The Special Collections Room at the Library of Science and Medicine has a long and interesting history. The Library of Science and Medicine was opened in the summer of 1970 under the aegis of James W. Barry, librarian of the new Library of Science and Medicine. Through the efforts of Mr. Barry, donations of books were solicited for the LSM Special Collections Room. Books were received from New Jersey physicians and private donors. The LSM Special Collections Room was envisioned as a place to showcase the unique and valuable items within the medical sciences collections.

Over time, LSM Special Collections grew beyond its original intent. Lack of funding and staffing created problems with cataloging, access, security, and visibility of the collection. By 2002, librarians and staff at LSM had decided to discuss ways of remediating the situation.

LSM Librarians had been informally discussing problems and issues related to the LSM Special Collections Room and its holdings for some time. In October of 2002, shelves in the glass cases had collapsed in several areas of the room, compromising the books. Librarians became concerned about the integrity of the collections and contacted Access Services personnel to look into the physical facility. Concurrently, librarians began discussing the collection itself and decided that it may be time to make decisions regarding the cataloging, location, visibility, and usage of the book contents of the room.

Science librarians had expressed concerns for some time about the problems with access as well as the physical facilities and preservation issues involved with our “Special Collections.” Reference librarians would sometimes be asked about materials housed in the Special Collections Room and found it difficult to coordinate access to the materials, even with the help of Access Services. The materials needed special supervision and handling, and neither Access Services nor Reference librarians were free to leave their posts to supervise patron use of the materials in the room. The Special Collections Room was never outfitted with any copying facilities, especially the type to be used with sensitive materials, and books would therefore need to be removed for copying on another floor. There were no guidelines to specify what books should be copied from or even removed from the room. It was seen as problematic to have a “closed stack” as part of a public area. Meetings would be held and the room would not be secured immediately afterward. Staff were not trained to handle valuable and brittle materials properly, including making gloves available. Further, in time, cabinets became hard to open and keys were difficult to maneuver. One evening, a librarian noticed that the shelves inside one of the glass cabinets had completely broken down, and valuable antiquated books had been smashed underneath.

Access Services was notified of this situation and librarians began at the same time to look at the room’s problems more holistically. With many books not having current
cataloging, librarians felt that it was unknown what actually made up “LSM Special Collections.” Both the X (non-circulating) and X2 (circulating) collections were felt to be in need of analysis and inventory. It was decided amongst the librarians to start discussing the collections as well as the various problems with the room in order to try to remedy the situation.

After problems encountered by librarians were presented to the larger science librarians’ group in November of 2003, a committee of librarians was formed to address the issues. Members of the voluntary committee included Mei Ling Lo, Laura Bowering Mullen, and Patricia Piermatti. This committee was named the “LSM Science Special Collections Project Committee.”

This project was a valuable collaboration between LSM librarians and both Access Services and Collection Services staff. Ron Becker and Tim Corlis of Special Collection and University Archives were also consulted in the decision-making process. In addition, the committee kept Françoise Puniello, the Acting Director of New Brunswick Libraries, informed about the project.

Science selectors were consulted for their subject expertise and invaluable historical perspective was provided through informal conversations with Adeline Tallau, retired librarian. From the discovery of the physical problems with the room until the last book was removed and transferred from the spaces, approximately thirty months had passed.

A report detailing the Access/Collections perspective was prepared by Andy Martinez of Access Services in April 2005, and that information is attached as Appendix A. Information is provided in that report pertaining to numbers of items transferred, eventual locations of materials, cataloging issues encountered, preservation implications, and personnel involved from both departments. December 2003 can be considered the beginning of “Phase 1” of the project. This phase dealt with titles already cataloged in IRIS. “Phase 2,” described on page 4, dealt with items not found in IRIS.

In January 2004, the committee visited the Library Annex where preservation issues were discussed with Stacy DeMatteo. The committee was told how the books would be handled if they were transferred to the Annex, and it was decided that books could be adequately handled there. However, the committee still had concerns about the facilities and policies.

