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The Association of Librarians in the History of the Health Sciences

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Preservation-Conservation literature from 1979:

A sampler

by Lisabeth M. Holloway

Our last survey of the literature of preservation was reported by Inci A. Bowman in the issue of October, 1978. About that time, the Editor, at least, was cherishing a hope that a major "breakthrough" might be in prospect — rather early prospect even, some magic chemical process which would erase the ravages of time from deteriorated books by the truckload, turning bad old paper into good-as-new stuff with a shelf-life of three hundred years minimum. No such glorious announcement has penetrated the editorial office.

Accordingly, a rapid survey was made of Library Literature since then. Articles on conservation have appeared in increasing numbers in professional publications at all levels — local, regional, national, and specialized. But a glance at some of this matter plainly reveals our former fantasies as moonshine. We may, however, be chipping away at our problem through a few new techniques, both of prevention and of cure, and through wider professional and popular education.

Swartzburg, Susan G. Preserving Library Materials, A Manual. Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1980. 282 p.

A readable book, introductory rather than didactic, preferring to outline the problem for the uninitiated instead of directing the practicing librarian in specific difficulties. Described by its author as a "handbook," it "discusses collection maintenance, ranging from good housekeeping to the installation of environmental controls," and "covers the various media found in library collections: books, prints, photographs, slides, microforms, records, tapes and film, and the special problems each represents" (p.[ix]). This reader looked up the areas of her special interest — photographs and manuscripts — and found these furrows simply re-plowed, nothing new. The sub-title "a guide," or "an introduction," would have been more accurate than "a manual." Trustees, library-school students in their beginning phases, and lay administrators should be encouraged to read it.

Preservation of Library Materials, Joyce R. Russell, editor. Proceedings of a seminar sponsored by the Library Binding Institute and the Princeton-Trenton Chapter of Special Libraries Association held at Rutgers University, July 20-21, 1979. New York, Special Libraries Association, 1980.

Chapters on various topics by leading local and national authorities. A valuable compendium altogether,

especially for the transcript of discussions following each paper. If it had an index — shouldn't librarians be especially careful to provide indexes to their own productions? — we could use this as an introductory textbook and ready-reference. Among the best chapters:

"Housekeeping," by Pamela W. Darling. Covers the fundamental preventive techniques which all of us ought to be attending to: writing them into our job descriptions, teaching them to our assistants, and heckling our superiors to budget time for.

"Disasters: Can we plan for them? If not, how can we proceed?" by William [! Willman, of course] Spawn, reprinted from Roland Baumann's A Manual of Archival Technique (Harrisburg, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1979). Specific as to problems and solutions, drawing on the author's extensive experience assisting libraries after all sorts of disasters.

"Mass deacidification," by George B. Kelly, Jr. An excellent summary of the problem and its extent (he estimates the volume of deteriorated books in the U.S. at 300,000 tons), of various processes under development or testing (liquid-based and gaseous), their advantages and disadvantages, and general prospects, with considerable detail about the most promising. This seems to be the diethyl-vapor-phase treatment tried in the General Electric Space Center at Valley Forge, Pa., requiring 8 days to treat 5,000-7,000 volumes. Easily comprehensible even to the non-chemist.

The final discussion takes up such questions as in-

house techniques safe for the nonconservator, best deacidification agent for the single sheet, and the one-batch versus the double-batch method, when not to oil bindings, etc., etc. A bibliographical addendum emphasizes newsletters and teaching aids.

De Candido, Robert. [A four-part series on preserving library materials in Library Scene. The last three of these are in volume 8, 1979; volume 7 had fallen into the abyss between the shelf and the microfilm department in my resource library, and I cannot report on it as a result.]

"Preservation treatments available to librarians." 8(1): 4, March. A good brief discussion of basic options available to the practicing librarian.

"Environmental Factors Affecting Library Materials." 8(2): 4-5. Useful specifics, as "Lowering heat from 77° to 68° F doubles the amount of time it takes paper to lose half its strength." "If relative humidity and temperature are high, above 70% relative humidity and above 75° F, it is possible for mold to grow on paper."

"Emergencies in Libraries." 8(3): 6-7. Discusses freezing, various means of drying soaked materials, the importance of organization in advance of disaster, and such after-effects as insect larvae.

Brief but valuable summaries, especially helpful in their specificity.

Buchanan, Sally. Recent developments in library conservation in the United States. Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information 1982: pp. 61-68.

Rehearses approaches to and efforts underway in conservation under headings "National Developments," "Professional Organizations," "Cooperative Efforts," "Individual Library Efforts," "Education and Training," "Research and Development," "Publications," and "Funding." As one would expect from the title, this is a survey piece rather than a substantive one. As such, it is detailed and well done.

Hendriks, Klaus B. and Brian Lesser. Disaster preparedness and recovery: photographic materials. American Archivist 46(1): 52-68, Winter, 1983.

