

DRAFT VERSION 6/30/04
Minutes, Special Collections Task Force
State University Libraries
June 25, 2004

Present: Dee Cael, FAU, Vicki Silvera, FIU, Lucy Patrick, FSU, Carla Summers, UCF, (recorder) Robert Shaddy and John Ingram, UF, Eileen Brady, UNF, Dean DeBolt, UWF, and Megan Waters, FCLA

John Ingram, Chair, SUL Collection Management Committee, charged the group and the Task Force members discussed the charge.

The Task Force started as a committee several years ago, met once, with no results. The Directors are committed to reassembling the Task Force and to locate special collections within overall collection development and collection management for the institutions. Of great interest is the physical state of the collections and the services provided to our community.

The SUL Council, comprised of the library directors, is being reorganized. Final committee structure may include technical and public service committees and the collection management committee that oversees the Task Force. Despite the demise of the Board of Regents and the rise of independent university boards, the 11 library directors have recommended that we act together to build and manage collections to support our users. In the past, special collections departments have been regarded as the “step-child” but that is changing. Special Collections hold what makes up the institutions’ identity and the strengths of their holdings should be made more useable. PALMM is doing that to a certain extent.

The Task Force should put together responses to the charge and recommendations by the Directors meeting December 2004. Funds will be provided for travel. The Task Force might want to set up a monthly conference call like DPPC and a listserv. The Collection Management Committee will not impose itself on the Task Force – the Special Collections department heads know the issues. John Ingram will serve as an ex officio member as will Megan Waters. Monica Metz-Wiseman, Coordinator of Electronic Collections at USF and Committee Chair, SULC Electronic Collections Committee is also a resource as are individuals from the Catalog & Access Guidelines for Electronic Resources Subcommittee of the SULC Technical Services Planning Committee.

The Task Force has a short-term focus but one of the recommendations might be that there needs to be a standing committee to continue to address the charge. That may cause an evaluation of staff support for the Task Force from FCLA. The Task Force may recommend a survey of collections, but it is not expected, in the short-term, to do a survey of collections. What is needed is a more holistic view. Digitization has a real need for content and we convert special collections – ephemera, archives, manuscripts, photographs, rare books. These are our research strengths. What are the mechanisms that can support these activities, mechanisms such as electronic finding aids? There is a

sense that there is much interoperability. There is danger when technical persons choose content because it is the curators who are trained in the appraisal of content and who know the anticipated audience.

The Association of Research Libraries held a conference September 8-9, 2003 on Hidden Collections in research libraries. The findings from the conference may provide a model for the Task Force in making recommendations. The LSTA EAD Pilot Project was discussed including its recommendations for cataloging and EAD training. DPPC has identified EAD training as a priority. Cooperative processing grants focusing on collaborative research support might be an outcome of Task Force meetings. Other concerns may include preservation/conservation, additional staffing and the needs for a union catalog. Our decisions about what we need are going to bubble up through the Collection Management Committee and to the Directors. We need to find out what we have and what needs to be done. Here is where we start.

1. Gather data on special collections operations. What is the nature of our programs and our collections?
2. Enhance access to collections and backlogs, surface "hidden collections."
3. Define collection management issues including the coordination of information sharing regarding digitization efforts.
4. Refine, redefine and respond to the charge.

Carla Summers was elected Chair and the next meeting will take place in Orlando at the end of July. The draft agenda includes the following points.

1. Getting to know our programs and collections.
2. Discussion of surfacing hidden collections, see <http://www.arl.org/collect/spcoll/ehc/info.html> and <http://db.arl.org/SCsurvey/default.html>.