



Marx Library

## History of the University Libraries University of South Alabama

**Dr. Frederick Whiddon**, the first president of the University of South Alabama, recognized that a first-class academic library was one of the most important facilities on a university campus. More than 10,000 books were purchased for the new University before students attended the first class.

A room in the Administration Building was designated as the library, and Student Services Director, Retired Navy Captain Richard Touart's logistical skills were put into service organizing books and other materials, which began arriving at a prodigious rate. Captain Touart served as Acting Librarian until 1966. Ms. Hilda Steinweg, hired in 1965, organized and cataloged the growing collection. Ms. Steinweg had extensive experience in cataloging, having served at major universities in both Illinois and Ohio for a number of years. She served the University Library for ten years until her retirement in 1975. Within two years, \$610,000 was budgeted to purchase more than 100,000 books for the University Library. Donations of books from Mobile residents, as well as materials purchased under the guidance of several local librarians, contributed to expanding the initial collection.

The dedicated work of several Mobile area librarians resulted in a flood of material for the new library. They were Mr. Ed Rhodes, formerly of the University of Alabama Extension Center in Mobile, Mr. Robert Zeitz, then director of the Spring Hill College Library, and Ms. Fanny Taylor, a local librarian. They ordered materials utilizing the Undergraduate Library shelf lists from the University of North Carolina, and the University of Michigan, as guides. Ed Rhodes, who worked in a general public services capacity during this formative period, was later appointed the first Head of Circulation at the University.

The rapid growth of the University Library in 1965/66 resulted in the public services areas being moved to the south end of the Administration Building on the first floor, and technical services and the administrative areas to the basement. A little later, the Acquisitions unit was moved into temporary offices of the new College of Education facility next to the Administration Building.

Mr. Aaron I. Michelson, who had a degree in the field of Library Science, was hired as the first Director of the Library in 1966. Mr. Michelson directed many significant developments in the library during his tenure as Director. Paramount among these was the completion of a modular four-story structure to house the University Library. Hoping to put USA on the cutting edge of modern library facilities, the University hired three distinguished consultants to help plan the building. These were Guy R. Lyle of Emory University, T. M. McMullan of Louisiana State University, and M. Orvin Rush of Florida State University. The building was opened for use by the University community on September 15, 1968, and dedicated by Governor Albert P. Brewer on July 31, 1969.

By 1969, all of the major department heads had been appointed. Ms. Viola Harper became the first Head of Reference; Dana G. Gould, Head of Acquisitions; Geraldine M. Irby, Head of Government Documents; Eugene V. Sullivan, Serials Records Librarian; and Dr. Joaquin M. Holloway, Jr., Director of the Instructional Media Center.

***During the 1970s, the University Library Collections and Services grew to full-fledged academic library status:***

- Government Documents, Microforms, and an Instructional Media Center were three unique functional areas developed at this time. The opening and professional staffing of these three new areas went smoothly with the exception of one area, Government Documents. In this case, Ms. Irby faced a serious obstacle. According to the law, there can only be two depositories in any one Congressional District. The First Congressional District, in which the University is located, already had two depositories, one at Spring Hill College, and one at the Mobile Public Library. It is a credit to both Ms. Irby and then Congressman for the First District, Jack Edwards, that the University Library was able to acquire depository status and become the primary government documents resource for this region. Both Spring Hill College and the Mobile Public Library had to thin out the retrospective materials in their collections due to space limitations, and Ms. Irby eagerly acquired these materials for USA.
- There were some early attempts at automating library procedures. A serials printout was produced using punched cards. The Library's financial records could be called up on a direct line from the Computer Center, and serial invoices were input on magnetic tape in the main computer for easy reference. All of this was done with the help and expertise of the University Computer Center.
- The Microforms Collection grew significantly with the acquisition of the Library of American Civilization and the Library of English Literature. These collections, along with large blocks of local newspapers such as the Mobile Press and the Mobile Register, proved to be excellent resources.
- The Biomedical Library, founded in July 1972, became part of the University Library system to serve the College of Medicine's information needs. It was housed in the University Library with Mr. Tom Lang as its first Director.
- In 1973, the University Library became a charter member of the Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET), which is a broker of OCLC (Online Computer Library Center) cataloging and reference databases.
- The University Archives, established at the USA Brookley Center in 1978, was the last official act of then Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dave Morton. The Archives remained at Brookley until the building was damaged by a tornado in May 1989, at which time the collection was relocated to the USA Spring Hill Campus. The Archives houses primary source material relating to the history of Mobile, the state of Alabama, and to the University. The Archives grew into one of the largest photographic collections in the region, including the popular Erik Overbey collection. The Archives also houses important records and manuscript collections such as the papers of Congressman Jack Edwards; materials from the civil rights era; the Mobile County Circuit court records (c. 1830-1917); and with the addition of the McCall Collection in 2010, became one of the repositories of the most extensive collections of historical documents in the state of Alabama.

