PRODUCTION NOTE

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Library
Archives Receives Papers of Ford Foundation's W. McNeil Lowry

The University Archives has received a major new collection that provides an extraordinarily detailed look at the state of the performing arts in this country as well as an insider's view of one of the country's most important philanthropic foundations.

The collection is the personal papers of W. McNeil Lowry (1913-1993), the U of I alumnus who created and ran the humanities and arts division of the Ford Foundation from its inception in 1957 until his retirement from the foundation in 1975.

In the process, he became the single most important driving force behind the explosive expansion of theater, dance, opera, and symphony orchestras between the late 1950s and early 1970s.

"Lowry did more individually than any other person in the country for the cultural and artistic life of the nation," says U of I alumnus James W. Armssey, who was a program director in the foundation's Education Division until 1977 and a longtime friend of Lowry's. "He knew what he believed in, and he had the opportunity and access to the money to carry it out. That's what makes him so significant."

Adds Interim University Archivist William Maher, "This new collection has an intensity of analysis that is really uncommon and raises it above just the level of administrative files. The papers have very prominent people recording their thoughts and impressions about the direction that culture should be going."

The collection's fifty-five boxes include thousands of field notes taken by Mr. Lowry and his assistants; transcripts of private conferences held with some of the most famous names in the performing arts; copies of oral histories with Mr. Lowry for the Truman Library, Ford Foundation, and other organizations; personal correspondence with political, philanthropic, and arts figures; and much detailed information about how a major philanthropic foundation is run, including an internal memorandum from 1976 that candidly discusses the foundation's successes and failures.

The collection also documents his career in the late 1940s as founder and first chief of the Cox newspaper chain's Washington bureau. During this period, he exposed the 1948 Commodity Credit Bureau scandal, the fallout from which Mr. Lowry knew (though others didn't believe it) would assure President Truman's election in the 1948 presidential campaign against Thomas Dewey. He also became friends with Milton Eisenhower, leading to his writing a speech for President Eisenhower in 1954 condemning Joseph McCarthy and upholding the principles of academic freedom (the collection contains the speech's first draft).

According to a handwritten document in the collection, Mr. Lowry grew up in the small town of Columbus, Kansas, where "... there were no original works of art and only a few reproductions, no live music besides the high school orchestra, no theater save for travelling tent shows in the summer .... [and] as for dance, there was none, we did not make ourselves, and no impression that its home was a stage."

Mr. Lowry did, however, attend the University of Illinois in the early 1930s, receiving his bachelor's degree in English in 1934 and his Ph.D. in 1941. He taught in the English department from 1936 until he was drafted in 1942. From 1940 to 1942, he helped found and edit the literary magazine Accent.

In 1942, the Navy forever changed his life by assigning him to news reporting for the Office of War Information. At the end of the war, Lowry told the Truman oral history interviewer, he was "so steamed up about national and international affairs .... [and] that's why I couldn't go back to my teaching job at the University of Illinois."

Despite an early inquiry from the Ford Foundation in 1948, Lowry did not join the foundation until 1953, as assistant to foundation vice president William McPeak. By 1955 he had been made a program director in education, but, as documented in the collection's copy of the Ford Foundation oral history, he also had been agitating for a grant program for the arts.

Eventually he was asked to propose such a program to the board of trustees, which resulted in a small exploratory program whose focus was a few initial grants combined with a nationwide tour to survey the state of the arts. Not surprisingly, in 1957 Mr. Lowry was made the fledgling program's head.

What the board probably didn't realize, as Mr. Lowry told the oral history interviewer, was that he had revolutionary plans to run the program "in the artist's own terms, just as you would do a program in science, hopefully in the scientist's own terms ...." His intent, he told the interviewer, was "... declaring war upon the whole treatment..."
University Archives to Administer Records of National Fraternity

The national headquarters of Alpha Tau Omega has designated the University Archives as the repository for its national records. Among the records are more than 200 cubic feet of chapter files, including original charters for each chapter, minutes, newsletters, chapter correspondence with headquarters, scrapbooks, pledge materials, and hundreds of photographs.

Also included are general headquarters correspondence, national officer files, congress files, architectural drawings of chapter houses, and ritual materials.

