

THE LIBRARY STORY

Another Chapter

By CAROL J. BURR

The late OU librarian Jesse L. Rader may have said it first in 1920 — or if not, surely Sul H. Lee thought it this summer as books by the thousands were transferred to their new quarters: "Moving day is the pits."

But however maddening the repositioning of 1.9 million volumes was for Lee, his task also was tinged with the same elation that Rader and Milton J. Ferguson and Arthur McAnally must have felt as, in their turns, they moved the University's library resources into bigger and better facilities.

The University had no library space problem in the beginning. The old rock building on Norman's Main Street in 1892 had no need for a library since the University had no books. When the first University building was completed in 1893, however, the second floor of the east wing was proclaimed proudly "the library." The second catalog, 1893-94, advertised a library of 1,000 items, including 400 books, mostly donated by local ministers and of dubious value in the classroom. Large additions to the resources were promised for the 1894-95 school year.

Since Nathan E. Butcher had been the only student in the University preparatory school to qualify as a "college student" in 1893-94, he was the logical choice to become the student librarian the next year. His salary was \$10 per month, and he was given \$500 for new books.

Miss Maude DeCou followed Butcher from 1895 to 1897, when Miss Maud Rule began her four years as the first "official" librarian.

When Vernon L. Parrington, the English professor who would one day win the Pulitzer Prize, arrived in 1897 to seek employment, he was

not impressed with OU's library resources.

"In the east wing on the second floor," he wrote, "Miss Rule was busying herself putting things in shape there. The room was fair-sized and pleasant, only where were the books? . . . There were perhaps three or four hundred books, all told, but of those that could be used for work in English, there were not fifty. They were so few, it was with downright pleasure that I found a set of the *English Men of Letters*, Taine's *History of English Literature*, and Gosse's *History of Eighteenth Century Literature*. For a year they were the stock in trade of the English department."

But things were looking up, at least for a while. When Miss Rule left in 1901, the library boasted more than 6,000 volumes, 36 magazine subscriptions and most of the newspapers of the Territory. Miss Rule's student assistant, Milton Jay Ferguson, who had graduated in 1901 and spent a year at the New York State Library School in Albany, returned to become the University's first full-time, professionally trained librarian. He arrived just in time for the fire.

A few months later, January 1903, the University's first building burned to the ground — library, books and all. The Andrew Carnegie fund came to the rescue with \$30,000 to build a new library. (Carnegie grants had been building city libraries for some time; the OU gift was the first to a school.) In the meantime, Ferguson pulled together 1,000 volumes and re-established the library on the first floor of OU's second building, University Hall, which had been under construction at the time of the fire.

Fortunately for Ferguson, who

had had enough trouble, the Carnegie Library was completed in 1904, and he was able to move before fire also claimed University Hall in 1907.

Ferguson was succeeded by Jesse L. Rader, first as acting librarian in 1908, then as permanent librarian in 1909. He would serve until 1951.

By 1917, the library with its 30,000 volumes had outgrown its facilities again. The legislature appropriated \$75,000 for one wing of a new library, a beautiful little building facing Boyd Street, now known as Jacobson Hall. But with more than 6,000 volumes being added each year, the 80,000 volume-capacity library was too small, even as Rader and his staff moved in.

Moving day for Rader in 1920 was no picnic. "Moving 30,000 volumes in a week — and in mid-winter — with almost no mechanical facilities, was one of the most trying jobs I ever attempted," he recalled in an early issue of *Sooner Magazine*.

When President William Bennett Bizzell arrived in 1925, his first priority was a library worthy of the university he saw developing on the plains. He asked the legislature for \$500,000 to build the first phase of his dream. (The original plan called for two additional wings connecting to the administration building and forming a quadrangle, providing capacity for one million volumes.)

Even his best friends told Bizzell that the Oklahoma lawmakers would never fund his request. But Bizzell was on a crusade and refused to compromise. He got his half million and \$60,000 more to buy book stacks for the new building.

