

PAST FORWARD

The Newsletter of the Sisters of Providence Archives, Seattle

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Spacesaver
high-density mobile storage systems



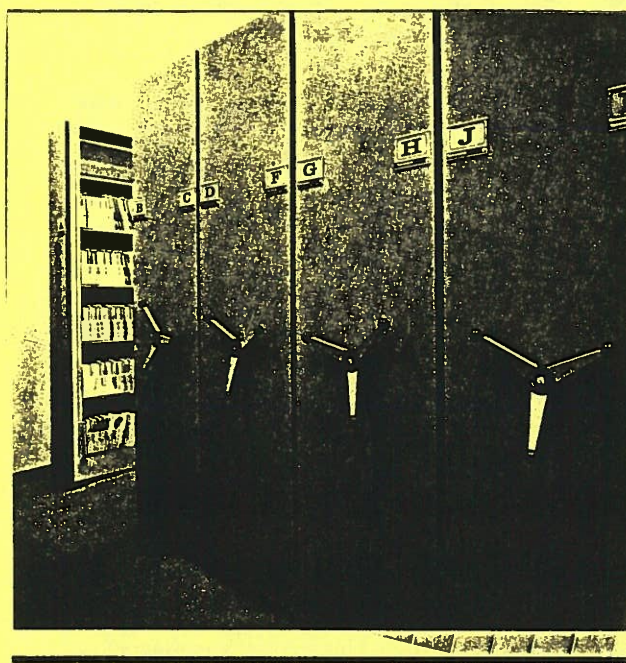
In 1972, 23 years ago, the Archives were established as a separate department of the Provincial Administration. The archival collections were moved from Providence Heights, Issaquah to St. Joseph Residence in Seattle and Sister Rita Bergamini, S.P. was appointed the first full time Archivist under the Provincial Secretary.

The establishment of an Archives requires equipment and space. The most important thing in planning an archival facility is the ability to expand. When the Archives moved to St. Joseph Residence, shelving from the recently closed library at Providence Heights was installed. Prior to the shelving installation in the Archives two large storage rooms, the aisle spacing and shelving layout was carefully planned. However, the workmen did not always adhere to the plans. As a result, aisle widths vary with the smallest being 19". It is a challenge for staff to file and retrieve archival storage boxes and to push carts down the aisles. In addition, the shelving is standard library book shelving, and ranges from 6" to 9" deep. The standard archival box is 12" deep and legal size is 15" deep. This creates precarious situations when boxes extend 6" off a shelf and must be carefully balanced not to tip off!

Since the Archives were established, they have grown within the same facility. Each year, an average of 150 linear feet of material is accessioned into the collections. This does not include artifacts, many of which are large liturgical pieces or framed paintings and pictures. The Archival collections includes 2,250 linear feet of manuscripts, archival material and historical books. The storage areas are 87% full.

A combination of inadequate shelving, insufficient work space, collection growth, and environmental conditions prompted the evaluation of the Archives facility several years ago. It was determined that high-density compact shelving, also known as movable shelving, would be an appropriate solution to the records storage problems. With movable shelving, the shelves are attached to carriages which run on rails, allowing aisles to be opened where they are needed. In this way, a room can be completely filled with shelving instead of wasting space on fixed aisle widths for stationary shelving.

Spacesaver Storage Systems, Inc is the vendor which will design and install the new shelving system in the Archives, giving us approximately 50% more storage in each room. This is the same as having an additional storage room, of the current dimensions, with stationary shelving as currently laid out. Aisles will be a standard 36" and will feel like a boulevard after our 19" aisle! The



Spacesaver high-density shelves will be installed in the Archives

shelving will be 11" and 15" deep to accommodate all archival box sizes. There will also be a canopy top with dust seals to protect the collections from dust, and any accidental overhead water leaks. The structure of the system itself will provide stability and protection for the records in the event of an earthquake.

Installation of the movable shelving will be a major undertaking. The collections will be removed from the Archives and kept in off-site storage. While in off-site storage, the collections will not be accessible for research use. After the collections are removed, the old shelving will be dismantled and shipped to another institution for its use. The rooms will then be modestly renovated including a drop ceiling to conceal overhead pipes, and a fresh coat of paint. The new shelving carriages will be installed, shelving assembled and the collections retransferred to the new shelves. Phase I, removal of the collections to off-site storage will begin July 31. Plans for completion of the total project are for the end of September.

It is difficult to estimate the hours which have gone into the planning, design, and redesign of the new storage system. In addition, the Archives staff is working with the collections to make historical material more accessible and to eliminate duplicate items. Artifacts, books, videotapes and other loose shelf items must also be boxed and stored. Finally, a new collections location guide is being developed to identify the new shelf location for each collection.

In the Autumn, an open house will be held in the Archives to show everyone our new work area and the enhanced storage for the preservation of the Sisters of Providence history.

Throughout the preparatory process, the Archives has been on a reduced access schedule. However, there have been several research requests for which the collections have been used...

MOTHER JOSEPH IN CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE

For several months, Deborah Rink, a historian and architecture landscape designer from Vancouver, B.C. has been researching Mother Joseph's architectural work in that city. Deborah's work culminated in an exhibit, "The Pioneers - Trailblazing Women in Canadian Architecture", shown at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver B.C., April-May, 1995. The exhibit was well

received and there are plans to publish an exhibit catalogue. In the meantime, the editors of Canadian Architecture magazine were alerted to the exhibit and included a news item about it in a following issue. They were so taken with Mother Joseph's story that they highlighted Mother Joseph and printed her portrait.

VIDEO FOCUSING ON WOMEN RELIGIOUS CONTRIBUTIONS TO HEALTH CARE

The Catholic Health Association, CHA, is in the process of producing an hour-long documentary focusing on the commitment of women religious in health care. The documentary will be nationally televised in 1996 and is funded by private grants.

To assist CHA with this project is the Washington, DC based video production firm *Video Action Fund*. Christel Libiot is the principal researcher who is visiting archival repositories of women religious across the country. In June, Christel visited the Sisters of Providence Archives for 2 1/2 days to research the contributions and impact of the Sisters of Providence, Sacred Heart Province, on the development of health care in the Northwest. The Sisters of Providence history, and the archival collections were highly recommended to Christel. She not only had samples of historical material previously provided by the Archives, but was encouraged to learn about the Sisters of Providence history and include them in the video by Donald Brennan, past President, Sisters of Providence Health System, and Christopher Kauffman, a renowned Catholic historian. Mr. Kauffman is the author of the recently published volume, Ministry and Meaning.

Christel was fascinated with the Sisters of Providence history. Her research centered on Mother Joseph and the institutions she established; health care to the Native American population; tickets, or "billets", an early form of pre-paid health insurance; the Sisters of Providence corporation (one of the oldest in Washington); begging stories; photographs; Alaskan ministries; and health care documented through photographs and patient ledgers.

For more information about the Archives contact:

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