Tiers for Fears: Sensible, Streamlined Sharing of Special Collections

Dennis Massie

Program Officer
OCLC Research

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Dennis Massie, for OCLC Research

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OCLC Research
Dublin, Ohio 43017 USA
www.oclc.org

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Please direct correspondence to:
Dennis Massie
Program Officer
massied@oclc.org

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Contents

Figures

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Executive Summary

This report presents strategies for providing efficient and affordable interlending of actual physical items from special collections for research purposes, as well as advice on determining if a loan is the most appropriate way to fulfill a particular request.

The lending of physical items for exhibition purposes has long been a core activity of archivists and special collections curators. Now, with the increased visibility of special collections, requests for research loans are multiplying. There are legitimate instances—based on the nature of the material, the type of research question, or the need for extended access by a distant scholar—when only the loan of a physical item from special collections can satisfy a researcher's request.

Prudent approaches to lending rare and unique materials are justified, and providing a digital surrogate is usually the answer. But such thinking is not appropriate for every item in special collections, or for every request, and often results in time-consuming, overly cautious procedures. Streamlining such procedures is critical. Labor-intensive processes and policies can be simplified to fit the nature of the material, institutional resources, the circumstances of requests, and the risk tolerance of curators and administrators.

Lending physical items ranks among the most divisive issues in the field of archives and special collections, perhaps the one most likely to bring out equal parts raw emotion and well-reasoned professional opinion. But solid evidence indicates that the practice of lending physical items from special collections is becoming as common as not doing so. While an increasing number of curators are willing to consider the physical loan of materials under their stewardship, the workflows for considering and executing such loans tend toward unscalable. In order for curators to cope with the uptick in requests and arrive at a well-considered and professionally-responsible "yes" as often as possible, new workflows and new ways of thinking about lending physical items from special collections must be established.

From 2009 through 2011, a working group made up of resource sharing supervisors and special collections curators from OCLC Research Library Partnership institutions studied this issue. The most significant activity of the working group was creating a set of tools that will help institutions reconsider and streamline their processes for handling loan requests for special collections materials.

These tools include:

- a tiered approach to streamlining workflows associated with lending special collections, outlining minimal, moderate and maximum amounts of effort and overhead, to be invoked based on
    - the material
    - the request
    - the risk tolerance of curators and administrators
- a model written policy on sharing special collections
- a "trust" checklist to serve as a conversation starter between a prospective lender and an institution interested in borrowing an item from special collections

This report contains a complete description of the working group's activities, plus all of the tools listed above, and advice on how best to use them. The report's principles intentionally dovetail with the Association of College and Research Libraries' 2012 revision of Guidelines for Interlibrary and Exhibition Loans of Special Collections Materials (ALA 2012).

Introduction

Enhanced discoverability of special collections has led to increased interest from researchers. Concurrently, advances in scanning technology have helped make the provision of such materials in digital form fairly routine. There are instances, however—due to the nature of the material, the type of research question, or the need for extended access by a distant scholar—when only the loan of a physical item from special collections can satisfy a request.

"Says who?" you might ask. Says two-thirds of community practitioners, according to a survey conducted for this report.

> *There are instances . . . due to the nature of the material, the type of research question, or the need for extended access by a distant scholar . . . when only the loan of a physical item from special collections can satisfy a request.*

Ten years ago, requests for loans of special items for exhibition purposes were routine. Loans for research purposes were rare. Many institutions refused to consider such requests. Those that did turned each request into what amounted to a special project, requiring multiple internal consultations and extensive contacts between staff at the borrowing and lending institutions. Each step of the process, including packing and unpacking, required the participation of specially-trained experts.

With the increased visibility of special collections, requests for physical loans have multiplied. They arrive at prospective lending institutions in two separate streams, directly to the special collections curators and also via interlibrary loan departments. While an increasing number of curators are willing to consider the physical loan of materials under their stewardship, the workflows for considering and executing such loans don't scale well. In order for curators to cope with the increased volume in requests and arrive at a professionally-responsible "yes" as often as possible, new workflows and new ways of thinking about lending physical items from special collections must be established.

This report presents strategies for determining if a loan of the original item is the most appropriate way to fulfill a particular request for special collections material and offers techniques for providing efficient and affordable delivery of physical items. Cautious approaches to lending rare and unique materials, while justified, are not necessarily appropriate for every item in special collections and often result in time-consuming procedures. Labor-intensive processes and policies can be streamlined to fit institutional resources, the circumstances of requests, and the risk tolerance of curators and administrators.

Let's Get Physical

The work described in this report got its initial spark from the same steering committee that previously championed allowing cameras in the reading room and providing scan-on-demand services for users of special collections materials—both topics, in those days (2009), rather controversial ideas in themselves. But this issue always stood apart. The physical lending of special collections was put on the table, whisked off, and then nudged back on again. "I know we should be talking about this," said one committee member, "if only because it makes me feel so uncomfortable." Another agreed: "We have a professional responsibility to push at our boundaries and question our comfort zones." The third added, "I love the idea of lending from special collections. But I would never be allowed to bring it up at my own institution."

The idea has been around for a long time. Some prestigious institutions have been doing it for years, almost completely without mishap. The Historical Society of Wisconsin, for instance, has since the early 1970s operated a statewide network of regional research centers which moves archival materials around so that researchers can use them close to where they live (Erney and Ham 1972). More recently, in 2010, Elaine Engst of Cornell University sent an entire archival collection to Columbia University so that a Manhattan-based FBI agent could, over many months, search for crucial provenance evidence in an effort to recover letters allegedly stolen from a special collection at the New York Public Library (2012). NYPL had no item-level description of the collection, but decades ago a Cornell Ph.D. candidate consulted it and extensively described many of the letters in notes made while preparing his dissertation. Those notes were the key to the case. This represents a classic instance where only prolonged access to a complete set of original archival material at a spot near the user's home base could adequately satisfy the need.

> *"We have a professional responsibility to push at our boundaries and question our comfort zones."*

But emotions on this issue can run high, and professional peer pressure can be intense. I offer one example from my own experience:

In 2003, following a well-received Research Libraries Group program called Sharing the Wealth, where staff from dozens of institutions in the US and a few from the UK came together in Washington, D.C., to talk about their experiences with sharing physical items from special collections, I formed a working group to develop a pilot project that would promote such loans. Within a few weeks, I was pulled aside by the director of a top-tier ARL library who said, only half-jokingly, “Can’t you find something else to work on? This sharing special collections business has my staff yelling at each other in the hallways.” The working group’s only UK representatives soon begged off, because they felt their peers were not ready for a rational conversation about the topic. The working group ended up gathering some interesting examples of documentation and best practices for lending special collections, but the pilot project itself never materialized.

Fast forward to today . . .