***There were a number of important events during the 1980s:***

- Dr. Charles B. Lowry became the Director of Libraries in 1980, and under his leadership library automation began in earnest.
- In 1980, librarians achieved faculty status and tenure and created policies to document promotion, tenure, and evaluation procedures.
- The University became a member of NAAL (Network of Alabama Academic Libraries) in 1983 to improve statewide resources in support of graduate study and research and to facilitate resource sharing. NAAL has since increased emphasis on cooperative licensing of agreements for databases and electronic article delivery services of common interest to members.
- Assisting Dr. Lowry with automation was Patricia Ramage, who served as the libraries' first Systems Librarian from 1984 until her retirement in 1998. With the support of the University Administration, and the University Computer Center, the Library purchased the NOTIS (Northwestern Online Total Integrated System). The first modules to be automated were cataloging, acquisitions, and serials in late June 1983. LUIS (Library User Information System), the online catalog, was made available in October 1983. LUIS, which initially contained one-fourth of the Libraries holdings, was user friendly, and library users could access the catalog database by author, title, and subject.
- When the Baldwin County (USABC) campus was created in 1984, a librarian was hired to offer reference, instructional, interlibrary loan, and other services to USABC students and faculty. The USABC librarian could obtain or photocopy needed library material housed in the University Library or Biomedical Library and make it available at the USABC campus or the Fairhope Public Library.
- A bibliographic instruction position was created in 1984 and filled by Viola Harper, former Head of Reference. Collection Development was also singled out as an independent activity, and Gene Sullivan, Head of Acquisitions/Serials, was made head of the unit.
- Dr. Lowry left the Library in 1985, and Bob Donnell, Director of the Biomedical Library, served as Interim Director for more than a year. He resumed his duties as Biomedical Library Director when James A. Damico came on board as Director of University Libraries in 1987. With Jim Damico, the Libraries moved into a period of closer ties with the University community through a program of visibility and public relations.

***The 1990s brought even more changes to the Library:***

- The move from library accessible CD-ROM databases and mediated searches (Dialog) to Internet accessible licensed databases and full-text journal article delivery services that all USA affiliated users can access through networked PCs. By the end of the decade, this became the preferred method of access to the periodical literature for the vast majority of students and faculty.
- In December 1992, the Biomedical Library was moved to a renovated residence hall near the College of Medicine, where it is located today. It provides about 35,000 sq. ft. and serves the needs of the students, staff, and faculty of the College of Medicine, Nursing, and Allied Health Professions.
- The USA Medical Center Library, with more than 5,000 sq. ft. of space, was renovated in 1995 to serve the needs of the doctors and clinicians at the Medical Center.

- In 1996, Media Production Services (MPS) was administratively merged with the Biomedical Library until it became an independent unit of the College of Medicine in 2000. It offers a wide range of services, including photography, both traditional and digital, computer graphics, CDR production, videography, medical illustration, and slide production. MPS has a campus site in the Medical Sciences Building and another in the Mastin Building at the Medical Center.
- Jim Damico retired as Director of the University Library in 1998, and Eugene Sullivan served as Interim Director for the next year.

***The new millennium brought in exponential changes as technology changed the way libraries and library materials were accessed:***



Richard J. Wood, Ph.D.

In August 1999, Dr. Richard J. Wood began his third academic library directorship at USA. In January 2001, the University Library, the Biomedical Library, library services, the Baldwin County campus, and the USA Archives, were centralized by President Gordon Moulton under Dr. Wood, whose title was changed to Dean of University Libraries.

