

Archives

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historical Manuscripts and Oral History, Chapman said. All this stored knowledge fills three floors, and the archive staff hasn't even touched all of their boxes of information, he said.

"We have a small staff and it just takes time to sort through everything," he said.

But the information they have organized is enough to keep the most avid history buff busy.

Among the collections of books and manuscripts the Archives has a complete collection of the Aggie yearbooks and former student directories both starting in 1876. These collections can be important to people who would like to trace friends and relatives from way back, Chapman said.

Some other things from times past include the papers of A&M's presidents starting in 1948 and going to about 1978; records of Aggie clubs and organizations; and special subjects file cabinets, where files are kept on former students who have made headlines.

A movie that has always made headlines with Aggies since 1943 is "We've Never Been Licked." And if you don't remember what it's about, the Archives has a copy of the script, Chapman said.

"We got it about two years ago from a screening house in New York," he said.

The Archives paid about \$30 dollars for the script but they usually don't pay for anything, it's given to them.

"We live off of charity," Chapman said.

Sometimes the things sent to us are 99 percent junk, but there is always that 1 percent that could

be a gold mine of information, Chapman said.

"When people call and say they have some old pictures and memorabilia, we say 'yes we want it,'" he said.

Another gold mine to the Aggie football fans might be the hundreds of cans of game film from as far back as 1936, Chapman said. Included in the collection is the 1968 Cotton Bowl game when the Aggies beat Alabama.

In addition to these collections is the picture section. The Archives has every kind of picture taken of A&M and its students and they're all filed according to category, Chapman said. But of course, there are those boxes in the workroom that they hadn't had time to sort yet, he said.

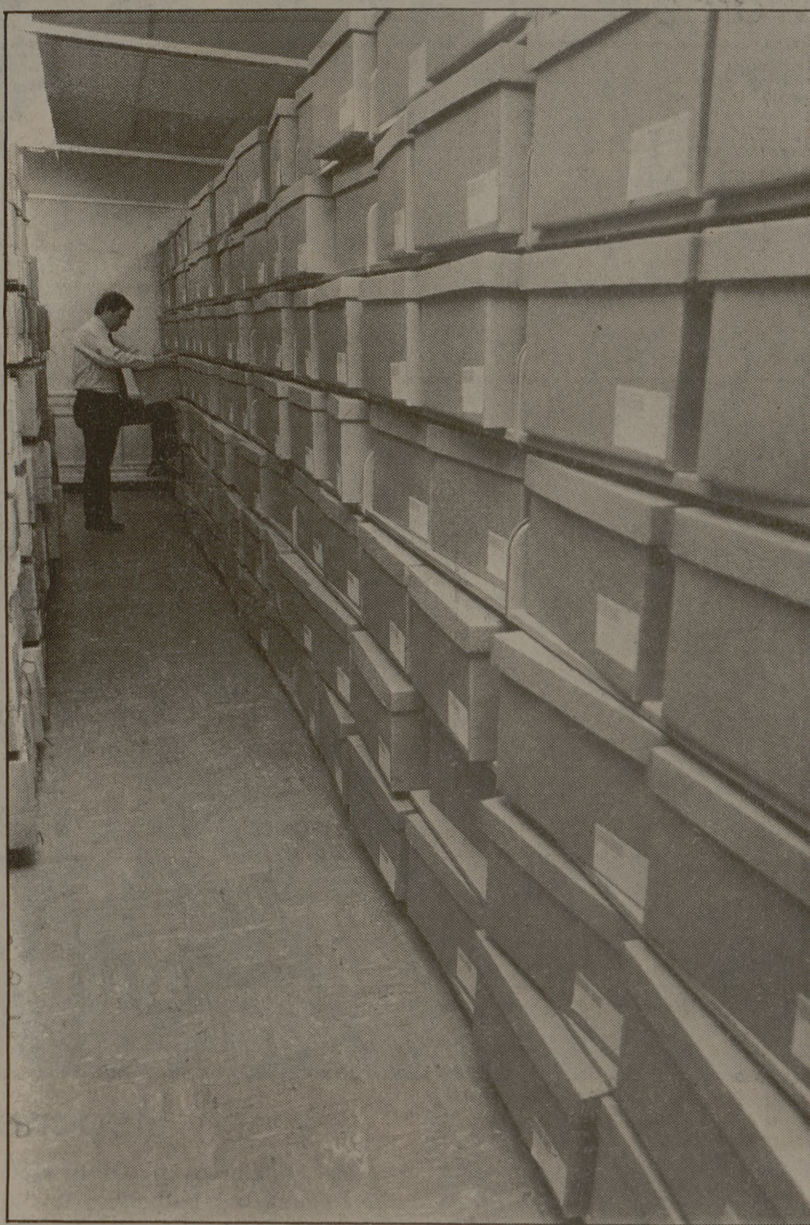
With all the old pictures, Chapman said the Archives would like to set up a museum of some kind. Along the same idea they would also like to recreate a dorm room from the 1920s, he said.

