



Packed with volumes,  
University libraries obtain  
and maintain mankind's

# Stacks of knowledge

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Not everyone would agree that underground comic books are great literature or art, but they're here in Ellis Library all the same. Lurid, technicolored fantasies — like *The Adventures of the Fabulous Furry Freak Brothers* — are tucked away in a collection of underground comic books, not far from an assortment of rare hand-colored botanical books that date back to the 16th century.

If comic art or the great classics don't interest you, there's plenty more to choose from in the special collections, up on the fourth floor of Mizzou's Ellis Library. Maybe the miniature book collection. Published as curiosities, some of these tiny gems of the printers' art aren't much bigger than an oversized thumbnail.

Or there's the rare book collection, which includes medieval manuscripts, one page from a Gutenberg Bible, and a copy of Poor Richard's Almanack, printed in 1747 by Ben Franklin.

There's still more. Down the corridors, or back in the stacks, or shelved in special reference sections are acres of books, tens of thousands of bound journals. The microform collection holds copies of just about every book published in the United States before 1820 — nearly 50,000 volumes.

Ellis Library and the six branches that make up University Libraries are a vast storehouse of information, a

treasure-trove for scholars and researchers from around the country.

By any standards, MU's collection is huge. Back in 1857 Mizzou's library published a thin pamphlet that catalogued its entire holdings. That wouldn't be possible today.

Now the collection stands at more than 2.5 million volumes, more than 17,000 journal and serial subscriptions, and another 4.2 million microforms. It's hard to comprehend those kinds of numbers. If the shelves of books were lined up they would stretch nearly 50 miles, almost half the way from Columbia to Kansas City.

Bob Almony, assistant library director puts it another way. "We're the largest public research library in the state," he says. "That means it's more likely that we're going to have that book that students need than any other library in the state.

"We're a research library, rather than just a college library. Other libraries go through their collections periodically, and if a book hasn't been checked out in a number of years, it's weeded out. We never do that. Our mission is to obtain and maintain mankind's knowledge for as long as possible. We never throw things out the door."

That all adds up to a gigantic job. In a typical month nearly 32,000 books are checked out and 55,000 books are reshelved. In a typical year,

MU buys about 44,000 new books, and those books have to be cataloged and entered into the system. The brittle pages and bindings of aging books need continual repairs.

University Libraries are bursting at the seams. There simply isn't enough space to shelve the entire collection. About 400,000 volumes are housed in a library annex off Campus, where they can be retrieved at the request of users.

Space is a priority, even after a \$7 million addition on the south side of Ellis Library in 1987 provided another 50,000 square feet to consolidate the reference collections. Plans for another 150,000-square-foot addition to Ellis are on hold, waiting for funding.

**I**t's all part of the challenge of the day-to-day business of running a major research library. But University Libraries is facing another challenge: a revolution in the way information is collected and used.

Some futurists predict that a hundred years from now, libraries might not contain a single book. Instead of searching through acres of shelved books, a library user in the year 2092 would sit at a computer keyboard, enter a few strokes, and call up information from all over the world.

That scenario might be a little far-fetched, but someday it could be a possibility. At University Libraries,

students and faculty already are using technologies that put information at their fingertips in a fraction of the time it would have taken even 10 years ago.

Ellis Library was the pride of Campus when it was built in 1914. The generations of Mizzou students who have studied there over the years

## A peek at the past

The tumblers of the safe click into place and the heavy metal door swings open. In a quiet office of the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, archivist Laura Bullion pulls on white cotton gloves and lifts a paper-wrapped bundle from the safe.

She unwraps a battered leather notebook. Then, using a thin bone spatula, she gingerly lifts the cover. In the frontispiece a notation is scrawled in faded ink: "William Clark, Notes on a second journey to New Orleans."

The date is 1798 — six years before the famous explorer joined Meriwether Lewis for their expedition up the Missouri River. There's more — a journal that Clark kept from 1826 to 1831, when he was an agent for Missouri's Indian tribes, and a book of math formulas that Lewis used for astronomical observations during the expedition.

