

Library storage shortage debated

By MELODY WARD
Of the Emerald

The University library is faced with a critical problem: A finite amount of storage space, and an exponentially growing influx of information.

"We've got about three more years expansion time before we'll have to stack the books in the aisles," says Head Librarian William Axford.

Axford says 120,000 books are currently stored in other campus buildings, but he says alternative storage must be found soon to alleviate the shelving crunch.

Just how the books are to be stored has raised some controversy among faculty members.

"We either build new library buildings, add on to the present ones, or go to a central storage concept," explains John Baldwin, dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

"What we can't do — is nothing," he says.

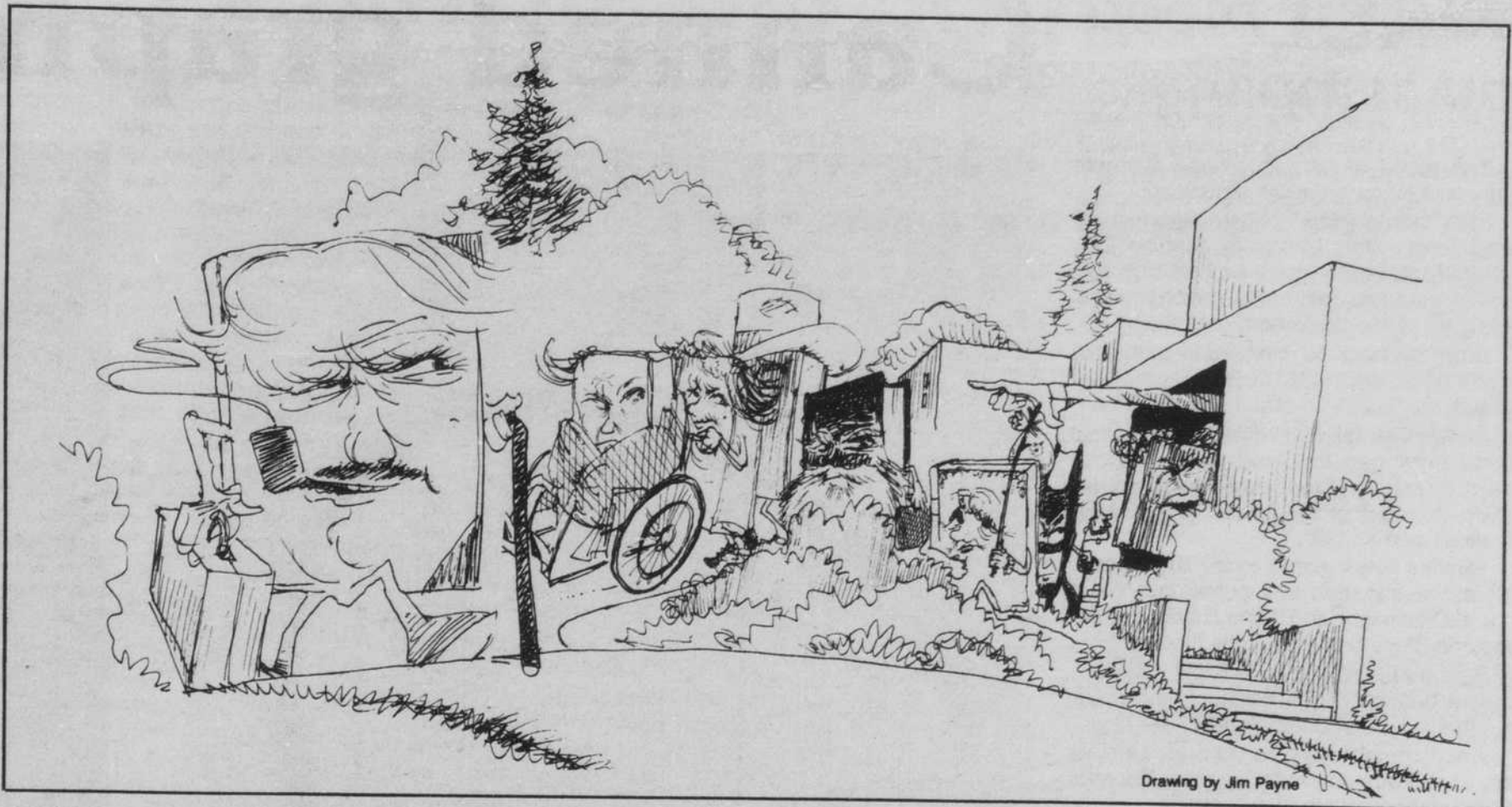
Baldwin says the shortage of storage space is being felt by the other state system libraries in "varying degrees." By sharing a central storage system, each library would be able to house incoming books and retain access to those volumes that are not in as great demand.

