

>> Well, good afternoon. I hope our slides come up soon. Here we go. So this afternoon we're speaking on how to eat an elephant and focusing on a massive gift collection in a streamlined work flow. My name is Beth Picknally Camden, and I am the Goldstein director of information processing at the University of Pennsylvania libraries.

>> And I'm Elsa Varela. I'm a rare book cataloger. And at the time this project was underway, I was the project coordinator.

>> Beth Camden: So first a little bit of history. The Gotham Book Mark was a New York City book store in the 20th century, founded in 1920 and it closed in 2007, and it was known as somewhat of a literary salon. It was a hangout for notable literary figures in the mid 20th century and after it closed, the contents were donated to Penn. So we'd like to start with a quick poll and ask all of you to check in to see whether you have reviewed the case study in advance. And we have yes, no or some of the group for those of you in a group setting.

All right. Well, we're going to end the poll. And move on to the next slide. Since a lot of you didn't have the chance to review the case study in advance, I just want to go over some of the key issues.

The Gotham Book Mark collection was estimated about 200,000 volumes when it was given to Penn, and at the time we started working on this project, we had 76 pallets of unopened boxes in our storage facility. They were all on pallets and you could see on the screen some of the pictures of what they looked like. We estimated that there were up to 80,000 monographic volumes and about 18,000 serials. We also had a time pressure. We had a construction project that was due to start in 12 to 15 months, and we needed to clear the floor of this storage facility. Some of the other key factors in this project were that almost anything in any box could be potentially rare, and there were a large number of stakeholders. There were the special collections curators. There were the general collection, as well as technical services folks and the people that operated the storage facility.

>> Elsa Varela: Okay. So our next poll question is how would your institution handle a large gift collection. And we ask that you check all of the answers that apply. I'm just going to read through your choices here.

The first one is find another storage facility. Create a list of items for bibliographers to use to make decisions, photograph items for curators to view and make decisions, require a list of titles from the donor to be checked against the catalog, create brief records for each item to be fully cataloged when a patron requests an item. Create a single stream work flow, and set aside formats that are not

mainstream, or you just don't accept any gifts. It looks like a lot of you leaned towards asking for a list of titles, and I do not blame you.

So at this point I'm going to end the poll and we're going to move on to the next slide.

So let's talk about how we handled this very large gift here at Penn. Starting with staffing. Project staff was hired on a contract basis. In addition, we brought in some existing full-time staff, which -- some of which worked on the project on a part-time basis. We hired four full-time staff members for the project. One was the project coordinator, who was responsible for creating work flow, managing staff, and reporting results to the stakeholders. There were two library specialists, and these were our core catalogers, and one clerk, who sorted and organized the collection. In the first few months of the project, we were very fortunate and having another library specialist join us as a full-time member. She was an existing staff member in special collections processing center and knew that she would be leaving Penn in a matter of months, but she had very valuable rare book cataloging experience and really set the project going well from the beginning.

The next group that was brought on were three members of the permanent Penn library staff who handled in processing. Some members of this group fluctuated between full and part-time as the project needs changed.

And finally, there were four additional staff members that came on to the project that assisted in cataloging, all of them on a part-time basis, and there were members of this group who had special skills with serial cataloging and also rare book cataloging.

So work flow. Those of you who looked at the preliminary information on excel sheet that had the sort criteria, and the criteria was really informed by what we learned in the pilot project. After an initial curatorial assessment, it was determined that within the collection, we would come across some items that would be suitable for special collections and others that were really more appropriate for general, and potentially a very large group that would go to resale. Also we realized that not everything was meant to be kept for special collection. It could be fully processed through this project. And so we came up with this term which we said would archive, but really was way beyond what you would identify as archived. It included Ephemera, manuscript, records, tote bags, T-shirts, basically anything you could imagine in a modern book store.

The first sort was done by the clerk. He had a staging area set up for him where he could open boxes, identify duplicates, and there were very many duplicates in this group, and then begin to send items up to the catalogers for processing. For the group that went to the catalogers, he would be looking for

signs of provenance, such as inscription, stamp or book plates and some indication that maybe it was a special edition. In the staging area, there were shelves, and he would put items up there for the curators that had already been made as a blanket decision that we were not going to keep, for instance mass market paperbacks that had absolutely no provenance, textbooks, fix it books and things like that. And these items would be left on the shelf for several days for the curators to review and pull if, for any reason, they found something that was, in fact, valuable within that group.

