



Friends of the Wade

The Marion E. Wade Center Wheaton College

Archives: the heart of the Wade Center

When most people think of the Wade Center, the first image that comes to mind is probably the Lewis family wardrobe, the museum as a whole, or perhaps our lovely English-style building. The true heart of the Wade Center, however, lies in our archival holdings—which include not only our manuscript and letter collections, but also our books and periodicals as well as numerous other items. The archival collections were begun by Clyde S. Kilby in the 1960s, and we have been adding to them ever since.



These valuable resource materials are crucial to our purpose as they undergird and inform all that we do at the Wade Center.

The Wade Center's archival staff currently includes our full-time archivist, Laura Schmidt, and Heidi Truty (who is also Head of Public Services); in addition, during the school year, nine student assistants work 3–8 hours each per week. The Wade's three closely-linked responsibilities of acquisitions, preservation, and accessibility are most clearly seen in the work of the archivists.

Through acquisitions, we add materials to our collection, a pursuit that occupies

roughly a quarter of Laura's time, and requires ongoing attention from the Director, Chris Mitchell, and the Associate Director, Marjorie Mead. We continue to seek out rare and original items through various means, including booksellers, auctions, private gifts, and purchases. We also add current materials related to the authors. Of course, books and articles about the authors are being published constantly and must be obtained as soon as available. However, a recent dissertation on George MacDonald's theology, a Disney promotional Happy Meal figure of the White Witch, or a video recording of an interview with a friend of Dorothy Sayers, are all candidates for acquisition as well.

Through preservation, we work to prolong the life of materials so that future generations can see and enjoy them. Preservation is achieved through procedures such as the creation of copies from original manuscripts and letters (for both backup and research use), and maintaining and improving light, temperature, humidity, and security standards in storage locations of our facility, including the basement, the museum, and the reading room. As a result, there is the need to maintain an ongoing balance between preservation and accessibility. We preserve materials so they can be used, but we must also find ways to use them carefully so they are preserved for future readers.

Accessibility, in terms of the archivists' work, entails making the materials available through various methods, both physical and electronic. As acquisitions arrive, they are

“...the relationship between God and man is, in the last resort, expressible only in metaphor.”

—Owen Barfield



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During the month of April, I traveled to the city of Prague in Czechoslovakia where the second Narnian film, *Prince Caspian*, is currently being filmed. The invitation came from Ernie Malik, the director of Unit Publicity for the film. Production actually began in New Zealand in January, but in March the crew moved to Prague to take advantage of the large studios located there.

The first day on-site, I was invited to watch the shooting of the scene of Nikabrik's betrayal inside the Mound at Aslan's How. Aslan's How, one of five very large and highly elaborate sets (obviously they have "spared no expense"), had the feel of a large and very ancient catacomb. Stone images of early Narnian history were etched in the walls surrounding the stone table. Such attention to detail not only in the construction of the sets, but also to costume and makeup, were encouraging to say the least.

What I saw amounts to a very small part of the total project, leaving me wondering what the finished film will look like. However, having been there and talked to many involved with its production, I am in a much better position to address the questions that inevitably will come my way in the months leading up to the movie's May 2008 release. We do not know if *Prince Caspian* will have the overwhelming impact on the Wade Center that its predecessor had, but are pleased that the Narnia stories continue to delight a wide audience.

WITH ALL GOOD WISHES,



Did You Know?

The Wade Center's archival work is further supported by trained volunteers. Darlene Allen is one such volunteer who has been assisting the Wade Center on a regular basis since 1998, when her interest was piqued at Wheaton's Writing and Literature Conference. Darlene works several hours a month at her convenience, and has made steady progress over the last several years on creating a detailed listing of C.S. Lewis's personal library. We are sincerely grateful for Darlene's work, and that of other volunteers. If you are interested in participating in our archival work, contact Heidi Truty at wade@wheaton.edu or 630-752-5908. **W**



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catalogued, labeled, and filed so they are easy to find and use. In this pursuit, our archivists are continually refining old systems as well as designing new ones.

Accessibility also encompasses certain museum-related work. The archival staff manages the original artifacts on display in the museum cases: selecting and researching artifacts, determining their arrangement, composing captions, and creating physical supports for the items in the new display. This work also involves rotating display materials on a regular schedule (to aid preservation) and documenting the content of previous exhibits.

