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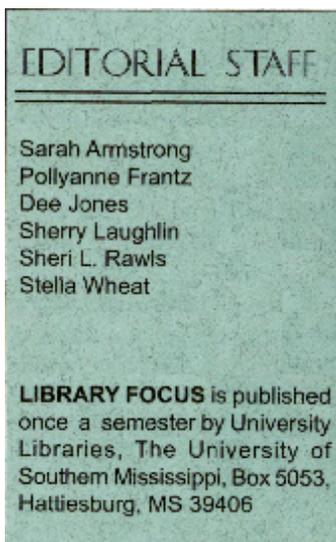
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This is the electronic version of *Library Focus*.

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Transforming the Academic Library: An Interview with Dr. James R. Martin, University Librarian



- *Many scholars are predicting profound and traumatic changes ahead for higher education. How will the university library of the future fit into this new academic environment?*

JRM: The modern academic library is in the forefront of the new academic environment. I think that the university library will have an easier time fitting into the new academic environment than will the teaching side of the university. One reason for saying this is that the modern library has been transitioning to a networked electronic environment for some years now. Libraries long ago acknowledged that their collections could never be self sufficient and have been interconnecting increasingly over the last 20 years. The modern library is not only the library with walls, i.e., the building and its collections, but it

is also the library without walls, i.e., the virtual library.

Another reason I think future changes will be easier for libraries than for the teaching side is that our learning activities, though subtle, are arguably more effective than the traditional lecture. Whenever librarians help anyone use the library, we are teaching the thought processes and skills necessary for information gathering. And if you think about it, that is exactly the direction toward which modern learning is moving. Thus in some important respects, the learning environment is moving toward what libraries do, not away from libraries.

- *What factors are forcing change in today's university library?*

JRM: In the 1970s and 80s libraries were forced to automate their internal processes in order to avoid huge payrolls and huge files (i.e., card catalogs, patron lists, lists of materials checked out, lists of materials on order, etc.). Libraries found that maintaining library processes without computers took unacceptably large numbers of people.

In the 1990s the factors forcing change are in the external environment. Two factors predominate. The first is the rising cost of print materials. The USM Libraries has an acquisition budget of approximately two million dollars. While this is a large sum of money, we estimate it can purchase only 10 to 12 percent of the materials published in a given year relevant to our academic departments. Worse still, yearly journal price increases and the declining value of the dollar result in a crippling loss of buying power.

If the price of library materials inflates 10 percent a year, the University would have to add \$200,000 a year to its \$2,000,000 materials budget just to maintain its buying power. The second factor is the electronic environment. Just as the computer has made the typewriter obsolete for many applications, electronic formats have made some types of books obsolete. Who wants to read through 30 index volumes when a computer search can do it in a few moments? Who wants the most recent reference book dated 1992, when he or she can have access to the up to date database from which the next edition of the book will be derived?

- *If books and journals are digitized and databases can be searched from home or office, why will we need librarians?*

JRM: The role of the broker is often questioned in our society. Why use a real estate agent? You can sell your own house. Why use a lawyer for a will? You can write your own. Why go to a doctor? There are stores full of natural medications. Why go to school? You can teach yourself. There is no more complex part of our world today than the information environment, and it too requires brokers. Librarians at their best are information brokers, and we will increasingly need their help. We may name them something else, like "information professional," but they will have the librarians' skills and professional commitment. Librarians, on their part, are becoming increasingly focused on customer expectations and needs, and less on the traditional place of work, the library. We are already seeing that in the library world.

- *How did our changing information environment affect the design and planning for the Cook Library addition and expansion?*

JRM: Because we could see that change was coming and to some extent had arrived but we were not sure how the future

would affect traditional services and their positioning within the library building, the growing centrality of the automated system as the virtual library affected our planning at every stage. Practically speaking, this meant that we fought long and hard to ensure that an expansion of the online system and an adequate wiring of the building was achieved. This sounds basic, but it was not always easy to convince all the players that a building without system wiring would be like a building without plumbing. Initially, for example, the Bureau of Buildings, the final decision maker concerning expenditures, would not pay for building wiring. They argued that wiring was not integral to the building. Eventually, they modified that stand.

