

The Vital Organ

By Tiffany Kell
Of the Emerald

The campus library system is one of the University's vital organs.

"It affects every program on campus," said Laura Simic, the coordinator of library development. "An academic library's quality acts as a barometer for an institution because a quality research library is going to attract quality professors."

The library is critically lacking in areas crucial for a productive research library, said University Librarian George Shipman. However, funds recently allotted by the University provost may help to remedy the situation and bring the University library system up to par, he said.

After six years of requests, Dick Hill, provost and vice-president for academic affairs, granted the library \$75,000 for new shelving. The new addition is one positive step in lightening staff member's workloads; however, it also means the removal of study desks in the main library.

On the surface the University library system is a quality research institution. It is the largest research library in Oregon. In addition, it is a member of the prestigious Association of Research Libraries, which includes Universities such as Harvard and Stanford. Membership in the ARL is by invitation only and includes 106 academic libraries across the country.

The 1.7 million books and 17,000 periodicals housed here gave it a 67th-place ranking among the ARL libraries in 1985. The library also boasts an automated catalog and interlibrary loan system (OCLC), which enables anyone access to more than 15 million books from more than 2,000 libraries, primarily in the United States and Canada, but from other nations as well.

Despite these notable accomplishments, the library has not been able to keep up a high level of quality.

Many students complain that the library doesn't keep its reference books current enough, and according to Shipman, this is true. The library collections are "less than adequate," Shipman said.

Since 1980 the library's collection has "lost ground," said Shipman, who believes the library's "buying power has declined." Today the library isn't able to buy its fair share, he said.

This year Gov. Neil Goldschmidt plans to increase the library's budget by 7 percent to cover inflationary costs. This increase in the library's acquisition budget isn't going to be sufficient to meet the library's purchasing needs, however, Shipman said.

"This library is grossly underfunded," he said. Updating books and periodicals isn't the only area that needs immediate financial attention. Lack of automation and staffing also are pressing concerns.

Library lacking critical 'lifeblood,' sustaining dollars

When Shipman took the position of University Librarian in 1980, there was no automation in the library; in fact the library was the last ARL library to install an automated system, he said.

Today all titles dating back to 1977 are on a COM-catalog (computer output microfiche) that is updated monthly.

The library offers a third computer system known as INNOVAQ. With this system anyone can find out if the library has purchased a book or title and when that title is expected to arrive.

These relatively new systems have merely "brought the library into the 20th century," said Rod Christensen, a business reference librarian.

The library still needs an integrated library system, Shipman said. This on-line computer system would allow anyone to directly query a catalog to determine if the library owns a title, and should the library have the needed title, the computer will state whether it has been checked out and when it is due back, he said.

This system wouldn't replace staff, but it would allow staff members to do the necessary manual services more efficiently, Shipman said.

It will be at least two years before the library can afford to install the on-line system, while many other ARL libraries already have them, he added.

Right now Shipman's greatest problem is lack of staffing, he said. There are three levels of staffing: professional, non-professional (classified), library-funded students and work-study students.

The University library ranked 79th out of 106 libraries in a recent ARL statistical report that rated the quantity of professional staff, and 97th for classified staff.

The library needs to fill 47 classified positions in order to reach the median level among ARL libraries, Shipman said.

Should the library receive enough money to fill these positions, there would be a "quantifiable difference in the level of performance," Shipman said. "It would mean the elimination of backlogged cataloging."

This extra staffing would eliminate backlogged material bought years ago, Shipman said. The library has enough trouble cataloging recently purchased materials, he said.

In the past, librarians have had to move books

back and forth to facilitate the fluctuation of returned books due to the lack of shelving.

Inadequate shelf space is just one problem library staff faces; simple tasks such as issuing overdue notices can't be performed without more staff members. Overdue notices save forgetful students a great deal of money but haven't been issued in more than seven years.

Another dilemma the library faces is that it has to use what few work-study students it has in place of needed classified staff. This is not common practice in most libraries, Shipman said.

