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Archives aid students' research

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Students would press their noses against the windows of University Archives and Manuscripts when Hale Library first opened in 1997. They wondered what the area was and if they could go in.

The archives are on the fifth floor of Hale with more than 150 years of K-State history - yet most students today probably are not aware of its existence.

An official university archives did not exist at K-State until 1983. It was then that a national search took place and Tony Crawford was hired as K-State's first official university archivist.

Crawford, who also serves as an associate professor and curator of manuscripts, said university archives contains original K-State academic department documents, photographs, scrapbooks, Kansas State Collegian and Royal Purple clippings and DVDs, among other historical items. One of its largest collections are the papers of every K-State president, Crawford said.

"Archives collects a variety of materials that document a variety of segments on campus," he said.



Media Credit: Matt Castro

The oldest materials in the university archives date prior to the founding of Kansas State Agricultural College in 1863. During the 1850s, New Englanders came to Kansas and established Bluemont Central College, which is where Founders Hill Apartments exist today.

Archival materials from Bluemont Central College, now stored in archival boxes and folders, are the oldest in the University Archives and Manuscripts, Crawford said.



Media Credit: Matt Castro

"It's been really special to see how archives has grown in its collection of K-State," he said. "It's really gratifying to see how its mission is being satisfied in maintaining the archives of K-State and maintaining a rich history so the legacy will not be forgotten."

The Council of State Archivists, along with the Society of American Archivists, developed a nationwide annual observance of Archives Month. Until this year, while most Archives Week activities occurred in October, a fixed, nationally recognized date for events did not exist, according to the Council of State Archivists Web site.

"More and more archivists think it's a good idea because many people don't know what an archive is," Crawford said. "We're trying to put that seed in peoples' minds."

K-State will have its first archives event in celebration of the month from 1-5 p.m. Friday on the fifth floor of Hale. University Archives tours will take place at 1 p.m., 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. Crawford will present "The University Archives: Preserving K-State's Legacy" at 3 p.m. in the Hemisphere Room.

"We think K-State has a really important legacy," Crawford said. "Students should be proud of the university and how it's grown."

About 1,000 people visit archives each year, and students are the largest group of its users, Crawford said. Students with academic majors like journalism and mass communications, history, English, architecture and women's studies often use archives as research for class projects, he said.

"We think that the archives is an extension of the classroom," Crawford said. "In some sense, we are a lab that's providing a resource for students to do research."

Pat Patton summarized University Archives and Manuscripts in one sentence - "Knowledge is power, and archives provides the knowledge." Patton became a research specialist with University Archives and Manuscripts in 1988.

"I knew nothing about the position except that I love K-State," she said.

Patton said she starts her days reading the Topeka-Capital Journal, the Manhattan Mercury and the Collegian and indicating stories for student assistants to "clip and copy" into the vertical files.

The rest of Patton's days are spent assisting researchers and bringing them materials like archived photographs, Collegian indexes and history indexes.

However, the research is not always routine. Patton spent part of Monday helping a researcher look through indexes about a hog cholera serum.

Patton also said she enjoys researching and telling the stories of people associated with K-State. She spent about 10 years researching and documenting the founders of Phi Beta Sigma's Delta chapter.

She also said she enjoys sharing interesting facts with people, like that K-State's first graduating class in 1867 had more women than men.

"We all have different people and different areas we work on," Patton said. "We become deeply attached to them."

Researchers are required to fill out a registration card with university archives. Patton said it is exciting to see freshmen fill out the card because she said she has four years to engage with them in archives.

"The comment that is really difficult to hear is 'I never knew this place existed,'" Patton said.

Tamara DeRossi, who has worked as a student assistant with university archives for about two years, said she learned a significant amount about K-State's history, including campus building names' origins.

"I've learned a lot of new research methods and how valuable using university archives can be when you are researching K-State," said DeRossi, senior in family studies and human services.

DeRossi said she helps researchers retrieve vertical files and other materials needs. She also said most people she knows are unaware of University Archives and Manuscripts or even that a fifth floor in Hale Library exists.

"It'd be a good way for people to learn more about the school they're attending," she said. "It's a great resource to use when doing research."

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R. Nicholas

posted 10/16/07 @ 8:22 AM CST

Great Story. Might be a good idea if the students that attended KState submitted their memories and student activities to the Archives as well. Create a living history for the students and their descendants who might want to research their time at KState in the future as well. ([Continued...](#))

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Jeremy Parker

posted 10/16/07 @ 11:51 AM CST

Ah, how I miss you, student archives.

Sincerely,
Your favorite employee ever.

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