Bizzell Memorial Library, so named a year after the president emeritus' death in 1944, was a magnificent building. Master craftsmen



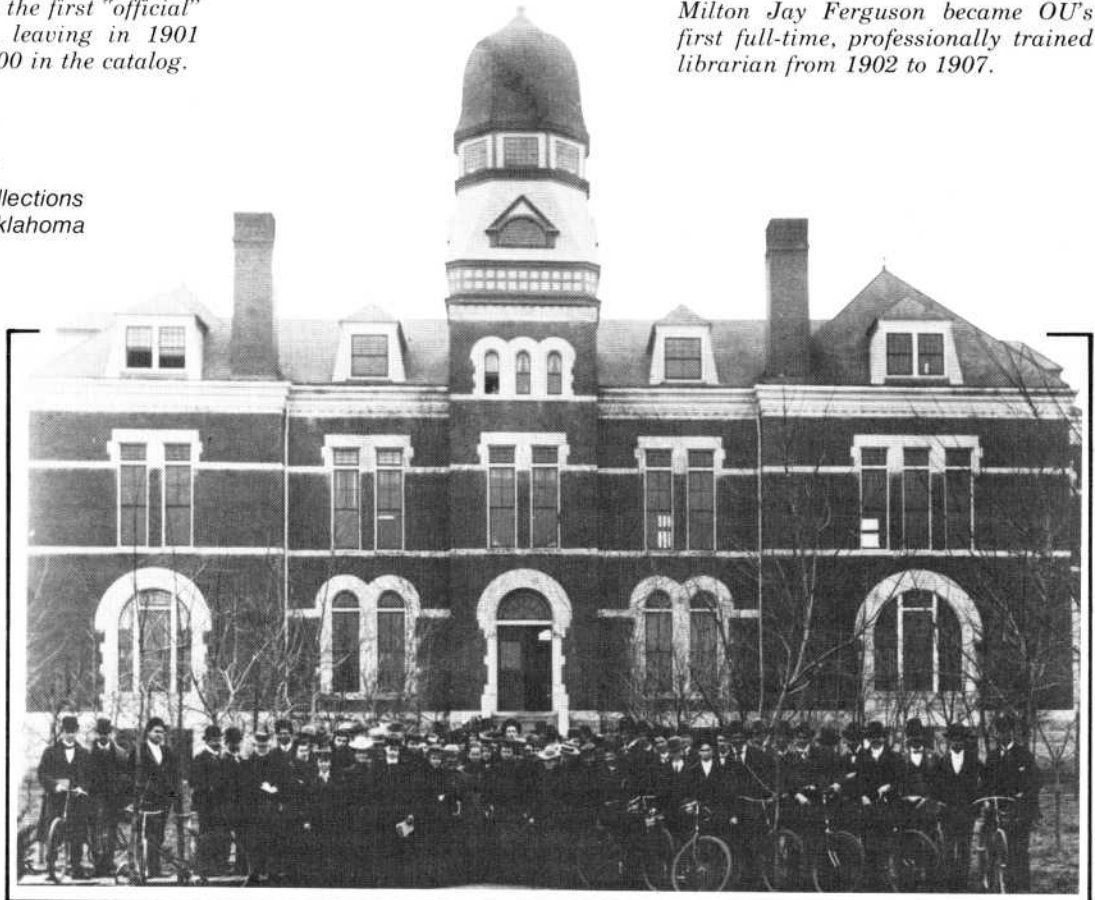
Although she was also a student, Miss Maud Rule became the first "official" librarian in 1897, leaving in 1901 with more than 6,000 in the catalog.

Since Nathan E. Butcher was the only one in University preparatory to qualify as a college student in 1893, it made sense to put him in charge of the library.



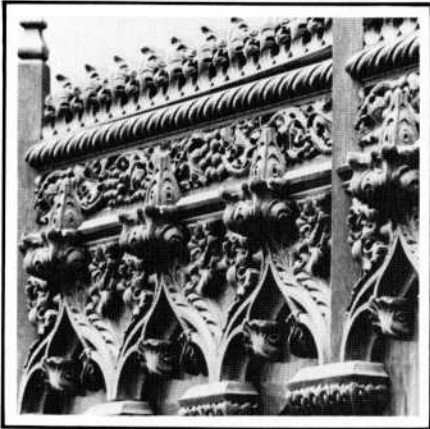
Milton Jay Ferguson became OU's first full-time, professionally trained librarian from 1902 to 1907.

*Photos Courtesy of
Western History Collections
The University of Oklahoma*



The University's first building boasted of a library on the second floor containing 1,000 items, including 400 books, mostly donated by ministers. The 1903 fire claimed building, books and all.

At right, an early view of the Carnegie Library, built in 1903. Below is a portion of the hand-carved woodwork in the original 1929 section of Bizzell.



from Kansas City were brought in to work with Karl VeKorne, a renowned wood carver from Grand Rapids, Michigan; the woodwork alone cost \$115,000. Almost an exact replica of Christ College at Oxford, the library had space for 300,000 volumes, an impressive Great Reading Room and a "Treasure Room" for the many rare books and manuscripts which Rader had collected so diligently.

