

History of the University Libraries

The first library of the University of South Alabama opened its doors in early 1964 in a room of the present Administration Building. Donations of books from Mobile residents, as well as materials purchased under the guidance of several librarians, contributed to building the initial collection. The first Director of the Library was a retired Navy Captain, Richard Touart. His skills in logistics were vital since books and other materials were arriving at a prodigious rate. Seeing that his work was cut out for him, the new Director hired Ms. Hilda Steinweg as the first professional cataloger from 1965 to 1975. She was steeped in the specialty of Cataloging having served at major universities in both Illinois and Ohio for a number of years.

The flood of material the library was receiving was the result of the work of several librarians employed in the Mobile area who acted as selectors for the new Library. They were Mr. Ed Rhodes, formerly of the University of Alabama Extension Center in Mobile, Mr. Robert Zeitz, then director of the Spring Hill College Library and Ms. Fanny Taylor, a local librarian. These three had been ordering materials utilizing the undergraduate library shelf lists from the University of North Carolina and the University of Michigan as guides. Ed Rhodes later worked in a general public services capacity during this formative period and was later appointed as the first Head of Circulation.

The rapid growth of the University Library in 1965/66 resulted in the public services areas being moved to the south end of the Administration Building on the first floor and technical services and administrative areas to the basement. A little later, the Acquisitions unit was moved into temporary offices of the new College of Education facility next to the Administration Building.

Captain Touart functioned as the Director of the Library until May 1966 when he assumed other duties for the University. Captain Touart retired in the early 1970's from the position as Head of Personnel Relations.

Touart was replaced by Aaron I. Michelson as the first Director of the Library with a degree in the field. Mr. Michelson directed many significant developments in the library during his tenure as Director. Paramount among these was the completion of the modular four-story structure which houses the University Library today. Hoping to put USA on the cutting edge of modern library facilities, the University hired three distinguished consultants to help plan the building. These were Guy R. Lyle of Emory University, T. M. McMullan of Louisiana State University, and M. Orvin Rush of Florida State. The building was opened for use by the University community on September 15, 1968, and dedicated by Governor Albert P. Brewer on July 31, 1969.

From 1966 through 1969, all of the major department heads were appointed. Viola Harper became the first Head of Reference; Dana G. Gould, Head of Acquisitions; Geraldine M. Irby, Head of Government Documents; Eugene V. Sullivan, Serials Records Librarian; and Dr. Joaquin M. Holloway, Jr., Director of the Instructional Media Center.

During the 1970's, the University Library collections and services grew to full-fledged academic library status. Some of the highlights of this decade were as follows:

- Government Documents, Microforms, and an Instructional Media Center were three unique functional areas developed at this time. The opening and professional staffing of these three new

areas went smoothly with the exception of one area, Government Documents. In this case, Ms. Irby faced a serious obstacle. According to the law, there can only be two depositories in any one Congressional District. The First Congressional District, in which the University is located, already had two depositories, one at Spring Hill College and one at the Mobile Public Library. It is a credit to both Ms. Irby and then Congressman for the First District, Jack Edwards, that the University Library was able to acquire depository status and become the primary government documents resource for this region. Both Spring Hill College and the Mobile Public Library had to thin out the retrospective materials in their collections due to space limitations and Ms. Irby eagerly acquired these materials for USA.

- There were some early attempts at automating library procedures: a serials print-out was produced using punched cards, the Library's financial records could be called up on a direct line from the Computer Center and serial invoices were input on magnetic tape in the main computer for easy reference. All of this was done with the help and expertise of the University Computer Center.
- The Microforms Collection grew significantly with the acquisition of the Library of American Civilization and the Library of English Literature. These collections, along with large blocks of local newspapers such as the Mobile Press and the Mobile Register, have proven to be excellent resources.
- The Biomedical Library was founded in July 1972 and became part of the University Library system at this time to serve the College of Medicine's information needs housed. It was housed in the University Library with Mr. Tom Lang as its first Director.
- In 1973, the University Library became a charter member of The Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), which is a broker of OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) cataloging and reference databases.
- The University Archives was established at USA (USA Brookley Center) in 1978 as the last official act of then Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dave Morton. The Archives remained at Brookley until the building was damaged by a tornado in May of 1989, at which time the collection was relocated to its current location at USA Spring Hill. The Archives houses primary source material relating to the history of Mobile and south Alabama and to the University's history. The Archives has grown to have one of the largest photographic collections in the region, including the Erik Overbey collection. The Archives also house important records and manuscript collections such as the papers of Congressman Jack Edwards; materials from the civil rights era; and the Mobile County Circuit court records (c. 1830-1917).

