No more room on the shelf—and no more rooms for the shelves

By James Quick, Associate Vice President for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies

I grew up in a home that valued books. When my father had extra money, he bought books. This library was an important source of information that carried me through high school and college, and through these books, my father’s principal passions, science and history, were transmitted to me.

It is impossible to imagine the breathtaking scientific advances of the last 400 years without libraries. Scientific advance feeds on observation, debate and participation. The accelerating pace of discovery reflects both the increasing observational base as we learn more about the universe around us, and the increasing numbers of people engaged in science. Without libraries to disseminate knowledge, science might still be conducted much as it was in the 17th century—by a few learned aristocrats exchanging letters and pamphlets. I am certain that no society can maintain leadership in science and technology without investment in libraries.

But libraries are under pressure—pressure to expand collections as more books are published and pressure to subscribe to increasing numbers of periodicals, which are proliferating as science and technology explode. And, of course, pressure to find space to house growing collections. These problems are seemingly insurmountable unless novel solutions are found.

I confess that I prefer to read from a book held in my hands rather than from a computer screen. But I now obtain online virtually all journal articles I require. The scientific community has committed to this strategy, with online availability recognized as the most cost- and space-effective way to distribute information. Could we not use the same approach to reduce the enormous pressure to find space for growing library collections? As an experiment, in a matter of minutes, I downloaded to my iPhone three personal favorites for free: The Iliad and The Odyssey, The Histories of Herodotus and the complete works of Shakespeare. More than 1 million additional out-of-print books are available through Google Books. Imagine a library that makes its collection available to its student by Internet. After all, what is important, the physical book or the ideas and information it contains?

Belo Corp. donates historic papers to DeGolyer

In December 1963, Dallas Morning News reporters and photographers who had covered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy were gathered together for a meeting. Their assignment was to record their memories of the tragedy.

Most of the first-person accounts have never been published and are part of the Belo Corp. archives recently donated to DeGolyer Library.

The archives reflect the 167-year history of the Belo Corp., owner of WFAA-TV and until 2008, parent company of The Dallas Morning News. The company’s first newspaper, The Galveston Daily News, was established in 1842 when Texas was an independent republic and Sam Houston was president. Before its split in 2008, the company owned four daily newspapers, 26 television and cable stations, and more than 30 interactive web sites.

"From the beginning of the company, it is clear that the leaders knew their work was of historic significance," says Judith Garrett Segura, Belo archivist and author of Belo: From Newspapers to New Media (University of Texas Press, 2008).

Company leaders preserved correspondence, business records, photographs and scrapbooks documenting the history of the newspaper and, in turn, the history of Dallas. The newspaper in the
1920s opposed the Ku Klux Klan and as a result came close to going out of business. In the ‘30s it campaigned to replace Dallas aldermen with a city manager style of government, and in the ‘60s Belo supported fair housing, Segura says.

“Belo often supported unpopular but important causes,” she says. “It saw itself as a force of good that moved discussions forward to what needed to be done.”

With the encouragement of Robert Decherd, chair of A.H. Belo Corporation and Belo Corp., Segura began assembling the Belo archives while conducting research for the 1985 centennial celebration of The Dallas Morning News. She continued the process in following years in addition to her regular responsibilities. Segura continued as Belo archivist after her retirement.

“The papers were preserved, but they were not in one place. I found a wealth of incredibly interesting information in files in closets that had been locked for two generations,” she says.

In 1991, as Segura prepared for the Belo sesquicentennial, she recruited Dallas historian and SMU Libraries Executive Board member Mike Hazel to help with the massive organization project. During the next 17 years they collected, sorted and organized the papers, creating an 800-page index to describe the resulting 700-linear-foot collection.

“I’m having a little trouble not referring to the collection with the personal pronoun,” Segura admits. “But I’m relieved to pass it on to DeGolyer Library.”

The Belo Corporate Archives will provide a valuable resource for scholars, says Central University Libraries Dean and Director Gillian McCombs. “We are truly grateful to Belo for making these materials accessible to the public by donating them to SMU, where they will be used for teaching and research in a wide range of fields, from journalism, business and history to literary and cultural studies.”
A nicked horn was Emily George Grubbs’ first clue that the masks were not what they seemed. They had been labeled as Mexican theatrical artifacts — but the missing chunk revealed layers of what appeared to be fabric rather than the expected carved wood.

