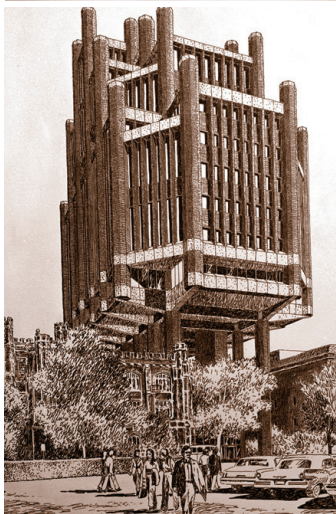




# 125 Years of Books to Internet

The Quasquicentennial of the  
University of Oklahoma Libraries

By Jeffrey M. Wilhite



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Foreword by Richard Luce

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## Foreword

The heart of every great university is its library, the intellectual hub of campus where collective knowledge is preserved, tempered, and created anew. This forge of ideas fosters creativity and collaboration in ways that can impact how we learn and how we share our knowledge with the world around us. As we move forward with a new vision of the University of Oklahoma Libraries, one that embraces the technological influences of today while maintaining the preservation and conservation of primary sources with innovative digital resources and state-of-the-art facilities, it is important to understand where we have been.

The University of Oklahoma Libraries has embraced the pioneer spirit driven by a sense of possibility. Shaped by the land and its history, we seek to embody a Sooner renaissance of intellectual engagement. With reverence and profound appreciation for those who have paved the way, we seek to transcend the model of a traditional library to one that enables us to learn in a way our founders could have never imagined.

Richard Luce  
*Dean, University Libraries*



## Preface

My love affair with the University of Oklahoma Libraries began twenty-seven years ago. The first recollection I have of entering Bizzell Memorial Library was in 1987 to find information on the poet William Wordsworth, a noble quest for a young college freshman bound for a love of books. My first sensation was the thrill of encountering mile after mile of book stacks: red books, blue books, old books, giant books; these manifold books seemed to contain all the knowledge of the world, right there for my choosing. To have all of that knowledge stacked right there before you is a powerful feeling.

But the enormity of the actual structure also left me awestruck: the three unusual buildings stuck together, the bustling thoroughfares of students and faculty and librarians, the empty study rooms tucked into far corners on upper floors, and the curious deck hallways that led nowhere. But the pièce de résistance was, of course, behind those great red leather doors: the Great Reading Room.

To my young Edgar Allen Poe-inspired mind, this room was the absolute tops. Amidst its splendid vastness, huge curtains concealed mysterious bay windows, aging gargoyles goggled you from outside, and those magnificent carved wooden angels, precariously perched so high above, offered protection. The edifice seemed like my own Gothic-novel version of the Winchester Mansion. But past the whispering Renaissance art on the walls and the soaring oak arches in the architecture, there was a feeling throughout the whole structure that anything could be accomplished there with just the help of some books. And from the moment I first entered those memorable halls, I knew I was struck: I loved this library.

It was not long before I had a job there, in Government Documents, the same collection I run today. My thought at the time was, “I’m in the library all the time, why not work here?” And that reasoning still applies to this day. After progressing from the status of student to graduate student, from visiting faculty to faculty to tenured faculty—and thus indeed growing up within the shelved walls—I never cease to be impressed by our library.

But my infatuation with the library now goes beyond a curiosity about the book stacks and the nooks and the crannies of the building. It extends to the flashing digital labs and the glowing computer screens of e-books shining out articles about Sci-tech still not even dreamt of today; to the virtual reality headsets and 3-D printers humming away in brightly lit makerspaces; and above all to the people—the people streaming into the building to use the new as well as old resources that the library has to offer. The library is now an even more amazing place than it was the first time I crept into it, for it has stretched out a technological hand to the new students of today. The library is a place of illuminated robotic progress beyond the shelves of vellum-bound books; it offers a lit display mirroring the eyes of those with questions.

It is an amazing library, indeed.

But if you need me, I will still be in the Great Reading Room, being awed.

Jeffrey M. Wilhite  
*Associate Professor of Bibliography*  
*The University of Oklahoma*

## Introduction

Settled upon the Great Plains in 1890, the University of Oklahoma has a long and distinguished history. And the University of Oklahoma Libraries have as storied a history as the University they are nestled within. From one bookcase of fifty-three books brought in by train by the first president, to the current holdings of more than six million volumes, the University of Oklahoma Libraries have grown and changed along with the twists and turns of America. One hundred and twenty-five years after their founding—through wars, depressions, the Dust Bowl, budget cuts, microfiche, and now the Internet—the University of Oklahoma Libraries have not only persevered but prospered, and have grown into the largest research library in the state as well as one of the premiere libraries in the United States.

# From Indian Territory to Oklahoma Territory

Oklahoma was never meant to be a state. In the early nineteenth century, the U.S. government established the area as Indian Territory, designating it as a new homeland for Native American tribes that were forcibly driven from other parts of the quickly expanding United States. In the 1880s, however, the federal government changed its plan and opened up the restricted area to white settlers. On April 22, 1889, the first Land Run was held, allowing settlers to claim parts of the unassigned lands. This Land Run opened up the area where the town of Norman would be founded later that day.

On December 19, 1890, the first territorial governor of Oklahoma approved a bill for the establishment of three educational institutions in the state, one being a university at Norman. The act establishing the university was adapted from the 1869 law that had established the University of Nebraska.<sup>1</sup> And with the stroke of that executive hand, the University of Oklahoma was founded. Norman was not incorporated as a town until May 12, 1891, and then with only a population of 1,218. But the town's founding fathers were clear in their desire: to have their new city be the educational center for Oklahoma Territory and even, eventually, to become the future "Athens of Oklahoma."<sup>2</sup>

## 1890: The University of Oklahoma

The first step in establishing the University was to appoint its first president. David Ross Boyd came to Norman in August 1892 to attend to this position. In later remembrances, Boyd recalled "being surprised at the idea of wanting a university in a place as primitive as I knew [Oklahoma] must be." When he arrived, he found that "not a tree or shrub broke the interminable monotony of that hard-pan desert. . . . Behind me was a crude little town [Norman] of 1,500 people, and before me was a stretch of prairie on which my helpers and I were to build an institution of culture. Discouraged? Not a bit. The sight was a challenge."<sup>3</sup>

On the train bound for Norman, Boyd carried with him 53 books in a bookcase. These 53 books were not obtained as strategically as today's acquisitions; rather, the volumes had been given to him freely by publishers, so they were not even books Boyd had chosen for his future classes. But those 53 books constituted the University's original library, and for that reason those 53 books were well cared for over the years and are now on display in the current president's office.



The University of Oklahoma began its existence in the “Rock Building” on Main Street, rented for \$20 a month. This two-story building on the south side of Main Street, a block and a half west of the railroad tracks, was formally named the Adkins-Welch building, but because it was constructed of Cleveland County rock, it was usually called the Rock Building. One faculty member would later recall, “In comparison with the magnificent plants of older and wealthier states, it seemed a gross exaggeration to call that stone building and its modest contents a university. Only three rooms without ornament, barely comfortable, cheaply furnished with tables for teachers’ desks and with chairs for the students; no libraries, laboratories, traditions; a toddling present, a hope for the future, but no past.”<sup>4</sup> Sadly, the fledging university had no need for a proper library since the University had no books besides those few Boyd had brought with him and the smattering of materials collected in that first year.

On September 15, 1892, the doors of the University of Oklahoma were officially opened to its first fifty-seven students. According to author Harold Keith, “The students were mostly older, poor, and had not had a chance to go to school since arriving in the new county a few years earlier. The boys mostly wore high riding boots and denim trousers, while the girls dressed in gingham and wore their hair in plaits. Seldom could a student be found who owned a collar or necktie.”<sup>5</sup>

The University moved out of the Rock Building into a new campus south of Main Street in the fall of 1893. The first true University of Oklahoma building was



The first University Building, 1893. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Coleman no. 40

three stories tall, with twenty-two rooms. Designed by C. H. Hocroft, it cost \$32,000 to build. According to *The Norman Transcript*, “Both the interior and exterior of the Oklahoma University building is not alone a picture of beauty, and symmetry, but a model of art, an encomium upon the architect and a living panegyric upon the skill of the contractor. The inside finishings are complete and so commodious that the professors all predict a much more interesting and progressive term this fall.”<sup>6</sup> And with that, the University was off and running.

## 1893–1903: The First Library, University Building

The first official University Library was established in the new University Building, in a twenty-by-thirty-foot room on the east wing of the second floor. The library now contained seven hundred books. The Oklahoma Historical Society was founded at the University in 1894, and many of the organization’s books and magazines had become part of the new library, adding to its total volume count. During the 1893–94 academic year, the Board of Regents authorized President Boyd to spend \$30 on improvements for the library room.

