Kris Kiesling and Beth M. Whittaker

Editors' Note

THE 49TH ANNUAL RBMS PRECONFERENCE, "Rare and Special Bytes: Special Collections in the Digital Age," was held in Los Angeles June 24–27, 2008. In addition to enjoying the warm southern California sunshine and hospitality, participants were challenged to rethink how special collections libraries and archives function, how they present themselves to researchers and the public, and how born digital and born-again digital materials in our collections add a new dimension to nearly everything we do.

The papers in this issue of *RBM* represent fewer than half of the plenary presentations at the Preconference. Plenary speakers imparted practical advice on copyright in the digital world, exhorted us to "just do it" (that is, digitize) or become irrelevant, showed us examples of how to do it, examined scholars' needs and the importance of the relationship between librarians and scholars as we digitize our collections, and looked into the future. Some of the presentations comforted us with assurances that we're headed in the right direction, while others clearly pushed some buttons.

Overall, the Preconference attempted to examine as many aspects of managing and providing access to digital collections as was possible in a three-day time frame. In reality, it represented a small part of an ongoing conversation about improving access, maintaining relevance, and pushing the envelope where we can.

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Although not all the plenaries are published in this issue of *RBM*, many speakers have made their talks available in other formats. RBMS is actively working to capture preconference content in real time, and *RBM* looks forward to providing a complementary platform for publication.

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