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## Archives Annual Report, 2012-2013

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**To:** Karen Schmidt, University Librarian

**From:** Meg Miner, University Archivist & Special Collections Librarian

**Date:** November 24, 2013

**Re:** 2012-2013 Tate Archives & Special Collections Report

### **Service and Accessions Summary**

Three student assistants helped me provide access to Tate Archives & Special Collections material during 2012/2013; I employed one of these students over the summer. Our holdings grew by 16 linear, so our total as of this year is 1,323 linear feet.

We fulfilled 220 requests for research services with 96 of them coming from alumni/students. Requests for assistance most often arrived via email but we also had 53 walk-in patrons who needed full research assistance. With the addition of 128 walk-ins for staff assistance of a less time-intensive nature, the total number of on-site visits to use our collections during this year reached 187.

An additional service I provide to our community is direct classroom support. Through regular outreach efforts and our Archives Exploration Research Award opportunity for faculty, the number of courses using these collections has grown from one to eight in the last six years. Half of the following faculty/courses are new patrons as of this year. Taken together 124 students were introduced to both our unique collections and the research processes involved in accessing them thanks to these colleagues:

- Kristine Nielsen, ART 115: Introduction to Art History
- Amit Ghosh, ECON 311: Money and Banking
- Dan Terkla, ENGL 258: Desolation Angels
- Brandi Reissenweber, ENG 301 Seminar in Creative Writing
- Kathleen O’Gorman, ENG 370: Avant Garde Literature
- Chris Callahan, HUM 270: The Plantagenet World
- Carolyn Nadeau, SPAN 303: Advanced Grammar and Composition and SPAN 490: Senior Seminar
- Curtis Trout, THEA 377: History of Décor

### **Archives Accessions and Activities**

We recorded 18 accessions this year that span 10.4 linear feet. Notable additions to the archives include a collection of photographs from an alumna of the Brokaw School of Nursing program. The photos span the years 1948-51 and contain remarkably detailed descriptions. Such care in labeling is unusual in these kinds of albums. The same donor also gifted her inscribed Brokaw Nursing Pin which is a cherished symbol of successful achievement in the program.

We also received a collection of material from alumni who were long-time friends of faculty members Wilbur and Constance (Class of 1916) Ferguson. Among the material donated are scrapbooks that are not in pristine condition but the span of time these people documented their interests in IWU is remarkable: 1890s-1958.

In addition to the usual types of research support services (fact finding, document research and photo reproduction requests) the archives provides to the Office of the President, Advancement and Communications, we also accommodated a last minute request from Advancement for a display during an Honors Day lunchtime celebration of the dedication of Kemp Commencement Plaza.

Our other major display was for the now-annual Mini Museum Tent on the Quad during Homecoming which was all but rained out. A few of the seams on the tent ceiling gave way to slow but steady trickles of water. I was able to spot the problem almost immediately and move the affected material to other locations in the tent, but the downpour prevented moving anything back to the library until a later time. All paper-based display material was affected by the humidity, but none required treatment beyond fanning pages until dry over the next few days.

Outreach across campus to secure access to electronic records is slow but did yield new contacts this year. The Residence Hall Association sought help with their historical records and a member from that group also inquired about how to secure another student group's records: the IWU chapter of the National Society of Leadership and Success. Both groups now post their meeting documents directly to Digital Commons. Only Staff Council takes similar responsibility for their records. We have more limited e-record success with Student Senate after two years of dialogue. The turnover in officer positions makes me less confident that all of our processes are firmly in place yet for the important governance documents of this student group.

Finally, I conducted one IWU History talk off campus this year to the "4 O'clock Club," a local group with an interest in all historical topics that was founded by Nell Eckley and whose current members include many IWU alumni, faculty and local community leaders.

### **Special Collections Accessions and Activities**

We recorded 7 accessions at just over 5.5 linear feet. These accessions include several purchases made for our Artists' Books Collection. Most of these books came from traveling book artists Peter and Donna Thomas and a new nation-wide letterpress group called Combat Paper Press. These materials will most directly benefit Kathie O'Gorman's Avant Garde Literature class, but one work is also cross-listed with the Beat Poetry collection since it includes previously unpublished works by a noted poet of the time: William Everson—a monk, a fine press printer, and an early mentor of Peter Thomas.

I also acquired several pieces from visiting book artist Don Widmer after we hosted an exhibit of his works. These books require original cataloging but will be available when Dr. O'Gorman's class needs the collection again.

An unusual acquisition came to us when the head of our Biology Department asked me to evaluate material stored in a room used by a recently deceased colleague. I found a "herbarium," a scrapbook of botanical specimens, that was inscribed by A.O. Coffin. Coffin graduated from our Non-Resident Degree program in 1889, thus becoming the first African-American to be awarded a Ph.D. in Biology in the U.S. This book and one other found in the same storage area are now part of a Botanical Research Collection in Special Collections. They join material from

the previously accessioned personal research files of long-time Biology faculty member Earl Edward Sherff. This new collection will be described and cataloged as a whole in order to make it discoverable to researchers elsewhere.

Our final major acquisition was a collection of over 900 letters between Florence Ralph (Class of 1930) and Marion Bird. Bird was only enrolled at IWU in 1926, but he was here long enough to begin courting Florence and this correspondence contains the entire written record during their developing relationship up through the time of their marriage. The donor created scanned copies for her family's records and transferred a set of pdfs to us with a few images of the couple. We created a CONTENTdm collection that the donor may augment with additional images from the family album in the future.

### **Goals for 2013-14**

This year I will be deeply involved in the IMLS digital preservation project. We are in the product exploration stage and our PI began negotiating trial subscriptions with selected vendors for full testing in the winter. I continue to consult and conduct outreach across campus related to the educational components of the project and electronic records acquisition as a whole.

I hope to partner with the Alumni Office on reaching more of our alumni population. Five student volunteers went through my active listening training this year and four of them conducted at least one interview. It is clear they enjoy these experiences and I believe this effort offers another opportunity to strengthen the connections between our students and the long history that is our community's collective past.

I am also interested in

- revising the electronic thesis deposit processes in coordination with Associate Provost Boyd,
- exploring outreach methods with the campus Social Media group in order to raise students' and alumni awareness about depositing digital objects,
- working with IT to discover if document iterations on Web site and in Moodle can be harvested in batches, and
- introducing ID&S staff to record capture workflows and exploring adoption of ARCHON as our archival records cataloging system.