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Talk of the Trade

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Overall, the conference programs and workshops were very informative. It was marvelous to be surrounded by all that creativity and ingenuity with the only drawback being the lack of time an individual had to attend all the sessions that were of interest.

Preservation Options In A Digital World: To Film or To Scan
Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) Workshop, May 20-23, 2003, University of New Mexico

Report by Sharon A. Moynahan (University of New Mexico General Library)

Decision-making in today's rapidly changing library world is fraught with uncertainty. Technologies and laws change so rapidly that today's brilliant decision is tomorrow's embarrassing mistake. From May 20 through May 23, a group of fifty librarians, library specialists, technical support people, archivists, and museum curators gathered for a workshop at the University of New Mexico. Sponsored by the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC), the program, “Preservation Options in a Digital World: To Film or To Scan,” featured experts in microfilming, digitization, program planning and the legal issues involved. While the majority of participants were from New Mexico and surrounding states, both coasts, the Midwest, and even New Zealand were represented.

The first day featured a summary of traditional microfilming and photographic reproduction used for preservation. Steve Dalton, Director, Field Service, for NEDCC, welcomed the participants and launched into a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of microfilming. Components of cost along with factors to be considered in selecting items to be filmed rounded out the discussion. During the late morning and early afternoon, Wes Boongaard, Preservation Officer of the Ohio State University Libraries examined the options for both microfilming and digitization along with the decision-making process in selecting the best method for different types of collections. Costs, standards for quality, delivery options, copyright law, and finding aids were discussed as components of good decisions for successful projects. The day ended with a presentation by Nancy Dennis, Director of the Repository and Technology Services for the University of New Mexico, describing New Mexico's successful statewide digitization initiative. Although packed with information, Day One would prove to be just a warm-up for Day Two, which featured a comprehensive look at digitizing, including selecting the items for preservation and the nuts and bolts of the technology involved. Paul Conway, Director of Information Technology Services at Duke University, presented what he felt participants "really needed to know" about the digital landscape and later discussed the infrastructure needed to support digital projects. In between his two presentations, Steve Puglia, a Consultant for Image Constructors, LLC, stretched most of the participants' comprehension of pixels, resolution, bit depth, color, and other specifications farther then they would have believed possible. By the end of the day, it was apparent that good decisions were in the future.

However, it wasn’t really the end of the day. During the early evening, Mary Minow, Library Law Consultant, gave an overview of the legal issues of microfilming and digitization. The fact that digitizing constitutes "republishing" would likely interfere with some plans in the works at participants' home institutions. International copyright agreements, changes in U.S. law, the Bolo copyright extension act all impinge on the public domain, and add new challenges for librarians trying to stay within "fair use" guidelines. By the end of her presentation it was abundantly clear that the group had dozens of questions and not enough time. No one minded postponing dinner to the evening hours.

Day three was the Paul Conway show. He delved deeply into the relationship of producer, archive, and consumer. His discussion of the real costs of digitizations projects (most of which are not connected to the actual imaging process) opened many eyes and probably caused some rethinking of projects in the works. Discussions of the move from "projects" (one-time initiatives, often given funded) to a regular institutional program of preservation, as well as the costs of maintaining viable access in the face of constantly changing technology were comprehensive. Putting realistic budgets into grant proposals, with believable, well researched back-up data, was described as crucial to getting the outside funding that sustains most preservation projects.

Day four was a lagniappe aimed at the New Mexico institutions' projects for preserving the state's history. Paul Conway, Mary Minow, and Steve Puglia discussed the essentials of collaboration, again tackling technology choices, project management and legal issues.

Throughout the four days, innumerable sources for additional information were given to participants. It was soon apparent that, however extensive, this workshop was to be just the beginning of the learning process. Rather than suggesting a particular course to follow, the panelists prepared the fifty participants to examine the many options and factors involved in making good digital or microfilming preservation decisions.

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Oprah’s Perfect Solution
Oprah Winfrey's wildly successful "Book Club" segment on her TV show made obscure authors famous, and propelled their novels to the top of the best seller lists. But Pulitzer Prize author Jonathan Franzen doomed the gravy train when he dised Oprah, saying he'd refuse to have his book, The Corrections, included in her club because her selections were not up to his literary standards. To the consternation of publishers and booksellers, Oprah took this withering criticism to heart, announcing she would no longer feature books on her show. Now she's had a change of heart, but instead of risking more critical pronouncements from ungrateful authors, Oprah has come up with the perfect solution: Only dead authors will be featured on her show.

Academie Francaise Insists Gourmandise Must Wait Its Turn; Desperate French Petition Pope on Seven Deadly Sins
Even thought the Catholic Church has downgraded the seven deadly sins to the venal sin category, a French pressure group sees no reason to feel the slightest tinge of guilt when indulging in their favorite pastime, eating. The problem is that the French dictionary, compiled by the Academie Francaise, translates "gluttony" as "gourmandise." In fact, there is no precise English language equivalent of "gourmandise," which irritates French foodies—meaning practically everyone in France. They insist that this word exemplifies what is best about their food culture, a combination of "Athenian elegance, Roman luxury, and French delicacy" according the eighteenth century food philosopher, Brillat-Savarin. The six other deadly sins (pride, avarice, lust, anger, envy and sloth) translate accurately into French, but a coalition of food societies and food writers complains that "gluttony" should be translated as "gourmanderie," a more reproachful word. Led by historian Jean-Francois Fayard, they have demanded that the linguists who constantly revise and update the Academie Francaise-sponsored French dictionary, the official arbiter of the French language, immediately correct the flawed "gluttony"/"gourmandise" translation, substituting "gourmanderie."

However, the Academie Francaise linguists are now working on words starting with the letter M, and they refuse to disrupt their alphabetically ordered revisions. It could be years before they arrive at words starting with G. Mr. Fayard and his cohorts, refusing to take no for an answer, continued on page 101
10. "Achieving institutional advantage." This means, as the author points out, many things to different people. For some libraries they have long understood the need to build on existing collection strengths. This may be an area where we as librarians need to do some additional thinking.

11. "Transforming bureaucracy, culture, and assumptions." This is, as is known in library circles, the "vision" thing. We are actively grappling with this. With one foot in the printed past and the other in the digital future, we are actively trying to figure out how to chew gum, hum, and dance at the same time. The author talks about the need for non profit colleges and universities to compete with for profit institutions. For libraries, as the ultimate non profit but black hole consumers of funds, our challenge is to compete with the free Web.

My intent in this review of the eleven strategic challenges facing higher education has been to show how well libraries are doing. Yet, we still have some work to do: We need to get even closer to the communities in which we live. Especially for libraries associated with private institutions, we need to discard the "us and them" mentality that stops non-students from having some meaningful access to our holdings;

- make our libraries as easy to use for disciplinary specialist as non specialists;
- give our staff the freedom to try out new forms of technology without making them battle their way through the committee structures that dominate many modern libraries;
- not lose sight of our need to bring users and information together as we satisfy our need to collaborate with each other in hundreds of organizations;
- work with other libraries to develop areas of true strength so that all of our users benefit; and of course
- be willing to detach our finger holds on the ways we have done things in the past.

We have much to do, but I remain proud to be a librarian and pleased with how well we are doing as participants in the larger educational enterprise.