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Did You Know?

Each second, or every time the clock ticks, the University Libraries' computer servers on average respond to 2.5 digital queries—more than 6.6 million queries per month.



Mason Acquires Legal Title to Planned Community Archives

For nearly 20 years, the University Libraries have been the repository for an important and uniquely varied collection—the Planned Community Archives (PCA) Collection. The collection charts the history of the planned community and new town movement worldwide and comprises correspondence, reports, meeting minutes, publicity, maps, architectural drawings, slides, videotapes, and photographs.

The PCA Collection was officially given to the University Libraries by Planned Community Archives Inc., a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving community development in the United States. Planned Community Archives Inc. maintained legal control over the collection until this past February. The original collection, which was placed on deposit at Mason in 1987, has since grown quantitatively through the addition of new resources, as well as qualitatively through digitization efforts.



Hickory Cluster Town homes, architectural rendering, June 1964



Hickory Cluster Town homes, completed model, front exterior, May 1965



Advertisement for Hickory Cluster Town homes, Reston, VA, circa 1964

The University Libraries' PCA Collection owes its existence to the foresight of the founding members of Planned Communities Archives Inc., including William A. Nicoson, Robert E. Simon Jr., Charles A. Veatch, Thomas Grubisich, and Peter McCandless (see page 2). The organization was created to be a repository for books, articles, papers, tapes, film, and other sources of information regarding the development, governance, and character of planned communities, including the new town of Reston, Virginia.

The PCA Collection contains information from planned communities and new towns from across the United States, such as Reston; Greenbelt, Maryland; and Woodland, Texas, as well as planned communities abroad, such as People's Freeway, Israel, and Saint Quentin, France. Closer to home, the collection contains materials from Virginia's Loudoun County transportation-oriented development planned communities, Loudoun Station and Moorefield Station. The major Internet search engines yield a number 1 search result for the PCA Collection when searching the term "planned community."

"What makes this such a distinctive collection is that no other collection like it exists," says Paul Koda, the recently retired head of Special Collections and Archives. "Scholars from across the United States and from as far away as Japan have come to Mason to access these unique materials."

Through private support, the University Libraries have undertaken an ambitious plan to digitize a core component of the collection to allow for broader access via the Internet.



Message from the University Librarian

Dear Friends,

Another academic year is already behind us, leaving our campuses indeed much quieter with fewer students rushing about.

This issue of *Full Text* illustrates a number of important accomplishments achieved over this past year. I am pleased to share with you some of the many ways we serve the university and our broader community in the pages that follow.

The University Libraries' impact is measured not just by the number of reference questions we field, the databases we provide, or the hours we keep. Our service to the Mason community also includes sponsoring lectures, mounting both physical and virtual exhibits, recording the history of the university and region through the Oral History Program, and, as always, adding to the depth and breadth of the University Libraries' resources by acquiring unique research materials. Many of these accomplishments are made possible by you, and I thank you for supporting the important work we do.

—John Zenelis

Mason Acquires Legal Title to Planned Community Archives

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“Because of generous donors, the University Libraries have been able to bring some of these materials to light,” says university librarian John Zenelis. “Our efforts, with the help of our donors, will allow scholars as well as interested citizens from around the world to access the materials contained in the collection.”

The collection is approximately 675 linear feet and is particularly strong in its documentation of the history of Reston, including Reston-related oral histories, plans, photographs, and records of civic organizations.

Portions of the PCA collection have been digitized. See <http://MARS.gmu.edu/dspace/index.jsp>

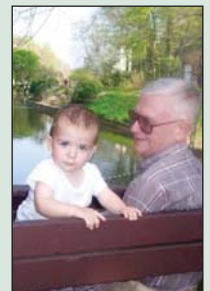
—Adriana Ercolano

Founding Members of Planned Community Archives Inc.



