WHAT TO KEEP

How your department can contribute to the continuity and completeness of the story of the University of Puget Sound.

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February 2, 2005

Introduction

The University Archives, housed in Collins Memorial Library, contains the historical record of the University of Puget Sound in tangible form. It contains printed materials produced by the campus throughout its history, a fairly extensive photograph collection, and many other items that help tell the story of the university. It's an impressive collection of irreplaceable items that are the memory of the institution.

The archives is an orphan of sorts and is only minimally maintained. There is no comprehensive, campus-wide collection program and little has been added to the archives in over a decade. There just isn't the staff or the space at this point to do so.

This document is meant to raise awareness on campus of the status of the archives and the need for departments to hang on to documents and other items they produce that may be of long-term historical value to the institution. The University Archives is not able to collect materials at this time, so we are asking departments to retain and store items that may be deposited in the archives in the future once the issues of staffing and space are resolved.

Below you will find guidelines to help you determine what materials may be valuable. Generally, only a fraction of the materials a department produces are of historical value but it's important that they are identified and preserved. The guidelines relate only to the materials departments have that are of historical value and not records that must be kept for administrative, financial or legal purposes. Guidelines for the latter are provided by the University's Division of Finance and Administration (http://www.ups.edu/financeadmin/Record_Retention_Policy.shtml).

Identifying materials of historical value

Deciding what items are of historical value is more an art than a science. Materials that describe the purpose, activities, history, values and character of a department should be kept. Materials of historical value describe
- when, why, how the department was formed;
- who provided guidance and leadership over time;
- who has been a part of the department over time;
- how the department has grown, evolved, and changed focus over time;
- what milestones, achievements, unusual or outstanding events have occurred over time;
- what anecdotes, stories, and people embody the essence of the department at a particular point in time.

Traditionally, the types of materials that address these points and merit archival retention include those listed below. Each department is different and you are encouraged to develop a customized list based on the items suggested below. Only the most basic digital items are included in the list and departments should to determine what other digital files might be historically significant. Since the University Archives does not have the capability of preserving electronic files or 'born digital' materials at this time, departments should (1) bear this responsibility for now, and (2) make printed copies whenever feasible.

- Accreditation reports
- Announcements
- Annual reports
- Artifacts (trophy, plaques, gifts, etc.)
- Brochures and flyers
- Calendars and timelines
- Correspondence relating to key issues and decision-making
- Department web site (perhaps print out annually)
- Faculty web pages
- Goals and objectives
- Handbooks
- Histories
- Minutes of meetings

- Organizational charts
- Photographs & slides of faculty, students, special events, or other notable happenings
- Planning documents
- Posters
- Publications
- Publicity materials
- Reports
- Scrapbooks
- Special event invitations/announcements
- Speeches
- Videotapes
- Web pages – beyond those mentioned already that are considered worth capturing

Keith Ward and Carole Christensen used these guidelines and developed the following list of materials for the School of Music to retain and store.

- School of Music DIS (off web beginning 2004)
- Brochures of the School of Music
- Poster of the School of Music
- Annual printout of the web site
- Curriculum Reviews
- School of Music recruitment media: record, cassette, CD, and CD-Rom
- Photographs in digital files
- Press Releases (from Public Events)
- Scrapbooks (Adelphians)
- NASM Reviews
- Concert Programs (also from Public Events)
- Annual Welcome Back memo from the Director
- Faculty meeting minutes

Be aware that material that may seem dated to you (over three years old?) may not be to the archives. Very little has been added to the archives over the past 12 years and materials that are in the archives are not there due to any former comprehensive collection efforts.

Please discuss this with your department and, if it isn’t being done already, develop a process for identifying and retaining materials that may be of historical value to the university. Once a list of items to keep is drafted, it will be a fairly simple task to collect them regularly and store them.

Storing materials of historical value

The University Archives does not currently have the capacity to collect large quantities of materials from departments. A long-term plan for the archives is being developed which will address this issue. In the mean time, departments are asked to store historically significant materials within their departments whenever possible. Date, organize and label items, folders and boxes. Add explanatory notes as needed. Store the items together in a dark, dry place that is off the floor and away from water sources and food.

Retiring faculty

It’s likely that much interesting and valuable historical information about a department resides only in the heads of people that have been there a while. At some point, this information should be recorded. It can be a very significant and substantial part of the department’s history. Perhaps retiring faculty could be interviewed and recorded, or asked to write up a brief memoir of their time at UPS for the archives. At the very least, departments are encouraged to ask retiring faculty if they would like to contribute a select amount of materials, stories, documents, etc., to the department history and/or the University Archives. Please ask them. These are only suggestions. Perhaps this is an issue department chairs can explore further as a group.

Department histories

It would be nice to eventually have histories, how ever long or short, for each academic department and program on campus in the University Archives. Departments have distinct characteristics and unique identities and department faculty are the best authorities on how to tell the story of a department. Perhaps there is an emeritus faculty member who would need little more than to be asked to write up a history of the department or program. Or, current faculty could put down in writing more recent history.

There may also be someone else close to the department that would be interested in such a task. For example, in 2004, the Occupational Therapy Department celebrated its 60th anniversary. Mary Bess Johnson, daughter of Mary Marjorie Jenkins Mann (the key player in the founding of the program), used the occasion to start writing up the early history of
the department (1936-1965) based on her mothers files and information in the UPS Archives. She handed out the draft version at the reunion and gathered additional information from the participants. Reunions are also excellent venues for capturing stories and historical information. State alumni chapters may also be fruitful.

The future of the University Archives

This document is just one component of a larger effort to improve the University Archives and ensure its continuity. This effort includes a thorough needs assessment of the existing collection in terms of preservation, organization, growth, and use. I invite anyone in the campus community who would like to be involved in this effort to contact me.

The university is already very fortunate to have such a fine historical collection. I see this as an opportunity to complete an important part of the story of the University of Puget Sound, and acknowledge that our past is as important as our future.