According to student life and culture archivist John Straw, the new collection complements and supplements the Archives’ Stewart S. Howe Collection, the largest group of fraternity materials in the world. Combined with the Archives’ extensive holdings on student life and culture, these materials provide an excellent basis for the study of undergraduate and extracurricular activities in higher education.

“We are very excited about this agreement to maintain our archives in a facility that will protect them for a long time,” says ATO executive director Scott Gilpin. “The fact that the University Archives has an endowment for the archives of the Greek movement and our belief in that project, and the fact that the National Panhellenic Conference placed their archives here, made us feel that it was high time that a major national fraternity do the same thing.”

The agreement follows more than fifteen years of contacts with the national office of ATO, and an even longer association between the university and the fraternity, according to Maynard Brichford, university archivist emeritus.

The university’s association with ATO dates back to the early part of the century, when U of I Dean of Men and ATO member Thomas A. Clark was the national president. “It was Clark who felt that we should start a national office, back in the early ‘20s,” says Mr. Gilpin. “That’s why we’ve been located in Champaign all these years.”

Then, in 1981, the Archives helped the headquarters office establish its own archives. Now, the fraternity will be providing ongoing funding to the University Archives for a graduate assistant to maintain and process the material, and to handle reference questions.

“We just couldn’t handle 130 years worth of records with our small staff and a mission that doesn’t really include preserving important material,” Mr. Gilpin notes.

In addition to the papers, the Archives will be tied to the fraternity’s new electronic communications system, the ATO Net, which provides an electronic forum via CompuServe and e-mail access via the Internet. “They will be transmitting reports and other documents over the network, which we will be receiving in electronic formats,” says Professor Straw.

The network recently garnered an award from the Smithsonian Institution for the most creative use of technology.

The impetus for the current agreement, according to Professor Straw, came from William Krahling, former editor of ATO’s fraternal magazine and former president of the College and Fraternity Editor’s Association. “His hope is that fraternities nationwide will learn from ATO’s future experience with the Archives,” says Professor Straw.

“The idea is not for other fraternities to warehouse their records with us, but for them to learn guidelines for the preservation and handling of their own records.”

Thomas A. Clark, former U of I Dean of Men, circa 1925. As national ATO president, he convinced the fraternity to start a national office in Champaign. (Photo: University Archives)

Alpha Tau Omega was founded in 1865 as a youth society for peace by several former Confederate soldiers at the Virginia Military Institute. It now has 153 chapters, including the chapter at the U of I.

The Library is Looking For...

$450 to purchase Voting Records of the British House of Commons, 1761-1820 for the History Library. This six-volume work makes available for the first time a unique compilation of accurate voting records and constitutes an indispensable resource for parliamentary history.

$450 to purchase 7th International Congress of the International Association of Engineering Geology, Lisbon 1994 for the Geology Library. Engineering geology is a very active field. The unit holds proceedings from previous conferences and would like to keep its collection up to date.

Funds to purchase Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics (2nd revision) for the Modern Languages and Linguistics Library. Semiotics (the systematic study of linguistic and non-linguistic signs) is an extremely active interdisciplinary field. This work provides a comprehensive overview and bibliography of the field. Cost is $480.

$952 to purchase an HP Laserjet 5MP for the Veterinary Medicine Library. The unit is compiling a text-and-photo database of plants that are toxic to animals, which will be available through its World Wide Web home page. The printer is needed for patrons who do not have access to the Internet elsewhere and therefore would need to print the text and images from the database.

$500 to purchase International Historical Statistics: The Americas, 1750-1988 and International Historical Statistics: Europe, 1750-1988 for the Documents Library. The volumes include information on population, vital statistics, labor, agriculture, international trade, finance, education, and national accounts. They are part of a series that is considered the most important source for historical statistics.

Funds to purchase Handbook of the Birds of the World, vols. 1 and 2, edited by Josep de Hoyos, Andrew Elliott, and Jordi Sargatal, for the Biology Library. This major new series covers more than 9,000 species of birds, including extensive background information and beautiful illustrations. Cost is $165 each ($330 for both).

