
Standards for ethical conduct for rare book, manuscript, and special collections libraries and librarians

2d edition: A draft

Prepared by the RBMS Ethical Standards Review Committee (ad hoc)
Beverly P. Lynch, Chair

Bring your comments on the Standards to the hearing in San Antonio on Saturday, January 25, 1992, 8:00–10:00 p.m.

Standards for ethical conduct for rare book, manuscript, and special collections librarians" was approved as policy by the ACRL Board of Directors on January 18, 1987, and published in *College & Research Libraries News*, v. 48 (March 1987), pp. 134–5. The statement was designed, as is this second edition, to amplify and supplement the Code of Ethics adopted by the American Library Association in 1981 (ALA Policy 54.16).

As part of ACRL's ongoing practice of periodic review of its statements of standards, the ACRL Rare Books and Manuscripts Section appointed an ad hoc committee to review the Standards for Ethical Conduct and to revise them in accord with present and anticipated needs. The members of this committee are Susan M. Allen (the Claremont Colleges), David W. Corson (Cornell University), Ellen S. Dunlap (Rosenbach Museum & Library), Sidney F. Huttner (University of Tulsa), William Joyce (Princeton University), Beverly P. Lynch (UCLA, Graduate School of Library and Information Science), Alexandra Mason (University of Kansas), Alice Schreyer (University of Chicago), and Daniel Traister (University of Pennsylvania).

The Standards for Ethical Conduct are designed to make known to the public and to the profession the principles which guide the actions of the members of the profession. The Standards exist to assist

decision and action, not only by the special collections librarians and the agencies they serve, but also by all those who are concerned with institutional ownership of culturally significant properties.

The 1987 statement has served the rare book, manuscript, and special collections community in a number of important ways. By calling to the attention of curators and administrators the need to develop institutional policies and procedures, it has enabled them to confront difficult ethical issues relating to conflicts of interest, thefts and forgeries, and staff activities in areas of collecting, dealing, and appraising. In this revised version of the document, the committee has provided, as part I, a set of ethical standards for the guidance of the governing bodies and administrators of rare book, manuscript, and special collections libraries. These standards are not intended to address general matters of effective library administration but only those points of particular ethical importance to these particular libraries.

Libraries which are responsible for the care of rare books, manuscripts, and special collections maintain them in many administrative patterns, ranging from the part-time assignment of a librarian who has other primary duties to the establishment and maintenance of separate divisions or even entire self-contained libraries with the care of spe-

cial collections as their sole function. These special collections libraries are known by many names, from Treasure Room to Research Center. The term “special collections library” is used throughout this document to refer to all these administrative patterns and names.

The bodies responsible for the governance and administration of libraries have as varied a set of names as the libraries themselves. Throughout this document “the library,” “libraries,” etc., should be understood to stand for “the body responsible for the governance and administration of the library.” Whenever a statement such as “Procedures must be established” is used, it is this body which is responsible.

The term “library director” should be understood to stand for the person in charge of the library as a whole.

The term “special collections librarian” is used in this document to denote persons employed in special collections libraries. Most of the points discussed relate directly to actions usually performed by professional staff only but all persons working in such libraries share the obligation to follow ethical standards.

I. Standards of institutional practice for the ethical governance and management of special collections libraries

The governing body of a special collections library is responsible for acting ethically toward the library’s collections, staff, readers, donors, and the world of scholarship, with due care for the preservation of the library’s reputation. It must create and maintain a climate of ethical conduct within the library, promulgate standards of ethical conduct, both institutional and individual, and take responsibility for compliance with these standards.

I.A. The collections

Special collections libraries derive their unique identity from their collections, and the primary duties of these libraries are the safeguarding and development of, and the provision of access to, these essential elements of our cultural fabric. The libraries’ responsibility to their collections is paramount.

I.A.1. Security of the collections

Special collections libraries have, as a primary responsibility, the safeguarding of their materials. The institution of policies and procedures to protect and preserve the materials is an institutional responsibility of the highest order.