Lending physical items from special collections for research purposes is finally an idea whose time has come—for some. It remains among the most divisive issues in the field of archives and special collections, perhaps the one most likely to bring out equal parts raw emotion and well-reasoned professional opinion. But solid evidence indicates that the practice of lending physical items from special collections is becoming more commonplace than not doing so. The Sharing Special Collections Working Group’s 2010 survey of 88 special collections and archives departments in North America, Europe, Australia, and Africa, found that 57.4% of respondents will lend physical items from their special collections within a consortium, while another 10.3% will lend even beyond their favored group (See figure 1.). That’s 67.7% of respondents who lend physical items from special collections at least some of the time.

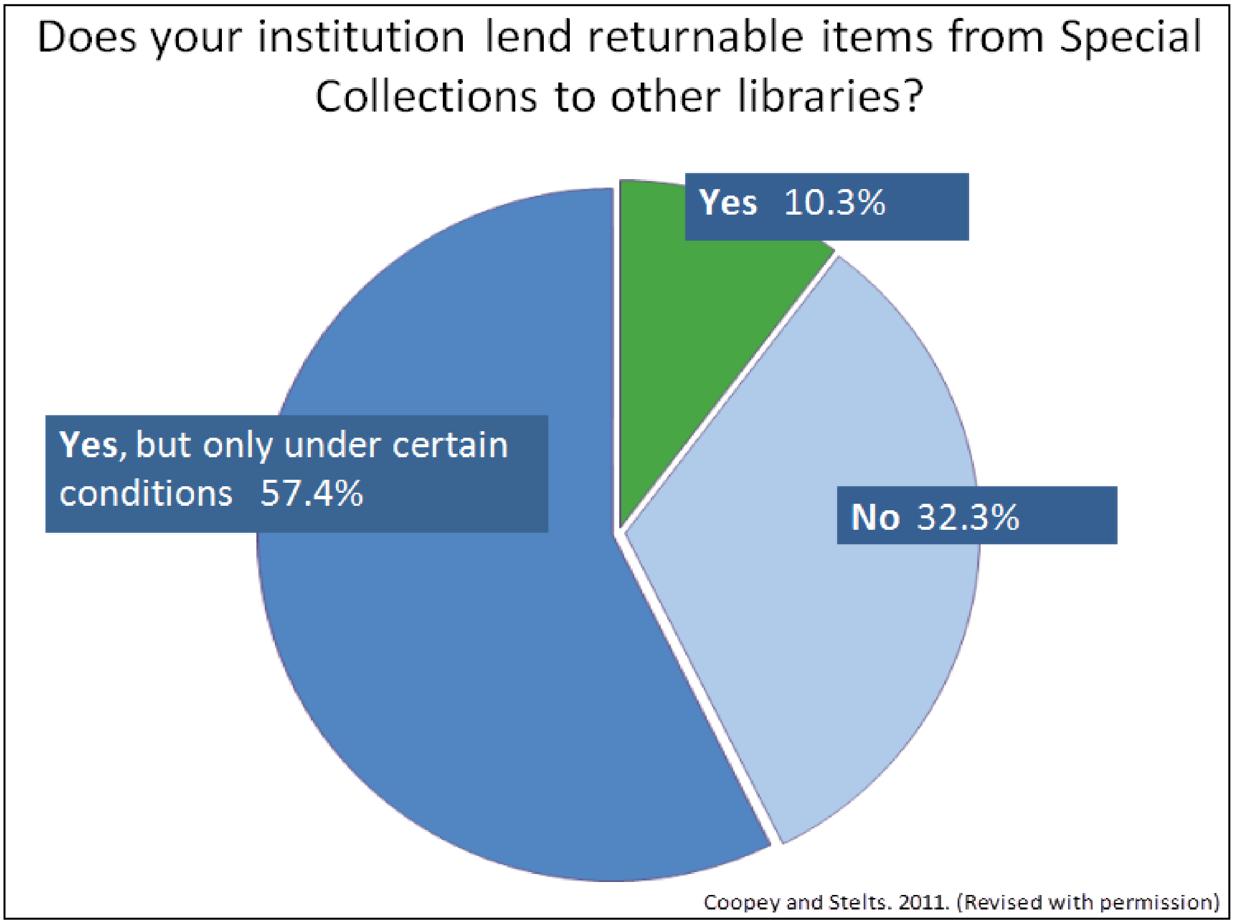

Figure 1. Most respondents (67.7%) physically lend special collections items

Getting to "Yes"

The working group was made up mostly of teams of special collections curators and interlibrary loan supervisors and included seasoned veterans of lending special collections, those who had experimented with the practice, and one team considering doing so for the first time. One of our initial tasks was to develop a set of "first principles" to guide our exploration of the issues:

- Lending a physical item from special collections is an exception, appropriate only when providing a surrogate copy would fail to satisfy the request.
- Considering a loan from special collections often requires a flip in mindset from "Why?" to "Why not?"
- Not everything held in special collections is equally special.

- Not every requester of special collections material realizes that the item is held in special collections.
- Let those who are best positioned to do something do it.
- Lending physical items from special collections requires trust, both internally and externally.
- An interlibrary loan (ILL) of special collections material counts as use.
- Borrowers of special collections should give serious consideration to being lenders; lenders of special collections should be entitled to some expectation of success in borrowing.

The working group devoted time and energy to a number of activities designed to promote the physical lending of special collections:

- Compiling a glossary for use by the working and advisory groups (the main contribution of which was to establish that by “special collections” we meant any material held in formal special collections or archives departments).
- Conducting a survey (sent via international discussion lists) of current practices and attitudes regarding the sharing of special collections, targeting both special collections and interlibrary loan practitioners.
- Producing a webinar, *Treasures on Trucks*, which featured a recent history of sharing special collections and a panel discussion featuring grizzled veterans alongside newcomers to the practice (Schaffner and Massie 2009).
- Supporting and informing the work of the RBMS Task Force that, in 2011, revised the ACRL guidelines on sharing special collections for exhibit and for research, with our main contribution being to ensure that sufficient numbers of interlibrary loan professionals and archivists commented on the draft guidelines (See this report’s list of references on page 39 for a link to the revised guidelines, which have since been endorsed by the Association of College and Research Libraries’ board of directors and the Society of American Archivists Council). (ALA 2012)

The most significant activity of the working group was creating a set of tools that will help institutions reconsider and streamline their processes for handling loan requests for special collections materials. These tools include:

- A tiered approach to streamlining workflows associated with lending special collections, outlining minimal, moderate and maximum amounts of effort and overhead, to be invoked based on
    - the material
    - the request
    - the risk tolerance of curators and administrators
- A model written policy on sharing special collections
- A "trust" checklist to serve as a conversation starter between a prospective lender and an institution interested in borrowing an item from special collections

This report contains a complete description of the working group's activities, plus all of the tools listed above, and advice on how best to use them. Let the sharing begin. And continue.

