

Developing Special Collections of Interest to Local Communities

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ALLA POWERS: My experience in the library world goes back to 1988. In my home country, Russia, I worked in academic and public library settings. In the United States I briefly worked in the Klamath County Library, and in 2004 I began my career in the Oregon Tech Library. Right from the start I was involved in both patron service and collection development, adding metadata to the scanned photographs for the Klamath Waters Digital Library. And so my love for digital content was born. Since then I expanded my experience by working with several digital collections. The work in the Special Collections is very versatile and challenging, and involves learning new skills. For example, mastering EAD encoding for creation of Finding Aids for the Archives West website.

In the late 1950s, Oregon Technical Institute (OTI) in Klamath Falls, Oregon, was facing an uncertain future in its hometown. The former marine barrack facilities hosting the Institute were at the end of their lifetime and there was an offer to move OTI to Portland or Corvallis. Due in part to the concerted effort of the local community the Institute, now known as the Oregon Institute of Technology or Oregon Tech, is still located in Klamath Falls, on its geothermally heated campus. The Institute continues to maintain connections with the local community as an integral part of the university's existence.

The Special Collections and University Archives strive to strengthen the relationship with local researchers by collecting and preserving materials of vital interest to the local community. This article covers community usage of the Oregon Tech Libraries' Special Collections: the Shaw Historical Library (SHL), The Klamath Waters Digital Library (KWDL) and the University Archives Geo-Heat Collection (print and digital).

Shaw Historical Library

The Shaw Historical Library is owned by the Oregon Tech Foundation and is operated by the Oregon Tech Libraries and the SHL Board of Governors. SHL specializes in research collections about the history and culture of the “Land of the Lakes” which includes Klamath Falls, Klamath County, Lake County, the Klamath Basin, Northern California’s Siskiyou and Modoc Counties, and Washoe County in Northwestern Nevada. Through the Archives West website, <http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/>, users have access to online descriptions of documents, reports, manuscripts, articles, photographs, recordings, and maps from the 1800s to the present time. Recordings, primary documents and books published by some of our local community members, as well as by the Land of the Lakes residents, are onsite. The Shaw Historical Library book holdings consist of 3,727 volumes. Among other areas, the SHL collects and makes available materials of historical and cultural significance to the local Native American tribes. The number of tribal sound recordings, manuscripts, and collections known to date consists of nine for Klamath, twenty for Modoc, and six for miscellaneous tribes.

The Collage (see fig. 1), created by one of the Shaw Library Student Assistants, Mike Yilek, Special Collections Librarian Alla Powers, and the Head of Special Collections and University Archives Iris Godwin, represents the economic, social, and cultural activities of the Land of the Lakes. Shaw Historical Library staff wants to express their appreciation for all the local communities that use the historical documents of the SHL, and help it grow by donating their own collections.



Fig. 1. Collage of the photographs from the SHL collections, illustrating its areas of interest. Produced by SHL staff.

In preparation for writing this article, the Head of the Special Collections sent email requests to several patrons asking them to share their experiences when they visited the Shaw Historical Library. The following two examples are tangible demonstrations of the Shaw Historical Library collections’ influence on the research of community members.

A young college student came to the Shaw Historical Library previously having researched for Klamath and Modoc family records at the National Archives Branch in Seattle and special collection libraries. She visited with Klamath tribe elders and found her tribal family names. In the Shaw Library, she was able to gain more knowledge of the Modoc

and Yahooskin peoples and bands. Especially meaningful to her was listening to the tape containing Modoc songs. *Modoc Indian Songs and Documentation, 1934* include songs sung in Modoc, possibly Paiute, Pit River, Klamath, and Shasta languages. Song topics include puberty, love, healing, and the Ghost Dance.

During the forced assimilation policy, the Bureau of Indian Affairs education system suppressed the use of native languages on reservations. Assimilation policies caused the loss of some tribal traditions. Our freshman student stated, “Although our songs, traditions, ceremonies, language, lands, family values, structural systems, and everything else that made us Klamath, Modoc, and Yahooskin were beaten out of us, stolen. We have families that continue to carry our knowledge. . . . Shaw Libraries’ resources and materials on the indigenous peoples continue to grow and become a fantastic source for researchers and tribal members.”