For brittle items that were sent to Annex, selectors could specify "no photocopy" and "on site use only.” Although this policy was meant to protect the books from being further damaged, it has implications for access and interlibrary loan issues (RLG SHARES between special collections departments). With the advance of technology and equipment, this policy should be revised. Currently, there is a photocopier for patrons to make copies. Yet, some special equipment such as overhead scanners and handheld scanners should be installed for patrons and staff to use the resources.
In addition, archive boxes should be used for most items so that they can be shipped to other Rutgers Libraries or outside of Rutgers through interlibrary-loan. Staff who work at the Annex should be provided with adequate training on how to handle brittle materials.

We should start to consider some of these ideas now. When we plan for the second Annex, we should also have space for in-house preservation facilities. The Annex is not simply a storage facility. It can be used for public access when patrons need to use low-demand materials. It should also be a more technologically sophisticated information environment so that the condition of the materials would not have to be compromised when patrons use the items.

In January 2004, the members of the committee reviewed the reports and assigned appropriate subject selector initials to each item listed. The committee then made a recommendation on each item as to its final disposition—whether the item should be sent to SC/UA, transferred to another NBL location, sent to the Annex, or withdrawn. Items were then separated into folders by sublocation: X, X2, XPer, or XFolio. Further, items were identified as “LSM only” or “LSM and other RUL.”

The “X” designation is usually reserved for those items with pre-1800 publication dates that were originally part of a non-circulating collection. These non-circulating items were to be used in the room under supervision. Those items labelled “X2” were items published after 1800 that had been designated as “circulating.”

The librarians involved with the project were most concerned with the following issues: ensuring the cataloging of each item, the transfer of each item to a safe and secure location, preservation of the books, inventory of the collection, determining the “value” of each unique item, and establishing a future use for the room. To accomplish these objectives, the librarian members of the team followed a specific protocol in examining each item in the LSM Special Collections Room.

On February 4, 2004, the committee developed an “action plan” to begin the process of evaluation and transfer of materials. The plan allowed for two paths of decision-making. Each book was either deemed to be “last copy” in the system or determined to be a duplicate as other copies were existing elsewhere in RUL.

Before proceeding with the action plan, reports from IRIS were generated by Collection Services. Each book was searched in RLIN and OCLC, and potential value was ascertained by searching AbeBooks, Amazon, etc.

Recommendations by the committee for books labelled as “last copy” followed these guidelines:
   a. pre-1800 would be sent to Special Collections/University Archives
   b. 1800-1899 labelled X, X2, XFolio, or XPer. The committee would make recommendations as to eventual locations. There were to be no withdrawals of any of these materials.
c. 1900+ labelled X, X2, XFolio, or XPer would be reviewed by the committee with most titles probably to be sent to the Annex. Some might be sent to other locations such as New Jersey Collection (SC/UA), LSM Ref., LSM Stacks, etc.

The guidelines for books that have duplicate copies elsewhere at RUL would include consulting science subject selectors to confirm the committee’s recommendations as appropriate. These decisions would involve determining shelf location of these materials or eventual withdrawal. Withdrawn books may be used for future display in the room or donated to “Better World Books.”

In March of 2004, completed folders with all the pertinent information were then given by the committee to science subject selectors to make sure they concurred with the committee’s recommendations. The goal was to find the most appropriate location for the transfer of each title from the LSM Special Collections Room.

In April 2004, completed folders with selectors’ recommendations and the committee’s decisions were then shared with Ron Becker and Michael Joseph at SC/UA for their expertise and agreement. Books that were considered appropriate for those collections in SC/UA were marked for transfer to those secure locations. Those books identified as most rare were hand-delivered to SC/UA. Librarians at SC/UA concurred with most decisions.

In May 2004, the annotated reports were given by the committee to Access Services. The team from Access Services began working in the room to change records and transfer books to SC/UA and the Annex.

