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Discovering Linfield's Hidden Treasures

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

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Discovering Linfield's hidden treasures

Entering the Linfield College Archives is like opening a treasure chest.

You might not find gold or silver, but you will find irreplaceable riches. Like a hand-painted Wildcat tie, made for the late Win Dolan, professor and president emeritus. Two books that date back to the 15th and 16th centuries. Others that chronicle the history of the Pacific Northwest and the people who settled here including those of the Baptist faith. Hundreds of these written by former Linfield students, dating back to 1917. There are dolls and nursing uniforms from the former Good Samaritan School of Nursing and thousands of photographs tracing the 155 years of Linfield College. And the newest gem – the Oregon Wine History Archive, documenting the history of the wine industry in Oregon.

Archivist Rachael Woody's excitement is palpable as she leads visitors into the archives. Motors from the climate control system send out a constant hum, keeping the temperature below 67 degrees and the humidity around 35 percent to protect the miles of photographs, documents and artifacts housed in the 1,274-square-foot room. Motorized shelves stretching more than 11 feet in the air move at the push of a button, chugging along tracks to open different sections of the archives to unveil another aspect of history.

The archives is not a stale, dank place. It is teeming with activity and serves as a laboratory for students, who work side-by-side with Woody to explore, catalog and document a mountain of material that has been collected over Linfield's history.

Curiosity is an innate attribute of each of the four students who serve as archive technicians. "They love the mystery in history and have an affinity for immersing themselves in the connections between Linfield's past and present," Woody said.

A section in a student thesis titled "Linfield's Victory Bell" caught the attention of Jeremy Odden '15 and led him on a quest to see if the bell still existed. The brief entry documented the history of a bell that hung in Pioneer Hall for over 100 years. It signaled athletic victories and successful fund drives until a crack was discovered in 1961.

Making information accessible

In addition to material that is uploaded to DigitalCommons@Linfield, Woody and the students use social media and the web, including a Tumblr page (linfieldarchives.tumblr.com/) and a Historypin project (historypin.com/channels/view/8284201/) using Google technology to make information more accessible. For example, images of the Old Oak have been pinned to Google maps so people can see the historic images next to the Google-provided images. Students post weekly updates on their projects on the Tumblr page to provide transparency, chronicle their evolution in a professional capacity, and to get feedback into how the public is interpreting and interacting with the collection.



Archivist Rachael Woody, left, stands in the Linfield Archives special collections section that holds the oldest material, some of which dates back to the 15th century. Linfield has one of the best collections of Baptist history in the region, which includes Bibles, hymnals, missionary reports and publications dating back to the 1850s. Inset: Four student technicians work with Woody including, clockwise from left, Mitra Haeri '14, Jeremy Odden '15, Terran Sobel-Smith '15 and Julian Adoff '16.

The bell was removed from the Pioneer Bell Tower in the 1970s and disappeared into obscurity. Now, thanks to Odden's diligence, the restored bell is on display in Riley Hall.

Students are getting graduate-level experience in an undergraduate setting. Woody, who did a four-year stint at the Smithsonian Institution, is teaching the students everything she learned in graduate school and on the job.

"It's very rigorous, and they are very much up to learning it," she said. "We have tried to harness their passion."

Because archivists operate under the "do no harm" philosophy, Woody and the students do nothing to a document or object that could cause more harm in the future. Much of the work is minimal – removing rusty paper clips or staples – but some is far more involved. Any documents with mold must be isolated so the mold doesn't spread. Buffer paper is inserted between many papers to aid preservation. Students learn how to repair torn documents using Japanese tissue paper to create a stronger bond.

Once a collection has been sorted, organized and catalogued, documents are placed in labeled folders and filed in special archival boxes. Students create a finding aid, a massive online

document that provides detailed descriptions of the collection's contents. Other materials, such as maps and photographs, are also digitized and uploaded to the [DigitalCommons@Linfield](#), making them accessible to the public and researchers.

Linfield has been very mindful of its own history, collecting and storing materials for more than 150 years. But it's also aware of the greater community. One portion of the archives has been dedicated to the Oregon Wine History Archive (OWHA), an example of how Linfield also takes ownership of local history, Woody said.

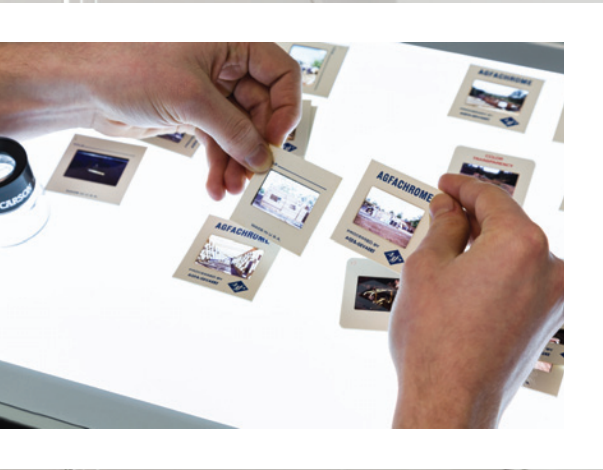
"The Oregon wine industry's history could go undocumented if Linfield didn't step in," she said. "The traditional view is that something isn't history until it's at least 50 or 100 years old. Here we are actively collecting contemporary documents showing where the wine industry is going and decisions that they are making now. It's a nice paradigm shift in my own profession and one that I think is really smart on Linfield's part."