Robert E. Simon founded Reston, Virginia, which draws its name from Simon's initials. In 1961, with the proceeds from the sale of a family property, Carnegie Hall, New York City, Simon purchased 6,750 acres of land in Fairfax County, which later became Reston, now recognized as the foremost planned community in the United States. Reston emphasizes quality of life for the individual and provides a community where people can live, work, and play. Simon, a pioneer and visionary in the planned communities movement, imagined Reston as a place open to all regardless of economic standing or race—a radical concept for the early 1960s when Reston was under development.

William A. Nicoson incorporated Planned Community Archives Inc. in 1985 at the request of a group of residents of Reston and served as its president until 2005. He was first exposed to planned communities in the early 1960s when he was practicing law at Sullivan & Cromwell's Paris office. One of the firm's clients was a joint venture involving a major Swedish bank and Sweden's largest iron and steel manufacturer. The joint venture opened an iron ore mine in the Nimba Mountains of Liberia, and Liberia's president authorized the creation of a new community at Nimba. Nicoson was dispatched to act as counsel for the venture, where he encountered many of the issues involving planned communities in the United States and Europe: density, open space, and transportation. In addition, Nicoson accompanied two congressional trips to study new towns in Europe and South America and served as director of the New Community Assistance Programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development during the Nixon Administration.



During summer 1964, **Charles A. Veatch** began working for Robert E. Simon's Palindrome Corporation, which was developing Reston, and in 1968 moved to Reston with his wife and two children. Veatch, who had obtained his real estate license in 1960 while still a student at the University of Virginia, started his own real estate development and consulting firm, Environmental Concepts Inc., in 1970. He soon built many residential and commercial projects throughout Northern Virginia, including ones in Reston. Veatch, the current President of PCA, Inc., is active in many community nonprofit organizations, an advocate for the arts, and an avid and highly accomplished nature photographer.

University Libraries Receive Significant French History Collection

The George Mason University Libraries' collections have become richer in French history, thanks to an exceptional gift of books from Robert Forster, PhD, and his wife, Elborg. The collection grew out of teaching and research by Forster, a recently retired Johns Hopkins University professor emeritus of history. Mrs. Forster is a translator and actually did her first work for her husband.

The Forster Collection comprises approximately 2,000 titles predominantly on French medieval to contemporary history, with an emphasis on French social and economic development from 1600 to 1900. Notable among the collection is an 1884 title by Charles de Mazade, *Monsieur Thiers*:

Cinquante années d'histoire contemporaine, a treatment of Adolph Thiers, the first president of the Third Republic. Included, as well, is a major section on the French Enlightenment and subsections discussing French Canada, the West Indies, and the Haitian revolution. Many of the titles are not available in any of the Washington Research Library Consortium or Virginia libraries.

Forster gave the collection to Mason, recognizing that the university would have difficulty finding many of these rare works on the book market. "We take pleasure in knowing they will be available to researchers and students at Mason," says Forster.

"Because the university has a more contemporary collection, mostly in English, these volumes will make a tremendous difference," says Jack Censer, professor of history and dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences. Censer, who studied under Forster while a doctoral candidate at Johns Hopkins University, says, "Along with other gifts by retired professors and the University Libraries' own collecting, we will now have, once the books are cataloged, a strong research collection regarding the French Revolution and the preceding centuries."

"The collection's range is quite impressive and will be valuable to scholars in a number of areas, not just French history," says George Oberle, the University Libraries' history liaison librarian. "The collection has many rare materials dealing with French colonialism and imperialism of the 18th and 19th centuries, and it further adds value to the University Libraries' collections because there is a strong element of global history sources, as well as cultural and political studies. This addition is an important step toward building the deep collections needed to support significant scholarly research."

University librarian John Zenelis also expressed appreciation to the Forsters for their "excellent, unique, and scholarly collection," noting that because many of the titles are out of print, "it would be impossible to acquire them, even if funds are available. Gifts of this kind, in practical terms, permit this relatively young university to develop retrospective collections that are so essential for graduate-level study and research."