In addition to the main library, the University operated several branch libraries in departments throughout the campus. In Monnet Hall, Dr. E. E. Dale, with the financial backing of Bartlesville oilman Frank Phillips, began to build a collection in the history of Oklahoma and the Southwest, one which eventually would become a major research facility.

Rader retired in 1951 to be succeeded by Dr. Arthur M. McAnally. The library was well beyond capacity at 450,000 volumes, the second largest research collection in the Southwest, trailing only the University of Texas.

Although acquisitions and staffing budgets were cut back drastically in the 1950s — for a time the library had to close on weekends — books still were being added at the rate of 27,000 a year by 1954, many of them donations. The 500,000th volume was acquired in June 1954.

The solution to the space problem

— at least for a time — was a \$2.7 million addition to the back of Bizzell, which opened in 1957, raising a total library capacity to one million volumes. The brick box style typical of the era was in sharp contrast to the collegiate Gothic of the original building, but the change was more than cosmetic.

McAnally reorganized the whole operation, converting from a closed to an open stack system, enabling students and faculty to browse (in air conditioned comfort) through the shelves instead of waiting for a library staff member to retrieve requested books. McAnally also went to a professional staff policy, eliminating the rapid turnover in student employees.

Two more distinguished special collections were established and gained distinction during the 1950s. The History of Science Collections began with a gift in 1949 from Dallas oilman Everette Lee DeGolyer and, under the curatorship of Dr. Duane H. D. Roller, became the best of its kind in the world. The Bass Collection in Business History became a part of the OU Library in 1955, the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Harry W. Bass Sr., also of Dallas, with the late Dr. Ronald B. Shuman guiding its development.


McAnally's death in 1972 was a shock to the campus. In the previous

64 years, since Jesse Rader began his 43-year career in 1908, the University had had only two head librarians. Associate Librarian James L. Zink succeeded McAnally; he resigned in 1978 in frustration over inadequate library budgets during the down period for higher education.

The new director, Sul H. Lee, who would later be named dean of University Libraries to reflect a heightened mission for his unit, found the Bizzell facilities filled to overflowing once again. He sought space to house the 1.9 million volumes in the library's collections, room to accommodate the onslaught of new published knowledge being produced each year and the automation which would enable his staff to deal with these resources effectively and efficiently.

The result was the Doris W. Neustadt Wing of Bizzell Memorial Library, the 300,000-square-foot addition pictured on pages 11-15.

When some renovation and modernization of the older facilities are completed, the University will seem to have the library of its dreams. But with libraries, bookwise and spacewise, enough is never enough. No matter how well you build, how fully you stock, how skillfully you plan for the future, the library is never finished.

There's always another moving day. 

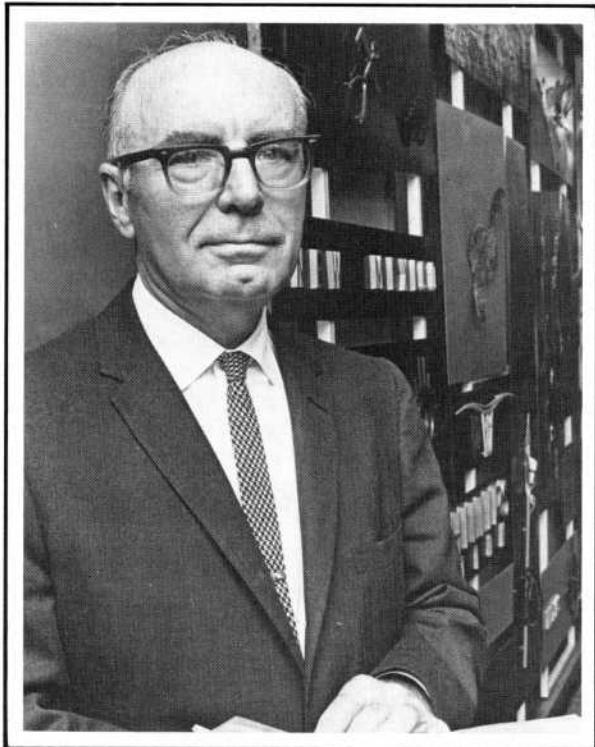
As OU librarian from 1908-51, Jesse Rader was a builder, an avid collector of rare books and manuscripts.



In 1920 Rader moved the library resources into what was to be the first wing of the new library. The building later became the art museum and was named for Oscar Jacobson. Today it houses specialized libraries for the fine arts.



The 1929 library was President Bizzell's dream. He refused to compromise with a reluctant Oklahoma legislature.



Arthur McAnally directed University libraries from 1951 until his death in 1972, supervising the 1957 expansion, reorganizing from a closed to an open stack system and adopting a professional staff policy.

