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## **History on the Move: Relocating Special Collections and Archives**

Pam Hackbart-Dean, Leah Agne and Julie Mosbo

As anybody who has moved from one house or apartment to another knows, moving is hard work. It requires physical strength, to be sure, but it also demands mental strength since any move will cause a mixture of excitement, frustration and anxiety. The most crucial step to minimize mental stress is planning, which should be started as far in advance as possible. Because every move offers its own challenges, communication, coordination and flexibility are also essential. The same principles apply to moving an academic library's special collections. The focus of this article is on the preparation and execution of a move. In it, we highlight the level of attention to detail entailed, which in turn necessitates an amazing amount of planning. And even then, contingencies arise. We share experiences that demonstrate the likelihood of obstacles along the way, problems to be resolved and the potential scope of post-move recovery projects. A successful move will ensure that the collections are undamaged by either the move or their new surroundings and that they are available to researchers as soon as possible. While the goal is

straightforward, the reality can be a challenge for any special collections center.

Established in 1956, the Special Collections Research Center (SCRC) of Morris Library at Southern Illinois University Carbondale (SIUC) holds 80,000 volumes of rare books and approximately 20,000 cubic feet of manuscripts and photographs in all areas of the University's curriculum and research interests. Early collections focused on the history of southern Illinois and modern literature. More recently, SCRC has grown in three particular areas: American philosophy, freedom of the press and censorship, and Illinois political history. SCRC continues to acquire materials related to southern Illinois history, American and British expatriate writers, and the Irish Literary Renaissance. SCRC also maintains the University Archives, documenting the school's history from a small teacher's college in the 1870s to the post-World War II boom in higher education that transformed SIUC into a modern research institution.

Our collections consist of late nineteenth to twentieth century types of paper, monograph and photograph collections, as well as bound ledgers, sound recordings (cassette tapes, reel-to-reel, wax cylinders, vinyl records), visual recordings (film, U-matic, beta tapes, VHS, DVD), a limited number of maps, architectural drawings, posters, portraits, and three-dimensional objects. Our rare book holdings range from old and fragile materials to current publications.

In 2009, SIUC completed a \$56.5 million renovation and expansion of the first five floors of Morris Library: to date, the largest capital project in the school's history. This massive undertaking included a 50,000 square foot addition and a complete makeover of the library's exterior and interior. During the previous four years, the bulk of the library's several million volumes, as well as its staff, were relocated to a new Butler-type storage building, specially

constructed on the edge of campus. Other library services were moved to existing structures, including an old lumber yard building and a former dorm. SCRC moved to two existing offsite storage facilities in 2005. These buildings held both collections and staff, with onsite reference service limited to one location. One building had been designed as library offsite storage, which meant that shelves were sized for books rather than archival boxes, though it did have a caged area which made it more secure. The second building, formerly a lumber yard building, also contained book shelving; additionally, we were able to install some mobile archival shelving. This building was off-campus in an industrial area. It had a barbed wired fence around the property and no signage, as well as an alarm system directed to campus police.

As a unit of Morris Library, SCRC had continual discussions with architects, university personnel and library administration about plans for security, environmental controls, and appropriate shelving within the renovated library. Any renovation or construction project typically encounters setbacks and delays, and ours did as well. Owing to our sensitive holdings, we were the next to the last unit to move back into the library. Circulating library collections and personnel had moved back in three stages, each stage being delayed at least three months due to construction issues. This added up to plenty of coordinating experience between university and library administration by the winter of 2009, when it was our turn to move. Leading up to this project, our staff consisted of four full time staff, three faculty and four students. We also hired two extra help positions. One assisted with surveying holdings, tagging individual collections to be moved, and updating our shelving locations once we moved into our newly renovated area, while the other worked on publicity projects in the new building. At the time we did not have a manuscript archivist, so the SCRC Director oversaw

preparations for moving the manuscripts.

Before planning the project, we reviewed the archival and library literature and found a wide spectrum of views on planning and moving library materials. However, there was less discussion of unexpected things that could go wrong even with extensive and conscientious planning.

A number of articles provide helpful examples pertinent to individual repository settings. These individual stories provide consideration on management issues pertinent to any move, including planning, moving personnel, building design and construction, public relations, staff morale, preservation, and security. Eleven archivists who have been involved in moves from small to grand in scale at institutions of all sizes recount cautionary tales and lessons learned in *Moving Archives*, edited by John Newman and Walter Jones.<sup>1</sup> Each of the archivists shares the common bond of moving an archival collection with few published guidelines in professional literature. Each author teaches us something new, reinforces what we already knew, and illustrates certain patterns. Their differences serve to explain how varied approaches can result in a successful move and how disasters can be avoided.