There were a number of important events during the 1980's as follows:

- In the early 1980's, Dr. Charles B. Lowry became the Director of Libraries and under his leadership, library automation began in earnest. Assisting Dr. Lowry with automation was Patricia Ramage, who served as the libraries' first Systems Librarian from 1984 until her retirement in 1998. With the support of the University Administration, and the University Computer Center, the Library purchased the NOTIS (Northwestern Online Total Integrated System). The first modules to be automated were cataloging, acquisitions, and serials in late June 1983. LUIS (Library User Information System), the online catalog, was made available in October 1983, with one-fourth of the Libraries holdings. LUIS was user friendly and library users

could access the catalog database by author, title, and subject. After virtually all holdings were input to the online catalog, the card catalog was removed in 1988. The Circulation function of the library was implemented in 1989 after all circulation materials were bar-coded to link to the bibliographic record. The Library's database at that time could be accessed by anyone having a modem from locations on campus or the world for the price of the phone call.

- A bibliographic instruction position was created in 1984 and filled by Viola Harper, former Head of Reference. Collection Development was also singled out as an independent activity, and Gene Sullivan, Head of Acquisitions/Serials, was made head of this unit.
- In 1980, librarians achieved faculty status and tenure and created policies to document promotion, tenure, and evaluation procedures.
- Dr. Lowry left the Library in 1985, and Bob Donnell, Director of the Biomedical Library, served as Interim Director for over a year. He resumed his duties as Biomedical Library Director when James A. Damico came on board as Director of University Libraries in 1987. With Jim Damico, the Libraries moved into a period of closer ties with the University community through a program of visibility and public relations.
- The University became a member of NAAL (Network of Alabama Academic Libraries) in 1983 to improve statewide resources in support of graduate study and research to facilitate resource sharing. NAAL has since increased emphasis to cooperative licensing of agreements for databases and electronic article delivery services of common interest to members.

The 1990's brought even more changes to the Library as follows:

- The 1990's saw the move from library accessible CD-ROM databases and mediated searches (Dialog) to Internet accessible licensed databases and full-text journal article delivery services that all USA affiliated users can access through networked PCs. This became the preferred method of access to the periodical literature by the end of the decades for the vast majority of students and faculty.
- In December 1992 the Biomedical Library was moved to a renovated resident hall near the College of Medicine where it is located today. It provides about 35,000 sq. ft. and serves as the needs of the students, staff, and faculty of the College of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health Professions.
- The Medical Center Library with more than 5,000 sq. ft. of space was renovated in 1995 to serve the needs of the doctors and clinicians at the Medical Center.
- In 1996, Media Production Services (MPS) was administratively merged with the Biomedical Library. It offers a wide range of services including photography, both traditional and digital, computer graphics, CDR production, videography, medical illustration, and slide production. MPS has a campus site in the Medical Sciences Building and another in the Mastin Building at the Medical Center.
- Jim Damico retired as Director of the University Library in 1998 and Eugene Sullivan served as Interim Director for the next year.

- In August 1999, Dr. Richard J. Wood began his third academic library directorship at USA. In January 2001, the University Library, the Biomedical Library, library services and the Baldwin County campus, and the USA Archives were centralized by President Gordon Moulton under Dr. Wood, whose title was changed to Dean of University Libraries.
- The Endeavor, Inc., Voyager System was purchased and installed in February 2000 to replace the NOTIS system which had been used for the previous 17 years. Voyager's client-server system replaced the mainframe system architecture of the NOTIS System to allow for more seamless linking to electronic resources and services.
- A branch library of the Biomedical Library at Children's and Women's Hospital was dedicated in late 2000 to meet the specialized needs of doctors, nurses, and staff for library resources and services.
- From 1999 through 2001, the efforts of many University administrators, faculty and staff members went into designing and planning a new addition to the University. Working with The Architectural Group (TAG) of Mobile and Doster Construction Co., Inc., construction of the long promised addition to the University Library commenced in January 2002. The ground floor of the University Library was also renovated in 2002. The new addition to the University Library was opened in 2003. It features two entrances closer to the parking lot, one on the east and the other on the west side. This significantly enhances access to the University Library and allowed the main entrance on the south side to be removed. While considered a separate building from a construction viewpoint, the second, third, and fourth floors of the two buildings are connected to achieve an integrated building.

This history of the University Library is based on the following books and book chapters and has been added to as needed.

Caldwell, James F. *Magic – No! Miracle – Yes!: The Founding and Early Development of the University of South Alabama*. Mobile, Ala. : n.p. , 1998.

Sullivan, Eugene. "University of South Alabama 1964-1988," in *A Dynamic Tradition: The History of Alabama Academic Libraries from Their Establishment Through 1988*, edited by Vicki L. Gregory, 205-210. Birmingham: Birmingham Public Library Press, 1991.