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## Documenting Women in Architecture

by Clara B. Cox

In only five years, the International Archive of Women in Architecture (IAWA) has accumulated 110 collections of the papers of women architects and the records of women's architectural organizations from throughout the world. The archive, which is housed in the Special Collections Department, was established through the joint efforts of University Libraries and the College of Architecture and Urban Studies. "The efforts of the archive have been directed principally at collecting the papers of women who practiced architecture before the 1960s, when there were few women in the field-the pioneer generation," says archivist Laura Katz.

The archive was established in 1985 when Milka Bliznakov, professor of architecture in the College of Architecture and Urban Studies, became concerned that the records of pioneering women architects were becoming lost or destroyed. Additionally, she learned that their work was seldom cited in publications.

"As a researcher, I found I had to correct the omission of women from architectural history. I did not want future generations, simply because of a lack of information, to say women architects never did anything," she says.

In 1985, Bliznakov approached Robert E. Stephenson, at that time the architecture librarian, and Glenn McMullen, head of special collections, about establishing the archive. The three of them adopted major goals and established a board of advisors, which Bliznakov still heads. Stephenson and Bliznakov also wrote numerous letters requesting materials from women architects and notifying architectural organizations about the archive's goals.

By early 1987, when Katz became the IAWA's first trained archivist, the IAWA had received the works of 28 women from Austria, Spain, Switzerland, the United States, and West Germany.

Since then, Katz has helped attract over 80 collections, made inventories for the larger collections, and developed a guide to make the archive accessible and useful to researchers. Last

year, she obtained a grant from the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects to publish a newsletter, which was first issued in late December.

Among the major collections in the archive is one donated by noted Dutch-born architect Han Schroeder, who grew up in the famous Rietveld-Schroeder House on the outskirts of Utrecht and worked in Gerrit Thomas Rietveld's office before establishing her own practice.

"The Han Schroeder papers are representative of the collections we try to acquire because they encompass her whole career. We try to collect papers that reflect the span of one person's professional life," Katz explains. Other collections in the IAWA include the records of the Association for Women in Architecture, a Los Angeles, California, based group with members-at-large across the country; panels for "The History of Women Architects," an exhibit sponsored by L'Union Internationale des Femmes Architectes; publications and writings of Diana Lee Smith, a British architect concerned with housing and shelter conditions in Africa; and the papers of Susana Torre, an Argentinean architect practicing in New York City and editor of *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective*.

Katz predicts continued growth for the IAWA as professional publications and organizations learn of its existence and as she, Bliznakov, and Stephenson—who serves as secretary to the board of advisors—continue to contact women architects. "I see us acquiring many larger, more comprehensive collections. At the rate it is growing, this archive has the potential to be a valuable resource to researchers of women's history as well as architectural history," Katz says. For further information on the IAWA or to receive its newsletter, contact the University Libraries, Special Collections Department, Laura H. Katz, Archivist, IAWA, P.O. Box 90001, Blacksburg, VA 24062-9001, USA.



## Center For Research Libraries

*by Clara B. Cox*

Virginia Tech's University Libraries have joined the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), an affiliation that provides a dramatic increase in scholarly and scientific materials for researchers.

By joining CRL, Virginia Tech faculty members, graduate students, and staff members can "borrow for long-term use an enormous variety of historical, legal, governmental, scientific and literary materials that will transcend in many ways the limits of our local library collection," says Paul Metz, principal bibliographer for the University Libraries.

"What separates the use of the center's materials from the standard book and article fare of most borrowing is the ability of a Tech researcher to borrow an entire microforms set or long run of a newspaper and to keep it for many months," Metz adds.

CRL is a consortium of over 150 university libraries that "pool money and purchase materials none of the libraries would be able to purchase individually," Metz notes. The center's holdings, estimated at 4 million items, are housed in Chicago. The CRL materials can be obtained through the Interlibrary Loan Department in Newman Library for an indefinite period— "it's indefinite unless materials are recalled," Metz says. However, the local library is establishing a renewal mechanism, he adds.

For additional information on the CRL, contact Metz at 231-5663.



## NAL Text Digitizing Project:

*by Gordon Hogg*

Many library users are by now familiar with indexes in the CD-ROM format which have revolutionized the often tedious process of culling needed citations from a number of print sources. What used to take hours, or days, or even weeks and months can now be accomplished in a matter of minutes. Even though citations and abstracts can be found quickly using such a system, the time-consuming search for cited journals or reports remains.

