

**Special Collections Division Recommendations for
New Service Models:
A Proposal to Extend and Integrate Current and Future Services
19 June 2007**

The Special Collections Division is delighted with the Library's call to units to do what we as a division have been attempting for over 30 years. We have known for a long time that our special collections require a model that consolidates space and functions to enable the Division to take advantage of current trends in teaching and scholarship while also fulfilling University's noteworthy and expansive mission. Such a model, we knew, would enable us to take advantage of opportunities to expand the breadth and depth of research and scholarly endeavors without increasing collection budgets.

It is an unfortunate truism that the very nature of our collections require significant space and specialized environmental controls to provide the flexibility, ability to support user and instructional services, and the protection appropriate to the collections. Due to the lack of the two crucial elements of space and climate controls, the Division's service points have, despite the best intentions, been scattered to as far as a mile away from the Main Library. This has made it impossible to achieve even the modest goal of consolidating the functions of intellectual and bibliographic control, as envisioned in 1987 in the NEH Challenge Grant proposal.

Despite these underlying structural problems, the division proposes a new service model that embraces collaboration and cooperation across our division boundaries and enhances current and future service activities by sharing resources and expertise. For example:

- 1) Develop a model for an environmentally appropriate facility to provide shared reading rooms, a shared processing unit for rare and special research collection materials, and shared storage space of professionally accepted environmental standards that will also meet the unusual space needs of the Division. The result should be the relocation of six far-flung locations into one building, which would enable the sharing of many technical and public services. (See our May, 2006 *Vision Statement*, attached.)
- 2) Engage in shared collection management activities. This would focus not only on new collections, but especially on access to those rare or personal-paper collections currently located in non-Special Collections Division units throughout the University Library. These kinds of collections should be integrated into the Special Collections Division because of the need to apply best practices to the technical issues surrounding their appraisal, arrangement, and intellectual control as well as the appropriate provision of user services.
- 3) Expand coordinated public programming in enhanced facilities.

If the necessary proposals are developed and implemented, then the resulting freed-up space would provide the Library with more than ample means in which to achieve its goals of realigning and integrating the many service points it currently wishes to consolidate. The result would be a Main Library that is both vastly more cost-efficient and user-friendly, with the side benefit that the Library's most monetarily valuable and unique collections would finally be under one environmentally appropriate roof, instead of suffering in their current inappropriate space.

**University of Illinois Library
Special Collections Division
VISION STATEMENT 2007**

Library special collections are fundamental to the University's mission of serving the state, nation, and world. The material objects of special collections are invaluable resources to enable the University community to create knowledge, prepare for lives of impact, and address societal needs by the transfer and application of knowledge. These important synergies happen when students meet around a box of manuscripts and photographs documenting the University's tracking of 1960s political protests; when a professor of music brings to life the unique timbre of a Sousa-era coronet; when faculty and students employ the university's pre-eminent Renaissance collections to understand the work and times of Shakespeare and Milton; or when urban planners compare aerial photographs of northeastern Illinois to map environmental change in the post-war years. Driven both by intellectual curiosity and the wish to effect change, students, faculty, and the public find countless opportunities in special collections to become directly engaged in the objects of culture and discover their social, historical, and political significance.

Special Collections faculty and staff enable an authentic learning, perhaps unmatched on campus, through curatorial activities that include:

INSTRUCTION AND RESEARCH: Special Collections faculty are educators contributing directly to the mission of the University by helping students understand and evaluate sources; by developing and teaching courses and classes in many disciplines; by mounting exhibits and sponsoring educational events; and by lecturing and publishing the results of their original research.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT: The Special Collections Division's dynamic public programs and exhibitions guide people of all ages to discover important and deeply-engaging stories of their past. The distinctive intellectual and emotional connections developed through encounters with special collections cultivate life-long learning and new understandings of diverse cultures.

COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT AND STEWARDSHIP: Special collections must be thoughtfully acquired and described for use; they must be carefully conserved as part of our cultural heritage; and they must be held in physically and environmentally secure facilities

These curatorial functions must be conducted with professional skills and in facilities that match the international importance of the collections and the immense value they hold for meeting the University's goals of education, discovery, and engagement.