Besides getting the system expanded with equipment, wiring, and software licenses, the changing information environment affected the allocation of space. When the addition is completed, library users will find far more space dedicated to terminals, microcomputers, CD-ROMs the access tools of the information age than was ever possible in the cramped quarters of the old building.

One thing that was not affected, though many people assumed it would be, is the space requirement for the collection. It is a popular notion that the changing information environment reduces the need for books and shelves in libraries. Librarians have seen no evidence of this to date. Rather, book and journal production continues to expand while at the same time libraries have the added responsibility of providing access to information in electronic formats. If we do eventually see a reduction in paper based information products, it will arise out of exorbitant cost increases rather than because electronic technology has made the paper format obsolete.

- *In the near future, what new services can we expect from the USM Libraries?*

JRM: Most library services will not be new but reassigned or transformed. We have seen a transformation in reference services, for example, from an emphasis on how to use book materials to an emphasis on how to find information in an electronic environment. We have already transformed library catalog access from one point delivery at the card catalog to universal access.

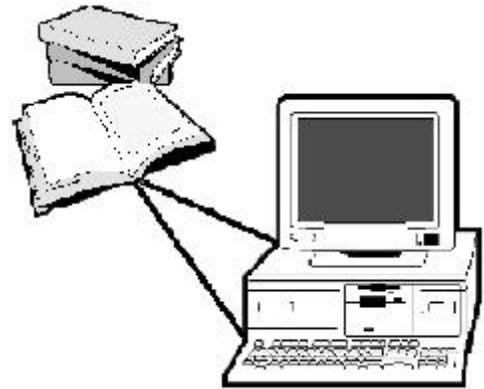
The completed building will allow us to provide some services previously impossible. For example, we will be able to set aside a study room (on the first floor where Reference is now temporarily located) which could be open extended hours. In fact, this room can be opened while the rest of the library, i.e., the stacks, is closed. The building will also offer research carrels for assignment to those doing intensive research projects. The feature of the new building that we are most excited about is the second floor reading room. There, we will be able to house not only the current unbound issue of a journal, but the most recent several years together. This will be a controlled environment and should greatly aid those using current journal materials.

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Electronic Document Delivery

Major changes are about to take place in the manner in which the library obtains materials from other locations, all as a result of the "Information Superhighway," also known as the Internet. With the opening of the new library building, all departments in the library have been connected directly to a networked environment, thereby providing access to the campus network and the Internet. For a number of years the library has used a fax installed for the purpose of delivering photocopies of articles via a telephone line. In order to take advantage of the delivery of articles via the Internet, the library recently placed orders for equipment and software which will permit us to take advantage of this new communications link.



Known as "Ariel," the system provides for the rapid transmission of information between participating libraries. The Ariel software is loaded on a networked microcomputer which can receive and send electronic information 24 hours a day to other libraries which have installed Ariel. To send an article, it is first placed on a scanner and an image is stored on the computer's hard disk. The Ariel software will then forward the article to the electronic address specified by the Interlibrary Loan staff. Library users should expect their documents to be of a higher graphics quality, since the original document is a bit mapped image and the copy is produced on a laser printer. The benefits to the library are that the Ariel workstation can automatically send and receive documents, and there are no long distance phone charges. The library also will investigate the possibility of e mailing documents directly to patrons' Ocean and Whale accounts.

Another form of access to information, known as "full text databases," is also becoming available via the Internet, and a number of vendors are now providing actual text of the articles online. Different vendors have various payment options; some charge each time the journal is read, whereas others provide open access for a set annual fee. In order for the library to take advantage of a large variety of remote databases, last year the library entered a subscription to a service known as "FirstSearch." This online service provides access to dozens of databases containing millions of records. Although most of the databases provide access to just a citation, there are some databases which permit access to the actual item. A library user who wishes to have the item delivered can enter a credit card number and specify a delivery method (postal, UPS, fax, e mail, etc.) and indicate whether it is a rush item (with a rush order fee attached.)

What will the future bring to libraries and how information is delivered? With technology rapidly changing and vendors capitalizing on new markets, the library of 2001 will experience some major changes. Just 20 years ago experts were predicting that book publishing would cease and everything would appear on microfilm! There will still be books in 2001, but more and more of the information will be available electronically, either on CDROMs, tapeloaded databases, or via networked services. And much of this information will be available without even having to go to the library.