These are some of the handful of artifacts that rarely leave the safe. "This kind of thing could not really be insured," Bullion says. "You couldn't put a value on it. It's irreplaceable."

Most of the items are priceless. Housed in the west wing of Ellis Library, the Western Historical Manuscript Collection is a related collection that contains more than 6,000 separate files

Thousands of acid-free cartons shelved in the dim, temperature-controlled storerooms contain some of Missouri's collective memory. There are photographs and family histories, along with diaries, ledgers and papers of the state's politicians, farmers, scholars and shopkeepers.

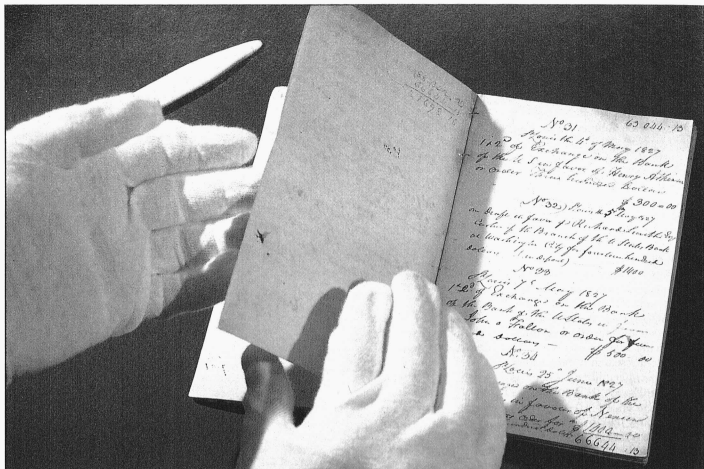
For instance, the E.B. Trail Collection documents steamboating along Missouri's rivers, with ships' logs, cargo manifests and diaries from long-ago steamboat captains.

The Ramsay Collection represents two decades of work begun in the 1930s by the late MU English Professor Robert Ramsay. With his graduate students, he studied origins of more than 20,000 Missouri place names.

Another crown jewel is the Tamony Collection, a rollcall of nearly 70,000 American slang terms. It was the life's work of San Francisco businessman Peter Tamony, who for more than 60 years studied how "Americanisms" are invented, modified or borrowed from other languages.

This single compact disc catalogs thousands of articles in scholarly journals. It's part of the technology that is changing the way University libraries provide information to their users.





# M FAX

At MU,  
how often  
did you  
go to the  
library?

- What library?
- Only before tests.
- Once or twice a week.
- Three to five times a week.
- I lived there.
- I'm still there, how do I get out?

How many books did you check out at MU?

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What was the most unusual or funny thing you did or saw in the library?

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Help us gather facts for this fun, unscientific poll. Fax *Missouri Alumnus* at [314] 882-7290, or mail to MU Fax, 407 Reynolds Alumni Center, Columbia, Mo. 65211. Include your name, degree, graduation date, address and telephone number. Look for the results in the next issue.

might not recognize the changes that have taken place.

A line of satellite dishes is bolted to the roof of Ellis, scanning millions of bits and bytes of electronic data. Rows of wooden card catalogs still line the walls of the first floor reference section, but cards for new books haven't been filed there since 1985.

Now, library users stand at a row of computer work stations and with a few keystrokes, tap in their search for books and journals on LUMIN, a computerized catalog developed by the University. The acronym stands for Libraries of the University of Missouri Information Network, and LUMIN is an index for all the books MU has acquired since 1960 and includes the holdings from all four campuses.

In another section of the reference area, lines of students pile up to use CD-ROM machines. The acronym stands for compact disc-read only memory and the machine sorts through millions of entries to find abstracts of articles from scholarly journals. A handful of discs contains

as much information as an entire wall filled with the standard indexes.

Martha Bowman, director of University Libraries, has been working to spread the electronic revolution at Mizzou. What she and other experts predict for the future includes software packages called client server architecture.

"At one work station a user could have access to databases in other parts of the world," Bowman says. "You tell it what you need to find out, and the software would be searching in places you didn't even know about."

The purpose is to increase access for users. Libraries now are rated in part by the size of their collections—the bigger the better. "We're moving away from the concept that a library actually owns everything, and moving toward being able to access everything for clients no matter where it resides."