Two recent survivor tales related to renovation and moving are Emily Weaver's "Renovating the Atlanta History Center Archives: Moving People, Places and History" and Leigh McWhite's "A Comedy of Errors: Repository Renovation in Reality." Weaver discusses relocating collections during a renovation and moving them back to a permanent space, as well as layout plans for the "new" Special Collections at the Atlanta History Center.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> John Newman and Walter Jones, *Moving Archives: The Experiences of Eleven Archivists* (Landham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2002).

<sup>2</sup> Emily Weaver, "Renovating the Atlanta History Center Archives: Moving People, Places and History," *The Primary Source* 28 no. 1 (2008).

McWhite chronicles the University of Mississippi's Archives & Special Collections timeline as anecdotal evidence of various hazards and problems one repository experienced during the construction process. It is a cautionary tale.<sup>3</sup>

Other resources are designed specifically to assist those planning and executing moving an archives and directed to those who have never taken on this responsibility. These articles contain specific information on packing, security, preservation, as well as equipment, personnel, and transportation required when moving an archives. Mary Frances Morrow's "Moving an Archives," identifies common challenges encountered during a move.<sup>4</sup> Ted Ling describes the process of relocating an archives from an old to a new building.<sup>5</sup> Caroline Bendix gives guidance on best practices for moving collections.<sup>6</sup> Helen Forde discusses the organization and planning required for a successful move.<sup>7</sup> Finally, Thomas P. Wilsted's *Planning New and Remodeled Archival Facilities* discusses various aspects of planning a move from establishing a budget to creating a move schedule.<sup>8</sup>

The Northeast Document Conservation Center has published *Protecting Collections during Renovation*, a thorough leaflet authored by Karen Motylewski, which

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<sup>3</sup> Leigh McWhite, "A Comedy of Errors: Repository Renovation in Reality," *The Primary Source* 28, no. 1 (2008).

<sup>4</sup> Mary Frances Morrow, "Moving an Archives," *American Archivist* (Summer 1990): 420-431.

<sup>5</sup> Ted Ling, "Shifting the Sands of Time: Moving an Archive," *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (2000), 169-181.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Bendix, *Packing and Moving Library and Archive Collections* (London: The British Library, National Preservation Office, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> Helen Forde, "Moving the Records," *Preserving Archives* (London: Facet Publishing, 2007), 155-176.

<sup>8</sup> Thomas P. Wilsted, *Planning New and Remodeled Archival Facilities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2007), 131-141.

proposes ideal solutions for renovation planning and for responses to fire, water, chemical hazard, and security emergencies. While there are no ideal situations and solutions in any renovation, Motylewski provides the basic understanding needed to apply ideal concepts to realistic, organized chaos.<sup>9</sup>

## **Laying the foundation: Where did We Start?**

### ***Project Planning***

The previous SCRC Director, who had helped design the unit's new space, retired shortly after the project began. In 2006, the newly appointed SCRC Director, as well as a new University Archivist and Political Archivist, arrived in Carbondale. A new Rare Book librarian joined in 2008. Although the physical layout of the new space had been determined, some changes were allowed, such as installing security cameras in the reading room, acquiring appropriate archival shelving, increasing processing space with bigger tables, and adding wireless capability in the processing room and stacks area.

One of the first priorities for the new staff was to survey the holdings at the two storage sites. The new SCRC Director soon realized--after evaluating the overall size of the collections--that there was not enough space to move the entire holdings back to the newly renovated space. We decided to leave the archival copies of theses and dissertations, as well as unprocessed political and manuscript collections, in the "off-site" storage. Maintaining reference and access was another priority as was preparing individual collections for the inevitable move. Acquisition and collection development took a back

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<sup>9</sup> Karen Motylewski, "Protecting Collections during Renovation," (Andover, MA: Northeast Document Conservation Center, 2007) [http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/3Emergency\\_Management/09ProtectingCollections.php](http://www.nedcc.org/resources/leaflets/3Emergency_Management/09ProtectingCollections.php).

seat. We accepted collections that fit our collecting policy but we did not actively solicit collections. Assessing what we had and preparing for our move were our most important tasks.