The physical integrity of the materials must be protected, the materials guarded against theft, defacement, alteration, and physical damage, and measures taken to insure that their integrity and

meaning are not impaired in consequence of conservation treatment, arrangement, or use.

I.A.1.a. General physical care

Procedures must be established for the general and special maintenance of the collections to insure that they are preserved unimpaired for the future, including the following:

1.A.1.a.i. Regularly evaluate storage and handling procedures to protect the material against damage.

1.A.1.a.ii. Regularly evaluate standards of conservation treatment.

1.A.1.a.iii. Regularly monitor environmental and safety conditions.

1.A.1.a.iv. Educate and continually supervise readers and staff in the handling of materials.

1.A.1.a.v. Establish policies and practices to prevent damage to materials from photo-reproduction, lending, and exhibition.

I.A.1.b. Disaster planning

Senior staff and emergency preparedness personnel should develop and regularly review plans to prevent, prepare for, deal with, and recover from disasters.

1.A.1.b.i. Insure that staff are thoroughly familiar with these plans.

1.A.1.b.ii. Make appropriate sections of these plans known to emergency preparedness personnel such as institutional maintenance departments, fire and police departments.

I.A.1.c. Theft prevention

Special collections libraries must guard their materials against theft by developing, evaluating, and regularly reviewing physical and procedural safeguards against theft. In addition to physical and procedural security against theft by outsiders, policies and procedures which guard against both the suspicion and the actuality of insider theft must be established and put in practice.

1.A.1.c.i. Separate responsibility for order and receipt of materials, payment, and accounting, so that no single staff member controls all procedures.

1.A.1.c.ii. Maintain clear and scrupulously accurate records of all such transactions, open to inspection by responsible senior staff and administration.

1.A.1.c.iii. Require compliance by all staff, including volunteers, with security measures comparable to those applied to the public in regard to entering and leaving the library and the storage and inspection of personal possessions such as books, coats, briefcases, and other containers.

1.A.1.c.iv. Maintain strict control over keys and entry to the library.

1.A.1.c.iv.a. Restrict issue of keys, keycards, and access codes to a minimum number of designated responsible senior library staff only.

1.A.1.c.iv.b. Document all entries and departures outside hours of opening.

1.A.1.c.v. Maintain proper bibliographic control, including employment of copy-specific catalog descriptions and recorded markings which make the materials unmistakably identifiable.

1.A.1.c.vi. Perform regular inventories.

1.A.1.d *Response to theft and forgery*

Special collections libraries victimized by thieves, forgers, and other criminal traders, either as the targets of theft or the unwitting purchasers or recipients of stolen or forged materials, must do all in their power to stop further illicit practices.

1.A.1.d.i. Special collections libraries must not knowingly acquire materials which have been stolen or imported in contravention of applicable law.

1.A.1.d.ii. Special collections libraries must be prepared to publicize known thefts and proven forgeries, to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the identification and prosecution of thieves and forgers, and to work cooperatively with other libraries and the antiquarian trade in the recovery of stolen materials, in efforts to make known the existence and locations of stolen materials, and in facilitating the return of the materials to their rightful owners.

1.A.1.d.iii. Special collections libraries must prepare and regularly review contingency plans to deal with any theft which may occur.

1.A.1.d.iii.a. Establish chains of authority for handling relations with law enforcement and press.

1.A.1.d.iii.b. Establish contacts with appropriate law enforcement agencies.

1.A.1.d.iii.c. Make plans for necessary public dissemination of information, including alerting of booksellers and other libraries.

1.A.1.d.iv. Special collections libraries must vigorously investigate allegations of external or internal theft of library resources and, where appropriate, seek public prosecution.

1.A.1.d.v. Special collections libraries must vigorously investigate allegations that library materials may be forgeries and, where appropriate, seek public prosecution.

1.A.2. Development of the collections

Collection development policies and practices must be designed to improve the quality of the collections. While the governing body bears final responsibility for the collections, including both acquisition and disposal, development of the collection development statement and rigorous assessment of the pertinence of items to the collections or the library's programs should be the responsibility of the special collections librarian in consultation with appropriate collection development staff.

