



Biblio-Notes

Issued by the Literatures in English Section of the Association of College & Research Libraries, a division of
the American Library Association

#47 Spring 2006

ISSN 1076-8947

Notes from the Chair:

LES in New Orleans

The foundation is laid for a terrific line-up of LES events, discussions and meetings in New Orleans. We hope to see many of you there.

Our program for New Orleans is entitled "Cultural Studies in the Academic Library" and will be held on Saturday, June 24 from 1:30-3:30. Speakers include Professor Joel Dinerstein, of the Tulane University English Department, who will provide a practitioner's perspective; Jane Faulkner (UC Santa Barbara) and Rob Melton (UC San Diego), who will report on a survey of UC faculty who engage in Cultural Studies; and Mark Szarko, U. Washington, Bothell, who will speak on the challenges librarians face in building relevant collections and providing reference/instructional services for cultural studies faculty and students. Many thanks for the good work and creativity of the Program Planning Committee 2006 Chair, Rob Melton, and the Committee in creating a panel to address this timely and challenging topic.

Our Section hosts three of discussion groups for people to share experiences and advice. Two of these cover the realms of collection management and reference. The third, the New Members Discussion Group, provides a friendly atmosphere for people new to literary librarianship to explore topics with more seasoned colleagues. If there are particular matters that

Katrina and the UNO Library

As Katrina loomed offshore in the Gulf of Mexico the last week of August 2005, the administration of the University of New Orleans made the decision to close early that Saturday afternoon, to allow staff and students time to pack up and evacuate. Closures for hurricanes are pretty routine at UNO; in the eleven years I've worked as a librarian here we've probably closed the library an average of once each hurricane season. But most of the time the hurricanes don't end up coming close enough to cause major damage. Katrina hit the city just two days later, changing all of our lives.

It wasn't until several days after the storm had passed, as I struggled to grasp the implications of the storm for myself, my family, and the city, that I was able to get any information about the university. Eventually, I found UNO's temporary emergency website up and running, with a login for employees to check in and give contact information. We were assured that we would be paid at least for the next several weeks and were asked to check in weekly to report our whereabouts.

We had no initial reports on the state of the campus, but from news stories and satellite imagery on the web we could see that some of the deepest floodwaters in the city were in the neighborhoods near campus. We also heard that areas close to Lake Pontchartrain (near part of the rim of the "bowl" that is New Orleans) had been spared. Since our campus literally abuts the levees for Lake Pontchartrain, we had some hope that UNO might be at least partially dry. We heard later that about a week after the storm our Chancellor journeyed to the campus by boat with armed Coast Guard personnel ("bcellofordh)8(oJ-0.0006 Tc -0.0013 Tw T[1617 TD[Chany r an6(ckey)7(th)y)8)6(evac

during this initial phase of reopening the campus before the spring semester. All library staff were expected to report back to work at the library on December 5th, or begin taking leave. While some of the staff had by this time returned to homes with little or no damage in the larger metropolitan area of New Orleans, most of us were still living outside the city. Finding a place to live in New Orleans was suddenly very difficult. The University promised trailers to all staff and students who needed them, but the time frame for their availability was uncertain. (It turns out that the trailers weren't set up until late March.) People scrambled to find housing and about 70% of us showed up on that Monday.

As we greeted each other and swapped war stories back in the library (devoid of electricity or heat) we discovered that more damage had been done than initially thought. (The Dean and a few others had visited the library earlier in the fall, as part of a convoy of military vehicles that drove from LSU, traveling on top of the levee part of the way to avoid still-standing flood waters). Though the library building itself suffered little damage from the hurricane itself, the evacuees who had been dropped off on campus managed to break in to the library and cause some problems. Because they broke in through the large glass windows that front the lobby, water eventually blew in from subsequent rains and damaged carpets and furniture. Large sections of the first floor carpet and most of the upholstered chairs were removed. The entire contents of staff desks in affected areas were packed away by mold remediation workers hired in the months after the storm. Even those desks not touched for mold remediation had clearly been rummaged through by evacuees scrounging for food or drink. An empty wine bottle was left on the Collection Management Librarian's desk, and an abundance of animal hair (presumably from one or more dogs or cats) was spread about the Serials Office. Other, more distasteful messes (that I won't describe in detail here), had already been taken care of by clean-up teams.

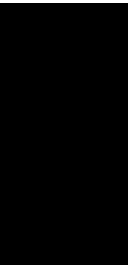
Most of the books in the collection were fine, except for part of the Social Sciences collection on the library's third floor. No water had directly come in there, but the lack of air conditioning for so many weeks caused a mold outbreak (a problem we have struggled with in the past when we suffered extended power

outages), and several hundred books were removed for evaluation and mold remediation.

As the weeks passed the library gradually came back toward a semblance of normalcy. Because of our sudden staffing losses we had to scramble to redeploy staff within and between departments, speeding up a reorganization process that had been still in the planning stages. The public services/technical services divide has been bridged in many ways, as people have been asked to work in new areas as needed. Staff whose jobs were less busy now (book ordering, cataloging, Special Collections) were asked to help out in Serials, which was swamped under months of mail to be processed. We ended up closing up our Multimedia Room as a service point, and integrated much of that collection behind the main public services desk. Because many of the other buildings on campus weren't ready for occupancy, several administrative offices set up temporary shop in the library, including the Registrar, the Bursar, and Financial Aid. Though we were a little crowded, we did learn a lot about these groups on campus, by working almost elbow-to-elbow with them for a couple of weeks as the spring semester started.

One by one more campus buildings were cleaned up and reopened (though large tents were still being used to house some classes for which no classrooms were available). Though the campus now looks relatively normal on the surface, we are still reeling from the effects of the storm. We are bracing for a difficult financial year coming up, with funding cuts from the state and decreased revenue because of fewer tuition dollars (our student body has shrunk from about 15,000 to under 12,000). The entire campus is on pins and needles waiting to hear about expected cuts to entire academic programs and the termination of about 40-50 faculty positions (including tenured positions). The Library is apparently exempt from these personnel cuts because of promises made as part of an accreditation review the previous summer.

Though things are still very difficult, and the future appears unclear at best, there have been some positives. With the campus in so much flux and disarray, we were able to see ourselves as still very much essential to the teaching mission of the university. Our students and faculty needed us and were grateful for our efforts to reach them from afar. We also saw that we could change and



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