SLIDE 1 | TITLE SLIDE

I would like to thank Merrilee Proffit and Karen Smith-Yoshimura [the moderator] for giving me the opportunity to speak with you all today about “Repositioning Special Collections.” What I hope to do in the next 20 minutes is to give you a sense of how we are positioning The Eberly Family Special Collections Library at Penn State to expand its services and those of the library in general. The question I want to consider is “How are we availing ourselves of Special Collections?” both at Penn State and in our wider community.

By way of background, let me warn you that I have never worked in a special collections library; all of my formative experience is in the realm of support for digital scholarship, digitization, publishing, and the like. Today I am an administrator, one who presumes to know exactly what it is Special Collections needs to be doing while at the same time learning from the staff.

Jim Michalko, Susan Gibbons and others have already today touched on how we align our Special Collections with the institutional mission. In order to do that we emphasize its specialness when rhetorically useful, and minimize it when it comes to practicalities.

SLIDE 2 | WATERS QUOTE 2005

On the one hand: We like to quote Don Waters’ talk to the Association of Research Libraries in 2005, the one in which he said:
“....libraries and their institutions will increasingly be distinguished by the special collections of rare and unique materials that they hold...”

This is the quote we use when we talk to less-than-understanding administrators about how libraries are changing, but still have traditional elements and thus, yes, we really do need the space, the people, and the old stuff. We also rely on this message when we are talking to donors, emphasizing the distinctiveness of what we have and why a collection or an endowment will allow them to Contribute to Greatness.

Special Collections is for many of us a critical element of space planning, and we have treated it this way at Penn State. The Libraries began an intensive space study of the entire Pattee/Paterno Library complex about a year ago that is now going through a third phase. First we had external consultants come in and reviewed all of our spaces to give us some options to consider—what are the major issues that we need to tackle, what kinds of spaces should we be privileging. Secondly we had our Library Management Council review those results and identify priorities in 8 areas, one of them being Special Collections.

SLIDE 3 | FLOOR PLAN

This diagram shows the floor plan of the Paterno Library—the east side of the complex. The area outlined in red is Special Collections. (The vast, apparently empty, but vital space above it is Technical Services—it looks empty because it is a maze of cubicles.)

The key drivers for future work on this space are likely to be: 1) Creating more space for public services 2) Unifying Special Collections and offering a more visible public presence 3) Expanding Special Collections space offsite.
The point I want to make here is that the *distinctiveness* of Special Collections comes out to be a critical element for future planning, especially on the east side of our building, Paterno Library. When you go about long-range planning you need to organize your steps around some key ideas. For us that will be Special Collections. We’ve now entered the final stage of planning, which is working on a master plan with our Office of Physical Plant. I don’t want to exaggerate or make promises: at this stage we don’t have a timeframe for making changes. But it’s clear that the energy of the discussion is deeply bound up with Special Collections.

So, yes: Special Collections are distinctive and critical to our identity and our mission, and our actions usually reflect that. The quote from Waters I just cited is widely used. Less widely cited, but no less valuable, is a corrective statement Waters made in 2009:

**SLIDE 4 | WATERS QUOTE 2009**

“...taken to an extreme, the argument about institutional distinctiveness can also limit scholarly productivity by provoking the impulse to protect silo-like boundaries around collections, thereby hindering the natural scholarly impulse to create and explore links among related special collections across various holding institutions.”

What are some ways of blurring those boundaries, so that they do not hinder our broader mission of enabling research and learning?

For the remainder of my time I’ll talk about two issues pertaining to Special Collections at Penn State. I already spoke briefly about space.
I want to spend a little more time addressing the results of an internal assessment of our special collections conducted at the behest of the Dean.

Finally, I want to talk about what SC and archives brings to our conversations about scholarly communications, curation, and preservation and suggest that in fact there is some very special knowledge in SC that we haven't always taken full advantage of in plotting out emerging services.

Collections are absolutely key, of course, but what I really want to do is to talk more about organizational awareness and readiness to take on new challenges and the ways that Special Collections can support that.

SLIDE 5 | ASSESSING COLLECTIONS AND SERVICES

At last year’s OCLC Research Library Partners Meeting, held in Philadelphia, Tim Pyatt, our Huck Chair for Special Collections and Head of the Eberly Family Special Collections Library talked about “Aligning Special Collections with the Institutional Mission.” In some ways his talk very much fits within the theme of this panel, and he introduced a work in progress that has since been concluded.

