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# The Inception of Brigham Young University's Archival Program, 1956–1962

*J. Gordon Daines III*

Brigham Young University today houses thousands of documents and photographs about the history of the university as well as millions of other documents and photographs on Mormonism, Utah history, and Western history. These materials are housed in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections in the Harold B. Lee Library. The Perry Special Collections is well known as a place to study historic documents, read rare books, find photographs, and much more. Among the treasures found in the Perry Special Collections are the Brigham Young University Archives. This paper examines the establishment of the BYU Archives, with Ralph W. Hansen as the first archivist, through 1962, when Hansen left to become the founding university archivist at Stanford University. It also examines the pivotal role that the University Archives played in laying the groundwork for the development of BYU's exceptionally strong manuscript collections documenting the history of Mormonism and the West.<sup>1</sup>

## Background

Members of the LDS Church in general have been from the beginning a record-keeping people, and thus the histories of the Church and of BYU

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1. David J. Whittaker has written on the Mormon collections in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections in two articles, "The Archives of the Mormon Experience" and "Printed Mormon Americana Collection at Brigham Young University," in *Mormon Americana: A Guide to Sources and Collections in the United States*, ed. David J. Whittaker (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 1995), 101–2, 122–24. This article focuses on the history of the University Archives.

are informed by a rich variety of manuscripts and archival materials. Brigham Young Academy was founded in 1875 by Brigham Young with the intention that secular knowledge be tempered by the sacred. Young told Karl G. Maeser, the new institution's first full-time principal, that "neither the alphabet nor the multiplication table were to be taught without the Spirit of God."<sup>2</sup> Maeser's emphasis on the sacred is a touchstone that continues to guide BYU in the twenty-first century.

Maeser's successor, Benjamin Cluff Jr., felt strongly that the academy needed to have high caliber academics along with its emphasis on the sacred. He wrote a colleague that "we want, therefore, the most modern methods and the best trained teachers we can get."<sup>3</sup> Cluff successfully lobbied the academy's board of trustees in 1903 to change the institution's name to Brigham Young University.<sup>4</sup>

In May 1921, newly appointed university president Franklin S. Harris articulated his vision for BYU. He told students and faculty, "The President of the Church Commission of Education and all who have anything to do with Church schools are determined to make this 'the great Church University.'"<sup>5</sup> Harris was interested in seeing the university continue to build on the spiritual foundation laid by Karl G. Maeser and the educational excellence added by Benjamin Cluff Jr. Harris intended that BYU become a university in deed as well as name.<sup>6</sup> His efforts led to the successful accreditation of the university in the mid-1920s and laid the groundwork for the university's expansion in the 1950s and 1960s under Ernest L. Wilkinson.

The university administrations following those of Maeser and Cluff have worked diligently to augment and solidify the unique blend of the sacred and the secular established by these men. Given the institution's

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2. Dedicatory exercises of the Brigham Young Academy Building, 1892, UA SC 33, p. 2, L. Tom Perry Special Collections, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

3. Benjamin Cluff Jr. to George H. Brimhall, November 12, 1893, UA 1093, Benjamin Cluff Jr. Presidential Records, 1892–1904, Perry Special Collections.

4. Ernest L. Wilkinson, ed., *Brigham Young University: The First One Hundred Years*, 4 vols. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975), 1:375–381.

5. "Dr. Harris, Pres.-Elect Visits School," *White and Blue*, May 4, 1921, 1, Perry Special Collections.

6. For more information about Harris's vision for the university, see J. Gordon Daines III, "'The Vision That You Have . . . Augurs Well for the Development of Still Better Things': The Role of Accreditation in Securing the Future of Brigham Young University, 1921–1928," *BYU Studies* 49, no. 2 (2010): 63–92.

rich history, it is surprising that meaningful efforts to collect and write a rigorously documented history of BYU were not begun until the 1950s, the decade in which the University Archives developed.

That time period saw tremendous growth for college and university archives nationally. While a few institutions of higher education had established college and university archives prior to the 1950s, the vast majority had not.<sup>7</sup> The growth of enrollment at colleges and universities post–World War II led many institutions to look for ways to preserve the history of their institutions. The establishment of an archival program was seen as an important way to do so. Important early archival repositories in the West include the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley (founded in 1905),<sup>8</sup> the Huntington Library (founded in 1919),<sup>9</sup> and the American Heritage Center at the University of Wyoming (founded in 1945).<sup>10</sup> The development of these institutions shaped what was collected at the BYU Archives but had little direct impact on the development of the Archives itself.

While the BYU Archives, founded in 1956, cannot claim the distinction of being the first archival program in Utah—that distinction belongs to the Utah State Archives and Records Service, which was founded in 1954<sup>11</sup>—it was the first college or university archival program

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7. Patrick M. Quinn notes, “The emergence of large numbers of archival repositories at colleges and universities in the United States is a relatively new phenomenon dating only from the 1950s.” William J. Maher, *The Management of College and University Archives* (Lanham, Md.: Society of American Archivists and the Scarecrow Press, 1992), ix. For more information on the growth of college and university archives in the 1950s and 1960s, see Bessie Schina and Garon Wells, “University Archives and Records Programs in the United States and Canada,” *Archival Issues* 27, no. 1 (2002): 35–52; Robert M. Warner, “The Status of College and University Archives,” *American Archivist* 31 (July 1968): 235–37; and Nicholas C. Burckel and J. Frank Cook, “A Profile of College and University Archives in the United States,” *American Archivist* 45 (Fall 1982): 410–28.

