

RBMS Technical Services Discussion Group (TSDG)

Minutes

ALA Midwinter Meeting, Dallas, TX

Sunday, January 22, 2012, 10:30 am – 12:00 pm

Attendees: Annie Copeland, Penn State; Sarah Fisher, Yale; Erin Blake, Folger Shakespeare Library; Ann Myers, Stanford; David Faulds, Emory; Catherine Uecker, U. of Chicago; Michelle Mascaro, U. of Akron; Morag Boyd, Ohio State; Deborah J. Leslie, Folger Shakespeare Library; Kate Moriarty, Saint Louis U.; Becky Fenning, Clark Library, UCLA; Jane Carpenter, UCLA Special Collections; Laila Miletic-Vejzovic, U. of Central Florida; Stephen Skuce, MIT; Melissa Hubbard, Southern Illinois U.; Beth Kilmarx, Binghamton U.; Christine DeZelar-Tiedman, U. of Minnesota; Jennifer Schaffner, OCLC Research; Christine Megowan, Loyola Marymount U.; Emily Epstein, U. Colorado Health Science Library; Louis Reith, Georgetown U. Library; Ellen Cordes, Yale; Ellen Ellickson, Yale; Meghan Constantinou, Grolier Club; Martha Conway, U. of Michigan; Deb DeGeorge, U. of Michigan; Christina George, Shiloh Museum of the Ozarks; Linda Isaac, U. of Miami; Margaret Nichols, Cornell; Mary Lacy, Library of Congress; Jane Gillis, Yale

1) Welcome and introductions.

We were forced to move rooms because the setup was too small for the 32 people that we had at TSDG.

2) Backlogs of ephemera.

Yale has a large collection of uncataloged industry documents and pamphlets that must be moved swiftly to the library shelving facility but must be cataloged prior to the move. Rather than relying only on MARC collection-level records, finding aids are being created using Archivists' Toolkit in order to provide access to this material.

Other institutions have similarly sized backlogs (for example, 50,000 bookseller catalogs, 250,000 playbills, and 91 boxes of pulp novels). MARC single-item or collection-level treatment is typical for such printed materials. However, finding aids, machine searchable databases, or digitization with OCR could also be used to provide access. Downsides are the potential for duplicate acquisitions due to the lack of item level cataloging, and search results that are confusing (icons display as "archival material" when a user is seeking printed books, broadsides or catalogs).

Dealing with such backlogs has been made a priority by the destruction of a building in one case, and spurred on by a commitment to revealing hidden collections that would otherwise be unknown to a researcher in another. Is "baseline processing" of archival collections resulting in the referral of more printed materials within collections? Yes. Has the hidden collections discussion really resulted in giving more support to cataloging? In some cases, yes.

A timely publication on assessing archival materials prior to processing has been posted: *Taking Stock and Making Hay: Archival Collections Assessment* / Martha O'Hara Conway and Merrilee Proffitt (<http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2011/2011-07.pdf>). For a discussion of backlogs of

rare books, see Hubbard and Myers, *Bringing Rare Books to Light: The State of the Profession* (RBM, 11:2, p. 134-151 or <http://rbm.acrl.org/content/11/2/134.full.pdf+html>)

3) How can we assess the value of full level cataloging?

Stressing the monetary value of rare books gives administrators a better understanding of the value of cataloging generally. For identifying ownership in the case of theft, full-level records are now recognized as crucial. We have moved beyond “something is better than nothing” to acknowledging “If you catalog it they will come.” Cataloging records and detailed finding aids have a direct impact on use that can be measured by statistics. Interest in our online collections and metadata can be gleaned from Google analytics; digitizing our collections has resulted in increased use of the originals as we see in our reading rooms.

Curators often buy a book for a copy-specific reason having to do with provenance, marginalia, added illustrations, or bindings. Adding that information to a cataloging record not only illustrates and justifies why such a purchase was made, but also brands the institution’s copy as unique. ILL requests can help to justify why putting such copy specific information into our records is important. Having valuable notes about the engraver, the bookseller, or the former owner in the catalog record can help curators locate books quickly, curate exhibitions, devise digital projects, and can provide users with access to information on collectors and their libraries.

4) Cataloging foreign language materials:

From Polish herbals to Chinese Government gift books, our collections are full of materials in other languages that are cataloged in English. The RBMS Diversity Committee asked us if this is justified. While we often lack language expertise in our departments the bigger reason is that our cataloging rules require that notes, extent, and other non-transcribed elements are to be recorded in English. We discussed the possibility of devising titles in other languages when creating finding aids for archival materials; keeping foreign language subject headings in records upon import; the potential of VIAF and automated authority control to help in the future. The inability of some library’s systems to display CJK records, etc., further complicates things. A website designed by the very scholars for whom these collections have been acquired might be a starting point to providing access.

5) Artists’ books.

Many collections include books that are more sculptural than book-like. The use of 655s for specific formal aspects of artists’ books can help to provide access to certain features (Accordion fold format). Books that are more like art objects, having no pages, are sometimes difficult to describe. Some libraries try to get the artist to fill out a form describing the book or use web descriptions by the artist. Various approaches to cataloging could be used (as an object, as a book, as realia, possibly within a finding aid to provide institutional context). Some libraries do have specific collecting emphases (eg., Shakespeare, Florida artists, Local presses). Good news: a new relator code was just approved by the Bib Standards Committee: book artist.

Annie Copeland, Penn State University & Ellen Ellickson, Yale University, co-conveners