Highlights of the 2010 Sharing Special Collections Working Group Survey

In April 2010, the working group conducted a survey in order to solicit current attitudes, practices, policies, and priorities regarding the lending of special collections materials for research purposes. We cast a wide net, announcing the survey on major primary sources and interlibrary loan discussion lists and inviting any library with a special collections department to reply. Survey instructions encouraged respondents to have ILL and special collections staff members work together in answering the questions.

We received 88 responses. Types of responding institutions varied greatly and included academic, national, and public libraries, plus museums and historical societies. The overwhelming majority of responses came from North America, with four from continental Europe and one each from Africa and Australia. Respondent job titles included a mix of special collections curators, reference or access heads, and interlibrary loan supervisors, along with a few university archivists and library directors.

Major revelations included:

- Lending physical items from special collections is now more common (67.7%) than not doing so, at least within consortia.
- Digitizing on demand has become routine.
- Condition of the item is still the key to the lending decision.
- Attitudes toward unpublished materials are more restrictive than toward published.
- 36% indicated they have written policies for sharing special collections (but no one had an overall policy; each example covered a particular aspect or format).
- "Too risky" (69%) is by far the most common reason for not sharing returnable special collections (i.e., original items held in special collections that must be returned at the conclusion of the loan period).
- "Because we never have" and "Not part of our mission" each got more votes than "Lack of staff resources" as main reasons not to lend returnable special collections materials.
- Most interesting comment: "We were able to borrow things we would not be able to provide to others."

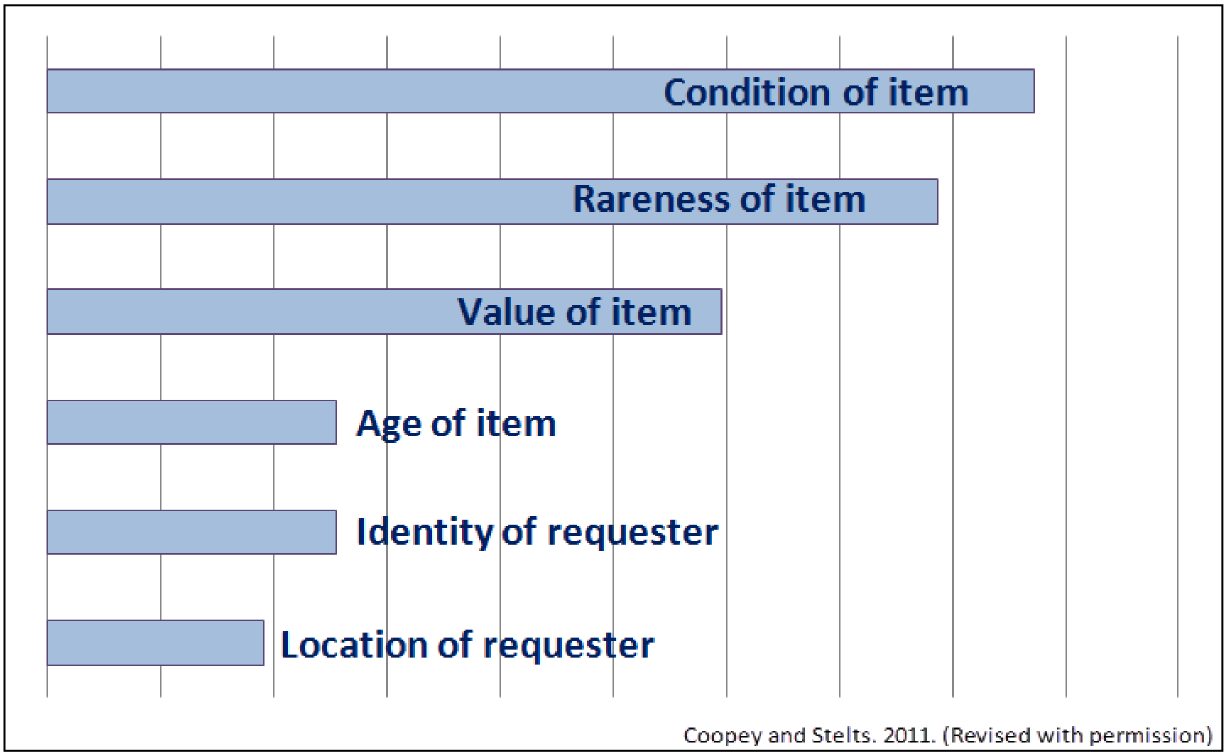

Figure 2. Issues involved in physically lending special collections items

The first section of the survey focused on policy. It was impossible to find any sort of consensus in the responses, other than one sizable camp being willing to lend even its treasures to trusted partners, while another sizable camp expresses an aversion to risk that at times sounds more like fear.

One respondent (an ILL staff person) expressed surprise at learning through completing the survey that special collections staff often receive and fill requests directly without ILL involvement; the ILL'er felt that such requests should be routed through the established resource sharing channels, because a willingness to lend such items creates a valuable reserve of good will for that library out in the community when it comes time to borrow.

> *"A willingness to lend . . . creates a valuable reserve of good will for that library out in the community when it comes time to borrow."*

In response to an open-ended question about how the decision is made to lend or not to lend, we mostly received confirmation of what was learned from the multiple-choice questions: condition matters most, with other factors such as rarity, value, popularity, and proximity (of the requester to the supplier, or of the requester to other copies of the same material) carrying significant weight. But one response was so thoughtful and comprehensive in approach—while so perfectly capturing the spirit of considering each request on its own merits—that it deserves to be quoted in full:

> We look at WorldCat to see how many other libraries have the item and where they are located. If the requestor lives within a day's to-and-fro driving distance, we would usually prefer that the researcher come to us to use the book. If we find via WorldCat that the requestor lives nearby another library (a researcher from the University of Chicago who wants a book that is owned by the Newberry Library, for example) we would usually decline to lend, particularly if the title is scarce. We think about the rigors of travelling and how the journey might affect the condition of the book. Some items are just too frail to lend and must be used under curatorial supervision. We think about the type of book—novelty books with pull tabs, fragile pop-up books, etc.—and turn down requests to borrow. When we are reluctant to lend, we often look up researchers in their university directory and email them to ask what specifically they are looking for. Sometimes we can fill a request by photocopying the table of contents or the index, or perhaps a few relevant pages. When requestors learn that the book is in a special collections library, we find that some say, "Oh, never mind. It isn't terribly important" or "I wouldn't want you to lend a rare book." Sometimes we find that researchers have gone on to another topic or no longer need the book because of a deadline. It sometimes makes a difference whether a researcher is engaged in an initial fishing expedition on a topic or whether the book would contribute to a major project. If we learn that our book is a vital part of a researcher's work, then we will go out of our way to accommodate the request. For books that are not particularly valuable or scarce, we check in other online catalogs to see if the same title might be in the circulating stacks of another library. We have lots of books (science fiction, utopias, or works by certain authors, for example) that are not particularly rare but that in OUR library are housed in Special Collections because of their subject or provenance. We wouldn't lend one of our utopian works if circulating copies are easily available from other institutions. We think of what it might mean to us if our book is damaged or lost. (We have on occasion lost books through lending.) There's a cost involved in two senses: What would it literally cost us to replace a book (if we could)? What would be the cost to our collections and researchers if we couldn't replace a book? If we are asked for a particularly scarce book, I look to see if there is a copy currently on the market. (This is often how we establish insurance values as well.) Could it be easily replaced? Was it given by a donor who would be angered by our having loaned it? Is it a key item within Special Collections that we couldn't afford to lose because it is so closely identified with us? Is the book unique (a signed copy or an association copy, for example), or does it have a particularly fine binding? We think about our local use patterns. We have an unwritten policy not to lend county histories or county atlases, for example, because they are so often consulted in our own reading room. It would be a hardship to our users (particularly genealogists on the road) to come here to find that a book that is supposed to be non-circulating is at another institution.