The university's budget concerns had an impact when it came to selecting movers. Choices included using only special collections staff to move all the materials, hiring local day laborers under the supervision of a professional manager and library staff, or employing a professional library moving company. We met with a library moving firm from St. Louis that would manage and provide labor for the move. However, the cost of this was prohibitive. Since our move was complicated by our various materials' formats and number of locations, we convinced library administration to hire a professional manager and local day laborers. We chose an experienced moving consultant who had planned and executed the move of the general collection of Morris Library and had experience moving other special collections. Most importantly, the consultant was able to work within our budget.

A date was set several months before the move for the winter of 2009. Due to scheduling and budget constraints, there was no chance of moving the date up to late spring or early summer. As the moving date got closer, we followed the weather reports very closely. Sure enough, two days before the move they began to forecast snow (which turned out to be rain). The Preservation Librarian and the SCRC Director sought to postpone the moving day, but the moving consultant decided against a last minute change.

### *Assessing services and collections*

One of the hardest elements of planning for any move is to accept its impact on other projects. Depending on the state of the collections and the extent of processing or

accessioning backlogs, the tasks of labeling, measuring, and rehousing for a move will require considerable time and effort. Because we had moved once, we hoped that the collections were shelved in consistent order. Even so, we began initial planning for the move two years before the anticipated move date. This meant putting excellent projects and ideas aside for a limited time, which occasionally frustrated staff and patrons with seemingly “slowed” services and a temporary focus on physical rather than digital horizons.

Ignoring the normal divisions of labor, all staff contributed to the arduous and repetitive physical tasks of move preparation, assisting with such things as shelf reading, repairing labels, and dusting off boxes. It was important that all staff members fully understood the reorganization project that was underway and the importance of adhering to strict shelving and reshelving protocols during the period leading up to the move. The task of move preparation could become exponentially more time consuming if staff members undid each others' efforts. The tasks we worked on included:

- Shelf reading to create an accurate container by container shelf locator or to update the current shelf locator.
- Surveying for labels that needed to be replaced or reattached.
- Fixing incorrect or unclear labels.
- Measuring odd-size containers and logging standard container sizes, item by item.
- Repairing existing containers.
- Ordering archival-grade containers to replace any damaged containers or containers that would not protect contents during normal stacking and handling by movers.
- Accessioning (or re-accessioning) and rehousing loose materials in storage and processing areas.

- Setting a strict deadline for accessioning (or re-accessioning) and rehousing loose materials in all staff members' personal areas.
- Implementing the consistent use of call slips for retrieving and reshelving materials, if not already in practice.
- Planning a small-scale digital project that students or extra help could work on during the weeks of the actual move and shortly following when materials were temporarily inaccessible. The project we designed was to migrate our digitized photographs from a standalone program into CONTENTdm, which is now available on the web. This included cleaning up and adding to the metadata.

Even with all of those essential projects underway throughout the year prior to the move of the Special Collections, we already had a nagging sense that we were unprepared and behind schedule. In order to work with our moving consultant/manager, the SCRC Director needed a great deal of specific information about each collecting unit at a moment's notice.

To start, each unit was asked to give the Director a list of processed and unprocessed collections, along with the number of cubic feet associated with each collection and their processing status (i.e., if processed, to what level?). The next request involved determining the total physical size of each collecting unit, to be given in inches. In each unit, the individual archivists went around the two storage buildings to measure the rows of shelving and subtract empty spaces from the linear total. This effort encountered the following obstacles.

- It was hard to accurately measure unpackaged, loose, oversized material that had been stored in stacks, some of it awaiting basic accessioning.
- It was difficult to tell how the boxes would be arranged on new shelving (not yet purchased) or to

be able to estimate linear/cubic feet, depending on how boxes would be oriented.

- Unprocessed collections stored by accession number in the lumber yard storage facility were interfiled with materials stored for other collecting areas and had to be measured one box at a time, rather than by rows.

Once the initial survey was completed, each unit was asked to report how many and what type of boxes were associated with each individual manuscript and archival collection, and how much space might be needed for future growth. It soon became clear that we needed to survey all materials from each unit, box by box, and create an item by item shelf list showing the name of each collection, the record group, manuscript number or accession number, the container type (record storage cartons, clamshells, document flip-tops, etc.), the individual container number, an estimate of potential growth, the current location, the destination, and any notes (such as preservation concerns or additional work needed before moving).

Once the information was entered into a spreadsheet, we could use sorting and formula functions to assemble any needed physical description in our new shelf list. We devised codes for each different type of container, from standard boxes to odd shaped materials. This shelf list spreadsheet proved useful over and over again before, during, and even after the move, to answer additional questions posed by the director and moving consultants.