- The Endeavor, Inc., Voyager System was purchased and installed in February 2000 to replace the NOTIS system that had been used for the previous seventeen years. Voyager's client-server system replaced the mainframe-system architecture of the NOTIS System and allowed for seamless linking to electronic resources and services.
- A branch library of the Biomedical Library at Children's and Women's Hospital was dedicated in late 2000 to meet the specialized needs of doctors, nurses, and staff for library resources and services.
- From 1999 through 2001, the efforts of many University administrators, faculty, and staff members went into designing and planning a new addition to the University Library. Working with The Architectural Group (TAG) of Mobile, and the Doster Construction Co., Inc., construction of the long promised addition to the University Library commenced in January 2002, along with renovation of the ground floor of the existing University Library. The addition featured east and west entrances closer to the parking lot, which significantly enhanced access to the University Library and allowed the main entrance on the south side to be removed. The second, third, and fourth floors of the two buildings were connected to achieve an integrated building. Dedication of the new 53,000 sq. ft. addition was held in March 2003.
- The new addition provided space for two art galleries – one on the first floor, and a larger one on the third floor. Student artists from the University, as well as, artists from Mobile, surrounding communities, and across the state, display paintings, photography, ceramics, and other types of art for several weeks at a time in the galleries. This has enhanced the quality of life for Library patrons and the surrounding community.
- In 2005, the Mitchell College of Business added about 15,000 sq. ft. of space to its building for a Learning Resource Center (LRC) to house current business-related books, journal issues, and other materials. It provides a comfortable space where students can receive information

assistance from a professional librarian, study, read, use their laptops, or have group discussions.

- During his tenure as Dean of the Libraries, Dr. Wood, along with his staff, oversaw the evolutionary change from print-based journals and books to a majority internet accessible full-text journals, ebooks, and databases. By 2010, the budget for internet accessible resources, primarily e-journals, exceeded print books and journals.
- In May 2011, the University acquired a collection of historical documents from the family of Doy Leale McCall, Sr., appraised at \$3.1 million. As part of the gift, the University announced that the University Archives would be renamed "*The Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library.*" The collection includes material from the late 17th through the 20th century, such as, presidential land grants, papers related to slavery and Reconstruction, plantation documents, Civil War diaries, and papers of the Winter Iron Works in Montgomery, Alabama, among others. The collection opened to the public in stages as the archivists restored and preserved the documents. The agreement also requires the facility be moved to the main campus.
- In 2012, University of South Alabama Professor of Surgery, Dr. Charles Bernard Rodning, and his wife, Mary Elizabeth Rodning, established a \$200,000 endowment to underwrite future exhibitions, fund acquisitions, develop programs, and make improvements to the galleries. The Rodnings also provided an additional gift of \$10,000 for the immediate needs of the galleries. On June 20, 2012, the third floor art gallery was named "*The Mary Elizabeth and Charles Bernard Rodning Gallery of Art*" in honor of the couple.
- In that same year, the Main Library's Reference Department was named in honor of Vi Harper, appointed as the first Reference Department Head for the University in 1969. The Main Library's third floor east study rooms were named in honor of Mark Twain, Albert Einstein, and Albert Schweitzer, with gifts for art and collection expansion from Mobile businessman Ross Sloan.



Vi Harper



- The University of South Alabama Board of Trustees voted on September 17, 2013, to name the University Library in honor of the Marx family of Mobile in recognition of a \$3 million pledge from the Julien E. Marx Foundation Trust. Of this gift, \$1 million was designated for the renovation of the third-floor library space to relocate the Doy Leale McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library from the USA Springhill campus. This move will make the archive collections more accessible to USA students, faculty, and the community. The remaining \$2 million of the gift established an endowment to provide annual support for the Marx Library. **MARX LIBRARY** is now prominently displayed on the front of the library building on the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the University.

- 2014 saw the move and renovation of Marx Library's Academic Research Center (ARC) from the small space on the first floor to an expanded area on the third floor known as the Computer Lab, providing students access to computers and printers for their research projects. With the relocation of the ARC lab, a long-anticipated request by students was granted with the opening

of a full-service Starbucks Coffee Shop constructed in the same area. The coffee shop maintains the same hours as the Library giving students access to the caffeine they need when studying.

- *The Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education* made a generous donation of more than 500 books, reference materials, video and audio tapes, pictures, and other memorabilia to establish the Agnes Tennenbaum Holocaust Library Collection at the Marx Library in honor of Agnes Tennenbaum, a Holocaust survivor. Ms. Tennenbaum, who died in 2016, was the last known Holocaust survivor in Mobile. The Center continues to donate materials to the collection.



