

ARCHIVAL
PRODUCTS

A Division of Library Binding Service

news

Breaking New Ground in Special Collections and Historic Preservation: The Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa Libraries — by Karen Mason

On October 28, 1992, the University of Iowa Main Library celebrated its opening of the Louise Noun - Mary Louise Smith Iowa Women's Archives with a symposium on Iowa Women in political life. The archives was established this past year at the University of Iowa to collect, preserve, and make available primary source material on the history of Iowa women. The

archives is named for the two women who conceived the idea for such an archives and worked to bring it to fruition. Louise Noun is an art collector, historian, and social activist from Des Moines. She is the author of *Strong-*

Minded Women: The Emergence of the Women's Suffrage Movement in Iowa (1968), and *More Strong-Minded Women*

(1992), which is a series of biographical essays on the women's movement in Iowa during the 1970s. Mary Louise Smith has been active in the Republican Party for many years, and was the first (and only)

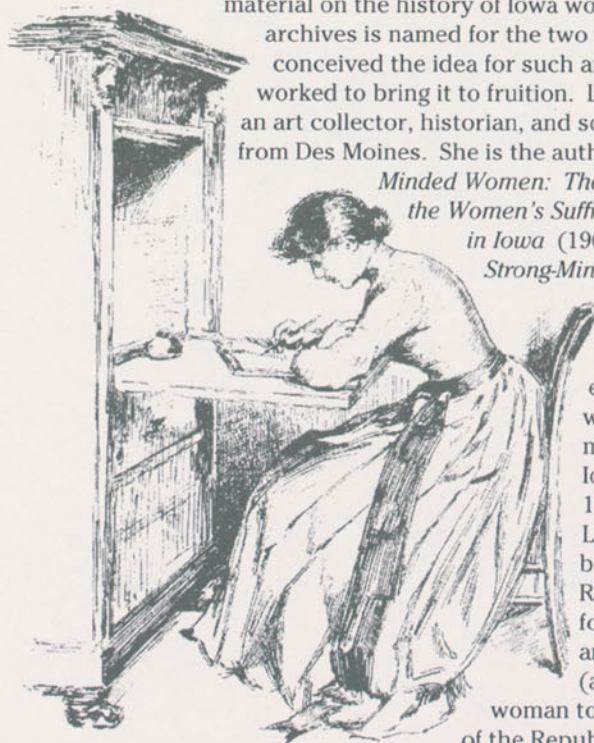
woman to serve as Chair of the Republican National

Committee, a position she held in the mid-1970's.

The idea for a repository that would collect material solely about women began percolating in Noun's mind when she was conducting research for her first *Strong Minded Women* edition. Noun experienced the frustration commonly felt by historians: lack of information. Data and references on some of the more important figures in the early women's suffrage movement had vanished. It wasn't until three years ago, as Ms. Noun and Ms. Smith met for lunch and talked about their mutual interest in preserving the history of Iowa women, that the idea became a real possibility. Smith felt that if the public knew an archives existed where women's records were valued and preserved, many people would strive to collect those materials that might otherwise be lost or destroyed.

Noun and Smith approached University of Iowa President Hunter Rawlings about the need for such an archives, and Rawlings was enthusiastic but cautious, given the state of Iowa's economy and of the university's straitened financial circumstances. To make the dream of the archives a reality, Noun offered to sell one of her most treasured paintings, Frida Kahlo's *Self Portrait With Loose Hair*. In May 1991, the painting was sold at auction at Christie's, netting \$1.5 million for an endowment for the Iowa Women's Archives. The University of Iowa is now in the midst of a fundraising campaign to raise additional funds for the archives.

The Iowa Women's Archives is a part of the Special Collections Department at the University
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Pamphlet Binders and Materials Preservation: A short history of the Archival Products' binder

Before 1986, archival product suppliers didn't think too much about pamphlet binders. Older product catalogs by various vendors placed the pamphlet binder in a small, insignificant space amidst pages of other products. 1986 was the year Archival Products began as a division of Library Binding Service, and this division would specialize in durable, well-crafted preservation enclosures for use in college, university, and research libraries.

