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WOMEN’S VOICES

Until the late 1960’s and early 1970’s when the feminist movement encouraged historians to investigate the collective history of society, the study of one half of the population was not impressive. Before those turbulent decades, women’s history emulated the vast majority of historical research, operating under what could be called the “greatness syndrome.” Historians focused upon well-known women, when they looked at women at all. Or, historians focused upon the plight of women, operating under the “oppression syndrome.” In the past twenty-five years, research energy has produced a more balanced interpretation of the contributions of women to the social order.

Saving the historical record is the charge of archivists, who take that trust seriously. Their responsibility has never changed. What has changed is the subject matter of records and personal papers placed into safekeeping and archival appraisal methods. Since the emergence of social history in the 1970’s, archivists have increased their collecting activity in the areas of women’s history, minority history, ethnic history, and labor history. Previous generations of archivists often collected in bulk and applied few appraisal criteria to collections. The archival profession came to realize that speculating the interests of future historians was not appropriate. Present-day appraisal ideally requires an inductive approach.

Volume I of the “Guide to the Orin G. Libby Manuscript Collection,” published by the Department of Special Collections in 1975, illustrates fairly typically the collecting focus of many repositories of that period. Of the 292 collection guide entries, thirty-six offer information recounting the lives of North Dakota women. The strength of the Libby Collection has been and continues to be its political collections. Since the ’70’s though, collecting efforts have increasingly sought documentation across the spectrum of North Dakota’s social and cultural heritage.

Access to primary source documentation has always been an issue, no matter the subject area. The Internet has encouraged, or perhaps forced, archivists to reconsider the ease of access to their collections. Today the general public increasingly expects to find the information it needs on the Internet. This environment has compelled archivists to reexamine strategies in response to the ever-changing expectations of researchers and scholars. Instead of relying on printed guides to collections, footnotes and bibliographic citations, or word of mouth to advertise their holdings, archivists are creating home pages and launching indexing projects. Some have mounted their printed guide entries on the Web, some their finding aids or inventories, and some have digitized and made available portions of their collections to which they hold copyright.

MRS. ANNA KIRK.

The Department of Special Collections has chosen the middle ground. Through a Federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) grant received in July 1999, Special Collections and the Library’s Cataloging Department completed an information access proposal. The project enhanced and mounted finding aids for women’s papers and women’s organizational records on Special Collections’ web site and created respective online catalog records in ODIN. To date Internet access to primary research materials within 113 women’s collections is available on ODIN with links from ODIN to Special Collections manuscript page found at www.und.nodak.edu/dept/library/Collections/oglmain.html. This project in turn accelerated the creation of web finding aids for collections in other subject areas and a redesign of the Department’s web site.

Manuscript collections housed in Special Collections offer original documentation of women’s lives and attempt to claim the diverse past of North Dakota women from settlement on. Letters, diaries, scrapbooks, financial records, minutes of meetings, programs and newsletters, newspaper and magazine articles, and photographs chronicle their lives.

A series of courtship letters narrate the experiences of one Norwegian immigrant, Caroline Gjelsness, who arrived in Reynolds, ND, from Kongsvinger in 1886. Caroline describes her work as a housekeeper for Grand Forks Sheriff Swan and two families in Crookston, fairly typical employment for a new arrival. Marius, her husband-to-be, worked for the Great Northern Railroad. Introduced by extended family members, letters kept their courtship alive. Writing in a flowery style, Caroline poignantly declared to Marius in December 1886 that “You are my everything both in life and death...You are fastened solidly to my heart...” Caroline and Marius married in 1888 and established a farm near Reynolds.

Horticultural articles and drawings for regional and national publications offer insight into the work of Fannie Mahood Heath, Grand Forks County homesteader. After the death of her only son in 1902, Heath immersed herself into plant culture, seed exchanges, and the advocacy of farm shelterbelts. Known as the “Flower Woman of North Dakota,” she helped establish the National Horticulture Society in 1922, becoming its first Vice-president.

Anna Kirk arrived in Dakota Territory as an infant in 1884. Three years after her marriage, she joined the North Dakota Women’s Christian Temperance Union (W.C.T.U.) in 1908. She became president of the Niagara Union in 1909 and
Cataloging Settlers’ Values

Preservation is a component of the Chester Fritz Library’s mission, but the preservation of older books is not essential to the mission of every library. Often those libraries that retain older materials have done so because their patrons asked for them, especially when faced with the pressing need to catalog new books, and recently, digital journals, books, maps, etc. 

The advent of microfilm, books, hand carried across half a continent, representing the lives of our forebears, sagas of Iceland, Danish, and German immigrants have preserved the printed culture and living traditions in which the books were published before North Dakota became a state and were printed in a foreign language, which entitled challenging library cataloging. Over the last 10 years, the Library’s Head of Acquisitions and Bibliographic Control, Shirley Harken, has undertaken a project to catalog several hundred of these books every year. She has been assisted in part by Karen Holle, Rene Arnds, and Delores Clark. The cataloging of over 300 titles with no or inadequate bibliographical records is now complete. This mini-library is now accessible and fully described for users of the Chester Fritz Library and its preservation has become part of our heritage.