To donate any of the items mentioned above, please contact Sharon Kitzmiller, associate director of development, at 227 Library, 1408 W. Gregory Drive, Urbana, IL 61801, or telephone (217) 333-5683.
of the arts by foundations to this date, which had been as an adjunct to education. Instead, Mr. Lowry wanted to learn what the artists needed to survive and flourish, not what the arts could do for schoolchildren or some other extraneous objective. Therefore, using his reporter's instincts and training, Mr. Lowry embarked on an interviewing tour that became the hallmark of his tenure as program director for humanities and arts. The thousands of field notes he and his staff created after each interview over the next twenty years form an invaluable record of the state of the arts from the mid-50s to the mid-70s. For instance, during Mr. Lowry's attempts in 1958 to solicit nominations of young writers for grant awards, Mrs. Barry Bingham, wife of the publisher of the Louisville Courier-Journal, wrote, "Due to some sort of public aberration, the young writer these days attracts the extravagant attention of publishers, and if one has outgrown snow-suits and pony tails one's chances of getting published seem to become very dim." Among the 1958 recipients were James Baldwin and Bernard Malamud, whose acceptance letters are in the collection. Or how about George Szell, longtime conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra, complaining in 1965 about a new contract awarded to the Chicago's Symphony musicians. "It is not the salary which disturbs Mr. Szell but the control over the activities of the men, which has been taken away from the conductor and the management," reported Edward F. D'Arms in one of the collection's thousands of field notes. "This constitutes a shameful abdication of responsibility, according to Mr. Szell, and if copied elsewhere will ruin the excellence of American symphony orchestras." The Ford Foundation's contentious relationship with the Metropolitan Opera also is heavily documented in the collection. Well-documented is an infamous incident involving composer Marc Blitzstein and his proposed opera on the Sacco-Vanzetti trial, a project that caused the Ford Foundation's board chairman to attempt to cancel the entire program in the humanities and arts. Said Mr. Lowry in the oral history, "Some people have surmised that Rudolph Bing did this deliberately to wreck any program run by—and these are his words—a prestigious Foundation for contemporary opera because he didn't believe in it going on at the Met..." But as the field notes show, that didn't stop the Met from approaching the foundation for money to cover all artistic salaries for ten years. The Met didn't get its wish. Mr. Lowry, however, always insisted that grants were given out not on the basis of friendship, but on artistic merit combined with the potential for viability at the end of a grant period. This philosophy was most notable in the field of live theater, for which one of the earliest grants was made, in 1957, to the Cleveland Playhouse. The idea then, and throughout Mr. Lowry's tenure, was both to help a company produce plays and to train young actors. From this humble beginning, Mr. Lowry almost single-handedly instigated the growth of regional theater in this country from a small handful in 1957 to dozens by the time of his retirement. His cultivation of not only mainstream theater, but also experimental and black theater movements, is heavily documented in the collection. His most controversial, and perhaps most important, moves, however, came in the field of ballet. In 1964, after years of gathering data, he convinced the Ford Foundation to award a ten-year grant of more than $7 million to just one organization—George Balanchine's New York City Ballet and School of American Ballet. In retrospect, the grant is acknowledged to have caused the greatest decade of ballet this country has ever known. Among the then-unknowns trained through the grant were Cynthia Gregory and Suzanne Farrell. At the time, however, the furor was tremendous. "I find it quite shocking that the great achievements of the American Ballet Theater, the Chicago Civic Opera Ballet, the Robert Joffrey Ballet and other fine American ballet companies were in no way recognized," wrote an angry Gertrude Lippincott, the modern-dance choreographer, in a January 1964 letter found in the collection. Wrote Ted Shaw, founder-director of the Jacob's Pillow Dancefest, in his December 1963 letter, "Money is power, and money in such huge sums as you have in your hands to disperse can be crippling power." In 1964, Mr. Lowry was tapped to be the Ford Foundation's vice president for policy and planning as well as vice president for the Division of Humanities and the Arts. With the resignation of Henry Flagler (another U of I graduate) as president of the foundation in 1965, Mr. Lowry was named acting president until the foundation hired McGeorge Bundy in 1966. Mr. Bundy's tenure was difficult for Mr. Lowry, not only because many in the foundation felt Mr. Lowry should have been made president, but especially because Mr. Bundy did not see a need for heavy funding of the arts. Mr. Lowry's budget therefore was cut severely. "Lowry's most important work had already been done by this time anyway," notes Mr. Armsey, "and the purpose of a foundation is not to fund the same people and same organizations forever. The idea was to identify or define a need, help the program become self-sufficient, and then go on to something else. In terms of the arts, it was time for the foundation to move on to something else." Mr. Lowry retired from the Ford Foundation in 1975 but remained active in the arts, as the collection documents. He became an active arts consultant, helped organize conferences for the American Assembly from 1977 to 1984, and was president and chief executive officer of the San Francisco Ballet from 1988 to 1991. He died in 1993. "It's hard for us today to really appreciate what Lowry started because, with the existence of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, we take a certain amount of this for granted," notes Professor Maher. "With this collection, however, by virtue of the breadth of Lowry's programs, researchers will find information here about arts organizations that just never had the time or money to create their own records programs. So, this collection will provide information that probably can't be found elsewhere."
Art in the Campus Environment the Subject of Library Friends Lecture