The University Libraries' catalog will include annotations for each title in the Forster French History Collection, and each volume will receive a commemorative University Libraries' bookplate.



Robert and Elborg Forster in Pompeii, Italy, spring 2003

"The collection's range is quite impressive and will be valuable to scholars in a number of areas, not just French history," says George Oberle, the University Libraries' history liaison librarian.

—Adriana Ercolano

Did You Know? In FY '06, library staff answered nearly 100,000 reference questions and taught nearly 10,000 undergraduate and graduate students through 450 library instruction classes.



One of Ker's wildlife photographs from the collection.

Local Woman's Safari, Wildlife Photos Part of New Library Collection

In 1958, Washington, D.C., native Edith McChesney Ker went to Kenya on a safari vacation with a friend. Little did she know that this vacation would lead her to meet her future husband and would forever change her life.

An avid photographer of wildlife and nature, Ker dedicated her life to traveling around the world taking pictures and learning as much as she could about everything she could. When she died in 2003, she left behind a monumental record of world travel and love of history and nature. Her materials – including photos, films, journals and other memorabilia – are available as one of the newest collections acquired in the University Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

The Edith McChesney Ker Collection chronicles the intriguing life of Edith and her husband, Donald. With detailed journals that reveal her passion for nature, the collection shows the couple's love for travel and history as well as breathtaking photographs from a woman with a talented eye.

"She really was a fascinating woman with a very interesting life," says Archivist Veronica Fletcher. "Though she wasn't directly associated with the university, the collection has proven to be a beneficial addition to Special Collections and Archives. Ker's photography, enhanced by numerous travel scrapbooks, journal articles and other papers, enables the collection to support a wide variety of scholarly research."

Edith's husband Donald and his business partner Syd Downey founded Ker & Downey Safaris in 1946. The company was very successful and attracted famous clientele such as Britain's Prince Charles. They also set up and maintained camp facilities for many films such as the "Macomber Affair," "Out of Africa," "The Color Purple" and "Gorillas in the Mist."



Edith McChesney Ker, second from right, with husband Don, far left, and Hugo Van Laurch and Jane Goodall, circa 1965.



Photos from Edith McChesney Ker Collection, Special Collections and Archives, George Mason University

Edith Ker spent decades of her life traveling to many continents, photographing polar bears to jungle cats. She wrote about each of her journeys in notebooks. One such, in 1966, reads, "Back to main highway where saw herd of sheep high up on hill. Ran down with surprising speed and one big ram among them. No picture of him, unfortunately, as idiot tourist stalked and scared him."

Even after her husband died in 1981, Edith continued to travel. In 1986, on a trip to Alaska, she again reveals her love of animals in her journal, "Black bear about 2 years old came to garbage can out back and people went right up close to photograph. He is a regular and now even ignores the dog. Very cute."

Edith Ker participated in more than 70 professional photographic camping safaris in Africa, and she was president of the Society of Woman Geographers from 1997 to 1999. Her photos from those trips were used in many places. The East African Wildlife Society used more than 50 of her photographs for their Christmas cards and calendars. Her photographs were also used in books for young children.

The Edith McChesney Ker Collection is available for viewing in Special Collections and Archives, Fenwick Library. Special Collections and Archives is open Monday through Friday, 12:30 to 5 p.m., or by morning appointment. The collection comprises more than 10,000 slides of wildlife, architecture and nature scenes from around the world and scrapbooks of Ker's travel and personal diaries. For more information, contact Fletcher at 703-993-2220 or vfletche@gmu.edu.

—Tara Laskowski

In addition to the photos she took while on safari with her husband in Kenya, Edith McChesney Ker also shot thousands of outstanding photos while traveling the globe over a nearly 20-year period. Images from many of these trips are enriched by accompanying typed journals and scrapbooks that vividly and meticulously describe her journeys. Below is a brief sample.



