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This Is Your University: The Archives Program

Summary created by: Summer Dougherty

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Paul Quist: In July of 1965, the University of Alaska Library inaugurated a new archives program aimed at preserving papers and records dealing with the history of the state. Many of these valuable records were being rapidly destroyed, even though fire or natural causes or being simply thrown away by people unaware of their historical value. Since its inception, the archival program has grown rapidly and archivist Paul McCarthy has initiated a vigorous program of collecting historic records and papers from throughout the state. The University of Alaska Archives Program: our story today on *This is Your University*.

[Music plays]

Paul Quist: We have with us today Mr. Paul McCarthy, the university archivist. Mr. McCarthy, can you tell us a little bit about the archival program at the university?

Paul McCarthy: Well, as you have already mentioned, the program was initiated to preserve written records and manuscripts on Alaska, both for all future Alaskans and for research use by students and scholars of Alaskan history.

Many of these older records and papers have been and are being destroyed or are being taken outside the state. Our program is aimed at collecting and preserving these records.

Paul Quist: Well, what type of papers or records do you have or what are you looking for?

Paul McCarthy: Well, we are looking for papers which record the way of life as it was in early Alaska: diaries, journals, business and organizational records, letters, field notes are all important.

Paul Quist: Could you give us some examples of what you now have in the archives collection?

Paul McCarthy: We have the collected papers of a Major General C. S. Farnsworth who was an army commander in interior Alaska during the late 1890s and early 1900s. We also have the papers of Judge Anthony J. Dimond, former delegate to Congress and the papers of Dan Sutherland, who was a delegate to Congress from 1921 through '31. We also have the records

of the old Alaska Commercial Company and the personal records and field notes of both Otto Geist and Ivar Skarland, both former members of the university faculty.

Paul Quist: Well, what do you do with the papers when you get them? Do you or organize them or index them?

Paul McCarthy: Yes. When we first get a collection we examine it for content and then repair it or treat it if necessary. Then we organize the collection and index it. This index describes the types of papers the collection has and where they can be found.

Paul Quist: You mentioned treating the papers. What sort of treatment are you referring to?

Paul McCarthy: Most papers, especially the cheaper grade, have a certain amount of acid in them. As they get older, the acid starts to decompose the paper. We now combat the effects of the acid by storing the papers in acid free file folders. The folders are then placed in special acid free archival boxes which are designed to resist mildew. In the near future, we hope to start treating papers with a new de-acidification chemical which was recently developed in England. The techniques will, we hope, assure maximum life for our collections.

Paul Quist: What sort of arrangements do you have for people to use the archives?

Paul Quist: The archives are open to any serious researcher or user. One restriction that we do have is that the material may not be removed from the archives. It is possible, however, in some cases to get copies of documents in the collections.

Paul Quist: Well, what if someone had some papers they thought you might be interested in? How would they make the necessary arrangements?

Paul McCarthy: Well, they should write or call the archives at the university. If possible, they should describe the papers and tell us of their content. We will then make all the arrangements to have the papers brought to the university if these people are willing to place them here.

Paul Quist: Thank you, Mr. McCarthy, for taking the time to come and talk with us today. We have been talking with Paul McCarthy, University of Alaska archivist on *This is Your University*.

[Music plays]

Paul Quist: *This is Your University* is a weekly recorded program aired by this station as a public service. It was produced by the University Relations Office of the University of Alaska in cooperation with the university radio station, KUAC. Your announcer has been Paul Quist. This is the University of Alaska Broadcasting Service.