Concerns "results of some experiments involving the immersion in tap water of still photographic negatives and prints in black-and-white and color, and their subsequent drying by various means." Illustrat-

ed with tables. Recommendations confined, as to be expected, to handling of materials which have been soaked; within its sharply delimited subject, both informative and impressive as an example of the high level of technology being developed toward a manual of disaster-preparedness.

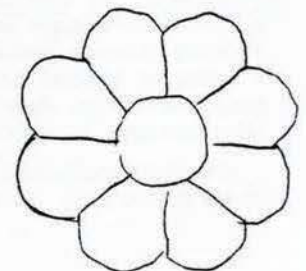
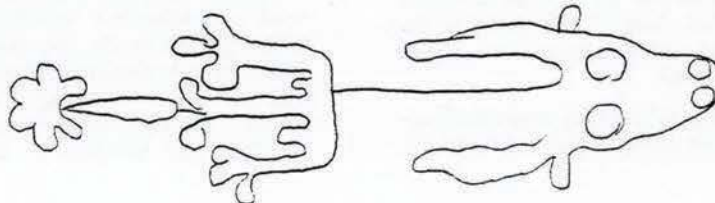
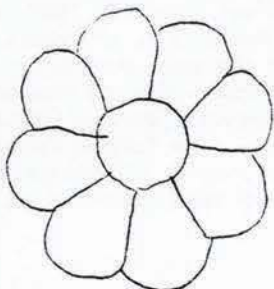
Byrnes, Margaret M. Preservation of library materials: 1981. Library Resources & Technical Services 26: 223-239, July/September 1982.

A review article, to become an annual publication, one would hope. Well organized by topic, consisting of two or three succinct paragraphs of text keyed to 135 references collected at the end, it discusses briefly: "Association activities," "Collection surveys," "Commercial binding," "Conferences and workshops," "Conservation techniques," "Deacidification," "Disasters," "Education," "Environment," "Exhibits," "Grants," "National, regional and local programs," "Nonbook materials," and "Paper."

As the author notes, "The preservation literature of 1981 is impressive in its quantity, variety, and quality. It reflects the groundswell effect of years of effort by a small group of dedicated souls. More importantly, it attests to substantial recent accomplishments on a number of fronts" (p.223). "The progress made during 1981 ... augurs well for the 1980's as the decade in which an enormous problem was brought to heel" (p.234).

The moderate optimism at which Margaret Byrnes arrives after her careful progress through 135 conservation and preservation papers and reports produced during a single year — this conservative optimism suggests an interesting contrast with the gloomy outlook of a foundation executive reported in "'Yellow snow' preservation problem at Harvard" (Library Journal December 1, 1981): "Foundations 'seek to find the key thing to fund. [But] we sense that the model we are looking for doesn't exist; ... there is a lack of consensus, of conscious ordering of priorities, and of any predispositions to do so.'"

Perhaps the "yellow snow," the 20th-century disease of the book, like cancer, the 20th-century disease of man, can be conquered only in a series of well-fought, well-planned small engagements, rather than by a wholesale frontal assault. Perhaps the foundations should consent to fund a number of local projects, rather than seeking vainly the single blockbuster solution.



Photography, advertising, and the history of medicine:

Notes on the medico-historical art of Lejaren A Hiller

by Robert E. Skinner

A deeper appreciation of the history of medicine is possible when one adopts a cosmic view. An area of medical history which is seldom explored by scholars is the role of the artist in depicting scenes and personalities from the past. Photographic art, advertising, and surgery come together to form a fascinating story in the work of Lejaren A Hiller. Born in Milwaukee in 1880, Hiller studied at the Art Institute of Chicago and in Europe before returning to the U.S. in 1904 to create posters for the Louisiana Purchase Exposition and to illustrate travel brochures for the Santa Fe Railroad.¹

By 1907 Hiller had turned his hand to photography and became one of the first successful advertising photographers. In these endeavors, he utilized his skill as an artist and draftsman to good effect by "pre-visualizing" the scenes he wanted to photograph. In this technique, he would make perspective drawings which would take into account the limitations of the studio camera and also serve as guides for set construction and decoration.²

In 1927, Hiller was hired by the firm of Davis & Geck to create an advertising series which would utilize scenes from the history of surgery. Davis & Geck was at that time the world's leading producer of surgical suturing material. The original idea for the series was conceived by the famous chief of surgery at Yale, Dr. Samuel Harvey, and Charles T. Davis, one of the founders of Davis & Geck.³ As envisioned, the photographs would depict famous surgeons of the past, posed in dramatic situations that would show the development of suturing materials. Davis & Geck, at Hiller's request, did painstaking research to determine the types of clothing, instruments, furniture, and other props that should appear in the scenes.

The backdrops were built to Hiller's exacting standards in New York's Underwood Studios on East 45th Street. According to Charles Riall, former advertising manager for Davis & Geck.