8. “Brief History,” The Bancroft Library, <http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/info/history.html> (accessed September 24, 2014).

9. “About the Huntington,” The Huntington, <http://www.huntington.org/WebAssets/Templates/content.aspx?id=56> (accessed September 24, 2014).

10. “About the AHC [American Heritage Center],” University of Wyoming, <http://www.uwyo.edu/ahc/about/> (accessed September 24, 2014).

11. Cory L. Nimer and J. Gordon Daines III, “The Development and Professionalization of the Utah State Archives, 1897–1968,” *Journal of Western Archives* 3, no. 1 (2012): 13, available at <http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/vol3/iss1/5>.

in the state. The Southern Utah University archives was established in 1962,<sup>12</sup> the Utah State University archives was established in 1965,<sup>13</sup> and the University of Utah archives was established in the late 1960s.<sup>14</sup>

### Documenting the “Great Church University”

In 1954, S. Lyman Tyler was appointed director of the BYU library, and he desired to see it become a first-rate university library. From the beginning, he was concerned about the historical records of the university. His interest in caring for the archival materials created by BYU is evidenced by his decision to join the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in late 1954. Tyler looked to that society for guidance in how to establish a university archive, what records to preserve, and how to preserve them.<sup>15</sup> Among the books that informed the library policy that he developed was *The University Library*, by Louis Round Wilson and Maurice F. Tauber. The book’s chapter “Book Collections: Special Materials” emphasized the importance of an archives and manuscripts program to a university library,<sup>16</sup> which clearly fit into Tyler’s conception of a first-rate library.



S. Lyman Tyler, who served as director of the university library at BYU from 1954 until 1966. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

establish a university archive, what records to preserve, and how to preserve them.<sup>15</sup> Among the books that informed the library policy that he developed was *The University Library*, by Louis Round Wilson and Maurice F. Tauber. The book’s chapter “Book Collections: Special Materials” emphasized the importance of an archives and manuscripts program to a university library,<sup>16</sup> which clearly fit into Tyler’s conception of a first-rate library.

Tyler’s desire to appropriately care for the university’s archival materials led him to have informal conversations with several university administrators about

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12. Anne Okerlund Leavitt, *Southern Utah University—the First Hundred Years: A Heritage History* (Cedar City: Southern Utah University Press, 1997), 192.

13. Ann Buttars, interviewed by J. Gordon Daines III and Cory L. Nimer, November 16, 2012, 1; copy in the possession of the author.

14. Nimer and Daines, “Development and Professionalization,” 25.

15. William D. Overman to S. Lyman Tyler, December 6, 1954, UA 549, box 28, folder 4, Perry Special Collections.

16. Louis Round Wilson and Maurice F. Tauber, *The University Library* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945), 353–81.



BYU President Ernest L. Wilkinson, who understood the importance of documenting the past and supported S. Lyman Tyler's efforts to better document BYU's history. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

the need for a university archive. He expressed his concern about the “physical facilities to care for the archival materials of the Brigham Young University and the Church School System” in a memo to them in early January 1956. In the memo, he posed a series of questions that needed to be answered before an archive could be established. What should be housed in the archives? When should files be transferred from campus entities to the archives? What type of storage facility is necessary for these types of materials? How available should the archival materials be? Where would patrons use the archival materials?<sup>17</sup> Tyler relied on discussions with archival colleagues in Utah and the resources provided by SAA to outline a policy, especially regarding what materials should be archived. These discussions were on Tyler's mind when he approached President Ernest L. Wilkinson about putting together a library policy for the university.

In March 1956, he appealed to Wilkinson, saying that it “is an established practice for the governing body of the university to make a statement of policy concerning the library to enable the Director of Libraries to carry on efficiently the functions of the university.” Tyler indicated that such a statement emanating from Wilkinson's office would “greatly facilitate the functions of the Director of Libraries.”<sup>18</sup> Tyler's memo initiated a discussion with Wilkinson that lasted three weeks and resulted in a policy governing the library of BYU.

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17. S. Lyman Tyler to Bliss Crandall, Clyde Sandgren, Lucille Spencer, and Kiefer Sauls, March 5, 1956, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

18. S. Lyman Tyler to Ernest L. Wilkinson, March 6, 1956, UA 614, box 38, folder 2, S. Lyman Tyler Papers, Perry Special Collections.



S. Lyman Tyler, in his office. He crafted a library policy statement that allowed for the creation of the University Archives. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

A directive under President Wilkinson's signature went out to the whole university on March 26, 1956, including an important statement about archiving university records. Point 15 of this library policy stated, "The Director of Libraries is also designated historian and archivist for the Unified Church School System. As such he is authorized to take the necessary steps to insure the maintenance of proper systems for caring for the official records of the Brigham Young University and of the various other units of the Church School System."<sup>19</sup> The new policy's appointment of BYU's library director as the "designated historian and archivist for the Unified Church School System" underscored Wilkinson's firm belief that BYU was central to the Church's educational program. The Unified Church School System had been created at the urging of Wilkinson in 1953 when the LDS First Presidency "decided to consolidate all Church schools under one administrator."<sup>20</sup> That administrator was President Wilkinson. The new policy put Tyler in a position to establish an archive at BYU.

