Evolution of Preservation Librarianship as Reflected in Job Descriptions from 1975 through 1987

Michèle Valerie Cloonan and Patricia C. Norcott

This article examines the job content of the field of preservation librarianship as evidenced in job advertisements culled from five major publications from 1975 through 1987. The authors consider factors such as qualifications, duties, reporting line, and salary—all of which show that preservation librarians function in a largely administrative role, possess the M.L.S. in many, but not all cases, and are being paid below the average salary for functional and subject specialists and department heads. The findings also show a considerable variation in the perception of the functions of preservation administrators.



n this study we examined the job content of preservation librarianship* as reflected in library placement advertise-

ments from 1975 through 1987 in order to trace the development and growth of preservation as a specialty primarily within the library profession. Additionally, we hoped that the data would help us draw conclusions about the ways in which preservation positions were situated in various organizational structures.

Information came from advertisements in five publications: Abbey Newsletter, American Libraries, Chronicle of Higher Education, College & Research Libraries News, and Conservation Administration News.

The study considered the following questions:

1. When did the title preservation librar-

ian first appear in job ads? What other job titles have been in use? Does the terminology in these titles accurately reflect responsibilities performed?

2. What are the required levels of knowledge, skill, and training for preservation librarians?

3. What are the responsibilities of a preservation librarian?

4. Did the number of positions for preservation librarians increase from 1975 to 1987 and, if so, what was the magnitude of the increase?

What types of libraries and other organizations are hiring preservation librarians?

6. To whom does the preservation librarian report? For which department of the library does the preservation librarian work?

*We use the term *librarianship* acknowledging the fact that preservation administrators also function in other institutional settings.

Michèle Valerie Cloonan is Preservation Librarian at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island 02912. Patricia C. Norcott is Assistant Dean at Syracuse University College of Law, Syracuse, New York 13244-1030. 7. How do preservation librarians' salaries compare with salaries in other areas of librarianship?

A data-collection form made it possible to systematize the evaluation of the job advertisements. The number and type of institutions, the number of positions, and the number of positions listed in each periodical appear in figure 1.

The study revealed considerable variation in the advertisements. Although the ads clearly reflected an increase in the number of preservation positions during the period under study, there was little consensus as to what duties this position entailed or even what title the position should have. For example, of the 116 advertised positions, there were 68 variant job titles. For this reason, the data analysis in this study is qualitative rather than quantitative, consisting primarily of frequencies. Due to the small size of the sample, true statistical analysis was not possible. Thus, trends are identified rather than measured.

BACKGROUND

In a 1975 article by Gay Walker entitled "Preservation Efforts in Larger U.S. Academic Libraries," the preservation activities of 86 large academic libraries (500,000 volumes or more) were reported. Of the responding libraries, 62 had preservation procedures, but only 4 had "independent preservation operations with one or more persons engaged in preservation activities of an organizational and decision-making nature." While the level of preservation activity was rather low, awareness of preservation needs was clearly high. Just ten years later, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) conducted a survey of its member libraries. For 1984-85, the 97 respondents spent a total of \$38.5 million on preservation programs,² although a high percentage of this figure went to contract binding and salary expenditures. Thirty libraries spent a combined total of \$604,874 on contract preservation microfilming.

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Although the Walker and ARL surveys asked different questions, thus precluding parallel comparisons, the ARL figures demonstrate that many large libraries have made considerable progress in moving from preservation activities to preservation programs. (The ARL Preservation Statistics Questionnaire, 1987–88 will demonstrate even more strikingly the in-

	Total sample:		a state - the			
		fter duplicates	removed: 116	5		
3.	Number of in	stitutions: 63				
	Number of po					
5.	Number of po	ositions by year	r from 1975 to	0 1987:		
	1975: 2	1982: 1				
	1976: 2	1983: 4				
	1977: 0	1984: 11				
	1978: 5	1985: 18				
	1979: 8	1986: 35				
	1980: 6	1987: 21				
	1980: 0	1907. 21				
,			a disal.			
0.		ositions by peri		last		
		tter: 49 (28 exch				
	American Libri	aries: 38 (25 exc	luding dupli	cates)		
		igher Education.				
		earch Libraries N				
		Administration N		xcluding dup	icates)	
1.00		RL libraries: 36				
8	Number of ot	ther libraries ar	d institution	s: 27		

"The field of preservation administration has grown substantially since 1975, and the literature has grown proportionately."

creased preservation activities.)

