

Academic Plan—American Heritage Center—2009-2014

The American Heritage Center (AHC) is the repository for the University of Wyoming's (UW) special collections and archives, including the university's rare books library and one of the largest manuscript collections in the U.S. The American Heritage Center aspires to be widely acknowledged—by the University community, by the people of Wyoming, by scholars worldwide, and by our professional peers--as one of the nation's finest special collections repositories, bringing international distinction to the University of Wyoming by advancing scholarly research and education at the university and beyond. Our mission is to preserve a clearly defined set of primary sources and rare books--reflecting the written, image, and audio history of Wyoming, the Rocky Mountain Region, and **select** aspects of the American past--and to make those sources accessible to all. Our diverse collections support casual inquiry and international scholarship; most importantly, we play an active and creative role in the teaching, research, and service missions of the University (see the Center's Mission and Vision statements, <http://ahc.uwyo.edu/documents/about/administration/mission2003-07-20.pdf>).

As was true for the 2004-09 Academic Plan, for this plan the American Heritage Center employed a widely inclusive and iterative process that solicited suggestions for five-year goals from all Center faculty and staff, prioritized and refined those goals several times within department heads meetings, reviewed and solicited further comments from all employees, had the director draft a narrative plan reviewed by the department heads, while providing the Provost opportunities for reviewing the work on two occasions prior to final submission. We believe the process resulted in a plan with broad support by AHC faculty and staff, and one that accurately reflects the most pressing goals and needs of the Center in the years to come.

The American Heritage Center is proud of its track record of implementing its previous academic plan. Of the ten prioritized goals, five were fully (or more than fully) achieved:

1. Create a clear, comprehensive, and sustainable collecting policy--including clarification of responsibility for the Hebard Collection and art collections;
2. Eliminate the backlog of manuscript collections that are completely uncataloged, and reduce the backlog of collections not cataloged on-line to 40% (by volume) by 2009, by increasing the pace of processing, by concerted reappraisal and deaccessioning, and by active solicitation of grant funding (*every one of our collections is now cataloged online*);
4. Lead in efforts to digitize primary source materials, particularly in collaborative projects, to increase the amount of scholarly content available worldwide on the Web;
7. If staffing remains stable, continue to expand direct support for the undergraduate and graduate curriculum, by approaching instructors of individual courses and by collaborating with broader programs such as the English MFA and the Public History masters;
8. Seek to enhance the visibility and prestige of the Simpson Institute, particularly by exploring further collaboration with Political Science, History, and the College of Law.

Two 2004-09 goals were partially achieved: 3. Eliminate leaks and improve security in the Centennial Complex (some leaks were mitigated and security was improved); 9. Raise private funds sufficient to create a well-equipped classroom on the 4th floor; use Toppan endowment income to create rare books processing and cataloging area off the Colket room on the 2nd floor (the 4th floor classroom was constructed). One goal was put underway but not completed: 10. Determine, in conjunction with Academic Affairs and the General Counsel, the university's

obligations and needs in managing university records, and define a course of action to meet those obligations/needs. And two goals were not realized, though one (number 6) proved beyond our control: 5. Raise private funds to fully endow sufficient faculty positions to maintain present staffing; 6. Presuming that the Toppan endowment is realized by 2004 and creates at least 4.5% expendable income by 2005, increase the Toppan books cataloged on-line to 50% by 2009.

Of the two goals partially completed, Creation of the Future III (CFIII) supports us in our continuing goal of fully resolving leak and security problems in the Centennial Complex, and creation of a processing area in Toppan is for the next five years part of a larger goal of cataloging a large percentage of rare books. We will continue to pursue the goal of university records management, focusing particularly on electronic records, as part of our new five year goal for digital preservation and for development of a collecting plan for University Archives.

Our successful implementation of a collecting policy, of backlog elimination, of comprehensive holdings cataloging, of significant digitization (including six CDs with lesson plans as part of our US Department of Education grant), of our extensive work with undergraduates and 6-12 students—and the fact that so many of our faculty have themselves achieved positions of expertise and leadership—*have combined to raise the stature and visibility of the Center within the archival profession to one of national leader.* (While not a stated goal for the next five years, it is nonetheless true that the American Heritage Center will continue to encourage and support its archival faculty and rare book curator(s) to remain national and even international leaders in their fields, from history and popular culture, to teaching and archives.)

At the same time, *the AHC continues to shine as a beacon on the UW campus for national and international scholars, bringing continuing recognition to the university for both our outstanding collections and our superior reference service.* As one researcher enthusiastically noted, “I have done some research...in the Library of Congress. While I have great respect for the LC...the service that I have received from you and your organization VASTLY outstrips my experience with LC!!!!” If the Simpson Family Fund campaign is successful the Center will be in a position to further expand its incentives to national and international scholars to visit the campus, and to publish books, produce documentaries, and mount exhibits that bring the AHC and UW to the attention of tens of thousands of readers, viewers, and visitors.

Regarding fundraising, the Center will continue to fundraise aggressively, maintaining its development priorities which, as they now stand, include: expanding and strengthening the Simpson Institute; a named faculty position dedicated to work with our photographic collection (the single most heavily used segment of our holdings); a named faculty position to focus on digitization of primary source materials and management of born-digital collection materials; and a named faculty position dedicated to oral history.

