

Preservation of Rare Books, Manuscripts and Other Library Collections

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Abstract

Preservation must be a major concern of the entire library and special collections populations, with special collections management addressing it to the best of their abilities within their institutional context, in a world where theft of special collections materials is a daily possibility. The "Guidelines for the Protection of Rare Books, Manuscripts, and Other Special Collections," published here by the ACRL/Rare Books and Manuscripts Section (RBMS) Preservation Committee is the primary ACRL document dealing with the preservation of library materials. These guidelines outline key issues that all collection administrators should consider when establishing adequate collection protection. While the subjects are geared toward rare books, special collections, and manuscripts, they can also be applied to common collections. The RBMS Security Committee strongly recommends that these recommendations be followed, including the labeling of items with unique identifiers and the appointment of a Library Security Officer (LSO).

Keywords: Preservation manager of library; Protection plan; Collections storage; Library workers; Common stock; Duties; etc.

Introduction:

These guidelines outline key issues that collection administrators should consider when establishing adequate collection protection. While the topics are geared toward special collections, they can also be applied to common collections. Rare book, manuscript, and special collections administrators must keep their collections safe and protected from theft and harm. Since administrators' attempts to improve the use and knowledge of collections under their care will result in a greater public awareness of their importance, increasing the risk of theft, collection protection is now more critical than ever. Preservation arrangements differ from one agency to the next, and are based on manpower, physical location, and use. Thieves may sell stolen materials for sale to rare book and manuscript dealers, so they must be concerned about stock

protection. Librarians should make every effort to familiarize such dealers with the methods used by organizations to protect and classify their products, and to assist them in using this information to reduce the likelihood of someone profiting from theft. The hiring of a library security manager and the creation of a preservation plan will help ensure that employees are mindful of their valid and ritual obligations when it comes to implementing preservation measures.¹

Preservation Manager of Library

A library security officer should be appointed by each institution that is concerned about the preservation of rare books, manuscripts, or other special collections materials (LSO). The LSO should be appointed by the library director, have primary authority and responsibility for implementing the

preservation Programme, and be well-versed in all repository preservation requirements, especially those pertaining to special stocks. The LSO should not be mistaken for the library's general security manager, while he or she should serve in that capacity. The identity of the LSO should be widely known, especially among the repository's other administrative officers. The LSO's primary duty should be to prepare and implement a protection Programme, which should include a study of the institution's stocks, assessments of the physical layout, and staff training. He or she should obtain the guidance and assistance of qualified staff, such as institutional managers, general counsel, life protection managers, the LSO mail lists, and/or outside experts from law enforcement agencies and insurance firms.²

The Protection Plan

The LSO should establish a written plan for collection protection. The LSO should consult with administrators and employees, valid authorities, and other competent individuals while designing the plan. A standard operating procedure for dealing with fraud or other preservation issues should be included in the plan. The document "Guidelines on Thefts in Libraries," published by the ACRL/RBMS Security Committee, outlines the steps to take in developing appropriate policies for dealing with thefts. The protection plan should be kept up to date with existing institutional and law enforcement contacts' names and phone numbers. The organization should also revisit the strategy on a regular basis to ensure that operational needs are still being met. Since common library security measures can affect the security of special collections materials, the LSO should collaborate with and be involved in their production and implementation. Any library emergency and disaster preparation should also include the LSO.³

Particular Collections Storage

There should be as few access points as possible in the special collections building or field, with a single entry and exit point for both researchers and staff. Normal access should not be allowed by fire and emergency exits, which should be tightly managed and equipped with alarms. The public should only have access to public areas inside the building, not to work areas or stack rooms. Researchers should be greeted in a separate reception area, which should include a coatroom and lockers for their personal belongings and outerwear. The only environment in which material

can be used should be a safe reading room where researchers can be constantly monitored at all times by staff trained in surveillance. A security guard can inspect researchers' research materials both before and after they reach the secure area. Keys and their equivalents, such as keycards, are particularly vulnerable items; as a result, all keys should be checked out in a regulated manner. Staff should only be given access to protected areas when required, and master keys should be kept secure to prevent unauthorized access. Vault combinations should also have a restricted distribution which should be adjusted if a spot of access to the vault changes hands. Installing patented keyways in locks in the special collections field should be seriously considered.⁴

Library Workers

The strongest protection against employee theft is a culture of confidence and concern for the collections. Nonetheless, constant and fair monitoring is needed. Workers, including students and volunteers, should be carefully selected, with all possible options included in the recruiting process. Personnel control is a constant requirement. Disgruntled employees who seek revenge by fraud, degradation, or deliberate mishandling of collections are a weak point in maintaining a security system. Employees who work in special collections should be considered for bonding. The LSO should make security training a top priority for its employees. Staff should be aware of their valid and ritual obligations in relation to protection, as well as their own and the researchers' valid rights when dealing with potential issues, through such training.⁵