The third category that the clerk dealt with was that really misnomer archive that I talk about earlier, and these items were boxed to be dealt with later. Now, what you see on the screen is the sort that the catalogers used. Sorry if it's a little difficult to read on the screen, but basically they were going through yes/no scenarios on this flow chart. I understand that yesterday there was someone else who talked about flow charts in ALCTS exchange, and so this is another example of that.

And this was used from the beginning, first to decide were there things that the curator had selected that they absolutely wanted to keep, and so that that would obviously be cataloged. Next, they were looking for items that were already in special collections. They were looking for other things such as did something have a dust jacket, have provenance, and again, they were finding things that were not going to be added to the collection. And these would be brought down to the staging area for the curators to look over.

So ultimately, the curator saved time because they weren't initially looking at every item, but rather going through things that had been sorted out. And through this process, we hope that they were looking at a much smaller group.

Okay. So in cataloging, the way that we ended up saving a great deal of time was by using macros, constant data and work streams, the last two are a way of saying it's a pre populated field. These shortcuts saved us a lot of time in cataloging and led to the results that you're going to see later on in the slide show. What you see on the screen on the right-hand side is a screen capture of macro express. It's a very simple script editor, and what I have here is a script that pre-populated three fields in every catalog record. It was determined that these were necessary to really cull out the collection in the Penn's public --

The only one of these fields that needed editing was the chronology field where you had to enter the publication date, but otherwise, catalogers were using a couple of key strokes and really saving a lot of time and not having to retype these things continually.

These same fields I put in to a constant data records in OCLC connection. The reason I duplicated this in those macro express and connections is because there were times when the cataloger would find a record that was already in voyager and they could use this macro for that purpose. But there would be other times where they'd have to bring in a new record from OCLC, and if they preferred to work in connection, then they could use the constant data effect. And I felt that because there were so many catalogers working on this project that I really needed to allow for that diversity in how people prefer to work.

You'll also see on the screen on the left-hand side a capture of some texturing in connection. This is a work flow that I personally -- [Inaudible] -- a copy-specific note. You don't want to have to go switching for it again. It's handy to see these examples and I ended up making a constant data set of the ones that were used most often to share with the other catalogers on the project.

So storage processing. This is another very important time saver on the project. And we decided early on that there was going to be no physical processing of the items that were added to the collection. This was done in order to maintain the original integrity of the items that could be considered rare. So what this meant was there were no cull member labels attached, no bar codes to fix, no property stamps placed on any of the items.

Later in the process, the curator has an opportunity to have a second look at an item after it's been requested by a patron, and if it's identified as something that is really necessary to be kept in special collections, at that point it's going to be go through the regular processing.

What you see on the screen right now is a picture of our storage facility, and on the right-hand side, you're going to see some trays that hold the Gotham collection book mark books. They're the ones that have the little red teeth on them. And you'll see that there's some flags in there. Each one has an individual acid-free flag and its own bar code. And the tray also has a bar code that identifies the exact location within the storage facility. The item record for each book contains both of these bar codes. And at the end of the process, they all had to be quality checked, which is what we refer to as exit checking, make sure that these things wouldn't be lost forever.

So the results were really outstanding. On average, we cataloged 3,000 titles per month, and the closest comparison we can make is to share cataloging, which is a portion of the cataloging department here at Penn, and they average around 3,200 titles per month.

The cost was \$15 per title, and compared to similar projects that were done here at Penn libraries, this is about a third of the cost. Due to the strength of the results of the first year, the project was extended to

a second year. And by retaining the core staff, we were able to keep the flow of the project going. In the second year, we worked on items that had already been identified in the pilot projects as candidates to be added to the collection, and so the sorting was more straightforward, but again, we found very many duplicates.

>> Beth Camden: So I'd like to talk a little bit about lessons learned. I talked about the number of stakeholders that we had in this project, and we spent a lot of time with stakeholders at the beginning of the project, and got a lot of input, and this is a really -- it had both pros and cons. The pros are that we had many views considered, and we were able to take the results of a pilot project and refine it into something that worked for the project as a whole. The con side is that it did take extra time to launch the project and we probably lost a couple of months of processing time as we talked through this with all of the stakeholders.