“I could tell by looking that they had been mislabeled,” says Grubbs’08, a curatorial assistant in Hamon Arts Library. Her job, funded by the endowment that supports the University’s Mary McCord/Edyth Renshaw Theatre Collection, allows her to catalog stacks of materials that previously languished in boxes with labels such as “Exhibit Case” or “Playbills.”

Hoping to solve the mystery, Grubbs showed the masks to Sam Ratcliffe, head of the Bywaters Special Collections. In turn, Ratcliffe asked former SMU Meadows Museum director John Lunsford to take a look at the items during a visit.

Lunsford referred Ratcliffe to the Fort Worth Kimbell Museum’s curator of Asian and non-Western art, Jennifer Casler Price.

From the moment she received images of the masks through e-mail, Price knew they were something special. Even in a digital photo on a computer screen, she recognized the bird-creature Karura — a character from a Buddhist dance ceremony called gigaku performed in 7th- and 8th-century Japan.

The other figure, previously presumed to be a horned demon, has been more difficult to identify. Still, Price could tell that the two masks were related and probably came from the same set of 14 different stock characters.

The masks, which cover the entire head, are among the world’s oldest examples of a type that was the first used in Japan. About 200 gigaku masks still exist in Japan, primarily in the collections of major Buddhist temples. There are only 10 known examples elsewhere in the world, six of them in the United States — including the two in Hamon Arts Library.

The key to identifying the masks was the dry-lacquer technique revealed by the mask’s damaged horn. The process uses layer upon layer of lacquer-soaked cloth to create a figure or vessel; surface features are sculpted from additional lacquer mixed with powdered stone, sawdust and other materials. The method identifies the masks as Japanese, created sometime between the 7th and 11th centuries, and undeniably authentic.

“No one forges dry lacquer,” Price says. “It’s an extremely difficult process, and faking it is just not worth the effort.”

Grubbs has uncovered a 1940 Dallas Morning News article naming the donor as New York physician Julius Y. Pokress. The article also misidentifies the masks as 16th-century Chinese.

Art historians know that during the global economic downturn of the 1930s, many large Japanese temples sold their art and other materials to pay for repair and restoration of temple complexes, Price says. That may have been how the Hamon masks found their way to the United States, she adds.
Advertising collection blends fact and fiction to make the sale

Farmer Doubtful is in a peck of trouble: His plowing is not half done and his crew is tired. When storekeeper Mr. Bright suggests a Sulky plow, Farmer Doubtful is well, doubtful, but he tries a Sulky plow... and likes it. Not only does it get the job done, but it also brings "solid comfort" and fun to the farm. His saga is told in *A True Story of Rural Life*, published in 1884 as advertising fiction.

DeGolyer Library recently acquired a 300-piece collection of advertising fiction dating from 1856-1978. The collection features booklets, pamphlets and comic books that used fictional stories to sell products and concepts ranging from appliances to dental health to jewelry to tobacco.

Advertising fiction is a slice of Americana that graphically captures the essence of a wonderful era, says Russell Martin, director of DeGolyer Library.

The collection includes a 1923 booklet, which illustrates a young couple finding happiness by consolidating their shopping to one place: J.C. Penney. A 1978 miniature comic book, distributed by Pacific Gas and Electric Company, tells a story using characters from television's "Happy Days." The Fonzie and Richie Cunningham help kids build and safely fly a kite.

In another book, Don Quixote conquers the world with a Myers water hand pump in an 1890 illustrated poem. "The farmers are sure to bow to the power behind Myers’ pumps – they’ll submit in an hour," he says.

The collection reflects the history of American advertising and literature, says Alexis McCrossen, associate professor of history.