University student Nahum E. Butcher became the first “librarian,” although he was not a librarian by trade. Butcher was hired for this position, in which he served from fall 1894 through spring 1896, on a part-time basis and was paid \$10 per month. In the first year, Boyd allowed his young librarian some limited funds to spend on books. Butcher later recalled, “We had quite a little library of books, very few of which would apply to education purposes in a university because they were given to us by ministers over the state and other people who had books they wanted to give away. Then we had a few dollars to spend for the books that different professors requested for use in their class work. First year, as I remember, they allowed us \$500.”<sup>7</sup>

In fall 1895, President Boyd advertised for a new librarian, boasting “the Library will be in charge of a competent librarian, and the books will be so indexed and catalogued, as to make the resources of the Library available to students. The reading room will be open at all hours of the day, where in addition to the newspapers of the Territory and the leading papers from all parts of the United State[s], will be found a full list of the leading magazines for the use of the students.”<sup>8</sup> Boyd’s support of the library, with its focus on the students, reflected his overall mission for the burgeoning university.

Maude DeCou, former Ponca City school superintendent and another university student, was hired as the next librarian, serving from 1896 to 1897.

DeCou was paid \$200 a year and was the first librarian to attempt to index and catalog the library collection. She also hired as her student assistant Milton Jay Ferguson, who would later come back in 1902 to take charge of the library on a full-time basis. DeCou left Norman within two years, to accept a position at Newkirk High School.

As times changed and students enrolled and graduated, the early University continued to grow in small but incremental ways. As classes became larger, so did the faculty. There were visible changes on campus as well. "Illustrating the young school's wistful yearning to pull itself up to the same plane as the older institutions in the country," writes Keith, "*The Umpire* [the University's first student-run newspaper, which premiered in 1897] announced with pride that spring, 'The ivy on the north side of the University has reached the second story window.'"<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the small things meant the most, especially to a school as young as the University of Oklahoma at the time.

After DeCou's departure, a new librarian, Maud Rule, was hired. Rule, another University student, ran the library for four years, from 1897 to 1901. Although Rule worked to bring order to the library, some professors were still unimpressed. In reflecting upon his initial perceptions of the University, English professor Vernon Parrington mentioned in particular his first impressions of the library:

"I had never been in Oklahoma, and as I got off the train, that September day, what lay before my eyes was disheartening. The afternoon was insufferably hot and dry. . . . A single small red brick building—ugly in its lines and



Grace King and Maude DeCou, circa 1897. King was the first music teacher at the University, and DeCou was in charge of the library. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Boyd 17

with a wart atop—a sort of misshapen cross between a cupola and a dome. . . .Then I went into the library. . . .Miss Rule was busying herself putting things in shape there. The room was fair-sized and pleasant, only where were the books? . . .There were perhaps three or four hundred books, all told, but of those that . . .could be used for the work in English, there were not fifty. They were so few, it was with downright pleasure that I found a set of the *English Men of Letters*, Taine's *History of English Literature*, and Gosse's *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*. For a year they were the stock in trade of the English Department."<sup>10</sup>

And in 1900, geology professor Charles Gould likewise found conditions at the University inauspicious: "There was absolutely no equipment for carrying on the work of the department; no classrooms, no laboratories, no collections, no library, nothing but a young chap just out of college, turned loose on his own resources and permitted to sink or swim."<sup>11</sup>

Professorial opinion aside, the library's collection grew at a steady and healthy rate. In 1900, the library boasted, according to Roy Gittinger, "4,023 accessioned books, 1,391 of which had been added during the past year; 4,500 unaccessioned books; and about the same number of monographs and pamphlets, consisting mainly of congressional reports and reports of various departments of the U.S. government."<sup>12</sup> The library had become a Federal Depository Library in 1893, and as such received publications from the Government Printing Office free of charge. In addition, the reading room of the library had on file most of the newspapers of the Territory as well as forty magazines. By this point the library had expanded to include a stack room, a small librarian's office, another small room for work on cataloguing, and a student reading room that was open every weekday from 7:45 A.M. to 5 P.M. and every Saturday morning.

In 1901, the Sixth Territorial Legislature passed a bill making an appropriation for a new university building, providing that not more than \$90,000 should be used for "the purpose of constructing such buildings and procuring the necessary machinery for heating and lighting the same, and for remodeling and repairing the present University building."<sup>13</sup> The Regents appointed A. J. Williams to design this new building, with the stipulation that the architectural firm of Cope and Stewardson, of Philadelphia, was to advise him. This second official University of Oklahoma Building would be named University Hall, and would house a new, larger library.

By the time Maud Rule departed in 1901, the current library boasted more



than 6,000 volumes. Milton Jay Ferguson, who had graduated from the University in 1901 and had spent a year at Melvil Dewey's New York State Library School in Albany, returned in June 1902 to become the University's first full-time, professionally trained librarian. He remained in the position for almost seven years, until January 1, 1908. He returned to campus in time to see the library grow and expand but also to suffer greatly from its first massive fire.

The spring 1903 semester was to begin with 465 enrolled students, but on the morning of January 7, 1903, a fire started in the one complete university building, as University Hall was still under construction. As described by Keith, "A red blaze was seen smoldering in the southeast basement room of the lone university building. The alarm was given. Shouts and cries of 'Fire! Fire! The university's on fire!' . . . Since the building stood alone on the prairie, far away from even the southern-most extension of the city's new water line, the town fire department was useless. Buckets were found and scooping up cistern water from the vat, the students fought frantically to preserve the beloved building."<sup>14</sup> And with that, the only intact University building burned to the ground.

Beyond everything else—the science equipment, teachers' class notes, and the prized grand piano—the entire ten-year-old University Library was also lost to the fire. Among the books lost were Professor Parrington's prized English Collection, which contained six volumes of *The Dramatic Works of John Dryden*; a



Ruins of the first University Building, January 1903. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Hadsell 20

fifteen-volume set of works by William Hazlitt in leather and gold; Cunningham's *Ben Jonson*; the new *Variorum Shakespeare*, and countless others.<sup>15</sup> The only volumes not destroyed were those few that happened to be saved by stalwart students as the fire began, those currently checked out to students, or the books the professors had at home. All in all, around twelve thousand books and five thousand pamphlets went up in flames. The cause of the fire was unknown, but because it started in the laboratory, there was reason to believe that an explosion of chemicals was the catalyst. The only advantageous aspect to the timing of this fire was that the University's second building, University Hall, was almost complete.

From January 7 to the middle of March 1903, the University was transferred back to the Main Street Rock Building. The president's office and what was left of the library was transferred to the Arline Home, a privately owned dormitory also on Main Street, designed to accommodate eighty to a hundred female students. Work began on finalizing the second, and now only, University building, as well as on replacing the library resources.

According to a February 7, 1903, article in *The Oklahoman*, "The library is fast being replaced. Already all the books that are being used this semester have arrived and are all catalogued. The new library is somewhat better than the one destroyed in the fire for the books received are all new and in many instances they are much more durable."<sup>16</sup> The first book purchased for the new collection was Tuckerman's



University Hall, circa 1906. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Kraettli #35

*History of English Prose Fiction*, which was used for many years after that. Noted statesman William Jennings Bryan sent a check to the University's Oratorical Society for \$25 to buy additional books. This money was used to purchase a complete set of Thomas Brackett Reed's *Modern Eloquence*, a set that later became known as "The Bryan Donation."

## 1903–1905: The Second Library, University Hall

Just two months after the January 1903 fire, the University's second, and now only building, University Hall, opened its doors. The new building was vastly different from the Romanesque structure of the original University Building; instead, this one was built in Renaissance style. Much larger than the first, it contained around 80 rooms (compared to 22 in the previous) and was 240 feet long and 120 feet wide. According to Carolyn S. Sorrels, "The material of the building was Coffeyville pressed brick, finished in St. Louis buff brick and terra cotta. The building was surmounted by a heavy terra cotta entablature and a handsome balustrade. A flight of stone steps 40 feet wide led up to the main entrance and was flanked at each end with heavy stone walls trimmed with terra cotta coping. At the top of the steps were four large Ionic columns set on heavy pedestals. The columns were surmounted with entablatures, and above the entrance was a pediment containing the seal of the University executed in terra cotta."<sup>17</sup> The most imposing feature of University Hall was the dome. This was 46 feet square at the base, changing as it rose higher to an octagonal and then to a circular shape. A gallery surrounded the rotunda, which extended from the basement to the top.<sup>18</sup> But the building's main visual characteristic was its uneven appearance, as one wing was left off in the original construction, so it appeared unfortunately lopsided in its massive stateliness.

