

## THE BIZZELL MEMORIAL LIBRARY

# At the Heart of Excellence

By DONNA MURPHY

*Photos of Doris W. Neustadt Wing by Gil Jain*

The Library.

It's called the heart of the University. Not because of its central location — nor from sentiment — but because of its vital role in the mission of the University of Oklahoma.

Much like blood rushes to the heart to be rejuvenated and enriched, students and faculty and others with curious minds intent on learning come to the library. There they search out statistical data, history, information on current events, poetry, fiction

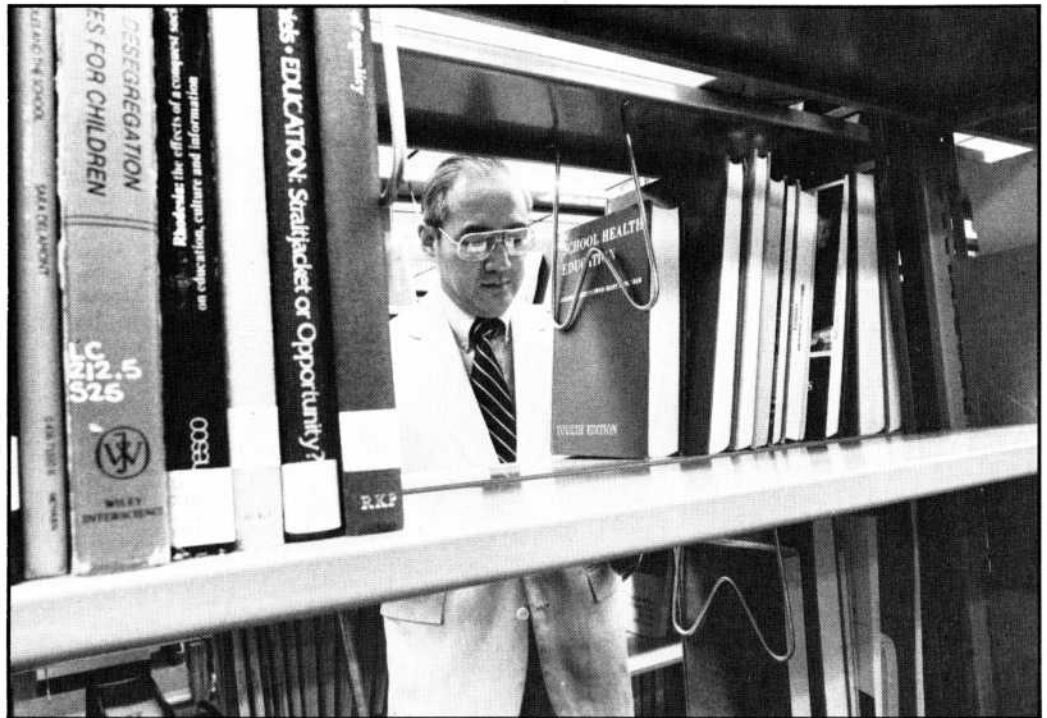
and the evolution of human thought, for a library measures the development of knowledge, wisdom and culture like a father records the growth of a child with annual scratch marks inside a closet door.

The growth of Oklahoma's largest library — OU's Bizzell Memorial Library and its several branches — chronicles the maturing of the University. With the May dedication of the new \$13.1 million Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell, the University

marked another milestone in its rapid march toward excellence which started 92 years ago.

When OU's first president, David Ross Boyd, began classes in a rented rock building on Norman's Main Street, he had no library. But the University's first building, which was opened in 1893, did have a library — a rarity in the territory. Most of the books, however, had been donated by ministers and other friends and were not too useful in the classroom. But as

*Library Dean Sul H. Lee, at right, set four goals: to improve space, increase acquisition funds, implement an automated system and raise library salaries.*

