Academic libraries face a crisis of insufficient funding, aggravated by predatory pricing of digital STEM journal subscriptions; and also a crisis of purpose, as students avoid the real estate that libraries occupy, satisfying most of their information needs digitally. An appealing solution to both crises is to reduce the perennial costs of maintaining access to non-digital materials (that is, material books and journals), by deaccessioning “duplicate” copies held by library consortia in “collective collections,” or otherwise made available in digital facsimiles (supposed “surrogates”), and to repurpose the space thus liberated to host attractive reading rooms and makerspaces. The mass destruction of bulky runs of newspapers, publicized two decades ago by Nicholson Baker in his exposé Double Fold, is a disquieting precedent.¹ The more recent and now indispensable JSTOR project, advanced with the support of the Mellon Foundation, was explicitly designed to relieve librarians of the responsibility of curating miles of shelf space for volumes of little-used journals.² “We do not assume that there is any intrinsic value to the maintenance of collections of print artifacts.”³ Maintaining a single master copy of a journal in


²“Mellon’s goal was focused not on usage, but on saving space. To save space, the JSTOR project would digitize the full backfile of the journal, to allow volumes to move en masse off the shelves.” Roger G. Schonfeld, JSTOR: A History (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 28. “En masse,” indeed; “off the shelves” of more than one library. Furthermore, the compact digital surrogates were casually prepared. “In the language of textual scholarship, JSTOR offers noncritical facsimile editions of the journals it contains, basing each upon an inexplicit assemblage of extant tokens according to the varied accessibility of fair copies.” Lisa Gitelman, “Searching and Thinking About Searching JSTOR,” Representations 127:1 (2014): 75. https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/rep.2014.127.1.73.

the short term is thought to be sufficient.

Nineteenth-century periodicals are very much at risk in such a critical environment, and RSVP would do well to intervene and try to save them. Otherwise we will lose much of the material evidence that is essential to periodical studies.

Our need to preserve multiple copies of actual Victorian periodicals—which vary significantly from holding to holding, not least as regards the presence or absence of advertisements—is a special case of the general need to preserve multiple copies of books and periodicals that were published after the eighteenth century. Many copies of handmade works that were printed before 1800 have found refuge in rare-book libraries. However, most copies of works that were printed by industrial, steam-powered presses in the nineteenth century are neglected on the open or closed shelves, where they occupy expensive space and present an attractive target for cost-cutting initiatives.

I have been told by an officer of BIG10 Academic Alliance, which is a significant player in the recent American initiative for “collective collections” (and one that includes the library of my own institution⁴), that housecleaning attention in the BIG10 has not yet turned from twentieth-century scholarly journals to the nineteenth-century periodical press. That is reassuring news. Still, RSVP should make sure that actual nineteenth-century journals are not swept aside by collective collections in the United States, in the United Kingdom, or elsewhere, in favor of a token remnant—the preservation of which might not be guaranteed for more than a decade anyway.⁵

I prepared a broad survey of the relevant issues in an annotated bibliography, more than a hundred pages long, titled “Duplicate Books, Facsimiles, and Weeds: A Bibliography with Excerpts, for Scholars and Librarians” (2021).⁶ I gave a brief summary of that work, titled


“Banishing Books from Academic Libraries,” in an online presentation for a virtual conference later that year. Neither venture focused on Victorian periodicals, but both are relevant. I hope that by bringing this hazard to the attention of RSVP we can find ways to protect the actual archive that informs our scholarly research.

One possible avenue would be for RSVP to appoint a liaison officer to monitor and give advice to the many collective collections and related enterprises that have been established recently in the United Kingdom and the United States, such as the following. Passages that are quoted here from their online statements gently suggest that not all journal copies will be preserved (italics are added).

**The BIG Collection**

“Ensure the longevity of existing print and digital collections through policies to guarantee sufficient copies are retained and through coordinated investments in preservation and digitization to ensure sustained access.”

**Eastern Academic Scholars Trust (EAST)**
https://eastlibraries.org/

“By creating a collaborative collection which elevates the concept of a library collection to scale above a single institution, shared print programs help research libraries to fulfill their mission to preserve the scholarly record in an era of changing usage, limited funding, and space constraints.”