We used it to provide growth estimates and a mapped estimation of how the individual record series and collections would be shelved, including where each collection would start and end in the new building and where spacing would be needed. Once the move started, two more columns were added to list a movers' tag number and a shelf location in the new building for each individual archival container.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
1	Building	Row	Bank	Shelf	Collection #	Box #	Box type	Accession	Title of EDC/Items	Notes				
2	Storage 2	32	I	1	1	4	2-1	1	RC	684	Ben Gelman Collector	Photo negatives, oral history transcripts		
3	Storage 2	32	I	1	1	4	2-1	2	RC	684	Ben Gelman Collector	Southern Illinoisian Photographs		
4	Storage 2	32	I	2	1	4	2-1	3	HOV	684	Ben Gelman Collector	Southern Illinoisian Photographs		
5	Storage 2	32	I	2	1	4	2-1	4	HOV	684	Ben Gelman Collector	Southern Illinoisian Photographs and negatives		
6	Storage 3	11S	4.5		12	1	1	1-17	Doc-12, RC-		MacVicar			
7	Storage 3	11S	2.3		15	3	1	1	Doc-16, RC-		Krause			
8	Storage 3	10N	4		16	3	1	1-18	Doc-17		Austella			
9	Storage 2	36	K	7	16	8	1	1	HOV	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
10	Storage 2	23	M	6	16	8	1	2	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
11	Storage 2	24	D	1	16	8	1	3	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
12	Storage 2	36	J	1	16	8	1	4	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
13	Storage 2	24	F	7	16	8	1	5	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
14	Storage 2	25	B	7	16	8	1	6	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
15	Storage 2	26	A	1	16	8	1	7	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
16	Storage 2	25	E	6	16	8	1	8	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
17	Storage 2	26	D	2	16	8	1	9	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			
18	Storage 2	26	L	4	16	8	1	10	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Drawer #1		
19	Storage 2	26	N	3	16	8	1	11	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	T. Wood		
20	Storage 2	27	J	4	16	8	1	12	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES Published Curriculum		
21	Storage 2	24	D	3	16	8	1	13	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Teachers' Resource Guides & Related		
22	Storage 2	28	K	6	16	8	1	14	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Springfield & Springfield		
23	Storage 2	31	N	6	16	8	1	16	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES Budget		
24	Storage 2	28	O	3	16	8	1	17	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES Symbols, Folder etc., Personal Collect		
25	Storage 2	30	M	7	16	8	1	18	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Theses and Dissertations		
26	Storage 2	30	N	1	16	8	1	19	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Theses and Dissertations		
27	Storage 2	31	N	7	16	8	1	20	CS	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Personal file		
28	Storage 2	28	O	1	16	8	1	21	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Old medical books, Professional Assoc. Comm		
29	Storage 2	31	N	6	16	8	1	22	RC&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Springfield speeches		
30	Storage 2	32	E	4	16	8	1	23	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Health Education books and articles		
31	Storage 2	31	N	7	16	8	1	24	HOV	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Photographs, certificates, memorabilia		
32	Storage 2	32	D	2	16	8	1	25	RC-odd box	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Teaching curriculum kits and Society for Public		
33	Storage 2	31	N	7	16	8	1	26	HOV	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Sanitation Study, Dissertation		
34	Storage 2	32	E	4	16	8	1	27	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Diplomas and artifacts: pins, medals, awards		
35	Storage 2	32	E	6	16	8	1	28	HOV&VO	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Awards and education, scrapbook		
36	Storage 2	32	E	6	16	8	1	29	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES Permanent records		
37	Storage 2	35	M	4	16	8	1	30	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Reprints, Files and Medical dictionary		
38	Storage 2	35	M	4	16	8	1	31	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES '10, M. Pollack		
39	Storage 2	35	N	6	16	8	1	32	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	Health Books '5		
40	Storage 2	35	O	2	16	8	1	33	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Pap	SHES early papers '4		
41	Storage 2	35	O	2	16	8	1	34	RC	746	Elena Sliepecevh Papers			

Example of a survey used for collections not shelved sequentially

### Physical preparation of collections

Moving arrangements dictated some activities required of SCRC staff as the scheduled move approached. Since an outside moving consultant would manage the actual move and day laborers would do the physical move, we labeled our collections with movers' tags. The task of moving of 11,000 boxes and 80,000 books out of two buildings and into a third needed to be highly efficient. We were only allocated only 13 days and a moving crew of 15 members.

