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Reports

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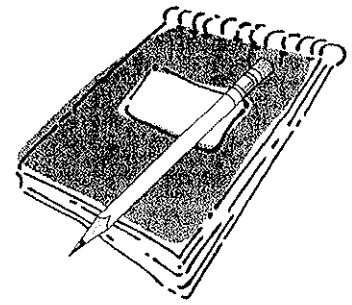
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Reports



SOCIETY OF MISSISSIPPI ARCHIVISTS' ANNUAL MEETING,
April 6-7, 2001 at the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation
in Vicksburg, MS

Reported by Mike Ballard, Betty Uzman, Robert Schwartz and Irmgard Wolfe

From April 6 through April 7, 2001, SMA conducted its annual meeting at the facilities of the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation.

SESSION I VICKSBURG NATIONAL MILITARY PARK

The first session of the 2001 Society of Mississippi Archivists annual meeting in Vicksburg focused on the archives and museum artifacts housed in the Vicksburg National Military Park. Michael Ballard, Coordinator of the Congressional and Political Research Center in the Mississippi State University Library, initiated the session with a discussion of archival holdings and a sampling of the guide to those holdings. Ballard led a team that organized and processed the Park archives. He talked about the various records series that the team created and shared with attendees the methods of processing required by the Park Service and passed around a copy of the complete finding aid. Elizabeth Joyner, who is in charge of archives and artifacts and supervises the *U. S. S. Cairo* museum in the Park, then presented a power point program on the Park's mission and purpose in preserving the historical record, as well as specific information about the numerous artifacts found aboard the *Cairo* when it was salvaged from the bottom of the Yazoo River north of Vicksburg. Especially interesting were the various examples of techniques used to monitor storage areas. During the question and answer session that followed the presentations, Ballard and Joyner discussed the various problems that existed in trying to keep the archival program up to date and viable.

SESSION II *ANGELS OF MERCY: AN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNT OF THE CIVIL WAR AND YELLOW FEVER BY A SISTER OF MERCY*

Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes spoke of *Angels of Mercy: An Eyewitness Account of the Civil War and Yellow Fever by a Sister of Mercy*, "a primary source by Sister Ignatius Sumner," that Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes had annotated and edited. Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes began her presentation by describing the convent archives and the importance of archives and archivists in preserving the past. She then introduced herself, speaking of her education at the St. Francis school of the Sisters of Mercy in Vicksburg; her majors in English and education; and her service as principal at the school. Describing herself as a "history buff" she explained that she had long been familiar with anecdotes about the Sisters of Mercy's history in the Civil War when she decided to edit Sister Ignatius Sumner's work.

Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes then described the help she had received in editing the work, and her use of the diary of Bishop William Henry Elder of Natchez in establishing information for the footnotes. The rest of the presentation focused on two themes: the history of the Order of the Sisters of Mercy during the time period covered by the diary; and the life of Sister Ignatius Sumner, the author of the diary. Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes described the situation of Vicksburg, as a riverboat city with no public schools when the Order arrived, and the work of the Order in establishing a school there before the Civil War. While the school was evacuated and their house eventually occupied by Federal troops during the war, the work of the Order continued as the Sisters worked as itinerant nurses in several locations in Mississippi, including Raymond, Jackson, and Oxford, and in Alabama, helping among others, the soldiers wounded at the

battle of Shiloh. For their work, the Sisters received commendations from both Jefferson Davis and Abraham Lincoln. Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes also briefly described the work of the Sisters of Mercy during the Yellow Fever epidemic of 1878, during which they provided food, nursing care, and herbal remedies for the sick, and shrouds for the dead.

Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes then described the background and family life of Sister Ignatius Sumner, who kept a scrapbook as well as a "register of events" or diary. A member of a prominent Baltimore family whose uncle was abolitionist Charles Sumner, Sister Ignatius also had two brothers who were Jesuits and a sister who married a nephew of Jefferson Davis and helped raise money in Vicksburg after the war for the Sisters of Mercy.

At the end of her presentation, Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes answered questions which focused on life in Vicksburg during the Civil War and the siege of the city by Union troops. Throughout her lecture, Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes emphasized the importance of Sister Ignatius Sumner's account in preserving the details of local history in Vicksburg and Jackson, and the critical role archives play in preserving historical documents themselves.

