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In 1870, by order of Queen Victoria, a royal commission was organized, "to examine extant manuscript collections of civil, religious, literary or historical significance that were being held in libraries, abbeys, manors, castles and private collections in Great Britain." This became a monumental task, requiring 43 years to complete. What the Commission found was a veritable treasure trove of English history, from the Norman Conquest to the nineteenth century. Detailed documents, private correspondence, state papers, and even personal expense records give a glimpse of England and Europe rarely found in text books or monographs. Many of the documents had never been open to public view before the Commission’s work began.

The Chester Fritz Library houses the collection, Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts which contains 162 original sets, bound into 72 hardcover volumes. It would be impossible to accurately and briefly detail the entire collection. A representative sample has been selected to highlight the social, political, and religious life of Great Britain and Europe during the Medieval and Early Modern periods. The selected material demonstrates the wide variety of information available within these reports. The title, Report, is quite misleading because these documents are not just simple reports of available materials, but excerpts and in most cases, entire transcripts of original documents.

The political life of Great Britain is interwoven throughout the entire collection, but one particular set exemplifies England’s political life during one of its most turbulent periods. “The Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury,” a part of the Ninth Report of the Commission, is a twelve volume set chronicling the reign of Queen Elizabeth I. The papers of William Cecil, Lord Burghley and his son, Robert Cecil, Earl of Salisbury, detail the lives of two of the most powerful political figures of the Elizabethan era. The period covered by this collection was pre-eminently one of conspiracy, intrigue, and general unrest throughout Europe; not the least of all England, Scotland, and Ireland. Personal correspondence between Elizabeth, her advisors, and many powerful European figures give an intimate glimpse into the life of one of history’s most influential monarchs. The attention to detail in the transcription of documents is magnificent. A short letter from Henry IV of France to Elizabeth is a classic example: “1591, June 13 – Thinking that in the account of his affairs by De Reau there are particulars which she would rather hear form one of her own servants, he has instructed Grimston to accompany him, and begs the Queen to excuse the lib-
The Chester Fritz Legacy

March 25, 1992, commemorates the centennial of the birth of Chester Fritz, generous benefactor of the University of North Dakota. Fritz initiated his philanthropy in 1950 with a donation of $10,000 to the University Development Fund. This was followed by gifts for scholarships, professorships, a library and graduate study area, and an audio-visual endowment. Fritz's generous contributions were almost $3 million by the time of his death in 1983. Fritz remarked at the dedication of the Chester Fritz Library, October 13, 1961, that, "I am herewith submitting a proposal which I hope will be acceptable to UND President, George Starcher. In 1954, Tiffany wrote to Starcher in September 1957 that Fritz's mind was "always on a little shelf below the scholar's desk." The purpose of the library is to "bridge the gap between the library and the library building only. It was Fritz's hope that the library would be a working center for Ideas - not a place where immature boys and girls may play at studying - or where they may sit idly and observe the passing scene."

Chester Fritz continues to provide for the future of the Chester Fritz Library. In his will and testament of December 1982, Fritz bequeathed one half of his residuary estate to the University of North Dakota for the twofold "purpose of constructing an addition to the present Chester Fritz Library building, and for otherwise enhancing the value and increasing the usefulness of that library." An addition to the Library had already been completed in 1982 with funding from the state legislature. Enhancement of the value of the Library and an increase in its usefulness waited until 1988. It was then that President Thomas Clifford designated $600,000 from the Fritz endowment to initiate what was to become ODIN (Online Dakota Information Network), the library automation system of the North Dakota Higher Education Computer Network. In retrospect, President Clifford provided both the genesis for ODIN in 1983 when he included library automation in UND's Academic Computing Plan, and the foresight to recognize the benefits that would accrue to the entire state from an automated library system. In 1992, ODIN is a resource sharing network consisting of twenty libraries in North Dakota and is linked with similar state-wide library networks in South Dakota and Minnesota, for access to a combined total of more than seven million titles. Thus, the benefits of Chester Fritz's endowment have spread beyond the campus walls, as he had hoped. Through ODIN, Fritz's legacy reaches not only the people of his native state, but the people of the Northern Plains region as well.

Sandy Beldier
Special Collections

Distinguishing marks

In keeping with Chester Fritz's appreciation of the book, six carved limestone panels grace the tower of the Chester Fritz Library. Each panel is a rendering of five distinguishing printers' marks used by early printers who significantly contributed to the development of book design. The sixth lower left panel, with its quill pen, ink well, scroll, and most commonly illuminated letter, "A," represents early forms of the book, the scroll and manuscript.

