Brave New World: Special Collections in Transition
IFLA (Lyon)

August 18, 2014
E. C. Schroeder
Yale University – Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library
Purpose of today’s workshop

• How and what do we teach current and future special collection librarians the skills they need to succeed in the changing world of special collection librarianship?
• How do we teach others? students, the general public and administrators
• What are the future areas or trends that special collection librarians need to understand and manage.
Changes from above

• More open and accessible
• Demonstrate that libraries and special collections are dynamic
• Fewer resources available
• Prove relevance
• Assessment
• Belief that everything is digitized
Change from below

- New areas of interest
- Changes in scholarship
- Changes in public interest
- Instant response or availability
Collect

• Diversity of formats
• Diversity of subjects
• Market
• Provenance and authenticity
• Contemporary material
• How to say no
Contemporary material
• Changes in cataloging standards (special collections and general collections)
• New formats (i.e. born digital)
• Less is more vs. detailed descriptions
• Efficiency and productivity
• Collaboration
• Specialized cataloging projects
• Promiscuous metadata
• New ways of access
• User contributions
Preservation

- New formats
- Born digital
- Buildings
- Security
- Digitization
- Born digital
Access

• New discovery tools
• Minimize barriers to the creation of knowledge
• Impact of “less if more”
• Digitization (beyond reproducing original work)
• Social media (previously Web 2.0)
• How to reach the general public (including the “younger” generation)
• Open access
• Teaching with the collection
• Copyright, intellectual property and rights management
Observations of transition and change for special collections

- Move away from concept “treasure room”
- Collaboration
- Growth of assessment
- Diverse and competing expectations
- Learn to let go
New appointments

- Digital archivist
- Archivist – Metadata coordinator
- Archivist – visual materials.
- 2 rare book catalog librarians (multi-language, format; now how to manipulate metadata
- 2 curators (early books & manuscripts; American literature)
- Head of Digital Services
- Public relations manager
Characteristics of new hires

- Strong subject knowledge
- Technology skills
- Public presentation skills
- Flexibility (embrace change)
- People skills
- High energy
- Commitment to concept of special collections
E.C. Schroeder
edwin.schroeder@yale.edu