University Hall opened just as electricity had come to campus. The library within had been quickly recompiled from donations of one thousand ill-assorted books, which were placed in a single cramped room on the first floor. This makeshift library was certainly not sufficient for the growing University, however, and the process of establishing an independent library building after the chaos of the recent fire began quickly.

In April 1903, at the meeting of the Board of Regents, it was announced that the famous American industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie's proposal for a new library building for the University was accepted: "Mr. Carnegie is very glad to share in the work of reconstruction of the University which was burned, to the extent of providing a library building to cost thirty thousand dollars."<sup>19</sup> The

Regents accepted the offer and construction started immediately. Carnegie, who eventually would fund nearly 1,700 libraries across the country, at this point had never funded a university library.

## 1905–1920: The Third Library, Carnegie Library



Carnegie Library, circa 1905. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, EB Johnson Postcard 32

The new Carnegie Library, the first dedicated library building on the University of Oklahoma campus, opened in January 1905. Designed by A. J. Williams, it clearly betrays a new architectural influence: Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie style, which was well suited to the plains of Oklahoma.<sup>20</sup> As Sorrells explains, "The entrance is framed by massive square columns supporting a plain entablature topped with a false pediment. The strong horizontal lines of the entablature are carried around the building by a string molding and an intermediate cornice. The windows of the flanking wings are set in slightly recessed bays, creating the illusion of pilasters, but the vertical sweep is interrupted by the insistent horizontal of the string molding and cornice. The raised terrace and two flights of steps give further importance to the entrance, and are, again, important elements of the Prairie style, the strongest element of which is horizontality."<sup>21</sup> As of 2015, this building still stands on campus and now houses the Department of Classics and Letters.



According to University historian David Levy, "For the time being, of course, the building was more than was needed to house the University's meager library holdings—the fire had seen to that."<sup>22</sup> The University Library occupied only the main and second floor, with an auditorium (used for graduation, as well as the chapel) and the women's gymnasium in the basement. Upon completion, the library held 11,910 books for the use of the University's 743 students.

The 1907 fall semester opened with a feeling of unrest on the campus. The citizens of Oklahoma were in the midst of an active campaign regarding the adoption or rejection of the state constitution. On November 16, Oklahoma Territory officially became the State of Oklahoma. By this time, the library had reached 15,000 volumes, and the library system had broadened to include a number of branch libraries, including for the departments of Geology, Biology, and Engineering.

On December 20, 1907, an earlier decision to eliminate the fireproofing from University Hall, which had been made in the interest of economy, proved disastrous. On an exceptionally cold day, as workmen were beginning to tar the roof, utilizing a coal-oil stove to heat the tar, the bucket boiled over and fire began to spread.<sup>23</sup> The new domed University Hall burned to the ground. Fortunately, the Carnegie Library had already been built, so at least this time the University did not lose its library.

Overall, the loss was great, but not as great as the loss of the first building in 1903, four years before, as now there were two other buildings on the campus besides the new Carnegie Library: Science Hall and the Gymnasium. President Boyd quickly organized the campus and not a day of class was missed when the students returned from the holidays. As the University adjusted to the ramifications of the second fire, the women's gymnasium in the basement of the library was converted to four sizeable classrooms to help make do.

"Just as it seemed that the library was fated to be the responsibility of able but highly transient students and former students," according to Levy, "[librarian Milton Jay] Ferguson chose an assistant librarian who changed everything."<sup>24</sup> Ferguson hired Jesse Lee Rader as his assistant librarian, forever altering the face of the University of Oklahoma Libraries. In January 1908, Ferguson left the University to go to the state library in Sacramento, California, and Rader, then a senior, replaced him for the remainder of the year. Although Rader applied for the official position, the Regents overlooked him, instead hiring John Sherwood McLucas as the University's next librarian. With a Harvard education and significant library experience, McLucas had the good sense to retain Rader as his assistant.<sup>25</sup> When McLucas left for the University of Colorado in 1909, after only a year in Norman, Rader became

the University's librarian. Rader held this job for the next forty-four years, until his retirement in 1953. The 1908 University *Mistletoe* yearbook speculated that Rader may have been born in the library.

By 1912, the holdings of the University's libraries (including all branches) numbered approximately 20,000 volumes. At the recently established School of Medicine in Oklahoma City, a medical library had been established, and the School of Law also had its own library. Although the entire University Library holdings were impressive for Oklahoma at the time, they were smaller than some of the other notable library collections in the area, including those of the University of Texas with 130,000 books, and the University of Kansas with around 100,000.<sup>26</sup>

In 1917, the State Legislature allotted \$75,000 for a new library, as the library holdings had already outgrown the confines of the Carnegie Library. Having matured at a good clip, the number of University Library volumes was now around 30,000, which was quite notable, considering that twelve years earlier, when the Carnegie was first built, there had been only just over 11,000 books.

Time passed, and as the specter of World War I fell over Europe and then the United States, the University went all out for war. According to Keith, "On October 1, 1918, the Student Army Training Corps was established [at the University] and the campus was like a military camp with sentries marching and more than 1,300 male students wrestling the manual of arms and learning to roll their Khaki leggings."<sup>27</sup> But through wartime and then peace, the University continued to grow and add new students, new faculty, and new buildings.

Something should be said at this point about the early architectural style of the University buildings. The first real architectural arbiter on campus was English professor Vernon Parrington, who would later receive the Pulitzer Prize for his three-volume *Main Currents in American Thought*. In 1908, Parrington had made a case for the Gothic style. As Levy explains, "it had long academic traditions, flexibility, and economic practicality . . . and it had been endorsed by the most advanced college planners and architects in America."<sup>28</sup> The Collegiate Gothic style (or "Prairie Gothic"), with its gargoyles, rising turrets, pointed arches, divided windows, and ornate detailing, also helped to add a thousand years to a school's history, something that certainly benefitted a burgeoning small-town Oklahoma university.<sup>29</sup> And thus under Parrington's direction and erudition, the campus began building in the Collegiate Gothic tradition.

The first Collegiate Gothic building on campus was the 1912 Administration Building (later renamed Evans Hall). To this day, Collegiate Gothic at the University appears to be an eclectic collection of stylistic elements influenced by the

architecture of early England, ranging from the early Norman period through the Jacobean period.<sup>30</sup> During a visit to the University of Oklahoma in 1950, famed modern architect Frank Lloyd Wright is said to have coined the phrase “Cherokee Gothic” to describe this type of campus architecture, which he deplored. In more recent times, the University has embraced this phrase as a fitting description of the elegant campus architecture.<sup>31</sup>

## 1920–1929: The Fourth Library, the New Library (Now Jacobson Hall)

In 1920, the “New Library” opened, housing the 30,000-item collection (but with a capacity of 80,000 volumes), a reading room, periodicals, and offices. This was the second structure to be built at the University specifically to serve as a library. The two-story structure was situated on the North Oval, facing Boyd Street, in a cross between the Prairie style and a toned-down Collegiate Gothic style, with deep-set gothic-arch windows and roof pediments, but also with the horizontal lines typical of the popular Prairie-style buildings on campus. As of 2015, this building is still standing, has been renamed Jacobson Hall, and houses the University of Oklahoma Visitor Center.

With the projected future growth of the collections, the New Library was



The “New Library” (later Jacobson Hall) in snow, circa 1920. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, Heffner W1193

quickly destined to be too small even as Rader and his staff moved in. With only a few pushcarts to use for transportation, Rader was not overjoyed with the task of transferring the library. "Moving 30,000 volumes in a week—and in midwinter—with almost no mechanical facilities was one of the most trying jobs I ever attempted," he later reflected.<sup>32</sup> After the opening of the New Library, additional branch libraries began to be established, including for Chemistry, Mathematics, Physics, Pharmacy, and the University High School, all by the end of the 1920s.

A number of University presidents had come and gone since David Ross Boyd, but the one who had the greatest influence on the developing 1920s library was William Bennett Bizzell, who became president on July 1, 1926. When Bizzell arrived, the library had 65,000 volumes, plus 120,000 pamphlets, 8,000 volumes of uncatalogued government documents, and several thousand volumes in the Law library. Bizzell announced as one of his first priorities the establishment of a new library building, designed to house the expanding library resources. "We can't build a great university without a great library," he declared.<sup>33</sup> Bizzell proceeded to pursue exactly what he wanted: a \$500,000 new library building to replace the 1920 "New Library."