1.A.2.a. The special collections library should

develop and make public a statement of its policies regarding the acquisition and disposal of items.

1.A.2.a. Additions to the collections

Materials collected by the special collections library should be relevant to the library's purposes and activities and consistent with the collection development policy.

Particular care should be taken to insure that records of ownership and of any conditions agreed to at the time of acquisition are maintained.

1.A.2.a.i. For full legal and ethical protection of the library and any other parties concerned, the types of records to be maintained and the forms of instruments of conveyance and other documentation to be employed should be developed by legal counsel.

1.A.2.a.ii. Retain clear and detailed records of purchase of materials.

1.A.2.a.iii. Insure that donated materials are accompanied by an appropriate document transferring title, preferably unrestricted, but with any limitations clearly described in the instrument of conveyance.

1.A.2.a.iv. Insure that oral histories and other individual testimonies are collected only under the terms of clear written agreements controlling access to and use of such materials.

1.A.2.a.v. Insure that materials accepted "on deposit" are accompanied by clear documentation of ownership, any conditions of deposit, and the rights and responsibilities of both library and owner. The documentation should include agreement of ownership and provision for disposition of the materials in case of abandonment.

1.A.2.b. Deaccession of materials from the collections

In the deaccession of rare books and manuscripts, the special collections library must weigh carefully the interests of the public for which it holds the collections in trust, the interests of the scholarly and the cultural community, and the institution's own mission. Consideration must be given to any legal restrictions on alienation of materials, to the necessity for possession of valid title, to the donor's intent in the broadest sense, and to moral restrictions imposed by the wishes of donors.

Procedures for the deaccession or disposal of materials must be at least as rigorous as those for purchasing and should be governed by the same basic principles.

1.A.2.b.i. *Responsibility to the public and the world of scholarship*

The decision to alienate library materials must be made only after full and scrupulous consideration of the public interest and the needs of researchers.

Deaccession of library materials must be accomplished in an open and public manner.

1.A.2.b.ii. *Responsibility to the library community*

Due consideration must be given to the library community in general when disposing of items.

Sales to, or exchanges between, institutions should be considered as well as disposal through the trade.

1.A.2.b.iii. *Responsibility to donors*

When mandatory restrictions accompany a donation they must be observed unless it can be shown clearly by appropriate legal procedures that adherence to them is impossible or substantially detrimental to the institution.

When statements of donor's preferences accompany an acquisition, any departure from them must be carefully considered and negotiated with the donor or the donor's heirs or settled by appropriate legal procedures.

1.A.2.b.iv. *Responsibility to the needs and reputation of the library*

In preparing for and accomplishing any deaccession the special collections library must take care to define and publicly state the purpose of the deaccession and the intended use of monetary or other proceeds of the deaccession, to avoid any procedure which may detract from the library's reputation for honesty and responsible conduct, and to carry out the entire process in a way which will not detract from public perception of its responsible stewardship.

1.A.2.b.iv.a. The library must insure that the method of deaccession will result in furthering the agreed purpose of the deaccession, whether this be monetary gain or more appropriate placement of scholarly resources.

1.A.2.b.iv.b. The deaccessioning library must disclose to the potential new owner or intermediary agent any action, such as the retention of a photocopy of the material, which may affect the monetary or scholarly value of the material.

1.A.2.b.iv.c. The library must make public information on the disposition of deaccessioned materials.

1.A.2.b.iv.d. The library must not allow materials from its collections to be acquired privately by any library employee, officer, or volunteer, unless they are sold publicly and with complete disclosure of their history.

I.A.3. Access to the collections

The library must provide reasonable access to the collections on a nondiscriminatory basis.

1.A.3.a. *Intellectual access*

The library must insure the intellectual accessibility of its holdings by the application of professionally accepted standards of cataloging and the free

exchange of information about the collections.

The library must maintain information about the collections in an orderly and retrievable form.

1.A.3.b. *Limitation of access*

Special collections libraries may regulate access to the collections according to established and stated policies.

