Annual Report, 2009-2010

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. Libraries. Special Collections Department

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Special Collections
Annual Report
2009-2010

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Looking Back: Highlights

Special Collections enjoyed another busy and productive year. Two digitization projects were completed. The digital collection titled, “A Calm Voice in a Strident World: Senator J.W. Fulbright Speaks,” includes the text of fifty Fulbright speeches posted online. Another new digital collection now available online, the newsletter Commonwealth College Fortnightly, documents the activities of a historic labor college located near Mena, Arkansas. A major processing project for the Diane Blair Papers concluded with a March 9 event celebrating her life and the opening of her papers. Another large processing project began, with the hiring of staff for the Dale Bumpers Senatorial papers. The Libraries also hired its first full-time University Archivist; University Archives is now a unit of Special Collections.

The Department is increasingly pursuing grant monies and private funding; during the fiscal year staff worked on two major grant proposals and a number of smaller ones. Great strides were made this year in implementing EAD (Encoded Archival Description) for the preparation of archival finding aids. In January the Department finished a major space reorganization. The Department launched its redesigned Web site in the spring, enabling more efficient online access to the resources of Special Collections.

Manuscripts Unit

The Unit acquired fifty-eight new collections during this fiscal year, comprising 514.25 linear feet of material. Among the new acquisitions are the Loy Barton Papers, the Alice Ghostley Papers, and the Raymond Ellis Papers. Loy Barton was an electrical engineer, radio pioneer, and inventor, whose work set standards for AM radio transmission for five decades. Alice Ghostley was a Tony Award-winning actress who enjoyed a long career in theater, television, and movies. She is perhaps best known for her role as “Esmeralda” in the television series Bewitched between 1969 and 1972. Raymond Ellis, a Fayetteville aviation pioneer, trained University of Arkansas aviation cadets during WWII and beyond. He was instrumental in developing numerous Arkansas airports, and he started a commuter airline service which operated out of Drake Field.

The Manuscripts Unit processed fifty-two collections, comprising 1,520 linear feet. Highlights of the newly processed collections include the Diane Blair Papers, the Fulbright Alumni Association records, and the Sylvester H. Sawyer Correspondence.

The Fulbright Alumni Records contain historical and organizational files of this private, non-profit association of American Fulbright grantees. Dr. Sylvester H. Sawyer was a surgeon with the 36th Iowa Regiment, which fought in the Civil War Battle of Helena, Arkansas. This small collection includes two letters about the war. Processing of the Rep. John Paul Hammerschmidt Papers, a large processing project started in 2006, is nearly complete, pending only final wrap up.

Processing of the Diane D. Blair Papers was finished in the spring. Blair was an award-winning Arkansas educator, political scientist, activist, writer, public servant, and friend

Alice Ghostley (left) as Esmeralda on the television series, Bewitched, ca. 1970. From the Alice Ghostley Papers, a recently acquired collection, currently being processed.

Senator Dale Bumpers at a March of Dimes fundraiser, ca. 1979. Photo from the U.S. Sen. Dale Bumpers Papers, courtesy of the March of Dimes Birth Defects Foundation. Special Collections is currently processing the Bumpers papers, which will be open for research in about three years.
of Bill and Hillary Rodham Clinton. Her papers will provide researchers an inside look at 40 years of Arkansas and American politics. The Blair papers consist of biographical materials, primary and secondary research materials, newspaper clippings, correspondence, notes, manuscripts, memorabilia, photographs, VHS recorded programs, audio interviews, and electronic data and databases.

The first day of spring break, March 22, kicked off the beginning of a major processing project, with the hiring of Case Miner as archivist for the U.S. Senator Dale Bumpers Papers. Three additional staff members were later added to the project. Bumpers was a U.S. Senator from 1975-1999, known for his fiscal conservatism, social liberalism, and oratorical skills. The Bumpers papers will be open for research in about three years when the project is finished.

Researchers now have access to fifty speeches from the Sen. J.W. Fulbright collection, which were digitized and posted online. The digital collection, titled “A Calm Voice in a Strident World: Sen. J.W. Fulbright Speaks,” reflects Fulbright’s interests in international cooperation, educational exchange, and support for the United Nations. This digital collection was named a “Digital Library of the Week” in the American Libraries Direct electronic newsletter. During the fiscal year, the Department started another digitization project of selected materials from the Brooks Hays Papers.

The implementation of EAD (Encoded Archival Description) for the preparation of finding aids saw considerable progress this year. All new finding aids are now prepared with EAD encoding.

Some of the EAD encoded finding aids have been posted online, including the finding aid for the Diane Blair Papers. EAD creates a standardized method of describing the contents of archival collections in an electronic environment. It enables researchers to efficiently discover and locate primary source materials, and it allows repositories to maintain essential information that will endure rapid changes in hardware and software.