And although funding for the libraries is a Campus priority, the skyrocketing cost of library materials keeps a tight budget from stretching far enough.

The journals collection is one area



Documents from the Western Historical Manuscripts Collection provide a link to the past. Explorer William Clark kept this notebook during a 1798 journey to New Orleans, six years before his historic expedition to the Pacific coast.

One of the jewels of MU libraries' special collections is a group of miniature books. Printed as a novelty, this tiny book contains a section from Mark Twain's *Roughing It*.

that's feeling the pinch. MU students and faculty, as well as scholars around Missouri, rely on the libraries' 17,000 journals and other periodical subscriptions to keep up to date in their fields.

For foreign journals alone, the price has more than quadrupled in the past 15 years, from \$41 to \$172 for an average subscription. Last year the serials budget was in the red by nearly \$300,000.

"We made up the deficit by using all available gift monies," Bowman says. "Usually those funds are used to acquire books, this time it all went to pay for serials. We held vacant positions open and used the salary savings. We can't do that anymore."

Bowman adds that if the budget picture doesn't brighten this year, the deficit could grow to \$500,000. Faculty and students almost certainly would see a reduction in the number of journals available at Mizzou libraries. "Yes, we will have to cut," she says. "Already we've worked with faculty to identify a number of journal subscriptions to cancel."

In all categories of library materi-

als, the rate of inflation is outpacing MU's ability to catch up and keep up. The shortfall is demonstrated by a steady decline in the libraries' national rating. In 1978, Mizzou had the 35th largest collection among the nation's 107 research libraries. By 1991 that ranking had dropped to 46th, according to the Association of Research Libraries.

In 1971, the libraries received 4.1 percent of MU's total budget. That percentage had dropped to 2.5 percent by 1990.

Some relief might be down the road. President George Russell has called for priority funding of the University's library system. A task force from all four campuses is developing a five-year plan to look at ways of using the new technology to speed delivery of information to students and faculty.

The plan, says Bowman, will explore "accessing information no matter where it might be and regardless of whether we own it or not. We're in a transitional state, learning to use the technologies that allow us to be much more effective." ☐

## Bucks for books

Since the earliest days, MU's library has counted on the support of faculty, students and alumni. Almost from the beginning, the library supplemented slim state appropriations with the efforts of several literary societies on Campus, which helped buy books and periodicals for the fledgling collection.

The library has grown since those days, but it still counts on private support. "Outside funding is important. It makes the margin of difference in maintaining the types of collections that have attracted faculty and scholars to Mizzou," says Martha Bowman, libraries director.

One of the best opportunities to support the libraries comes through contributions to a challenge grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. If MU can raise \$1.5 million, the endowment will provide an additional \$500,000 to add to and preserve the humanities collection in such disciplines as art history and religious studies. So far, library supporters have raised \$525,000 and the NEH has made a first payment of \$126,000 to Mizzou.

MU's Student Foundation, the student arm of the Mizzou's development program, is carrying on the tradition by making the NEH challenge grant its fund-raising priority. Over the past several years the student group has raised nearly \$6,000 for the library with bake sales, auctions and telephone fund-raisers.

University Libraries also is in the middle of a campaign to raise \$3 million for vital projects at Mizzou. More than \$2.24 million has been raised as part of MU's Capital Campaign, the largest fund-raising effort in the history of the University. And groups like the Friends of the Library are making a difference too.

The friends group includes hundreds of library supporters from around the state who raise money for library needs with activities like an annual used book sale.

MU Alumni Association chapters also support the libraries. The Kansas City chapter is one of eight making significant contributions to the University Libraries. Over two years, chapter volunteers approached more than 600 alumni in the Kansas City area and urged support for one of Mizzou's top academic priorities. The chapter offered to match the first \$25 of any individual gift earmarked for the libraries. As a result, alumni in Kansas City raised more than \$27,000 for the University Libraries. To find out more about helping University Libraries contact Linda L'Hoté, development officer, at 306 Donald W. Reynolds Alumni Center.