DEAR ARCHIVIST: I NEED HELP

A Question and Answer Column on Problems Faced by Archivists

Each issue will have a member of MAC respond to questions raised by readers. If this column is to be useful we must have volunteers to answer questions as well as ask them. You could also share your knowledge with us. Have you solved a problem that has bothered other people? Do you have a problem that nobody has solved yet? Please send your questions, answers or comments to Jacqueline Haring, Curator of Special Collcetions, Henry M. Seymour Library, Knox College, Galesbury, Illinois, 61401. The column is open to any sort of problem that would be of interest to our readers. We need to know how to make this column be of use to our readers. Please write, especially if you have material for a future column.

1) Q. A long distance caller asked about framing antique maps so that they would not be damaged by ultra-violet rays.
   A. The best glazing material to use is UF1 plexiglas made by Rohm and Haas. Recent inquiries made of Cope, in Peoria, one of their distributors, brought the discouraging news that UF1 can be purchased only in minimum orders of 5,000 sq. ft. Therefore, I suggest UF3 plexiglas, same manufacturer and same distributor, which can be purchased in single sheets of 6' x 9' at between two and three dollars per square foot. UF3 has a slightly yellow color but this is not disturbing in the 1/8" thickness appropriate for framing. Prices and size change on this rapidly; it would be wise to make your own inquiries when you are ready to order.

2) Q. How do I repair old wax seals on ancient documents which have cracked in several places?
   A. Remove the pieces of the seal from the document with a dull knife slipped between seal and support. Fit the pieces closely together and hold them in place with a solution of Canada balsam, dissolved in a mixture of benzene and toluene. After the solvents have evaporated, the pieces will be stuck together and may be reapplied by heating the underside of the seal slightly but sufficiently to soften the wax so that it will adhere to the document. This portion of the document should be supported in storage to reduce strain and possible future damage.

3) Q. What are the most frequently used symbols in describing manuscript items?
   A. "A" means self-written, not autograph in sense of a signature, therefore:

ALS = self-written letter self-signed.
LS = letter either typed or written by someone other than signer.
S = signature (hopefully genuine).
ANS = self-written note* self-signed.
NS = note typed or written by someone other than signer.
AN = note unsigned, but self-written.
DS = document, usually printed but occassionally written by a subordinant, signed.
D = printed document, unsigned.
M = manuscript, usually typed.
AM = self-written manuscript.
AMS = self-written manuscript signed.

*A note differs from a letter in that it is usually an incomplete sentence or has no salutation such as an inscription in a book or on a calling card.