These two studies—spanning just over a decade—correspond closely to the date parameters of our study. They also provide a barometer of the interest in and money spent for preservation programs since the mid-1970s. We included ads from 1986 and 1987 in order to increase the sample and to verify some of the trends predicted between 1975 and 1985.

The field of preservation administration has grown substantially since 1975, and the literature has grown proportionately.⁴ Yet the focus has been on preservation programs, planning and implementation, collection surveys, disasters, environmental standards, conservation treatments, and education rather than on the job content of preservation librarianship. Such a gap is understandable: the field is still quite young, and the literature has tended to focus on the most immediate concerns.⁵ Further, there have been so few preservation librarians/administrators until recently that a study such as this one would not have been feasible.

Over the past eight years, however, there have been several developments which now make the study of preservation librarianship appropriate. In 1981 the School of Library Service at Columbia University inaugurated degree programs for both conservators and preservation administrators. Simultaneously, and in some cases in conjunction with these programs, many libraries received grants to hire preservation interns and/or preservation librarians.6 With the existence of training programs for preservation librarians as well as more funding resources available for establishing programs, attention can now be focused on the job content of preservation librarianship.

METHODOLOGY

Job advertisements from 1975 to 1987 in five professional publications provided

the data for this study. These publications represent the general library profession as well as the conservation and preservation fields. The AIC Newsletter, published by the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, was not used for two reasons: for the early years of this study, jobs advertised there tended to be for art conservators, and during the entire period, most of the jobs were for bench conservators rather than preservation administrators. Library Journal, originally chosen because of its large circulation, was eliminated after a search through an entire volume (1984) failed to yield appropriate ads. The year 1984 was selected because in that year eleven preservation positions were advertised elsewhere; it was thus reasonable to conclude that if ads failed to turn up in that Library Journal volume, it was probably not a useful source. Therefore, American Libraries was chosen as the journal to represent the general library profession. As the organ of the ALA, it reaches a large audience and includes all areas of librarianship.

With the exception of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and *Conservation Administration News*, all issues of the publications from 1975 through 1987 were examined.⁷ For the *Chronicle*—a weekly—ads from alternate issues were taken. Since many *Chronicle* ads run for two or more consecutive weeks, a check of every issue would probably not have resulted in a higher yield of new preservation ads.

Once the publications were selected, a strategy for selecting job advertisements was developed. Because job titles for preservation librarians/administrators vary so greatly, all ads were skimmed in order to select appropriate jobs. The following administrative responsibilities were sought: planning, decision making, staff supervision and training, grant writing, the implementation of policies, and educational programs. Bench conservator and other positions were included only if the job entailed three or more preservation-related administrative responsibilities. Internships for preservation administrators were included for two reasons: they tended to include administrative responsibilities such as planning and budgeting, and in many cases internships such as the

ones sponsored by the Mellon Foundation have been ongoing rather than nonrecurring positions. Furthermore, these internships have influenced the field.

The terms preservation and conservation should be considered here. Although there has been a trend toward the use of the term preservation for the administrator's care of library collections in the aggregate, as opposed to individual conservation treatment of books at the bench,⁸ the term conservation is still used as part of some administrators' job titles. Job ads using either term were included in this study as long as the position advertised entailed the administrative duties described here.

By examining all jobs with preservation duties, it was possible to trace the development of full-time positions from 1975 through 1987. In three cases libraries that originally advertised for positions with some preservation duties later advertised for full-time preservation librarians. For example, in 1976 Princeton advertised for a curator of manuscripts with preservation duties and in 1980 for a binding and preservation librarian. SUNY/Buffalo advertised for a curator of poetry and rare books with preservation duties in 1979 and in 1984 for a conservation officer. In 1980 Northwestern advertised for a head of collection development with preservation duties and in 1984 for a conservation officer. These relationships were apparent because all of the job ads were examined. By 1981, however, there were enough fulltime preservation positions advertised so that other positions with preservation duties appear with less frequency in this study.