Researchers

The particular collections administrator must strike a careful balance between the need to make materials accessible to researchers and the need to keep the materials safe. By maintaining adequate, signed checkout logs, which should be kept indefinitely, staff should be able to distinguish who has used which materials. Each researcher who uses special collections materials should be required to register, including their name, address, signature, institutional affiliation (if applicable), and photo identification or some type of positive identification to prove their physical identity. These registry documents should be kept for the rest of your life. Researchers should be allowed to provide a rational justification for their use of the materials. Each researcher should be given an

introduction to the collections requested as well as the rules that govern their use. Researchers should not be allowed to bring any personal items into the reading rooms. This includes journals, briefcases, outerwear, books, and large amounts of paper. Before using a personal computer in the reading room, it must be removed from its case. Any objects not allowed in the reading room should be stored in lockers or some other safe location. Staff should keep a close eye on researchers at all times and not let them work unnoticed behind bookcases, book vans, piles of books, or any other obstructions that block their view.⁶

At any given time, researchers should only have access to the books, manuscripts, or other materials needed to complete the research project. Before giving an object to a researcher, staff should inspect it for condition, material, and completeness, as well as when returning it after use. This double-checking of returned materials is particularly important for archival and manuscript collections, which often contain several loose, one-of-a-kind items. Even if they intend to return later to continue their study, researchers should be allowed to return all library materials before leaving the reading room. Researchers should not be able to swap materials or have access to materials brought into the room for another researcher's use.⁶

Stock

Special collection administrators must be able to positively identify the materials in their collections in order to determine loss and substantiate evidence of recovered stolen goods. Maintaining proper accession records, comprehensive cataloguing records and lists in finding aids, recording copy relevant information, and holding condition reports and records are all examples of this. Lists created to meet the needs of insurance policies should also be kept up to date. Additionally, the products themselves should be labeled. This can be done by labeling valuable objects according to the RBMS "Guidelines for Marking," adding other special markings, and maintaining photographic or microform copies of them.⁷

Shift From Common Stock

Many institutions keep materials in open stack areas where anyone can access them. These open stacks areas can contain unidentified and unregulated rare materials. The materials in open stack areas are the most vulnerable to security breaches. Rather than attempting to penetrate special collections areas or outwit the security

measures introduced in supervised reading areas, many criminals check open stacks areas for materials deemed rare. The ACRL/RBMS "Guidelines on the Selection of General Collection Materials for Shift to Special Collections" can be used to help classify rare materials on open shelves that need to be protected.⁷

Duties: Valid & Ritual:

The administrators of special collections and the LSO must be aware of the laws governing library theft in their state and must share this knowledge with their employees. Staff members must be mindful of their valid rights in preventing thefts while still respecting the rights of the person accused of stealing.

The administrator of special collections and the LSO are responsible for reporting rare material thefts to relevant law enforcement agencies and for seeking valid action. When materials are stolen, they must be identified as soon as possible to help avoid unintentional shifts of the objects and to enable their recovery. State, institutional, and state law enforcement agencies, as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, are appropriate agencies to report to.⁸

Conclusion

More knowledge is accessible through technical literature, professional associations and consultants in the rare book, manuscript, and special collections sector, as well as in the law enforcement and insurance professions, so the recommendations given here are necessarily brief. The combined efforts of the entire team, with final responsibility vested in one senior staff member, in collaboration with law enforcement, would result in more secure collections where materials are stored and made available to those who wish to use them. In larger organizations, a Preservation Planning Group may be required to assist the LSO in identifying problem areas and recommending solutions. Institutions with insufficient personnel resources may want to hire a preservation consultant to help them develop a plan and identify any significant threats to the collection. When hiring a preservation contractor, the organization or LSO should proceed with caution when assessing the consultant's competence or capacity to complete the job. The organization should thoroughly examine the history and references of the preservation consultant. The LSO and special collections administrator should ensure that all staff are aware of these guidelines as well as their institution's

preservation policies and how they can relate to them. Background checks and team bonding should be considered where necessary and compatible with institutional policies. The LSO or special collections administrator should be familiar with the institution's personnel plan and should raise preservation issues with the human resources department. When establishing researcher policies, the LSO or special collections administrator may obtain valid advice from the institution's valid counsel or another competent valid authority to ensure proper valid redress if researchers breach the use agreement. All researchers should be required to read and sign an agreement to follow the institution's policies. This contract should be extended every year.

LSOs and/or special collections administrators should play an active role in raising awareness of the serious nature of materials theft among other institutional officials, such as institutional valid managers, public safety managers, the library director, and others, and urge the institution to actively seek the resolution of security threats and breaches, as well as the harshest punishment possible. A staff member may perform this role in organizations where it is not possible to employ an additional security guard. Installation of a video surveillance device should also be considered. Keys and locks to protected areas should be changed on a regular basis as a precautionary measure. The LSO and the special collections administrator should ensure that all security requirements are met in the design and planning when an institution decides to remodel or renovate space or construct a new facility in which special collections materials will be stored.

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