Shipman fears that if the federal government cuts the work-study program, the library would have to resort to extreme measures such as closing at 5 p.m. daily.

Within the past six years there has been a decrease in work-study hours from 10-12 hours a week to six to eight hours a week, he said. This cut places yet another strain on library supervisors in that they must train and hire more students.

Shipman stressed the need for staffing above all and said automation would only enhance the grossly neglected staff-performed services.

"The library is not unique in its funding problems, however, it is unique in the depth of each facet of those problems," Shipman said.

In order to understand the real depth of those problems one must take a closer look at the actual financial situation.

The library was established in 1881 as a result of a gift from Henry Villard, then president of Northern Pacific Railroad.

Even though that first contribution toward the library came as a private donation, the library today exists primarily on state funds. Private funds fulfill only a fraction of the library's financial needs. The library's shortcomings range in the millions.

In 1985 the library budget was \$2.3 million below the ARL median. One million dollars of that money should have gone to wages and salaries. Overall, the library ranked 96th in total expenditures among ARL libraries.

"The state isn't paying its fair share," Shipman said.

He acknowledged that the library system is not the only state institution that desperately needs money, but it is a serious case, he said.

Shipman has the chance, once each fiscal year, to submit a budget proposal to the provost. This year's proposal consisted of a total of \$470,000, \$270,000 of which would go to 15 new classified positions and one professional law librarian position.

