



**“The Beginning of Everything”: A Five-Year Report on the
Colorado State University Water Resources Archive**

Prepared by Patricia J. Rettig
Head Archivist

Water Resources Archive

*A joint effort of the University Libraries and
the Colorado Water Resources Research Institute*



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I. Introduction

In January 2006, Colorado State University President Larry Penley began his speech to the Colorado Water Congress Convention by recognizing the importance of water. He stated:

Another reminder of the importance of water – and especially water policy – to Colorado came toward the end of this past fall, when CSU's Morgan Library opened to the public the papers of Delph Carpenter -- a collection that has been many years in the making and that has enormous significance to the history of water in the West. As you know, Delph Carpenter was the author of the 1922 Colorado River Compact, a landmark agreement in the West that governs a vital natural resource on which 25 million people now depend. In the words of our CSU archivist, Patty Rettig, this agreement is, quite simply, "The beginning of everything."¹

Later in the speech, Penley included Morgan Library's establishment of the Water Resources Archive as one of the ways in which CSU contributes to the improvement of water management in the state. To be included this way, alongside the Colorado Water Resources Research Institute, the Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension, gives testimony to the value the Water Resources Archive has added to the Libraries, CSU and the state, not to mention the research and water communities at large.

The Water Resources Archive serves donors who have materials to donate and researchers who have information needs. It also raises awareness about the importance of the state's water history, improving the reputation of the Libraries and the university at the same time. On this, the five-year anniversary, it is wise to take a look at just what impact the Archive has had, what accomplishments have been achieved, what challenges have been faced, and what the next five years might hold.

II. Origins

As Carpenter's compact idea was part of the beginning of modern water allocation, management and projects, so were his papers part of the beginning of the Water Resources Archive. When they were in need of a home in 1993, no one at CSU could make an offer. With that disappointment and with other water-related collections languishing on campus, the idea of establishing a water archive emerged.

When the Provost's Commission on the Library of the Future allocated insurance funds from the 1997 flood for just that purpose, work could begin. Robert Ward, director of the Colorado Water Resources Research Institute (CWRRI), and James Hansen, history professor in charge of

¹ Penley, Larry Edward. "The Business of Water and the 21st Century Land-Grant University." Speech to 48th Annual Colorado Water Congress Convention, 26 January 2006.
http://president.colostate.edu/index.asp?page=speech_water

the department's Colorado Agricultural Archives (CAA), worked with the Libraries' archivist, John Newman, to begin consolidating water-related collections stored in various places around campus. The quick accumulation of collections attested to the need for such a service.

Formally commenced on July 1, 2001, the Water Resources Archive began with these collections transferred from the CWRRI, the CAA and a few previously existing in the Archive and Special Collections Department. The focus for the Archive's first year was to build a good foundation in terms of getting collections ready for research use, establishing a finding aid template, creating a website and doing some initial outreach.

A three-year "Plan for the Water Resources Archive" was created during the second year of operations. This plan specified the mission of the Archive as "provide access to, promote and preserve the water heritage of Colorado." Key challenges involved marketing, collecting, technology, staffing, collaboration, funding and ongoing operations. The Archive met many of these challenges, though some will remain indefinitely.

III. Facilities

Providing adequate storage and research facilities was key to enabling immediate growth of and comfortable access to the Archive. An annex with state-of-the-art environmental controls was built adjacent to the Libraries' book depository on campus' Lake Street. Designed to hold over 5,700 standard-size records cartons, the Annex was completed in January 2004. It became occupied one month later with the acquisition of the Colorado Agricultural Archive. It is currently 32% full and includes over 350 Water Resources Archive boxes. The remainder are in the Archives' main storage area in Morgan Library.

Fortunately, the Archives' reading room in Morgan Library was able to be remodeled during summer 2004. Along with new carpet and fresh paint, a custom-made reference desk was installed, providing a more welcoming, professional look. Expanded exhibit space was also made available, though funding has yet to come available to furnish custom-made display cases to replace borrowed ones. Most importantly, though, researcher workspace has doubled—from four to eight seats. While the room has yet to reach capacity, researchers have plenty of space to spread out and make themselves at home. The improved space shows a good public face to all Archives visitors.

