



Behind-The Times

A Newsletter of Loyola University of Chicago Archives

Vol. 1, No. 3

February, 1989

The editor is happy to introduce Mary Giblin, our guest writer. Ms. Giblin is staff assistant to the Provost at the Medical Center and also serves on the University Archives Committee. Mary will describe the status of archives at LUMC and the need for an archives and records center on that campus of the University.

This issue of the newsletter is dedicated to the memory of Barbara Tuchman, an excellent writer of history and recipient of the 1983 Loyola-Mellon Humanities Award, who died February 6, 1989.

Bro. Michael J. Grace, S.J.
University Archivist

A MEDICAL CENTER PERSPECTIVE

As you know, Loyola University's Archives is located in the Cudahy Library, Room 219, at the Lake Shore Campus. When the Medical Center was built twenty years ago in 1969, the University Archives encouraged administrators at the new Medical Center to be cognizant of records retention and preserve historical documents by sending them to the Lake Shore Archives. Some did. But as the Medical Center grew, and very rapidly, there was a constant turnover of personnel and, somehow, communication of this fact was overridden by departments--tossing out what they felt were inactive records, sending them to outer storage buildings, or "squirreling away" what was deemed valuable for possible easy retrieval in older departmental filing cabinets. Rarely was time taken to review the material and properly box the files for sending to the University Archives for permanent storage. Besides, it was not clear to most (even to the writer, who started over thirteen years ago) just what should be saved on a permanent basis. This thinking prevails to this day.

It is true that preservation of important documents is our responsibility, and that quick access to old records in a safe and convenient facility is most important. Saving everything, however, or sending files to outer buildings for storage, or "squirreling away" various materials in individual departments are not answers to our desire to preserve important documents. First of all, saving everything is not necessary; sending material to outer buildings for storage is neither safe nor convenient; and storing files in our limited office space is only a temporary solution and definitely not cost-effective.

An inventory has been taken at the Medical Center of storage files in the outer buildings. It appears that almost every department of the Medical Center is represented there. At present, no decision has been made to relocate any of this material because there is just no place at present to properly re-store this material. On June 15 of 1988, a communication went forward from the Provost relative to the pursuit of the goal of establishing an Archives on this campus. With plans underway for a new Administrative Building on the Forest Park property, it looks very promising that there will be space available for this purpose, especially because the use of prime office space can cost thousands of dollars for each department, each year.

As an example of the cost-effectiveness of an Archives and Records Center versus individual department storage, I would like to quote directly from an article by Wayne Duncan, Assistant Director of the University of Missouri's Printing and Records Management Service (Byline, July 1988, published by the Registrar's Office at Georgia State University), as follows:

"Placing a dollar value on quick access to old records and keeping them in a safe and convenient facility is impossible to do. But it has value just as air has value for a person to live. Comparison of cost between keeping records in prime office space and a Records Center is much easier to do. The cost of keeping records in prime office space varies in different parts of the country. I have heard figures quoted that range from \$800 per 4-drawer file cabinet to \$800 per file drawer. At \$800 per cabinet, that equals \$133 ($\$800 \div 6$) per cubic foot per year.

"At the University of Missouri, our actual cost of maintaining the 34,000 cubic feet of records in the Records Center is \$2.30 per cubic foot. This results in a cost avoidance, to the University of \$4,943,800 per year. For that kind of cost avoidance, an organization cannot afford to not keep their inactive records in either their own Records Center or a commercial Records Center.

"If your institution is still depending on office space for records storage, approach your administration about creating a Records Center or using a commercial center. Not only will the recovered space provide more space for people, but it will save the institution money. While your savings will vary from the University of Missouri, a Records Center cost of 10 times (\$23) our cost (\$2.30) per cubic foot and a per year office cost of only half (\$66.50) the accepted standard of \$133, is still a net cost avoidance of \$43.50 per cubic foot of records and that is not pocket change."

I've been asked, "Are computers helping to eliminate the paper glut?" The answer is that computers and copiers are the primary cause of the burgeoning paper glut (according to a "Business Briefing" in Insight). Today's technology makes it easy to create and distribute multiple copies of even the most trivial documents, the magazine reports in an article that quotes author Dianna Booher's comments in a recent issue of Personnel Journal.

Meanwhile, until such an Archives and Records Center is established at Loyola's Medical Center, please save such things as--minutes from originating departments (for all time); data of an historical nature, including such things as photographs/slides/films, contractual arrangements, etc.; books and papers published by University faculty; and all paperwork that reflects the work of administrators. Please do not destroy any material until it can be properly evaluated by someone in our Archives Department. You can always call me on extension 3265 in the event your departmental space is becoming a problem between now and the time when we can have a Records Center on campus for permanent storage and recall of important documents. When in doubt, do not throw out. Thank you!

--Mary Giblin
Provost's Office
Member of
University Archives Committee

A.M.D.G.

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