The remaining \$200,000 would pay for new

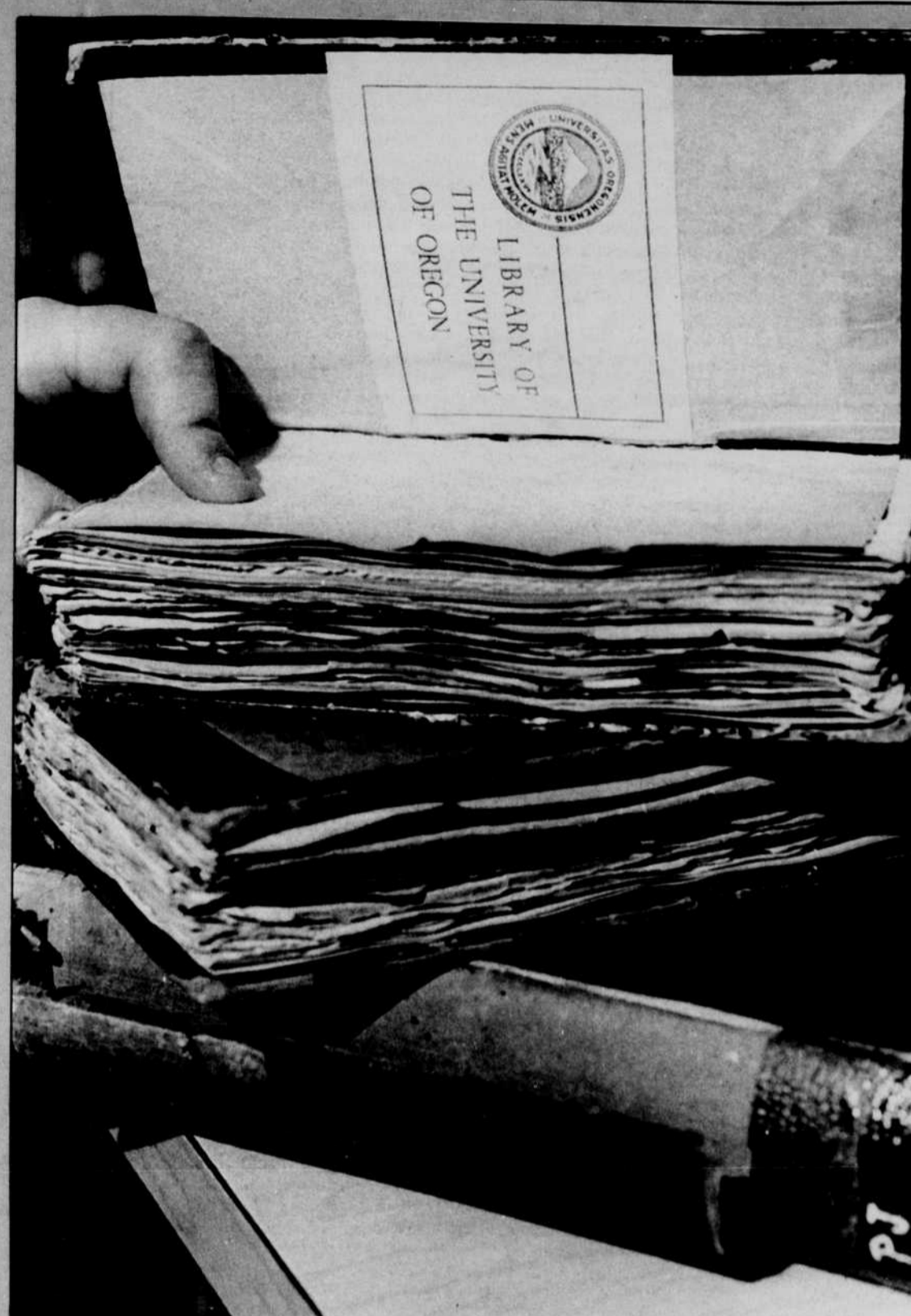


Photo by Michael Wilhelm

University law school to house public-interest law conference

By B.J. Thomsen
Of the Emerald

The University law school soon will be the site of the largest environmental law conference in the country, according to Richard Metz, a second-year law student at the University.

Metz came from Boulder, Colo., to the University to study in the "most comprehensive environmental law program in the country," he said.

The fifth annual Western Public Interest Law Conference, sponsored by the Western Natural Resources Law Clinic and Land, Air, Water, will consist of a series of 23 workshops March 13-15, Metz said.

Both sponsors are associated with the University law school's environmental law program.

LAW is an independent student environmental research group, and WNRLC represents clients throughout the west in environmental litigation and administrative appeals.

Sixty speakers, many of them nationally known, will address environmental law issues at the weekend-long conference. All speakers at the conference are experts in their respective fields, Metz said.

Keynote speaker for the conference, David Brower, was executive director of the Sierra Club for 18 years, founded Friends of the Earth and most recently has founded the Earth Island Institute to promote environmental thinking on a global basis.

"He's a real visionary who likes to stick to his ideals," said Metz, who described Brower further as "probably the most distinguished environmental activist around today."

Dave Foreman, head of Earth First! and former chief lobbyist for the Wilderness Society in Washington, D.C., also will speak at the conference.

Earth First!, founded by Foreman, is an organization dedicated to acts of civil disobedience in defense of the natural environment, Metz said.

Metz described the organization's actions as "guerrilla theater civil disobedience tactics."

Foreman spends his time traveling around the country participating in nonviolent civil disobedience and last summer was arrested in Yellowstone National Park when he and others dressed up as grizzly bears, Metz said.

Both Brower and Foreman have been instrumental in shaping and creating much environmental law that exists today through extensive lobbying efforts, but neither have formal law degrees, Metz said.

"The interesting thing about the conference is that both Brower and Foreman have been very critical of the mainstream environmental groups. They perceive people in the Sierra Club and the National Wildlife Federation as being too willing to compromise their environmental values," he said. "Many of those groups... will be represented by prominent attorneys at this conference."

The whole spectrum of environmental stands will be represented, he said.

Even attorneys working for government agencies and defending the government in environmental suits have been invited.

Also speaking will be Charles Wilkinson, a University law professor who writes and lectures on natural resource issues, and Brock Evans, vice president of the National Audubon Society.

The workshops will deal with a variety of environmental issues including toxic waste, old-growth forests, citizen activists, Alaska and Native American rights. They are free to the public.

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