*Giverny – Monet’s Garden Bridge
France 1985*

“It was a lovely drive as we passed some of the more than 30 forests that surrounded Paris, then the country became rolling lush green farmland. We crossed the Seine a couple of times...and entered the village of Giverny, where Claude Monet lived and worked from 1883 to 1926...The gardens are totally enchanting, an informal mishmash of color with a lot of blue, roses on arches, and some colossal blooms of various flowers, and, of course, the bridge and lily ponds.”

*Monument Valley – Big Hogan
Canyons of Time October 1990*

“This is all deep red sandstone country with fantastic formations, many of them hundreds of feet high... We got out a number of times to photograph and look at the scrubby vegetation, some with little flowers – tumbleweed of Russian thistle, squaw bush, rabbit brush, Mormon tea, groundsel, and many others.”



*Easter Island – Tahai-Ahu Tahai, Ahu Vai Uri
Argentina – Chile – Easter Island November 9-23, 1993*

“On the shore not far from town is Tahai, an area of 3 ahu reconstructed between 1968-1970, lead by American archeologist William Mulloy and others... The lone Tahai dates from 700 AD and the 5 moai of Ahu Vai Uri are from 900 AD.”

The Inaugural James M. Buchanan Lecture

More than 200 attend lecture and exhibit honoring the scholarship of one of Mason's Nobel laureates

The University Libraries and the Center for Study of Public Choice cohosted the inaugural James M. Buchanan Lecture on April 7. The lecture series honors the groundbreaking scholarship of Dr. James M. Buchanan, the advisory general director of Mason's Center for Study of Public Choice and distinguished professor emeritus, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in economic science in 1986.

The lecture's keynote address was delivered by Deirdre N. McCloskey, PhD, a distinguished professor of the liberal arts and sciences at the University of Illinois at Chicago and a professor of economics, philosophy, art, and cultural studies at Erasmus Universiteit, Rotterdam, Netherlands. McCloskey's lecture, "The Hobbes Problem: From Machiavelli to Buchanan," was introduced by David Levy, professor of economics and then director of the Center for Study of Public Choice, and Sandra J. Peart, professor of economics at Baldwin-Wallace College.

In her opening remarks, Peart explained how McCloskey's celebration of the market, emphasis on motivational homogeneity, and ideas of ordinary people made her "the perfect choice to give the inaugural Buchanan Lecture." In her keynote address, McCloskey offered that a combination of seven political and theological virtues are necessary for a "flourishing human life" and placed the discussion of virtue in the context of major political theorists, including Buchanan. After McCloskey's speech, Buchanan provided his own comments, and a spirited question-and-answer session concluded the lecture portion of the event.

The lecture was followed by a reception and library exhibition, "Biography of a Book: The Making of *The Calculus of Consent*," in the Mason Hall Atrium. Robert Vay, acting head of the Libraries' Special Collections and Archives, presented a companion electronic exhibition to the "Biography of a Book" exhibit.

The Buchanan Lecture marked the first time the Center for Study of Public Choice had ever partnered with another university office for a full-scale event. All parties commented on the immensely successful partnership, and Buchanan himself commended the sponsors and the organizers, especially the attention paid to his work by McCloskey in her "fine and comprehensive lecture."

—Anne Hakes



Keynote speaker Deidre McCloskey addressing theories advanced by James Buchanan (background).

In her opening remarks, Peart explained how McCloskey's celebration of the market, emphasis on motivational homogeneity, and ideas of ordinary people made her "the perfect choice to give the inaugural Buchanan Lecture."

The contents of the exhibition are available in an electronic collection in the University Libraries' Mason Archival Repository Service (MARS). MARS is a stable, permanent archive for digital scholarly and research materials of enduring value produced by Mason faculty, staff, and students. The "Biography of a Book," Buchanan's *Calculus of Consent* Electronic Collection can be found at mars.gmu.edu/dspace/handle/1920/471. It contains 27 items pertaining to Buchanan's writing of *The Calculus of Consent* and its abiding impact.

