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The Conservation Documentation Archive

Duke University Libraries have digitized and preserved 23 years' worth of conservation treatment documentation. The Conservation Documentation Archive (CDA)¹ was recently made available to the public through the Duke Digital Repository. The CDA collection provides one model for institutions to consider if they are interested in providing digital preservation and access to their records.

Funding

This project was made possible in part by a 2021 award from the Catalyst Fund at LYRASIS and it was additionally the recipient of the inaugural 2021 Sandy Nyberg Award. The Sandy Nyberg Award recognizes proposals that demonstrate the highest levels of innovation in the areas of preservation, conservation, collections, writing and publishing.



2006 board reattachment and minor structural repair to Vollständiger und neuerläuterte deutsche Sprachkunst



2006 surface cleaning of Quadratum alchymisticum



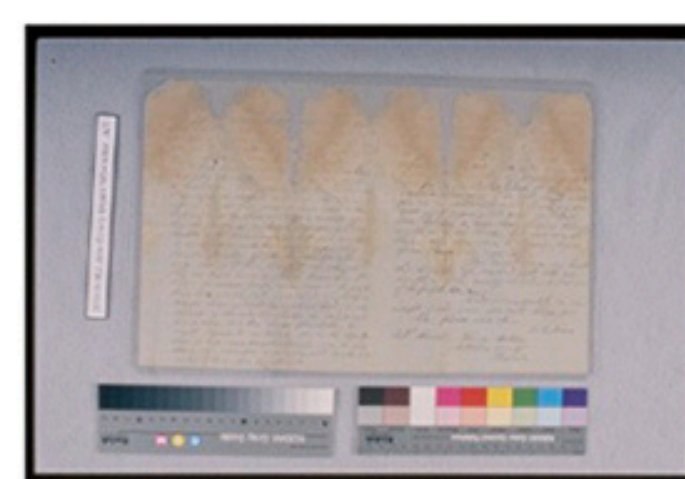
2006 board repair and reattachment to Propagation of the Gospel in the East



2006 board reattachment, hinge repair, spine repair, stain reduction, and page repairs for digitization of Affection's



2006 board reattachment, hinge repair, spine repair, and page repairs for digitization of Affection's



2005 page repairs to John Emory Bryant papers 1854 letter

01. Introduction

The AIC Code of Ethics requires documentation of conservation treatment and maintenance of those records “in as permanent a manner as possible”, yet, currently there is no singular framework for preservation.² In 2012, McCann advocated for better conservation records preservation, suggesting deposition in university archives, but because Duke’s records have been actively used by staff, they were deemed unsuitable for transfer to University Archives at the present moment.³

To reconcile these issues, DUL undertook a pandemic-era project to digitize their legacy treatment records (paper documents and 35mm color slides) and ingest these files along with their born-digital records into the Duke Digital Repository for both preservation and public access. By sharing this collection, Duke Libraries joins a small number of institutions who have made their treatment records available to the public in recent years (Preservation Lab, British Museum, and Stanford University Libraries).^{4, 5, 6}

References

1. Conservation Documentation Archive. <https://repository.duke.edu/catalog/f3a3427a-2448-41a6-b3d0-2ec5a0f72454>
2. American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works. (1994). *Code of ethics and guidelines for practice*. <https://www.culturalheritage.org/about-conservation/code-of-ethics>
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4. Preservation Lab Treatment Documentation. <https://drc.libraries.uc.edu/communities/ed25f2a6-6423-427fa-a61c-db73c9b2d30b>
5. British Museum Conservation Treatment Documentation. <https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection>
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7. Duke University Libraries Digital Preservation Policy. <https://library.duke.edu/using/policies/digital-preservation>
8. Art & Architecture Thesaurus Online. <https://www.getty.edu/research/tools/vocabularies/aat>
9. Ligatus Language of Bindings. <https://www.ligatus.org.uk/lob/>
10. Aisha Wahab, Kristen St. John, and Richenda Brim. (2021) “Recentring the Bench.” *The Book and Paper Group Annual*. (vol. 40) (pp. 102-108). <https://cool.culturalheritage.org/coolaic/sg/bpg/annual/v40/bpga40-10.pdf>