I hope someone thinking like this will be processing my own ILL request for special collections materials.

The survey closed with the open-ended question, "Is there anything you'd like to tell us about sharing special collections materials that wasn't addressed by the survey, or any point you'd like to emphasize?" We received 22 responses. A few mentioned that their institutions do not lend special collections and have no plans to review their policies; others lauded the increasing emphasis on access; a few wanted to hear more about the experiences of those institutions that are successfully lending entire archives. One respondent pushed the idea of digitizing as much as possible and making it available online as the best means of providing access. Another wrote, "We receive for our patrons materials that are similar to items we would not provide."

"We receive for our patrons materials that . . . we would not provide [to others]."

In other words, the survey showed us what we suspected already: that there is currently no consensus on any aspect of sharing special collections.

Survey Implications

When community practice is all over the map or split down the middle, the time is ripe for someone with a strong point of view to step forward and lay out a prospective path for that community. The Sharing Special Collections Working Group studied the survey results and decided to leap into the void.

Taking the "Scare" Out of Lending the Scarce

For members of our working group, volunteering for this assignment meant continually having to confront their own fears about the physical lending of special collections materials for research purposes. (See appendix 1, a case study of Pennsylvania State University staff involvement in this process, for an explicit example.) These fears became more manageable as we built up a core set of working principles.

Principal #1: The appropriate answer is still usually "No."

No one is going to lend *The Book of Kells*—except perhaps for the most major exhibitions. In all cases, making a surrogate of the item, digital or otherwise, will be the first option in answer to an external request to borrow something from special collections. But will a surrogate be useful to the researcher?

Principle #2: Not all special collections material is equally special.

Many items are in special collections not because they are rare or valuable, but because they were written by a certain author or type of author, about a certain place or topic, in a specific genre, or at a certain time. Some special collections items, such as transcripts of oral history tapes, are easily replaceable and even easier to copy.

Principle #3: Not all requests for special collections material are created equal.

Often a borrower doesn't realize that a requested item is held in special collections. Sometimes the researcher really needs to see the original; in other cases, a copy of only part of the material will suffice. A researcher may be under a crippling deadline or may have all the time in the world. Sometimes the requested item is absolutely critical; at other times the researcher is merely satisfying an idle bit of curiosity and wouldn't want to put anyone to any special trouble.

Principle #4: Interlibrary loan staff knows how to lend things and get them back safely.

It's what they do. They are meticulous. They've spent decades perfecting infrastructure and techniques. They're aware that existing national and international ILL codes serve as implied contracts that cover any and all interlending transactions. They know how to double back to the requester and find out exactly what is needed. They established the community practice of sending out a surrogate instead of lending the original. They're experienced in making sure material is handled properly. With a little coaching, they can expertly handle even the rarest or most fragile material. They will be judicious about when it's time to confer with special collections experts. In short, special collections and archives staff can trust them.

A Tiered Approach

With these principles in mind, working group members set about creating a flexible system for considering loans of special collections (See figure 3.). A flexible approach acknowledges differences in user needs, collections, institutions, and resources. As always, institutions will bring to bear professional judgment regarding when to scale up effort and investment. Delivery of special collections material, whether of the actual item or a surrogate, is the goal, no matter the combination of tiers chosen.

We borrowed the concept of three tiers, or three levels of effort and overhead, from the work presented by Jennifer Schaffner, Francine Snyder, and Shannon Supple in their April 2011 OCLC Research report, *Scan and Deliver: Managing User-Initiated Digitization in Special Collections and Archives*. We listed the main steps in processing external requests for research loans of special collections: review, decide, lend, and return. Next we laid out tiers with three distinct levels of effort and overhead that may be chosen and combined based on decisions about the value, condition, rarity, format, rights status or popularity of the requested item; the identity, location, and controlled environment of the borrowing institution; the status, needs, and point in the research process of the researcher; and the policies, staff capabilities, and available resources of both institutions. Knowing what questions to ask and which level of staff to involve at each stage of the process are important first steps in streamlining processes, establishing effective communication among cooperating departments, and ensuring appropriate handling for materials regarded as "special."

	Routine Workflow	Cooperative Workflow	Exceptional Workflow
REVIEW			
Request	Via ILL system	Collaboration between Special Collections (SC) and ILL	Directly to SC
Is material held in a special collection?	ILL staff	Collaboration between borrowing and lending institutions	Lending institution
Reference Interview	At borrowing institution—reference desk and ILL staff	Collaboration of ILL and SC staff in both institutions	By lending institution—SC staff
Inter-institutional communication how?	ILL system	ILL system and email/phone	Direct contact between two SC’s
Internal communication how?	ILL system	ILL system and email/phone	Direct contact between SC/ILL staff and other departments
Stipulate for Research Use?	Implicit	Consider emphasizing	Explicit criteria
Reviewing Infrastructure	Written guidelines	Collaboration between borrowing and lending departments	Elaborate decision tree, multiple staff, institutional level decision
Mutual disclosure of ILL and SC facilities	We trust you	Approved checklist	Facilities report
Forms	ILL transaction work form and IFM	Extra insurance and/or forms for special handling	Use agreement, insurance forms, art museums loan agreement, etc.
DECIDE			
Decision Maker	ILL staff	ILL and SC consult when necessary	SC staff, curator, possibly director
Original or Surrogate?	Surrogate or predetermined originals	Prefer to lend surrogate, consider original	Case-by-case consideration
Published/unpublished?	Some published and predetermined unpublished material types	Some published OK. Unpublished material on a case-by-case basis	Consider lending published and unpublished materials
Use Rights	Borrower’s responsibility	What any reasonable SC staffer would do	Search, monitor and control thoroughly
Trust and Training	ILL training and expertise	ILL and SC cross-training on handling fragile materials	SC training and experience only
LEND			
Oversees loan transaction	ILL staff	Staff in ILL and SC	SC specialists
Quality Control	Usual packager, usual shipper, mailroom or ILL	Special ILL or SC packager	SC/preserv staff prepare special supports and deliver with the material
RETURN			
Deliver	Usual shipper, with use/handling conditions	Expedited shipper, extra insurance, special handling instructions	Deliver from SC to SC—call me when you get it

Figure 3. Tiered approach to sharing special collections, with varying degrees of effort and staff involvement

The Way We Were—and the Way We Could Be

While the survey results indicate condition of the material as the primary consideration when deciding whether to lend a special collections item, discussion among working group members revealed that the dominant factor for determining which tiers one will use is attitude toward risk.