All the institutions represented are American. Included are libraries, historical societies, one regional conservation center, state libraries, a few specialized libraries, and professional organizations such as the Society of American Archivists (see table 1).

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are obvious limitations to a study such as this. Preservation positions have sometimes evolved from other positions in an institution and may not have been advertised. Therefore, some people who have been crucial to the growth of the preservation field hold positions that were never advertised, or perhaps were advertised only locally; these positions were not picked up in this study. Also, job ads reflect the ideal rather than the real. Candidates who possess all the qualifications listed in an ad may not exist. Nevertheless, the 63 institutions that advertised 116 positions (table 1) will at least allow us to identify trends.

INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA Use of the Title Preservation Librarian; Other Job Titles; Levels of Responsibility

In our sample the title preservation librarian first appeared in a 1978 job ad for Harvard University. Since then it has been used with increasing regularity. The three other most commonly used titles are preservation officer, conservation officer, and conservation librarian.

"There is no evidence to suggest that the terms *preservation* and *conservation* consistently describe different levels of responsibility or even different areas of expertise."

There is no evidence to suggest that the terms preservation and conservation consistently describe different levels of responsibility or even different areas of expertise. Usage seems to reflect the preferences of individual libraries. However, two libraries stand out as having carefully differentiated the terms to reflect the nature of the work: New York Public Library (NYPL) and Columbia University. According to John Baker," at NYPL, the terms were always differentiated. Under James Henderson, conservation was used in the broadest sense to refer to all preservation and conservation activities. Since David Stam's tenure at the NYPL, preservation has been used as the broader term. The conservators treat the library materials while the preservation librarians are responsible for activities such as microfilming. John Baker's title is chief librarian for preservation.

At Columbia, starting around 1974,

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INSTITUTIONS

ARL Libraries	Non-ARL Libraries
Arizona State University	American Philosophical Society
Brown University	Boston College
Case Western Reserve	Brooklyn Historical Society
Columbia University	Cleveland Public Library
Cornell University	Georgia Department of Archives & History
Emory University	Hofstra University
Harvard University	Illinois State Historical Library
Indiana University	Indiana State University
Johns Hopkins University	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Library of Congress	Ithaca College
Louisiana State University	J. P. Getty Center for the History of Art
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	& the Humanities
National Library of Medicine	Jesse Ball duPont Memorial Library
New York Public Library	Marquette University
New York University	Minnesota Historical Society
Newberry Library	New Jersey State Library
Northwestern University	New Mexico State University
Ohio State University	New York Botanical Gardens Book Preservation
Princeton University	Center
Smithsonian Institution	New York State Library
Southern Illinois University at Carbondale	Northeast Document Conservation Center
Stanford University	Research Libraries Group
SUNY/Albany	SOLINET (Atlanta)
SUNY/Buffalo	Society of American Archivists
SUNY/Stonybrook	Stanford's Hoover Institution
Texas A&M University	University of Louisville
University of Chicago	University of Texas at Arlington
University of Cincinnati	University of Wisconsin at Madison
University of Connecticut	Vassar College
University of Florida	Virginia State Library
University of Maryland	
University of Michigan	
University of Virginia	
University of Wisconsin	
Vanderbilt University Yale University	
Tale Oniversity	and the second

ARL Statistics, 1984-85. Washington, D.C.: Assn. of Research Libraries, 1986.

Pamela Darling also used the term *preservation* to refer to administrative activities. Carolyn Harris, her successor, had the title head of the preservation department and later, assistant director for preservation. Darling's views on usage of the two terms are expressed in articles as well as in a 1985 letter to the editor.¹⁰

Required Levels of Knowledge, Skill, and Training for Preservation Librarians

A clear preference is indicated for the ALA-accredited M.L.S., which was required in 53 of the 116 ads. Eleven ads stated that an ALA-accredited M.L.S. was preferred. Six of the ads required a master's degree but did not specify that it be an M.L.S. A conservative interpretation of the data is appropriate here; we know of at least five instances in which candidates without an M.L.S. were hired for these positions. However, it *is* clear from the data that most libraries would prefer to hire candidates who have at least an M.L.S. The perceived importance of the degree for a preservation librarian may have something to do with the administrative responsibilities entailed for the jobs advertised. The relationship between the M.L.S. and administrative responsibilities of preservation librarians will be considered in the conclusion.