02. Project Overview

DUL Conservation Services (CSD) applied for grant funding to help them digitize, describe, and make their records available through the libraries’ digital repository.⁷ LyRASIS Catalyst grant funds paid for outsourced digitization of legacy records, for contributions to storage expenses, and for a student and intern to assist with the project. Duke Libraries’ CSD, Digital Strategies & Technologies, and special collections staff also contributed to the creation of the CDA as cost share for the project.



03. Methodology

Treatment records were curated by CSD staff so that only appropriate documentation was ingested and made publicly available. Bibliographic identifiers were assigned to items in the CDA to facilitate linking from to catalog records and archival collection guides.

Each record preserved in the CDA documents a “treatment event” and is comprised of:

- Tiff images from before, during, and after treatment
- Tiff scans of paper documentation and 35 mm color slides
- PDF-A files of written documentation that are available to download
- Metadata that describe:
 - geography/culture of the item treated
 - description/features
 - condition at the time of examination
 - treatment performed
 - workflow associated with the treatment

04. CDA Collection Features

- By fall of 2024, the CDA will hold records of approximately 1800 treatments dating from 1997-2020
 - CSD plans to add records on an annual basis
- Keyword searching is available for metadata terms and item titles
- Faceted browsing for date, conservator, and format/description information
- As possible, metadata terms were drawn from standardized bibliographies such as AAT and Ligatus Language of Bindings (LOB)^{8, 9}
- Item pages in the CDA link to catalog records and archival collection guides for the items treated
- Additional links to related treatment records in the CDA, as well as to items also available in the Duke Digital Collections
- Catalog records for items treated have a global Local Note (590 field) applied that includes a link back to the CDA landing page

05. Considerations and Lessons Learned

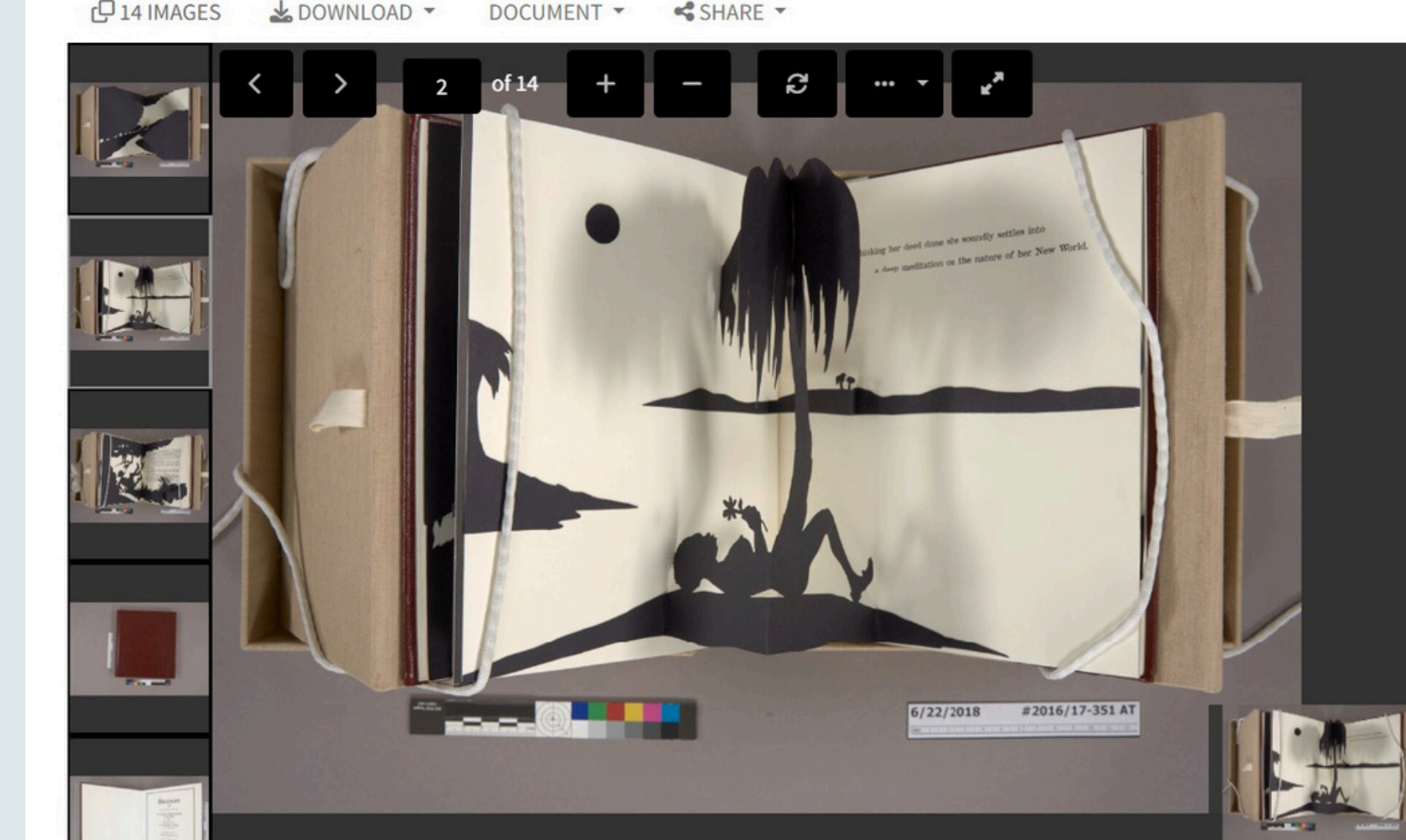
Project Management:

- Metadata entry was one of the most time-consuming aspects of the project. Google and Microsoft Office Forms created some efficiencies and ensured standardization of terms.
- Assessment of the terminology used in CSD’s treatment forms revealed regrettable blind spots and Euro-centric biases in our documentation practices. This prompted an update to treatment forms to make them more inclusive of a broad range of cultural traditions. Stanford’s work provided helpful guidance in this area.¹⁰
- Following digitization of our 35mm color slides, a noticeable color shift was observed. DUL’s Digital Production Services staff made color adjustments to slide scans, and both the raw scans as well as the color-corrected images were ingested into the CDA. Only the color-corrected files are publicly available.

Privacy and Copyright Concerns:

- Many files contained information with potential privacy concerns, such as curator and conservator signatures and email exchanges that provided context for treatment. We managed these issues by redacting signatures prior to digitization and by suppressing any private email correspondence in the public interface.
- DUL copyright librarians felt that CSD had a fair use argument for publishing treatment documentation, particularly since whole works are rarely imaged. However, additional reviews revealed some potential instances of market harm or issues with donor relations. In consultation with curators, CSD chose to suppress those items or their individual components of concern in the public interface to avoid potential copyright or donor issues.

2018 page repairs to Kara Walker's Freedom: a fable



Title: 2018 page repairs to Kara Walker's Freedom: a fable
 Permalink: <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r4kp840g>
 Date: 2018
 Creator: Hammeke, Erin
 Type: Still image
 Description: Culture: The Americas; North American; African American
 Condition: cockling; loose material; minor tears or losses
 Treatment: Flattening; loose leaves reattached; page repair; stain reduction
 Reason/Workflow: Unknown
 Identifier: 002048701
 201617_351
 ark:/87924/r4kp840g
 59571c41-a0ea-4b2f-a4b8-579241925274
 Collection: Conservation Documentation Archive
 Format: Bookbinding
 Case binding
 Cloth binding
 Full binding
 Pop-up book
 Rights: © Copyright Undetermined