IV. Collections

Creating the Archive had to do with collecting and preserving historical materials concerning the development of Colorado's water resources, in all aspects. This includes any individual or organization in the state that works in relation to water, no matter where the water is, as well as anyone anywhere working in relation to Colorado's water. As many local engineers serve as

national and international consultants, Archive collections do end up documenting other states as well as many other countries. It has been suggested that the Archive extend its collecting focus beyond “Colorado water” to include water that flows beyond its borders, essentially developing a watershed approach instead of a state approach.

The collections display a diversity of geographic and chronologic coverage. Subject strengths are civil engineering topics, policy and law. Particular subject areas to be strengthened include environmental, recreational and industrial/commercial water uses.

Starting from scratch, the Archive has grown to forty collections. More concretely, that is over 900 boxes (plus drawers and tubes) measuring more than 1,170 linear feet—quickly approaching a quarter mile. Individual collections range in size from one box to over 170 boxes. The Archive averages eight new collections a year, not counting accessions to existing collections.

Though the Archive’s initial aim was to avoid accepting collections faster than they could be processed, that guideline was put to the wayside in the interest of accepting significant donations that might otherwise be lost. The processing backlog currently stands at near 50%, but over half of that is contained in two collections, the Papers of Maurice L. Albertson and an addition to the Papers of Daryl B. Simons. Collections are normally processed to high standards for ultimate preservation of the materials, but the Archive may need to begin using minimal processing standards if the backlog continues to increase.

It should also be noted that having materials donated to the Water Resources Archive positively impacts other parts of the library collections. Often, published materials are removed from water collections as they are rarely archival in nature, but significant quantities of these publications have found homes in Special Collections or University Publications as well as in the circulating stacks.

Many of the newly donated collections (not those from campus sources) have come because others have heard about the Archive and initiated the contact. While that is good, the Archive needs to also actively acquire collections, becoming proactive in establishing contacts and making negotiations, instead of being reactive. This is an area where an advisory board could be of assistance; an acquisition plan would also serve well.

V. Description

Researchers discover the contents of an archive through various descriptions created by archivists and catalogers. The main tool for discovery in archives is the finding aid, a description and inventory of a given collection. The Water Resources Archive has 23 finding aids available, both online and in print. The online ones are cross searchable by keyword, both as a separate resource and integrated with the department’s other finding aids. This electronic

access makes discovery more efficient for both researchers and staff. The finding aids, all encoded using the profession's standard of Encoded Archival Description (EAD) and converted to html and word documents for online and print access, respectively, can be found in a variety of ways. They turn up through general Internet search engines, and they are also harvested by RLG/OCLC for their ArchiveGrid database. They will also be available through CDP's Rocky Mountain Online Archive once that service is released.

The other main way finding aids are discovered is through catalog records available in Sage, Prospector and WorldCat. Each record for a water collection contains a hyperlink directly to the finding aid. In this way, archival materials are integrated with books, journals and other traditional library materials.

For all water collections, brief summaries are made available on the website. Especially important for those collections without finding aids, the summaries provide essential details to help patrons know what is generally available. The Archive has made it procedure to post summaries online as soon as possible after new collections arrive so as not to restrict access to materials that can be used even if not yet processed.

It should be noted that the Water Resources Archive's use of EAD for its finding aids was the first among archival institutions in the state, making the CSU Libraries a recognized and respected leader in that area.

VI. Website and Digitization

The Water Resources Archive created its website in February 2002, though "site" might be an overstatement—it was only three pages. Now, the site has nine core pages, which in turn link to four e-newsletters, 23 finding aids and four digital object "sub-sites" containing numerous additional pages. Though web statistics were not kept from the beginning, the last three years show significantly increasing numbers of visits to the website (see appendix 1). This likely has to do with outreach achievements and continually increasing content.