1.A.3.b.i. The library may deny or limit access if it would impair the physical or intellectual integrity and safety of an item or collections.

1.A.3.b.ii. The library may deny or limit access to meet conditions imposed by the donor as part of the acquisition agreement or for other legal reasons.

1.A.3.b.iii. The library may not reserve materials exclusively for the use of individual scholars except where required by a donor's condition of gift or where such a reservation has been imposed by the holder of the literary rights in the material as a condition of acquisition.

1.A.3.b.iv. The library should attempt to persuade donors and/or copyright holders to refrain from requiring exclusive reservation for individual scholars or other undue restrictions on access to materials under their control and should weigh carefully any decision to acquire materials accompanied by such restrictions.

1.A.3.b.v. Where the library itself is the holder of the literary rights, exclusive reservation of materials for the use of individual scholars (although legal) should be avoided.

1.A.3.c. *Access to photocopies and other surrogate materials*

When providing access to photocopies of or other surrogates for original items which are the property of others, special collections libraries should be mindful both of copyright and of the property rights of the owners of the physical original, informing readers that publication or other public use of such materials requires permission both from copyright holders, where relevant, and from the institutions that own the originals from which copies have been made.

I.B. Staff

The library must clearly state its standards of ethical conduct and make them known to all staff; it must develop and promulgate procedures for the resolution of questions of unethical conduct. Particular aspects of professional conduct which should be addressed in these standards include personal collecting, personal dealing, appraisals and authentications, gifts and other favors, personal research and outside employment, and confidentiality, which are discussed in detail in Part II, Standards for Ethical Conduct of Special Collections Librarians. Where institutional policies or legal restrictions exist governing matters within the purview of such

standards these must be included in the policy statements of each library.

I.C. Library-donor relations

Written policies governing relationships with donors must be provided to both staff and potential donors, governing such matters as authentication, referral to appraisers, and provision of information about tax regulations concerning donations. *See also* section I.A.2.b.iii above on responsibility to donors in case of deaccession of donated materials and section II.C., Appraisals and authentications, below.

I.C.1. Advice on authenticity or market value

Special collections librarians are often called upon to advise potential donors and others on the authenticity or market value of books and manuscripts. It is proper to assist the owner of materials in the use of reference tools for these purposes, but special collections librarians must exercise due caution when offering further advice, characterizing it as informed opinion only and explicitly cautioning against employing it in place of professional appraisal.

I.C.2. Tax matters

United States Internal Revenue Service regulations prohibit librarians from acting as appraisers of materials given to their institutions. While donors may be helped to find expert appraisers and tax advisers, special collections librarians must avoid any appearance of collusion with potential donors to bypass provisions of the law regarding gifts. Caution must be exercised in giving written certification of the authenticity or authorship of specific materials beyond the ordinary non-binding statements made in the course of cataloging or normal reference work. (*Note:* Librarians from other countries should consult the appropriate legal codes of their own countries for similar restrictions which may govern the provision of information on valuation, authenticity, and the like.)

I.C.3 Referrals

Special collections librarians referring potential donors to appraisers, booksellers, and other persons who may be of assistance to them should avoid any appearance of collusion or favoritism by providing, whenever possible, more than one name.

I.D. Objectivity and authenticity

The library must be scrupulous in the observance of objectivity in its provision of information about its collections and in the accuracy of its attestations of the authenticity of its materials.

I.D.1 Objectivity

Institutional practices must be designed so that

exhibitions, publications, and public information are presented honestly and objectively.

1.D.1.a. The stated origin of an item or attribution of work must reflect thorough investigation and must promptly be changed in the event of accurate challenge.

1.D.1.b. Library exhibitions and publications routinely address a wide variety of social, political, artistic, or scientific issues. Exhibitions on any subject can be appropriate, if approached objectively and without prejudice.

1.D.1.c. Special collections libraries should display materials created by staff members who practice arts or crafts or pursue similar outside interests only under circumstances in which objectivity in their selection can be clearly demonstrated.