The old methods of pamphlet binding were damaging the valuable materials found in these institutions. The primary drawback with pre-gummed cloth flange binders was the direct contact between adhesives and the pamphlet. The adhesive strip tended to create fracture points on the title page, cause partial discoloration, and restrict the pamphlet's openability. Other binding procedures required side-stapling material that was originally joined through the fold, which also caused openability and fracture point problems.

The Archival Products' pamphlet binder changed all of that with three main ideas: adhesives would not touch the pamphlet; flexible, scored cloth spines would make through-the-fold stapling feasible; and a pressure-sensitive strip on the outside of the pamphlet spine would hold any stapling or sewing in place.

The pressure-sensitive strip also gave a finished look to the bound pamphlet, but designers had to address the question of "cold flow." Librarians would be concerned about adhesives migrating, or flowing, onto the pamphlet, so examiners at 3M conducted several tests on their adhesive. In one test, technicians at 3M used two glass panels, putting a twenty pound weight on each. One panel was exposed to temperatures of 120 degrees Fahrenheit, the other was left at room temperature for 30 days. Neither panel showed any oozing or migration from the applied area.

With those satisfactory results, designers moved on to materials. Pre-1986 pamphlet binders were constructed from poorer quality boards and cloth that were susceptible to moisture, soiling, dents, and scratches. Specialty Paperboard of Brattleboro, Vermont, agreed to work with

Library Binding Service to construct a moisture resistant, durable, and very dense archival board. The Archival Products' High Density Acrylic Coated Pamphlet Board resulted from months of collaboration with Specialty Paperboard. No other archival board was this dense and strong, and the added acrylic coating provided yet another barrier from stains, dust, handling, and most importantly, water. Everything about this board would serve a purpose, and though the charcoal gray hue was pleasing to designers, more than aesthetics were involved when choosing the board's color. It was simple. Light shades show soiling, dark ones do not.

Like the unique and innovative pamphlet binder design, the High Density Acrylic Coated Pamphlet Board is available only through LBS/Archival Products. The commercial success of the Archival Products pamphlet binder has inspired some other versions and makeshift imitations of the LBS non-damaging pamphlet binder invention. We invite librarians to compare these copies to the researched, quality-tested, hand-crafted original. Call Archival Products at (800) 526-5640 for a free sample.



We are interested in your conservation and preservation projects. Archival Products encourages readers to share their thoughts and ideas on any subject affecting the Library Community.

Address articles to:

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University of Nebraska Libraries Preserve Willa Cather Documents With Brittle Book Replacement

Willa Cather's fiction has become an established part of American Literature, and the presence and character of the Midwestern plains have become a defining feature of the writer, her work, and her contribution to American history. Novels such as *O Pioneers*, *My Antonia*, and short stories "The Sculptor's Funeral" and "Neighbour Rosicky" detail life on the Nebraskan frontier, where the material environment and rawness of nature often conflict with some of the more artistic pursuits of a few of its inhabitants. It is not surprising then, that Cather spent her formative years in Red Cloud Nebraska, a place much like the fictional settings in some of her books. Willa Cather also attended the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, and the University Libraries at U. of N. boast an impressive collection of Cather papers, records, and documents.

Unfortunately, some of these treasured documents are brittle and deteriorating, so U. of N. Development Librarian Eva Sartori recently sent Archival Products some of the Cather collection for Brittle Book Replacement. Two of the three volumes sent for replacement consisted of minutes from the university *Union Literary Society*, of which Cather was the secretary from September to December 1892. The added advantage to photocopying these volumes was that staff members at U. of N. could choose only the most important parts for the final facsimile edition. All of Cather's notes from the last four months of 1892 were copied, and minutes during the previous year and following year and a half were also included and bound together in chronological order. With the photocopy edition, students will have a stronger,

more manageable copy to work with as well as an improved context from which to examine Cather's contribution to the literary society.