At Virginia Tech, science librarian Michael Cramer is testing a new system that is not only an index to literature, but also presents the entire text, with illustrations, to the reader. Called the Text Digitizing Project, this undertaking was begun in 1989 by the National Agricultural Library (NAL) in Beltsville, Maryland. The aim of this project is to distribute, via compact disc, material that is expected to be of relatively wide interest among researchers in the agricultural sciences. Information from NAL's more obscure sources would still be obtained through interlibrary loan networks.

To determine which system prototypes might best serve the needs of this project, Virginia Tech and four other land-grant universities were chosen by NAL as test sites. University librarians, faculty members, and students will prepare an indepth evaluation of the necessary by Gordon Hogg equipment and software.

"The participation of Virginia Tech's faculty and students in testing and surveys surpasses that reported at the other test sites," Cramer notes. All participants questioned have been enthusiastic about the new technology, particularly when mentioning the sharp imaging of photographs. (The Text Digitizing Project uses a scanning process known as bit-mapping to generate digital images that recreate the original journal or report, page by page, on the screen of a special high resolution monitor.) Two other popular features are the capability of magnifying the displayed image for close examination and the startlingly clear reproduction of photographs, maps, and drawings by the attached laser printer.

Viewing a copy of the original page rather than the usual computer screen transcription was valued by many of those interviewed, and this attests to the potential appeal of such systems for use in different fields of study where full reproduction of text and images is a must. The first test disc—the Aquaculture Database—presents a wide range of vital information in photographs that include such details as physical signs of disease in fish, which a text-only database would be hard-pressed to present.

Added to the convenience of full reproduction is the CD-ROM's known capability for storing considerable amounts of data; the Aquaculture Database disc alone comprises 62 publications covering more than 4000 pages. The second test disc was compiled by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and offers 20 lengthier reports under the title "Food, Agriculture, and Science." The third disc includes 113 selected Canadian federal and provincial documents on acid rain. A fourth release is anticipated in this fall.

By early 1991 Michael Cramer will meet with the other evaluators at NAL, where they will consider software packages for a fifth disc. It is possible that NAL will produce an abstract series to complement the full-text sets once the project is standardized and fully underway. Such sources will expand the possibilities for researchers already using the AGRICOLA database online and using CD-ROM, and will expedite interlibrary loans from NAL.

Library director Paul Gherman says that "participation in this project reflects very favorably on Virginia Tech. Should this technology expand into new fields, even more of the university community would benefit from our involvement at the early stages of product development."



## Of Textblocks and Clamshell Boxes:

*By Becky Ryder*

Preservation in the University Libraries

Open a book from the late nineteenth century. That is, open it if you can, without it crumbling in your hands. Yellowed, acidic paper breaks into pieces. Flakes of newsprint and chips of glue drop off the spine; crumbs of desiccated bookcloth remain behind. One more circulation may transform this brittle book into an unusable pile of paper fragments.

Libraries around the world face this brittle book dilemma. Research continues on the development of mass deacidification techniques. Microfilming programs are in place to preserve the contents of brittle books. National and international forums meet to identify preservation priorities-what will be saved, how, and at what cost?

The brittle book crisis, however, is only the most dramatic aspect of the preservation problem that libraries must deal with every day. In addition to restoring and microfilming endangered materials, libraries must also take action to slow the deterioration of all the materials in their collections. It is in the area of prevention that the University Libraries at Virginia Tech have focused their energies.

For example, the library makes a significant investment in preservation with the binding of its journals. Our commercial library binding conforms to strict quality control standards which specify the use of acid-free materials and conservationally sound binding techniques. Margins are not trimmed if they are narrow. Because of recent advances in the adhesive binding processes, bindings are now both more durable and more flexible. These volumes are "user-friendly"; they are easy to open and read, and they are easier to photocopy.

Some books are too brittle or too fragile to be rebound. Our binder produces enclosures for brittle books known as clamshell boxes, hinged boxes, or slipcases. Other boxes, called phase boxes or creased boxes, are made from acid-free folder stock by the library's book repair staff. All of these enclosures protect fragile items from excessive damage through handling.

Acid-free pamphlet binders, some with clear front covers, house slim publications. Clear fronts allow for easy browsing, a particularly useful feature for the music collection. When materials are easy to find and use, they suffer less damage from improper reshelving.

As might be expected, the Special Collections Department, which houses rare books and manuscripts, is especially concerned with preservation. Because the embrittlement of acidic paper is enhanced by heat, humidity, and exposure to ultraviolet light, the library's special collections are housed in an environment where temperature and humidity levels are maintained at optimal levels and vary only slightly during the year. Overhead lights are covered with ultraviolet filters, and no materials are shelved or handled near direct sunlight. Manuscript materials are housed in non-acidic folders and boxes. In 1989, the department received a commendation in a preservation survey conducted by the Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts and the Virginia State Archives.