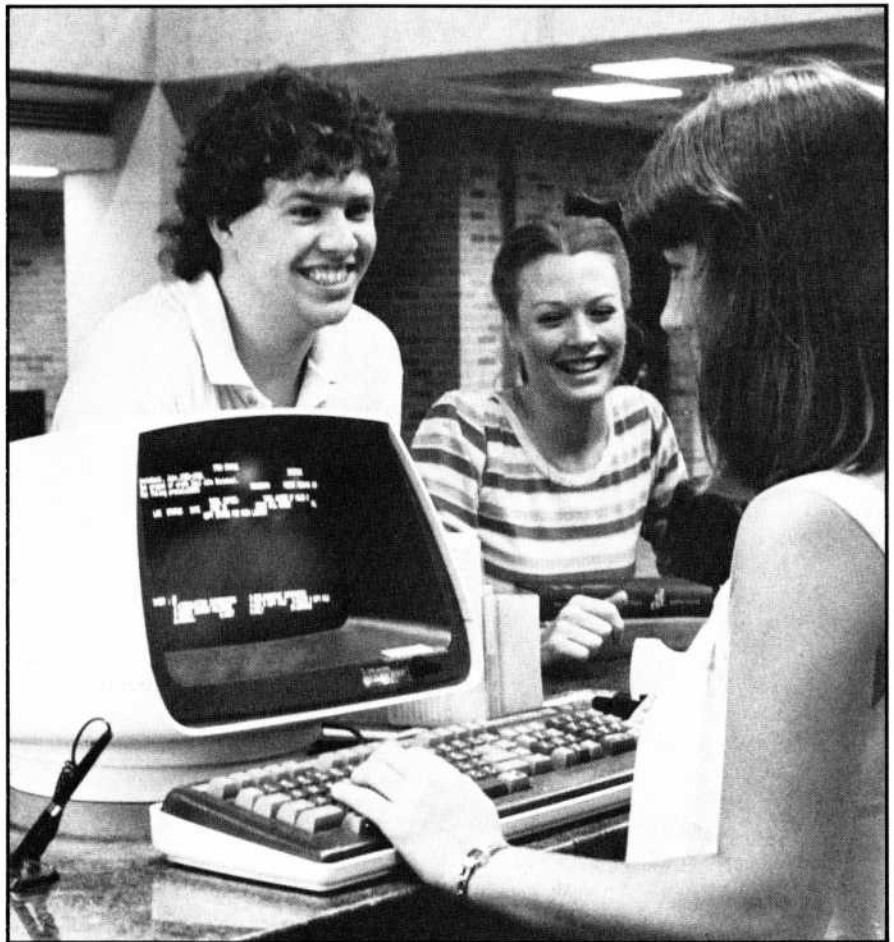


the University grew, so did the library, mirroring the prosperous years as well as the poor.

As recently as the 1970s funding was lean, and the library suffered a general decline with a marked impact on collection development.

Three forces merged in 1978, however, to thrust the University Libraries into an era of rapid expansion. William S. Banowsky, a new president seeking to make bold improvements academically, embraced library development as one of his first projects, declaring that "without an excellent library, no university can fulfill its responsibilities either to instruction or research." A new library director, Sul H. Lee, used his professional experience to mold a plan which would serve as the foundation for the library Banowsky envisioned. And, the healthy economic climate of Oklahoma and a concerned legislature and citizenry provided generous private and state support to shore up the library budget.

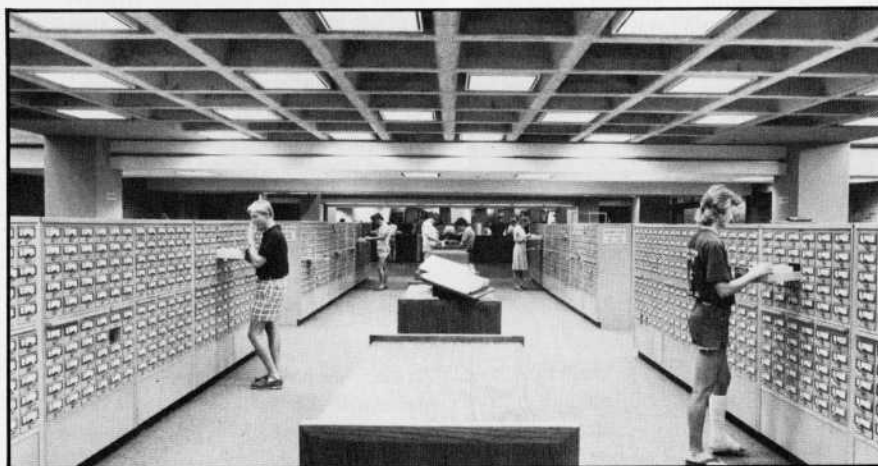
Four years later, the 150,000-square-foot Doris W. Neustadt Wing was dedicated, and as Provost (now interim president) J. R. Morris observed, it stands as the most visible — but not the only — part of a program begun in 1978 to propel the University of Oklahoma Libraries into the top ranks of research libraries in America.