I.D.2. Authenticity

Special collections libraries must take special care in the representation and identification of forgeries and facsimiles.

1.D.2.a. Items known or proven to be forgeries must be clearly identified as such.

1.D.2.b. Special collections libraries which knowingly acquire forgeries must do so only for use, study, and display as forgeries.

1.D.2.c. In arranging for the manufacture and sale of facsimiles, reproductions, or other commercial items adapted from items in a library's collections, all aspects of the commercial venture must be carried out in a manner that will not discredit either the integrity of the library or the intrinsic value of the original object.

1.D.2.d. Care must be taken to identify reproductions permanently for what they are, to record their source and degree of completeness, and to insure the accuracy and high quality of their manufacture.

I.E. The book trade

Libraries depend upon the book trade for provision of the rare books and manuscripts which they hold in trust; the two parties share a long tradition of mutually beneficial cooperation in building collections and a common concern for their preservation. Libraries (and librarians) must conduct all business with booksellers and vendors in an open and ethical manner.

1.E.1. Libraries whose budgetary constraints require that payments for goods or services be deferred to a future time should discuss these constraints with booksellers and vendors before acquisition processes are initiated or materials are ordered "on approval."

1.E.2. Libraries have a responsibility to reach acquisition decisions quickly and to make certain that payment procedures, to the extent that these lie within their control, are as expeditious as possible.

1.E.3. Libraries which prefer to dispose of

deaccessioned materials by sale or trade to dealers rather than by public auction should offer them to a number of dealers for bid, wherever feasible. Institutional fiduciary responsibilities must outweigh library-dealer relationships that could permit the appearance (or the reality) of favoritism. I.E.4. Libraries should respect the property rights of booksellers whose materials they have under consideration, handling the materials carefully, not taking photocopies, and making sure that material to be returned is packed securely and returned promptly and safely.

II. Standards of ethical conduct for special collections librarians

Rare book, manuscript, and special collections librarians hold positions of trust, involving special responsibilities for promoting scholarship by preserving and providing access to the records of knowledge in their care. Such librarians, in implementing the policies of their institutions, must accept and discharge these responsibilities to the best of their abilities for the benefit of their institutions and the publics those institutions serve.

The maintenance of public trust is essential to the effective function of a special collections library and special collections librarians must scrupulously avoid weakening this trust. In all their activities, they must act with integrity, assiduously avoiding activities which could in any way compromise them or the institutions for which they work. They must particularly guard against personal conduct or procedures or conditions within their libraries which may lead to conflicts of interest—a condition which arises when an employee's personal or financial interest conflicts or appears to conflict with that employee's official responsibility. Special collections librarians cannot be required to reverse, alter, or suppress their professional judgment in order to conform to a management decision, but they must be accountable for making themselves familiar with and adhering to institutional policies as well as applicable laws.

It is in the public interest and the institution's interest that special collections librarians engage in the full range of professional and personal scholarly activities. However, in doing so, librarians must remember that their first responsibility is to carry out fully and conscientiously the duties of the position held in the library. Special collections librarians must avoid actual or potential conflicts of interest and misuse of the library's name, reputation, or property.

These standards for ethical conduct are designed to help in the application of these principles to ethically difficult situations that arise in library experience. The standards are illustrative, not comprehensive. The standards assume that the librarian

will act in accordance with the spirit as well as the letter of the standards.

II.A. Personal collecting

The acquiring, collecting, and owning of books and manuscripts by special collections librarians is not in itself unethical. These activities can enhance professional knowledge and judgment and are not to be discouraged. Ethical questions can arise, however, in personal collecting. Extreme care is required whenever a librarian collects items similar to those being acquired by the institution and some institutions will choose to restrict or prohibit personal collecting.

II.A.1. Special collections librarians must keep the appropriate administrative personnel of the library informed in a timely way about their personal collections and collecting activities.