As a group, the director, archivists and librarian had to determine how to shelve boxes in the new building and communicate the requests of the movers. We decided to use an S- pattern throughout the building so that the sequence of materials in each row wraps around continuously to provide a convenient and logical arrangement. Numbers and lettered labels were created for each row and shelf in the new facility and applied to the new shelves in advance.

This greatly improved the process of communicating with the moving manager, allowing everyone to refer commonly to rows by number and to determine easily that a certain box should land at a certain location in the new building. The manager planned for more than one area to be shelved simultaneously, providing him a method of verifying the desired spacing. Row numbers were laminated and affixed using removable tape and Velcro, so that we could easily rearrange and re-use them as needed.

### *Cleaning*

Before moving any item into the new space, we made sure that the storage spaces and shelving had been cleaned appropriately. Because of the amount of dust and dirt left by the renovation that settled on the shelves, we had to have them cleaned twice. If a moving company or a library relocating service is used for the move it is best to find out whether they will clean the boxes. If not, local staff will need to wipe down all surfaces using reusable microfiber cloths which can be found in most hardware stores.<sup>10</sup> We were told only a month before the move that SCRC staff would be the ones cleaning and dusting the boxes. The Preservation Librarian demonstrated how to properly dust the materials and boxes to staff and student workers. Each

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<sup>10</sup> For more information on general cleaning and stacks maintenance, see the following: Preservation 101, "Collection Maintenance," [http://www.preservation101.org/session5/expl\\_maint.asp](http://www.preservation101.org/session5/expl_maint.asp) (accessed April 26, 2010); President and Fellows of Harvard College, HUL Weissman Preservation Center, "Library Preservation at Harvard: Cleaning Rare Books," <http://preserve.harvard.edu/guidelines/cleaningrarebooks.pdf> (accessed April 26, 2010); University of California at San Diego Libraries Preservation Department, "UCSD Stack Cleaning Procedures," <http://orpheus.ucsd.edu/preservation/bstclean.html> (accessed April 26, 2010); University of Washington Libraries, "Stacks Cleaning Procedures," <http://www.lib.washington.edu/Preservation/clean.html> (accessed April 26, 2010).

archivist or librarian was in charge of cleaning the materials on their own shelves with the help of shared student workers. Then, two weeks before the move, we were told that the day laborers would clean the materials and boxes as they were moved. Staff passed on the training they received to the day laborers. We had to double check to make sure that labels were not knocked off during dusting. If a label was not adhered correctly, the cloth would catch on the adhesive and pull the corners off.

To insure that we would have enough cleaning supplies, we purchased items a month ahead of the move. Some stores will only keep a certain number of items in stock and this gives them time to order more. Microfiber cloths proved to be a difficult item to find. We purchased ones made for car washing and had to make several trips to the only store that had them, as we kept buying out their stock.

### ***Packing***

Before we moved boxes, we examined each to make sure that the items were packed correctly and would not shift. Some of the storage boxes required spacers because they were not full. Fragile, breakable items like glass, glass negatives, ceramics, and plaster pieces were packed and padded securely.

As we packed the items, we had to keep in mind the exact route that these materials would travel. One of our storage buildings is located across town. To get to the library, the moving trucks had to drive through a gravel parking lot and over railroad tracks. The Preservation Librarian asked if the drivers could take a second route that would avoid the train tracks but the moving manager stated that there would be no problems going over the tracks. As a precaution we did triple check the packing of fragile materials to insure their safety. For some of the items, we were still not comfortable with the driving route. At the

request of the SCRC Director, the Preservation Librarian moved boxes of glass slides, glass negatives, and a plaster death mask in a separate vehicle.

Items that were less fragile, such as archival boxes, were placed in “speed packs” on dollies and/or on carts that were then stretch-wrapped. Bound volumes and books were placed on carts and stretch-wrapped.



**Example of speed packs being loaded onto a truck**

### ***Additional Packing Tips***

Spacers can be purchased from most archival suppliers. In addition to large quantities of spacers, we also used scraps of acid-free board leftover from projects in the Conservation Lab. Boards were cut to standard box sizes and inserted by staff and student workers as they worked in the collections. Maps, posters, architectural renderings, and other large format items often housed in map drawers could remain in the map drawers during the move. Our movers decided to remove the drawers from the cases before moving the cabinet. Though this was understandable

to reduce the weight, they proceeded to stack the map drawers on top of one another without paying any attention to the content inside or how the drawers sat on top of one another. Luckily, no damage was done.