But the concept of central storage sparks distrust among many faculty members, particularly in the humanities area.

"We want to see all the titles around us so that we can compare the works in terms of content and quality before rejecting some and making use of others," explains English Prof. Robert Grudin. "You don't want a librarian deciding that for you."

Grudin adds that the "browsing" process often requires only a brief amount of time.

He says, "there are many times when a scholar only needs about 30 seconds to check an index or a reference. But this procedure would be very difficult if the works involved were in a storage facility."



Drawing by Jim Payne

Baldwin says state system librarians have already filed a proposal with the chancellor's office to locate a central storage facility at Camp Adair, a former military base near Corvallis.

"It would not be the sort of situation one could browse in," he says. Under such a plan, books could be retrieved from storage within a week. But Baldwin cautions that at this point, no one is certain exactly how long it would take.

According to the proposal, the Camp Adair facility would cost approximately \$400,000 and would serve all the state system libraries. Baldwin says some faculty members are worried that if University books were stored away from this campus, they may not be as accessible.

"Some people are against remote storage period, others are against state system controlled storage," he explains. "Not all the faculty have confidence that the

needs of the University would be kept paramount because the state system would give equal weighting to the needs of all the state institutions."

It is estimated that an addition to the University library would cost from one to three million dollars.

According to Axford, the best

solution would be a new addition to the existing library, so the books would remain near at hand. He says an addition of nearly 16,000 feet to the fourth floor is being considered, but its feasibility depends on other campus construction priorities.

"No decisions have been

made," Axford says. "Ultimately, the Legislature will make the final decision."

Baldwin says the University is carefully considering every alternative. Six outside experts will speak to both sides of the central storage issue in a public colloquium to be held April 20 and 21.

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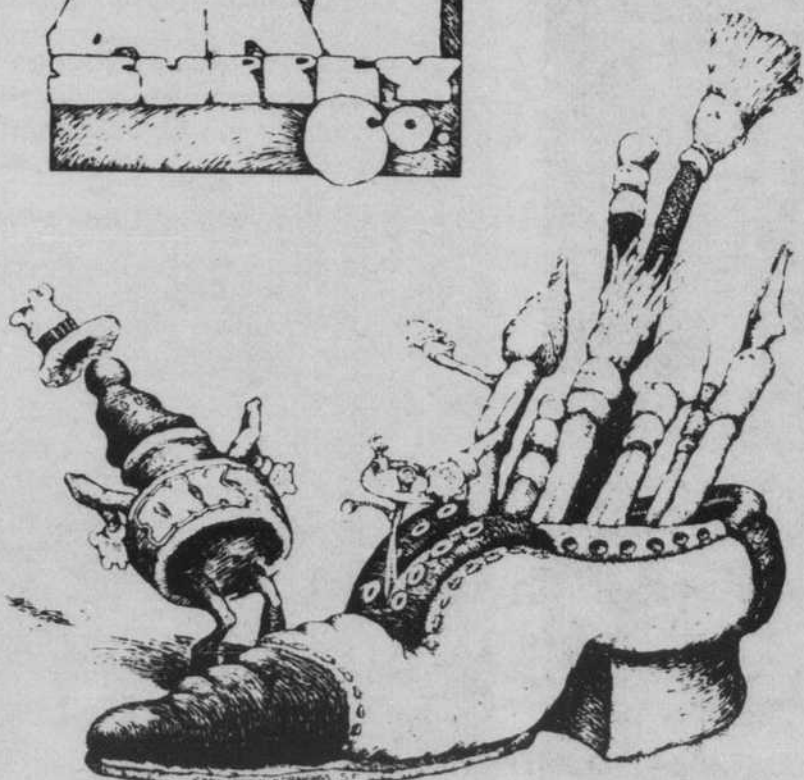


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