More than 150 curious Library Friends and others gathered May 19 for a Library Friends-sponsored lecture by U of I art historian Muriel (“Mickey”) Scheinman on “Art in the University Environment: Inspiring, Stimulating, Puzzling.”

Professor Scheinman is the author of A Guide to Art at the University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign, Robert Allerton Park, and Chicago, a new book published by the University of Illinois Press.

Her talk focused not on works found in the university’s museum or galleries, but on sculptures, murals, and architectural art found all over campus, items that have “become part of our landscape, part of our history, something we want to know more about.”

Using slides and occasional quotes from faculty, architects, and the artists themselves, Professor Scheinman led the audience on an engaging and often amusing tour of the Urbana-Champaign campus.

The artists and architects for campus projects, she noted, have historically been subjected to committees, criticism, and occasional back-seat driving from know-it-all faculty.

For example, one of the Library’s lovely murals in the central stairwell leading to the Reference Library and circulation area caused a small tempest both before and after it was unveiled in 1926.

According to Professor Scheinman, Library Dean P.L. Windsor and his faculty had originally wanted something reflecting a midwest theme, but eventually conceded that it would be unwise to tell the artist what to do. The artist instead painted four allegorical hemispheres—the polar, eastern, western, and celestial—which were acknowledged even then to be beautiful. However, the fact that the artist rendered the Greco-Egyptian astronomer Ptolemy peering through a telescope caused a furor on campus.

“Within two weeks of the mural’s installation,” recounted Professor Scheinman, “alert academicians protested that Ptolemy, who is represented as using a spyglass or telescope, appears likely to bring the institution into a certain kind of ridicule… The artist brought the matter to rest in a short, handwritten note, found in the architect’s file, saying, ‘I think it is pretty certain that if those clever Alexandrians didn’t have lenses, they at least looked through tubes so as to isolate that portion of the heavens they wished to observe… Anyhow, what’s an anachronism between friends?’”

The terra cotta plaques on Lincoln Hall’s exterior, depicting the life of Lincoln, caused a similar furor when the building was constructed in 1911. According to Professor Scheinman, an informal committee of art and architecture faculty unanimously pronounced the panels out of place and unsuitable.

Recounted Professor Scheinman, “The company president wrote, ‘You have a mighty fine faculty socially and educationally, but they are too much for me as critics… Now Mr. Green suggests a submission to a state art commission and criticizes the second panel as to whether Lincoln saw any slave sale. Now my hands are up. Unfortunately, Michelangelo, who might have been able to do this work, is not now accessible, and it indeed occurs that it’s possible that if he had been compelled to submit to your art commission before placing his work, Italy today might not have some of its art treasures’.”

Professor Scheinman also shed light on the history of other, less controversial pieces of campus art. The famous Alma Mater statue, for instance, shows sculptor Lorado Taft’s “romantic love” for his alma mater. Noted Professor Scheinman, “Taft once wrote, ‘I once told Daniel Chester French that his noble alma mater on the steps of Columbia library was happily expressive of the reserve and reticence of the east, but that a midwest mother must be more cordial, so I made my lady with widespread arms and smiling face.’”