Bizzell first approached the Regents and then the state legislature, and the legislature suggested that the cost be reduced. But President Bizzell stood firm. He explained to the legislature what a great library would mean for the University, for its thousands of future students, and for the cultural standards of the entire state.<sup>34</sup> In 1927, he eventually persuaded the reluctant state legislature to appropriate \$560,000 for the project: \$500,000 for the building and an additional \$60,000 for the glass and steel stacks.

The library was to be the symbol of Bizzell's administration. "The completion of this building means more to me than anything in my career," Bizzell said. "It will be the nucleus for a truly great University. I feel that the library is the real heart of a school, the foundation for all learning."<sup>35</sup>

The new library was going to be much larger and much grander than all the previous library buildings. It would feature the work of some of the best wood-carvers, sculptors, and masons in America. It would also be the first University of Oklahoma building to face the soon-to-be-developed South Oval, in contrast to all of the previous buildings, which had been built on the North Oval. The new library was to be designed by the architectural firm of Layton, Hicks, & Forsyth in the same Collegiate Gothic style that characterized Evans Hall. Almost an exact replica of Christ College at Oxford, the library would have space for 350,000 volumes, an



impressive Great Reading Room, and a Treasure Room for housing the many rare books and manuscripts that Rader had begun collecting so diligently.

According to Bizzell, the new library would be designed in a style of architecture that would permit it to be joined by wings to Evans Hall, eventually forming a library with a capacity of one million volumes. Under the plan, Evans would then become the front entrance of the library, and a new administration building would be built elsewhere. The wings, when built to connect the new library with the Administration Building, would form a quadrangle around an open rectangular court. Sadly, over time, the need for space for growing collections was met by constructing a utilitarian red-brick box addition. That addition, built in 1958, destroyed the magnificent potential of unified buildings surrounding the planned central university courtyard.

Construction on the new library began in 1927, including the seven floors of glass-and-steel book stacks. Stacks constructed of fire-resistant materials, such as glass and steel, were a popular safety feature of libraries at the time, and an element the university was especially keen to incorporate after its two earlier devastating fires. The steel stacks could not be ordered until the final passage of the institutional appropriations bill; nearly five months were then required to build the stacks after they arrived.

As President Bizzell moved forward with the planning of the new library building, he also began courting donors to build up the library collections. With the help of noted University of Oklahoma history professor Edward E. Dale, Bizzell persuaded Frank Phillips of Bartlesville, founder of the Phillips Petroleum Company, to finance, with a gift of \$10,000, a collection of source materials on the history of Oklahoma and the Southwest. This assemblage of materials would eventually become the Western History Collections, one of the University's most valuable special collections.

A *Sooner Magazine* article at the time summarized the extent of the library's rapid expansion: "In the relatively short period of its existence the Library of the University of Oklahoma has grown. . . . The 35,000 volumes which composed the collection in 1920 have been added to at the rate of 8,000 volumes a year until the present number, almost 100,000 volumes, has been acquired. New books are continually being added, despite the fact that there is not enough room to place them in use on the shelves of the building now in use."<sup>36</sup>

## 1929—: The Fifth Library, The University Library (1929–1945), then Bizzell Memorial Library (1945—)



The University Library (later Bizzell Memorial Library), circa 2014. Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Libraries

The new University Library, as it was initially called, was completed in 1929, and was first occupied in January 1930, after 125,000 volumes of books had been moved there, in the course of five days, from the old “New Library.” Librarian Rader proudly called the new library “Oklahoma’s Crown Jewel” and promised that the new facility would have the capacity to hold one million books when finished.<sup>37</sup>

The library was—and as of 2015 still is—a masterpiece of Collegiate Gothic architecture. The front outside façade contains a multitude of symbols carved into the architecture: grape-vine motifs (symbols of mental power) around the “Library” name; three- and four-leaf clover designs (for luck) on the outside and inside of the building; shield/escutcheon motifs with purely decorative elements (for strength, defense, and nobility) on the towers; tablet flowers (for beauty) in the borders; and lotus leaf designs (for purity, resurrection, evolution, and potential) across the top upper pediment of the library façade.

Figurative elements abound outside the building, including many grotesques (carved stone figures). Grotesques and gargoyles were originally added

to medieval churches to scare evil spirits away from the building, and in Collegiate Gothic design they are used for a similar design purpose. The figures adorning the University Library include seven monstrous faces across the front middle pediment (perhaps the Seven Deadly Sins?); life-size crouching figures inside the front alcove appearing to “hold up” the alcove roof; grotesque faces lining the roof pediments; faux-gargoyle grotesques sprouting from the top towers; and actual gargoyles (which function as water spouts) hanging from the east and west gables.

There are also beatific icons carved into the outside of the building. On the east and west gables are angels holding scrolls that mirror the carved wood angels soon to be encountered inside the Great Reading Room. But the crowning symbol of the building, in the middle of the top façade, is the grand front-facing pendant of a griffon holding a scroll. A griffon has the body of a lion with the head and wings of an eagle. Symbolically, a griffon is a guardian of treasure and representative of power and watchfulness. Here the library griffon is presented as proudly guarding the innumerable and invaluable treasures within the walls of the University of Oklahoma Library.

As one enters the library, the work and expense that were put into making this European-inspired masterpiece on the Oklahoma plains are as evident in 2015 as they were in 1930. The architects spared no effort in making the structure a beautifully finished monument to knowledge, from the floor tiles to the last carved architectural detail. Grill-work fountain screens, linen-fold paneling, wall moldings, and elaborately carved roof trusses accounted for a large share of the \$115,000 spent on the dark oak woodwork alone.

The woodcarver for the entire new structure was Boudewyn DeKorne, who came from the Netherlands, settled in Zeeland, Michigan, and was the master carver for Berkey & Gay Furniture factory in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In the early 1900s, DeKorne went into business for himself, making commissioned hand-carvings and furniture for homes, churches, and libraries, both locally and throughout the United States. He worked six months to chisel out the preliminary designs for the library, which he then sent to Oklahoma for local craftsmen to replicate and install. Interestingly, one Boudewyn DeKorne design that can still be seen every day in your local grocery store is the Lorna Doone cookie. DeKorne carved the original arabesque mold of the cookie in 1912.<sup>38</sup>

In 2008, the great-granddaughter and the great-great granddaughter of Boudewyn DeKorne came to the Norman campus from Michigan to see the Great Reading Room woodwork, and this author had the privilege of giving them a tour of the room. The great-granddaughter commented, “The grapevines were

his trademark. He did them in everything. Even when he was eight or nine, coming over on the boat from The Netherlands, he carved the wooden spoons with that same grapevine design.”<sup>39</sup> And those designs continue to grace the outside entrance, walls, and interior woodwork of the library to this day.

The outside decorative elements of the library carry over inside the building in the woodwork and glass details, including the four-leaf clover and decorative shields, while other new images are introduced. On the interior doors there is extensive scroll work (literally depicting scrolls) and, in the glasswork, triskelion designs, which are symbolic of good luck. Other features of note are the brass-lined terrazzo floors, which consist of cement and marble with extra marble chips on the surface. Even the water-fountain alcoves are impressive, with gorgeous carved-wood grill-work screens and detailed tile work that depicts animals and children climbing vining trees.

When the new library was originally opened in 1930, it was a nonbrowsable collection, which meant that books were accessible to patrons only through the assistance of pages. Faculty and graduate students were allowed to browse the decks but not without permission. When patrons first entered the library, they would be greeted by a large counter staffed by the pages, who would pull whatever books were requested and deliver them back to the patrons at the counter. That counter was removed in the 1958 “update,” to allow access to the new wing so patrons could browse the stacks for themselves, unfettered for the first time.

Traveling up the grand stairs to the anteroom to the Great Reading Room, one discovers carved wooden statues of monastic figures, which are intended to add reverence and academic intent to the structure. The terrazzo marble floors in this room contain a magnificent starburst design, which can be interpreted as symbolizing the actual heart of the University. Bizzell believed that “the library is the real heart of a school,” and here we have that idea realized in marble, as this starburst is in the heart of the library, which is the heart of the University.

On the anteroom walls on either side of the starburst were two enormous paintings. These paintings (which now hang inside the Gothic south entrance to the library) were completed by Patricio Gimeno in 1931 and were reproductions of famous European masterworks. Gimeno was a multitalented University faculty member, who taught art and the Italian and Spanish languages from 1911 to 1940. One painting was *Dante and Beatrice, After Henry Holiday* (the original of which is in the National Museum of Liverpool, England) and the other was *Blind Milton Dictating Paradise Lost to His Daughters, after Milhaly von Munkacsy* (the original of which is in the Salomon Room of the Central Research Library, New York Public Library).

