



Concluding Remarks

William Noel, Director, Kislak Center for Special Collections, Rare Books and Manuscripts; and Founding Director, Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies, University of Pennsylvania

I want to make two claims for us. The less ambitious first: With CLIR's help we have shaped history. By redefining what constitutes an archive, by inventing new ways to process the archives, and by creating myriad paths of access to a stunning amount of previously hidden material from our past, we have in the last eight years expanded the well of material upon which so many diverse audiences can draw. This is an enormous achievement and we should thank CLIR for funding our efforts and for providing a compass to orient us. We can also thank each other for brilliantly mapping the terra incognita that so many others will enjoy exploring in their own ways.

The second claim I want to make is that, together with CLIR, we have made history. This is a different point. I don't mean simply that we have organized the past in ways that make it history out of debris—although that might be true. I mean rather that the Hidden Special Collections program has been a landmark program in library history—that it has fundamentally changed the way in which libraries go about their business. We have made archives history, and I applaud Jackie Goldsby's conceptualization of this as the creation of the relational archive.

If we are creating relational archives, what then has the archivist become? What are the characteristics of the relational archivist? Let's take Jackie literally. The archivist now is someone who creates acts of human contact and sociability, who actively engages the user in making the archive visible and functional, whose dialog with the

stakeholder becomes the quintessence of his or her practice, and who conceives of their archive as working interoperably with similar materials in geographically distant repositories. These are the archivists that I see every day in the Kislak Center, working collaboratively in a regional environment and in an international one, orchestrating students not just to process collections but to publish on them, and varying the depth of their cataloging with an eye not only to the vast pile of yet-to-be-processed material in their inbox, but also with an eye to their users' needs. And this is a very far cry from the archivists that I trembled before as a student in England 30 years ago.

So much has been achieved by archivists such as these, and the work is not done. There are vast tracts of analog special collections still to be processed, and it is our job to continue to process them without continued funding from CLIR. We still have CLIR's compass, but we don't have CLIR's money. CLIR, which is enormously proud of the achievements of the Hidden Collections program, is as anxious about this as many of you are. But I think the seeds of our future success are in our current practice. We have created digital gateways to our collections in experimental ways. We have created rich digital assets that can now be built on, further explored, and emulated. Even though the archives that we have processed are for the most part analog, I would like to suggest that in another environment we would be called digital humanists: we have certainly provided



the tools and the data for these humanists to use, and, who knows, maybe these same people will help us as we continue to celebrate and discover our past. And the delightful thing is that the academy is catching up with us, and I predict that comparatively well-funded digital humanities student programs in universities across the land will be looking to the archives, and to archivists, to help them explore in a digital environment the still-hidden analog world.

CLIR itself is changing its emphasis to the digitization of hidden special collections, and with good reason. While it has changed the landscape for the cataloging of hidden collections, current practices for the digitization of those collections need the radical rethinking that CLIR's money and brainpower can inspire.

Its pretty clear to see what CLIR is aiming for. If you can just work with your neighbor, you double your money. Half a million instead of

\$250,000 for those of us who are farsighted enough to see that it is our combined data that is important, rather than our branded proprietary website, and that digital collections can have an increased autonomy, integrity, and power precisely by transcending the physical limitations of analog collections. Collaboration is hard; digital haves need to work with digital have-nots. It necessitates a generosity of spirit, by both the haves and the have-nots, that more than matches the generosity in cash that CLIR promises to the lucky few. But, as Chuck Henry has noted, there is no ambiguity: the future of academic libraries and higher education rests on the ability to reconceive ourselves holistically. We shouldn't be doing this for the money; we should be doing it for the future of humanity. So let's thank Chuck, and all at CLIR, for a fantastic past, and let's steel ourselves, have a drink, and go and make a future together. Thank you.