More wine history donations are continually sought and Woody has oral commitments from eight new donors who are expected to yield more materials early this year.



This scrapbook with a hand-painted cover from the early 1900s is just one example of books, artifacts and other collectibles that have been donated to the Linfield archives. The scrapbook includes a variety of materials (inset) including invitations, dance cards, programs, photos and clippings. Since Rachael Woody joined the staff, more alumni are donating materials to the archives, providing a rich new angle of Linfield history from the alumni perspective.

Right: Dick Erath, left, and Terran Sobel-Smith '15 review materials that Erath has donated to be included in the Oregon Wine History Archive. The Erath Family Foundation has provided financial support for the Oregon Wine History Project, which was launched to preserve the papers and other materials from the pioneers who established the Willamette Valley wine industry in the 1970s. Numerous photos and slides (inset) have been donated and are being digitized and identified for inclusion in the digital archives.



Changing directions

Terran Sobel-Smith '15 wasn't looking for a life-changing experience when he applied to be an archive technician. He was just looking for a summer job.

This, like most of his Linfield experiences, was serendipitous. "Most of my opportunities have not been planned or even expected," he said. His work on the wine history archive and at the International Pinot Noir Celebration is opening new doors. Having met wine makers from around the world, he's now contemplating spending time in Burgundy, France, to learn first hand about winery management.

Reading, scanning and digitizing documents and photos from the Linfield archives and from the various wine collections, has brought history to life for Sobel-Smith.

"These are real people, there are real experiences behind these materials," he said. One of his favorite finds was a touching letter to Dick Ponzi from his daughter.

What's in the archives?

The Linfield College Archives still holds a great deal of mystery, with only between 5 and 10 percent of the collection closely examined.

It houses a diverse assortment of materials. The oldest is a leaf from a 15th century French "Book of Hours," written in a fine Gothic hand on creamy vellum. Another is a printed "Book of Hours" from the early 16th century by the Parisian printer Antoine Verard. There are Baptist Bibles, hymnals, missionary reports and publications dating from the 1850s through World War II. Linfield has one of the best collections of Baptist history in the region. Other old volumes cover topics such as slavery, immigration and women's roles. There are student scrapbooks from 1901 and class registers going back to 1890. A flour sack reading "Go to College," which hung on poles around town, is one example of student recruitment.

A large section of the archives houses college presidential papers, including dozens of boxes of correspondence, programs and documents for ceremonies, minutes of meetings, menus for dinners and special events. There are thousands of photographs covering the history of the college, some of which have been identified, catalogued and digitized and others that are waiting to be processed. About 250 historical photos have been digitized and are located on the DigitalCommons@Linfield.

Since Woody joined the staff in 2011, a number of alumni have donated photos, scrapbooks, and fraternity and sorority paddles used for pledging back in the 1950s.

"Materials that have never been in the archives before are finding their way here and adding a nice new angle to Linfield's history from an alumni perspective," Woody said.

"You have to be meticulous in the archives because if you have anything wrong, it could throw people off for the next 30 years."

"When I meet the wine pioneers, they are 30 years older than the photos I've been working with, so it really brings me back in time," he added. "In the archives it's easy to get lost, you forget what era you are living in because you live within a certain time frame."

Mitra Haeri '14 said that the archives add a historical element to her education.

"That's the nice thing about being at a small school, you can combine things to find that special niche you want," she said.

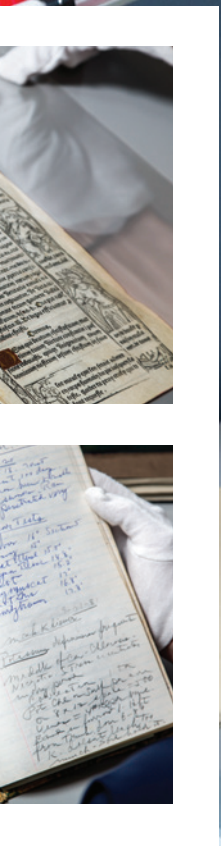
Haeri has continued research begun by Rosa Gimson '12 who organized the current exhibit on display at the Linfield-Good Samaritan School of Nursing in Portland. The photographs have given Haeri an inside view of the changes in the medical field and nursing profession over the past 100 years.