When Tim spoke here last year, our Dean had just charged a small group to “Assess Collection Development Policies and Collecting Directions.” The charge to this group was to

“evaluate the SCL’s existing collecting policies and related data sources, compare with the library, campus, and national directions, and in the context of available resources, make recommendations for revising existing
collecting activities and suggest areas where more development is needed.”

This was an internal review in the sense that it was comprised of Penn State faculty and staff, but it was an external review in the sense that no one on the team was from Special Collections. The membership included our librarian for English, the head of our Art & Architecture library, the head of Life Sciences Library, an assessment analyst, and a professor of Geography. The curators and staff of Special Collections had lots of input into this assessment (they provided lots of data and were interviewed) but they were not involved in drafting the final report. At the end of the process we invited Jen Schaffner from OCLC Research to visit us, review the report, meet with staff, and help us put our situation in context with the national scene: where are we relative to other special collections in research libraries?

In one respect, this report was long overdue. Three different “special collections” (with a lowercase S and C) were unified in the late 1990s: University Archives, Historical and Labor Archives, and Rare Books and Manuscripts. Since that time there had not been a systematic assessment of Special Collections as a whole, and in many ways the three units still acted independently. In other words, they maintained their distinctive identity while at the same time were “unified” as Special Collections. Now there is nothing wrong with that distinctiveness—we rely upon it. But the question Dean Barbara Dewey wanted answered was similar to what Susan Gibbons addressed earlier today: “In the face of potential future uncertainty, what is the impact our collections are having and could have on Penn State?”

SLIDE 6 | RECOMMENDATIONS
The team made recommendations in four areas: 1) Collection Development Policy 2) Deaccessioning 3) Organizational matters including processing 4) Web-based discovery. These recommendations are respectful of the distinctiveness that grounds the collections, but suggests that distinctiveness can’t be the sole driver in service development.

The key recommendation is to create a future-focused holistic collection development policy for the entirety of Special Collections:

“To ensure a smooth transition to the next generation of curators, or to accommodate a possible reorganization of staffing upon the retirement of the present curators, a collection policy that states explicitly the history, rationale, and practices that have been passed down is essential....”

SLIDE 7 | COLLECTION DEVELOPMENT POLICY OUTLINE

The outline suggested by the committee included four major sections:

1. The University
2. The Region
3. Special Topics for teaching and research
4. Collections of Distinction

Within these categories there is room to talk about current collection foci, previous areas of collecting interest, collection opportunities that often arise but which are of limited interest, and the relationship of the special collection holdings to those of the general collections (how do they balance or reinforce each other?)
This model breaks down our usual collection-area distinctions. It highlights that there is some confusion among librarians and users over certain collecting areas where all three curators have an interest, e.g., regional topics; alumni-related topics often cross borders.

Finally, the report makes a plea for more collaboration across organizational boundaries.

"Collaborating with relevant subject specialists in the Libraries, particularly in the cases of “collections of distinction” (e.g. Civil War) and areas of interest to both circulating and special collections (e.g. History of the Book) can situate Special Collections in relation to general collections throughout the libraries."

Of course, this already happens in various ways. There are endowments that are split between our Special Collections library and our Arts & Humanities library—though split is the key word; joint purchases are not common. We believe that there are still greater opportunities for stakeholder input and outreach for special collections, working with the subject liaisons: our curators have great relationships with a number of faculty; liaison librarians, like those who wrote the recommendations, have great relationships with entire departments.

To say that thing can improve is not to say that things are not working; it’s to suggest that we have an opportunity to raise the visibility of the work of these curators in building the collections we have.

Other recommendations also emphasize a blurring of boundaries (centralized processing functions in SC Library, deaccessioning less-special items to the general collections, etc). The curators of the
three parts of our Special Collections library are planning to have the policy drafted by December 2013.

SLIDE 8 | ARCHIVES AND SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION

For the remainder of this talk I want to address “Special Collections, Archives, and Scholarly Communication at Penn State.” First I need to talk about the organizational structure, and then I’ll talk about what we hope this structure will help us to do for our users.