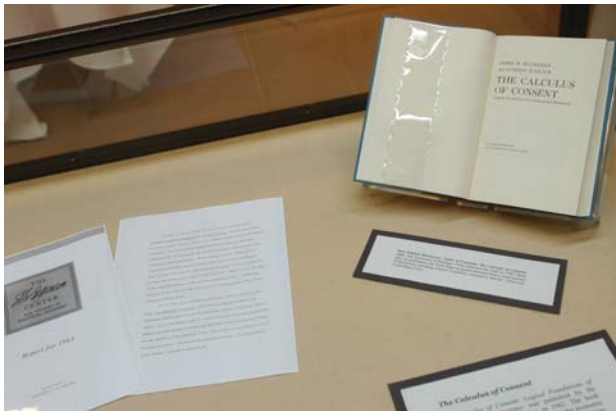
The texts of Peart's introduction and McCloskey's lecture are available on-line at the Center for Study of Public Choice web site at www.gmu.edu/centers/publicchoice/Workshop/47buchlectures.htm.



The University Libraries' Special Collections and Archives exhibit, "Biography of a Book," focused on James Buchanan's seminal work, *The Calculus of Consent*, which was coauthored with Gordon Tullock (University of Michigan Press, 1965). The exhibit incorporated letters, photographs, and other documents from Buchanan's collection at Buchanan House, including prepublication scholarly correspondence and Korean and Spanish translations of the book. (Photography by Evan Cantwell, George Mason University Creative Services)



Images from Buchanan's Nobel award ceremony (right)



Calculus of Consent archival material



Mason's two Nobel laureates, James Buchanan (left) and Vernon Smith (right), pictured with Center for Study of Public Choice administrative director, Betty Tillman



Pictured from left to right: David Levy, then director, Center for Study of Public Choice; Deirdre N. McCloskey, keynote speaker; Sandra Peart, Baldwin-Wallace College; James Buchanan; Betty Tillman, Center for Study of Public Choice administrative director; and Robert Vay, acting head, Special Collections and Archives



Buchanan reviewing the University Libraries' exhibit of his archival papers

Current Fenwick Fellows (Academic Year 2005–06)



Rutledge Dennis,
PhD, Professor of Sociology, Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Research Topic: *Socialization Processes through which Minority Group Individuals Become Intellectuals*



Ann Hurdle Maradiegue,
MSN, Nurse Practitioner Instructor, Family and Adult Nurse Practitioner Program

Research Topic: *Central American Immigrant Mothers Living in the United States: An Exploration of Genetic Family History, Parental Behavior, Acculturation, and Demographic Factors Associated with Risky Sexual Behavior among Their Teenage Daughters*

University Libraries Fenwick Fellowship Program

Retrospective look at a yearly tradition provides benefits to the university's libraries and faculty

Back in early 1983, a proposal to establish a library fellowship was submitted to the Faculty Senate Library Committee by Louella Wetherbee, director of Fenwick Library, Mason's only university library at the time. Several months later, draft guidelines were established that enabled Fenwick Library to award a fellowship each year to assist the research efforts of a tenured Mason faculty member.

In fall 1983, the first Senior Fenwick Fellowship was awarded to Barry Beyer, PhD, Department of Education, for his proposal, "Research Project on Analytical Thinking." Since then, there have been 29 Fenwick Fellowship recipients researching myriad topics.

The early proposal stipulated that the fellow would receive exclusive use of a "large carrel in Fenwick equipped with a desk, file cabinet, shelving, and a typewriter." The fellow also was allocated a stipend of \$500 to cover such services as computer searches, interlibrary loan requests, and book purchases falling within the University Libraries' collection development policies. Upon completion of the fellowship, the Faculty Senate Library Committee would receive a brief, three- to five-page written report stating benefits, work completed, and an evaluation of the Fenwick Fellow Program. Today, the award is \$2,000, and fellows must present a public lecture on the results of their research the year after their fellowship.