"We have an old trunk of that time and pictures of the dorm rooms," he said.

Another section, the Oral History Collection, is headed by Dr. Terry Anderson. This part of the Archives consists of interviews conducted on four different subjects, Chapman said.

Right now the oral section is working on interviewing all the former students who became generals, Chapman said.

All this information is available to every student at the University Archives, which is located at the west end of the library. Hours for the Archives are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.



Books

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Though there was a time in 1976 when the library seemed to be willing to buy any books it could to reach a goal of a million volumes, having reached that quest, book buying has become more particular.

"We don't want to buy books just to be buying," says Irene Hoadley, the director of the library. "We want to buy those things that will be used."

But lack of sheer numbers isn't the major problem with the library's collection, the Chapman-Cook internal self-study of the library says. "Sadly," the internal study says, "the development of the library's collection was sorely neglected during the first 95 years of the University's existence."

"Although innumerable external and internal studies of the library during the last 30 years indicated that serious steps needed to be taken to increase funding to purchase library materials, little was done. While the collection is wide in its scope, it is for the most part, shallow in depth."

Or as an old Aggie joke says: The university library at Texas A&M burned down. It was OK though, the joke teller will say, they

saved the book.

Unfortunately, he'll add with a bit of irony, all the pages already had been colored in.

Some faculty say the joke too closely resembles reality. But administrators say the funds needed to buy the large numbers of books just aren't there.

"Generally admitted, humanities and liberal arts holdings aren't what they should be," says Clint Phillips, dean of faculties. "I feel very strongly that we should be augmenting the liberal arts collections, but liberal arts is the new kid on the block as far as making claims on library resources."

Because of the school's early dependence on agriculture and engineering, those collections are quite good, the self-study says.

Sections of the recent collection also are adequate, says Terry Anderson, the library's oral historian. Since 1971, Texas A&M's collection has increased 81 percent, 750,000 volumes. But the library is playing a hopeless game of catch-up in obtaining older books for research in liberal arts such as history.

Even if Harvard didn't buy a single book for 100 years, and Texas A&M continued to buy books at its current rate, A&M's collection still wouldn't rival that school's, the internal self-study says.

But it's a game the library must play if it's ever to be even adequate for graduate research, Anderson says. Both studies agree.

"Ten years of progress does not even begin to rectify nearly a century of neglect," the internal self-study says. "Money to maintain pace with current acquisitions will scarcely be adequate for the Texas A&M library."

It will not be possible for the library to develop into a great library — or even one adequate for graduate research — without increased funding from both the University and from outside sources. One such source, a library development council, was formed in 1982 to solicit gifts.

"Although the library cannot make up for a century of monetary neglect in the next ten years, the potential exists to make enormous strides in bringing the collection and library service levels up to the needs of library users; only the mandate — in terms of dollars — is needed to begin," the study says.

The University System has money, but where it is spent is question of priorities.

"The University has lots of calls on its money; it has to sort out what is of highest priority," Hoadley says. "We've tried to convince them the library is high priority."

But the library certainly isn't No. 1 on the of University's list of priorities.

"It's not that we wouldn't want to spend more," Phillips says. "It's just you have to allocate your money for the marginal benefit to maximize welfare for the University community."

This seems to translate to: buildings first, then books.

"Enrollment is leveling off," Phillips says, "but we're still 1 million square feet short of building space."

The need for building space itself doesn't make the buildings-first-then-books priority correct, says Clarence Dockweiler, a former member of Library Council and author of a report called "Crisis in the Library."

"If we would maintain the acquisition level as it is, the University would continue to function as we have in the past," he says.

"But, I have always felt the bottom line is if we want this to be a pre-eminent university we need to put library acquisitions, staff and buildings in the forefront (of university concerns). From the Library Council's discussions, we felt it hasn't been in the past."

The status of the Sterling C. Evans library depends primarily on a single issue: a kind of paper not printed in books — the dollar.

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