These paintings immediately drew the viewer into the quickly unveiling heaven and hell architectural and decorative theme of the building.

Upon entering the Great Reading Room, one is inevitably awestruck. This architectural masterpiece continues to be a favorite location for students to study and alumni to visit. University students of the twenty-first century are fond of calling it “The Harry Potter Room,” because it reminds them of the expansive and



The Great Reading Room, Bizzell Memorial Library, circa 1930. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, OU 281

magical Hogwarts Dining Hall, as described in J. K. Rowling’s popular book series. The room is 184 feet long by 40 feet wide—about half the size of the University football field—and can seat 250 people. The walls are lined by 30-foot-high windows, with Bedford limestone bays on each end. Beautifully carved bookcases, decorated with carved rosettes, hold theses and dissertations of University graduates. The outside decorative elements continue herein, with scroll work and DeKorne’s trademark grape leaves carved into the woodwork.

The ceiling features intricately carved angels, variously holding a book or a shield, symbolizing knowledge and strength. With the addition of the angels, the full architectural intent of the building is finally realized: after you have braved the tortured gargoyles outside the building, ascended the great stairs and passed the heaven and hell paintings, where you are now under the carved wooden angels,



you have ascended into Heaven. One is reminded of a line from a poem by the great Spanish writer Jorge Luis Borges: "I, who had always thought of Paradise in form and image as library."<sup>40</sup> The Great Reading Room makes his vision a *fait accompli*.

The Great Reading Room was originally used as the main reference area for the entire library. Inside the cavernous room is a small walled-off cubicle that served as an office. Ominously resembling a Catholic confessional, this office was occupied by the librarian, who was available to answer questions. The room also contained beautifully built furniture. Out of the \$500,000 appropriation, \$62,000 was spent on furnishings and stacks. All of the original library furnishings, including leather upholstered chairs and oak tables inlaid with ebony and carved to match the general Gothic design, were supplied by the Wisconsin-based Svaboda Church Furnishings Company.

As impressive as this room is today, can you imagine how impressive it was to students attending the University in the 1930s, when Oklahoma was in the throes of the Dust Bowl and Great Depression? Much later, a woman whose father-in-law worked on the building, and who first saw the new library in early 1931, commented, "Everybody was so poor . . . it was the beginning of the Depression and it [the library] was beautiful and finished." During the Depression, she explained, "people were closer together and beauty was more important."<sup>41</sup>

On the day the University Library opened in January 1930, more students checked out books than on any other day in the history of the school to date. A total of 740 books were drawn out by students, and about 1,200 people visited the building during its first day of service. At this time, Jesse Rader's title was changed from "Librarian" to "Library Director," as a way both to acknowledge his leadership skills and many years of dedicated service and to indicate the growing importance of the library on campus. Radar was also appointed the first director of the Library School, which was founded that same year and housed in the basement of the library.

The dedication of the University Library occurred on February 21–22, 1930. More than 150 prominent educators from all parts of the United States attended the event, with President Bizzell presiding over the program. At the dedication, Bizzell called the dedication "one of the most important events in the history of the University" and "the most important cultural event that ever happened in Oklahoma."<sup>42</sup> He continued by reading congratulatory letters that had been sent in honor of the event, including one from President Herbert Hoover and one from Henry Putman, the Librarian of Congress.



## 1930s–1950s

In the first years after the construction of its new building, the library grew steadily, with its holdings reaching 138,000 volumes in 1931, even as economic hardships began to set in. The early 1930s Great Depression brought severe financial constraints to the entirety of the United States, with Oklahoma governor William H. Murray requesting that state agencies collectively return the sum of \$2 million out of the appropriated funds during the second year of the 1931–33 biennium. The University Regents responded in May 1931 by ordering President Bizzell to plan for a return of \$305,000 to the state.<sup>43</sup> Belts had to be tightened, even at the state's largest university.

The University combatted its financial shortfall by promoting the low cost of attending the school to the state and nation. This tactic worked, as by 1934, the University became the tenth-largest state institution in the nation and the twenty-fourth-largest institution of higher learning in the United States. In the Midwest and Southwest, only Texas had a larger enrollment. During the lowest point in the Depression, 1930–31, the University of Oklahoma still beat its own previous record for enrollment.<sup>44</sup>

By 1938, the University had gained enough financial footing that the library was able to open a new browsing room for patrons. According to *Sooner Magazine*, "Nonconformists who disdain the mechanized selection of reading matter by the card-catalog system can enjoy the University Library now, since an informal browsing room recently has been opened. Containing 3,000 new books, the browsing room has comfortable seating accommodations for 200 persons and plenty of wandering room for those who merely like to rove from shelf to shelf, eyeing the titles and leafing through best-sellers. Purely for pleasure reading, the collection emphasizes new fiction, but there is a liberal sprinkling of biography, travel, economics, psychology and religion."<sup>45</sup> The general feeling of "disdain" toward the closed stacks would not be rectified until the 1958 library addition opened, giving patrons the freedom to browse the stacks on their own.

Also in 1938, a new technology was introduced to the library: microfilm. The process reproduced books on film or fiche, using microscopic print. In conjunction with the English Department's purchase of a series of microfilmed British books, the library assisted researchers by providing the machinery to read these microfilmed materials. But as if to prove that the library was not all business and machines in the 1930s, nineteen-year-old Laverne Thomas, who had been employed in the library for two years and was working toward her degree in Library Science, married

twenty-one-year-old electrical engineering major Gordon Taylor in the library's Treasure Room on June 6, 1938.

And then as war again began across the ocean, casualties were dramatically felt and mourned on the University campus, just as they had been during the previous world war. The war did produce an unexpected agreement between the University of Oklahoma and the U.S. government that would radically affect the history of the University. In 1942, the University agreed to lend its new airstrip to the U.S. Navy for training purposes for the duration of the war. Similar to the way much business at the University was conducted in its early years, this deal was founded on a handshake between two men on a train.<sup>46</sup> This led to the Navy establishing two large bases in Norman: North Base and South Base.

World War II and its aftereffects profoundly influenced practically every facet of life in the contending nations. In our own country, perhaps no human activity or institution felt the impact of the war more strongly than higher education, and this was certainly felt even more so after the war was over, as a flood of servicemen clamored to attend the University on the new GI Bill. In 1939–40, the University had a student body of 7,070. The final enrollment count in the fall of 1946 showed that 10,126 students had enrolled, and approximately 6,000 were veterans.<sup>47</sup> The University had to adjust to handle these new servicemen students, including many with wives and children. And the University did, and grew accordingly, as did the town of Norman around them.

The year 1944 was also a somber year on campus as former President Bizzell (who had retired in 1941) passed away. To mark Bizzell's immense success in the establishment of the 1929 University Library, the building was renamed Bizzell Memorial Library in 1945. A fitting tribute to Bizzell had already been added to the campus in 1943, when the University commissioned sculpture professor Joe Taylor to craft a statue of President Bizzell (as a gift of the class of 1943), which would face the library that would soon bear his name.

In 1946, after the war, the Navy moved out of Norman and, first, allowed the University to lease its buildings, and then eventually turned them over to the University completely. This donation included 1,380 acres of land and properties valued at \$7 million, which very nearly doubled the small University's holdings. What this did for the University was to give it more resources, and more land, allowing it to spread out, as greater space and more buildings had fallen under its provenance.

The late forties presented a series of disasters to the University, including two more calamitous fires (with lives lost in one) and a major tornado that destroyed

part of North Base. But the late forties also brought donations to the library. The first, made in 1949, was the generous gift of the Bizzell Bible Collection, donated by the family of President Bizzell. This collection contained bibles published in common European languages such as Greek, Latin, German, French and Spanish, as well as bibles in other languages such as Cherokee, Muskogee, Hindi, Swahili, Javanese, Mongolian, Tartan, Mooltan, and Turkish.

In December 1949, alumnus Everett L. DeGolyer, a noted geophysicist from Dallas, Texas, loaned to the University 129 rare volumes in the history of science in exchange for its establishment of a teaching and research program in the history of science. According to Long and Hart, "DeGolyer believed that science could best be understood by studying the motives, ideas, and thoughts behind historical events in science. He was not content merely to own editions of books written by the giants in science—Euclid, Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, Boyle. DeGolyer wanted his alma mater to create a research and teaching center in the history of science second to none."<sup>48</sup> This initial loan formed the beginning of the now world-renowned University of Oklahoma History of Science Collections.

