

**RBMS Public Services Discussion Group**  
**ALA Midwinter Meeting**  
**January 25, 2014**

**Present:** Julia Gardner, University of Chicago; Colleen Theisen, University of Iowa; Samuel Huang, University of Florida; Robyn Huff-Eibl, University of Arizona; Alison Clemens, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Mike Hunter, Brigham Young University; Connie Strittmatter, Boston College; Lois Fischer Black, Lehigh University; Melanie Myers, The Center for Jewish History; Agnes Haigh Wedder, Michigan State University; Barbara Morland, Library of Congress; Jeanann Haas, University of Pittsburgh; Hjordis Halvorson, Newberry Library; Mary Lacy, Library of Congress; Jeffrey Marshall, University of Vermont; Sarah Horowitz, Haverford College; Moira Fitzgerald, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Kate Hutchens, University of Michigan; Martha O'Hara Conway, University of Michigan; Kristen Mapes, Rutgers University; Kimberly Tully, Miami University of Ohio; Shannon Supple, Clark Library UCLA

**Renovations, Relocations, Reorganizations:**

We heard from a number of libraries who had experienced (or were preparing for) merging departments or collections together. The Library of Congress had recent experience introducing new or different services from other locations. For example, librarians in their main reading room had to adjust from providing more specialized to more general reference. The Center for Jewish History is currently experiencing construction, and has the challenge of housing many separate institutions, and their collections, in one place.

Another example came from University of Pittsburgh, in which their archives and special collections changed from a share space to separate ones. Everyone agreed that having consistent policies and fees when one either merges or separates collections/departments makes life easier for all staff and patrons involved. Communicating carefully and clearly with patrons about changes and moves was also seen as key to managing a transition.

We also discussed the importance of communicating with researchers before and during a renovation, and various ways of doing this. For instance, including a tagline about the closure in all emails, posting notices on websites, and keeping in communication with faculty were all mentioned.

**Collaboration:**

We heard of a number of examples in which the larger library moved to a liaison librarian model, and the opportunities this approach provided for special collections. Positive outcomes included increases in class visits to helping to clarify misconceptions other library staff may have had about special collections. The University of Iowa provides training to liaison librarians who have not come from a special collections background so any staff member who is involved with class visits has a common understanding of handling, and of expectations for class use.

We also heard examples of ways special collections engages with/trains colleagues outside the department. At Haverford College, non-special collections librarians choose a research topic, work in Special Collections on that topic, and then present their results publically. Colleagues learn from each other, and those doing the research get experiencing using special collections. The Beinecke Library provides summer workshops on book history, and may consider opening these up for other library staff.

One question raised involved having a written principle of collaboration. In situations where a library or special collections receives many opportunities to collaborate, both with partners on campus or off, how does one decide which opportunities to choose?

We concluded with a brief return to a topic discussed at the June Annual meeting, social media. Shannon Supple created a wiki for special collections social media. Many institutions have listed their various social media on the wiki, and the question was what should/could the wiki do that would make it more useful to people. Suggestions for reminding people of the wiki and its resources included broadcasting the link at regular intervals via Twitter, Tumblr, etc. and re-posting to Ex Libris.

Julia Gardner, Convener