Fifteen ads offered an alternative to the M.L.S. This can probably be explained by the fact that preservation administration requires more skills than can be taught in most library school programs. Some li-

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braries might prefer to hire someone who has training in the physical treatment of library materials, micrographics, chemistry, statistics, or whatever other areas best complement the needs of the particular hiring institution.

The phrase *administrative experience* appeared in 28 of the ads; *preservation administration* was listed only three times. In general, administrative skills dominated the experience portion of the job ads and included grant writing, preservation planning, and supervising staff. Experience in the physical treatment of library materials was called for in 30 of the ads. Although some libraries feel that experience in the physical treatment of materials is important, more libraries find administrative ability preferable.

Responsibilities of the Preservation Librarian

Planning appeared in 96 job ads, and development of policy and procedures in 66 ads. Supervisory responsibilities was the third most cited administrative task; 58 ads listed it. The high ranking of these three tasks can probably be attributed to the fact that most preservation positions require all of these skills, though planning and development of policy and procedures are certainly interdependent. Planning may refer to the development of preservation microfilming programs, disaster preparedness plans, staff education, and security systems-all of which ultimately require the development of procedures. One might also argue that the development of policy and procedures is a facet of planning. Similarly, planning and budgeting are interrelated. Does the separation of these tasks in the ads indicate a professionwide confusion as to the role of the preservation administrator? Imprecise language often signals confusion on the part of the writer. In the case of the ads, it may indicate that some institutions are unsure either about what a preservation librarian does or what in fact the institution wants the incumbent to do.

A more positive interpretation of the variant tasks listed in the ads is that the duties and relative rank of preservation positions reflect differences in institutional goals and styles. For example, a preservation administrator might have consultative rather than supervisory or budgetary duties. At the same time this individual may be charged with developing library programs. The separation of duties in the ads may actually reflect the wide variety of duties that preservation administrators are currently assuming in diverse institutional settings.

One area of responsibility not often mentioned is grant writing. With the increasing pressure on libraries to obtain large grants, and with the increasing availability of grant monies for preservation programs, it is surprising that grant writing was not specified more than eight times.

"There were 2 positions advertised in 1975 and 21 in 1987, with a peak of 35 advertised in 1986."

Magnitude of Increase for Preservation Librarian Positions

There has been an unsteady increase in the number of preservation positions advertised from 1975 through 1987. However, the numbers before 1984 are so small that the magnitude of the increases and decreases is probably not significant. There were 2 positions advertised in 1975 and 21 in 1987, with a peak of 35 advertised in 1986. The years 1982 through 1987 represent the most striking increases, possibly due to such factors as the increased availability of grants for preservation programs, internships that grew out of the Columbia programs, and the expansion of preservation activities in professional organizations such as the ALA, ARL, and Research Libraries Group (RLG). Again, it is important to remember that not all positions are advertised, so the figures must be evaluated with this limitation in mind.

Types of Libraries and Other Organizations Hiring Preservation Librarians

Of the 63 institutions represented in this

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study, 36, or 57 percent, are ARL-member libraries¹¹ (table 1). Significantly, from 1975 through 1985, ARL libraries accounted for 27 of the 38 (71 percent) institutions represented.12 This indicates that preservation programs have been centered in large university and independent research libraries, though the figures for 1986-87 may signal a new trend. Conspicuously absent from the sample before 1986 were public and college libraries, with the exception of the NYPL which is an ARL member. Although preservation programs now exist in both public and college libraries, 13 at the end of 1987 they still represented a small portion of the sample: 4 of 63, or 6 percent of the institutions. The appearance of these types of libraries over the past two years indicates that the field is expanding beyond its traditional boundaries.14

The other types of libraries represented in the job ads were four historical societies, three state libraries, and five miscellaneous specialized libraries such as the J. P. Getty Center for the History of Art & the Humanities, and the New York Botanical Gardens Book Preservation Center.

In addition to libraries, professional organizations and other types of institutions have hired preservation administrators; these include the Society of American Archivists, Northeast Document Conservation Center, SOLINET, and RLG.