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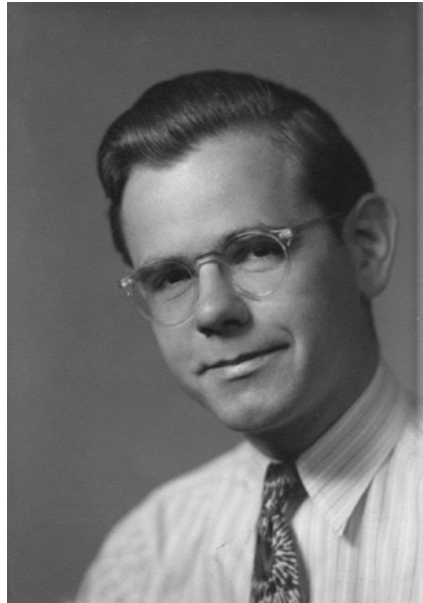
19. Ernest L. Wilkinson to S. Lyman Tyler, March 26, 1956, UA 614, box 38, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.

20. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 2:572-74.

### Establishing the BYU Archives

After receiving President Wilkinson's signature on the library policy, Tyler wasted little time in establishing the University Archives. He asked Ralph W. Hansen if he would be interested in the challenge of establishing an archive for the university, and Hansen accepted. Hansen had been working as an assistant reference librarian in the library since 1953. He had also recently completed a master's degree in history and seemed to have the historical understanding that Tyler was looking for.<sup>21</sup>

Since Hansen had no archival experience, Tyler arranged for him to receive training at the Harvard-Radcliffe Institute for Historical and Archival Management during the summer of 1956. The six-week program attended by Hansen was taught by Lester Cappon.<sup>22</sup> The focus of the program was how to prepare collections for research use and how to provide adequate reference service. Participants also "took field trips to the Records Center in Boston, to historic houses, to a large microfilming company; we had a number of visitors come in and speak—they came and spoke the whole day about their particular specialty, and there were university archivists, historical society directors, people from the National



Ralph W. Hansen, who served as BYU's first archivist. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

21. Ralph Hansen, oral history, August 21–24, 1979, p. 1, MSS 295, box 5, folder 12, Ralph W. Hansen Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University.

22. Ralph W. Hansen to George P. Hammond (Librarian, Bancroft Library, UC–Berkeley), October 30, 1961, MSS 295, box 4, folder 2, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University. The Harvard-Radcliffe Institute for Historical and Archival Management was held annually from 1954 to 1960. Cappon was director of the Institute of Early American History and Culture at the College of William and Mary. He was also a prominent member of the Society of American Archivists.





The Karl G. Maeser Memorial Building, ca. 1950. The fourth floor of the building served as the first home of the University Archives. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

Archives and others.” The culminating event was preparing an archival project for research use. Hansen processed the papers of a former president of Radcliffe College.<sup>23</sup> Hansen’s experience at the Harvard-Radcliffe Institute reinforced to him that “the purpose of the Archives Department is to collect, process, and preserve all university archival material both old and current.”<sup>24</sup>

Hansen started on the archival program in September 1956, and work was “carried out on a part-time basis throughout the school year 1956–57.” The newly established archive was housed on the fourth floor of the Karl G. Maeser Memorial Building.<sup>25</sup> The first step in establishing the archives was the creation of a disposal program so that the archivist

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23. Hansen, oral history, p. 2.

24. Staff Manual, Library, Brigham Young University, June 1958, UA 614, box 55, folder 7, Perry Special Collections.

25. First Annual Report—University Archives, May 24, 1957, 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections.

could weed out and dispose of nonessential records. Hansen and Tyler determined that nonessential records are those created to facilitate certain activities that no longer have value once those activities are completed, such as routine administrative correspondence, transactional financial records, equipment requests, and other like records. Hansen worked with the library director, university counsel, and the university president to create a form regarding “all disposable items.”<sup>26</sup> The next step taken was processing<sup>27</sup> of materials deemed to have long-term value. These materials were placed in acid-free folders and Fibertext cases. Hansen worked diligently to follow accepted archival practice and noted in the Archives’ 1957 annual report, “As far as possible the manuscripts were left in the same order in which they were found. When no order was apparent the system obviously used in similar groups of papers was followed.”<sup>28</sup>

Hansen described his archival activities in a letter to his archival mentor, Lester J. Cappon, noting that most of what he had accomplished in the fifteen months since the program’s establishment had been done on a part-time basis. He wrote,

Immediately upon my return to Provo I was instructed to establish an archives for the university. This involved putting on overalls for a period of six months. After the cleaning was over, the archives had a home and I could begin to sort and collect the university archives. Since my appointment was on a half-time basis, progress the first year was slow. [Hansen had continued serving as a reference librarian when he was appointed university archivist.] This year the position of archivist is a full time responsibility and progress is being made in acquainting the faculty and staff with the services available from the archives.

He also explained that he had visited several archives and attended the annual convention of the Society of American Archivists in Columbus, Ohio, during the summer.<sup>29</sup>

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26. First Annual Report—University Archives, 3.

27. *Processing* is the term used by archivists to describe the actions they take to prepare archival and manuscript collections for research use. Typical activities include reboxing materials, labeling boxes, and creating access points (catalog records, finding aids, and so on).