Research Services Unit

The two most noticeable trends in Research Services are
the continuing increase in requests for duplication of materials and in the number of researchers assisted by e-mail. Research services made 38,227 photocopies and 4,784 digital scans for patrons. These figures average 3,186 photocopies and 399 scans per month. Patrons may also arrange to use their own flatbed scanners and/or digital cameras to duplicate materials. This year staff helped patrons scan or photograph 7,312 items.

This year Research Services assisted a total of 4,127 researchers. Of these, 1,539 were assisted by mail and e-mail, 943 had on-site research consultations, and 831 patrons conducted research in the department. Researchers used 15,826 items from the Department's collections. Of the researchers assisted, 52.9% were university students, faculty, staff, and alumni (University of Arkansas as well as other universities), and 47.1% of patrons were from businesses, media, government agencies, libraries, museums, and the general public.

Instructional sessions and follow-up consultations with students from the classes were provided for 16 courses, including 706 participants. New presentations and handouts were developed for courses in Honors History Methods, Medieval Spanish Literature, Documentary Photography, and Architecture.

Digitization of the Commonwealth College Fortnightly newsletter, supported by Department of Communications Professor Stephen A. Smith, was completed by Research Services, with the copies of missing issues supplied by the Walter B. Reuther Library at Wayne State University and the Annenberg Rare Book and Manuscript Library at the University of Pennsylvania. Commonwealth College was one of the most controversial, famous, and longest lived experiments in American cooperative labor education. This digital collection was also named a "Digital Library of the Week" by American Libraries Direct.

In June a class from the Fay Jones School of Architecture worked with the Fay Jones Collection on a project to document the personal home of renowned Fayetteville architect Fay Jones. The house, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, is located in Fayetteville, but little documentation existed concerning the original structure. The purpose of the project, which combined both archival research and hands-on investigation of the structure, was to document the house for the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS). The project report won first place in competition for the Charles E. Peterson Prize, sponsored by HABS.

The Special Collections Department draws researchers from around the state, the U.S., and the world. Among the international visitors during this fiscal year were Markkyu Ruotsila and Rebecca Brueckmann. Markkyu Ruotsila, a professor of American church history at the University of Helsinki, Finland, researched fundamentalist Christian sentiments between World War I and World War II and during the Cold War, to analyze anticommunist activities in a global context. His research focused on the Billy James Hargis Papers and the Sen. J. William Fulbright Papers.

Research Services Head Andrea Cantrell assists visiting researcher Markkyu Ruotsila, a professor at the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Researcher Rebecca Brueckmann, a German graduate student working on a master's degree in contemporary history at Humboldt University in Berlin, focused her work on segregationists' resistance to the civil rights movement, in particular the activities of the Mothers' League of Little Rock Central High School. She examined the Sara A. Murphy Papers, the Little Rock Central High Integration Crisis Records of the FBI, the Arkansas Council on Human Relations Papers, the Virgil T. Blossom Papers, the Orval Eugene Faubus Papers, the Citizens Councils of America Collection, the Elizabeth Huckaby Papers, and the Southern School News.
The University Libraries hired Amy Allen as its first full-time University Archivist. University Archives, a new unit of Special Collections, will identify, collect, preserve, and provide access to materials of enduring value to document the history of the University.

Index Arkansas

After receiving a $58,500 grant from the Happy Hollow Foundation, Index Arkansas hired staff to index Arkansas historical publications from 1986 through 2007. Considerable progress has been made. The Index now contains nearly 100,000 citations, with a goal of 114,000 citations at the project’s completion in the spring of 2011. Use of the Index, a key indicator of its importance, has grown rapidly. During this fiscal year, over 35,000 searches were conducted, compared to 8,640 searches conducted in 2004.

Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History

The Pryor Center recorded ten interviews in high definition video, with subjects Bob Lamb, Tim Massanelli, Randall Ferguson, Sr., Lizzie B. Ferguson, Milton Crenchaw, Martin Steele, Jennings Osborne, Phyllis Louise Brandon, James Edgar “Jim” Lindsey, and Stanley Eldon Reed. Milton Crenchaw was a WWII pilot trainer who instructed the first African-American pilots at the famed Tuskegee Airfield in Alabama. Jim Lindsey is a Razorback football legend and Fayetteville realtor. Lt. General Martin Steele played a significant role in the planning of the 1991 invasion of Iraq.

Center staff recorded two events: a reception for John Bell, Jr. and an event at Arkansas Tech University featuring former Senators Dale Bumpers and David Pryor reminiscing about their political careers in front of a live audience.

Center staff worked on two University projects: a film of University history clips with three segments on the history of Razorback Stadium, plus interviews concerning 2010 inductees into the Walton College of Business’s Arkansas Business Hall of Fame, which included an interview with Jerral Wayne “Jerry” Jones.

As of January 1, 2010, the Pryor Center began reporting to the University Chancellor. Although it will no longer serve as a unit of Special Collections, the Department will maintain a relationship with the Pryor Center and will continue to host the Center’s Web site and its collections.