The second lesson is about taking guidelines but applying them in practical ways. So we came out of the discussions with the stakeholders with a long list of sorting criteria that we had to consider for what was rare, what was general, what was not to be kept, and we simplified this into the flow chart in the ways that staff working on the project were able to apply. The other things that -- having the -- we also learned to be flexible, in particular listening to the staff at work. The hands-on people have a lot of creative ideas about what might work and can make the most efficient.

I also want to mention physical realities, with a large number of materials coming through, and the need to keep moving them through. Sometimes all parts of the project weren't in sync, and so a backlog of exit checks, for example, would mean that other parts of the project weren't able to push things through because we didn't have enough turnover or book trucks, and sometimes this was like somebody's vacation, something like that.

The other thing we had to, because we weren't doing physical processing, we used special trays and boxes, and at one point we were delayed in starting the serials processing because we were waiting on a shipment of special boxes for those. So physical was very important in this project. And lastly, as in most things, communication is key. We did have regular team meetings between the team and special collections, who were a strong stakeholder in the project, but also an ongoing dialogue between the clerk that did the sorting and the curator who was doing most of the review. So again, communication is always key.

Quick look at statistics. And you can see here a number of the crates that we used with trays ready to go to storage facility, the books that were completed.

We cataloged a large number in two years, and as a point of comparison, the 80 some thousand volumes that we handled over the course of two years, the general comparison for the university libraries is about 85,000 volumes added per year, so essentially, this project added 50% more on top of our normal cataloging and added volume output.

So what comes next? Well, we do have the archival materials that were set aside. We've completed processing of the business records of the Gotham Book Mart but the remainder of the materials will still be a future project of the special collections department. And we are currently planning an exhibit for next year, 2018, which we're all very excited to see the treasures that were cataloged in this collection.

So how do you eat an elephant?

And the answer is one bite at a time.

So we do have some time for questions, and we're opening the floor for questions.

>> Santi Thompson: Thank you so much for that. This is Santi again from the working group. So since this group started a little late, we'll give them a few minutes for questions, which means our break will be a little shorter. That's okay. So if you do have any questions, please put them into the general chat or question menu and we will see what we have.

>> Beth Camden: While we're waiting for the questions, I did want to mention that the slides have some additional resources with links at the end and also we have some sources for some of the images that we used on the slides, in case you're interested.

>> Santi Thompson: So we have several questions come in. So I'm going to just select one. And again, remember if we don't get to all of these, then the rest will go over to the online forum. So Sarah Becker from Arlington asks, can patrons -- I assume this means -- can patrons Penn look at materials. Sarah, I'm not sure what that means. So if you want to clarify that, you can.

>> Beth Camden: So let me address that, if we reverse it to say can Penn patrons look at the materials? And the answer is yes. They're in the storage facility but they can be requested, and there are two categories, the general collections one, follow the standard storage request, which gets them to the patrons I think in two days. The ones that were cataloged for rare collections will go to -- will be pulled from storage and sent to the rare reading room for a patron to look at it in the reading room.

>> Santi Thompson: Okay. And Sarah clarified and she said she meant patrons outside of Penn.

>> Beth Camden: So the ones that are in the general collection would be available for ILL requesting. And I guess the rare ones, people would have to visit, but you can register as a reader to use them.

>> Santi Thompson: Okay. And we have time for maybe one more. Did you all get special funding for the project? Project staff or re-allocate from your budget?

>> Beth Camden: It was a reallocation from our budget. We had several vacant positions that we used to fill the project staff, but also, of course, we used staff from our regular -- some of our time from our regular staff as well.

>> Santi Thompson: Perfect. Well, to respect the break, we have to close here, but many thanks to Beth and Elsa for their presentation. And next I'm going to hand it over to Robin, one of our working group members to lead us in to our break. So whenever you're ready, Robin you can take over and we'll see you all in a bit.

>> Robin: Great. Thanks, Santi! So thank you to our speakers. We're going to take a break, and it's about seven minutes at this point. At 2:30, we'll have Michelle and Julia presenting creating a social justice mindset, the diversity, inclusion and social justice task force of the MIT libraries' collections directorate. At 2:50. We'll have Helen Okpala presenting Google cataloging, using Google app for quick and easy cataloging. Please note that her presentation is pre-recorded so any questions you have for her should be submitted to Helen's discussion forum page. And then at 3:10, is Narda and Shelly will present gone but not forgotten, a remote storage success story. So we'll return at 2:30 p.m. eastern. See you then.

[Session is on ten-minute break].