28. First Annual Report—University Archives, 5.

29. Ralph W. Hansen to Lester J. Cappon, November 14, 1957, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

## Preserving Presidential Papers

Among the records that Hansen and Tyler worked first to protect were the papers of BYU presidents. Unfortunately, Hansen found no documents from Karl G. Maeser's term among the records he inherited.<sup>30</sup> In the library's 1961 ten-year report, Tyler wrote,

Early in the present decade it was discovered that archival materials essential to document the history of the university were not being adequately cared for. As an example most of the correspondence from the Maeser period had either been destroyed or had otherwise been lost to the University. To remedy this situation the library was charged with the responsibility of developing a program of records management and of providing facilities essential to the care and preservation of archival materials created by the Brigham Young University and the Unified Church School System.<sup>31</sup>

Records from the terms of later presidents were more plentiful and show the development of the university. It is worth listing a few highlights from those records here. The records of Benjamin Cluff Jr. show that he was constantly recruiting new faculty members and looking for ways to help existing faculty improve their teaching credentials. He wrote to a colleague explaining "that every encouragement should be given the professors to work up in their branches and it shall be my policy as principal so long as I may be honored with that title, to encourage teachers to study, and furnish means for study, and I might say that positions in the Academy should depend on merit."<sup>32</sup> Cluff's records include documents about his educational experiences at the University of Michigan and his South American expedition.

The records of George H. Brimhall document financial difficulties in paying faculty and Brimhall's efforts to guide "an institution still struggling to find a balance between its two identities,"<sup>33</sup> secular and spiritual. The records include information on one of the most trying episodes of

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30. First Annual Report—University Archives, 4. Some Maeser records were preserved at the Church Archives in Salt Lake City. Alma P. Burton to Ralph Hansen, February 28, 1957, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

31. Ten Year Report of the University Library, 1951–1961, UA 614, box 29, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.

32. Benjamin Cluff Jr. to George H. Brimhall, November 12, 1893, UA 1093, Perry Special Collections.

33. Mary Jane Woodger and Joseph H. Groberg, *From the Muddy River to the Ivory Tower: The Journey of George H. Brimhall* (Provo, Utah: BYU Studies, 2010), xx.

the early university, the Modernism Crisis of 1911.<sup>34</sup> Brimhall wrote to Reed Smoot following this incident, “I am ready to say that if the life of the college depends upon any number of men out of harmony with the brethren who preside over the Church, then it is time for the college to die. . . . The school follows the Church, or it ought to stop.”<sup>35</sup> Records also document the expansion of university buildings to upper campus<sup>36</sup> as well as the increasing student body.

Franklin S. Harris's records are evidence of his efforts to see BYU accredited as a college and then a university by the Association of American Universities. Under Harris's leadership, the university became the Church teachers' college and played a central role in providing teachers for the seminary and institute program.<sup>37</sup> Harris's vision of the university that “all Mormondom cannot be educated here but I hope to see the time when two of a city and two of a county will come here to become leaders” still resonates today and plays an important part in the current mission of the university.<sup>38</sup> Key to Harris's vision was developing a

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34. The Modernism Crisis arose when three university faculty members were dismissed for their outspoken teaching of evolutionary Darwinism and higher biblical criticism. More information on the crisis can be found in Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*, 1:412–32; and Gary James Bergera, “The 1911 Evolution Controversy at Brigham Young University,” in *The Search for Harmony: Essays on Science and Mormonism*, ed. Gene A. Sessions and Craig J. Oberg (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), available at <http://signaturebookslibrary.org/the-1911-evolution-controversy-at-brigham-young-university/> (accessed December 1, 2014).

35. George H. Brimhall to Reed Smoot, March 8, 1911, UA 1092, Perry Special Collections.

36. The original campus was located where the current Provo City Library is and is often referred to as lower campus. Upper campus refers to the site of the current campus of Brigham Young University. Lower campus was three to five buildings located on University Avenue between 500 North and 600 North. The first building on upper campus was the Maeser Building completed in 1911. At the time Hansen became university archivist, the modern campus was beginning to take shape.

37. For more information on the developing seminary and institute program and its ties to BYU, see Casey Paul Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill and the Transformation of Church Education,” in *A Firm Foundation: Church Organization and Administration*, ed. David J. Whittaker and Arnold K. Garr (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, 2011), 377–402, and Casey P. Griffiths, “Joseph F. Merrill and the 1930–1931 LDS Church Education Crisis,” *BYU Studies* 49, no. 1 (2010): 92–134.

38. “Dr. Harris, Pres.-Elect Visits School,” *White and Blue*, May 4, 1921, 1, Perry Special Collections.

strong library at the university. Upon learning that his efforts to secure Church funding for a new library building were successful, Harris wrote to a colleague, "We were all very much elated yesterday because Wednesday the Church Board of Education decided to build us a fine library building on the hill."<sup>39</sup> The Heber J. Grant Library was the first building dedicated to house the university's library collections. It served as the university library from 1925 to 1961.<sup>40</sup>

Records of Howard S. McDonald's term show that the GI Bill resulted in many more students, straining the existing capacity of the campus and the ability of the faculty to offer appropriate courses, because many returning veterans were interested in vocational education. McDonald wrote to a faculty member, "As you know, the University is facing a real challenge this coming fall. Our manpower, equipment, housing, and all of our facilities will be taxed to the limit if we accomplish what we have in mind for the students who will enroll with us."<sup>41</sup> McDonald's papers also underscore the commitment of the LDS Church to provide educational opportunities enriched by the gospel of Jesus Christ to its members. In a letter to the Church commissioner of education, Franklin L. West, McDonald explained why they were requiring a character recommendation form for new students. He wrote, "We want people to know that this is a Church Institution, and that the young people here have the highest of ideals. We do not want people here who have no desire to conform to the standards of the Church."<sup>42</sup>

Without the thoughtful and careful efforts of Tyler and Hansen, these records might not have been preserved and made accessible.