Over the program's 23 years, the University Libraries' collections have been enriched by the research materials and books accumulated during the fellows' terms. Many scholarly journal articles and books were published by Mason faculty members based on their one-year fellowship research (see sidebar on left/right). The program serves as a reminder of the University Libraries' continuing role in contributing to and enhancing the scholarly pursuits of those who immerse themselves in its offerings.

In a memo to Wetherbee, thanking her for information on Fenwick fellowships, Mason's president at the time, George Johnson, said, "I continue to think this a brilliant idea." It was then and remains so today.

Further information about the Fenwick Fellowship Program can be found at timesync.gmu.edu/libnews.

—Debra Hogan

Over the program's 23 years, the University Libraries' collections have been enriched by the research materials and books accumulated during the fellows' terms.

Did You Know? In FY '06, the University Libraries were "open" an average of 107.5 hours per week.

Past Fenwick Fellows

1983–84

Barry K. Beyer, PhD, Professor of Education, Department of Education
Research Project on Analytical Thinking

1984–85

John O'Connor, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of English
A Critical Biography of John Howard Lawson

1985–86

Brack Brown, PhD, Associate Professor of Government and Politics, Department of Public Affairs
Public Administration and Policy Aspects of Space Development

1986–87

James E. Maddux, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology
Child Development and Child Health Psychology: A Critical Review of Theory and Research and Implications for Public Policy

1987–88

Melvin A. Friedlander, PhD, Assistant Professor of Government and Politics, Department of Public Affairs
America, the Middle East and the Paradox of Culture

1988–89

Veronica D. Feeg, PhD, Associate Professor of Nursing, School of Nursing
Plan for Integrating Computerized Techniques to Establish Library Resource Aids for Research on Children's Health

1989–90

Karen I. Vaughn, PhD, Chair, Department of Economics
An Examination of the Liberal Christian Critique of Capitalism

1990–9

Donald P. Kelso, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Biology
The Preparation of a Bibliography of Academic Articles on Tidal Freshwater Rivers

1991–92

Jonathan L. Gifford, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Public Affairs
Policy Issues in the Implementation of Intelligent Vehicle Highway System Technologies

1992–93

Timothy J. Conlan, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public Affairs
Adding It Up: Estimating the Cumulative Costs of Federal Mandates on State and Local Governments

Post-Fenwick Fellowship Accomplishments

Fenwick Fellows' research projects have resulted in scholarly publications. Below is a sampling of such activities by Fenwick Fellows:

Howard Kurtz, 2004–05 Fenwick Fellow, assistant professor of theater, developed a resource guide that is available at Fenwick Library based on research for his lecture, *The Costume Designer's Search for Inspiration*.



Cynthia Lont, 2003–04 Fenwick Fellow, professor and acting director of the Center for Telecommunications and Media Research, created in conjunction

with GMU-TV a video module, *Women and Media: An Introductory Video to the Field*. The video received the Crystal Communicator Award of Excellence from communications professionals to recognize excellence in their field and a "Gracie" from the American Women of Radio and Television.



Hazel McFerson, 2002–03 Fenwick Fellow, associate professor of international studies and conflict analysis and resolution, edited *Blacks and Asians in America: Crossings, Conflict and Commonality*,

which was a direct offshoot of her Fenwick Fellowship research. The book was recently published by Carolina Academic Press.

Geoffrey Birchard, 1994–95 Fenwick Fellow, associate professor of biology, selected for his proposal "Analysis of Reptilian Developmental Times through the Development of a New Data Base." He continues to build on his Fenwick Fellowship research, including the publication of a subsequent paper, "Incubation Time in Reptilian Eggs" in the *Journal of Zoology*, London (1996).

