

# Guidelines for the Security of Rare Book, Manuscript, and Other Special Collections (Draft II)

*Editor's Note: Draft II of this document, prepared by the ACRL Rare Book and Manuscripts Section's Ad Hoc Committee on Security, was approved by the RBMS Executive Committee, Monday, 25 January 1982.*

*Your comments are invited. Send them to: Peter E. Hanff, Chair, RBMS Committee on Security, Technical Services, Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems in the administration of rare book, manuscript, and other special collections is the security of those collections. Thefts have greatly increased in the past few years because of the availability and ever increasing value of materials. This problem has compounded the difficulties of rare book and manuscript dealers, who may unknowingly sell stolen materials. Rare book, manuscript, and other special collection administrators have the responsibility of securing their collections from theft. Security arrangements will vary from institution to institution, depending on staffing, physical setting, and use of the collections; these guidelines are written to identify the general topics to be considered in an adequate security program.

## II. THE SECURITY OFFICER

A senior staff member should be named Security Officer, with the responsibility and authority to carry out the security program. The identity of the Security Officer should be made widely known, especially among those persons responsible for handling incoming telephone calls and letters. The Security Officer's first priority should be to plan a program, starting with a survey of the collections, including physical layout and staff, and seeking the advice and assistance of appropriate personnel, life safety officers, and of outside consultants from law enforcement agencies and insurance companies. The Security Officer may recommend that a Security Task Force be named to bring problem areas to the Officer's attention and to recommend solutions. A security consultant may be brought in to assist in determining the major threats to the collection and high-risk areas of vulnerability.

## III. THE SECURITY POLICY

A policy on the security of the collections should be written by the Security Officer, in consultation with the administration, staff, legal authorities, and other knowledgeable persons. The policy should include a "standing operating procedure" on dealing with possible theft: determining suspected thieves, reporting thefts to the proper authorities within an organization, and to the local and (where appropriate) national legal authorities. The Security Policy should be kept up-to-date with current names and telephone numbers.

## IV. THE SPECIAL COLLECTIONS BUILDING OR AREA

The special collections building or area should have as few access points as possible, with the same entry and exit for both patrons and staff. The public should have access only to the public areas, not work areas or stack space. A reading room or search room should be identified as the only area in which materials may be used, and readers must be carefully watched at all times by staff trained for this purpose. A visible security guard or staff member should check readers before they go into the secure area, and when they leave the area. Keys are especially vulnerable items; the keys to secure areas should be issued on an as-needed basis to staff, with master keys secured against easy access. There should be a control/check-out system for all keys.

## V. THE STAFF

An atmosphere of trust and mutual concern for the collections is probably the best insurance against theft by the staff, although close and equitable supervision is essential. The staff should be chosen carefully, and background checks should be made at the time of hiring. Bonding of the staff should be considered. A major weak point in any security system is disgruntled staff who may seek revenge through the destruction of collections. Staff should know their responsibility for security and know their legal rights in handling possible problems. Staff should also adhere to the same security procedures as readers, in

general including keeping records of use of materials by staff, checking their belongings when entering and leaving the secure area, and keeping unnecessary personal items out of the secure work areas. The Security Officer should make training the staff in security measures a high priority.

## VI. THE READERS

The special collections administrator must carefully balance the responsibility to make materials available to researchers with the responsibility to ensure the security of the materials. Readers should be required to present photographic identification and a reasonable explanation of their need to use the materials. This check is especially important in the use of archival and manuscript collections. Each reader should have an orientation to the collections and to the security procedures before using the collections. Readers should not be allowed to take extraneous personal materials (for example, notebooks, briefcases, heavy coats, books, or voluminous papers) into the reading room. Lockers or some kind of secure area should be provided for personal items. The readers should be watched at all times, and not allowed to hide their work behind bookcases, booktrucks, piles of books, or any other obstacles. Readers should be limited to only those books, manuscripts, or other items which are needed at one time to perform the research at hand. Each item should be checked before being given to the reader, and when returned. Readers should be required to return all library materials before leaving the reading room area, even if they plan to return later in the day to continue their research. Readers should not be allowed to trade materials, nor to have access to materials another reader has checked out. The special collections staff must be able to identify who has used which material by keeping adequate check-out records. These records should be kept indefinitely.