### **The Struggle to Preserve Contemporaneous Documents**

In addition to valuing presidential papers, Hansen also worked to preserve important records that were then being created. His efforts to acquaint the faculty and staff with the services available from the

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39. Franklin S. Harris to Fred Buss, August 8, 1924, UA 1089, Perry Special Collections.

40. For more information on the Heber J. Grant Library, see J. Gordon Daines III, "Charting the Future of Brigham Young University: Franklin S. Harris and the Changing Landscape of the Church's Educational Network, 1921–1926," *BYU Studies* 45, no. 4 (2006): 68–98.

41. Howard S. McDonald to Miss Carma Ballif, July 31, 1946, UA 1087 Perry Special Collections.

42. Howard S. McDonald to Franklin L. West, September 6, 1946, UA 1087, Perry Special Collections.

archives relied on the backing of the administration. Hansen planned to educate university personnel about the importance of archives in an effort to make them archives conscious.<sup>43</sup> Hansen was also looking ahead; he asked permission to present a statement at the faculty conference that would be held before fall classes began: "In just eighteen years this institution will be celebrating its centennial, which will undoubtedly involve considerable historical research. If the faculty makes a university, faculty records should certainly make its history. You can perform your duty now by making provisions to deposit your papers with the archives."<sup>44</sup>

In 1958, Hansen noted that the University Archives was "in a more secure position than in the previous year. The archival program was included in the faculty handbook (p. 61) and support from the administration and various departments of the University was encouraging."<sup>45</sup> Hansen noted that he had begun receiving records from various faculty members and several departments including women's physical education, music, and chemistry. These records included meeting minutes, departmental correspondence, and course syllabi. Hansen also noted that he had been given an assistant "trained archivist who worked twenty hours per week" and who created indexes "to the papers of presidents Cluff and Brimhall."<sup>46</sup>

Hansen continued working actively with faculty and staff to encourage them to donate materials to the archives. He asked Christen Jensen, who had served as acting president of the university twice,<sup>47</sup> to "consider depositing with the archives, such manuscript items that you still have in your possession."<sup>48</sup> He also approached Clyde Sandgren, a university administrator, about updating the section in the faculty handbook concerning the University Archives. He added an introductory section defining archives and included a separate section on the records

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43. First Annual Report—University Archives, 6.

44. Ralph Hansen to Lyman Tyler, September 1957, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

45. Second Annual Report—University Archives, June 10, 1958, 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections.

46. Second Annual Report—University Archives, 1.

47. Christen Jensen served as acting university president from 1939 to 1940 while President Franklin S. Harris was doing work in Iran and from 1949 to 1951 while the university searched for a replacement for Howard S. McDonald.

48. Ralph W. Hansen to Christen Jensen, May 21, 1958, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

management services that the archives was beginning to develop. Hansen defined the University Archives as “the depository for those *records* which are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference and research purposes” and defined records as “all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by the University in pursuance of its legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of its proper business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that institution or its legitimate successor as evidence of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities or because of the informational value of the data contained therein.”<sup>49</sup> His definition was based on that of prominent archival thinker Theodore R. Schellenberg of the National Archives.<sup>50</sup> The policy indicated that two copies of every item printed by BYU should be deposited in the archives, invited the faculty to submit teaching materials to the Archives, indicated that all correspondence was “University property and shall be delivered to the archivist as soon as not currently useful to the writer,” and pointed out that no records could be destroyed without the express authorization of the archivist. It also included a section describing the records management services offered by the University Archives.<sup>51</sup> Hansen felt that the changes made to the policy allowed him to be more effective in working with departments to acquire their materials.

Two years later, Hansen continued to struggle with getting departments and faculty to submit materials to the University Archives. He wrote Earl C. Crockett, BYU academic vice president, asking him to remind the faculty of their responsibilities in this regard, writing, “We have also encountered some difficulty in obtaining copies of the minutes of the various college and department meetings. These form a vital

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49. Ralph W. Hansen to Clyde Sandgren, December 19, 1958, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.

50. Schellenberg defined records as “all books, papers, maps, photographs, or other documentary materials, regardless of physical form or characteristics, made or received by any public or private institution in pursuance of its legal obligations or in connection with the transaction of its proper business and preserved or appropriate for preservation by that institution or its legitimate successor as evidence of its functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities or because of the informational value of the data contained therein.” T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1956), 16.

51. Hansen to Sandgren, December 19, 1958.

part of the history of the university; it is essential that they be preserved in the archives.”<sup>52</sup>

Hansen had only limited success in acquiring the records of faculty members. The papers of scientist Carl F. Eyring (UA 509) include correspondence concerning his research projects as well as records from his many years as dean of the College of Arts and Sciences. The papers of Wesley P. Lloyd (UA 183) document his activities as dean of students. The papers of geologist George H. Hansen (UA 509) contain photographs and documents concerning the College of Arts and Sciences.

Hansen had more success acquiring material from the administrative officials of campus departments. The University Speakers Bureau (UA 516) transferred correspondence related to speeches given by faculty members in the community. The University Program Bureau (UA 518) transferred scrapbooks and correspondence documenting the performing groups of the university to the archives. The Department of Athletics (UA 1327) transferred the records of athletic directors Floyd Millet and Edwin Kimball as well as other program information. The College of Family Living (UA 661) transferred correspondence, annual reports for the college and departments, budget information, meeting minutes, faculty files, and dean's office files.