The Archive began offering digital contents from its collections first through a small virtual exhibit called "Father of the Flume: Ralph Parshall" in January 2005. Though only a few select items were digitized, the virtual exhibit provided interpretive context for them and added unique content to the Internet. This is evidenced by the *Denver Post's* citation of the site.²

Larger scale digitization took place beginning in fall 2003 with the assistance of an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant to the Greater Western Library Alliance to create the Western Waters Digital Library (WWDL). CSU's contribution, locally called the Colorado's Waters Digital Archive and made available in fall 2005, consists of fourteen reports from the Ival Goslin Collection. Containing nearly 3,000 pages, the reports are now e-books which can be

² "Because You Asked." *Denver Post*, 6 April 2006.

accessed around the world by those interested in Colorado's water. Investigation of grants to further the WWDL is ongoing.

The Archive also offers two other virtual exhibits, both created in spring 2006. One is the traveling exhibit "Carpenter and the Compacts" put online as web pages. The other, "Dot Carpenter: The Woman Behind the Man," is more in-depth and features over fifty archival items placed in context with narrative text, captions and family trees, as well as metadata in ContentDM software. Further such exhibits, which help bring the Water Resources Archive to the public in an educational manner, await sufficient resources.

VII. Researchers

No patron statistics were kept during the first two years of the Water Resources Archive, but they are easily remembered since researchers could be counted on one hand for each of those years. In contrast, the Archive has had more than a dozen research contacts for the Delph Carpenter Papers alone in the eight months it has been open.

The department began keeping better patron statistics in 2003, but they are not adequate to measure the full demand on the Water Resources Archive by researchers. One measure that clearly indicates growing usage, however, is the number of boxes used from the Archive per fiscal year. (Note that numbers are approximate, not exact.) In FY04 (year three of the Archive), ten boxes were used. In FY05, the number went up to 44 and more than doubled in FY06 to ninety boxes. The latter number includes usage of the Carpenter Papers. As collections are acquired, finding aids are completed, and outreach continues, the numbers will certainly continue to climb. For better tracking, departmental statistical practices should be improved.

Patrons predominantly find the Archive through Internet searches, reference desk referrals, previous outreach contacts or word-of-mouth suggestions from colleagues. The variety of researchers ranges from CSU history and engineering graduate students to local water lawyers to a person of unknown profession calling from New York. One researcher from Nebraska stayed for a three-day visit, thus helping the local economy.

Subjects of interest are also wide ranging, from maps of area ditches to groundwater data to various river compact issues. Many of the Archive's patrons are beginning to contact the archive as either a starting point for their research or as a place of last resort. In any case, when Water Resources Archive materials do not meet patron needs—which is not unusual—they are always referred to other potential sources. Creating an online database of all Colorado repositories holding water-related documents would be a significant new resource, helpful to researchers and staff alike.

Follow up with patrons is not always achieved, so it is difficult to know how Water Resources Archive materials are ultimately used. Some uses are for personal research, but others do turn

up in more public ways. A photo from the Ralph Parshall Collection was utilized for a Cache la Poudre River Corridor signboard on their river trail as well as their brochure. The Larimer County District Court Map Collection was cited by Rose Laflin in her report on the Poudre River (*Irrigation, Settlement and Change on the Cache la Poudre River*, 2005). Also, Dan Tyler's biography of Delph Carpenter (*Silver Fox of the Rockies: Delphus E. Carpenter and Western Water Compacts*, 2003) relied heavily on those papers, though before they came to the Archive, but his next book (working title: *Love in an Envelope*) will cite the Water Resources Archive as the source of the Carpenter family love letters.

VIII. Outreach

The "coming of age" for the Water Resources Archive was an event which brought together multiple outreach methods for an impressive result. The opening of the Delph Carpenter Papers on November 18, 2005, had approximately 100 attendees—people from across the state with varying interests in the collection. They had been reached by invitation, had seen posters, or had read the page-and-a-half article in the November 12 *Rocky Mountain News*. During the event, they enjoyed presentations by Carpenter biographer Dan Tyler and archivist Patty Rettig. They sampled hors d'oeuvres and viewed a new traveling exhibit about Carpenter and the compacts. They were offered copies of the finding aid to take with them. They also viewed numerous items from the collection on display in the Archives reading room, in the form of both a formal exhibit and a table display. All the stops were pulled for attracting, educating and entertaining this audience.

