

Annual Report 2005-2006



Special Collections Department
University of Arkansas Libraries
Fayetteville, Arkansas

Special Collections Personnel



Kneeling: Tom W. Dillard, Head of Special Collections; First Row (l to r): Tim Nutt, Manuscripts and Rare Books Librarian; Felicia Thomas, Asa Hutchinson Papers Archivist; Krista Jones, Manuscripts Processor; Jennifer Koenig, Manuscripts Processor; Lindley Shedd, Oral History Assistant, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History; Kerry K. Jones, Diane Blair Papers Archivist; Second Row (l to r): Anne Prichard, Reading Room Supervisor; Ellen Compton, Manuscripts Processor for Architectural Collections; Diane Worrell, Special Projects Librarian; Andrea Cantrell, Head of Research Services; Gretta Tritch, Research Assistant for Architectural Collections; Third Row (l to r): Jim Kelton, Manuscripts Processor; Dave Prater, Honors College Intern; James Defibaugh, Oral History Coordinator, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History; Geoffrey Stark, Reading Room Assistant; Todd Lewis, Lead Processing Archivist; Clark Donat, Honors College Intern; Cheri Pearce, Secretary and Scanning Coordinator; Vera Ekechukwu, Fulbright Papers Archivist. Not pictured: Scott Lunsford, Associate Director for Video, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History; Anita Mysore, Arkansas Studies Curriculum Coordinator; and Gentry Collier, Manuscripts Processor.

ANNUAL REPORT

Special Collections Department

University of Arkansas Libraries

July 1, 2005-June 30, 2006

Introduction

The past year has been one of intense activity for the Special Collections Department. A wide variety of collections have been received, large numbers of researchers have been served, eight collections have been processed, and public programming and outreach have been enhanced. Several new staff members were added, and for the first time, arrangements have been made for the Department to host interns from the University Honors College.

Manuscripts Unit

The Manuscripts Unit is responsible for building the research collections of the Department. This includes recruiting the donation of manuscript collections, audio visual materials, books and other publications, journals, maps, photographs, and a wide variety of other materials. It operates under the management of Tim Nutt, Manuscripts and Rare Books Librarian.

Fifty-two manuscript collections were received during the past twelve months, representing a total of 565 linear feet. Among the more significant collections are the Diane Blair Papers, the Mabelvale Home Demonstration Club Records, and the Jerry Russell Papers. The late Diane Blair was a beloved and highly regarded professor of political science at the University prior to her death in 2000. Her papers, which were donated by her husband, Jim Blair, are a gold mine of information on Arkansas politics, people, and government. The Mabelvale Home Demonstration Club Records are significant because it was the first home demonstration club established in the nation—and because it adds to our existing concentration of women's club records. The late Jerry Russell of Little Rock was a man of incredibly broad interests, and his papers are likewise diverse. The Russell Papers include many items on the American Civil War, Arkansas politics, and various aspects of Little Rock political and social history.

A special emphasis of the Manuscripts Unit during the past year has been to catch up on the backlog of unprocessed manuscript collections. This is important because unprocessed manuscripts are useless to researchers. Among the eight collections processed during the year were the papers of the late Margaret Ross, a Little Rock historian and journalist whose papers are a trove of useful information. Archivists were hired to process the Diane Blair Papers as well as the records of former third district Congressman Asa Hutchinson, and both collections are nearing completion.

A total of 694 books were added to Departmental holdings during the past fiscal year, making a total of 46,307 titles. An effort is being made to make better use of alternative sources to learn about available publications on Arkansas, including eBay and other on-line auctions.

The Manuscripts Unit initiated a project to convert our manuscripts finding aids to EAD [Encoded Archival Description] format, which will facilitate electronic searching of the indexes as well as better retrieval of materials for patrons.

Finally, the staff has been working to develop a strategic plan for the Manuscripts Unit. A draft plan has been written and distributed broadly for comment, and it should be completed within a short time.