Accepting departmental and university administrative records required that Hansen develop procedures for managing these materials. Confidential records could be viewed only by personnel from the originating office. Other records were available for public research. (This policy is similar to the access restrictions on university records today. Current records are restricted based on the source of the records, and older records can be viewed in person in the L. Tom Perry Special Collections reading room.) In 1957, the library had created the Special Collections department to manage all of the unique materials, including rare books, manuscripts, and archives in the library.<sup>53</sup>

Hansen understood that active collecting meant that there needed to be a place for the materials collected, and he was excited to be involved in the planning of a new library building for BYU. Planning for the building began in earnest in 1957, and in late 1958 Hansen wrote archivist

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52. Ralph W. Hansen to Earl C. Crockett, October 4, 1960, UA 549n, Box 1 Folder 5, Perry Special Collections.

53. Chad Flake, interviewed by Russell C. Taylor, June 7, 2002, 16; copy in the possession of the author. When Special Collections was established in 1957 it had responsibility for the rare books held by the university.



Dolores Renze for advice on what equipment “should be built into a modern archives.”<sup>54</sup> Renze advised him to be concerned about being able to keep temperature and relative humidity stable.<sup>55</sup>

### Manuscript Collections

The year 1958 was energizing to Hansen because he had begun to emphasize the collecting of manuscript materials as well as university records—and he discovered that he really enjoyed manuscript collecting. Hansen had been given responsibility for manuscript collecting in 1957 but had not been able to do much with it. In March 1958, Hansen contacted W. Lester Bagley about Bagley’s “collection of photographs pertaining to early pioneer Mormon trails, memorials, and residences.”<sup>56</sup> He explained to donor Fred Fellow why manuscript collections were so valuable to the university. He wrote, “We are ever grateful to friends of the University such as you whose donations are building up the manuscript collection of the library which makes it possible for our students to do intelligent research on the history of Utah.”<sup>57</sup> He contacted many more people over the following years. In 1959, he wrote to Brigham Y. Card to see if Card would be willing to donate his family’s diaries to the university. Hansen’s selling point was, “We feel that in our expanding graduate program the greatest contribution our students can make is in the field of Mormon studies, and I include in the term Mormon studies: history, economics, sociology and related areas as well as religion.”<sup>58</sup> Enabling rich student research experiences was at the heart of Hansen’s interest in manuscript collecting. Hansen carefully developed plans articulating what types of manuscript material the university should collect and why.

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54. Ralph W. Hansen to Dolores Renze, October 3, 1958, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.

55. Hansen to Renze, October 3, 1958, typewritten response on the letter.

56. Ralph W. Hansen to W. Lester Bagley, March 14, 1958, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections. It is unclear from the University Archives records whether Hansen was successful in acquiring the Bagley collection. Hansen did acquire other materials documenting Mormon and Utah life that enabled students to gain experience researching in archival collections.

57. Ralph W. Hansen to Fred Fellow, August 20, 1958, UA 549n, box 1, folder 1, Perry Special Collections.

58. Ralph W. Hansen to Brigham Y. Card, January 6, 1959, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.



Donald T. Schmidt, who served as acting university archivist from 1959 to 1960, when Ralph Hansen took a sabbatical to work on a PhD degree. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

Collections.”<sup>61</sup> Hansen had taken his sabbatical to begin work on a PhD degree in history at the University of Oregon, where he learned more about going out into the field to gather historical documents.

Schmidt continued Hansen’s efforts to gather university records. He approached Sam F. Brewster, director of physical facilities, about getting architectural drawings and proposed use “for all new buildings.”<sup>62</sup> Schmidt also continued the manuscript collecting program that Hansen had begun. He approached S. Lyman Tyler about making a collecting

But Hansen was not as upbeat about facilities. In 1959, the Archives had been forced off campus due to the encroachment of administrative offices in the Maeser Building and had ended up in the “library storage area of the Utah Wholesale Grocery Warehouse.”<sup>59</sup> Hansen and the archives assistant were not able to do much work during the winter months because the building was too cold. Hansen was forced to maintain the status quo and mentioned that this would probably be the case “until the new library is a reality.”<sup>60</sup> The 1959–1960 school year brought no improvements. That year Hansen was “on leave of absence. Donald T. Schmidt was assigned acting University Archivist as well as assistant in Special

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59. Third Annual Report—University Archives [1958–1959], 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections.

60. Third Annual Report—University Archives, 1.

61. Fourth Annual Report—University Archives [1959–1960], 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections.

62. Donald T. Schmidt to Sam F. Brewster, October 23, 1959, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2, Perry Special Collections.



Chad Flake, *right*, with an unidentified individual. In 1957, the library created the Special Collections department with Chad Flake as the head. The University Archives became a part of the new department. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

trip to southern Utah and wrote various potential donors about acquiring their manuscript materials.<sup>63</sup>

Chad Flake was placed in charge of a new department that included the University Archives,<sup>64</sup> and when Hansen returned from Oregon, he was assigned to gather documents from outside BYU. He relished “getting out into the various areas of Utah and visiting with potential donors, and bringing in manuscript collections.” He noted that almost all of the archival institutions in Utah collected LDS Church history, and he decided to welcome those items that came but to focus his energy elsewhere. He “went after mining history, economic history, and things that no one else was collecting at the time.”<sup>65</sup> Hansen’s colleague Martin Schmitt, curator at the University of Oregon, encouraged him, writing:

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63. Donald T. Schmidt to Mrs. John L. Bench, May 23, 1960, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2; Donald T. Schmidt to Joe C. Anderson, May 4, 1960; UA 549n, box 1, folder 3; Donald T. Schmidt to Albert Giles, March 18, 1960, UA 549n, box 1, folder 2; all in Perry Special Collections.