SLIDE 9 | ORG CHART

At Penn State Special Collections is organized administratively as part of the division of Research and Scholarly Communications, of which I’m the associate dean. It is not part of the collections or subject liaison division (led by Lisa German, Associate Dean for Collections, Information, and Access Services), nor does it report directly to the Dean, as it does in some libraries. Our arrangement is a bit unusual in Library Land, and certainly raised eyebrows when we rearranged the org chart. But I believe organizing in this way has allowed us to strengthen our scholarly communications and digital preservation program and has benefitted Special Collections as well.

Also reporting to me is the Department of Digitization and Preservation, which includes a very strong print-based collection care program, a conservation program (newly fueled by a conservation challenge grant from the Andrew W Mellon foundation). Digitization is possibly the largest part of what they do, and they have been the recipients of four National Digital Newspaper Program grants from NEH/Library of Congress. They have digitized hundreds of thousands of newspaper pages through that program and locally funded efforts, as well as thousands of images and manuscript items from Special Collections.
Publishing and Curation Services (which accounts for those activities often conveniently labeled “scholarly communications”) is the newest group and is still growing. PCS has service leadership for publishing services—which are defined very broadly and include things like graduate student exhibition materials, not only journals, or proceedings—and also data management and digital scholarship services. PCS also user service responsibility for ScholarSphere, which is what most places would call an institutional repository—though we have tried to market it somewhat differently at Penn State.

So why did we make this organizational alignment? There were a lot of reasons, some practical, such as balancing administrative loads in the dean’s office. But, on a more noble note, we wanted to align Special Collections more closely with innovative services for digital scholarship and to link it more closely to the preservation program. And we wanted those newer programs to build upon the work and strength of the expertise in Special Collections.

A lot said already about how special collections can better support scholarship and changing practices of Scholarly Communication: more digitization, improved discoverability, less restrictive reuse provisions, collaborating with researchers. The list is as long as you have time to brainstorm.

**SLIDE 10 | SAYEED QUOTE...**

But you have probably heard this quote once or twice:

“Data are the new special collections.”

Choudhury has said this many times in presentations, and several speakers, including Carole Palmer at UIUC have frequently cited. We
already heard about the equivalencies and tribulations of data and archives in the first half of the morning, so I don’t need to belabor this.

Sayeed has written about how scholars and archives need to value data and data-driven scholarship just as much as we value, say, manuscripts and related products, like critical editions.\textsuperscript{1} By calling “data the new special collections” (without drawing a distinction as to the type of data—humanities or sciences--he claims value for them by linking them to our most distinctive and prized possessions: special collections.

It also normalizes the emerging practices of data curation by linking them back to things we already know how to do: manage, arrange, process, describe and preserve things. It says “there are practices and principles to build upon when we move in this apparently new direction.” In this way we actually highlight the critical value of the expertise accumulated in archives and special collections. Not for nothing do we talk about “curation” in both special collections and scientific data management.

This isn’t a grand revelation, of course. At Duke University Library, the campus IR was essentially housed at in university archives, and, and we heard this morning from Michelle Light about a similar arrangement at UC Irvine when she was there. But what’s important is that I don’t think that the research data management/curation communities, which generally is science and social-science focused, have always recognized the potential links.

But at Penn State we have, and the development of our data management and repository services, and to some extent, publishing services, and our preservation planning is strengthened by an alliance with Special Collections.

\textsuperscript{1} http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/VO-and-roman-de-la-rose-collaborative-imperative

Edited to approximate actual remarks (June 17, 2013) | Mike Furlough, Penn State University Libraries
This presentation made available under a Creative Commons CC-BY license.
The remainder of this talk is in some ways speculative: we have to acknowledge that some things are still at early stages of development, and it will take some time to be able to demonstrate the outcomes that I think we are working towards. For now, here are some ways in which this is playing out.

**SLIDE 11 | COLLABORATION TOPICS**

*University Publication Outreach*

First, and relatively simply, hatching plans for outreach to student groups who have publications. We have had a relationship through U Archives, which assiduously collects these items, which might include literary or critical journals, in addition to the student newspaper. This history provides a link to build upon in Publishing and Curation Services. Together members of both departments have initiated discussions of what I would call a full-service model, one that would potentially enable us to expand services beyond print archiving. These are very early, but very promising, ideas.

*ScholarSphere/ArchiveSphere*

ScholarSphere is more developed in its service model, but still has a long future ahead of it. Framed as an author/researcher tool, not as a Penn State showcase. For certain administrator we talk about it as a compliance tool.

