

Evaluation Report
BYU-Idaho McKay Library Special Collections
June 15, 2009

On June 15, 2009, Larry Draper, Gordon Daines, and I (Russ Taylor) from the Lee Library's Perry Special Collections visited the McKay Library at BYU-Idaho to solicit input from the librarians and archivists there about how BYU Provo could be of assistance to them in the development and administration of their Special Collections. We were graciously hosted by Martin Raish, Sam Nielson, and John Powell.

Based on our conversations with Martin, Sam, and John, we have a number of concerns about BYU-I's Special Collections/Archives, including: (1) a lack of focus in the book and manuscripts collections; (2) the absence of permanent walls dividing processing/storage areas from the public reading room; and (3) the decision of the BYU-I administration to separate the record center and archive functions at BYU-I.

Collection focus

Several times in the discussions with our BYU-I colleagues we heard the phrase, "trying to identify who we are." This lack of collecting focus was apparent in the book collection especially. We feel that because the book collection is relatively small, there is no need to divide it into Mormonism, Idaho materials, rare books, or other sub-categories of collecting. Having said that, we do believe there is much that can be done to grow the book and manuscript collections. To us there were obvious collecting areas that were not being aggressively pursued:

- Mormon Church publications
- Local histories/Southeastern Idaho histories
- Yellowstone National Park materials
- Grand Teton National Park materials

With a limited budget, we understand our colleagues' reluctance to pursue out-of-print Mormon materials. The Lee Library may be able to assist by providing duplicates of materials not needed in Provo. We do not want to send materials, however, that will ultimately end up in book sales at the McKay Library. We want to see these materials building the McKay Library's collection. We recommend that the circulating collection be surveyed and rare Mormon materials brought into Special Collections. We noted some rare materials that were in the circulating stacks and alerted Sam to the need of transferring these items to Special Collections (which Sam has done).

Collecting books and manuscripts dealing with communities near Rexburg and indeed throughout Southeastern Idaho seems to be a logical area for expanding their collections. No other institution in the region is seriously collecting materials related to Mormon settlement of these areas and it seems to us that BYU-I has a community and cultural responsibility to acquire these materials to preserve them, regardless of whether these materials currently have any

relevance to the university's curriculum. If these materials are not collected, they may well be permanently lost to researchers. We strongly recommend that CCLA encourage the BYU-I administration to allow their Special Collections to collect in this important area.

The proximity of Rexburg to two major national parks also compels us to recommend that BYU-I consider collecting material on Yellowstone and Grand Teton National Parks. BYU Provo has an excellent Yellowstone National Park Collection, and we have many duplicates that we could share with the McKay Library. We're particularly concerned that important materials related to Mormon settlement of the Grand Teton Park area are being overlooked.

Should a well-considered collecting policy (supported by the university administration) result in measureable growth of the book collection it might be advisable to designate sub-collections such as Mormon Americana, Idaho-ana, Rare Books, or other categories to divide the collection into. But at this point we don't see that any value would be achieved by sub-dividing the book collection.

Security of Materials

Another of our concerns about the McKay Library's Special Collections was the lack of security for the book and manuscript storage areas. While some manuscript collections are stored in secure rooms, some are not. Nor are the books secure. A curtain divides the storage and work areas from the reading room. We recommend that a permanent wall be built to divide the work/storage areas from the publicly accessible reading room. This recommendation has been made before; and Martin, Sam, and John have already done what they can. They need additional administrative support to finally resolve this crucial issue.

We were also concerned about the handling of interlibrary loan (ILL) materials borrowed from Perry Special Collections for library use by BYU-I students. We had the understanding that these materials were being sent to McKay Library Special Collections, but the staff there were unfamiliar with this arrangement. We're concerned that valuable library materials are not being restricted to use in Special Collections, and we will be monitoring future loans of these materials to make sure that they are being sent to the McKay Library Special Collections as per our ILL lending guidelines.

Record Management Issues

The decision to separate Records Management from the operations of the University Archives creates real problems for the long-term maintenance of sensitive and historical materials. In order for the University Archives to collect appropriate historical sources that will document the history and development of university departments and colleges, the University Archivist must be closely linked to the operations of the University Records Center. To maintain a university record destruction program without the involvement of an archivist is to risk permanent loss of irreplaceable institutional memory.

Miscellaneous Issues

We encouraged our colleagues to compile a list of Special Collections materials valued in excess of \$10,000 for insurance purposes. Perry Special Collections maintains such a listing, which has proved to be valuable in helping our insurance underwriters determine the amount of coverage needed for our facility.

We were also dismayed to learn that *all* donations of library materials require the approval of a university vice president. This seemed to us to be an unusual and unnecessary level of administrative oversight of capable professionals.

We indicated to our colleagues at the McKay Library our willingness to cooperate with them in any way we could and to provide training in any of our mutually shared collection management software. We reiterate that desire to be of assistance to them in any way we can. We appreciate the challenges our colleagues face in dealing with space and budget issues, and we encourage them to contact us with any questions or concerns they may have. We welcome the opportunity to assist them.

Submitted by Russ Taylor, Supervisor of Reference Services and Department Chair, Perry Special Collections, Lee Library, Brigham Young University.

June 25, 2009