CCDO Collection Report Template

Author: Sharad J. Shah

University/Institution: Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (SLA), Smithsonian Institution

Title: Collections Management Librarian

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Collections Report

Budget Update:

Typically, there are no major updates, as SLA operates using primarily federal funding. On the whole, budget remains largely flat. Because federal funding has a 2-year budget cycle, we spend FY23 funds during the 2-year period ending in September 2024. A significant portion of our funding goes to salaries and benefits, with the remainder going towards expenses such as equipment, infrastructure costs, scanners, furniture, journal and database subscriptions, and one-time expenses such as journal backfile purchases, databases, and digital library purchases.

SLA recognizes the annual rate of inflation as it impacts the cost of serials and database subscriptions and regularly works to adjust our budget accordingly and review subscriptions for potential cuts, adds, and adjustments.

Staffing and Organizational Changes/Update:

Numerous changes to report. In 2019, the Director (Nancy Gwinn) and Deputy Director (Mary Augusta Thomas) retired. The Smithsonian Libraries (SIL) and Smithsonian Archives (SIA) integrated in 2020—forming the Smithsonian Libraries and Archives (SLA). Also in 2020, the Collections Manager (William Baxter) retired, and the Branch Services Head (Barbara Ferry) and the Discovery Services Head (Polly Khater) retired in 2023. The first Director of SLA, Tamar Dougherty, was hired in December 2021.

Tied to COVID and the integration, there have been numerous departures and retirements. Consequently, SLA has lost approximately 40 (+/-5) full-time staff since 2019—accounting for about 1/3 of the full-time staff. Another complication (and future learning lesson) is that while the SLA-merger had been officially approved, the Smithsonian's Office of Human Resources (OHR) was not included in conversations relating to the merger. This left an added wrinkle in trying to accurately match up positions based on pay and job duties between units to create consistency and parity. SLA is currently examining which positions to update and how to prioritize the filling of vacancies. In the interim, several members of SLA's governing body, the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) are serving as acting department heads.

Collection Assessment Activities

Every year, the National Collections Program (NCP) conducts a series of data calls which effectively serve as audits of Smithsonian collections. For physical and digital collections, there is the Collections

and Digitization Reporting System (CDRS). For collections space, there is the Collections Space System (CSS).

CDRS in particular provides a broad-but-detailed overview of the state of SI collections. For SLA, this reports purchases, gifts, formats, total size (in volumes and cubic feet), acquisitions, deaccessions, visitor stats, digitization counts, and physical condition assessments.

Other assessment activities include the annual Collections Disclosure Report, which tracks budget costs tied to collections and the ARL collections report.

Notable and Newsworthy Collection Development and Acquisition Models

SLA has created an automated, consolidated process for fulfilling gift approval, donor stewardship, and legal gift documentation. By interfacing Docusign and Microsoft Office applications through Microsoft Flow, multiple streams of format-diverse gifts are now approved, acknowledged, documented, and queued for cataloging in a "one stop shop" that reduces staff workload, improves communication, and protects Personal Identification Information.

Scholarly Communication Initiatives and Developments

Internally, SLA maintains Smithsonian Research Online (SRO), which tracks the scholarship, publications, presentations, posters, etc. of SI staff. Staff are asked to update their own profiles, but SLA provides training and assistance.

Additionally, SLA is both a founding member and host of the Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL). From April 17-21, 2023, SLA's BHL team attended the annual meeting in Paris.

Notable Acquisitions, Grants, Exhibits

SLA recently completed the acquisition of Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch's personal collection. Originally offered in 2014 when the Secretary was the Director of the National Museum of African History and Culture (NMAAHC), the acquisition involved several parts, as collections were gradually reviewed over time. The final part was the physical receipt of approximately 1,100 volumes from the Secretary's residence. Originally scheduled to be received in 2019, the process was placed on hold due to COVID, and finally completed in May 2023. The collection includes monographs and serials which the Secretary used during his research as well as rare and unique titles.

Additionally, SLA received a gift from Dr. Frederic Christian Thompson—consisting of 100 entomology-related rare books, many with hand-colored plates, and the gift of the Great Spirit Book (Original drawings and paintings by Anthony Quinn #96/100) from the Anthony Quinn Foundation. This 40-pound book features a sculptural wooden cover.

"Top of Mind" (Challenges, Issues, etc. to surface)

Easily the largest challenge is successfully filling vacancies. SLA is understaffed to the point it impacts our ability to perform day-to-day tasks such as reference/research assistance, collections management, cataloging, outreach, digitization, etc.—let alone staffing for complex projects. As an organization with 22 locations (and more sublocations) primarily in the DC-Metro area (and New York and Panama as well), the challenge is currently keeping all locations staffed and running.

As Smithsonian museums and research facilities face calls for updates/modernization and typical renovation and repairs, SLA Libraries face the challenge of moving their collections temporarily or permanently, and reducing the physical footprint of SLA collections space. (A unique feature of the SLA Libraries is that they are primarily tenants in museums and research facilities operated by other units. This can lead to discussions and extensive planning to determine how much space a given library will have and how the hosting unit will work to accommodate and preserve the security, condition, and accessibility of SLA collections.)

For SLA, at the most basic level, this means shifting collections and packing/unpacking as needed. It also means crafting spreadsheets to identify what collections are being handled (or their records updated). On the other end, it means having catalogers to update the records in a timely manner. The shortage of staff leads to communication to properly prioritize projects and engage in creative juggling of SLA staff.