*A new on-line circulation system allows book check-out in a matter of seconds by running a light pen across a computer-readable label on the student's ID card and a similar label in the book, instantaneously recording needed information.*



*From the library's new east entry (left photo), the check-out desk is to the left, card catalogs to the right, reference desk straight ahead. Above, a student takes full advantage of the lounge.*



*All the resources filed in the card catalog area (middle photo above) are being loaded into computers. The bottom photo shows the Travis Room, a second floor conference room named for donors Paul H. and Doris Eaton Travis.*

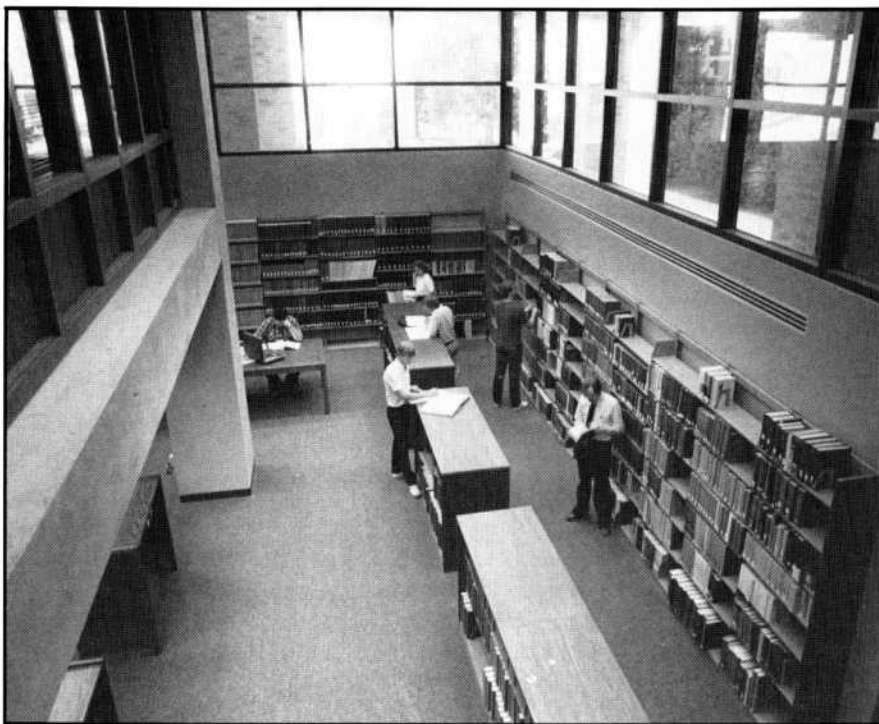
Since 1978, the book budget for University Libraries has more than doubled, library faculty salaries have risen from near the bottom to the top of the Big Eight, the Neustadt Wing has doubled the size of the library, and new computer capabilities allow users to browse through the book collections of such distinguished far-away research libraries as Stanford, Yale and Princeton.

The coalescence of these improvements was no coincidence, but the result of a systematic plan developed by Lee and Provost Morris, with the full support of the president and OU Board of Regents.