Summarized in so few words, the task of the archivist seems straightforward, but when one begins to understand the sheer bulk of material that is being managed, it becomes clear that this is a complex, time-consuming, and unending task. The work of the archivists and their assistants goes on constantly and inconspicuously, and is foundational to all other areas of the Wade Center's work.

To give you a sense of the scope of our archival staff's projects, here are some examples of tasks that have occupied them in the past year, are nearing completion, or will soon be started:

Original Periodicals Project: Entry of 1200 previously uncatalogued periodicals into a new database, each record containing 22 possible fields. This has taken approximately 1 year of student worker time.

Oral Histories Project: Transfer of over 70 oral history interviews from audio tape or video tape to archival gold standard CDs and DVDs, some requiring transcription (transcription can take 4 to 5 times as long as the recording itself). So far, this has taken approximately 1.5 years of student worker time. Completion of this phase will lead to follow-up projects such as proofing transcriptions, updating transcript binder lists and contents.

Audio-Visual Migration: After the completion of the oral history project, attention will

then turn to approximately 600 recordings from the 1960s through the 1980s on tapes and LP records which will eventually become unreadable as technology changes. We hope to identify those with the greatest needs first and either purchase new versions on DVD or CD, or transfer them ourselves in the same manner we did the oral histories.

Processing of Dorothy L. Sayers Manuscripts: Creation of detailed inventories and descriptions of thousands of original Sayers materials (plays, letters, manuscripts, and other miscellaneous items) purchased from Sotheby's auction house in London in 2000 and 2002,



as well as organizing the materials in acid-free folders and boxes to better preserve them.

Article File Revamp: Quality checking over 17,000 articles and other items in the Wade Center

article file. In the process, we are combining categories in the article file to promote easier access, and are checking individual database records and labeling for accuracy. Around 4 years of staff and student worker involvement have gone into this project so far.

As you can see, these projects involve the organization and care of thousands of items over a span of many years. Consequently, whenever our staff reaches some milestone on any portion of these projects, it is an achievement worth celebrating, because as the archives become more accessible, the Wade Center is strengthened in fulfilling its mission of promoting the seven authors.

Each time a researcher is able to make an important connection from a previously unknown letter, or a young student is able to find up-to-date resources for a school project easily at-hand, or a mystery fan delights in seeing an original Sayers manuscript in the museum, the work of the archivists comes to the forefront. Their ongoing and often unseen work ensures that the Wade Center continues to offer an unique and valuable service to the many people who visit and research here each day. **W**

The Clyde S. Kilby Lifetime Achievement Award

It is the great pleasure of the Wade Center to award Dr. Barbara Reynolds the first-ever Clyde S. Kilby Lifetime Achievement Award. The ceremony took place on June 13 (the birthdate of both Dr. Reynolds and Dorothy L. Sayers) as part of the opening banquet of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society's 2007 Convention at Wheaton College.

This award was created by the Marion E. Wade Center this year to recognize those rare individuals whose contributions to scholarship on one or more of the Wade authors are not only exceptional in quality, reflecting many years of significant achievements in this area, but also have made such noteworthy contributions in a particular Wade-related field that the scholarship is forever changed for the better by their lifetime of work. In the case of Dr. Barbara Reynolds, this award is given in answer to the question: "Where would Dorothy L. Sayers scholarship be today without the efforts of this individual?"

The award comes with a certificate in recognition of this honor and a cash gift of \$2500. The source of this monetary award is the interest from the Clyde S. Kilby Research Grant Endowment which was originally created as a gift of the Wheaton College Class of 1939, and later supplemented by other donations. For more on this special award presentation and on Barbara Reynolds, see our website: www.wheaton.edu/wadecenter/welcome/reynolds_bio.html **W**



Director Chris Mitchell presents the certificate for the Kilby Lifetime Achievement Award to Dr. Barbara Reynolds

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The 2007 Dorothy L. Sayers Convention

The annual conference of the Dorothy L. Sayers Society was co-hosted by the Wade Center and held at Wheaton College, June 13-17. Around 150 people traveled from the U.K. and the U.S. to attend a variety of talks and to use the Wade collection. See lower right where Marjorie Mead (seated) joins researchers in the Reading Room. Many conference sessions were audio-recorded and are available for use in the Wade Center archives. Dramatic presentations included Margaret Goodman's one-woman show "Prothalamion" from *Busman's Honeymoon* (right). Another highlight was Lifeline Theatre's performance of its award-winning stage adaptation of *Gaudy Night* (below). **W**



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