Events, Exhibits, and Outreach

Special Collections celebrated Archives Month 2009 on October 29, with an open house and program by University of Arkansas librarian Stephen Chism. His presentation was titled, “How a Newsletter Changed My Life: Special Collections and My Research for The Afterlife of Leslie Stringfellow.” The event drew a record crowd, with standing room only.

The University Libraries and the Special Collections Department celebrated Diane Blair’s life and the opening of her papers on March 9, with an event featuring remarks by her husband Jim Blair, her friend Ann Henry, and University Chancellor G. David Gearhart, as well as videotaped remarks by Diane Blair’s friend, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton. This event attracted a large audience, including members of Blair’s family, her friends, and her colleagues from all over the state.

Special Collections staff organized a memorial service for the late Donald Harington on November 30, 2009. Harington, the leading novelist of the Ozarks region, had a
long association with Special Collections. In addition to his acclaimed writing, he was a beloved art history professor at the University of Arkansas. Harington died on November 7.

On June 15, Departmental staff participated in a living history program sponsored by the Washington County Historical Association commemorating Arkansas Statehood Day. Tom Dillard portrayed the traveler, and Tim Nutt portrayed the squatter in a dramatization of the “Arkansas Traveler” folk tale.

Tom Dillard and Tim Nutt (right) in costume at the Washington County Historical Society’s Statehood Day celebration. Nutt portrayed the squatter, and Dillard portrayed the traveler.

Tom Dillard fiddles as the “Arkansas Traveler” in a dramatization of the famous folk tale, an event sponsored by the Washington County Historical Society in celebration of Arkansas Statehood Day.

The Department organized a book signing and program on November 18, as part of its “Collections and Connections” series. Co-sponsored by the University Press, the event featured Dr. Thomas C. Kennedy, whose presentation was titled, “We Surely Owe a Debt To These Long Downtrodden People: The Accidental Founding and Amazing Survival of Southland College.” His remarks were based on his book, A History of Southland College: The Society of Friends and Black Education in Arkansas (University of Arkansas Press, 2009). The Department also assisted with a book signing and program at Nightbird Books by Dr. Cleveland A. Harrison on May 17, based on his book, A Little Rock Boyhood: Growing Up in the Great Depression (Butler Center Books, 2010).

Special Collections began planning for the debut of a new journal sponsored by the Department. Arkansauce: The Journal of Arkansas Foodways will highlight food-related topics in the Natural State. The journal will initially be published annually, using guest editors. The inaugural issue is planned for December 2010.

The Department saw progress in its publicity efforts. Press releases for the Billy James Hargis papers (processed at the end of the previous fiscal year), the Fulbright digitization project, and the Commonwealth Fortnightly digitization project got wide coverage in media outlets such as American Libraries Direct and College & Research Libraries News. The Departmental newsletter, The Arkansian, continues to be a very successful tool for promoting Special Collections.

Nine exhibits within the Department or Mullins Library featured materials from the Special Collections Department. Departmental staff created eight of these exhibits, including “Diane Blair,” for the event opening her papers; “The Road Less Traveled: The Enduring Heritage of Rural Arkansas,” to celebrate 2010 Arkansas Heritage Month; and “Arkansas Politics: Rivalries and Conflict: 1865 – Present.”

The Future: Looking Ahead

The Department is looking forward to launching the first issue of Arkansauce: The Journal of Arkansas Foodways toward the end of the 2010 calendar year. Other goals include major progress in processing the backlog of unprocessed collections and encoding older finding aids in EAD. The Manuscripts Unit hopes to implement and populate Archivist’s Toolkit software, which holds great promise for efficient accessioning of archival collections and management of collection information. The Department continues to work on plans to digitize and preserve the Mary Parler Folk Song Collection.

Preliminary cover art for Arkansauce: The Journal of Arkansas Foodways, to be published by Special Collections.
Personnel Accomplishments
Special Collections Department, 2009-2010

Refereed Publications


Non-Refereed Publications


positions held

Compton, Ellen. Board member, Washington County Historical Society.


Presentations


Nutt, Timothy G. "A Historical Look at Some Towns in Perry County," Perry County Historical & Genealogical Society, Perryville, Arkansas.

Positions Held

Compton, Ellen. Board member, Washington County Historical Society.


Positions Held

Compton, Ellen. Board Member, Arkansas Women's History Institute.
Dillard, Tom. Editor-in-Chief, *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*

__________. Board Member, Washington County Historical Society.

__________. President, Arkansas History Education Coalition.

__________. Committee Chair, Arkansas Legislative Task Force on Arkansas History Education.

__________. Peer Reviewer, *Public Historian* journal.

Dowling, Annie. Vice-Chairperson, Fayetteville Historic District Commission.

Nutt, Timothy G. Vice-President/President-Elect, Arkansas Historical Association.

__________. Editor, *Flashback* (Washington County Historical Society).

__________. Co-Editor, *Perry County Historical & Genealogical Society Newsletter*.

Parsch, Janet. Board Member and Secretary, Ozark Society Foundation.

Worrell, Diane. Board Member and Arkansas Liaison to Publications Committee, Society of Southwest Archivists.