Sculpture lovers on campus can check out Daniel Chester French’s style by visiting his “Dr. Gallaudet and His First Deaf-Mute Pupil,” found in the north hallway of the main Library building.

“This reveals the sculptor’s original conception before having it cast in bronze,” said Professor Scheinman. “It is also innovative because it presents an actual event, the shaping of the letter ‘A’ in the new sign language without allegorical implications, as was customary.”

Professor Scheinman also gave insight into several of the campus’s more modern works of art, including the “extremely graceful and lovely” steel sculpture near the Agricultural Engineering Building on the south end of campus, and the “interesting” abstract sculpture by Alice Adcock near the College of Education. “From the side it is very insignificant,” she conceded, “and from the back even more so, but interesting.”

Her favorite modern work, however, is the new sculpture near the Grainger Engineering Library Information Center created by Alexander Lieberman. Showing a slide of a gigantic junkyard, she pointed out the origin of the sculptor’s raw materials. “This really is a handsome work,” she enthused. “It has a presence, a scale that relates to the building behind it.”

Apparent, the surface was marred when wet, rather than dry, gravel was dumped on it during installation. “It will be restored to its original, pristine rusty condition,” she chuckled. “When you go to see it, though, you will agree we are lucky to have it.”

Professor Scheinman discussed several other architectural sites on campus, including Memorial Stadium (with its copy of portions of the Parthenon’s friezes), the obelisk near the Beckman Institute (fondly called “Beckhenge” for its purpose of predicting equinoxes and solstices), and many others.

All these, and much more, are discussed in her book. Library Friends interested in obtaining the book are entitled to a 30% discount. Call the Library Development Office (217-333-5683) for ordering details.

Quotables

“This is such a wonderful library, and this is such a great group of helpful librarians that I come here every summer. This is, after all, one of the first-class libraries of the world, with first-class librarians, and that really makes the difference. I’m currently working on a book comparing the so-called ‘Great Reforms Era’ in Russia with the American Civil War and Reconstruction era. I might be able to find what I need at Harvard, but anybody who’s ever tried to use the Harvard Library tries to figure out how not to use it again!”

—James Cobb Mills, Jr.
Professor of History, Utica College
Women's Studies Unit Provides International Perspective

The time was 1979. Campus unrest was a fading memory, but the women's movement was not. Women's studies departments had sprung up at colleges and universities all over the country, including at the U of I, despite an initial lack of respect from mainstream academia.

That's when librarian Beth Stafford-Vaughan asked the Library to create the position of Women's Studies bibliographer and to appoint her to the post. Amidst great skepticism, she recalls, she was given the job and a windowless, unheated closet to call her office. The thinking apparently was that she'd run out of things to do in a few months.

Now, sixteen years later, Professor Stafford-Vaughan not only hasn't run out of things to do, she handles more than 1,500 patrons on site every year and at least as many by phone and mail. "I knew back in 1979 that a library with our reputation and prestige couldn't afford to ignore a field that was growing so wildly," she says, "and I was right.

Today, the Women's Studies/Women in International Development Unit collects books, serials, audio-visual, and electronic-format items in a variety of disciplines, including world literature, sociology, anthropology, agriculture, and many others. The materials come in a world of languages, including Chinese, Arabic, and Korean.

That's because women's studies centers have sprung up all over the world, leading Professor Stafford-Vaughan to have one of the most international collections in the Library.

"There are women's studies research programs in Japan and Korea," she notes, "and Latin America, India and Africa are just full of women's studies programs. Also, Scandinavia is particularly active."

With all these programs in place, you'd think it would be easy to acquire everything needed by scholars in the more than twenty-five university departments with women's studies components, but you'd be wrong.

"When I started doing this, which was actually a few years before I officially became the bibliographer, there were no bibliographic tools for selecting things—I just had to scramble around," remembers Professor Stafford-Vaughan.

"Now there are still very few tools, so it has taken a lot of work to build this collection."

One major difficulty has been the fact that many publications come from so-called "small" presses, which regular publishers and dealers don't want to handle. A second major complication is the fact that women's studies has expanded dramatically over the past twenty years.

"When I first started suggesting books for the Library to purchase back around 1975, even before I was the bibliographer, the big issue was the notion of women having a separate identity, rather than just being someone's wife or mother," she remembers. "Now the major focus is more on feminist theory, violence against women, and the recognition of women's contributions to national economies, which is something that grew out of international agricultural concerns.