Many special books were discovered in the collection. A Danish treasure has survived as the only known copy of the 1865 edition of C.H. Wold’s Folklandbrev by Adam Gottlieb Oehlenschlager was published in Copenhagen by Philipsen beginning approximately 1865. The library owns 21 volumes, some of which are bound together into four volumes. Oehlenschlager, a Danish philosopher, wrote extensively on moral ills. His sensitivity to nature inspired musicians and the records is now complete. This mini-library is now accessible and fully described for users of the Chester Fritz Library and its preservation has become part of our heritage.

If immigrants settled the state with no other book, it was simply was no record. Out of the approximately 37,000 libraries using OCR, only a fraction of these books, but the preservation of the history of our forebears, sagas of Iceland, Danish, and German immigrants have preserved the printed culture encourage the life of the spirit in a new and sometimes lonely place.

For some time, a veritable mini-library of books, hand bound together into four volumes.

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SPECIAL LEARNER COLLECTION

The Chester Fritz Library has long been committed to providing books and resources broadly in the field of education at the University of North Dakota. From its inception, UND prepared North Dakota's teachers. With the opening of its doors in September 1884, UND's Normal Department assumed this responsibility. The most recent departmental re-organization in 1996 resulted in the creation of the College of Education and Human Development, which includes six academic departments. For many years the Library has acquired the educational research documents produced by the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) in the form of ERIC microfiche and its indices. ERIC provides the world's largest source of education information. In recent years, access to the ERIC database has been expanded digitally via WebSpiris and through the Internet via AskERIC. A vocational education program in North Dakota has made these materials widely available across the state to educators.

Cognizant of its commitment, the Library expanded into a new area, servicing education materials not previously collected. The North Dakota Department of Public Instruction offered the Library an opportunity in May 2000 to apply for a grant to acquire, house and disseminate materials in what is now the Special Learner Collection. ERIC microfiche are just that, microfiche. They are indexed, but not cataloged, except for a small group of print-only ERIC documents. Although the focus of the Special Learner Collection is a narrow field of education, the collection, which also includes Talented and Gifted Resources, provides access to books and tangible materials for both educators and parents. The collection developed over approximately thirty years, long enough that it needed an appraisal. Tricia Lee of the UND resident teacher program and several assistants evaluated the collection after it arrived in June, discarding out-of-date worn materials and keeping newer relevant items for the collection.

The range of subject areas within the Special Learners Collection is rather diverse. The Fence, a video designed to stimulate discussion on how we treat others, is an animated allegory without narration that illustrates the consequences of an inconsiderate act when a man throws rubbish over the fence into his neighbor's yard. Call it Courage is a study guide to be used with Armstrong Sperry's book by junior high English or literature students. Based on a Polynesian legend, the story relates how Mafatu, which means Stout Heart, overcomes his fear of the sea and becomes a hero of his people. Reading Beyond the Basal is series of books for primary teachers and librarians that help children share ideas and engage in critical thinking. Titles include Stone Soup, Miss Nelson is Missing, and Where the Wild Things Are. AIDS: Distinguishing Between Fact and Opinion, one of the books in a series Opposing Viewpoints, encourages discussion about social issues. A video, Important Special Education Law Cases, reviews case law relative to the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, providing practical applications for special education. The Assassination of President Kennedy, part of The Great Mysteries series, examines the conflicting evidence regarding the search for Kennedy's assassin.

These examples illustrate not only the variety of subjects, but also the mixture of format within the collection. The latter has presented some cataloging challenges. In some cases, the item is curriculum material for which many libraries generally do not provide full cataloging. There are folders with lesson plans, games, kits, cases with objects and activity guides, and videos, both U-Matic (high quality) and VHS. The Library's approach has been to catalog these items as thoroughly as it catalogs all its other materials in order to maximize usage of the collection.

The Head of Acquisitions and Bibliographic Control, Shelby Harken, trained an Associate Cataloger, Teji Kaur, to produce advanced copy and original cataloging. Since this is a unique collection, cataloging rules were reviewed and standards, policies and procedures set up to manage the collection. A new branch of Chester Fritz Library was created in ODIN, the online catalog. Users of ODIN may now select "Special Learner Collection" in the Chester Fritz Library drop down menu and search for materials specifically held in that collection. Previously, access to the contents of the collection had been available only in print, which listed materials by title and included a simple subject index. By cataloging the materials, the Library is able to emphasize full subject access and further expand access to producer's names, contents, titles, etc. By cataloging the records in an online library system, users can access the collection from anywhere via the Internet, search for a variety of topics, and place online requests for delivery of the material.

Teachers, parents, and organizations in North and South Dakota, Minnesota, Montana, and certain areas of Canada may check out items from the Special Learner Collection. Users may go to the Chester Fritz Library home page at http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/library and click on Collections for the Special Learner Collection (http://www.und.nodak.edu/dept/library/Collections/special_learner.html). An electronic form is available for users to request items. When Interlibrary Loan receives a request, the materials are checked out to a unique barcode and sent to the user. Checkout periods vary according to items requested. All users of the Special Learner Collection are asked to fill out a survey card that addresses any service needs and allows for suggestions.

Since its availability in September, the Collection has been well received by North Dakota public schools and Upper Valley Special Education in Grafton. It also enables UND faculty and pre-service teachers access to additional resources, materials that may be integrated into lessons and classroom activities in K – 12 field experiences, in turn benefiting students across North Dakota.

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Library home page: www.und.nodak.edu/dept/library