64. Procedures Manual for Special Collections: Provo, Brigham Young University Library, 1959, UA 549, box 24, folder 10, Perry Special Collections.

65. Hansen, oral history, p. 2–3.



The J. Reuben Clark Jr. Library, 1961. Ralph Hansen enjoyed participating in the planning for the building because it would offer a new home for the University Archives. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

“You have discovered the Achilles heel of the State Historical Society and the LDS Historian—they have no field men. They must rely on the ancient belief that people are historically conscious and will send them the good things. This, as you know, is a lot of baloney.”<sup>66</sup>

Things began to look up for the archives during the 1960–1961 school year as faculty and administrators began to get a better understanding of the role of the archives “in the preservation of important papers and in research on various aspects of University history.”<sup>67</sup> Hansen’s annual report immediately following his sabbatical is the first that discusses manuscript collecting as separate from the archives or special collections. Hansen describes the establishment of a project to make “registers of the larger manuscript collections in order to acquaint students wishing to use them with all of the materials in them.” He patterned these registers

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66. Martin Schmitt to Ralph W. Hansen, January 9, 1961, MSS 295, box 4, folder 2, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University.

67. Fifth Annual Report—University Archives, June 1, 1960–August 31, 1961, 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections.



The special collections reading room in the new J. Reuben Clark Jr. Library, 1961. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections. In 2015, this room serves as the Music Special Collections library.

after the ones used at the Library of Congress.<sup>68</sup> Hansen indicated that he continued to engage in field operations and was always looking to obtain “interesting manuscripts which are valuable for research.”<sup>69</sup>

The 1961–1962 school year saw a new location for the archives in the newly completed J. Reuben Clark Jr. Library.<sup>70</sup> Hansen had played a vital role in moving not only the archives into the new building but also all of the rest of the library’s collections.<sup>71</sup> The new location “has permitted bringing together the here-to-fore scattered manuscript collections.” These collections included the Peerless Coal Co. records, the Bamberger

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68. Fifth Annual Report—University Archives, 2, and Ralph W. Hansen to David C. Mearns, April 11, 1961, UA 549n, box 1, folder 3, Perry Special Collections.

69. Fifth Annual Report—University Archives, 2, 3.

70. The J. Reuben Clark Jr. Library would be renamed the Harold B. Lee Library in 1973 with the establishment of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University.

71. Hansen, oral history, p. 3.

Railway records, the Herald R. Clark papers, the Arthur V. Watkins papers, the James E. Talmage papers, the L. John Nuttall papers, and the Jesse Knight Investment Company records.<sup>72</sup> These collections are rich resources for scholars. For example, the Watkins papers (MSS 146) contain correspondence, photographs, newspaper articles, speeches, and other materials documenting Watkins's Senate career. Much of the correspondence concerns Watkins's involvement with the McCarthy censure hearings. The Talmage papers (MSS 229) document his education in England and America, his academic career as a teacher and university administrator, and his activities in scholarly societies. The Nuttall papers (vault MSS 790) document his involvement in the LDS Church and his activities on behalf of the Utah Militia. The Knight Investment Company collection (MSS 278) documents the activities of the company in mining and railroads in Utah. These important collections laid the foundation for many of the collecting areas that the L. Tom Perry Special Collections is now recognized for.



Two unidentified library employees in the manuscripts stacks of the Special Collections in the new J. Reuben Clark Jr. Library, ca. 1961. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

Hansen believed that the “expanding academic program of the University will necessitate increased activity in the Manuscript Collection.”<sup>73</sup> The archives benefited greatly from the new space and now could accept new materials from campus departments and faculty members. The archives was being recognized as an important “function of the University.” Hansen initiated a study of the classification of archival material to determine the “most feasible way of classifying, arranging and shelving

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72. Annual Report, 1961–1962, Archives and Manuscript Department, 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections. (This is the sixth annual report.)

73. Annual Report, 1961–1962.

material to permit the Archives to perform its second function, that of answering quickly any question of B.Y.U. history and function.”<sup>74</sup>

### **Passing the Torch**

The additional responsibilities taken on during the library move caused Hansen to become restless. He was particularly concerned that the salary he was being paid was not adequate for what he felt were the multiple jobs he was being asked to perform.<sup>75</sup> Hansen began writing letters to Western repositories advertising his services as “an archivist and manuscript librarian.”<sup>76</sup>

Hansen still believed strongly in what he was doing and continued looking for opportunities to improve his archival skills. During the summer of 1962, he received a grant to work in the Baker Library business archives in the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration.<sup>77</sup> When Hansen returned to BYU, he told others that BYU should search out Western mining records, railroad records, public utility records, transportation records, and cowboy history.<sup>78</sup> Shortly after returning from his summer at the Baker Library, Hansen left BYU to found an archives and manuscript repository at Stanford University. He felt that Stanford’s reputation provided him an opportunity to advance professionally and personally.<sup>79</sup> Hansen served as university archivist and manuscript librarian at Stanford University from 1962 until 1979, when he left to become an associate university librarian at Boise State University.