After lunch, Ms Stacie Botsay, the program coordinator of the Southern Cultural Heritage Foundation, took the group on a very informative and enjoyable tour of the original convent building and the school annex. Sister Mary Paulinus Oakes joined the tour a little after it had started and contributed many stories and memories of her life at the convent. Her comments made the past come alive and added a unique dimension to the tour.

SESSION III STENNIS SPACE CENTER

Robert Schwartz, a graduate assistant in the History Office at NASA's John C. Stennis Space Center, Mississippi, spoke on the development of the space center and its History Office. He showed an overview video and gave a brief history of the federal installation. Stennis Space Center--"a unique federal city in South Mississippi"--is NASA's primary center for testing and flight certifying rocket propulsion systems for the Space Shuttle and future generations of space vehicles. The facility is also NASA's lead center for enabling private-sector organizations to commercialize remote-sensing technologies developed by NASA. Moreover, the installation serves as an agent for partnerships as a part of NASA's Earth Science Enterprise. NASA, however, is not the sole occupant at the facility; over 30 federal, state, academic, and private organizations operate from the site in Southern Mississippi. Performing work and research in the areas of space, oceans, the environment, and the national defense, these organizations have truly turned Stennis Space Center into a synergistic, multiagency, multidisciplinary facility since its founding in the early 1960s., Mr. Schwartz then detailed how the History Office at Stennis Space Center has developed since January 1990 and how it fulfills its mission within the overall NASA framework. In particular, his presentation described the office's primary roles and responsibilities, which include 1) storing and maintaining a variety of documents, a media collection, and an assortment of relics/artifacts; 2) responding to research requests from fellow employees at Stennis or NASA in general; 3) conducting oral histories with persons who have played a significant role in the history of the space center; 4) researching and assisting in creation of historical displays or exhibits for on-site and off-site functions; and 5) operating and adding entries to a database, which eventually will contain information on every item in the office's permanent collection. Mr. Schwartz also mentioned the official historical publication of the center, "Way Station to Space: A History of the John C. Stennis Space Center", written by Mr. Mack R. Herring and published in 1997 by the Government Printing Office.

SESSION IV U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS WATERWAYS EXPERIMENT STATION

Ms Deborah Carpenter, the chief of the Vicksburg Research Library, started her presentation with an explanation of the four laboratories located at the WES site in Vicksburg, Coastal and Hydraulics, Geotechnical and Structures, Environmental, and Information Technology. After a short history of the Corps, which had originated in 1828 at West Point as Civil Works Program, she outlined the genesis of the library from its beginnings as an office collection. A librarian was hired in 1939, and in 1947, this library became the reference collection for the entire Corps. The library was housed in a wooden frame

building, which burnt down in 1960. The collection was laboriously recreated through the heroic efforts of the librarian. In 1999, all libraries of the Corps were consolidated at the Vicksburg location. The collection contains ca. 504,000 items and supports the research and testing functions of the Corps as well as the construction of scale models. Government documents constitute fifty percent of the collection and since the Corps is closing its libraries, Vicksburg has become the holding library and Ms Carpenter tries to hold on to all old reports and regulations, thus adding an archival function as well. WES generates between 300 and 400 reports annually, which since the year 2000 are only available in electronic format. Ms Carpenter has set up a digital archive for these publications and is using Hyperion software for that purpose. The library has closed stacks but is open to the public, although some restrictions apply.

After Ms Carpenter's presentation, the group drove to the Waterways Experiment Station, now newly renamed Engineer Research and Development Center, for an extensive tour. The highlight was of course the working scale model of the Niagara Falls! After returning to the main building, the group saw a video presentation and ended the day with a visit to the Engineer Research and Development Center Research Library.

Following the business meeting on Saturday morning, the group met with Ms Joyner at the Vicksburg National Military Park for a tour of the "Cairo" museum and the new, state of the art storage facility. After returning to the museum, Ms Joyner also gave a tour of the basement, where big artifacts, such as cannonballs are still stored.