Preservation includes preparation for the unexpected. A Disaster Action Team has been in existence since 1982; it meets regularly to review procedures for dealing with floods, fires, and other disasters potentially endangering library collections. Recently, quick action in a small electrical fire prevented major damage to a number of books on the third floor of the library.

Preservation also takes the form of education. New employees in circulation and binding receive training in book handling and shelving techniques. Books are shelved to minimize the stresses on them. Some large books, for example, are shelved spine down. When books are shelved this way, the weight of the textblock conforms to the draw of gravity, and it nests snugly in the cover. When books are shelved on their edges, the opposite results: the heavy textblock pulls itself loose from the cover. Attention to this detail can help prevent costly repairs.

The preservation of library materials is a goal that affects every library department and many library procedures, for preservation is at the heart of guaranteeing access to information. The University Libraries have begun their preservation efforts with a focus on prevention, and here the proverbial ounce of prevention is well invested in avoiding the pound of cure.



## A New ERA

*by Alan Armstrong*

Visitors to the Newman Library Reference Room will notice that the reference desk has been moved to the center of the room. This was done in part to accommodate the expansion of the Electronic Reference Area, or ERA. The ERA expansion along the courtyard wall of the Reference Room provides a more orderly and centralized location of electronic equipment previously scattered about the room. The Infotrac, Newsbank, and Autographics CD-ROM (Compact Disc-Read Only Memory) databases formerly located elsewhere have joined the CD-ROM workstations and the Westlaw and Dow Jones News/Retrieval online services already located in the ERA.

The most exciting feature of the new ERA is a network of six workstations accessing 16 CD-ROM drives. Networking the workstations provides many advantages to both library users and staff. Discs no longer need be limited to one patron at a time, but can be used by as many simultaneous users as there are workstations available. Each user can search a database as though it were present only at that workstation. Depending on database demand, patrons may no longer be required to sign up for workstation time days in advance, as they have in the past for the more popular databases. Since the network precludes handling of discs by both patrons and librarians, a significant reduction in the amount of damage to discs and equipment due to handling should be in evidence.

Few libraries across the nation have implemented a network of this nature. Success in this project will obviously improve services to library patrons; but it also represents a breakthrough on the part of the University Libraries in the library world. Ultimately, it may even be possible for students, faculty members, or other library patrons to access the CD-ROM databases from their offices, homes, or other remote locations.



## Dorothy Foster McCombs 1924-1990

*by Clara B. Cox*

Dorothy Foster McCombs, a reference librarian and history bibliographer who retired from Virginia Tech's Newman Library in 1989, died April 8, 1990 at the age of 66.

"Dottie served as a model for all the library faculty. She was a person of kindness, grace, and intelligence who served our faculty and students to the highest degree possible," said library director Paul Gherrnan.

McCombs joined the library faculty in 1972 as an instructor and was promoted to assistant humanities librarian in 1976. She was named reference librarian and history bibliographer in 1985, a job she held until her retirement in 1989.

Interested in Appalachian history, she wrote a guide to library materials on the Appalachian region of Virginia and continued, after her retirement, to serve as a member of the board of advisors for the library's Appalachian Collection. She also served on the archive project committee of the Appalachian Consortium and the planning committee of the Southern Highlands Institute for Educators. In 1988, she coordinated and convened a session on crafts for the Appalachian Studies Conference in Radford.

McCombs also was a docent of the historical plantation house Smithfield, served two years on the board of the Montgomery Branch of the Association for the Preservation of Virginia Antiquities, and was president for two years of the Poverty Creek Weavers Guild.

Donations in her memory can be made to the Dorothy Foster McCombs Scholarship Fund, Virginia Tech Foundation, Inc., Blacksburg, VA 24061-0336, with checks made payable to the foundation. Her family established the scholarship to assist students from the Appalachian area attending Virginia Tech.



## Accomplishments

**Paul Gherrman**, director of University Libraries, has been elected to the On-line Computer Library Center (OCLC) Board of Trustees for a six-year term beginning in 1991.

**Donald J. Kenney**, head of the reference department, and **Gail McMillan**, online maintenance team leader in the cataloging department, published an article, "Librarians in Academic Limbo: Support for Scholarship," in the *Southeastern Librarian*, Vol. 39, no. 4 (winter 1989). Kenney and McMillan also published an article with **John Cosgriff**, head of the Virginia Tech Information Center. The article entitled "Support for Publishing at Academic Libraries: How Much Exists?" appeared in the *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, Vol.16, no. 2 (May 1990).