Sartori also sent a scrapbook from the general library records that contained assorted newspaper clippings dating back to the late 1800s. Cather's first "real job" after graduating from the University of Nebraska in 1895 was as a drama critic and telegraph editor for the Pittsburgh *Daily Leader*. The scrapbook clippings were from Lincoln area and university publications, and provided an entertaining glimpse into Cather's earlier critical endeavors.

Some of the clippings included handwritten notations that dated the articles and identified Cather as the author. After some research, students and library personnel determined that the notes were most likely made by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, a longtime friend of Cather and a former U. of N. administrator. Fisher's notations along with the clippings have been most useful to English students at the university, who are encouraged to research Cather history. This photocopy edition is slated for use in a particular freshman honors course entitled "The University of Nebraska Before and After: A Microcosm of Real Life."

Aside from the obvious benefits of protecting little-known writings by one of America's most loved authors, the advantages to preservation photocopy seemed especially evident with these volumes. The facsimile editions will provide greater access to the library patrons who need them, help preserve the original documents by placing less demand on their use, and improve the context and content of the works for the purposes of the university by manipulating the applicable information.

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Please call our Archival Products Representative for our 1992 catalog.

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of Iowa, but has its own stacks and reading room. The Archives' relationship with Special Collections is a fortunate one. Special Collections

"If we do not consciously collect these bits and pieces of Iowa's History as seen through women's eyes, a very valuable part of our state's heritage will be lost."

— Louise Noun

staff members have shared their knowledge of Iowa and Iowans (no small thing for a curator new to the state) as well as their expertise in various other areas. In addition, the department has transferred over thirty processed collections to the Iowa Women's Archives. With these collections forming a base of primary source material, the archives was able to open for research within

months of my arrival as curator. The Archives is open to the public and serves the research community at the University of Iowa, graduate and undergraduate students, scholars from other institutions, professionals, and individuals conducting research on a variety of topics.

The current strength of the collections is in the area of women and politics at the local, state, and national levels. In addition to the papers of Mary Louise Smith, the archives has papers of a number of former state legislators, women who are or have been active in local and state party politics, and two former mayors. The Iowa Women's Archives also holds the records of various organizations through which women have been politically active, such as the League of Women Voters, the Iowa Women's Political Caucus, pro- and anti-Equal Rights Amendment

groups, and Church Women United in Iowa. The archives also holds records of the Iowa Nurses Association and papers of several journalists, a farm magazine writer, and a civil rights worker.

The splash of publicity surrounding the sale of the Kahlo painting prompted a flurry of donations. When I arrived in Iowa City in July, papers of a diverse group of women awaited me. The women represented included Mildred Wirt Benson, author of the first Nancy Drew mysteries; Shirley Rich, a casting director who worked for Rogers and Hammerstein on *South Pacific* and *The King and I* before forming her own casting company; Myrtle Olive Ward, a missionary to the West Indies and the Belgian Congo in the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s; and Phylliss Henry, who in the 1970s became the first woman assigned to patrol duty on the Des Moines police force. The Archives is at present seeking funds to support collecting initiatives in various other areas, including girls' and women's sports in Iowa, rural women artists, and African-American women and their organizations.

Louise Noun has said that "If we do not consciously collect these bits and pieces of Iowa's History as seen through women's eyes, a very valuable part of our state's heritage will be lost." The enthusiastic response to the Iowa Women's Archives in its early months indicates that many Iowans are becoming aware of this heritage and the importance of preserving it. As our new archives grows, researchers will have access to a rich resource on the contributions and accomplishments of Iowa women.

Karen Mason is Curator of the Louise Noun - Mary Louise Smith Iowa Women's Archives at the University of Iowa Libraries.



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