At right, Mitra Haeri '14 carefully handles the oldest item housed in the archives special collections. It is a detached leaf from a 15th century French Book of Hours. It is written in a fine Gothic hand on creamy vellum, with alternating initials of blue and burnished gold decorated with fine line penwork. Above, clockwise from top left, other artifacts include a ceremonial medallion worn by the president at commencement and other events; a leaf from the French Book of Hours; planting notes from a vineyard manager in the Dundee Hills; and a hand-painted tie that was presented to Win Dolan, former professor, dean and interim president.

- Earth Rescue Lead Update - 1/2
- serve
- sides coming soon
- Willakope Pt Reserve Record - 1/2
↳ Collection pickup
- check
- at Klamath Park - 1/2

1/2 - LCA photos - ongoing



"The medical process has changed so much and what I find in the photographs is so strange and different that I'm getting an insight into a very different world," Haeri said.

Skills that transfer

Gimson '12, who organized the nursing exhibit from start to finish, has put the skills she learned to use in AmeriCorps. She's assigned to the REACH Project in Seattle working to improve the lives of individuals who are chronically homeless or face drug and alcohol addiction. Her technical skills and ability to write reports and proposals have allowed her to take the lead on projects.

"My work in the archives showed me that I love working with projects and planning," she said. "I am looking at graduate schools and I am seriously thinking about nonprofit management or public administration – interests I had not previously explored."

Odden has learned the importance of accuracy after working on the Sokol Blosser winery collection, consisting of 25 linear feet of materials.

"You have to be meticulous in the archives because if you have anything wrong, it could throw people off for the next 30 years," he said.

Sobel-Smith also tackled some of the thousands of photos in the Linfield archives, matching photos to a series of index cards. And while the work can sometimes be tedious, it's given him a sense of something much larger.


"You feel you know the collection as an entity or person because there is so much information. It's been very insightful for me to live within history," he said. "The most important thing about the archives is that it is much larger than yourself. It's little pieces of people and when you put them together it's a huge collection of memories and experiences."

Haeri said processing documents has honed her research skills. "I'm gaining an understanding of how to look at documents and evaluate how they might be useful," she said. "I think about the scholarly process and what would be the easiest way for people to find what they are searching for."

Julian Adoff '16 splits his time between the archives and the Linfield Center for the Northwest. He's working closely with Woody and Jeff Peterson, LCN director and associate professor of sociology, conducting research, assisting with oral histories and creating exhibits. He is currently researching the influence of Latinos in the wine industry for an exhibit at the 2013 International Pinot Noir Celebration at Linfield in July.

Adoff is finding the work may re-shape his future.

"I came in with a very solid idea that I wanted to teach and that's changed," he said. Now he may be interested in pursuing archival work as well as digital publishing. His latest project is to bring back the Linfield yearbook, but to publish it digitally.

With more treasures still waiting to be discovered, Woody anticipates plenty of interesting and engaging work in the archives will await students for generations to come. 

– Mardi Mileham

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Funding the Linfield Archives

The Oregon Wine History Archive (OWHA) had its origins in a project of the Linfield Center for the Northwest (LCN) in 2010.

Students and faculty chronicled the growth and development of Oregon's wine industry and mounted an exhibit, "Bringing Vines to the Valley," with support from the Erath Family Foundation. Video interviews with winemakers, photos, land-use planning maps and other historical records were included in the temporary exhibit and made permanently available through DigitalCommons@Linfield.

The OWHA, housed at Nicholson Library, was launched in 2011 to preserve the papers and other materials from the pioneers who established the Willamette Valley wine industry in the 1970s. Grants from the Erath Family Foundation and the Oregon Cultural Trust have supported preservation and program activities. Contributions from alumni and wine industry leaders provided initial funding for the college archivist. Endowments are sought to fund the position on a permanent basis.

OWHA continues to solicit and receive materials from vineyards and wineries throughout Oregon and seeks funding to support students and projects described in the accompanying article.

"The Linfield archives is a tapestry of all of Linfield's past, that includes photographs, yearbooks, newspapers, alumni magazines and presidential papers," said Susan Barnes Whyte, director of Linfield libraries. "What makes Linfield's archives unique is the Oregon Wine History Archive because we're looking towards the future by collecting the documents, maps, journals, photographs and publicity that paint the picture of this signature Oregon industry."

LCN and the OWHA continue to utilize faculty and students to collect oral histories from winemakers and produce exhibits relating to the wine industry for events such as the International Pinot Noir Celebration held annually at Linfield.



Rachael Woody and Terran Sobel-Smith '15 review slides that will be identified, digitized and archived. Numerous slides and photographs have been reviewed and archived in the Oregon Wine History Archive. Student technicians have started working on the thousands of Linfield photos that have been collected and stored over the years, including many dating back to when the college was chartered. About 250 photographs chronicling the history of the School of Nursing have been digitized and added to the DigitalCommons@Linfield. As other college photos are identified and digitized, they will also be added and available for public viewing.