Person to Whom the Preservation Librarian Reports; Department for Which the Preservation Librarian Works

Fifty ads specified the position to which the preservation administrator/librarian would report. In 7 of the ads it was to the director, variously referred to as librarian, university librarian, director of libraries, and executive director and education officer. In at least 13 others, it was to positions one level down from the director (for example, assistant university librarian). It would be impossible to tabulate the exact number of these mid- to upper-level administrative positions without examining the organizational charts for each institution, because titles such as principal librarian [for] collection management and network services do not indicate the level of responsibility.

Only 34 ads specified the department in which the preservation librarian would work. Departments mentioned included conservation, preservation, custom binding and restoration, collection development, collection maintenance, serials, public services, and library development.

Interestingly, the positions to which the preservation administrators report, and the departments in which they work, represent the major library divisions: administration, technical services, public services, and special collections. Preservation programs have gradually developed in three of the divisions: technical services, public services, and special collections. The reasons for this are understandable. In some libraries attention to preservation problems first focused on the rare deteriorating materials, and so programs started in special collections departments. The earliest positions found in this study were for rare book departments.

In other libraries programs were started in the circulation department because brittle and/or otherwise damaged books were identified as they were returned by the patrons. For example, the preservation program at Yale originated in the circulation department and Walker mentions other libraries in which this was also the case.¹⁵ The focus in these libraries was on books in the general collections.

It is probable that most preservation programs started in cataloging and acquisitions departments where commercial and in-house binding operations are usually located.

In this study, the first collectiondevelopment-related position was advertised by Northwestern University in 1980. The job was for the head of collection management but the position included preservation administration responsibilities. The next collection development position with preservation responsibilities was advertised by M.I.T. in 1985. Since then, one other position with this emphasis has been advertised—head, collection development and preservation—at Indiana State University (advertised in 1987). The variety of positions to which preservation librarians report probably reflects the different administrative styles and departmental structures of individual libraries.

Preservation Librarians' Salaries Compared with Salaries in Other Areas of Librarianship

We wanted to find out how the salaries for preservation librarians compared with salaries for other professional library positions. Because 36 of the 63 institutions in this study are ARL libraries, it made sense to compare the salaries in the ads to the salaries in the three most recent ARL Annual Salary Surveys (1985-1987).16 The ARL statistics report the beginning and median salaries, salaries by years of experience, and salaries by specialty/function. An alternative source which provides salary figures by library type and level of position is the ALA Survey of Librarian Salaries, 1986.12 Only the years 1985–87 were considered. Salary data from the earlier dates would not be particularly meaningful.

The data were compared with average salaries for a functional specialist, a subject specialist, and a department head (cataloging) in ARL libraries (table 2) so that a relative ranking could be made for preservation librarians.

Our initial interest in salaries for preservation librarians was to compare them with the more established library specialties. Some preservation librarians possess highly specialized skills-for example, in the physical treatment of library materials or in a subject specialty-and yet do not always have a substantial amount of library experience, or even library degrees. Many institutions are still willing to hire candidates who do not hold M.L.S. degrees. What sort of premium is put on preservation skills? Although the data cannot answer the question precisely, they do indicate that most preservation librarians are being paid below the average salary for functional and subject specialists and department heads.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY AND CONCLUSIONS

Our study was based on the seven questions presented at the beginning of this article. Answers were found for questions one through five, and the data for questions six and seven were inconclusive.

Question one dealt with usage of the term *preservation librarian*. It first appeared in the job ads in 1978. A variety of other titles have also been used for job descriptions that encompass similar duties. The different titles do not appear to describe different responsibilities with any accuracy.

Question two attempted to find out the required levels of knowledge, skill, and

	SALA	RY DATA	and a start of the start of the	
A	verage Salaries for Fund	tional Specialist (all regio	ns)	
1985	1	986	1987	
28,270	29	,663	31,396	
	Average Salaries for Sul	oject Specialist (all region	5)	
1985		986	1987	
29,119	31	,150	32,283	Yest
Averag	e Salaries for Departme	nt Head (cataloging); (all	regions)	
1985	1985 1986		1987	
34,150	34	,756	37,288	13 AP
	Preservation Libra	rian Salaries 1985–86		
	Low	Mean	High	
Base of scale $(n=46)$ Top of scale $(n=17)$	16,000 17,000	23,325 28,488	40,000 41,500	

TABLE 2 SALARY DATA

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training for preservation librarians. The information was very diffuse, but the ads reflected a clear preference for ALAaccredited M.L.S. degrees (64 requiring and preferring) and administrative experience (28 requesting).

