Note from the Archivist

Hello Mount Community,

As we head into our Spring semester, I have been reflecting on our busy Fall. During the Fall semester, we had 30 information inquiries made to the archives. This statistic represents a large increase from 19 inquiries in Fall 2016 and only 4 inquiries in Fall 2015!

We also had 17 research visits to the archives this Fall, which is large increase from only 5 research visits last Fall. Of those 17 research visits, 13 of them were Mount students conducting research for class projects. Their research topics varied but included Fr. John DuBois, Msgr. Hugh J. Phillips, Fr. Stanley Rother, Archbishop John Hughes, and the history of the grotto.

I want to thank the Mount community for its continued interest in Mount history and support of the archives. I look forward to working with all of you throughout the Spring semester.

Jessica Whitmore
One of the Largest Historical Collections in Maryland to Be Better Preserved Through Grant from National Endowment Humanities

The Hugh J. Phillips Library at Mount St. Mary’s University, which houses collections with medieval and early modern manuscripts dating from 1320 to 1700 as well as records on early Maryland history and Catholicism in America, has been awarded a Preservation Assistance for Smaller Institutions grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to support a comprehensive preservation assessment.

A consultant, Annie Peterson, preservation services librarian with LYRASIS, will provide an overview of the preservation concerns in the library’s significant historical and cultural collections, including the Rhoads Memorial Archives, as well as provide short- and long-term plans for addressing these issues. The $5,749 grant also allows Jessica J. Whitmore, C’16, interim library director and university archivist, to improve collection care immediately by purchasing environmental monitoring equipment for the two rooms where the materials are housed.

“If reopening the archives in 2014, conducting a formal preservation assessment of the university archives has been one of my top priorities. I am grateful to the NEH for this funding opportunity,” Whitmore said. “In the past, only about 30 percent of applicants have received this NEH grant. The fact that the Mount was a successful applicant in this highly competitive grant speaks volumes about the quality of our archival collections.” The NEH awarded 76 Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions, totaling $441,054.

“The humanities offer us a path toward understanding ourselves, our neighbors, our nation,” said NEH Acting Chairman Jon Parrish Peede. “These new NEH grants exemplify the agency’s commitment to serving American communities through investing in education initiatives, safeguarding cultural treasures, and illuminating the history and values that define our shared heritage.”

The Rhoads Memorial Archives, named for alumnus and benefactor Paul Rhoads, C’40, serves as the institutional memory of Mount St. Mary’s University and Seminary and its faculty, staff, students, and alumni. Holdings consist of a wide range of materials, including approximately 40,000 documents relating to the university’s founding in 1808, the growth and development of Catholicism in America, the local community and early church bishops and leaders. The collection also houses medieval and early modern manuscripts dating from 1320 to 1700, including religious texts, Gregorian chant music, legal documents and letters as well as American slavery, Civil War and World War II records.

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The Catholic Studies Room features a collection of more than 500 rare books, including incunabula and a copy of the Downey Bible, the first Catholic Bible printed in the United States. Other works in this room include the 217-volumes of The Patrologia Latina, the 68-volume Acta Sanctorum and the Heritage Edition of the St. John’s Bible. The library’s artwork collection is on display throughout the building; works by John La Farge are in display in the office of Mount St. Mary’s President Timothy E. Trainor, Ph.D.

Peterson will conduct her preservation analysis and deliver a report on her findings in the spring of 2018. Peterson is the chair of the Association of Library Collections and Technical Services (ALCTS) Preservation and Reformatting Section. In 2016 she was awarded ALCTS’s Esther J. Piercy Award, given to recognize the contribution to areas of librarianship included in library collections and technical service by a librarian who has shown outstanding promise for continuing contribution and leadership.

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at www.neh.gov.

Intro to Archival Science Update

Eighteen students are currently enrolled in HIST 297 B: Introduction to Archival Science. Unit I, which was titled What are Archives?, provided students with a broad overview of the field. Students spent several days examining archival ethics and the role archives play in society, as well as touring the Mount Archives.

Students will next wrap up Unit II: The Archivist Profession on Friday, Feb. 2nd. During this weeklong career unit, students have learned about the cultural heritage professions and the diverse career opportunities in the fields of libraries, archives, and museums. They also spent time learning about different graduate school opportunities related to archival science. The week concludes with a guest presentation by Clare Tauriello, Director of the Career Center.

Throughout the month of February, students will complete a unit on Arrangement and Description and learn about the unique ways that archival materials are cataloged. In March, students will have the opportunity to explore the science of preservation as it relates to protecting the Mount’s rich history.
Local Catholic Archives Meeting

On January 23rd, the Mount Archives hosted archivists from Catholic archives located throughout the greater Baltimore region. Archivist Jessica Whitmore co-sponsored the event with Archivist Dee Gallo of the Daughters of Charity Provincial Archives. This informal group meets bi-annually for discussion on current issues and trends facing Catholic archives today.

The meeting began at the Daughters of Charity Provincial Archives for introductions, discussion, and tours of the archives facility. The meeting then moved to Mount St. Mary’s for lunch, further discussion, and a tour of the Mount Archives. This event provided a wonderful opportunity to share the Mount’s rich history and archival collections with other Catholic archivists from the region.

Additional organizations in attendance included:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
- Archdiocese of Washington
- Diocese of Wilmington
- Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
- Catholic University of America
- Trinity Washington University
- Loyola-Notre Dame Library
- The Carmelite Nuns of Baltimore
- Sisters of Bon Secours, USA
- Redemptorist Archives of the Baltimore Province
- St. Mary’s Spiritual Center & Historic Site on Paca Street
- The Associated Archives (Archdioceses of Baltimore, St. Mary’s Seminary & University, and the Associated Sulpicians of the United States).

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