**Harry M. Kriz**, automated systems research and development librarian, presented an invited paper on "Mainframe Database Management for Public Service Librarians," at the SPIRES 1990 Fall Workshop at Memorial University, St. John's, Newfoundland, October 1990.

**Vicki Kok**, coordinator of branch libraries, has been elected chair-elect (1991 chair) of the Veterinary Medical Library Section of the Medical Library Association.

**Charles Litchfield**, VTLS database administrator, published an article entitled "Vendor Training: A Question of Commitment to User Success," in the *Journal of Library Administration*, Vol. 12, no. 2 (1990). Litchfield is also co-chair of the Virginia VTLS Users

Group, at whose meeting he gave a presentation on "Other Uses for the VTLS System at Virginia Tech." At the American Library Association summer conference, Litchfield chaired a panel discussion on "VTLS Release '89: Testing and Installation," and was elected secretary of the LITA Programmer/Analyst Interest Group of ALA.

**Gail McMillan**, online maintenance team leader in the cataloging department, presented a workshop on "Applications of the USMARC Format for Holdings" at the 5th annual conference of the North American Serials Interest Group at Brock University, Ontario, Canada. McMillan also collaborated with **Cheryl Fields**, assistant acquisitions librarian, in presenting a poster session, "Serials on CD: Applications of the MARC Holdings Format" at the American Library Association summer conference.

**Glenn McMullen**, head of special collections, presented a paper on "Harvey Black and John S. Apperson, Confederate Surgeon and Hospital Steward" at the 12th Annual Civil War Institute in Blacksburg, June 1990.

**Paul Metz**, principal bibliographer, wrote a chapter entitled "Bibliometrics: Library Use and Citation Studies" in *Academic Libraries: Research Perspectives*, published by the American Library Association, 1990. He also gave a presentation on "Big R, Small R, It's All Research" as part of the Librarians of the Inland Northwest Speakers Series at the University of Idaho, April 1990.

**Jessie Nicol**, head of the acquisitions department, presented a paper, "Change Without Pain," at the Acquisitions '90 conference in St. Louis, Missouri, March 1990. Nicol also gave a presentation on "Claiming" at the Serials: Getting Our Fair Share conference in Durham, North Carolina, April 1990.

**Linda Richardson**, reference librarian, gave a presentation at the 5th Agricultural Economics Reference Association Meeting, University of California, Berkeley, March 1990. Her presentation was on "University Library/Department of Agricultural Economics Interactions."

**Roger Stelk**, reference librarian, and F.W. Lancaster (University of Illinois) wrote an article on "The Use of Textbooks in Evaluating the Collection of an Undergraduate Library," published in *Library Acquisitions: Practice and Theory*, Vol. 14, no. 2 (1990).

**Linda Wilson**, coordinator of reference services, wrote a paper entitled "A Graduate Course in Information Literacy" in the book *Coping with Information Illiteracy: Bibliographic Instruction for the Information Age*, published by Pierian Press, 1989.



## From the Director

The University Libraries have felt the impact of the recent budget cuts mandated by the governer, as have all the departments and colleges on campus. In dealing with these cuts, our strategy has been to protect vital services such as the reserve book operation, shelving, and circulation.

We are attempting to protect the book budget, and indeed were fortunate to receive an additional \$404,000 this year. Well over half of this was used to cover the cost of inflation, which is currently at 10 percent for domestic journals and 30 percent for foreign serial publications. The \$303,000 in additional book funds that we had been scheduled to receive in the second year of the biennium, however, has been lost in the budget reduction. Inflation is expected to continue at

the same rate, so we face the necessity of reducing serial subscriptions by the fall of next year. In anticipation of this, we have been gathering data on the use of our collection in order to evaluate it. Next spring, principal bibliographer Paul Metz will begin a project in concert with faculty members to identify serial titles for possible cancellation.

We face difficult times and difficult choices, but I am confident that through careful planning and close consultation with the faculty, we will continue to offer quality service and meet the essential information needs of the academic community. For example, our membership in the Center for Research Libraries will allow our faculty access to over 4 million volumes of valuable research materials.

During the academic year we will be working with the Office of Management Services of the Association of Research Libraries to update our Strategic Plan of 1986. In this planning effort we will seek the advice of faculty members, students, and staff as we plan for the next five to ten years. And we will be looking for new methods of offering information to our users that will stretch our information dollars to effectively support research and teaching.

*Paul Gherman*

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