Oversize document boxes were packed and transferred in the “speed packs.” While the standard document boxes packed together tightly in the speed packs, the odd size of the oversize document boxes allowed for only so many boxes per row. Without padding, the boxes shifted in the carton and became a headache for the movers.

Films, video, and audio were housed typically in sturdy boxes. They were packed tightly and to the top of the box to limit shifting during the move so that the tapes/film would not get tangled. However, the weight put stress on the boxes, which bulged at the bottom. Boxes endured further stress when the movers stacked the boxes on top of each other.

### ***Moving Tags***

To reorder boxes during the move in a planned manner, they need to be labeled with colored and/or numbered moving stickers that indicate the new sort-order at a glance. In our case, these labels were provided by the moving company.



**Colorful tags make it easier for identification**

Special movers' tags serve the dual purpose of creating a straightforward numerical sequence for shelving boxes and

identifying gaps from missing or misplaced boxes for the new space. They can also be used to indicate intentional spacing gaps by adhering several tags to one box. Larger spacing instructions for our movers had to be noted separately in shelf increments using large, brightly colored half-page flags affixed to the last box before a gap indicating the number of shelves to be left empty.

The moving manager offered to take care of all of the custom tagging of our collections for the SCRC move. Two weeks in advance of the move, he sent a lone assistant with the tags. We recognized immediately that the assistant could not accomplish his task alone in the time allotted and proposed a supplemental plan. SCRC staff would take over the custom tagging of the entire university archives, photographs and manuscript collections, leaving the smaller and more sequentially shelved political and faculty collections to the mover's tagger.

However, even under this plan, which called for all hands on deck assistance and 17-hour work days on the part of the SCRC archivists, there was only barely enough time to finish in two weeks, with almost no time built in for archivists to check the work or address any large problems, such as custom tags applied to the wrong boxes or applied out of sequence.

Our sequential mover's tags came in reels of 500, so in order for multiple people to apply tags simultaneously, the collections had to be broken down into precise sections of 500 containers and each person had to tag precisely those designated 500 boxes without adding or skipping anything. Our lack of a collection-ordered shelf sequence in the storage buildings complicated the task. If a box was missing, difficult to identify, or located in another building, a tag number on the reel would still have to be removed in order to get at the next number. So each tagger kept a collection of tags affixed temporarily to a sheet of Mylar, set aside in this manner to be applied later to any missing,

off-site, or problematic boxes. Sometimes large strings of sequential boxes from the same archival series were spread out between different buildings. Nearly every tagger at one time or another missed a box or string of boxes early in the day and created a major sequential error that involved painstaking after-hours correction.

At the end of the two-week tagging crunch, the move manager arrived to prepare the moving crews. Looking over the tagged collections and considering the complexity of the sequence, he decided to take reordering the collections out of the moving project. Since reordering the collections as part of this move was originally his recommendation we found this to be unspeakably frustrating. Instead, a compromise was reached whereby together the move manager and SCRC staff would give reordering a try.

The new plan called for the university archivist and two students to remove boxes from the shelves in the current buildings and stack them in the new tag number order in the widest part of the aisles, ready for the movers to pick up each day. Fortunately, after several days and nights of such presorting, the move manager had a chance to get to know the day laborers who formed the moving crew, realized that they could manage to put the boxes in number order themselves, and released the SCRC staff. He ordered that the move carry on as originally planned, with reordering included.

### **The Move**

The decision to continue to provide reference services while planning for the move meant that thinly stretched special collections areas were stretched even thinner. As part of planning for the move itself, we now had to decide whether or not to attempt to continue to provide reference services while the collections were in actual transit. We quickly realized that it would be necessary to close

temporarily. Once this decision had been made, we could publicize the move itself, as well as the reduction or closing of reference services, through the library's website, local press, and archival listservs. Pinning down an exact date was tricky, however. Other areas of the library were scheduled to move as well, and not every stage was going according to the original schedules. We needed to plan the move for a time that would not overlap with other archives areas, as well as a time when our staff offices would also soon be moved

Careful thought was given to planning what path the materials would take from their current location to their new location. The move coordinator and staff identified weaknesses in the flow path within the two facilities, such as tight corners, current location of loading docks, size of doors, and other logistics. The Preservation Librarian trained the movers/day laborers in how to handle the archival collections. She reviewed the care and handling guidelines as well. Finally, we prepared general instructions to ensure that everyone could accurately and safely move our collections (see appendix A).