Some of the success of the Carpenter event was due to the fact of earlier successful outreach about the Archive in general. Archive staff have done a number of presentations at various water and archives conferences and meetings, including ones held by DARCA, the Colorado Water Congress, the Four States Irrigation Council and the Colorado Bar Association, among others. Often at water conferences, one of the Archive's two traveling exhibits is also displayed. Typically, two brochures accompany the display so viewers can walk away with something in their hand. Hundreds of brochures have been distributed over the years.

Some of the ideas for outreach came from research prior to and discussion at a meeting of water and agriculture professionals on November 11, 2004. Very supportive of the Archive, these folks gave some good suggestions on how to improve services to the community.³

Presence at water conferences has been one of the most effective means of outreach, along with articles in the CWRRRI's *Colorado Water* newsletter. Reaching thousands of people across the state, the newsletter is a perfect venue for conveying new information about the Archive or matching the topical focus of the issue. In fact, many people at conferences recognize the

³ For more information, see Rettig, Patricia J. "Planning for the Future of the Water Resources Archive and the Colorado Agricultural Archive: Preliminary Report," 11 November 2004.

archivist—by name or face—from having seen articles in *Colorado Water*. (See appendix 2 for a list of these and other articles.)

To extend beyond the audience of water professionals who receive the CWRRRI newsletter, an e-newsletter was developed by the Water Resources Archive and the Libraries' marketing assistant, Judea Franck. A quarterly publication, *Preserving the Source* has been issued four times, strictly over email (to approx. 2,500 recipients) but posted on the website for any interested person to peruse. Feedback, though heard from only a minute percentage of the recipients, has been positive.

Other outreach efforts have included individual meetings between the archivist and various water organizations or individuals. Originally these types of meetings had a focus on simply informing people of the Archive's existence and making them aware of services available; however, with growing awareness of the Archive, these meetings can now target collecting. The meetings also provided the archivist with wonderful learning opportunities, as do the many conferences, workshops, classes, tours and luncheons she is able to attend.

Archives and Special Collections coordinator Janet Bishop initiated a new method of outreach in summer 2006 by visiting the Ute Water Conservancy District and conducting for them a records management workshop. In helping water institutions understand what records to preserve and how to preserve them, the Water Resources Archive is thus providing another way to save the history of the state's water resources.

Outreach is also conducted on campus. Occasionally, groups and individuals visiting campus are provided with a tour of the Archive. Also, instruction sessions are conducted with various classes—mainly history students—to teach them about archives in general and the Water Resources Archive in particular. More instruction with other departments would be of benefit to campus.

IX. Funding and Fundraisers

Building on the publicity and energy generated by the Carpenter opening and previous successful outreach, the Water Resources Archive held its first fundraising event in January 2006. Inspired by Dave Stewart to base an Archive-focused fundraiser on the Libraries' Tables of Content concept, Water Tables featured twelve table hosts from various water professions and had nearly 100 guests. A successful evening according to attendees, the event started with the viewing of an exhibit on Mrs. Delph Carpenter as well as a table display in the Archives reading room. More people likely circulated through Archives that night than any other night in its history. Decided to be the "first annual" Water Tables, the event raised almost \$8,000.

A very enthusiastic external committee coordinated by Janet Bishop was testimony for the water community's belief in and support of the Archive. While Water Tables generated much

goodwill in addition to dollars, aiming to raise more money with the same amount of effort—contributed by external and internal committees and led by new Director of Development Andrea Lapsley and Janet Bishop—will give even more value to the event in future years.

In 2002, the Libraries' Tables of Content fundraiser benefited the Water Resources Archive, but little profit was made. However, not all monetary donations come as the result of an event. Individuals do make unsolicited donations on occasion. Also, a fundraising campaign, spearheaded by Dan Tyler, was conducted by letter to provide for cleaning equipment, supplies and staffing to remove mold from the Carpenter papers. Exceeding its goal, that campaign raised over \$45,000.