"For instance, if you're trying to feed your family but there's no sanitary source of water where two miles or potable water becomes a woman's issue. Or if a woman is denied access to credit in her own right so that she can't borrow $100 to buy seed and a cow for her farm, then banking laws become a woman's issue. So, it's not about 'making it big in a man's world' or what to wear to work—it's much, much broader than that!"

That's resulted in the remarkably international flavor of the collection.

"In terms of your Women's Studies unit's reference collection, it's just great," enthuses Susan Saring, deputy director of the general library system at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, who herself has been a women's studies librarian for many years.

"You have materials we don't even own here at Madison. And what's certainly impressive is the number of publications you have from women's centers in third-world countries, and publications from unknown publishers. You usually don't find this all pulled together in this kind of richness."

Electronic databases now are helping provide access to information as well. "We pay a lot of attention to United Nations things, especially with the Fourth World Conference on Women coming up in Beijing this summer," notes Professor Stafford-Vaughan.

"So, we have the Womenet, a service to connect us with those who will be providing electronic connections at the conference. Right now, it provides full texts of items being prepared for the conference by the United Nations and various academic and activist non-governmental organizations, and we will be in constant contact with them in Beijing."

The U.N. Women's Indicators and Statistics Database is another electronic resource, which provides vital statistics broken down by sex for birthrates, life expectancies, economic and political participation of women, education of girls, infant mortality, etc., for all U.N. member countries and areas. Other databases provide full texts of U.N. documents and, most importantly, the texts of unpublished conference proceedings.

Closer to home, the unit also has verbatim coverage of the Clarence Thomas nomination hearings and the reports of the American Association of University Women's recent survey concerning the education of girls in U.S. schools. "These, I am sure, will be very valuable to researchers over the years," she says.

It's all led to more support for her collection than Professor Stafford-Vaughan ever dreamed of back in the '70s, when it took her three years just to get the name of the unit onto the building directories. And finally, she has been able to hire a full-time library technical assistant to help her, after some years of no help and some years with just a quarter-time graduate assistant or an occasional library clerk.

Even her meager space is due for improvement. According to the Library's space reallocation plan, the unit will expand from its tiny 1,500 square-foot, one-room office to a new space, shared with the Afro-Americana, Africana, and Latin American units, that will provide 5,900 square feet of space just for patron use alone.

"For a place this size, and as well-disguised as it has always been, we always seem to get at least 1,500 people a year, even during the period when we could only be open half-days," says Professor Stafford-Vaughan. "And that's not counting telephone and mail transactions. Including those, it's about twenty per day year round. Considering the fact that a lot of people on campus still don't know we even exist, that's pretty good!"
Calendar

EXHIBITS

August
"Romance Linguistics: From Latin to the Present." Main Corridor
"500th Anniversary of Aldus Manutius." Rare Book and Special Collections Library
"The Revolution in Chiapas, Mexico, Continued." Newspaper Library

September
"Banned Books." Mueller Exhibit Case, East Foyer
"U.N. Fourth World Conference on Women." Main Corridor
"500th Anniversary of Aldus Manutius." Rare Book and Special Collections Library
"Big Ten Centennial and U of I Football." University Archives

October
"Latin America in the World Economy." Main Corridor
"Instructional Awards." Mueller Exhibit Case, East Foyer
"John Philip Sousa." Rare Book and Special Collections Library
"Big Ten Centennial and U of I Football." University Archives
"Scholarly Treasures of the Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign." Krannert Art Museum

SPECIAL EVENTS

September 28, 4–5 p.m. 6th Mortenson Lecture, "Preserving the Written Intellectual and Cultural Heritage — An Obsolete Task of Libraries?" Dr. Hans-Peter Geh, director, Württembergische Landesbibliothek. Levis Faculty Center, 919 W. Illinois St., Urbana

October 25, 5:30 p.m. Reception honoring the Library's exhibit at the Krannert Art Museum: "Scholarly Treasures of the Library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign." Remarks at 6:15. Krannert Art Museum, 500 E. Peabody Dr., Champaign.

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