## VII. THE COLLECTIONS

Administrators of special collections must be able to identify the materials in their collections. There are several means to this end. For example, adequate accession records should be kept, and cataloging and listings in finding aids should be as detailed as possible. Other means are records and lists kept to fulfill the requirements of insurance policies. Unprocessed materials should not be made available to researchers without careful checking. There are several ways of making the materials themselves identifiable: marking with indelible ink following the RBMS Guidelines for Marking (see Appendix below), other forms of marking, and keeping photocopies of valuable materials. Condition reports have also proved useful. Marking or photocopying must of necessity in most collections be a selective process, with careful thought given to which materials are

to be so protected. The more valuable items may also be segregated from the collections into higher security areas and not released to readers except under special circumstances.

## VIII. THE LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The administrators of special collections must know the laws for dealing with theft applicable in their political and geographical area. Staff members must know their legal rights in stopping thefts, while not infringing on the rights of the suspected thief. The administrator must report any thefts to the law enforcement agencies with jurisdiction in the area, and must take responsibility to prosecute thieves. Materials stolen should be reported to Bookline Alert: Missing Books and Manuscripts (BAMBAM), 121 East 78th Street, New York, NY 10027, telephone (212) 737-2715, a national program for theft control, endorsed by the Rare Books & Manuscripts Section of ACRL. An additional possibility is an advertisement in the Stolen Books column of *AB Bookman's Weekly* (P.O. Box AB, Clifton, NJ 07015). Listings in BAMBAM (which may be done anonymously) and in *AB Bookman's Weekly* will help to prevent unknowing transfer of stolen materials and to facilitate their return.

## IX. CONCLUSION

Security is a major concern of the entire special collections community and must be addressed in each individual repository. These Guidelines are necessarily brief; further information is available through the professional literature, professional organizations, and consultants both within the rare book, manuscript, and special collections community and in law enforcement and insurance professions. It is perhaps the most important and most difficult area of special collections administration. Still, the efforts of the entire staff with the final responsibility vested in one senior staff member, consultation and cooperation with local and other law enforcement agencies, and reporting losses to proper authorities will result in deterring thieves and in recovering materials when stolen.

### Appendix:

#### **Guidelines for Marking Rare Books, Manuscripts, and other Special Collections**

### I. INTRODUCTION

There has been much thoughtful discussion in recent years regarding the appropriateness of permanently marking rare books, manuscripts, and other special collections. The guidelines which follow are intended to aid those libraries and other institutions which have decided that they will mark their materials. The guidelines are intended primarily to provide as consistent and uniform a practice as possible, given the variety

and special nature of the materials concerned. They are addressed only to those libraries and other institutions who elect to use marking as part of their overall security arrangements; and they attempt to strike a balance between the implications of two major considerations: deterrence (visibility, permanence) and integrity of the document (both physical and aesthetic).

## II. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

General recommendations are:

1. That a form of permanent ink be used for marking.
2. That secret marking as a primary identification device be avoided.
3. That the ownership mark be placed where it can easily be located (but not in a place that is too prominent or disfiguring).
4. That it be placed away from text or image on both sides of the leaf.

For the sake of uniformity and other advantages, marking in ink has been preferred to embossing or perforating. Visible marking is meant to reduce or obviate the need for secret marking, which lacks an immediate deterrence value. Placement of the ownership mark will always be a matter of careful and trained judgment, varying according to each document. For the purposes of these guidelines, the place selected should be as close to the lower portion as possible, on the verso, at a site that is blank on both sides of the leaf, and removed sufficiently from the text or image on the side of the leaf on which it is placed to avoid disfigurement or confusion. Where circumstances or peculiarities of the item do not allow the above to be readily followed, marking may be deferred until further consensus is reached.

## III. SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Marks should be located as follows:

1. *Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts.* On the verso of the first leaf of principal text, on the inner margin, approximate to the last line of text.

Additional markings may be needed when the item is a composite manuscript or otherwise has a substantial text that may be broken away without noticeable injury to the volume. The location of each subsequent marking would be the same, i.e. lower inner margin, approximate to the last line of the text. When the manuscript is too tightly bound to mark in the inner margin, alternate locations may be made in any blank area of the verso, as close to the lower portion of the text as possible. The mark should be so placed that it may not be excised without extreme cropping. (In manuscripts of double columns the mark might be located in the blank area between the two columns).

2. *Incunabula and Early Printed Books.* On the verso of the first leaf of principal text on the lower inner margin, approximate to the last line

of text. Follow the same instructions as given under Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts above, with the same precautions and alternatives.