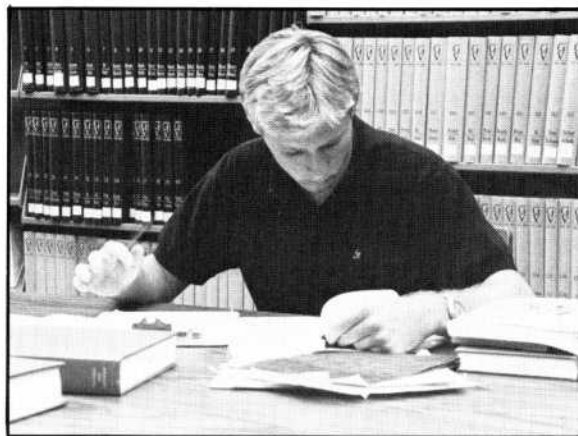
Under Lee's guidance, the library staff developed a five-year plan within which Lee set four important goals: to improve space, increase acquisition funds, implement an automated system, and raise library faculty salaries. He also surveyed Big Eight university libraries and those of institutions in the Association of American Universities to see how OU compared.

That first year, OU's library materials budget was half of the average budget of the 24 public AAU research libraries in the United States. This past year OU was at 72 percent of the average and expects to reach parity by 1984-85. During that four-year period, OU added approximately 250,000 volumes and 2,500 serial ti-





*In the photo above, part of the reference resources section is viewed from the library staff offices located on the second floor of the new Neustadt Wing.*



*At right a student works at a study table in the first floor reference area.*



*Even two stories underground in the library's technical processing area, a bright, open environment is achieved by use of a landscaped light well.*

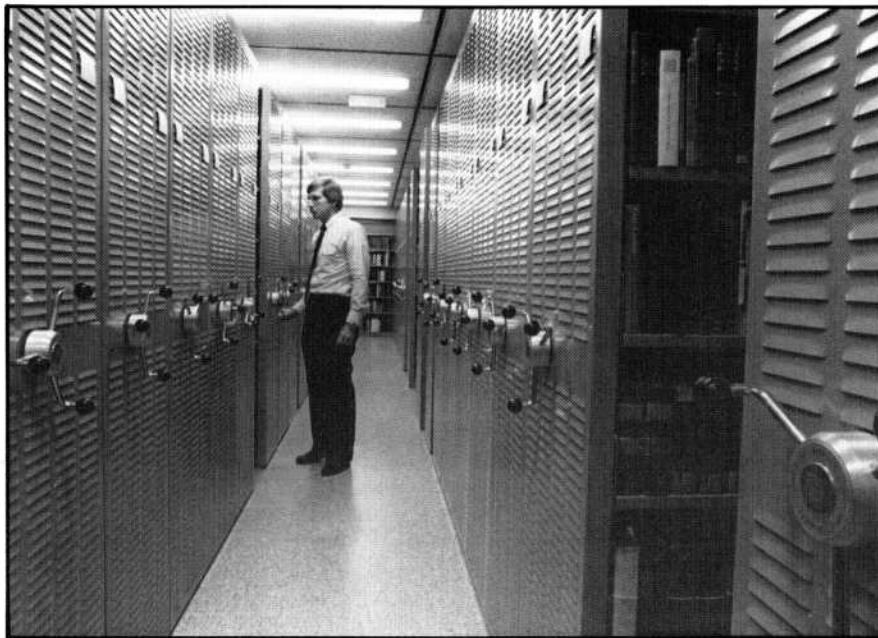
ties, and its book budget doubled, increasing from \$750,000 to \$1.5 million in state funds and another \$600,000 from private funds.

"Last year, we were first in the Big Eight in terms of book budget increase; four years ago we were seventh," Lee says. "According to collection size, our 1.9 million volumes place us in about the middle of the Big Eight and 47th in the 101-member Association of Research Libraries. Kansas, which is first in the Big Eight with 2.2 million, is 33rd. We like to use Kansas as a model."

Still, OU's library has areas of great strength that have brought national attention to the University for many years. It is strongest in Americana, principally Western history, art, and science and technology, and houses three very distinctive special collections: the History of Science Collections, Western History Collections and Bass Business History.

The History of Science Collections, which reached an important benchmark with its 50,000th volume last year (*Sooner Magazine*, Spring 1982), encompasses books by the world's best scholars, thinkers and scientists, including rare works by Galileo, Kepler and others. It is overseen by one of the campus' most popular distinguished scholars, Duane H. D. Roller, who for some three decades has nurtured and built the collection, searching each summer through the bookstores of Europe for prized scientific works that reveal the evolution of scientific and technological thought.