Agnes Tennenbaum

- The Instruction Classroom (Room 305) was remodeled and enlarged to accommodate additional thin client computers and audiovisual equipment for enhanced instruction classes.
- Dr. Richard Wood retired from the university in March, 2017.
- E. Lorene Flanders was named Executive Director of University Libraries in April, 2017. Formerly Professor and Dean of Libraries at the University of West Georgia, Flanders served on the American Library Association's governing Council, on the Boards of the Southeastern and Georgia Library Associations, and worked with the University System of Georgia committee that transitioned the Georgia Department of Archives and History to the University System of Georgia.
- Following discussions between the College of Medicine and the Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, the University Libraries were merged in October, 2017 under the administration of Academic Affairs. Dr. Angela Rand was named Director of the Marx Library. Geneva Bush Staggs was named Director of the Biomedical Library, and Clista Clanton as Assistant Director for Strategic Initiatives, Biomedical Library. Mary Duffy was named as the University Libraries' Associate University Librarian for Systems & Collections. Kathy Wheeler was named Assistant University Librarian for Collections.
- The University of South Alabama Libraries formed a partnership with Studer Education in Pensacola, Florida in 2018, beginning an extensive series of Leadership Development Institutes informed by annual Employee Engagement Surveys. In reviewing survey data with employees each year, libraries and departments developed Action Plans for evolving library operations, services, and facilities to meet the needs of twenty-first century students and faculty, and laid groundwork for succession planning to maintain a robust and responsive USA Libraries Leadership Team.
- Marx Library's first floor North was rebuilt as a Learning Commons, which formally opened in August, 2018. The University's Center for Academic Excellence opened on the second floor of Marx Library as reference collections were reduced due to the continuing transition to electronic resources. The 2018 opening served as a celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the completion of the university's Main Library. Also in 2018, the libraries celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the university's designation as a U.S. Federal Depository Library, and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the USA Photographic Archives, now the McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library.

### ***The 2020s opened with the closing of the library facilities...***

- In March, 2020, the university began making plans for alternative forms of instruction and for potential closures in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. The University Libraries surveyed employees to determine capacity to work from home, laid plans for distribution of classroom laptops to library employees, and for distributing print materials in the event of closure. The university's Pandemic Preparedness Plan was distributed March 9, and classes were moved online the following week. The libraries closed on March 19, with employees transitioning to working from home. The libraries reopened in phases, and were fully open again in June, 2021.
- Congressman Bradley Byrne donated his congressional papers to the McCall Rare Book and Manuscript Library in November, 2020, bringing the number of congressional collections held by the McCall Library to four. The collections included the papers of every member of Congress to serve Alabama's First Congressional District since the founding of the university. The Byrne papers joined those of the Hon. Jack Edwards, the Hon. Sonny Callaghan, and the Hon. Jo Bonner.
- The McCall Library received 1.575 million images from Thigpen Photography, a Mobile-based commercial company founded in 1947 by Roy Thigpen when the company ceased formal operations with the retirement of his son Alec Thigpen in 2021. Personal papers, artifacts, and the World War II-era correspondence between Roy Thigpen and his future wife, were received as part of the gift.
- Gail M. Kouame was hired as Director of the Biomedical Library in April, 2022. Kouame previously served as Associate Professor and Assistant Director for Research & Education Services with Augusta University in Georgia.
- USA Libraries Art Galleries partnered with Mobile's Black Ink Coalition, the Mobile Arts Council, the Mobile Art Association, and other organizations to organize the first annual Jazz Art Writers South (JAWS) Festival in 2022. Working in jazz-infused settings, children in several Boys & Girls Clubs created works of art that were submitted for exhibit in the Rodning Gallery. An awards ceremony featured a performance by Mobile's legendary Excelsior Band. The event has grown to encompass partnerships with area K-12 schools, with students' art travelling to branches of the Mobile Public Library following the university exhibit.
- The grandchildren of William (Bill) C. Shrouf, 1913-1986, donated his photographic collection to McCall Library following the 2022 death of his daughter and assistant Kathryn Elizabeth Shrouf. Bill Shrouf worked for the *Washington Post* early in his career, and for *LIFE Magazine* during World War II. Following the war, he established a commercial photography business based in Theodore, Alabama.
- Marx Library established a Graduate Lounge and Reading Room on its third floor in 2022. With over 1,000 students making use of the space in its first year, the library secured funding from the Student Government Association for painting, installation of whiteboards, and new furnishings.
- The Biomedical Library established an art gallery on its third floor. ArtSpace@Biomed held its first exhibit, Veterans' Expressions, in November, 2022.