II.A.2. In the course of personal collecting activities, special collections librarians may wish to make occasional sales or trades to upgrade their collection, or may wish to dispose of a collection en bloc. Because questions of title and conflict of interest may be raised by such sales or trades, it is incumbent upon the librarian to inform the library administration of proposed sales and trades and to present to any potential purchaser evidence of clear title or, failing the existence of a title document, a personal affidavit affirming ownership.

II.A.3. Special collections librarians must not use their library affiliation to promote any personal collecting activities nor may the special collections librarians compete with the institution, in fact or in appearance, in any personal collecting activity. The library always comes first.

II.A.4. Librarians who engage in personal collection-building must not take advantage of discounts offered on their own purchases in return for institutional orders.

II.A.5. Extraordinary care must be taken to avoid any possible confusion between personal and institutional collecting.

II.A.5.a. Personal orders for books or other items of the kind collected by the library and unrelated to current job responsibilities must be placed from a home address and invoiced and delivered to that address.

II.A.5.b. Great care must be taken to avoid any possible confusion of ownership. Only those personal books and similar items which special collections librarians find necessary to their work should be brought into their offices. Each item should be marked for personal identification before introduction into the library, and inspected when brought in and when removed.

II.B. Personal dealing

II.B.1 It is unethical for special collections librarians to engage in dealing of library materials.

II.B.1.a. Dealing is here defined as the regular purchase, sale, or trade of library materials for profit.

II.B.1.b. Upgrading of a personal collection (see previous section) is not dealing.

II.B.2. Special collections librarians must not be party to the recommending of materials for purchase by institutions or collectors, if they have any undisclosed financial interest in these materials, nor may they accept any commission or undisclosed or otherwise compromising gift from any seller or buyer of such materials.

II.C. Appraisals and authentications

II.C.1. Special collections librarians must not appraise any rare book, manuscript, or special collections materials, either for compensation or *pro bono*.

II.C.1.a. Appraisal is here defined as the determination of the monetary value of an item or collection of items.

II.C.1.b. Valuation of materials for internal administrative purposes is not considered appraisal.

II.C.2. Identification, authentication, and description (areas related to appraisal) when pursued as outside activities, must be subject to clearly defined library policy.

See also Section I.C.1, Advice on authenticity or market value.

II.D. Gifts, favors, discounts, and dispensations

II.D.1. Special collections librarians must not accept gifts, loans, or other dispensations, or things of value that are available to them in connection with their duties for the institution. Salaries together with standard related benefits should be considered complete remuneration for all library-related activities.

II.D.1.a. Gifts include discounts on personal purchases from suppliers who sell items or furnish services to the library, except where such discounts regularly are offered to the general public.

II.D.1.b. Offers of outside employment or other advantageous arrangements are considered gifts.

II.D.2. Genuine personal gifts may originate from individuals who have a potential financial or other interest in the library. In such instances the librarian is obliged to disclose the circumstances fully to the library director.

II.E. Personal research, outside employment and consulting, including teaching, lecturing, writing, and other creative activities

Special collections librarians have the same right as other professional persons to engage in personal research and outside employment in accordance with announced institutional and library policy statements.

II.E.1 Personal research

II.E.1.a. It is not unethical for a librarian to use

the library's research holdings for personal research and publication on the same terms as others using the same holdings if such practices are made known to the library director or other appropriate superior. The proprietary interest of both library and librarian in copyrights, royalties, and similar properties should be in conformity with stated general institutional policy.

II.E.1.b. It is unethical for a librarian to make use of special personal access to, or non-public information about, the library's research holdings to further personal research and publication in unfair competition with members of the public research community.

II.E.2. Outside employment

II.E.2.a. All outside employment activity must be undertaken within the fundamental premise that the librarian's first responsibility is to the library, that the activity will not interfere with the librarian's ability to discharge this responsibility, and that it will not compromise the library's professional integrity or reputation. Reference to the librarian's official position within the library should be avoided or made only sparingly in connection with outside activities.

II.E.2.b. Certain types of outside employment, including teaching, lecturing, writing, and consulting, can be of benefit to both the institution and the employee by stimulating professional development. Consequently, special collections librarians should be encouraged in these activities. In academic institutions, policies often regulate outside employment and consulting by faculty and staff. Special collections librarians should be subject to these same policies.