> *"The dominant factor determining which tiers one will use is attitude toward risk."*

Every research request used to be exceptional. Longstanding practice for those institutions that considered lending items from special collections was to treat each request according to the far-right "exceptional" tier. Most often requests were received directly by special collections staff; indeed, if the ILL office received a request for an item in special collections, common practice was to respond negatively and advise the borrowing institution to contact the special collections department directly. Often multiple staff members consulted about whether to lend the item. Typically special collections staff contacted the borrowing institution to talk about the patron's needs and the borrowing staff's ability to handle a loaned special collections item professionally. In some cases, use agreements and special insurance arrangements were required before a special item was be loaned. Preservation staff sometimes contributed special containers and support structures to protect the material while on loan.

Surely, working group members reasoned, there must be another kind of workflow appropriate to processing such requests. Surely there must be whole classes of special collections holdings about which an interlibrary loan person could be relied upon to make lending decisions, beyond a blanket negative. Perhaps there could even be middle-ground just beyond the obvious cases that could be decided cooperatively; special collections and interlibrary loan staff could come to an understanding about classes of material where a minimal amount of consultation would be appropriate, not necessarily to the level of bringing in curators or directors every time, and always with an eye toward providing a surrogate rather than lending the actual item whenever a copy would be sufficient. Surely a system could be put in place where the deluxe take-no-chances approach is saved for those few situations that actually require it.

Take a look at the tracks in figure 3. Think about the mindset at your institution, the prevailing attitude toward lending special collections originals, the tolerance for risk. Meet with your colleagues in special collections and interlibrary loan. What classes of material make sense for each track at your shop? For what material does it make sense to blend tracks, taking some steps in the Cooperative Workflow and others in the Routine Workflow? What materials push you outside your comfort level? What do you do when that happens? Proceed directly to the Exceptional Workflow?

Remember to breathe.

Then have the conversation about the tracks again.

The purpose of this report is to bring you to tiers.

Tool 1: Model Local Policy for Lending Special Collections Materials for Research Purposes

Working group members were excited when nearly a third of the respondents to our survey reported having developed a written policy statement that guided the sharing of items from their special collections. While no single institution possessed the kind of comprehensive policy statement that we sought, enough survey respondents provided examples of written policies on sharing particular formats that we were able to borrow the language needed to develop a comprehensive model policy statement on sharing special collections. The lion's share of this work was done by OCLC Research Program Officer Jen Schaffner, and working group member Scott Britton (then at the University of Miami). Our approach was to provide a multiple-choice template that special collections staff could customize for local use, adding and deleting elements to fit local practice.

Lending and Borrowing Special Collections for Research Purposes: Model Local Policy

Mission statement [example; add or delete as needed]:

> The [institution name] Special Collections unit supports an active program of loans from its collections. We take local demand for special collections into consideration when deciding whether or not loan. The benefit of increased public access to its collections is measured against internal programs and the demands of preparation, packing, and transportation, with special consideration to the physical conditions of the work must endure throughout the loan. Accordingly, all loan requests are subject to a formal approval procedure. All requests are [considered.] [considered on merit.] [considered for their contribution to scholarship/human knowledge.] [considered for their public purpose.] [etc.]

Formats [add or delete as needed]:

- Formats of materials that will be considered for loan include: [microforms], [rare books], [manuscripts], [maps], [archives], and [videos] [etc.].
- Items and collections for loan must be in stable condition that will not be damaged by the move, change of environment, or even supervised handling by the Borrower.

- Items that are fragile, expensive or oversized may circulate with special packaging, handling instruction and insurance.

Requests [add or delete as needed]:

- Inquiries regarding Interlibrary Loan policy and procedures for special collections should be directed to [ILL email or special collections email] or by telephone at [phone number].
- Researchers must channel loan requests through a qualified institution [university or college library, historical society, public library, archives, museum, etc.].
- Preliminary research concerning a request should be carried out well in advance so that the formal request can be made in a timely fashion.
- Requests accepted via: [ALA], [OCLC], [fax], [email], and [telephone].
- The preferred requesting method is [ILL system] [link to forms][extraordinary circumstances and forms].
- The institution charges what is charged for ILL, except in extraordinary cases. Any preparation requested by the Borrower or required by the Lender which is at variance with normal practice will attract additional charges. These will be negotiated on a case by case basis. Additional shipping/insurance costs may also be charged.
- Unless otherwise specified in writing, all works will be released from and returned to [your mailing information here].

Terms and conditions of loan [add or delete as needed]:

- No item may be re-loaned by Borrower to a third party.
- The borrowing period shall be for [x days or weeks] with a [x days or weeks] renewal period.
- Long-term loans will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- A researcher may borrow up to [x] items at one time and may not request additional loans until previously borrowed items have been returned.
- Researchers must be in good standing at their home institution.
- In the event that there is a local request for the loaned material, it will be recalled.

- The work must be stored in a space equipped to protect it from fire, smoke, or flood damage; under 24-hour physical and/or electronic security; and protected from humidity and temperature extremes, excessive light, and from insects, vermin, dirt, or other environmental hazards.
- No statement of valuation will be given an item in any manner to individuals or to the general public.
- The Loaning institution recognizes that a Borrower may cancel a loan, or other circumstances may prevent the loan from taking place as planned. Once remitted, loan-processing fees are non-refundable, regardless of circumstance.

Terms and Conditions of use [add or delete as needed]:

- All loaned materials must be used in the Borrowing library, in a reading room monitored by special collections staff.
- Staff of the Borrowing institution will ensure that the lender's regulations for use of [rare books, manuscripts, special collections, photographs and/or archives, etc.] are enforced during the loan period.
- Researchers must handle materials gently, taking care in a manner that avoids damage and excessive wear and tear.
- Permission for reproduction, including electronic formats, must be obtained from the Loaning institution. Permission may also need to be obtained from the copyright holder, if any.
- For specific digitization and publication use questions, please [visit the website] [contact staff].
- Each reproduction must be labeled and credited to the Loaning institution [as specified].
- Some material may not be available for reproduction due to preservation, copyright or other permission restrictions.

Packing, shipping and handling [add or delete as needed]:

- Only qualified staff may unpack, handle and repack the work/s.
- Any instructions given by the Lending institution regarding unpacking, handling and repacking are to be followed.