The renderings were designed in 1960 by Professor Robert A. Nelson, chairman of the UND Art Department, from suggestions by Donald Pearce, Head Librarian. Pearce wrote to Katherine Tiffany in June 1960 that he believed the panels "will be very effective as decorative motifs for the building, and will stand as a fitting tribute to several of the early workers whom we now must thank for the multitude of books at our disposal." Nelson also created the large oil mural in the main reading room which depicts the history of North Dakota.

The upper left panel represents the printer's mark of William Caxton who established the first printing press in England in 1476. More importantly, he printed the first book in the vernacular, which steamed from his long-held enjoyment of translating texts. His mark consists of a central symbol flanked by an "W" which is preceded by an "S" and a "C" followed by another "C." The focus of scholarly printers suggest that the "W" and "C" stand for Caxton's initials, the center symbol for his lawyer's mark from his years as a woolen merchant, and the "S" and "C" for Sancta Colonna, or Cologne, city where he learned the printing trade.

The upper center panel of a compass on a book depicts the mark of Christopher Plantin, a Dutch printer from the middle 16th century.

Chester Fritz at the Library dedication October 13, 1961.

Tribute must be paid to early printers
for the multitude of books at our disposal.

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Linkage between CFL and SBDC

Since 1985, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) has offered free professional counseling services to existing and potential business owners throughout the state of North Dakota. Small Business Development Centers, created by an Act of Congress in 1980, are designed to provide management and technical assistance to potential and existing small business owners, thereby stabilizing the economy, developing jobs in the private sector and fostering the survival and growth of the free enterprise system. The North Dakota SBDC is the unique result of a partnership which includes the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), the State of North Dakota, the University of North Dakota and the private sector. It consists of an administrative lead center at UND and five regional centers.

One facet of the mission of the Small Business Development Center is the integration of University system entities with the SBDC network. The Chester Fritz Library (CFL) offers a variety of valuable services which small business owners may access through contact with the SBDC regional directors. The SBDC’s professional counselors, who have prior experience as small business owners/managers, are familiar with the services available through CFL. Their assistance, together with the services of SBDC student interns and research assistants, provide a link between the University system public sector and the statewide private sector.

Technology transfer is a term currently used to describe the exchange of information and ideas. The Chester Fritz Library, with its vast stores of information, also possesses the staff to facilitate effective technology transfer. CFL staff, together with SBDC research assistants and interns, assist SBDC clients in database searches for business information and market data, patent and trademark searches, and general research and information retrieval.

CFL staff assist SBDC clients with information searches of four free databases. The Business and Company Profile is a database which provides comprehensive information pertaining to companies in all areas of the business world. The Magazine Index Plus furnishes text from over 430 periodicals. The Academic Index supplies information on the social sciences and humanities. The National Newspaper Index is a database which covers five major papers over the past four years. Searches of these various databases allow business owners to access timely information pertinent to individual business concerns.

The National Trade Databank (NTDB) is comprised of more than 100,000 documents, tables, and time series from 15 federal agencies. This extensive compilation allows the user to access information pertinent to export trade. The Foreign Traders Index (FTI) is included in the NTDB. The FTI explains how to search for foreign trade contracts through the Department of Commerce and the US & Foreign Commercial Service Foreign Traders Index Program.

Cooperation between CFL and the SBDC allows distribution of material to meet the information needs of a business. In today’s business arena, information is a valuable resource. Accessing current information regarding competition, industry trends, and potential markets is crucial to effective management. SBDC counselors are a cross between a consultant and an educator who help clients understand business and assist clients to find their own solutions to business problems.

For those business owners who have developed products and are interested in protecting the product or process with a patent or copyright, the SBDC offers the service of patent and trademark searches. A knowledgeable research assistant will do a preliminary patent or trademark search based on information supplied by the developer or inventor. One 45-minute consultation confirmed that a North Dakota product was a candidate for a patent. As in every aspect of SBDC assistance, confidentiality is paramount.

The Chester Fritz Library offers a variety of general information services that are available at the business site through on-line search capabilities. SBDC regional directors are able to access the University system libraries, including the specialty libraries of law, engineering, and others by means of modem-equipped computers. A business owner is able to enter the University system libraries without leaving the business. Access to all libraries throughout the state is available through interlibrary loan services. Research librarians are willing to answer questions or assist in finding materials. Public sector entities, like CFL, are available to assist the private sector as well as the academic sector.

The Small Business Development Center program is designed to provide quality business and economic development assistance for small businesses to promote growth, expansion, innovation, increased productivity and management improvement. To accomplish these objectives, the SBDCs link resources of the University system and the private sector. The combination of these resources strives to meet the specialized and complex needs of the small business community.

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