Discussion of various potential technical issues regarding the Hitchman exhibit:

Questions for meeting with Kate Leonard 7/29/09:

General questions about the environment of the Allen Mezzanine case: are there general recommendations Kate would have for me, general guidelines to follow? What is the standard procedure for marking items after they are returned to the collection, so that preservation meta-data is carried forward (is there a procedure for UWSC at this point)? Is there anything that I could add into the EAD finding aid to accomplish this same goal? Is there someone else who would know about this?

Exhibit of original sketches on onionskin paper - have these ready to show, let Kate see the items and evaluate possible exhibit. Will the lights be an issue? Should they have special mounting? What would this consist of?

Speaking of mounting, I have seen the acrylic sleeves/mounts for letter-size documents - what is the general availability of these? Are there standard angles to select from? Where do they live so that I can experiment with them?

Are there specific guidelines for the historic (19th century) materials? Letters, ephemera, books, etc. Have these materials ready to show Kate, and discuss potential problems and the possible solutions. Alternatively, if these items shouldn't be exhibited, work out alternatives (photocopy proxies, digital proxies (I've seen this done with digital 'picture frames' at BIHS), etc.).

Text materials to support original materials: How is this usually done? I am thinking in terms of a title banner (I think I know how this part works), an explanatory paragraph of text for the exhibit as a whole, and then several smaller descriptions of individual groupings. How does this usually work? What are the options? What is the lead time if there is a manufacturing/printing process?

Also, logistical questions: how do people designing exhibits normally choose their supports/mounts and design the layout? How do they present this design to others - or do they? Do they simply choose items, choose mounts, and then arrange them in the case in whatever way looks best while actually installing the exhibit, or do they do a layout first?

Notes following meeting with Kate Leonard:

Kate suggested a few mounts that made sense - most especially a set of acrylic bookends for displaying a selection of Hitchman's book collection as a shelf of books. I think this would be an excellent way to create representation for this part of the Hitchman universe in the exhibit. Besides these mounts, she educated me about the general rules of thumb surrounding display of the widely varied items I showed her. It seems like most of these decisions will be best made when actually staging the exhibit - some basic notes about the number of book cradles, hanging displays, and the like will be sufficient for preparatory purposes. Kate said that most of the acrylic displays I saw in the AYPE exhibit were actually custom made for that exhibit, but that there are similar items in her cache of display materials (which is hiding in the reading room apse, though I won't really have access to it until closer to the time of the exhibit). One excep-

tion that will take longer is the custom matting for the Jackson Hewitt drawings: these I will have to get to the mendery earlier as they will need time to set them up. Because we have this time, I still believe that they will be a nice component of the exhibit.

After discussion with Kate, I believe that I should minimize the number of text captions in my exhibit, and let main poster paragraph set the theme. After that, the material can speak for itself. This means I should really fine tune the text of the main poster. Kate said that if I got the text to her, she would be able to print it out and mount it for display on tagboard (thanks, Kate!). The same goes for the exhibit title banner.

As regards the preservation metadata, it seems that the paper notes in the collection are a good idea, and that the exhibit is not going to be long enough to require, nor do the materials or the exhibit conditions warrant, significant record-keeping for the exposure of materials. This is good to know, but obviously could be a more significant concern for other collections, and especially longer exhibitions or less benign exhibit environments (it was good to check, anyway).

Overall, there are no materials which raised red flags about the possibility for their exhibition. I didn't expect there to be any issues, given the age and general condition of the items in the collection, but it is good to have that confirmed.

At this stage, it looks as though the best approach to take to the selection and design of display materials for the exhibit is to create a specific list of the items for exhibit, and tally (at least roughly) how many of what sort of mount or display will be required. A map of general locations of each grouping will also be helpful as a guide for organizing the actual exhibit, and will give me my deliverable for the purposes of the DFW. It sounds as though practices vary widely between different people when they are designing and mounting exhibits in Special Collections - some people plan every part out, and some make their decisions when actually placing the items in the cases. I'll do a blend of the two, making plans and a general map, then allowing flexibility for final changes while placing items. I do believe that it will be very difficult to visualize the final exhibit without some sort of mock-up.