In December 2019, a reel to reel tape by Francis Landrum interviewing 82-year-old Seldon Kirk was reformatted to a compact disc. Mr. Kirk was the last General Chairman of the Klamath Indian Tribe and helped to identify some of the photos in the Francis S. and Patricia L. Landrum Collection, 1872–1986. The sound recording was made on November 4, 1965, at the residence of Seldon Kirk. On the recording, Mr. Kirk defines and pronounces various tribal words and phrases. He talks about the signers of the Council Grove Treaty of 1864 and the boundary line agreement signed on June 17, 1901. His father, Jesse Kirk, was the interpreter for the signing of the 1901 agreement between “James McLaughlin, United States Indian Inspector, on the part of the United States and the Klamath and Modoc Tribes and Yahooskin Band of Snake Indians, belonging to the Klamath Indian Agency, in the State of Oregon.” Mr. Kirk relates cultural stories and significant places located within the 1901 boundary line map. An example of the Klamath language on the recording is the word “mok’as” which means “owl.” On this website <http://klamathtribes.org/language/vocabulary/>, the translation is “horned owl.” A member of the Crater Lake National Park staff had a copy of the recording made for the grandson of Mr. Kirk, and commented, “. . . there are so few recordings of people speaking Klamath as a first language, especially when they can narrate in English the meanings of words and stories associated with places in the [Klamath] Basin.”

Oregon Tech Libraries: Klamath Waters Digital Library

Another resource of great importance to the local community is the Klamath Waters Digital Library (KWDL). It was created in response to the 2001 water crisis in the area, which caused protests concerning the reduction of water going to farmers. The lack of water needed by many different factions caused people to start researching for information, which was scattered among several government agencies. The library staff saw the need to create an online collection for future use by the local communities. KWDL includes many online primary documents and photographs donated by the Bureau of Reclamation and other contributors. The total number of items in the digital library is over 4,000.

Because the KWDL users do their work at home or in an office, it is difficult to trace a specific local community user such as a tribal member, an archaeologist, or a lawyer working on a water rights case. Water issues in the Klamath Watershed of Oregon and California have long been of interest to Native American tribes, wildlife enthusiasts, farmers, ranchers, and fishing industries. Searching for the local Native American resources retrieves one hundred and forty-one results for the Modocs, one hundred and nineteen results for the Klamath, and fourteen results for the Yahooskin. The titles most used by researchers tell



the story of the importance of this collection. The total number of page views for 2019 for primary and secondary documents and photographs was 18,763.

The following sections contain a few of the most frequently used resources.

Compacts and Legal Documents

The most frequently accessed document in KWDL is the Klamath River Basin Compact between the states of Oregon and California <https://tinyurl.com/y58vgz6s>.

This is a document related to water resources development and the laws and regulations surrounding a much-needed agreement. Views for the 11 months of 2019 totaled two hundred and seventy. This compact was consented to by an Act of Congress (71 Stat. 497) on August 30, 1957, and became effective on September 11, 1957. Some purposes mentioned in the document are:

“to facilitate and promote the orderly, integrated and comprehensive development, use, conservation and control thereof for various purposes, including, among others: the use of water for domestic purposes; the development of lands by irrigation and other means; the protection and enhancement of fish, wildlife and recreational resources; the use of water for industrial purposes and hydroelectric power production; and the use and control of water for navigation and flood prevention.”

The “Status of Indian Rights” is another frequently accessed document that represents how the shortage of water affects the tribes. “This compact may be terminated at any time by legislative consent of both states, but despite such termination, all rights then established hereunder or recognized hereby shall continue to be recognized as valid by the states.”

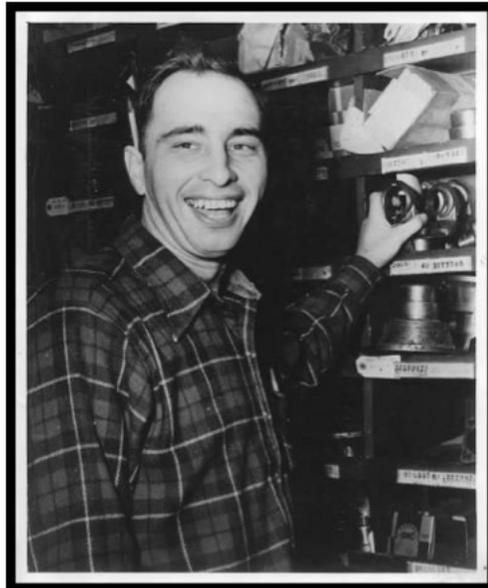
Government documents related to irrigation district management and the Klamath Project are among the most frequently accessed. For example: “Report on Payment Capacity for TuleLake Irrigation District, Klamath Project,” published in 1948, contains negotiations of a repayment contract with an irrigation district, and represents the water users of the Tule Lake Division of the Klamath Project.

Native American Tribes, one of the groups concerned with the water issues in the Klamath Basin, are able to access and work with the document: “Lower Klamath River In-stream Flow Study: Scoping Evaluation for the Yurok Indian Reservation” by Donald Anglin, 1994. The original publisher is the U.S. Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service, Lower Columbia River Fishery Resource Office. Adequate addressing of the Native American water issues and rights did not happen until the 1970s. To this group of users, KWDL offers documents like “The Water Report—Tribal Water Rights Update” from 2006 to highlight the sensitive water rights issues and to explain them to the concerned stakeholders.