Sphere development on a Hydra/Fedora framework. Initial release has been entirely developed around self-deposit service model. Contributors have a lot of control: can set level of access, license, and can even remove materials if they want. Preservation functions enabled on all content. Minimal metadata requirements. We tried to make this as simple as possible and watch user behavior. Initial
development focused on end-user service, so less developed administrative functions: very little “control” exerted over the content.

While we continue to develop “ScholarSphere” we see that codebase as the basis for many other services, such as digital asset management for our preservation department, or even our university press. But more critically, born digital records and collections.

Hence, we are now working on “ArchiveSphere” (unfortunately confuses people because of ArchiveSpace project). The initial use cases we’re developing around are about enabling administrative or curator control and getting stuff into the system. But while this looks like we are using the same framework, with the value of ScholarSphere going towards Special Collections, we are consciously working on the “Archives” aspects in ways that will contribute back to ScholarSphere and allow us to deploy it for different services.

In this work it becomes very easy to see how these archival cases that are driving development dovetail with a future service model that is built around a more highly curated/preserved sets of content in ScholarSphere. Who might the curators of these materials be? Well they may be archivists, they may be librarians, and they might be the members of research labs or academic departments themselves.

Preservation Planning

And finally, Special Collections staff are now helping to lead the effort to deepen our digital preservation capacity. Rolling out ScholarSphere helped us see all the things we don’t know yet. We more or less punted on preservation policy—didn’t feel comfortable setting timeframes of commitment (side note, those who have done
so have made it up by guessing). But it raised a number of questions not just about policy, but our own internal practices, and who had responsibility for certain parts of the preservation cycle.

Our Digital Records Archivist, Ben Goldman, has assumed a leading role in tackling this question. Jumped into MetaArchive, sees that as a link back to his work, and was the one who talked loudest about a need to assess our own “preservation awareness.” Now co-leading an internal audit with head of Preservation that is intended to identify some actions we can take to develop a coherent preservation policy that encompasses digital assets of all types.

SLIDE 12 | BOUNDARIES

My final remarks are less speculative than they are “thinking out loud.”

When discussing this presentation, I confused someone on the phone, who thought that the work of Publishing and Curation Services was actually being done in the Special Collections Library: in other words, data management planning was a function of special collections. That’s not true—I just wasn’t clear enough. But at the same time, I also wasn’t entirely satisfied with my answer. Was it because the boundaries are more blurry in my head than on paper? Or was it because it suddenly seemed like that might be an interesting role for Special Collections.

As I have talked about publishing in libraries, I’ve given up trying to define it and instead point out a broad continuum of activity and services. It’s something that students do now as part of class projects by posting them online; it’s something that our university presses do by selling subscriptions to journals. There’s a huge gap there, but for me it hasn’t always been productive to talk about those differences. You miss something then.
I think that in research libraries we may be starting to recognize a similarly broad continuum for management of “special” resources—one that recognizes a far broader role for subject specialists, “data management” librarians, scholarly communications librarians in their accumulation and use of special collections, however we define these.

While I see no changes on the horizon locally, I do wonder if there will come a time when we just look at our data management services and special collections, especially for university records and archives, and wonder: “Wait—why exactly did we separate those things out?”

SLIDE 13 | THANK YOU
Positioning Special Collections at Penn State University

Mike Furlough
June 4 2013  New Haven CT

Past Forward! Meeting Stakeholder Needs in 21st Century Special Collections
“….libraries and their institutions will increasingly be distinguished by the special collections of rare and unique materials that they hold…”

Don Waters, 2005
“…taken to an extreme, the argument about institutional distinctiveness can also limit scholarly productivity by provoking the impulse to protect silo-like boundaries around collections...”

Don Waters, 2009
Assessing Collections
Collection Development Policy
Deaccessioning
Process Improvement
Improving Discovery
University Region
Special Topics
(for teaching and research)
Collections of Distinction
Scholarly Communication
Research & Scholarly Communications

Special Collections

Digitization & Preservation

Publishing and Curation Services
“Data are the new special collections.”

Sayeed Choudhury, many times
Univeristy Publication Outreach

ScholarSphere | “ArchiveSphere”

Digital Preservation
Boundaries
THANK YOU