All our fundraising goals are designed to strengthen the Center’s ability a) to make its holdings more accessible; b) to attract and work with undergraduates, graduate students, scholars, and the public; c) to continue improvement of our creation and curation of digital material; d) and to continue to build our already renowned collections. These themes on the one hand reflect our formal mission and vision statement, and on the other hand are mirrored in our specific action items for 2009-14.

AMERICAN HERITAGE CENTER ACTION ITEMS, 2009-14:

I. Make our Holdings More Accessible

 *Triple the percent of Toppan books cataloged on-line* (this will include hiring a professional cataloger once the income from the AHC's Toppan endowment is available for Center expenditure). This will further improve intellectual access to AHC collections. Dramatically expanding the portion of the Toppan holdings cataloged online will also expand scholarly use of that under-appreciated collection (while already very actively used as an undergraduate teaching resource, the Toppan collection will be that much more useful to students as well once cataloged).

 *Digitize all older inventories.* This is a logical next step to having created catalog records for all collections—expanding the number of inventories (also called finding aids) available for those collections, not only through digitizing older inventories, but also (as a part of standard workflow) creating new inventories.

 *Develop or adopt a collection management database (e.g., Archivists Tool Kit).* The AHC has long outgrown its homemade collection management database, and must succeed in one of three avenues: developing another, more sophisticated, homemade system; piggybacking on the “backend” of the Libraries’ new public access catalog; or adopting one of two evolving open source archives-specific systems.

II. Attract and Work with Undergraduates, Graduate Students, Scholars, and the Public

 *Prioritize, target, and assess outreach to UW departments.* This goal will contribute to the University's goal (CFIII) of “increasing avenues for undergraduate involvement” with AHC collections in their curriculum, and possibly with AHC professional functions (as part of expanding work-study opportunities). While over the course of the past three years AHC faculty have presented at national professional sessions about our outreach and teaching to undergraduates and 6-12 students, discovering in the process that we are far more active and successful than most university repositories, one impetus for this goal is the turnover of UW faculty, resulting in many new faces who may not be aware of the opportunities at the AHC. Another impetus is to focus attention on expanding work-study opportunities for students in many disciplines. Moreover, while outreach to faculty and undergraduates has been continuing for over a decade, the Center has not developed any means of assessing the effectiveness either of the outreach itself or of the direct work with undergraduates. During 2008 the AHC participated in a national assessment of orientation efforts, but this must be expanded and regularized.

 *Develop a marketing plan for the AHC.* Purpose is to improve AHC's visibility and recognition within Wyoming and nationally. The Center remains something of an open secret in the state, less widely known than it should be; like UW generally, its national leadership in many areas is also under-reported. This undermines both outreach and fundraising efforts. AHC will work actively with UW Public Relations staff to better publicize Center activities and accomplishments to a statewide and national audience.

III. Continue Improvement of Our Creation and Curation of Digital Material

 *Address issues of digital creation and preservation on campus.* This goal encompasses further work on born-digital university records (begun under the 2004-09 academic plan), planned expansion of digitizing/storage/accessibility of analog primary source materials in the AHC's collections, and acquisition/preservation/ accessibility of "born-digital" primary source materials (including but not limited to web-based material such as websites and blogs). This work will specifically include (CF111) further collaboration with the Libraries in developing digital resources of many kinds, with the AHC probably continuing to focus on both digitizing primary source materials and acquiring "born digital" primary source collections to strengthen a variety of our holdings (including University Archives). This work will require resources primarily in the form of expanded digital storage and web-delivery capabilities (though the Center will also be fundraising for additional personnel).

 *Develop a "minimal" process for scanning.* AHC revolutionized national archival practice in processing collections through a method called "More Product Less Process," which emphasized prioritizing user needs above traditional archival practices. To apply these principles to digitizing primary sources will entail scanning a far greater quantity of material at lower resolution and organizing/cataloging it in groups (akin to file folders) rather than scanning at high resolution and cataloging as individual items. This activity will dovetail with the University's goal of greater collaboration between the AHC and University Libraries to improve access to digital resources.

IV. Build Our Already Renowned Collections

 *Develop collecting policies for Toppan and University Archives.* Logical extensions to the AHC's development of a full collecting policy for its manuscript collections. The Toppan work will include participation by UW librarians, and will proceed in parallel with the Libraries' development of a collecting policy for its new "special collections," all with the goal of ensuring collaboration and avoiding competition. The University archives work will seek collaboration with UW General Counsel's office and Wyoming State Archives.

 *Create a method and prioritize for active collecting.* This is the logical next step from our development of a collecting policy. Active collecting (consisting of researching leads, contacting potential donors, and persuading those individuals/organizations to donate collections) will ensure that the Center's holdings continue to remain important to evolving research in a variety of disciplines. These collecting priorities will include further strengthening our holdings in two of UW's "areas of distinction": history and culture of Wyoming and the West; environment and natural resources. These priorities will also include significant expansion of our holdings of "underrepresented communities," through active work with individuals connected to UW minority studies programs and groups such as Rainbow Resource Center, thus contributing to the University's goal of "inclusiveness."