1993–94

Daniele C. Struppa, PhD, Professor, Department of Mathematics
The Development of Complex Analysis at the Turn of the Century

1994–95

Geoffrey F. Birchard, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Biology
Analysis of Reptilian Developmental Times through the Development of a New Data Base

1995–96

Theodore L. Gessner, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Psychology
To Start a Specialized Library Collection Centered on the Problems of Organizational Violence

1996–97

No Award

1997–98

Arthur Herman, PhD, Adjunct Professor, Department of History
The Rise and Fall of Joseph McCarthy

1998–99

Jeremy Crampton, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Geography and Earth Sciences
Integrating Digital Spatial Data Resources with the World Wide Web: Metro DC/Northern Virginia Data in Fenwick

Lisa M. Rabin, PhD, Assistant Professor, Department of Modern and Classical Languages
Visual Art in the Poetry of Spanish America

1999–2000

Ann M. Palkovich, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Comparative Primate Behavior and Neuroanatomy: Toward Understanding Human Consciousness

Willem Hendrik Thorbecke, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Economics
U.S. Trade Policy during the Clinton Administration: A Public Choice Analysis

2000–01

Dana Richards, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Computer Science
Parallel Computation and the Problem of Sorting

Daniel Rothbart, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
From Instruments to Philosophy: Toward a New Philosophy of Science Based on the Design of Experimental Technologies

2001–02

Rose Cherubin, PhD, Assistant Professor of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies
Parmenides, Zeno, and the Framework of Scientific Knowledge

Peter Mandaville, Associate Professor of Government and Politics, Department of Public and International Affairs
Non-Western Alternatives to Modern Political Practice

2002–03

Kristin Johnsen-Neshati, MFA, Assistant Professor, Department of Theater
World Stages: Investigating Non-Western Theatrical Traditions

Hazel M. McFerson, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public and International Studies and Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution
Establishment of an Archival Collection and Baseline Data on Relations among Asian Immigrants, Asian Americans, African Americans and Amerasians of Part African American Ancestry

2003–04

Cynthia M. Lont, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Communication
Women, Minorities and Media Focus

Marcella Ridlen Ray, PhD, Senior Fellow, School of Public Policy, and Adjunct Faculty, Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Social Institutions: Messages from American Bestsellers for Educators, Civic Leaders, and Policy Makers

2004–05

Jo-Marie Burt, PhD, Assistant Professor of Government and Politics, Department of Public and International Affairs
Truth and Justice? Analyzing the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission

Howard Vincent Kurtz, Assistant Professor, Department of Theater
The Costume Designer's Search for Inspiration

Did You Know? The number of virtual visits to the University Libraries' web site: nearly 1.9 million
The number of virtual visits to the University Libraries' catalog: more than 1.2 million



From left, Bob Veenstra, Chipper Petersen, and John Whalan stand proudly with the telescope and observatory they built (1975)

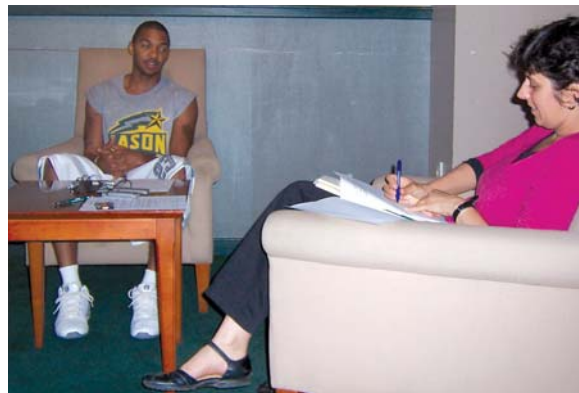
Oral History Program: Saving the Past for the Present

In 1971, John Whalan, Elaine “Chipper” Petersen, and Bob Veenstra, students in George Mason College’s first astronomy class, got the idea to build a research-grade telescope. With the support of the department and their professor, the three students spent four years of long nights, weekends, and summer vacations building the telescope and constructing an observatory on an undeveloped part of the campus where there once stood a pigsty. In 1975, the George Mason University Herschel Observatory opened to an enthusiastic public only to be torn down four years later to make way for the Field House.