- The Borrowing institution will keep the packing materials for return shipment, and the work will be repacked using the same protective methods and materials.
- The Lending and the Borrowing institutions will ship the materials by a courier with tracking capabilities, such as UPS or Federal Express.
- The Borrowing institution may be required to bear costs associated with the shipping of the work/s including crating, packing, transportation, etc., in both directions.
- The Borrowing institution is responsible for returning the materials in the same condition as received.
- No work may be altered, cleaned, or repaired without prior written permission.
- Any damage, deterioration or loss to the work/s must be reported to the Lending institution immediately. The work/s should not be moved or treated until further instruction from the institution unless necessary to prevent further damage.
- If irreparable damage or loss occurs at any time, the Borrowing institution must meet all costs of replacement, or appropriate compensation.

Tool 2: The SHARES Facility Trust Checklist

Staff at institutions that lend physical items from special collections report that, upon receiving a borrowing request from another library, they often pick up the phone and initiate a conversation with the special collections or interlibrary loan practitioner at the borrowing library. In 2011, a SHARES working group compiled a set of core questions that the prospective lender typically asks of the borrower during such a conversation. This work was led by Aimee Lind of the Getty Research Institute.

The aim was to establish a set of core criteria that, when met by an institution requesting special collections material, will allow the curator to lend with confidence that the material will be handled safely and professionally. The 2012 SHARES Executive Group agreed that providing a list of such criteria to prospective borrowers and lenders is a valuable first step in promoting the sharing of special collections materials.

Working group and SHARES Executive Group members identified these potential use cases for the checklist:

- For a borrowing institution to cite compliance in interlibrary loan requests for special collections materials, as an indication to lenders that the material will be handled safely and professionally.
- For a borrowing institution to use to convince its own administration that upgrades in facilities and professional competencies are required in order to borrow materials essential to researchers.
- For a lending institution to send to a prospective borrowing institution that has requested special collections material through interlibrary loan, to confirm that the borrower has the facilities and competencies necessary to ensure safe handling of the borrowed item.
- In cases where the borrowing institution does not meet all the criteria, to use as a "conversation starter" with prospective lenders who may be willing to be flexible or to provide certain classes of material if a subset of the criteria are met.

SHARES Facility Trust Checklist: Baseline Criteria for Sharing Special Collections Materials

Institution name and address____

____

Contact info for ILL____

Contact info for Special Collections ____

1._____ My institution employs staff trained in handling special collections materials.

2._____ My institution maintains a supervised and secure reading room.

3._____ My institution's supervised reading room is climate-controlled.

4._____ My institution has a locked storage area or vault for housing special materials.

5._____ My institution's locked storage area or vault is climate-controlled.

6._____ The bags of those leaving my building are inspected, and/or patrons are required to leave bags in a locker before visiting special collections.

7._____ My institution's special collections area has intrusion detection equipment.

8._____ My institution's special collections area has a fire detection system.

9._____ My institution's special collections area has a fire suppression system.

10.____ My institution has insurance covering loss of borrowed materials due to damage or theft.

11.____ My building has a secure mail receiving room.

12.____ Incoming and outgoing special collections materials are received, unpacked, packaged, and shipped by staff trained in handling special collections materials.

Appendix I: Case Study—Pennsylvania State University

(This account draws heavily upon materials prepared by Sandra Stelts and Barbara Coopey; see list of references at the end of this report for specifics.)

Who: Sandra Stelts, Curator of Rare Books and Manuscripts

Barbara Coopey, Assistant Head, Access Services; Head, Interlibrary Loan

Pennsylvania State University Libraries

What: Embraced the idea of considering requests for loans of their special collections materials, including unpublished material.

When: After attending the 2009 OCLC Research webinar, *Treasures on Trucks and Other Taboos: Rethinking the Sharing of Special Collections*, organized by the group that did the work described in this report. (Schaffner and Massie 2009)

Why: To quote Sandra, “We became alternately intrigued and alarmed by the suggestion that special collections curators should consider lending more and more materials—including original archival and manuscript collections. Such loans on the surface seem contrary to our perceived mission and have put special collections curators’ desire to protect unique material at odds with interlibrary loan librarians who want to fulfill these requests for these materials.”

How: Joined the OCLC Research Sharing Special Collections Working Group, helped to develop practices to streamline the process of sharing special collections materials, and then applied these concepts to improve their own workflow.

In applying the thinking of the working group to the situation at their home institution, Sandra and Barbara found that the following questions particularly resonated with Penn State’s concerns:

- Collections are for use; how can we share?
- Does the user know the material is in a special collection?

- Should the request go to Special Collections directly or through ILL?
- How does the lending institution staff determine that the requestor actually needs the special material?
- How do we build trust—not only between borrowing and lending institutions but also between Special Collections and ILL?
- What can be loaned under what circumstances?
- What can be digitized and added to the collections for others to access and use?

One almost paralyzing worry was that Penn State would be overwhelmed with requests for materials held in their Special Collections, especially items they considered special because of subject or provenance, but that other institutions would keep in their general collections. A real breakthrough for Penn State came during an advisory group conference call when Eleanor Brown, then of Cornell University, reported that her ILL department sends a conditional response to all who request special collections material through interlibrary loan: "This item is held in our Special Collections. If you cannot locate this material elsewhere, please try us again." Once more, quoting Sandra, "It's so simple, and it has helped us to focus on the requests that are unique to our institution. We have also asked our own ILL staff to tell us when Penn State is the only location on a request. We know to take those requests particularly seriously and to make every effort to lend or make surrogates."

"Trust should exist not only between borrowing and lending institutions but also between ILL and Special Collections."

Liberated by the "conditional response" strategy, Penn State staff proceeded to examine the workflow between ILL and Rare Books and Manuscripts to ensure careful transport of material between the units. They acquired distinctive tubs (See note, figure 4) that both protected special material while in transit and set it apart from other items being moved in and out of ILL. (This has led to some instances of "tub envy" from staff of other Special Collections units; after some quiet negotiations, archival materials being handled for ILL purposes are now permitted to ride in the same tub as Rare Books and Manuscripts materials.) They reviewed paperwork that accompanies loaned material, including instructions for shipping, insurance, and safe handling. They increased the number of filled requests by scanning with an overhead scanner to protect fragile material. They made paper "preservation" copies of fragile items under the copyright law's fair use provisions and lent the copy. They improved measures to ensure the safety of room-use-only materials borrowed from other institutions—

as well as their own materials—by moving the photocopier to a location directly next to the reference desk to ensure more direct staff supervision and compliance with no-photocopying rules. Other renovations to the reference and reading rooms will improve sight lines from the reference desk, and the security cameras have been upgraded.

