

## **PRESERVING CULTURE AS A CAREER: BECOMING A SPECIAL COLLECTIONS LIBRARIAN**

The RBMS Diversity Committee encourages members of underrepresented racial and ethnic groups with an interest in history and the preservation of cultural artifacts to consider a career in the profession of special collections librarianship

### **I. What Do You Need to Become a Special Collections Librarian?**

Generally Required:

- ALA-accredited Master's degree in Library or Information Science
  - (Some institutions accept other master's degrees that include a certification in archival studies.)
- Bachelor's degree in humanities or social sciences
- Coursework in library school focused on rare books, history of the book, archives, preservation
- Strong computer skills
- Strong communication skills

Helpful (especially for advancement in the field):

- Second master's degree or doctoral degree in relevant field, esp. humanities
- Library internship and/or work-study experience
- Specialized coursework in digital imaging, web design, databases, or XML (EAD)
- Foreign language reading ability
- Grantwriting/Fundraising/Outreach experience

Websites

- ALA Accredited Master's Programs – <http://www.ala.org/ala/educationcareers/education/accreditedprograms/index.cfm>
- Core Competencies in Special Collections Librarianship - <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/acrl/standards/comp4specollect.cfm>
- RBMS Educational Opportunities - [http://www.rbms.info/committees/membership\\_and\\_professional/educational\\_opportunities/index.shtml](http://www.rbms.info/committees/membership_and_professional/educational_opportunities/index.shtml)
- Rare Book and Manuscript Section Publications - <http://www.rbms.info/publications/index.shtml>
- Rare Book School, University of Virginia- <http://www.rarebookschool.org/>
- Rare Book School, UCLA- <http://www.calrbs.org/index.html>
- Midwest Book and Manuscript Studies – <http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/programs/mbms/>

### **II. Opportunities for Students from Underrepresented Racial and Ethnic Groups**

- ALA Spectrum Scholarships <http://www.ala.org/ala/aboutala/offices/diversity/spectrum/spectrum.cfm>
- LIS Access Midwest Project (LAMP) <http://www.lisaccess.org/>
- RBMS Preconference Scholarships - <http://www.rbms.info/conferences/index.shtml> [choose the next conference, which will have information on the scholarships offered)
- RBMS Mentoring Program - [http://www.rbms.info/committees/membership\\_and\\_professional/mentoring\\_program/index.shtml](http://www.rbms.info/committees/membership_and_professional/mentoring_program/index.shtml)
- Rare Book School (University of Virginia, Charlottesville) scholarships/fellowships - <http://www.rarebookschool.org/scholarship/>
- University of Arizona's Knowledge River - <http://knowledge.river.arizona.edu/>
- Colorado Antiquarian Book Seminar scholarships - <http://www.bookseminars.com/>

### III. Examples of Special Collections and Archives

Special Collections or archives may collect materials in any subject area depending on the focus of the institution or organization. To review many examples, see the online index of special collections and archives maintained at the University of Idaho:

<http://www.uiweb.uidaho.edu/special-collections/Other.Repositories.html>

### IV. Related Professions

- Archivist – SAA (Society of American Archivists)  
<http://www.archivists.org/profession/overview.asp>
- Records Manager – ARMA: <http://www.arma.org/learningcenter/index.cfm>
- Museum Professional – AAM (American Association of Museums): <http://www.aam-us.org/getinvolved/learn/index.cfm>
- Preservation Administrator/Conservator – The American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC): <http://conservation-us.org/>
- Public Historian – American Historical Association:  
<http://www.historians.org/info/public.cfm>

### V. Other Suggestions

- Contact the special collections department at a nearby college or university, or a nearby historical society or archives, and ask for a tour
- Contact RBMS committee member - <http://www.rbms.info/committees/index.shtml>
- Review a U.S. Department of Labor study to get an overall sense of the field - <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos065.htm>

### VI. Job Information

- LISWiki, How to apply for a library job - [http://liswiki.org/wiki/HOWTO:Apply\\_for\\_a\\_library\\_job](http://liswiki.org/wiki/HOWTO:Apply_for_a_library_job)
- ALA Job list - <http://joblist.ala.org/>
- Ex-libris Listserv (Special Collections and Archives) - <https://listserv.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/wa-iub.exe?A0=EXLIBRIS-L>