SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

DRAFT // PHILOSOPHY

As a steward of historical materials of enduring value, Smith College Special Collections fosters inquiry, critical thinking, and knowledge building for the future through an active engagement with the past.

Special Collections seeks to balance access with preservation of archives, manuscripts, and rare books in a variety of physical and digital formats. We recognize that preservation and use of these unique and rare materials necessitates that they be processed, used, and stored under conditions that are more restrictive than is the case with the general collections. For the physical materials, this means a physical security and environmental envelope. For born digital materials, this means a preservation repository and capacity for both open and closed-network access.

DRAFT // GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Because of the irreplaceable nature of the materials, they do not circulate. Students, faculty, staff and the public will primarily use them in a variety of spaces inside the envelope.
- The envelope should safeguard and sustain the contents, but not appear fortress or mausoleum like. To foster active engagement and a sense of belonging, the research/engagement spaces should be welcoming and comfortable; not intimidating.
- The work of Special Collections staff requires extensive work with the archival and/or rare book materials stored inside the envelope. Work spaces need to allow direct access of staff to the materials.
- Special Collections is a major content hub for the digital humanities. Digital exploration and content production can and do happen in Special Collections, but fruitful adjacencies include a Digital Humanities Lab, the Digitization Studio, and the Center for Media Production.
- Given the dramatic increase in digital archival content, Special Collections will endeavor to allow remote and closed-network (reading room) access to digital and analog archival materials for research, creative, and teaching purposes.
- To foster collaboration with Teaching, Learning, and Research (TLR) colleagues and accommodate the volume of classes, Special Collections physical materials can also be used in teaching spaces outside of the envelope, provided there is adequate security and adjacency. Given the volume of teaching done in Special Collections, however, multiple and flexible teaching spaces are required. Classes range in size and need to accommodate different models of teaching and learning.
- Exhibition of Special Collections materials in and outside of the envelope is very desirable provided there is adequate security and basic environmental control of the cases and spaces.
- Special Collections staff who teach, work on discovery of and access to Special Collections materials, and assist with on-site and distance research/reference would benefit from adjacency to other library staff engaged in related work.

(YOUR COMMENTS)