**Partnership for Shared Book Collections**
https://sharedprint.org/about/

“The Partnership for Shared Book Collections is a federation of monograph shared print programs in the U.S. and Canada whose mission is to ensure the long-term preservation of, access to, and integrity of monographic print resources. The Partnership supports both established and fledgling monograph shared print programs by coordinating collaboration for the protection of print books. Through the development of best practices, support of research on the risks to the loss of the print scholarly record, and advocacy for improving the infrastructure to support shared print, the Partnership identifies work that can be done collectively to advance mission-critical services while saving time and money locally.”

**Print Archives Preservation Registry (PAPR)**
http://papr.crl.edu/

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“The Print Archives and Preservation Registry (PAPR) system is designed to support archiving and management of serials collections by providing comprehensive information about titles, holdings, and the terms and conditions of archiving of the major print archiving and shared print programs.”

(The chart titled “Distribution of Preserved Titles Registered in PAPR—By Beginning Date of Publication” shows an incipient interest in registering nineteenth-century journals.)

**Research Libraries UK (RLUK)**
https://strategy.rluk.ac.uk/full-strategy/#introduction

“Collective Collections

“The collections held by RLUK members, together with other memory institutions across the world, provide an interconnected network of scholarship. Scholars and students navigate this network to get the full range of materials they need to further their research or learning. By coming together, RLUK members and the wider community can introduce efficiencies into the processes underpinning support for research and look to set up collaborative collection management. RLUK will identify potential areas for collaborative actions, with a focus on those that can best be progressed by collectives at the scale of RLUK.

“RLUK will work with its members to facilitate collaboration around:

“Collections

“Investigating commonalities of collections (for example, in print monographs) and develop collective solutions to provide efficiencies and reduce duplication of effort.”

**Rosemont Shared Print Alliance**
https://rosemontsharedprintalliance.org/

“Over the past 10 years and across North America, academic and research libraries have come together to engage in collaborative print journal archiving programs. These groups have various regional configurations, collection strategies and operational models. However, they all share the common goals of retaining and providing access to print journal backfiles and creating local opportunities to reclaim space.”

**Scholars Trust**
https://scholarstrust.org/

“The Association of Southeastern Research Libraries (ASERL) and the Washington Research Library Consortium (WRLC) have signed an agreement to combine the contents of their respective print journal archives under a single retention and access agreement called ‘Scholars Trust.’ Also participating in the program is the FLorida Academic REpository (FLARE), a statewide shared collection of low use print materials from academic libraries in Florida and the Triangle Research Libraries Network (TRLN), a collaborative shared print project with Duke University, North Carolina State University, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The combined title list
exceeds 14,000 journal titles and more than 300,000 volumes, making the Scholars Trust archive one of the largest print journal repositories in the United States.”

**UK Research Reserve (UKRR)**  
[https://www.bl.uk/ukrr](https://www.bl.uk/ukrr)  
“The UK Research Reserve (UKRR) **preserves** the nation’s printed journal collections. Together with the On Demand service, we give quick and **easy access** for researchers and help libraries make cost-effective decisions.  
“**UKRR allows libraries to de-duplicate their journal holdings and save space.** The UKRR team, based at the British Library site at Boston Spa, check the availability of every issue offered against the national collection by searching library holdings listed on Jisc Library Hub to make sure that **two copies of a journal are always retained**—an access copy at the British Library and one further preservation copy within the community.”

**Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST)**  
[https://cdlib.org/west/](https://cdlib.org/west/)  
“The Western Regional Storage Trust (WEST) is a distributed retrospective print journal repository program serving research libraries, college and university libraries, and library consortia in the Western Region of the United States. Under the WEST program, participating libraries consolidate and validate print journal backfiles at major library storage facilities and at selected campus locations. The resulting shared print archives ensure access to the scholarly print record and allow member institutions to optimize campus library space.”

The efficiencies proposed by these consortia pose at least an implicit threat to bulky runs of Victorian journals. RSVP has a special interest in working to preserve as many copies as possible.