TULANE-CAMBRIDGE "FREEDOM STRUGGLES IN THE ATLANTIC WORLD" CONFERENCE held April 5-7 at Tulane University in New Orleans

Reported by Bobs M. Tusa, University Archivist, University of Southern Mississippi

USM Archivist Bobs Tusa attended the joint Tulane University-Cambridge University conference on "Freedom Struggles in the Atlantic World". The conference is held annually, alternating sites every other year between Cambridge and Tulane. This year's conference featured presentations by British and American historians on subjects as varied as the Mau-Mau uprisings in Kenya in the 1950s; the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s in Birmingham, New Orleans, and Mobile; freedom struggles in Cuba, Ethiopia, and Brazil; and para-military organizations in the Mississippi Freedom Movement. The conference concluded with a panel discussion among former Freedom Riders.

In addition to Tulane and Cambridge Universities, the conference was supported by the Amistad Research Center, the Southern Institute for Education and Research, and the Stone Center for Latin American Studies.

RARE BOOK SCHOOL *RARE BOOK CATALOGING COURSE*

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA

June 3-8, 2001

Reported by Suzanne R. Graham, Catalog Librarian, University Libraries,
University of Southern Mississippi

Seven times each year, special collections librarians, bibliographers, and book dealers converge on Charlottesville, Virginia, the home of the Rare Book School. Terry Belanger and his staff coordinate twenty-five specialized classes, ranging from illustration techniques of the hand-press era to cataloging with the rules of *Descriptive Cataloging of Rare Books* (DCRB).

The cataloging course, taught by Deborah Leslie, is offered once a year and accommodates only twelve students. Academic libraries and private research institutions send their rare book catalogers to this five-day intensive study course to receive the only formal training of its kind offered in the United States. Students discuss how to define a "rare book" and learn to appreciate the practical and philosophical differences between DCRB and AACR2 cataloging. While the criteria for identifying rare materials in a collection depends upon the mission of the institution and the needs of the user community, the unique purpose of DCRB is clear. Rare book cataloging describes the item as an artifact and focuses on the physical characteristics of the book, not the subject matter. In accordance, DCRB prescribes more transcription and fewer omissions of information found on the title page of the item.

The need to identify varying states and different issues of the same text provides justification for faithful transcription. All catalogers note different editions, but DCRB catalogers try to identify differences within editions. During the hand-press era, compositors made corrections to the text block whenever proof-readers found errors; therefore, several versions of the text can emerge from a single printing session. Libraries often purchase items specifically for these variations. Leslie's institution, the Folger Shakespeare Library, has 138 separate records for printed texts of William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Each item contains important bibliographic distinctions; therefore, cataloging all 138 on a single record would thwart the intentions of the collection developer. While most libraries do not collect in such depth, the Folger example illustrates the need for special cataloging rules to accommodate users who want very precise access to subtle differences in text and book format.

In practice, catalogers can adopt one of three standard levels of rare book cataloging. Full DCRB is the focus of the course, but the students learn the marks of minimal-level DCRB, which omits 5XX notes, and Special Collections cataloging, which uses the rules of AACR2 but includes additional notes and access points to maintain the spirit of DCRB.

Full DCRB uses some special MARC fields. Two of the most common are the 510 for bibliographic reference citation and the 752 for added place of publication access. The citation note provides detail on where the cataloger found additional information about the book that may have assisted in the description of an imperfect copy. The 752 provides non-transcribed and Anglicized access to the place of publication.

A DCRB record often will contain a 500 note with signature information that describes how the pages were assembled and sewn together. Signatures are small letters (or numbers in early American books) centered at the bottom of a page of text. During the hand press era, these signatures assisted book compilers in the correlation of page bundles. An example of a basic signature note is pⁱ4A-2C⁸. This notation indicates that the book contains four introductory pages sown together without any signature followed by twenty-six gatherings of eight pages each, marked sequentially as A-Z and AA-CC (when printers adopted the lettering convention, the Roman alphabet had only 23 letters), for a total of 212 pages.