Hansen was succeeded at BYU by Delbert Roach, who had been working at the Genealogical Department of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Roach continued to work toward excellence in “preserving the worthy body of records of the University as well as other historical materials

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74. Annual Report, 1961–1962, 2.

75. Ralph W. Hansen autobiography; Ralph W. Hansen papers, MSS 295, box 5, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University.

76. Ralph W. Hansen to George P. Hammond, October 30, 1961, MSS 295, box 4, folder 2, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University.

77. Hansen, oral history, p. 4.

78. Ralph W. Hansen to Ralph W. Hidy, August 21, 1962, MSS 295, box 4, folder 2, Special Collections and Archives, Albertsons Library, Boise State University.

79. Hansen, oral history, p. 4.

relating to Utah and the Mormons and facilitating the dissemination of these materials consistent with established policies.”<sup>80</sup> Roach wrote that “the archival program and facilities of the University Archives is believed to be further advanced than that of any institution of higher learning in the interior states of western America.”<sup>81</sup> Roach was not trained as an archivist but recognized the importance of archival training. He wrote a colleague, “I hope to become better acquainted as to archival practices so as to better serve the Brigham Young University and the profession in general.”<sup>82</sup> Roach also continued to actively build the manuscript collection. He explained to Robert E. McConaughy, “The Brigham Young University is vitally interested in preserving the history of western America and especially Utah. It was this interest that prompted the Brigham Young University to provide the finest facilities for the preservation of manuscripts, personal records, diaries, letters, business records and similar records in its new library.”<sup>83</sup> After about a year, Delbert Roach was reassigned to go back to the Genealogical Society and was succeeded as archivist by Hollis Scott.



Delbert Roach, who followed Ralph Hansen as BYU archivist and served for about a year. Courtesy L. Tom Perry Special Collections.

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80. Annual Report, 1962–1963, University Archives and Manuscript Division, 1, UA 1068, box 15, folder 5, Perry Special Collections Perry Special Collections. (This is the seventh annual report.)

81. Annual Report, 1962–1963, 1.

82. Delbert E. Roach to Mrs. Edith Fox, November 28, 1962, UA 549n, box 1, folder 8, Perry Special Collections.

83. Delbert E. Roach to Robert E. McConaughy, November 20, 1962, UA 549n, box 1, folder 8, Perry Special Collections.



## Building on a Firm Foundation

By 1963, the University Archives was well established. Hansen had formed strong relationships with campus departments and was successfully documenting the history of the university. These relationships led to the development of collections that allowed the telling of the university's history at its centennial in 1975.<sup>84</sup> The University Archives continues to work actively to document the university's history.

The manuscript collecting program was still developing, and it would not be until the 1970s that it was firmly established. Hansen set important precedents regarding the types of manuscript materials to be collected. Early manuscript collections eventually included important Mormon collections as well as the papers of prominent individuals such as Cecil B. DeMille, Jimmy Stewart, Helen Foster Snow, and George Edward Anderson. The curators collected business records, including the Rosemarie Reid papers, the Provo Building and Loan Society records, and the Interstate Brick records; and political collections, including the Wallace F. Bennett papers, the George Romney papers, and the Reed Smoot papers. Early foresight laid the groundwork for much of the collecting done by later manuscript curators.

The items in the Perry Special Collections are used in a variety of ways. An excellent example of current faculty use of the collection is Leslee Thorne Murphy's use of a wiki to engage students with the Victorian Literature collection.<sup>85</sup> Scott Eyman, a prominent author, made heavy use of the manuscript collections in the writing of his excellent biography of John Wayne.<sup>86</sup> Students participating in the annual Brimhall Essay Contest are strongly encouraged to use archival materials from the University Archives in their essays.

In 1962, Hansen wrote an article, "Is There History in Your Attic?" for *Utah Libraries* and described why BYU had established its archives. Hansen's article highlighted the fact that he was attempting to

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84. Wilkinson, *First One Hundred Years*; and Edwin Butterworth, *Brigham Young University: 100 Views of 100 Years* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

85. More information about the Victorian Literature Wiki is available at "BYU Professor Leads the Way in Digitizing Victorian Era Literature," Brigham Young University, <http://news.byu.edu/archive14-nov-vikiviki.aspx> (accessed December 9, 2014).

86. Scott Eyman, *John Wayne: The Life and Legend* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

follow professional standards in establishing the University Archives. Hansen wrote,

In the fall of 1956, Brigham Young University commenced an archival program which in large measure fulfilled the precepts of the preceding definition. This is not to say that an effort had not been made previously to preserve university records. The library had a program of collecting and cataloguing most university publications. The papers of former presidents were carefully bundled in butcher paper, stored, and then just as carefully forgotten. From time-to-time, Newburn I. Butt, library research associate, would retrieve important minute books or ledgers from oblivion, but he was hampered by inadequate space to house the treasures of the university.

Hansen described how he had worked with campus departments to locate and retrieve records of historical value.<sup>87</sup> He brought that same sense of professionalism to manuscript collecting.

Ralph W. Hansen's insistence that the Brigham Young University Archives be founded on sound archival principles and practices directly impacts those who research in the manuscript and archival collections housed in the Perry Special Collections. The results of his efforts range from the quality of the collections held in the repository to the accessibility of those collections for research by students, faculty, and others. The blueprint he established resulted in a rich documentary history of both the university itself and important manuscript collections.

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87. "Is There History in Your Attic?" *Utah Libraries* (1962): 2.