The responses for question three, about the responsibilities of preservation librarianship, indicated that administrative duties were central to these positions.

Question four concerned the increase of preservation librarian jobs advertised during the period of this study. There was an increase from 2 in 1975 to 21 in 1987, with a peak of 35 advertised in 1986. However the increase was uneven: only from the years 1982 through 1986 was it steady; in 1987 it dipped. It may still be too early to draw any conclusions about probable future increases.

Question five attempted to find out what types of libraries and other organizations were hiring preservation administrators/librarians. The majority were ARL libraries. Prior to 1986, the only public library represented was the NYPL, an ARL member. In 1986 and 1987, other public as well as college libraries appeared in the ads.

There were two parts to question six: to whom does the preservation librarian report (50 ads provided this information), and for which department does the preservation librarian work (34 ads indicated this). The answers to these questions were inconclusive because the data were so diffuse.

Question seven, which sought comparisons between the salaries of preservation and other librarians, can be answered tentatively. It appears that in ARL libraries, preservation librarians are being paid less than functional and subject specialists and department heads.

Some of the areas explored in this study deserve further attention. For example, a survey could provide more information about the role of the preservation librarian in the organizational hierarchy of the library. Although the *ARL Preservation Statistics Questionnaire*, 1987–88 will present data on reporting relationships, it would be interesting to find out not only where preservation departments are located in the organizational chart, but whether or not the preservation librarians surveyed feel that the reporting relationships have worked effectively. Organizational models for various libraries might be studied and evaluated.

More information could be gathered about the salary scale for preservation librarianship; a survey might be a better way to collect this information. If a survey was conducted, correlations could be made between salary and the M.L.S. For our study, such a correlation was not possible; there is no way to ascertain whether the candidate chosen possessed an M.L.S., nor what salary was ultimately paid. Additional information could also be gathered about salaries in ARL versus non-ARL libraries.

This study has several implications for the preservation field. There seems to be little consensus among library hiring committees about what qualifications preservation librarians should have. Yet there has been a sharp increase in the number of preservation programs being established in libraries as exemplified by the ARL Surveys described. Perhaps workshops that would focus on the hiring of preservation librarians should be organized by RLG, ARL, or the PLMS section of RTSD for libraries in the process of implementing preservation programs. Further, standardization of the terms preservation and conservation might also help to alleviate confusion.

Although this is the first study to focus on the job content of preservation librarianship, Ellen McCrady wrote a column about the increase of the number of job ads in the Abbey Newsletter. In a brief item entitled "Lots of Jobs," McCrady cited an increase of 100 percent from 1983 (23 ads) to 1985 (55 ads).¹⁸ Her figures are substantially higher than ours because she included jobs for library and museum bench conservators as well as those for preservation librarians. Nevertheless, we concur that the preservation job market is presently healthy. At the same time, we hope that recognition of the growth of this field will lead to a reappraisal of the job content of preservation administration.

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- 4. See the bibliographical essays in Library Resources & Technical Services for July/Sept. 1981, 1982, 1983, 1986, and Oct./Dec. 1987. In the 1981 review essay by Rose Mary Magrill, preservation appeared as a short section in an essay entitled "Collection Development and Preservation in 1980." The 1987 Library Resources & Technical Services essay by Carla J. Montori, "Library Preservation in 1986: An Annotated Bibliography," was twenty-one pages.
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- 9. Telephone conversation between John Baker and M. V. Cloonan, Jan. 18, 1989.
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- 11. ARL Statistics, 1984-1985 (Washington, D.C.: Assn. of Research Libraries, 1986).
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- This activity is reflected in Robert and GraceAnne A. DeCandido, "Micro-Preservation: Conserving the Small Library," Library Resources & Technical Services 29:151–60 (Apr./June 1985).
- 14. Small special libraries are also developing preservation programs, though the impact of these programs is not yet reflected in the job ads of the periodicals used for this study. See Wesley L. Boomgarden, "Preservation Planning for the Small Special Library," Special Libraries 76:204–11 (Summer 1985).
- 15. Walker, p. 41.
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