



ArchivesSpace

University Libraries; Records

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

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Summary Information

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| Repository: | M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives |
| Title: | University Libraries Records |
| ID: | ua580 |
| Date [inclusive]: | 1916-1993 |
| Physical Description: | 163.7 cubic ft. |
| Physical Location: | The materials are located onsite in the department. |
| Language of the Material: | English . |
| Mixed Materials [Collection]: | X |
| Abstract: | This collection consists mainly of the records of the Office of the Director, records of the Library's divisions and departments, and the University Library Faculty. Includes accession and withdrawal records, 1929-1957; book circulation records, 1929-1960; correspondence, reports and minutes of bibliographers' meetings, 1966-1979; and bound volumes of the University Libraries newsletter, 1972-1976; announcements, schedules of events, memoranda, newspaper clippings, and brochures relating to Community University Day, 1972-1983; memoranda and pamphlets about access policy, 1979-1983; and annual reports, 1979-1987. |

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, University Libraries, Office of the Director Records, 1916-1993. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the University Libraries, Office of the Director Records).

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Historical Note

The University Libraries began as a textbook collection in the New York State Normal School, which opened in 1844. Within three months of its opening, the school had acquired its first set of textbooks, and in 1845 a student was appointed as the first librarian. While the important decisions regarding collection development were made by the faculty, the library continued to be run by students under the direction of the principal of the school until 1849 when a faculty member was hired as librarian.

Although the library's collection would remain relatively small until the 1960s (partly because it was felt that the nearby New York State Library would be adequate for school's needs), by the beginning of the twentieth century it was clear that the school was becoming increasingly professionalized. In 1889 the name had been changed to the New York State Normal College, and in 1905 it began to offer baccalaureate degrees in the arts and in the sciences. In 1909 the school moved to a spacious new campus built at the convergence of Washington and Western Avenues (now the Downtown Campus). The name of the school was changed to the New York State College for Teachers in 1914, and in 1916 the college hired Mary Cobb, its first professionally trained librarian. She would preside over the library for forty of the next forty-five years. In 1933 the college moved the library from its cramped, University Libraries one-room quarters on the second floor of Draper Hall to the college's old auditorium, Hawley Hall, the first building to be solely occupied by the library. The move didn't solve the perennial space problems that the library would continue to wrestle with during the ensuing decades, however.

The 1960s was a decade of phenomenal growth for the college and the library, and it was at this time that the college became a true university. In 1948 it had become a part of the new State University of New York, but it wasn't until 1962, when it became the State University of New York at Albany and one of four State University Centers, that it truly began to be considered a serious research institution. Between 1960 and 1970, as student enrollment quadrupled, going from 3,300 to 13,200, and the number of academic departments grew from seventeen to fifty, the library built a strong collection (swelling from 65,000 items to 620,000) to support the burgeoning new university. The library's staff grew at a commensurate pace. In 1960 there were ten librarians; by 1970 there were fifty-eight. In 1962 the library staffed its new Bibliography Department with subject specialists.

The library's collections and facilities underwent a number of changes during this time of expansion. In 1964 and 1965 a reclassification project was planned and implemented which involved converting from Dewey Decimal to Library of Congress classification, a reorganization of the card catalog, and the beginning of a machine-readable shelf-list database. The library was designated a selective repository for U.S. government documents in 1965. Also at this time, the expanding collection became increasingly stratified. The library established subject collections in the areas of the physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, business, and education--all separately housed within the library. Another separate collection was the University College Library (known as UNI), which was established to serve the needs of freshmen and sophomores. The separate collection approach was quickly abandoned, however. In 1970 the UNI was disbanded, and in 1972 the subject collections were integrated. Although the subject collections didn't survive, the branch libraries did. Two were established in 1966: one for the School of Library and Information Science and one for the Graduate School of Public Affairs. (After numerous changes in the branch

libraries, there is now one branch--the Dewey Graduate Library for Public Affairs and Policy, located in Hawley Hall on the Downtown Campus--which serves the original two schools along with the School of Criminal Justice, and the School of Social Welfare.)

