Tarleton Law Library.
 - * In either location on campus, the plenary sessions and the break-out sessions can be accommodated within the one building.
3. The Center for American History maintains a conference center 40 miles east of Austin at the Winedale restored village. If the preference is to meet in a setting away from the main campus, as we did at Allerton, then Winedale is the choice.

Travel to Austin Bergstrom International Airport 15-30 minutes from campus, depending on the time of day, is served by several major airlines, including American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, and Southwest.

Accommodations The Doubletree Suites and La Quinta hotels, and several bed and breakfast facilities are located within a few blocks of campus and provide rooms to satisfy larger and smaller budgets. All are used by university departments. Depending on the location of the meeting, transportation would have to be provided from some of these locations for those who are not dedicated walkers. If the meeting is held on campus, likely the best choice will be the hotel presently being built by the university one block from the School of Information. This facility will be able to provide meeting and sleeping rooms to accommodate our entire conference.

Budget and Institutional Support

Libraries & the Cultural Record and the School of Information will contribute the time of the chair and necessary staff to organize the seminar. In exchange for being able to attend sessions, students at both the master's and doctoral levels will be utilized to facilitate registration and to perform other work in immediate preparation for and during the conference.

At this juncture 4 years prior to the conference and in an economic environment in which we can anticipate that all costs will be greater than they are now, more important than trying to develop specific budget numbers for the costs of elements of the conference and, ultimately, for the cost to attendees of registration—more important than this is the commitment to raise support sufficient to keep the registration fee to the barest minimum. If the conference is awarded to us, this we will do. This is not a hollow promise, as clearly doing so is in our own best interest. The richer the conference is in terms of the breadth and depth of topics and papers presented, the greater the pool of papers that will be available for publication in *Libraries & the Cultural Record*. Everything hinges on being able to attract a substantial audience, which in turn is a function of the funding raised.

Among potential funding sources we can identify initially are: The Brown Foundation, the Houston Endowment, the Summerlee Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, the Institute for Museum and Library Services, and the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Proposed Conference Theme and Proposed Keynote Speaker(s)

A goal of *Libraries & the Cultural Record* is implementation of the concept of the Focus Issue. The idea is to identify a broad topic or matter that has affected libraries and many other communities through time, the ramifications of which both engage and reach beyond the immediate library community. This should be a topic as well that, largely because of the interdisciplinary nature of the topic, has been explored precious little, if explored at all. Rather than try to identify all the appropriate authors to write on aspects of the topic, for the Focus Issue we will announce a call for papers and distribute it throughout the library community and to communities that normally do not consider their history to intersect with ours. (The Focus Issue thus is different from the Special Issue in that for a Special Issue, a topic is selected, a guest editor chosen, and potential authors are tapped to treat aspects of the topic.)

One potential Focus Issue topic might be the history of, and the ramifications of the identification of, acid as the enemy of paper. Barrow's simple announcement in 1959 that, because of the acid content of paper, the majority of books printed in the twentieth century would not survive the century in usable condition rocked the library community, the archival community, library and archival vendors, publishers, and research chemists, ramified through the records management community, and has deeply affected the reading public, most recently that segment engaged in scrapbooking. Search for the chemistry of deterioration had a long and substantial history preceding Barrow's work. The response to his announcement resulted in strong focus of the Council on Library Resources on advocacy regarding the problem, which led to creation of the Commission on Preservation and Access, which not only took advocacy to a new level, but also brought into the discussion with librarians entire communities of scholars who theretofore treated the library primarily as a place to be mined (not an institution for which they had a particular responsibility), the Brittle Books initiative, elaboration of the concept of the preservation collection and search for the implications of that concept, the emphasis on preservation microfilming, and national attention first of Congress in funding to meet the problem and then in vitriolic reaction in Nicholson Baker's *Double Fold*. Chemists engaged with conservators in the library environment, librarians, and archivists in the desperate search for a mass fix for the problem, leading to the development of Wei T'oo, the diethyl zinc solution, paper splitting, and other processes. Beyond that, the preservation and conservation concern for collections gained an issue that, unlike that of the Florence Flood, would not be eclipsed

by later disasters pushing it off the front page. Throughout, leadership in the movement to combat acid deterioration has come primarily from the library community.

The most recent meeting of the Editorial Board of *L&CR* was scheduled purposely so as, for the first time, to allow a period for the members to get beyond reviewing mechanics of the journal and to talk about content they would like to see developed in Focus Issues. Below is a listing of ideas advanced and discussed. These are only raw ideas, some with great potential, others with little. The result of our first brain-storming session, this list is included for the purpose of stimulating thinking about possibilities beyond the bounds within which our history has been approached up to now. The list, as the discussion, represents no priority order.

Possible Focus Issues and LHSXII Conference Topics:

- The history of the ways in which collections have been protected from vandalism, government confiscation, and natural disasters, and means and methods by which librarians have struggled to recover their collections and their services.
- The selection process, that is, the building of library collections and archival holdings over time. Who has decided what to acquire, who has “re-selected” (that is, decided what would be preserved), and what processes and methodologies have been created and followed in this work.
- When do documents become artifacts: the blurred lines through time between libraries, archives, and museums.
- Sharing the cultural heritage vs. keeping the cultural heritage. Where has been the greater good and what have been the shifts over time in identification, protection, and repatriation of the cultural heritage in libraries, special collections, and archives.
- Aesthetics in the architecture of libraries. What has building design and utilization through time said to librarians, to the public, and to policy makers of the meaning of libraries.
- The history of demand: who have been the patrons of libraries, archives, and museums through time. For whom were these institutions set up and how have the institutions changed through history in identifying and seeking to serve the demand.
- Accessibility: the history of the balance between access/use and protection of collections.
- The history of “Disneyfication” of libraries: What has been the dividing line between traditional educational purposes of

libraries on the one hand, and entertainment and preservation commitments on the other.

For a conference theme, the organizing committee will be brought together outside of an Editorial Board meeting to consider these and other topics, and from all of the thoughts advanced and discussed, to select the conference theme. Once the theme is selected, then keynote speakers can be identified.

In summary, we propose going about the selection of a conference theme differently from the way it has been pursued heretofore. We propose selecting a theme that puts the library as institution and as concept in a larger social and cultural context through time and engages historians from communities beyond our own—historians from realms and pursuits the histories of which have intertwined with ours in important, but little-recognized ways. Further, while the committee will be responsible for making the selection of the conference theme, approaching the selection in the manner proposed here will necessitate the committee exploring ideas with colleagues throughout the library history community, which itself will stimulate interest in and excitement about Library History Seminar XII.

Publication Plans *Libraries & the Cultural Record* is the appropriate and best venue for publication of the papers of the conference, because it reaches the largest audience worldwide as a matter of course. The more than 600 subscribers will receive the papers without having to make any special effort to find a specific separate publication and pay additional money to secure the papers. *L&CR* will commit at least one special issue to the conference. The papers selected for that issue will be chosen in reference to the breadth, depth, and richness of the offerings at the conference. In other words, they will highlight the conference as conference. Papers not included in that issue will be published in subsequent issues arranged in one or more additional special issues from the conference and/or in relation to the goal of the journal to provide, as much as possible, topics of interest in each issue for all of our readership. As has been done in the past, separate publications can be realized from the articles published in the journal where such separate publication meets demand and need.

Proposed timeline	Determination of conference theme	Three years prior to LHSXII
	Issuance of informal call for papers	Beginning three years prior
	Selection of conference dates	Two years prior
	Issuance of formal call for papers	One year prior
	Selection of papers	Seven months prior