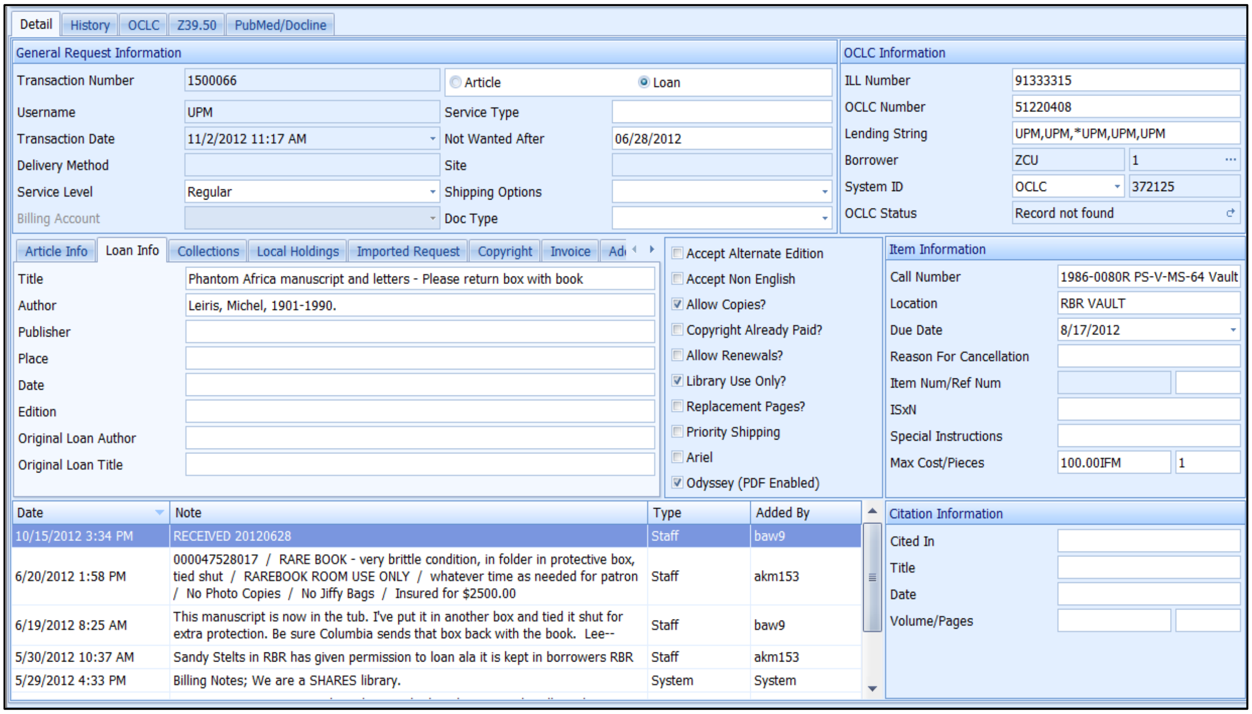

Figure 4. ILL transaction record of Pennsylvania State University lending a manuscript to Columbia University

Sandra and Barbara soon learned that trust was the key ingredient in the sharing of special collections material; as Barbara put it, "Trust should exist not only between borrowing and lending institutions but also between ILL and Special Collections." Penn State staff put major effort into building trust between the ILL and Special Collections units by increasing communication and paying more attention to the process. Both units now better understand the concerns and needs of the other and, in fact, find that they share many of the same needs and concerns, such as effectively balancing the pressing needs of researchers with the library's imperative to protect the material.

Barbara recently had a query from a librarian in Japan who wanted to know what sort of security the Penn State library offered in the reading room before deciding to lend them a book. Barbara just happened to have photos taken for a presentation about the Sharing Special Collections working group and was able to document the layout and security regime of the reading room. The librarian in Japan loaned the book. Working group members agreed that having such photos on hand to share discreetly during the course of an ILL transaction would be quite useful.

Once involved with lending special collections materials via ILL, Penn State staff warmed to the task. They discovered early on that it was often useful to be in touch directly with the other library's patron to find out exactly what was required, and how vital the need actually was. Sometimes they could satisfy a researcher's request by simply photocopying a table of contents, or a single chapter, or an illustration, rather than lending the whole book. Staff discovered that researchers were often sensitive to the curators' concerns, saying "Oh, never mind, I wouldn't want you to ship a rare book" or "I can try to find it on my next trip to Italy—let's hold off for now." When the need was truly urgent and could not be satisfied from other sources, Penn State staff went to great lengths to find a way to fill it.

All of this work building upon the accomplishments of the Sharing Special Collections Working Group has, in Sandra's opinion, led to an increased alignment of the Penn State library with the institutional mission. And to quote her one last time: "I bask in praise after a successful transaction, such as 'Oh! You are just too good!'"

Appendix 2: In-depth Analysis of the 2010 Sharing Special Collections Working Group Survey

In April 2010, the working group conducted a survey in order to solicit current attitudes, practices, policies, and priorities regarding the lending of special collections materials for research purposes. We cast a wide net, announcing the survey on major primary sources and interlibrary loan discussion lists and inviting any library with a special collections department to reply. Survey instructions encouraged respondents to have ILL and special collections staff members work together in answering the questions.

We received 88 responses overall, with 64 completing the entire survey. Types of responding institutions varied greatly and included academic, national, and public libraries, plus museums and historical societies. The overwhelming majority of responses came from North America, with four from continental Europe and one each from Africa and Australia. Respondent job titles included a mix of special collections curators, reference or access heads, and interlibrary loan supervisors, along with a few university archivists and library directors.

ILL Lending Policies for Special Collections Materials

The first section of the survey focused on policy. It was impossible to find any sort of consensus in the responses, other than one sizable camp being willing to lend even its treasures to trusted partners, while another sizable camp expresses an aversion to risk that at times sounds more like fear.

Over two dozen respondents (36.8% of the total) claimed to have a written policy on lending special collections. When the working group followed up, however, we found that not a single institution had an overall written policy covering all special collections and archives. Rather, they had a written policy on some aspect of sharing, such as microfilms or digitizing out-of-copyright materials. In the end, we borrowed language from several of these narrowly-focused policies to create a model overall policy for sharing special collections materials. (See tool 1.)

Nearly half of respondents (48.5%) have different policies for lending published special collections materials than for unpublished, while 35.3% do not, and 16.2% “sometimes” have different policies. Comments revealed that many have the “same” policies for both because they do not lend anything from special collections, published or unpublished. The differences in policy usually centered around being sometimes willing to lend published material but not unpublished, or to copy published material but not unpublished. There was no consensus.

Only 10.3% of respondents indicated that they lend physical items from special collections to other libraries, with another 57.4% reporting that they will do so "under certain conditions," for a total of 67.7% who share physical items at least sometimes. About a third (32.3%) never lend physical items from special collections. Comments revealed that many lend only for exhibition, others only to fellow participants in the SHARES resource sharing program, still others only published materials. One library reported experimenting with loans of entire archival collections to other libraries within their state. Again, there was no consensus on best practice.

Those who **do lend** physical items from special collections to other libraries were asked to choose the top three issues involved in the decision-making, from a list of eight that included "Other—please specify." By far the most important issues were "condition of item" (noted by 87.2% of respondents), "rareness of item" (mentioned by 78.7%), and "value of item" (noted by 59.6%). No other answer—age of item, identity of requester, location of requester, how busy we are, or other—was chosen by more than a quarter of respondents. "Other" choices put forward included how heavily the item is used at the home institution, the value to the home institution aside from monetary value, and the quality of the environmental conditions at the borrowing library.

