

## 1970: Preservation Research Office

We're leapfrogging a few years to acknowledge a significant anniversary. (We'll return to 1961 next week!)

Fifty years ago this month, CLR awarded \$95,000 to the Library of Congress for equipment to furnish its new Preservation Research Office. The office—really a laboratory—was created to undertake both basic and practical research, primarily focused on issues relating to paper preservation, but also for research in adhesives, bookbindings, microfilm, magnetic tape, and motion picture film.

The deterioration of print materials produced after the introduction of wood-pulp paper in mid-1800s had become a significant concern to libraries and archives, which were spending large sums on preserving or reformatting books, newspapers, and other crumbling items in their collections. (In CLR's first year of grant-giving, it had funded William Barrow to conduct research on causes of paper stock deterioration; it was Barrow who connected paper embrittlement to the acidity of wood pulp used in paper manufacture.)

The laboratory continues today as the [Preservation Research and Testing Division](#) of LC's [Preservation Directorate](#), under the leadership of CLIR Presidential Fellow and incoming Board member Fenella France. An anniversary program is planned for the afternoon of February 18.

The description at right is taken from the 14th annual report of the Council on Library Resources, Inc., for the period ending June 30, 1970, p. 34.

### Preservation Research Office at Library of Congress

In the United States there has been no single national facility with primary continuing responsibility for identifying and solving the preservation problems of libraries and archives. The Barrow Laboratory has done excellent work on many questions associated with the preservation of library materials; there has been related work at the University of Chicago, the Imperial College in London,<sup>20</sup> the Newberry Library, the Boston Athenaeum Library, and elsewhere. The National Bureau of Standards and private industry have also intermittently performed this kind of research. To make a coherent whole of these assorted pieces, the Association of Research Libraries has long urged the formulation and implementation of a National Plan for the Preservation of Deteriorating Research Materials. As has been related before,<sup>21</sup> several years ago the Council gave assistance for a pilot project at the Library of Congress to study some procedural problems.

As one consequence of that study the Library of Congress will now establish a permanent Preservation Research Office (or laboratory), and a Council grant will assist in the purchase of equipment. The Office, which will be directed by a qualified scientist, will undertake both basic and practical research. While the program will be aimed primarily at solving problems relating to the preservation of paper, attention will also be given to problems in other fields, such as adhesives, bookbindings, microfilm, magnetic tape, and motion picture film. In addition, the laboratory will assume responsibility for testing and evaluating materials, equipment, and methods used in preservation.

<sup>19</sup> Richard D. Smith. "New Approaches to Preservation" in *Library Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1, January 1970, pp. 139-171.

<sup>20</sup> XIII: 34. See also XII: 27.

<sup>21</sup> XII: 28-29; XIII: 35.