3. *Leaf Books, Single Leaves from Manuscripts, &c.* On either verso or recto, at the lower portion of the text or image of each leaf. The choice may be determined by the document itself if one of the sides has more importance (owing to an illustration, manuscript annotation, etc.). The ownership mark should then be placed on the reverse side.

4. *Broadsides, Prints, Maps, Single Leaf Letters and Documents.* On the verso, in the lower margin of the area occupied by text or image on the opposite side. Care should be taken here to insure that the specific area is blank on the side opposite to that which is to carry the mark. If the back side is entirely blank, the ownership mark may be placed freely in areas other than the lower margin.

5. *Multiple Leaf Manuscript Letters, Documents, Newspapers, Ephemera.* On the verso of the first leaf in the lower margin. It may be appropriate to place an additional mark later in the work if a portion (such as a famous signature, paper seal, first appearance of a poem, etc.) would have independent value if detached or excised.

6. *Modern Printed Books, Pamphlets, Serial Issues.* On the verso of the first leaf of the opening text, directly below the first line. The placement here is designed to spare the title-page, half-title, dedication page, etc., which in many valuable productions have a separate aesthetic appeal not to be disfigured even on the verso. As in the case of multiple-leaf materials (see above, no. 5) additional markings may be indicated for those internal items (illustration, maps, etc.) that may have separate marketable value.

## IV. KIND OF INK AND EQUIPMENT

The ink used should be permanent (i.e. sufficiently difficult to remove to act in most cases as a deterrent), inert in itself and in conservation treatment, and able to be applied in minute quantity. The ink and equipment (rubber stamp and balsa wood pad) described in the Library of Congress's Preservation Leaflet No. 4, *Marking Manuscripts*, may serve as an example.

## V. FORM AND SIZE OF MARK

The size should be kept to a minimum (ca. 5-point type size for lettering). The form should be made up of initials identifying the institution as succinctly as possible, based on the National Union Catalog symbols, and suitable for arranging in lists to circulate to dealers, auction houses, collectors, etc.

## VI. CANCELLATION OF MARK

Do not attempt to obliterate marks of owner-

ship made according to these guidelines, even in the event that the material is to be deaccessioned. No system has yet been devised for cancelling marks which cannot be imitated with relative ease by thieves, and there seems no alternative but to assume permanent responsibility for the fact of one's mark of ownership in a book,

manuscript, or other document. Permanent records should be kept of deaccessioned material containing marks of ownership made according to these guidelines, and the material itself when released should be accompanied by a signed letter of authorization on institutional stationery. ■■

## WASHINGTON HOTLINE

by Carol Henderson  
Deputy Director  
ALA Washington Office

If all the proposals outlined in President Reagan's fiscal year 1983 budget should be enacted by Congress there would be no federal role in support of libraries. The list of programs proposed for zero funding and termination is extensive: Higher Education Act II-A grants for college library resources and networking, HEA II-B library training and library research and demonstrations, HEA II-C grants for major research libraries, the Library Services and Construction Act public library services and inter-library cooperation, and the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science. The elementary and secondary education block grant which includes school libraries would be cut severely, then turned back to the states and phased out. Some cuts in library funds already appropriated for FY'82 were also proposed, including the entire \$1,920,000 for college libraries. The Education Department would be downgraded to a much smaller Foundation for Education Assistance.

In response to requests at ALA's Midwinter Meeting in Denver for a plan of action to protest this disastrous budget, the February 9 ALA Washington Newsletter suggested a massive campaign of letters and visits to every Representative and Senator with a very simple message--don't cut FY 1982 library funds, and reject the FY 1983 budget for library programs--backed up by specific data or "for instances" on the impact of the proposed cuts. This campaign has three components:

- (1) Everyone--librarians, faculty, students, researchers, friends, White House Conference participants--should write immediately. Write to your own legislators to protest the budget for the program(s) you know best.
- (2) This is the time to activate association and chapter legislation networks. Spread the word to others to write letters. Organize a representative group of library supporters for all types of libraries to visit the home offices of Members of Congress. In an election year (all House seats and 1/3 of Senate seats will be up for election), they will be home often; there is a recess scheduled for April 7-19. Or send a small group to Washington for the annual Legislative Day on April 20 of National Library Week.
- (3) Data on the expected impact of wiping out library programs, or "for instances" on services not provided or improvements not made are needed by your legislators and by the ALA Washington Office. Incorporate such material into your letters to make them more effective and send blind copies to the ALA Washington Office, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Box 54, Washington, D.C. 20002 (202/547-4440).