Research Services Unit

The Research Services Unit is the part of the Special Collections Department that provides assistance to researchers who are using the collections. It operates under the management of Andrea Cantrell, Librarian.

During the past two years the Department has served more researchers than ever before. A total of 2,336 people conducted research in the Department, which represents an increase of 90 researchers over the previous year. Slightly more than forty-five percent of the researchers using the Special Collections Department were students, faculty, or staff of the University. The second largest group of users (twenty-five percent) were from the general public. The increased use of the Department by UA students from a wide variety of disciplines has resulted from concerted efforts to promote the

Department beyond its normal base in the social sciences.

A continuing trend in this Department is the large number of requests for assistance that we receive through e-mail and postal mail, rather than on-site visits. That is how forty-two percent of the users contacted the Department during the past year. This trend is undoubtedly influenced by the growing use of the Departmental pages on the Internet. The Special Collections Department pages received the second-highest number of "hits" on the entire Library website.

Special Collections staff made 45,207 photocopies for researchers, averaging more than 900 copies per week. Also, we electronically scanned 1,359 images for patrons.

With more than twenty-one years in Special Collections, Research Services Unit manager Andrea Cantrell is the institutional memory for the department. She also manages a variety of projects that arise during the course of the year, such as developing exhibits, and this year she devised an innovative poster about the Department.

Pryor Center

The David and Barbara Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History was transferred to the Special Collections Department from the Fulbright College during the past year. The Center has the mission of capturing and preserving Arkansas history through the use of traditional oral history techniques as well as through the innovative use of modern digital video. Progress has been made in appointing a national advisory board to work on behalf of the Pryor Center. Tom W. Dillard has been serving as interim director.

With the assistance of two staff members loaned from the University Advancement Program, the Pryor Center's new Visual History unit conducted twenty interviews in high definition digital video format.

At the request of Chancellor White, the Pryor Center's Visual History unit developed a video on the ten outstanding black Arkansans honored in the inaugural "Silas Hunt Legacy Awards." The video, titled "Ten Voices," was debuted at the Silas Hunt Legacy Awards banquet—and it has since been developed into a multi-layered DVD for distribution statewide.

A total of fifty-four oral histories were completed during the past twelve months. A majority of these interviews were conducted as a part of the project to record the history of the *Arkansas Democrat* newspaper. Work is also continuing on Phase I of the "William Jefferson Clinton History Project" in collaboration with the Miller Center at the University of Virginia. Altogether, 176 interviews on several different subjects are in various stages of processing, and over the past year twelve interviews have been posted on our website.

Programming

The Department sponsored two public events during the past year, both of which were outstanding successes. In November, 2005, the Department convened a two-day conference on Mary Parler, a pioneer folklorist and collector who also taught at the University of Arkansas. More than 200 people registered for the event, resulting in widespread media coverage. The University of Arkansas Center for Arkansas and Regional Studies collaborated with the Special Collections in hosting this popular event.

To commemorate the 35th anniversary of the publication of Donald Harington's "Stay More" novels, the Department sponsored a "Stay Moron Celebration." The Department is publishing a booklet on the celebration, including the keynote address by a prominent authority on Arkansas literature, Bob Razer of Little Rock.

In collaboration with the Washington County Historical Society, the Department sponsored two programs on Arkansas musical history. Held at the Fayetteville Blair Library, the programs attracted a large attendance from both the University and the community.

While not sponsoring the event, Departmental representatives were heavily represented at the "launch" of the online *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* in Little Rock in May. Department head Tom W. Dillard was the founder of the *Encyclopedia*, and he serves as Editor-in-Chief; other staff attending the launch were Timothy G. Nutt, Manuscripts and Rare Books Librarian, who serves as Special Projects Editor for the *Encyclopedia*, and Ellen Compton, the Department's Architectural Archivist, who is the president of the *Encyclopedia's* board of advisors.