The Western History Collections form one of the nation's largest resources for books, photographs, glass plate negatives, papers and documents that pertain to the American West. Included are a significant collection of papers on President Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War, as well as material on Indians, and one of the largest collections of congressional papers in the United States. Western History contains more than 25 million manuscripts, 560,000 photographs, 45 congressional collections, 80,000 volumes and 5,000 oral histories, as well as other materials. John Ezell, former dean of OU's College of Arts and Sciences, and Jack Haley manage the collections.



*Movable compact shelving makes maximum use of space, controls access and provides protection for History of Science and Business History collections.*

Two major grants totaling more than a quarter of a million dollars were awarded this year to the Western History Collections to process and catalog the materials.

The last few years, however, have seen the University make major strides in strengthening its general collections as well.

"When I first came here, the library had suffered through several years of inadequate funding," Lee recalls. "Major cuts had been made in its journal subscriptions and in a number of subject areas, including Americana. The library was full of potholes!

"Libraries must be developed rationally, not accidentally, to build strength in relation to the mission of the university," Lee explains. "That rationale and logic was disrupted because of inflation and below-minimal funding.

"We've aggressively attacked to fill in gaps where potholes had developed," he said. "For example, we have added 2,500 new journal titles, which is unusual at this time as libraries across the country are having to cut back. We are one of the few research libraries adding now. We are putting back the strong foundation we once had, and we are building from there."

As the lean years have demonstrated so well, the library cannot

rely solely on state funds. Strong support is needed, too, to continue a partnership first begun when missionaries presented books to an infant territorial university and recently reaffirmed with a bold drive to expand the library. Half of the funds for the new addition were provided by the private sector, led by a \$2 million gift from the children of Doris W. Neustadt of Ardmore, Oklahoma. But the importance of every gift is illustrated by the touching contribution from 11-year-old Tim Kirk of Wilburton, who pledged a portion of his allowance each month for a year (*Sooner Magazine*, Winter 1982).

"Four years ago the stacks were overflowing, and some valuable resources were stored in old, wooden buildings on the south base," Lee says. "The Doris W. Neustadt Wing has dramatically improved the space for the main library. It added stacks for 700,000 volumes, provided seats for 1,100 students, and increased the number of faculty studies by 37 and group studies by 12."

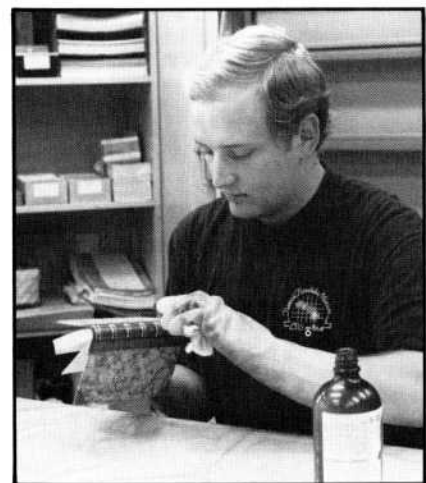
Alumni and friends also have helped strengthen the collections through \$25 gifts to "buy a book," an annual drive that nets approximately \$60,000 a year.

Significant enrichment funds will be provided by a new support group, the Bizzell Library Society, formed

*Continued on Page 32*

## **"Libraries must be developed rationally, not accidentally."**

*Guided tours of the new Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell Memorial Library will be conducted for campus visitors at 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. before each home football game, September 11 and 25, October 23 and November 6 and 13. The 30-minute tours will leave from the card catalog area just inside the new west entrance. Weekday tours are available at 3:30 p.m. each Wednesday and Thursday throughout the fall.*



*At top, a rare history of science book gets restorative care. Bottom photo shows the light well's effect on the underground periodicals area.*

last March by 20 leaders in communities across Oklahoma, and in Texas and New York. The society has set a first-year goal of \$1 million for collection development.

To nurture another type of support, Lee has visited more than 30 Oklahoma communities to talk about OU's library, its history and its importance to the state.

"I believe it is important not only to articulate the vital role the library plays in the University but also to express appreciation for the state's support," Lee explains.