Wildlife Enthusiasts

Wildlife enthusiasts and anglers will find valuable information about fish populations of salmon and trout in the KWDL. One example is the “Federal Register: Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants: Designation of Critical Habitat for the Klamath River and Columbia River Populations of Bull Trout,” 2004. “Recovery strategy for California Coho Salmon: Report to the California Fish and Game Commission,” published the same year may also be of interest.





Farmers and Ranchers

The image collection within the Klamath Water Digital Library gets many hits as well. Especially popular are photographs of homesteading in the Tule Lake Division and the Homestead Drawing performed in 1946 for the returning war veterans (see fig. 2).

The whole process of homesteading at times could be overwhelming to new entrants. (see fig. 3).

By 1951, the new homesteaders in the Tule Lake Division were busy building homes and working the land (see fig. 4).

Fig. 2. Mr. Miles J. Jakes of Portland, Oregon, the third man picked for one of the farms to be given away. Photograph was taken December 18, 1946. Source: Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Falls.



Fig. 3. New entrants learn from local and federal organizations. Source: Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Falls.





Fig. 4. Oscar Hammer, one of the original homesteaders of the Tule Lake Division, is shown here assisting a neighbor. Photograph taken in 1951. Source: Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Falls.

Fishing Industries and Concerned Citizens

Documents such as “Water Quality Monitoring: Technical Guide Book” and the “Trout and Salmon of the Pacific Coast” are popular with those interested in the Oregon and Washington trout and salmon populations and in the importance of monitoring the water in the watersheds and rivers. “The use of standard monitoring techniques provides the public with such a tool. ... Many different agencies, volunteer groups, and private citizens are involved in data collection ...”

(p. i) There are fifty-four documents retrieved with the search term: “fishing industries,” including “The ESA, Salmon and Western Water Law,” and see “The Water Report” at <http://www.thewaterreport.com/> in its 16th year of publication.

University Archives: Geo-Heat Collection

Oregon Tech President, Winston Purvine selected the university’s current site in 1959 because of its geothermal heating potential. The City of Klamath Falls, Oregon, is a Known Geothermal Resource Area (KGRA), and its residents need accessible and reliable information on the use of geothermal energy as a means of affordable heating. To meet this demand, Oregon Tech faculty opened the Geo-Heat Center in 1975, which over time amassed a vast collection of resources and data. After the Center closed in 2015 the Oregon Tech Library inherited print items owned and created by the Center, such as Quarterly Bulletins, site evaluations, maps, books, and other items, 40-years’ worth of materials, for preservation and public access. Since then, the library staff and student workers have been sorting, processing, and making this large collection available to users onsite and online. The onsite records are available at the library and the University Archives.

When the new collection attracted its first users, the library staff quickly discovered that the public interest lay mostly in one very specific type of documents: residential geothermal well logs. The Geo-Heat Center staff studied and described the local residential geothermal



wells in the 1970s to 1980s. The handwritten logs contain valuable information on local residents' wells, such as technical characteristics, depth, and temperature. New property owners and real estate agents are the two categories of users in need of this information. Below are research stories of patrons' use of the Geo-Heat well logs.

One patron who came to the library in the fall of 2019 asked for the information on behalf of her future neighbors. A member of the library staff was able to find the well log for that address and made a copy for her. An additional point of interest for us was that the visitor turned out to be the daughter of one of the Oregon Tech's most prominent instructors, who started working at the institute right at its inception. The visitor came to us several years ago with a different purpose: to donate a few items owned by her father to the University Archives. It was very exciting to reconnect with her.

Another recent visit reaffirmed the geothermal well logs as a valuable and necessary source of information, not available elsewhere. A young couple just bought a house in Klamath Falls in the area they knew was geothermally heated. They did not have a geothermal well on their property, but the neighbors on both sides of them did. These visitors needed information on their neighbors' wells, such as water temperature and depth, to decide on the feasibility of digging their own well.

In addition to the residential wells, the Geo-Heat Center staff appraised and evaluated industrial geothermal wells in town. They created blueprints and drawings of such sites. An example of the local interest in these materials is an inquiry made by employees of the local train station for potential geothermal heating of the station building.

Conclusion

The Special Collections and archival materials that the Shaw Historical Library and the Oregon Tech University Archives hold in trust are treasures to our local communities. One of the reasons Special Collections exist is because of all these communities and individuals who are interested in keeping their stories safe. Archival Collections grow and develop because of the continuing interest of researchers, historians, and engineers, who contact the library staff for information or to donate their unique collections. Such collaboration benefits all stakeholders and contributes to the preservation of the important memories this land has. 

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