"The techniques of advertising were less sophisticated in the 19th century, and thus the commercialism is often quite striking. There was no shame in selling something, particularly through fiction, which itself was considered a lesser form of literature than essays and poetry," she says.
Holleman leaves legacy in library collections

Curt Holleman, deputy director, Central University Libraries

Curt Holleman sees the fruits of his labors each time he heads to his office on the third floor of Fondren Library. The deputy director of Central University Libraries has spent most of his 36-year career at SMU developing the libraries’ book, periodical and electronic resource collections.

After joining SMU in 1973 as a reference librarian, Holleman quickly became involved in collection development, managing the selection of many thousands of books a year and subscriptions to thousands of academic journals. Over the last decade, he has also served as deputy director and chief budget officer of the library.

Holleman spearheaded the creation of consortial agreements with other academic libraries in North Texas in order to provide SMU scholars with the greatest possible selection of electronic resources. “The transition to electronic journals has allowed us to triple the number of journals we have,” he says.

“Curt has always been very attentive to the needs of our department with respect both to journals and books,” says Steve Sverdlik, associate professor of philosophy. “He has shown great sensitivity to our interests as scholars.”

Holleman is highly regarded by his peers in the library world and recognized as a leading expert in collection development. An early piece of his was described in the Journal of Academic Librarianship as “brilliant” and “a classic.” His writings have been taught in library schools around the world.

When Holleman retires January 31, he will be unemployed for the first time since he became a paper boy at age 13. Now he plans to enjoy the “utter quiet” at his home in the Texas Hill Country near Blanco, Texas.

“I’ll miss most being around the people at SMU. And I’ll miss the collections I’ve helped to build,” he says. “But I plan to spend a lot of time at the University of Texas libraries checking out lots and lots of books.”

DeGolyer document used in “National Parks” documentary

A rare brochure from DeGolyer Library was featured in Ken Burns’ PBS documentary series “The National Parks: America’s Best Idea.”

The 1886 Northern Pacific Railroad brochure featured in the documentary, “Alice’s Adventures in the New Wonderland: The Yellowstone National Park,” capitalized on the popularity of Lewis Carroll’s book Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland to promote the park. In the brochure the fictional Alice writes a letter to her friend Edith describing the wonders she sees.

“Well here I am rubbing my eyes every day, to be sure I am not either in a dream or a new world. You never saw nor could you ever imagine such strange sights as greet us at every turn.”

Burns’ six-part film series, which aired on PBS in September, traces the birth of the national park idea in the mid-1800s and follows its evolution for nearly 150 years. Burns and his team spent the last six years creating the series using archival materials such as the DeGolyer Library brochure, historic photographs and first-person accounts.

IN MEMORIAM

Passionate about libraries

Robert Oram, director of Central University Libraries from 1979 to 1989, died July 24 in Austin, Texas. Oram came to SMU from University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign where he headed the circulation department and served as associate and acting director. Active in library organizations, he was a member of the Friends of Libraries USA board of directors and chaired American Library Association committees concerning freedom of information, editorial advising and research. He also served on the boards and committees of libraries in Urbana, Illinois; Dallas, Texas, and Austin, Texas. But the volunteer activity he loved best was reviewing books for WILL radio, the University of Illinois’ radio station. The reviews now are part of University of Illinois archives. A memorial fund in his honor benefits Central University Libraries at SMU. For more information contact Paulette Mulry, director of development, at 214-768-1741 or pmulry@smu.edu.
Weeks started collecting books in high school with the works of Horatio Alger. The rags to riches stories inspired him to become an entrepreneur, says the retired mortgage business owner. A. Edward Newton’s classic books, The Amenities of Book-Collecting and Kindred Affections (1918) and A Magnificent Farce, And Other Diversions of a Book-collector (1921), inspired Weeks to begin collecting Dickens.

“Steve has some incredible collections, and he also has great enthusiasm and knowledge about his subjects, whether Charles Dickens, Horatio Alger, Mark Twain or A. Edward Newton. By a happy coincidence, these are all writers we are interested in, for scholarly and sentimental reasons,” Martin says. “In 1914, the first book Mr. DeGolyer purchased was The Pickwick Papers. But, alas, Mr. DeGolyer gave virtually all his literary first editions, including Pickwick, to the University of Texas after World War II, where they are now part of the Harry Ransom Center. We’ve longed for it ever since.”