All that is left of the telescope today are a few parts, photos, and the recollections from Mason alumni Petersen and Whalan (who married shortly after the observatory opened in 1975). These memories were captured by the University Libraries’ Oral History Program (OHP) and are just one example of the many interviews conducted and preserved by the program.

The OHP, which works to capture oral histories in a number of areas, is directed by the University Libraries’ Special Collections and Archives (SC&A). The program formally began in fall 1999 under the supervision of Paul Koda, who recently retired as head of SC&A. Oral histories are a powerful means of preserving the unique memories and life experiences of people whose stories might otherwise have been lost. Oral histories enable those in the present to experience the past and come in contact with feelings and attitudes as experienced by the very persons who lived through a particular moment in history. From an educational perspective, oral histories add richness to the study of history and can engage students and scholars in ways books and other writings alone never could.

One of the more notable collections is the George Mason University Oral History Program, which captures the experiences and careers of members of the Mason community, such as former university presidents and long-time staff, faculty, alumni, and friends. The interviews add important personal perspectives to the university’s history and acknowledge the contributions of individuals to Mason’s creation, development, and growth. Highlights in this collection include interviews with former Virginia Governor Linwood Holton (who signed the legislation establishing Mason as an independent university in 1972), former Mason presidents Robert Krug and George Johnson, fund-raiser and patron for the arts Joanne Johnson, and an interview series with Lev Vekker, a professor at the Krasnow Institute. SC&A staff are also in the early stages of compiling histories of the 2006 mens basketball team. Memorializing the team’s phenomenal year and experience at the NCAA Final Four will add a student athlete perspective to the Mason Oral History Project.



Oral History in progress: Katja Hering of the Libraries’ SC&A staff interviews Lamar Butler from the Mason men’s basketball team about his experience during the team’s phenomenal run in the 2006 NCAA Tournament



SC&A staff Katja Hering (left) and Veronica Fletcher (right) interview Tony Skinn from the Mason men’s basketball team about his years at Mason.

Another important collection is the Planned Community Archives Oral Histories Collection, which records the memories and reflections of major figures involved in developing the planned community of Reston, Virginia. (See related story, page 1.) Most recently, the OHP interviewed Charles A. Veatch, a long-time Reston resident, real estate developer, and environmentalist (see www.gmu.edu/library/specialcollections/veatch.html). The collection also includes interviews with Reston’s founder Robert E. Simon and many Reston residents and activists, such as alumna Catherine A. Baum, BS Business Administration ’81.

In addition, to its own recordings, the University Libraries have also acquired a number of oral history collections from other sources. One of these is the Theatre of the Thirties Oral History Collection, conducted by Mason’s Institute on the Federal Theatre Project and New Deal Culture and coordinated by Lorraine Brown, PhD, of Mason’s English Department. The project collected interviews with people involved with the Federal Theatre Project during the 1930s. Similar collections include the Clarence E. Larson Collection, which has interviews with

distinguished scientists, such as Luis Alvarez, Linus Pauling, and Glenn Seaborg, and the Northern Virginia Oral History Project, which contains interviews of individuals from the Northern Virginia community, highlighting their individual contributions to the area’s explosive development since World War II.

The OHP gladly accepts suggestions for possible interviews and can be reached at ohp@gmu.edu or 703-993-2220.

—Katja Hering

Upcoming Event:

Fall for the Book September 27 – October 5

(<http://www.fallforthebook.org>)

Featured Speakers

Dave Eggers

Fall for the Book Prize

Judy Blume

2006 Fairfax Prize for Lifetime Achievement

Doris Kearns Goodwin**David Ignatius****Susan Shreve****Deborah Tannen****Roger Wilkins**

library.gmu.edu/libinfo/fulltext.html

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