Space continued to be a problem even though the library had acquired additional buildings in the 1960s to accommodate some of the collection and staff. It came as a great relief, then, when in the late 1960s most of the university moved to the new uptown campus. The library began to make the move to the new campus in 1966, and an official dedication ceremony was held in 1968. The library's space problem persisted, however, and a plan to relieve it by adding 165,000 square feet of space by 1974 was never realized because of fiscal constraints.

During the latter half of the 1960s, librarians throughout the State University system began to lobby for full faculty status on par with the teaching faculty. Although they never attained true parity with those professionals, in 1968 SUNY librarians were rewarded for their efforts when they achieved faculty status with promotion, recognized professional service, and the ranks of Assistant Librarian, Associate Librarian, and Librarian. A fourth rank, Senior Assistant Librarian, was created in 1977.

Firmly established as a research institution, the University Libraries continued to make impressive strides during the 1970s and 1980s, particularly in the areas of computerization, online information retrieval, and networking. An automated circulation system built upon the machine-readable shelf-list (called Library Circulation System and later Library Control System [LCS]) was started in 1972, and in 1984 the libraries implemented an integrated public access catalog and circulation system designed by the GEAC corporation called Gemini. In 1974 the University Libraries began to use the cataloging of the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC). It became a member of the Center for Research Libraries (CRL) in 1973, the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) in 1975, and the Research Libraries Group (RLG) in 1984.

The 1990s is proving to be another time of change for the University Libraries, as it tries to keep pace with rapidly evolving information technologies. A new GEAC system, Advance, replaced Gemini in 1994, and the university looks forward to the completion of a new library annex designed to accommodate digital-based information systems.

Prior to the late 1960s the title Librarian was used by the head of the libraries and the term Library was used to designate the facility. In the late 1960s the terms Director and Libraries came into use but they were used along with the older terms until the beginning of the 1970s when the use of Director and Libraries became firmly established. The following is a list of Librarians and Directors, whose terms coincided with the years covered by the records, along with the dates they began their term: Mary Cobb, 1916; Alice Hastings, 1956; Jonathan Ashton (Interim), 1970; circa James Schmidt, 1972; John Farley (Acting), 1979; Joseph Z. Nitecki, 1980; Sharon Bonk (Acting), 1988; Meredith Butler, 1989.

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Scope and Contents

The records of the Office of the Director are comprised of a variety of documents, including correspondence, meeting minutes and agendas, reports, surveys, financial records, published articles, newsletters, grant applications, manuals, and vendors' promotional materials. The records were generated and collected as the director monitored and participated in the activities of the libraries' units, committees, and advisory groups; interacted with agents outside of the libraries; and reported to administrative superiors. The records begin in 1916, the year the library got its first professionally trained librarian, but the bulk of the collection dates from after 1962, when the school became the State University of New York at Albany and the resources began to be made available to dramatically expand staffing and collections.

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Arrangement of the Collection

The collection is partially unprocessed and is likely disorganized. Individual items may be difficult to find.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Revision Description

Encoded in EAD by Eric Reichert and Geoffrey A. Huth 1989 July 28

Processing Information

Processed in 1989 by Eric Reichert and Geoffrey A. Huth.

Access

Access to this collection is restricted because it is partially unprocessed. Portions of the collection may contain recent administrative records and/or personally identifiable information. Please contact an archivist for more information.

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The University Archives are eager to hear from any copyright owners who are not properly identified so that appropriate information may be provided in the future.

Acquisition Information

All items in this collection were transferred to the University Libraries, M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Academic library directors
- Academic libraries
- Library administration
- Education, Higher--Administration
- Annual reports
- Minutes (administrative records)
- Newsletters
- UAlbany Academic Administration

- State University of New York at Albany