With the addition of North and South Base, the University Library began to expand outward. In 1941, the library held 226,470 volumes, but by 1951 the number had reached 452,000, and the library was growing too tight for its shelves. To combat this overflow, the library elected to move part of the collection into space underneath the football stadium and to establish a library for undergraduates. This arrangement freed the main library for use by upperclassmen and graduate students and also took advantage of room in the stadium that had been otherwise going to waste. The Undergraduate Library was designed to eventually house 12,700 books.

In 1951, after forty-three years of service, Jesse Rader retired as director of the library. Rader's stewardship extended from the 1905 Carnegie Library, through the 1920 New Library, and into the 1929 University Library. His steady hand had guided the library from its holdings of 15,000 volumes to its collection of more than 500,000 volumes—a remarkable accomplishment. According to the current University president George Lynn Cross, "Rader's name will be linked unforgettably with the University Library. To him, books were always more than mere documents. Rather, they served as doorways to new ideas, new experiences."<sup>49</sup> Rader was succeeded by Arthur M. McAnally, former assistant director of libraries at the University of Illinois, who served as library director at the University for the next twenty years (1951–72).

Soon after the library acquired its 500,000th volume in June 1954, all of Okla-

homa's university campuses became, as of June 1955, fully desegregated. This occurred in the wake of the 1950 Supreme Court case *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, which, as we shall discover, proved highly significant in relation to the library's history.

In 1955, another important special collection was established within the library. Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Bass, Sr., of Dallas, Texas, gave a \$10,000 gift to establish the Bass Collection in Business History. Developed through the diligence of curator Ronald B. Shuman, the collection focuses on rare books, manuscripts, and archive collections related to the topic of business history. The collection houses many important works on the history of business, including 2,000 rare books and the archives of the J. and W. Seligman Company.

The 1950s were a time of budget constraints at the University, and the library was forced to cut its budget extensively and curtail and alter its library services. McAnally had to handle these budget issues, including staff reductions, just as the library was due for its first expansion since its dedication in 1930. The original building, erected for the 1929 enrollment, had become much too small for the more than 15,000 students expected to flood the campus each semester in the 1960s. After considerable planning, work began on the new library addition. According to McAnally, "The library, now full to capacity, holds a half-million books. With the new addition, more than 1,250,000 books could be filed. . . . At present the Library has reading space for only 600 students. The new construction would make it possible for an additional 2,400 readers, with a total of 3,000 using the Library at one time."<sup>50</sup>

The six-story, \$2.7 million addition was to be financed by a state bond issue, to be repaid by part of a cigarette tax. "So," McAnally explained, with a laugh, "every time you smoke a cigarette, why, you're helping to pay for our new library."<sup>51</sup> This was a legitimate request at the time, as smoking was allowed in most areas of the University, including the library. In fact, the toleration of smoking was used as one of the promotions of the new library, promising "burn-resistant Formica table-tops." Ah, the surprising luxury of the 1950s!

With the design of this new addition, the original plans for the 1929 library that called for the construction of east and west wings to form a quadrangle by joining the old building to Evans Hall, its architectural mate, had to be abandoned. By the late 1950s, the age of the woodcarvers, Gothic sculptors, and stonemasons had passed. Amid continued budget constraints, the new architectural design was to reflect the stark utilitarian box buildings of the day.

## 1958 Addition



The Card Catalog Area in the new fully browsable library addition, 1958. Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Libraries

By plan, the “unfortunate design of the 1958 addition”<sup>52</sup> was a \$2.7 million add-on to the back of Bizzell Library. Opened in 1958, the addition raised the total library capacity to one million volumes. The new library addition was designed by the architectural firm Coston, Frankfort, and Short of Oklahoma City. Its interior decorator was Robert Harrell of Fort Worth, who had also decorated the renovated Union building in 1951. Harrell was widely known for his decoration of the extravagant Shamrock Hotel in Houston, which was used in the final scenes of the 1956 movie *Giant*. The new library’s decorations included mod crème and brown diamond op-art floors, chartreuse brick walls, black vinyl couches, and chairs upholstered in acid green and tomato red leather.

The brick box style, typical of the era, was in sharp contrast to the Collegiate Gothic style of the original building. The addition joined the older part of the building at two upper levels, on the first floor, and in the basement. The most dramatic change was that the library was now fully browsable, with open stacks, and thus no more paging service. Decentralized reference was introduced, with a reference librarian on each floor at his or her subject area, and the special collections now had their own spaces, with the Bizzell Bible Collection in the basement, the Bass Business History Collection on the second floor, History of Science Collections on the third floor, and the Western History Collections on the fourth floor. In addition, the



library adopted a professional staffing policy, thereby eliminating the problem of rapid turnover in student employees. All of this newness was on show at the April 11, 1958, dedication of the new wing.

Along with these advances, updates were made to the older Bizzell portion of the library, including the installation of new lighting and the addition of air-conditioning to the entire structure. According to longtime *Sooner Magazine* editor Carol J. Burr, “The Great Reading Room, all but forgotten in the push to modernize, did receive some updating of dubious value in this 1958 renovation. Tapestries and draperies were installed over the south windows to shut out the natural light, and, to compensate, eight-foot fluorescent fixtures replaced the fourteen medieval lamps. . . . The wood, stone, and tile were allowed to dull into but a pale reminder of their former grandeur.”<sup>53</sup> So for a time, the brightness of the great room darkened.



The Great Reading Room, Bizzell Memorial Library, circa 1930. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, OU 281

The year 1960 brought in more than just John F. Kennedy to the U.S. presidency, it also brought troubles to the library. Thirteen days before Christmas, an accident occurred in the multi-tier glass-and-steel book stacks in the old building decks. The failure was due to some steel beams pulling loose from a concrete beam to which they had been fastened by lag bolts, causing approximately 256 square feet of flooring on each level from the first to the fourth deck to buckle downward as much as two and one-half feet. Over fifty thousand books had to be removed,

and the old glass floors in the damaged area were replaced by patented flooring. In addition, the entire structure was reinforced.<sup>54</sup> No one was hurt, but one wonders if this was when the rumor of a library ghost began?

The 1960s brought civil unrest to campus but also positive developments to the library. In 1963, the University of Oklahoma joined the prestigious Association of Research Libraries. The ARL is a nonprofit organization of libraries affiliated with comprehensive research institutions in the United States and Canada that share similar research missions, aspirations, and achievements.<sup>55</sup> Joining the ARL was a broad step for the University of Oklahoma Library and elevated its status nationwide. On January 14, 1966, the library also added its one millionth volume, a copy of John Milton's 1644 *Areopagitica*. The event was celebrated with an address by Mary L. Livermore.

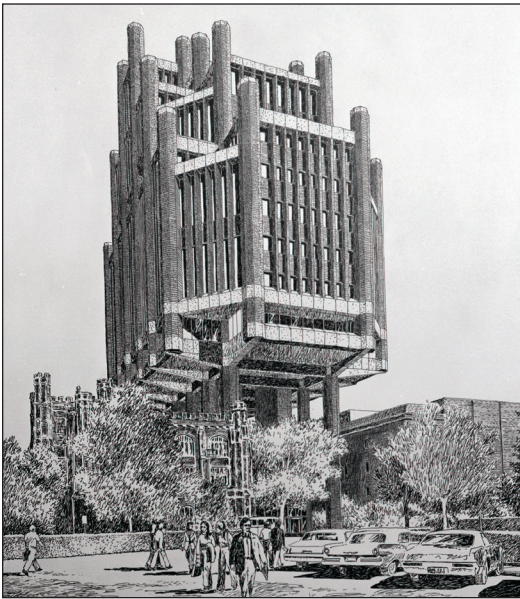
As the 1970s began, the library's special collections continued to grow. Books were purchased from Europe to supplement the History of Science Collections, and a second Bass Collection came to the University from the brother of the founder of the business history collection. Henry B. Bass's collection of early Americana, containing most notably invaluable works on Abraham Lincoln, took an esteemed place in the University's Western History Collections. The Western History Collections, which had been located on the fourth floor of the Library since the 1958 addition was opened, had grown so large that when the Law School left main campus and went to its new building on south campus in 1976, the Western History Collections were moved into the newly vacated Monnet Hall. The Government Documents Collection then moved into the vacated Western History space in the 1958 building.

During the turbulent 1970s, the library administration took a number of dramatic blows. To begin with, in 1972, Dr. McAnally suddenly passed away, and Associate Librarian James L. Zink became the library director. Zink served capably in the position for seven years (1972–78) but resigned in frustration over inadequate library funding.<sup>56</sup> A rocky period ensued, with a questionable interim dean, and then in late 1978 Sul H. Lee, former dean of Library Services and professor of Library Science at Indiana State University, was hired to be the new library director.