Both storage buildings housing items had reasonable overhangs at the loading dock so that the materials might not get wet during loading. The problem was that our newly renovated library did not have any kind of overhang for unloading. As soon we realized it was going to rain, the Preservation Librarian and the Library Administration asked our university's Construction Management Services to erect a temporary canopy of two by fours and a plastic tarp. Though it might sound precarious, the canopy helped immensely and has even weathered an "inland hurricane" since its construction.

Three staff members and the move manager coordinated the move, one individual in each designated area, working with the laborers. Two staff members were located at our two off-site buildings, at the loading docks.

At the new building, a staff member verified the arrival of each shipment and dispatched it to the stacks to be unloaded. As a final point, the move manager remained in the new stacks to check off the arrival of the boxes and see that the materials were placed on the shelves correctly.



**Loading dock canopy built for SCRC move. Photo courtesy of Julie Mosbo.**

As the materials were moved, we also had to coordinate the transfer of staff, files and equipment to the new facilities. Institutional records and staff files had to be counted and marked. This was an excellent opportunity for staff to deaccession or weed out old administrative and personal records before moving into their new space. Lastly, we synchronized the transfer of telecommunication and data lines, working with our IT department to move computers, printers, servers and other equipment.

### ***Security***

Security remained our top priority during our move.

Staff was present at all times to ensure that unauthorized individuals did not wander into either the old storage location or the new space and to become familiar with all of the movers. Staff was stationed at both the old storage locations and the new space to watch over the security of the collection and prevent theft or mishandling.

The move manager and the movers were instructed that special collections items could never be left unattended. The day laborers had set start, stop, and break times on a schedule so that they did not leave items on the truck while they went to lunch, took breaks or left for the night.

### ***Quality Control***

As the materials settled in our three floors of stacks areas in the renovated library building, we began to make a final inspection of the old space to ensure that collections, office files and equipment had not been left behind. In the first pass, we found 15-20 tagged boxes that had simply been missed and another 30-40 boxes that had been left out of our moving plan altogether, all of which we still hoped to take with us to the new facilities. The movers were accommodating. They asked that we transport any overlooked boxes to the loading dock of each building and stack them up ready to transport to the new building. After they finished work on a different section of the library, they picked up the boxes and dropped them off for us. While the moving crews would not return to shift as needed and intershelve the missed boxes, the Library Dean arranged to provide a local laborer to assist us with that task a few weeks after the move.

Once settled in our new home, we needed to create new shelf lists. Pre-move shelf lists were easy to convert to that purpose. A single student assistant could be set to work checking the new shelflist against the stacks areas to make sure all of the materials had arrived and been shelved in the

desired order. It turned out to be very important that we started this process *before* the moving crews had disbursed or departed from the library, because immediately we ran into a major error. Due to a miscommunication, the move manager had instructed the crews to ignore all spacing directions for the second floor stacks area. This meant that over six thousand boxes had been shelved with no allowances for growth space.

After we caught the error, the University Archivist helped the consultant to draw up a clear and logical plan for a moving crew to fix the error in a way that would minimize labor and additional expense. It did involve one evening of work to resolve. The university archivist applied neon-pink paper flags to the boxes that should have preceded spacing areas, and a skeleton moving crew worked on spacing the boxes out accordingly over the next two days. Later, we learned that the moving tags were not removable and would tear the boxes. The Preservation Unit trained one of the extra help staff to remove the moving tags. During the previous move before the renovation, the mover's adhered tags to actual items, including oversize leather bound books. Now, tags and adhesive were removed using microspatulas and special erasers. No long term damage had been done.

### **Returning to Business as Usual**

Long before the staff had recovered, the time arrived for returning to normal services and reopening the archives to public visitors. Our researchers enjoy our state of the art reading room. However, over the first two months some of the novelties of the new work space came with minor trials. Old systems of retrieval no longer worked and call-slips had to be redesigned. Reference resources were rearranged in the reading room and workroom areas. Tasks that were once automatic and immediate at first required extra time. We had to develop new divisions of labor and protocols for

staff to follow in accessing archival materials of various formats.

The new building came with new rules regarding noise or designated areas for eating and drinking, among other sensitive daily issues. New keys and electronic keys were issued. Elevators, lighting, and computer networks did not function smoothly right away. Staff members were frustrated and exhausted, having run one gauntlet only to find they had started another, possibly longer one.