June 2004 was the beginning of “Phase 2” of the project and involved books not already cataloged in IRIS. The same procedures were followed as for Phase 1. Through searching RLIN and OCLC, some items were found not to be cataloged in IRIS but still owned by SC/UA. Interesting examples of rarity were found in the room. Two examples were ownership of a print copy when another world-class library may only have the microform edition, and the uncovering of a unique hand-written seventeenth-century home-remedies book.

In September 2004, the committee met with Ron Becker and SC/UA's Silvana Notarmaso who specializes in cataloging rare books. Any items deemed valuable by the committee were then shown to these librarians.

By December 2004, Ron Becker and his staff completed the review of the annotated reports, and endorsed nearly all of the committee’s recommendations. The two books deemed most rare, and consequently hand-delivered were a 1665 “Manuscript book of Receipts and Medicines” and the 1498 “Receptavio Camposto dal Famossisimo.”
In January 2005, the team from Access Services began the processing of all of the items from Phase 2; those items without IRIS records. By April, all of the processing had been completed.

As for the disposition of all items in the LSM Special Collections Room, the numbers are as follows (please see Collection Services Report attached for further breakdown):

274 of these items were eventually transferred to SC/UA, 1787 items were sent to the Annex, 149 were relocated within LSM, 20 items were sent to another NBL, and 156 items were withdrawn, for a total of 2382 items.

Once the books in the LSM Special Collections Room had been dispersed to their final locations, whether Annex, library stacks, Special Collections and University Archives, etc., the committee met to discuss a future vision and plan for the room itself. It was stressed that the room would need to be renamed, possibly for a major donor.

After discussing all physical aspects of the room now that books had been removed, the committee decided to bring ideas and issues to the Science Librarians’ group. At two of its monthly meetings, the science librarians offered suggestions and opinions on future use of the room and its contents. It was decided in these consultative meetings was that the room would continue to be used as a meeting room for staff and librarians, special functions would be held there, and the space would be used as a local conference room. All glass cases would remain in place, with the cases on the wall against the office holding long-term exhibits. The cases against the back wall would display withdrawn books chosen by the committee because of the decorative value of their bindings. The bookcases covered with open wire mesh are to be evaluated by construction personnel to see whether they can be removed so that the wall space may be used for other purposes (such as projection of presentations). Further recommendations for design of the new room have included painting, rearranging meeting furniture, lighting changes, addition of videoconferencing capability, and the purchase of a new podium. The room is considered a valuable asset to the library building as well as to Busch Campus as meeting space.

In conclusion, the committee found this to be a very worthwhile collaborative experience as well as a valuable contribution to the sciences’ collections efforts. This ambitious project brought together science librarians, Access Services staff, and Collection Services staff in a unique and successful endeavor. This may have been the largest collaboration of these groups with such a beneficial outcome. Also, integral to the completion of this project was the successful collaboration with SC/UA. This initiative secured all of our sciences special collections materials. These books are now not only represented in our catalog, sometimes for the first time, but available to students and researchers in an enhanced and secure way. The committee feels that this was a long-overdue effort to consolidate and catalog all of our materials for our users. We look forward to more collaboration with our colleagues in the future.
LSM SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ROOM PROJECT OVERVIEW

The project as we know it began in October 2002 when shelving was found to have collapsed in the cabinets lining the room. As Roger Smith states,

“In October 2002 it was noticed that shelving in the glass cases of the special collections room had collapsed in several areas. A closer inspection of the shelving throughout the room indicated that sub standard and inappropriately sized brackets had been used to attach the shelves to the interior walls of the cases. There is evidence that such collapses had occurred before in two of the cases, where reinforcing metal “tracks” had been installed to support shelves and brackets. This should have been applied to the room as a whole at that time. Tim Corlis from Special Collections and I came to these conclusions after examining the room.

After consultation with Department Heads and selectors, it was decided that the collection would be transferred to the Libraries Annex and SC/UA, where the material would be securely housed and maintained. Access Services, Collection Services, library selectors, and SC/UA were asked to work together to process the material and transfer it.