Lee quickly discovered, as library directors before him had, that the Bizzell facilities were filled to overflowing. He sought new space to house the library's collections and room to accommodate the onslaught of newly published scholarship. The one thing Lee had on his side was the backing of William S. Banowsky, who had become university president in 1978. Banowsky had already seized upon the idea of a new library addition. "The Library expansion is terribly critical to the

University's future," Banowsky stated. "The Library is the baseline of the institution. It now contains 1,600,000 volumes, and that is most inadequate. The addition will double the Library both in floor space and in the number of volumes."<sup>57</sup> At the time Lee was hired, Banowsky was already in the process of interesting private donors, the state legislature, the University Regents, the State Regents, and Chancellor of Education E. T. Dunlap in the project. The legislature and State Regents soon agreed to allocate \$3 million for the first phase of construction if the University could match the amount from private sources.

By fall 1979, proposed architectural plans were under way and had been distributed to the media for dissemination to the campus to judge the new \$12 million expansion. The design called for a dramatic heightening of the five-story 1958 building,



An architectural rendering of the proposed new library addition, which some students called "the Death Star," 1979. Courtesy Western History Collections, University of Oklahoma Libraries, OUEMP #79616-1: OU Rendering

for a total of thirteen soaring stories. And, boy howdy, did the students and faculty ever judge the proposed designs. Responses ranged from "Gothic grotesque," "awfully futuristic," and "towering over the library," to the sublime observation that "Darth Vader will want to either live in it or fly it on weekends," a reference to the Death Star spacecraft from the 1979 *Star Wars* movie.<sup>58</sup>

Responses to the proposed design were so passionate that the Faculty Senate addressed the topic: "OU doesn't plan to build a library that offends most people . . . the administration doesn't want to build a library which will be forever remembered as the 'folly of Oklahoma.'" Banowsky even

stepped in to commiserate with these negative sentiments, agreeing that the lack of support for the proposed addition to the library was "understandable," and adding, "I don't like the current design."<sup>59</sup>

The design was redrawn and the final plan involved not building up, but rather extending the structure to the west of the 1958 building, which required

the destruction of the Women’s Building, just southwest of Evans Hall. Opened in 1921, and designed in the Collegiate Gothic style to match Evans Hall, the Women’s Building provided offices for women’s organizations, as well as a gymnasium, swimming pool, and reception rooms. After its destruction in February 1980, the first part of the new library construction began.

## 1982 Addition



The 1982 Doris W. Neustadt addition to the library, 2015. Courtesy of Rick Schultz, University of Oklahoma Libraries

The \$13.1 million Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell Memorial Library was the keystone to Banowsky’s plans for the University’s future. The new addition was half funded by private-sector donations, including a lead gift of \$2 million from the children of Doris W. Neustadt of Ardmore. The new addition doubled library space, adding 150,000 square feet, which was dearly needed by the expanding collections. Chancellor Dunlap’s help made the library project feasible, and a grateful Board of Regents named the library’s clock tower and plaza in his honor.

The Neustadt Wing, the work of the St. Louis–based architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata, and Kassabaum, Inc., attempted to blend the dramatically divergent styles of the two library buildings—the Collegiate Gothic and the “new.” The somewhat thwarted endeavor ramped up the “castle” features in a bid to blend the two structures stylistically. With its brazen battlements and arrow-slit windows, the west entrance to the new wing has a certain fortress-like appearance, complete with tower (with clock), moat, and drawbridge (over the Canyon Garden),



and then a portcullised entrance to the castle keep, an allusion to the elegant 1929 library building but certainly not a match.

The dedication of the new wing occurred in May 1982. According to Lee sometime later, “Four years ago the stacks were overflowing, and some valuable resources were stored in old, wooden buildings on the South Base. The Doris W. Neustadt Wing has dramatically improved the space for the main library. It added stacks for 700,000 volumes, provided seats for 1,100 students, and increased the number of faculty studies by 37 and group studies by twelve.”<sup>60</sup>

As the students became used to the new wing, changes within the library system continued. In 1982 alone, to show the continued heightened mission of the unit to the University, Director Lee was retitled Dean of the University Libraries; the Library School moved to the original 1929 library offices, with a wall added to divide the two areas; the Reference Department was recentralized, with one reference desk added to the main floor; the library reached holdings of 1.9 million volumes; and the History of Science Collections reached an important benchmark with the acquisition of its 50,000<sup>th</sup> volume.

Also in 1982, the first Dataphase computers were added for use in checking out books at the Circulation Desk. A terminal was also placed in the Card Catalog Area that made it possible for users to search by title, author, or subject without poring through drawers of cards. And thus the age of computers began in the University of Oklahoma Libraries. In the following year, 1983, the library celebrated its two millionth volume: the 1661 *Instructions Concerning Erecting of a Library*, by



The History of Science Collections, 2015. Courtesy of Rick Schultz, University of Oklahoma Libraries



Gabriel Naude, donated by the publishers Blackwell North American, Inc., and B.H. Blackwell, Ltd.

In the late 1980s, the University began focusing on its upcoming 1990 centennial. With emphasis on institutional history, effort was made to spruce the campus up to rise to the occasion. Part of this involved, according to Burr, “a new appreciation for the artistry of the Great Reading Room, and plans were laid for its restoration.”<sup>61</sup> This was fortunate, as over the years the room had gone from being the Great Reading Room to being more like the “Dank Reading Room,” dusty and forgotten.

In 1993, the Great Reading Room was finally renovated. The now dusty curtains were removed to allow natural light to filter back in, and the outdated and unattractive dropped banks of fluorescent lighting were replaced with hanging lamps (purchased from a church supply catalog), similar to the original chandeliers. The tile floors were repaired, the leather on the grand doors replaced, and a fund-raising campaign for the room began, with donors having their names inscribed on the chairs. All in all, grandeur began to be restored to the almost forgotten room.

## 1994–Present: President David L. Boren

In November 1994, after a series of short-lived presidents, the University of Oklahoma welcomed one of its most successful presidents to date, David L. Boren. As a former Oklahoma governor (1975–79) and U.S. senator (1979–94), Boren brought a broad swath of skills, accomplishments, and connections to the University presidency, breathing new life into the University unlike any it had seen in decades. Boren began a long-overdue revitalization of the University, with the library benefitting immensely from his vision and vigor.

In 1997, soon after the 2.5 millionth volume was added to the library (John Locke’s 1693 *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*) and the library premiered its first website, the president turned his attention to the library in a multitude of ways. In 1998, at the president’s recommendation, the wall in the 1929 building separating the library from the Library School was removed, allowing patrons to again use the Gothic south entrance to enter the library.

Boren next turned his eye to the Great Reading Room, which was renamed the Peggy V. Helmerich Great Reading Room, in honor of Peggy Helmerich, who has been a patron of Oklahoma libraries for years. Helmerich started her career as a film actress, under her maiden name of Peggy Dow, appearing in such films

as *Harvey* (1950), with Jimmy Stewart. She has since served as a generous patron in Oklahoma, with libraries in Oklahoma being one of the major recipients of her generosity.

Another benefactor to the library was Evelyena D. Honeymon, who was interested in beautifying the main building. The first library project she sponsored was the installation of outdoor lighting, designed to brightly illuminate the wonderful 1929 building at night. The library was now visible all the way from Lindsey Street, the closest thoroughfare, creating a popular nighttime photo opportunity for many students and graduates. Honeymon also sponsored the refurbishing of the Great Reading Room Anteroom, which sometime in the 1970s had been completely walled off to contain the Children's Literature Collection. The room was now restored and redecorated, bringing it back to its original opulence. Impressive lounge furniture was added and 1930s Gimeno reproduction paintings of famous authors that once had hung in the main hall of the original library were installed, including portraits of Goethe, Hugo, Wycliff (translator of the Bible), Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Dante. And once again, after many years of being hidden away, the tile starburst heart of the University could be seen in all of its radiance.

In 2000, a number of artistic decorative elements were added to the library. The portraits of all of the former University presidents, which had previously resided in the president's office in Evans Hall, were installed in the Great Reading Room, along with a portrait of the generous donor Peggy Helmerich. Just as President Boren had begun to add statues in all of the empty niches around campus, he also had life-sized statues added to the perpetually empty front niches outside the 1929 Gothic south entrance. The statues, created by University School of Art faculty member Sohail Shehada, depict William Bennett Bizzell, Jesse Rader, and Doris W. Neustadt, the magnanimous donor for whom the 1982 addition was named. The niches of the east and west gables were also soon filled with statues of OU notables, including Savoie Lottinville (University of Oklahoma Press); Paul Ruggiers (English Literature); Lowell Dunham (Modern Languages); George M. Sutton (Ornithology); and Duane H. D. Roller (History of Science).