Other changes, perhaps more subtle than the increased financial support and the new construction, also have influenced and strengthened the library. As an example, Lee's title was changed from director of University Libraries to dean to reflect the importance of the library to other academic programs on campus. He also set about tightening the organization of the library, naming assistants for administrative services and collection development. Individuals also were assigned to library public services and technical services.

The results have been noteworthy. The arrangement of books in the library has been completely re-thought — books no longer are arranged by subject but from A to Z on the Library of Congress classification system and numerically on the Dewey Decimal System. One central reference desk was organized, and reference "hot-lines," or telephones connecting directly to the reference desk, are located on each floor. Also a comprehensive plan for collection development is being drafted to assure that the library steers a straight course in building strength in its collections.

To have a strong library also requires a well-informed and trained staff throughout the ranks. Realizing this, Lee worked to gain increases in staff salaries to bring them to parity with professionals nationally.

"Four years ago, library faculty salaries were among the lowest in the Big Eight," notes Lee. "The past three years, the University has given very good average raises, and last October the library was given additional funds to make adjustments so that now our salaries are among the high-

est in the conference."

Knowing he did not have the funds to send his entire staff to conferences and national meetings to talk with other specialists and share ideas on current problems and trends, Lee decided to bring the conferences to them. The OU Library has hosted national conferences on preservation and serials collection development and will present one on reference services October 7 and 8. The conferences draw speakers who are specialists in their fields as well as more than 100 participants from throughout the United States. Moreover, the entire OU library faculty participates.

Instantaneous check-outs and catalog searches probably will be the most noticeable change — other than the new building — for students, faculty and visitors.

Four years ago, OU had only three OCLC computer terminals connecting to a national network of 3,000 libraries to supply data on processing and cataloging books. Since then, OU has joined the Research Libraries Group, an organization of 25 of the nation's most prestigious research libraries. Membership includes access to the Research Libraries Information Network, enabling users at OU to search by computer through the collections of each member's library.

"In other words, through a computer terminal, our faculty and students can browse the collections of Stanford, Columbia, Yale and other prestigious libraries," Lee explains. "If OU doesn't have the material or the book they need, they can borrow through library loan. RLG members are given high priority, so usually we receive the book within a week.

"It also allows us to compare our collections with Yale, Berkeley and Stanford to see how we measure up and where we should be developing our resources," he says.

The library's new DataPhase system will allow faculty and students to check out books without filling out a time-consuming form. Some 310,000 books already have been loaded into the computer and can be checked out instantly by running a light pen over a label in the book. A terminal is being placed in the card catalog area this fall, which will make it possible for users to search by title, author or

subject without poring through drawers of cards. The computer loading process is lengthy, however, and three to five years will be required to put the entire card catalog on computer. But when it's completed, Lee hopes that terminals can be placed in all major campus buildings so students and faculty can peruse the card catalog without making a trip to the library.

The past four years have been good for the library, Lee admits. "We have accomplished in large measure all four goals that we set in 1978. But our mission is not complete. There is more we can and must do.

"I would like us to develop our collections to the extent we become a meaningful regional resource. We don't want to duplicate the Library of Congress, but we do want to be excellent regionally," Lee says.

To best meet the needs of the University community, the library needs to increase further its serials subscriptions, he notes. "We now subscribe to approximately 17,000 serials, but I would like to see us level off at about 20,000."

The critical space needs of OU's libraries were met with the completion of the Doris W. Neustadt Wing. Lee now hopes the original building and 1958 addition can be refurbished, especially the Great Reading Room on the second floor of the original 1929 building. "It's the most beautiful room on this campus," Lee believes, "and I hope that someone will want to provide a gift to renovate it.

"We also need to renovate and improve the facilities in Monnet Hall where the Western History Collections are housed," he says.

Little exists to complain about, Lee admits. The library has fared well in recent years, and the University administration is committed to strengthening it further. For, as Morris said at the dedication of the new addition, the library "is the heart of the University's research enterprise; and when you see it in the evening filled with students, you realize its central role in the educational process.

"It is a lasting truth that the quality of any place calling itself a university resides in the quality of its faculty, its students and its books." 