The models varied from derelicts, to actors, to high-priced models.... The latter, when their fees were too high, were replaced by Hiller from the students of a nature dancing school next door. Many of the actors would perform (at their regular jobs) before and between takes.... Through all this confusion, Hiller would create the proper mood, correct lighting, check historical facts, and bring his superb artistry to the fore.⁴

The results of this seemingly chaotic arrangement were 84 photographs which appeared in the Davis & Geck advertisements in seventeen different periodicals between 1927 and 1941, and again between 1945 and 1948. They were extraordinarily popular and in looking at them today, one can easily understand why. Their shadowy, baroque lighting, reminiscent of a Rembrandt painting, quickly captures both the eye and the imagination. The really amazing quality of each photograph, however, lies in the realism of the backdrops. Hiller was able to create in the studio such complicated and diverse backgrounds as sailing ships in battle, an executioner's block, Paris during the Black Death, and castle battlements under siege.

Although the painstaking attention to historical detail shows the artist at work, some of the photos also show that Hiller was every inch the canny advertising genius. About fifteen of the scenes show attractive female models in various stages of undress, and occasionally in what can be described as seductive poses. It is apparent that he did this often enough to keep up viewer interest in the series, but not so often as to attract undue comment.

These photographs are of interest to the medical archivist or special collections librarian because they depict the history of medicine in art and also show an important milestone in medical advertising. Though the journal and magazine advertisements are lost to us, the pictures themselves can still be seen in two other forms. Sets of the photographs were issued as a limited edition portfolio and were given to members of the medical profession as promotional items. Each picture in the portfolio measures 9" x 12" and includes an extended caption that describes the work of the personality depicted. The portfolios themselves are dark grey paper with the words "Sutures in Ancient Surgery" embossed in script on the front. Below the title are embossed the words, "Davis & Geck, Inc." While complete portfolios are not often found, many of the individual pictures survive and are often found framed on the walls of medical offices and hospitals.

Even rarer than the portfolios is a book that was published in 1944 by Hasting House of New York. It includes seventy of the photographs with short summaries of each surgeon's career. The title page reads:

**SURGERY THROUGH THE AGES
A PICTORIAL CHRONICAL [sic]**

by
LEJAREN A HILLER
Text by
Paul Benton and John W. Hewlett
With an Introduction by
Iago Galdston, M.D.

This book has become a collector's item and, along with the portfolio, makes an interesting addition to any special collection. The portfolio is currently on a rotating display at the Medical Education Branch of the Louisiana State University Medical Center Division of Libraries.

References

1. Arnold Sovari, "Operating Theater." Camera Arts 1982, 2(8): 22.
2. Ibid.
3. Charles T. Riall to R. E. Skinner, November 22, 1982.
4. Charles T. Riall to Arnold Sovari, November 22, 1982.

New members

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Woodruff Memorial Building
Emory University
Atlanta, Georgia 30322

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Elsalyn P. Drucker, Library Director
Ann May School of Nursing Library
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201-775-5500 ext. 291

Address change

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Health Sciences Library
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New York, NY 10032
212-694-7931

ALHHS meeting

Bakken Library of Electricity in Life
3537 Zenith Avenue South
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55416

Wednesday, May 4, 1983

8:00 - 9:30 Continental Breakfast and tours of
the Bakken Library
9:30 - 10:00 Business meeting
10:00 - 12:00 Archives class
12:00 - 1:30 Buffet lunch
1:30 - 3:30 Archives class
3:45 - 4:45 Guest speaker - Andrea Hinding,
"Toward a holistic history: the
Women's History Sources Survey"
4:45 Wine and cheese

The class in Archives has been set up in response to requests at last year's meeting for information on archives. It will be taught by David Klaassen, Curator of Social Welfare History Archives at the University of Minnesota. He has extensive archival teaching experience as Co-Director of the Minnesota Manuscripts Training Workshops.

Our guest speaker, Andrea Hinding, who edits Women's History Sources, will talk about the creation of this massive archival reference tool and link it to research in the history of medicine.

Judith Overmier, organizer of our annual meeting, can be reached at the Wangenstein Library - 612-373-5586. The Bakken Library number is 612-927-6508.

MLA HISTORY OF THE HEALTH SCIENCES The Houston meeting of the History Section is scheduled for Wednesday, June 1, 1983 at 3:30 P.M. We understand that attendees will "hear reports on successful medical archives programs."

EDITORIAL NOTE: The long delay in publication of this issue results from an extended drought of contributed papers, lasting nearly ten months. In a newsletter of this sort, depending entirely on the wish of colleagues in a highly specialized area of librarianship to communicate with each other, this long silence appears to signal lack of interest in the area, and so the approaching demise of The Watermark. At a time when we have added 19 new members, this would be extremely malapropos. However, it depends on you. Our readers must become writers.

Normally, The Watermark is published quarterly for members of this Association and subscribers. Editor: Lisa-beth M. Holloway, 58 W. Tulpehocken St., Philadelphia, PA 19144 (work phone 215-629-0300, ext. 215). President: Doris Thibodeau, Institute of the History of Medicine, 1900 E. Monument St., Baltimore, MD 21205 (301-955-3159). Secretary-Treasurer, Jonathon Erlen, 14247 Shoredale Lane, Farmers Branch, TX 75234 (work 214-688-3369).



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