- *Eddie A. Williams, Director of Systems and Administrative Services.*

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Millionth Book Celebration

A celebration will be held the week of April 8th to mark the addition of the one millionth book to the USM Library.

President Aubrey Lucas will add to the collection a book written by Mississippi author Eudora Welty.

Music will be performed by USM students each noon hour during the week in Cook Library.

Other activities will include a workshop on preservation of library materials, a display, and drawings for prizes and bookmarks.



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COLLECTION PROFILE

Voices from the Past: USM's Oral History Collection

In August of 1969, Hurricane Camille struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast with raging winds gusting at 200 miles per hour. Years later, John A. Switzer, a survivor of Camille provided a vivid description:

*"The wind was screaming like a banshee. It was a sound I've never heard before, and I haven't heard it since. It would just actually scream like a banshee, or a woman screaming. It would be just a high pitched scream of wind as a gust would blow past."*¹

Another survivor, Jennie Jenevein, recalled the sound and pressure of the wind: *"Oh, it was the most horrible sound, and I have never forgotten it. If we start to get any kind of storm here, I can hear it. I can hear it coming. It really is tremendous. It's not wind as much as it is pressure with it that makes it just feel like it's going to burst everything wide open. It's so strong, the vibrations...."*²

Such testimony from survivors illustrates the power of a killer hurricane and also shows the ability of the human mind to recall events from years past with surprising detail. The above excerpts are from just two oral histories from the over 40 interviews on Hurricane Camille in USM's Oral History Collection. Eyewitness accounts in the form of oral histories are just one of many research tools available to students and faculty here at USM. The McCain Library & Archives serves as the repository for more than 600 oral histories prepared by the Mississippi Oral History Program of the University of Southern Mississippi.



Initiated in 1971, the purpose of the Mississippi Oral History Program is to record and preserve the history and culture of Mississippi as experienced by its citizens. Interviews conducted by the Oral History staff focus on the memories of knowledgeable people concerning important personalities, events, and occupations pertaining to the history and culture of Mississippi. Significant subject series include information about the cotton industry, the civil rights movement, African American history, ethnic experiences, sports, state politics and the service of public officials, natural disasters, and general life histories. The Mississippi Oral History Program, directed by Dr. Charles Bolton, welcomes suggestions concerning potential interviewees. Dr. Bolton and his staff also offer short training seminars to those interested in conducting oral history interviews or setting up a local oral history program.

A comprehensive index recently published by USM's Oral History Program provides subject and interviewee access to the contents of the oral histories. Additional subject and author (interviewee) access is provided through the University Libraries' online catalog (OSCAR) for over 400 bound transcripts currently cataloged in the Mississippiana Collection. Although non circulating, the bound transcripts are available for research in the Cleanth Brooks Reading Room on the third floor of McCain Library, while unbound transcripts and tapes are available from the University Archives. All transcripts and tapes are copyrighted but copies of tapes and transcripts can be purchased from the Mississippi Oral History Program at Box 5175, Hattiesburg, MS 39406-5175. For additional information on the Oral History Collections held at the McCain Library & Archives, contact the Cleanth Brooks Reading Room at 266-4345.

David Richards, Special Collections Librarian

¹ John A. Switzer, *An Oral History with John A. Switzer*. Vol. 227. (Hattiesburg, MS: Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi, 1985), p.29.

² Jennie Jenevein, *An Oral History with Jennie Jenevein*. Vol. 25. (Hattiesburg, MS: Mississippi Oral History Program, University of Southern Mississippi, 1984), P. 19.

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Cook Library Instructional Services

Instructional services designed to teach library users how to locate information efficiently and how to use specific print or computerized resources. The following are some instructional services offered by Cook Library:

- *Orientation Tours* - Provide a general walk-through of the building and information about public service departments and services.
- *Introduction to Electronic Services Workshops* - Provide users with an overview of all the menu options available on OSCAR.
- *Course Related Instruction* - Designed to meet the research needs of a specific course or assignment.
- *User's Guides* - Provide a list of sources recommended to conduct research on a particular topic or instruction on the use of a specific product, either in print, CD-ROM, or online.

For more information about instructional services, please call Shirlene Stogner at 266-4249.

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