Physical work on the project began in October/2003 with Access staff performing an inventory of the cataloged items in the Special Collections Room (LSM X, X2, X-Per, X-Folio). Reports for this inventory were generated by Gracemary Smulewitz. Items that were fully cataloged were removed from the cabinets and placed on book carts. The remaining items (items without catalog records) were left in the cabinets in call number order. A report listing all of the fully cataloged items was given to a group of LSM selectors to review. The reviewed report, with their recommendations, was then given to SC/UA to see which items they would like to add to their collections. The final report, with recommendations from the LSM selectors and SC/UA, would be given to staff working on the project to process.

While the selectors and SC/UA were reviewing the report of fully cataloged items, Access and Collection Services staff worked on creating brief records for the items remaining in the cabinets. This part of the project began in November/2003. The majority of the items were old, rare works dealing with medicine, pharmacy, and science. Access Staff had to work closely with Collection Services on this phase of the project, especially with the foreign language items. Mary Brodman, Rob Krack, Shirley Peck, Nick Reichardt and Eddie Suarez were the main contributors to this part of the project. They were able to create brief records for the non-cataloged items, added items to already
cataloged records, and forwarding problem items to Collection Services for review. To help with this processing, a PC was made available in the Special Collections Room for the duration of the project.

By May/2004, the LSM selectors and SC/UA had made their final decisions on the locations for the fully cataloged items (phase one). 825 items were processed and removed from the room: 581 transferred to the Annex, 79 transferred to SC/UA, 129 internally relocated to another LSM collection, 20 transferred to another NBL unit, and 16 withdrawn from the collection. 57 of the Annex transfers were sent to the CS office to be boxed to preserve the material. This processing was completed by sending the NBL transfers and internal relocates to LSM Collection Services office and by scanning the barcodes of the Annex transfers and withdrawals and having Systems complete the work online. All of the items from phase one were processed and removed from the room by July/2004.

By this time, Access staff had completed creating brief records for the items that were not cataloged (phase two). Gracemary generated a report listing these items (a NBINV tag in record made it possible) that was given to the LSM selectors and SC/UA for review. While the selectors and SC/UA were reviewing the reports, Access staff conducted inventories of the remaining collection (brief record items), fixed problems with item records, and made sure that the items were in correct collection and call number order.

The final reports for phase two were completed by the LSM selectors and SC/UA during January/2005. The reports were given to Access staff to process the items according to the decisions noted on the report. For this part of the project, 1,557 items were processed and removed from the room: 1,101 items were transferred to the Annex, with an additional 101 items to be transferred to the Annex after being boxed for preservation. 195 items were transferred to SC/UA. Approximately 20 items were internally relocated to another collection at LSM. 140 items were withdrawn from the catalog. This work was completed by sending the internal relocates to LSM Collection Services office for processing and by scanning the barcodes of the Annex transfers and withdrawals and having Systems complete the work online. All of the items from phase two were processed and removed from the room by April/2005.

In total, 2,382 items were processed and removed from the room. More than half of those items required the creation of a brief record. Collection Services was able to process the items for transfer to another NBL unit and the items to be internally relocated to another LSM collection. They also took care of preserving certain items by contracting an outside vendor to box them and re-labeling certain items that were missing call number labels. Access Services was able to complete multiple inventories of the collection, created over 1,500 brief records, and was able to sort and ship the items to their proper final locations. With the help of our Systems Department, staff working on the project incorporated a laptop with a scanner into their processing, allowing them to scan all of the item barcodes, automatically and efficiently perform the online work required, and use Excel spreadsheets containing the results to pack and ship the items.
From the discovery of the problem (October 2002) to the removal of the last item from
the room (April 2005), the project lasted approximately 30 months.

Access Services staff involved in this project include:

   Roger Smith, Mary Gadek, Michele Tokar, Mary Brodman,
   Rob Krack, Shirley Peck, Nick Reichardt, Dave Warner,
   Eddie Suarez, Stacy DeMatteo

Collection Services staff involved in this project include:

   Gracemary Smulewitz, Melody Tomaszewicz, Jamie Maguire,
   Bob Hosh