II.E.2.c. Special collections librarians often will be considered representatives of their institutions while they are engaged in activities or duties similar to those they perform for their library, even though their work may be wholly independent of the institution. In other instances a librarian's activities outside the institution may bear little relation to the functioning of a library. In either case, special collections librarians must disclose to the library director or other appropriate superior the facts concerning any planned outside employment or consulting arrangements.

II.E.3. Personal use of library resources

II.E.3.a. Prior approval must be obtained for any contemplated use of the library's research facilities, staff assistance, or property such as stationery, telephones, copying machines, computer time, or objects from the collections in connection with outside efforts. Arrangements should also be made

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to reimburse the institution for such use under the guidance of institutional policy.

II.E.3.b. No staff member should use at home any object or item that is a part of the library's collections or under the guardianship of the library, or use any other property, supplies, or resources of the library except for the official business of the institution. To the extent that circumstance or special policies warrant exceptions, the circumstances or policies should be a matter of written record.

II.F. Confidentiality

Special collections librarians, whose work in-

volves intimate knowledge of the work of researchers, the library's relations with donors and booksellers, and other material of a confidential nature, must be scrupulous in keeping this information confidential.

II.F.1. Special collections librarians must keep confidential information about the activities and research of their readers which they gain in performance of their professional duties.

II.F.1.a. Exceptions may be made to this provision in cases where, for the advancement of scholarship, the reader has signed a written agreement to waive any claim to confidentiality in general or in specific instances. ■ ■

(Scholars cont. from page 720)

The roundtable meeting ended with a discussion on how the future may be influenced. A number of scholars presented plans for projects that would create electronic publications available for shared access. Among these are the American Association for the Advancement of Science's online medical journal, a computerized dictionary of American literary terms, and a database of astronomy literature with natural language indexing. Common to these projects are the post-publication issues of storage, physical copies made at some point in time,

and archival and preservation issues.

Academic librarians are already facing these access and archival issues with established programs at a number of large research institutions. They are positioned to play a key advisory role, guiding publishers and scholars in the design of electronic products that take into consideration the information needs of future generations who will use the scholarly information we are recording and distributing today.—*Patricia E. Sabosik, Editor & Publisher, Choice* ■ ■

(IASSIST cont. from previous page)

In the session on text file issues, John Price-Wilkins, University of Michigan, gave a paper on "Text Files in Libraries: Present Foundations and Future Directions." He stressed that users of text need generalized data suitable for use with a variety of software tools, as well as access to these resources in a networked environment. Research libraries have a responsibility to build electronic collections conformant with evolving standards for text encoding and to facilitate access to these resources outside the library. The session closed with an impressive demonstration of a system developed at UM to provide access to text files.

"Electronic Products and Depository Library Programs" was another session where academic librarians presented views on providing data services within a library context. Ray Jones, University of Florida, a long-time advocate of library involvement with providing access to census data regardless of format, shared his experiences with providing services over a period of two decades. Juri Stratford, University of California at Davis, highlighted the advantages and disadvantages of U.S. depository libraries receiving a deluge of electronic

products, largely numeric, on CD-ROM.

Another hallmark of IASSIST conferences is the workshops. Four half-day sessions were offered and included "Starting a Data Library," "Living with UNIX," "Financial Time Series," and "Using Interactive Graphics and Statistical Data in the Classroom." Led by Ilona Einowski, University of California at Berkeley, and Jean Stratford, University of California at Davis, the workshop on "Starting a Data Library" raised many questions for those attending. While there is no one solution or organizational structure for data libraries, the various activities involved in organizing and operating a data library were debated by participants.

I attended the conference with the support of the ACRL Professional Liaison Committee and my home institution. As a member of the IASSIST Program Committee I worked to promote academic libraries as partners in providing access to computer-readable text and social data. The academic librarians who attended the conference and presented papers assisted in reaching that goal.—*Diane Geraci, social science and data librarian, State University of New York at Binghamton* ■ ■