The Director found it to be a good idea to increase communication with staff at all levels to assure that new policies were realistic, convenient, and functional in practice. It was cumbersome to attempt at this busy stage to resolve everything in formally scheduled meetings, but informal casual communications were helpful on all sides.

In the renovated Morris Library, SCRC has more storage space, individual offices for archivists, a workroom for processing, a workroom for digital projects, and a state of the art reading room—a total of 20,276 square feet. In all, over 11,000 cubic feet of manuscripts and archives and 80,000 volumes of rare books were brought back to campus.

The move was not over until we were all satisfied, and this took a while. We had to prioritize necessary tasks and formulate a realistic timeline. We acknowledge that this was a very stressful project for all involved. But it felt good to celebrate and thank all those involved. In fact we celebrated with a glass of champagne and invited the Dean and other library personnel involved. It took a while for the sense of a smooth workflow to return but the excitement of being in a clean, well-organized work place has yet to grow old.

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## APPENDIX

(This is an example of what was developed at Southern Illinois University Carbondale<sup>11</sup>)

### Instructions for Movers Special Collections Research Center Southern Illinois University Carbondale



#### **General Instructions:**

##### **I. Move**

- a. The move includes, but is not limited to, office contents such as files, books and general office/business related items. Except as noted, the primary office furniture for each staff will not be a part of the move. The move will consist primarily of box transfers consisting of items including staff files and workstation contents. SCRC has 10 vertical file cabinets (legal).
- b. The move includes moving and unloading all collections consisting of 11,000 cubic feet of paper records and photographs housed in boxes; 40,000 books (*shrink wrapped and placed on book trucks by SCRC staff prior to move*) onto shelves as directed by SCRC staff.

##### **II. Standards**

- a. Moving vehicles must be enclosed—not open to the elements in any manner—when transporting materials for SCRC.
- b. At no time shall the Mover leave University

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<sup>11</sup> These instructions were customized using the following sources: *Request for Quote* Moving Services, Office of the Secretary of State, Georgia Department of Archives and History, circa 2004 and Wilsted, 140.

- property unattended or in unsecured areas.
- c. No smoking, eating or drinking (even water) on the premises, as well as in and around vehicles transporting holding of SCRC.
  - d. Move will be halted during inclement weather or any other emergencies.
  - e. Materials must be well cushioned against shock, vibration, rattling, shifting and jostling
  - f. Secured in a non-damaging manner to protect from falling out of the transportation device
  - g. Transported on devices designed to minimize the danger of toppling
  - h. Transported on devices designed to withstand the weight load of the records
  - i. All boxes must have on labels securely--No adhesive labels or tags shall be applied directly to book collection under *any* circumstances. In cases where volumes must be individually tagged, this will be done by inserting flags in text blocks.
  - j. Boxed records should remain oriented horizontally or vertically as they are currently stored or as instructed by SCRC staff
  - k. Books that are shelved upright in their original locations will be shelved upright in their new locations unless flagged by SCRC staff. Books that were shelved flat in their original location will be shelved flat in their new location unless flagged by SCRC staff.
  - l. All materials will be placed on shelves according to instructions from the SCRC staff.
  - m. Movers will need to be focused on accuracy in reading and placement of the boxes and focused on physical condition of the boxes (damaged boxes must be replaced—task to be performed by SCRC staff as needed).

- n. Shelving heights may need to be adjusted in some areas—movers will work with SCRC staff on making determination of change.

### **III. Safety**

- a. The mobile shelving units in Storage 3 and in the Morris Library basement are moved with a hand crank system. These units weigh several tons when they are full, so it is essential to be aware of others in the aisles when moving the units. Always insure that no one is in the aisle before turning any of the cranks on the mobile shelving. Never attempt to move more than one aisle at a time.

### **IV. SCRC Staff**

- a. SCRC Staff will be available during all work hours.
- b. All items in transit must have protective packaging and must be the correct size for the material inside so that they do not shift in transit.
- c. Damaged boxes must be replaced—as needed.

### **V. Security**

- a. All temporary staff must be supervised by permanent staff at all times
- b. Trucks/vans must be locked upon departure and unlocked upon arrival.
- c. The movers in cooperation with designated SCRC representative will follow the established route from the current SCRC location to Morris Library
- d. No records/collections will remain on the trucks over night.
- e. No archival materials are allowed in the same van/truck as the office files/furniture.

**VI. Miscellaneous**

- a. Special handling
  - a.i. Filing cabinets (drawers need to be secured/locked in place)
  - a.ii. Card catalog cabinets (drawers need to be secured/locked in place)