Those who **do not lend** physical items from their special collections to other libraries were asked to rank the reasons why they don't, from a list of seven that included "Other—please specify." The most popular reasons were "too risky" (69.2%), "other" (51.3%), and "items needed onsite (30.8%). "Other" reasons included "items are irreplaceable," "have loaned previously and gotten back damaged items," "resistance on the part of special collections staff," "resistance on the part of branch managers," and, my personal favorite, "an atmosphere of mistrust and fear." As previously mentioned, the reasons "not part of our mission" and "because we never have" each was chosen twice as often as "lack staff resources," which the working group members had anticipated being an oft-cited reason for not lending.

Nearly half of respondents (47.8%) reported lending surrogates of special collections materials to other libraries, while another 35.8% said that they do "under certain conditions," for a total of 83.6% lending surrogates (compared with 67.7% lending physical items). Only 16.4% reported not lending surrogates of special collections materials to other libraries. Comments centered mostly on the condition of the original item and the proportion of the work being requested. One respondent wrote, "We desire to keep our collections, and make our repository valuable to researchers, so we don't create duplicate collections for storage by other repositories."

Those who **do supply** surrogates of special collections materials were asked how they supplied them, choosing all methods that apply from a list of five, including "Other—please specify." "Scan and send as file" (81.0%) and "photocopy and provide hard copy" (74.1%) were by far the most popular methods, with "scan, add to own digital collection, and provide a link" (41.4%) being the only other choice cited by more than a quarter of respondents.

Those who **do not supply** surrogates of special collections materials were asked why not, with up to three reasons to be chosen from a list of seven that included "Other—please specify." "Risk of damage to material" (52.6%) and "Other" (47.4%) were the only choices selected by more than a third of respondents. Comments indicated that some respondents interpreted the question as being specifically about providing a surrogate of the entire special collections item, and they either lacked the resources to do so or felt that such a request would violate copyright in most cases.

Workflows for Managing ILL Requests for Special Collections Materials

The divide in the community about sharing special collections materials continued when we looked at workflows for managing incoming requests. More than half (57.1%) have interlibrary loan staff manage library-to-library requests for special collections materials, while 9.5% manage such requests in special collections; 33.3% receive and manage such requests in both departments.

By far the most popular method for managing and tracking ILL requests for special collections materials was ILLiad (41.0%), the ILL management software created by Atlas Systems, with the next popular being paper files (16.4%). Other methods included spreadsheets, integrated library systems, and Clio, an ILL management package designed by Clio Software. One respondent reported using Aeon, an online request system for archives and special collections designed by Atlas Systems.

In response to an open-ended question about how incoming ILL requests for special collections materials are "triaged," answers varied from "we don't lend" to "we only lend within our consortium" to "we check with the archivist" to "the director reviews the request." The preferred method seemed to be related to the size of the staff handling requests and the volume of requests coming in; busier places saw more of a need to automate and streamline processes; at less busy places or sites where one staff member handles all incoming requests, procedures were more informal, epitomized by the comment, "When I get a request for special collections materials, I set it aside until a have a minute to go and see the archivist."

In answer to a question about the preferred modes of communication among staff processing and reviewing ILL requests for special collections materials, the most popular were “email” and “face-to-face” (36.1% each). Only 13.1% use the ILLiad client for such communication. Very few use paper forms and the telephone. One commenter emphasized, “The answer is no. Always.”

When asked an open-ended question about the effectiveness of current procedures for handling incoming ILL requests for special collections materials, most expressed satisfaction. A few suggested that more automation would be helpful, while others noted that key staff outages can throw the system into disarray. One respondent (an ILL staff person) expressed surprise at learning through completing the survey that special collections staff often received and filled requests directly without ILL involvement.

Workflows for Processing ILL Requests to Physically Lend Special Collections Materials

The next section of the survey focused on workflows associated specifically with lending physical items from special collections to other libraries. Most respondents (59.6%) indicated that a curator makes the final decision about whether a particular item will be physically loaned, with ILL staff making the decision in only 11.5% of the responses; at nearly a third of the surveyed institutions (28.8%), it is a group decision. In response to an open-ended question about how the decision is made to lend or not to lend, we mostly received confirmation of what was learned from the multiple-choice questions about basic processing of requests for special collections materials: condition matters most, with other factors such as rarity, value, popularity, and proximity (of the requester to the supplier, or of the requester to other copies of the same material) carrying significant weight.

Most potential lenders of physical items from special collections don’t require any specific knowledge ahead of time about the borrowing patron, with a few respondents asking to know the name and/or patron status. In response to an open-ended question about what potential lenders of such material might want to know ahead of time about the borrowing institutions, most mentioned the security and environmental controls in place, or the presence of professional staff to supervise use of the items. A few would want to know if the borrowing institution was a fellow member of a consortium such as SHARES. A very few indicated that they would not lend special collections materials to a public library.

As for packaging special collections materials for loans to other libraries, respondents were almost evenly split between assigning this task to ILL staff (34.0%) and special collections staff (30.0%). Only 10.0% of respondents delegated such packaging to the mail room. “Other, please specify” responses comprised more than a quarter of the total (26.0%); they varied from a division of labor (conservator makes special boxes, ILL staff does packaging) to a case-by-case approach based on condition or format.

Workflows for Processing ILL Requests for Surrogates of Special Collections Materials

The final section of the survey focused on workflows associated specifically with lending surrogates of special collections items to other libraries. As with the decision-making process for lending special collections items themselves, most respondents (44.8%) indicated that a curator makes the final decision about whether a surrogate will be sent (compared with 59.6% having curators decide when loaning the actual item); ILL staff make the decision on lending a surrogate in 25.9% of the responses (compared to only 11.5% having ILL staff decide on lending the actual item). As with the decision-making for lending actual items, nearly a third of the surveyed institutions (29.3%) make providing a surrogate of a special collections item a group decision.

The survey closed with the open-ended question, “Is there anything you'd like to tell us about sharing special collections materials that wasn't addressed by the survey, or any point you'd like to emphasize?” We received 22 responses, mostly reaffirming points made elsewhere in the survey. A few mentioned that their institutions do not lend special collections and have no plans to review their policies; others lauded the increasing emphasis on access; a few wanted to hear more about the experiences of those institutions that are successfully lending entire archives. One respondent pushed the idea of digitizing as much as possible and making it available online as the best means of providing access. Another wrote, “We receive for our patrons materials that are similar to items we would not provide.”

The survey showed us what we suspected already: that there is currently no consensus on any aspect of sharing special collections.

When community practice is all over the map or split down the middle, the time is ripe for someone with a strong point of view to step forward and lay out a prospective path for that community. The Sharing Special Collections Working Group studied the survey results and decided to leap into the void.

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