The use of the 655 genre term field is more important than the assignment of 650 subject terms for rare books. It is common to have no 650s in a DCRB record. The 655 field describes what the book is (e.g., juvenile literature, poetry, prayer book) and also the physical characteristics of the item (e.g., types of illustrations, typescript, binding, and evidence of provenance). The Standards Committee of the Rare Book and Manuscripts Section of the American Library Association has published six thesauri of authorized descriptive terms, but catalogers and curators frequently distill smaller working lists of the terms most applicable to the scope of their collections and the needs of their users.

Students receive a useful introduction to the characteristics of rare books to assist in accurate heading assignment and description writing. The type of lettering, ink color, margin spacing, and weight of paper provide clues to the overall quality of the original item and distinguish printing impressions of the same work. Students compare the defining marks of wood cuts, wood engravings, and copper plate engravings, all common illustrative styles of the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. To identify the format

of the book, participants receive hands-on training by folding printed sheets into Folios, Quartos, Octavos, and Duodecimos and practice finding chain lines and watermarks.

The course is a valuable start in the education of a rare book cataloger that provides the theoretic underpinnings of DCRB and connects the participants—often the only people at their institutions working with DCRB—to others rare book catalogers across the United States.

ACRL RARE BOOKS AND MANUSCRIPTS SECTION PRECONFERENCE

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

ALA CONFERENCE, SAN FRANCISCO

June 12 - 15, 2001

Reported by Peggy Price, Special Collections Librarian, McCain Library & Archives, University of Southern Mississippi

The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section of ACRL held its annual preconference this year in conjunction with the ALA meeting in San Francisco. The theme, "The Twentieth Century," brought together such topics as collecting new media, virtual collections, oral history, and special collections in the digital age. Speakers emphasized the transitory nature of many twentieth century materials and addressed the need to explore new areas of scholarship. Bay Area institutions such as the University of California at Berkeley and Stanford University hosted tours and receptions, offering insider views to collections and daily operations of their respective libraries.

Six plenary sessions, consisting of two delivered papers each, occupied the morning hours, while concurrent seminars filled the agenda each afternoon. Marvin Taylor of New York University helped open the conference and establish several themes with his paper, "Practicing Postmodernism and Building Contemporary Collections." Taylor introduced the concept of "special collections as mirror" and "librarians as builders of cultural monuments," and asked the question, "What role do librarians play in deciding what enters the canon?" The librarians' responsibility as stewards of the nation's cultural heritage was highlighted throughout the preconference in relation to everything from acquisitions to access and of course, preservation.

Twentieth century materials pose unique problems with electronic formats and media obsolescence, but provide fresh opportunities for new scholarship in such topics as American Studies and the History of the Book. The Internet was a ubiquitous theme underlying each and every talk, and was the primary focus of Brewster Kahle's paper, "Archiving the Internet." Mr. Kahle works for Alexa Internet, a company that is cataloging the World Wide Web. Alexa donates its indexes to the Internet Archive (www.archive.org), which is a "digital library of Internet sites and other cultural artifacts in digital form." Kahle encouraged librarians to become proactive participants in the digital revolution and present primary source materials to a global audience. Fears surrounding copyright infringement should be kept in proper perspective while librarians merely expand the role they have played since the creation of the library.

Another supporter of the "just relax and try it" digitization philosophy was Susan Kornfield, a lawyer who tried to calm everyone's fears during her engaging, pro bono presentation. Kornfield stressed that librarians need to take charge of their rights and let go of the fear. She reminded everyone that the purpose of copyright law was to advance public learning and that the rights of copyright owners are limited. Digitization issues were also covered in the plenary "Special Collections in the Digital Age." Peter Hirtle of Cornell University delivered his paper, "The Impact of Digitization on Special Collections in Libraries" and Paul Duguid of UC Berkeley entertained everyone with "The Social Space of Information: Libraries and the Lure of the Local."

Seminars provided more opportunities for questions and discussion, and offered insight on such topics as collecting modern literary manuscripts and oral history projects.

Again, the influence of digital media became a focal point of each discussion where word processors are destroying manuscript drafts and oral history transcripts are making their way to the Internet. Anyone looking for definite answers came to the wrong conference, as the consensus seemed to be that the best we can do is to remain flexible, optimistic and open to change.