Finally, Special Collections has been busy developing a program called "Sharing Our Heritage," which intends to make

materials from our collections available to school teachers. The first activity has been to develop a set of five posters on “Amazing African American Leaders of Arkansas,” which has been completed and will be distributed in conjunction with Black History Month next February. Work has now begun on a set of posters on “Amazing Women Leaders of Arkansas.” Each poster includes a lesson plan as well as other instructional materials. This work is accomplished under the direction of Anita Mysore, the Department’s curriculum developer.

Personnel Accomplishments

Any modern research facility is only as good as its staff, and the Special Collections Department is blessed with good employees. One of the priorities of the Department is staff enhancement and training.

We were fortunate during the past fiscal year in recruiting Timothy G Nutt from the Butler Center in Little Rock to work as our Manuscripts and Rare Books Librarian. Tim, who brings a vast array of skills to his position, also received official certification from the Academy of Certified Archivists. Other new recruits were Gretta Tritch, who is a recent graduate of the UA School of Architecture and who is working as the research assistant for architectural collections; Dr. Diane Worrell, Special Projects Librarian; and Felicia Thomas, who is the archivist responsible for processing the papers of former Congressman Asa Hutchinson.

With the support and collaboration of the Honors College, the Special Collections Department has become the permanent host of two Honors College interns. Dave Prater and Clark Donat, both history majors, have become indispensable as processors on the Diane Blair Papers.

Special Collections staff has been busy in a wide variety of professional activities. Tom W. Dillard continues to write his weekly column on Arkansas history, “Remembering Arkansas,” for the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*. Staff members who contributed articles to the heavily refereed *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture* are Tom W. Dillard and Ellen Compton. Tim Nutt published two book reviews in the *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, while Gretta Tritch presented two papers at meetings of the Society of Architectural Historians in Fort Worth and Savannah.

Andrea Cantrell has been active on a number of professional fronts. She has developed a variety of exhibits for both the Department and the larger Library system. She also serves as an elected member of the Faculty Senate.

The Future

The primary goal of the Special Collections Department over the next few years is to further solidify its status as the primary academic research center for the study of Arkansas history, government, and culture. Given the growing number of research archives in the state, collecting manuscripts has become an extremely competitive undertaking, and as a result, we expect to give greater emphasis to outreach activities.

Considering our large backlog of unprocessed collections, the Department has no option but to emphasize processing over the next few years. We are experimenting with a variety of approaches, including minimal processing.

Unlike any other department of University Libraries, Special Collections is expected to raise its own operational funds. Thus, fund-raising—especially building the department’s endowment—is a major focus.

Finally, a lack of space is an ongoing challenge for the Department. Relocating most of our unprocessed collections to a new off-site storage facility has provided some breathing room, but we still do not have space for a variety of activities.

—Tom W. Dillard
Head of Special Collections

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Andrea Cantrell	Head of Research Services
Gentry Collier	Manuscripts Processor
Ellen Compton	Manuscripts Processor, Architectural Collections
James Defibaugh	Oral History Coordinator, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History
Tom W. Dillard	Special Collections Department Head
Clark Donat	Honors College Intern
Vera Ekechukwu	Fulbright Papers Archivist
Kerry Jones	Diane Blair Papers Archivist
Krista Jones	Manuscripts Processor
Jim Kelton	Manuscripts Processor
Jennifer Koenig	Manuscripts Processor
Todd Lewis	Lead Processing Archivist
Scott Lunsford	Associate Director for Video, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History
Anita Mysore	Arkansas Studies Curriculum Developer
Timothy G. Nutt	Manuscripts and Rare Books Librarian
Cheri Pearce	Secretary/Scanning Coordinator
David Prater	Honors College Intern
Anne Prichard	Reading Room Supervisor
Lindley Shedd	Oral History Assistant, Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral & Visual History
Ethel C. Simpson	Contract employee
Geoffrey Stark	Reading Room Assistant
Felicia Thomas	Asa Hutchinson Papers Archivist
Gretta Tritch	Research Assistant for Architectural Collections
Diane F. Worrell	Special Projects Librarian



Preserving Our History



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