On January 3, 2001, the Bizzell Memorial Library was declared a National Historic Site by the National Park Service, in honor of its significance in American history and culture. According to the National Park Service, "The University of Oklahoma's Bizzell Library figured prominently in the historic movement to racially desegregate public higher education in the South in the mid-20th century, as well as the Federal government's position on eliminating racial segregation within a democratic society."<sup>62</sup> In January 1948, George W. McLaurin, a retired

African American professor, applied to the University of Oklahoma to pursue a Doctorate in Education. School authorities were required by Oklahoma statute to deny him admission solely because of his race. Under Oklahoma law, it was a misdemeanor for administrators, faculty, or students to maintain or operate, teach, or attend a school at which both whites and African Americans were enrolled or taught. McLaurin filed a complaint with the District Court to gain admission and eventually was allowed to enroll.<sup>63</sup>

In the fall of 1948, McLaurin became the first African American student to be admitted to the University of Oklahoma, but he had to sit apart from the other students. This included in his classrooms, in the Union lunchroom, and in Bizzell Library, where he had to study at a designated desk marked with his name on the mezzanine level of the library, apart from the other students studying in the Great Reading Room.<sup>64</sup> Because of this, McLaurin again filed suit with the District Court.

In 1950, the U.S. Supreme Court heard his case, *McLaurin v. Oklahoma Board of Regents*, and ruled that separate but equal conditions were unattainable in graduate and professional education.<sup>65</sup> This long-awaited decision was hailed with enthusiasm by officials of the University of Oklahoma, its faculty, most students, and a substantial portion of the state's citizenry. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's attorneys regarded it as a complete victory, as it meant that African Americans would be admitted to graduate study in all state-supported colleges and universities throughout the country.<sup>66</sup> This civil rights victory is commemorated at Bizzell Library with a National Historic Landmark plaque hung at the entrance to the 1929 Gothic south entrance.

In 2008, the University Libraries celebrated their five millionth volume: a rare first edition of Herman Melville's *The Whale*, housed in the John and Mary Nichols Rare Books and Special Collections, a new collection established at Bizzell Library in 2004. The John and Mary Nichols Collections are composed of rare books and special materials in European and American literatures dating from the fifteenth century to the present. The collection features a number of first-edition works by Charles Dickens. In the news release for this occasion, President Boren stated that "the University of Oklahoma Library system is a critically important resource for the entire state and region . . . I only wish that David Ross Boyd were still alive to see what has resulted from his first 53 books."<sup>67</sup>

In June 2012, Dean Lee retired after thirty-four years. He was replaced by Dean Richard Luce, former director of libraries at Emory University, Georgia. Dean Luce has brought his own intelligence and vision to the libraries, which in 2013 included opening a digitization lab and a second off-site storage facility for library

resources. Once this occurred, a majority of the microforms from Lower Level I of the 1982 addition were moved to the new off-site storage facility. This transfer cleared the way for Luce to introduce contemporary design, function, and space on Lower Level I in the form of the new Peggy V. Helmerich Collaborative Learning Center.

The Peggy V. Helmerich Collaborative Learning Center was designed as a modern collaborative workspace, utilizing the most modern technology available. The 18,000-square-foot renovation put the University Libraries firmly on the leading edge of information technology. The space contains a large “Community Room” with an interactive Prysm Wall presentation screen, ample study space for students, rooms for collaboration, teaching spaces, and specialized digital scholarship labs for faculty work. The space was formally dedicated November 7, 2014, and since then, approximately 1,200 people have used it each day. The space-age modern decor has been likened to “Mad Men” meets “The Jetsons.” After first visiting the new space, one professor reported to Luce that his students had insisted he come see it. “My students said I had to come over here. . . . I didn’t know why, but I came. Now I know why.”<sup>68</sup>

According to Luce, “Increasingly, we’re expecting students to do more than consume information. We’re expecting them to acquire information, analyze it, and to create information. The creative process is part of what we are trying to enable here at the Library—to give students the tools, the spaces and the human expertise to create knowledge and understanding. It’s an absolutely vital skill as they leave OU and move into the workforce.”<sup>69</sup>

The Peggy V. Helmerich Collaborative Learning Center was made possible through a \$500,000 lead gift from the Helmerich Foundation of Tulsa. In announcing the gift, President Boren said, “This most recent gift continues the Helmerich



The Peggy V. Helmerich Collaborative Learning Center, 2014. Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Libraries

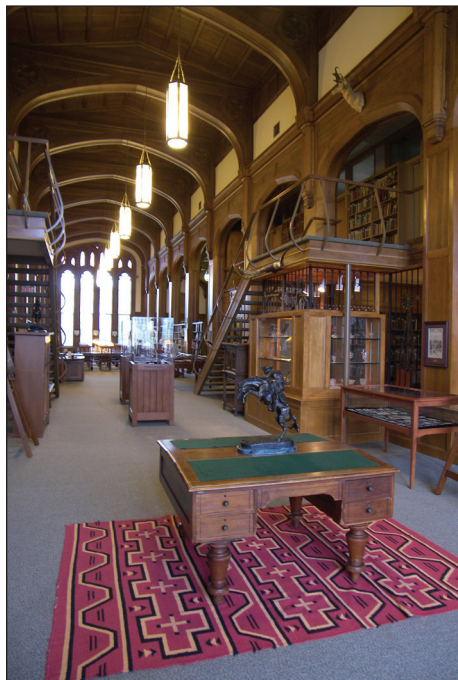
family's legacy of generosity."<sup>70</sup> And this is just the first step in Luce's new vision for the University Library as it reaches its one hundred twenty-fifth year.

## The Library at the Quasquicentennial

In 2015, the University of Oklahoma Library is the largest research library in the state of Oklahoma, containing more than 6 million volumes, 75,000 serials subscriptions (print and electronic), and 300 databases. The library has been a depository for federal government documents since 1893 and ranks thirty-second out of one-hundred and fourteen academic research libraries in North America for volumes held. The institution maintains over 17,000 linear feet of manuscripts and archives, 1.6 million photographs, and more than 1.5 million maps.

The library's special collections have continued to grow and develop. As of 2015, the Western History Collections continue to enhance the University Libraries general collections on the history of the American West; to support the research and teaching programs of the University of Oklahoma; and to provide opportunities for research through the acquisition, preservation, and access of materials relating to the development of the Trans-Mississippi West and Native Americans.

The History of Science Collections, as of 2015, includes all twelve first editions of Galileo's works, including many from his own personal library. One of the highlights of the collection is Galileo's personal copy of his *Dialogue of the Two Chief World Systems* (1632), which contains his own marginal annotations. The collection holds more than seventy incunabula (books printed before 1501), including the oldest book in the History of Science Collections, and indeed in the entire University of Oklahoma Libraries system: Hrabanus Maurus's *Opus de Universo*, from 1467.



The Western History Collections, 2014. Courtesy of University of Oklahoma Libraries



The library celebrated the 125th anniversary of the University by highlighting this collection with the momentous Galileo's World exhibition. This massive presentation, which opened in fall 2015 and extended into 2016, comprised 20 exhibits in seven locations over all three of the University's campuses, and involved the complete remodeling of the library's fifth-floor special collections and a part of the 1958 main floor, with a mock Tower of Pisa added to the main lobby. The exhibition, with all of its facets and features, was a thundering success.



Model of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, installed in the library lobby for the Galileo's World exhibition, in celebration of the University's 125th Anniversary, 2015. Courtesy of Rick Schultz, University of Oklahoma Libraries

## The Future

What will the future bring for the University of Oklahoma Libraries? Perhaps not a new main building, as the rush to build larger and grander libraries is somewhat a trend of the past. The future of the libraries will probably reside in redesigning the current main building, to further modernize it, while retaining its original architectural identity. Off-site storage will be utilized to store the books as part of the largest and most significant research collection in the state, to continue to maintain the integrity of the growing collection while ensuring continued access. Special collections will continue to be emphasized, as their holdings are not yet online, while the University of Oklahoma Libraries unique collections continue to gain national and international attention. Computer labs will replace stacks just as digital displays have replaced paper, according to the dictates of time. New technologies will introduce new capabilities to enhance scholarship. Things will continue to change, but the library, as it always has, will endure. The library will always be there, in one form or another. It may not be the library of your grandparents, and that may not be such a bad thing.

But no matter what, as time has told, the University of Oklahoma Libraries will continue to rise.

# Notes

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