To commemorate the 200th anniversary of Charles Dickens’ birth in February 2012, Weeks, now a member of the SMU Libraries Executive Board, is lending parts of his Dickens collection to DeGolyer for an exhibit.

“The Department of English and DeGolyer are just delighted by the prospects. Steve will be the curator, and the exhibition will be a major event for scholars, SMU students and lovers of Dickens,” Martin says. “The iconography of Pickwick alone could be the focus — his collection is so rich — but we’ll probably try to document the entire range of Dickens’ life as a writer. It will be interesting to see how it takes shape.”

Weeks’ collection includes 1,000 volumes of Dickens’ first novel, The Pickwick Papers, representing first editions and parts editions. The novel originally was published as a 19-month serial beginning in March 1836. Just 400 copies of the first installment were printed. By the time 29,000 copies of the last installment were printed, the 25-year-old Charles Dickens was a celebrity.

“In The Pickwick Papers you can see Dickens develop as an author,” says Weeks, who now visits DeGolyer regularly when he and his wife, Cindy, visit their daughter, SMU sophomore Jennifer. “He goes from obscurity to the best-known author in England.”

Weeks’ collection also contains 2,000 Pickwick Papers illustrations, including proof sets and hand tinted works representing all the artists who illustrated every Pickwick edition.
Bickston sees libraries change and stay the same

Dev Bickston remembers when librarians conducted interlibrary loan by teletype and when the first computer in the library was delivered—to his office. He helped bring SMU’s card catalog online in 1989 and directed for 39 years the Industrial Information Services (IIS) in the Science and Engineering Library.

Computers and the Internet have greatly impacted the way libraries do their work, but libraries have not changed in the most important way, says the SMU librarian who recently retired after 41 years of service at SMU.

“Librarians are still the intermediary between people who need information and the information, whether using book or Internet resources.”

Bickston joined SMU in 1968 as a researcher for IIS, the University’s business information service that conducts research on products, markets, patents and industries. Through the years IIS research has mirrored the Dallas business climate. Bickston says, “In the ’60s and ’70s we did a lot of work with the defense contractors. We’ve worked with oil companies since the ’60s, and when Dallas and Richardson became a telecommunications hub we worked with companies like Alcatel, Fujitsu and Ericsson,” he says. “Now law firms researching patent information and product liability are our biggest clients.”

Steanson Parks, president of Greene & Associates, has worked with Bickston for 35 years on research topics including oil and gas, environmental safety and construction materials.

“Dev blended his wide knowledge and research expertise with a fine appetite of curiosity as to why things develop or work the way they do,” Parks says.

Using SMU’s library resources to work on problems and opportunities anywhere in the world made his job interesting every day.

Bickston says, “It was a job made in heaven. We were able to do research on over 5,000 projects during my time at SMU.”

In his retirement, Bickston looks forward to traveling, volunteering, rejoining the choir at his church and supporting Mustang sports. He also plans to satisfy his natural curiosity with frequent trips to the library. “I plan to read a lot,” he says.
Greetings and Gatherings

Barbara Hill Moore, professor of voice, and her husband. "The Blood of Jesus" screening and panel discussion.

Gillian McCombs, Paula Apsell, NOVA senior executive producer, Judge John E. Jones III, Melanie Wallace, NOVA senior series producer and Laurie Lebo at the NOVA-Darwin anniversary event.

SMU Libraries Executive Board members and David Farmer at the board’s summer meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

SMU Libraries Executive Board member Sue Whitfield and Dean and Director of Central University Libraries, Gillian McCombs at La Barbaria, the Whitfield ranch near Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Library Contacts

DeGolyer Library/Special Collections 214-768-2253
Fondren Library – general library information 214-768-7378
Fondren Library
  Information Desk 214-768-2326
  Circulation/Reserve 214-768-2329
  Government Information Resources 214-768-2331
Friends of the SMU Libraries 214-768-1039
Hamon Arts Library 214-768-2894
Norwich Center for Digital Services 214-768-4584

Web site

Central University Libraries smu.edu/cul/