In the three years of funding (FY03-FY06) the Archive has received from temporary insurance funds, the total budget has been just over \$1 million. Nearly half went toward building and furnishing the Archives Annex on Lake Street. The next largest part of the budget was for salaries, with hardware/software, supplies, and miscellaneous rounding out the categories. Having received donations and grant funds, the Archive will continue to operate on those sources as well as receive state funds starting in FY09. Additionally, several grant proposals are pending.

X. Staff

The accomplishments of the Water Resources Archive have been achieved through one continuous staff member, associated professional staff, fluctuating student assistants, and the support of administrators and other Libraries departments. When the Archive began, John Newman was the department head for Archives and Special Collections, so he oversaw many of the start-up activities. He retired in October 2002, just sixteen months into the endeavor, but worked on a transitional, part-time basis for the following two years.

Assistant Dean Carmel Bush provided interim leadership from the time of Mr. Newman's retirement until new department head Janet Bishop began in August 2005. That period of nearly three years was key to the development of the Archive, and Ms. Bush helped make great strides forward. Ms. Bishop competently dove right into Water Tables shortly after her arrival and has contributed to other of the Archive's achievements in her brief time at the helm.

For the daily work of the Archive, Patty Rettig was brought in on a half-time basis as project archivist for the first year, and then made full-time following that, on a temporary faculty appointment. In September 2005, the university allotted a full-time position for the Water Resources Archive, thus ensuring continuous staffing and providing Ms. Rettig a tenure-track faculty position.

Additional professional staffing was provided with a project archivist, Rose Laflin, hired on a six-month appointment in early 2004. Following that was cataloger and archivist Holley Lange's

half-time appointment to the Archives department starting in July 2004. Ms. Lange provides many services for the department, including processing water collections and creating cataloging records.

The department's administrative assistants, first Pat VanDeventer and then Shan Watkins, also provided service for the Archive not only with general department activities such as ordering supplies and supervising students, but also by serving as the front line for fielding reference questions and assisting researchers.

The Water Resources Archive has been fortunate to have had eight student assistants dedicated just to it over the years. One came as an unpaid intern earning class credit, but the rest were paid employees, willing and eager to learn about archival work. Six of the eight were trained to process collections and create finding aids, and two were trained to perform EAD encoding to a greater or lesser extent. Additionally, they have all chipped in for various work activities from endless photocopying to transporting heavy boxes. Other department students also assisted with water activities when there was an extra need.

The work of the Archive could not have been accomplished without the students or most of the other Libraries departments. Preservation Services was absolutely key to the cleaning of the moldy Carpenter documents, in addition to providing their more routine services such as creating specialized storage enclosures. Metadata and Digital Services has not only done much of the digitization of Archive materials but also provides the metadata for most of it. Additionally, a staff member there has been trained to an expert level to assist with EAD encoding. Library Technology Services has helped with the website and its various aspects, especially providing access to and searching of the online finding aids and digital objects. Instruction and Research Services has been a sounding board for many Archive activities and has helped spread the word to its constituents. The Gifts and Exchange department has dealt with a lot of book and journal materials coming in to the Archive but which are better suited for the Libraries' main collections. And, of course, Administrative Services has helped in numerous ways, not the least of which are with personnel matters for staff and students, accounting issues to track and use monetary donations in the proper ways, development to keep donations rolling in, and marketing to spread the Archive's message.

The Water Resources Archive, though seemingly a fairly independent unit of a rather small department, is really a Libraries-wide effort, and credit should be broadly given to Libraries employees for helping in their own specialized ways.

XI. Building on the Beginning

The Water Resources Archive has started strong in its first five years by having an increasing positive impact on the Libraries, the university and the water and research communities at large. By collecting, preserving, making available and promoting the documentation of

Colorado's water history, the Archive has found its niche as the only repository in the state specifically focused on this important collecting area. In the next five years, the Water Resources Archive should become even more widely known as the preeminent repository for Colorado water history.

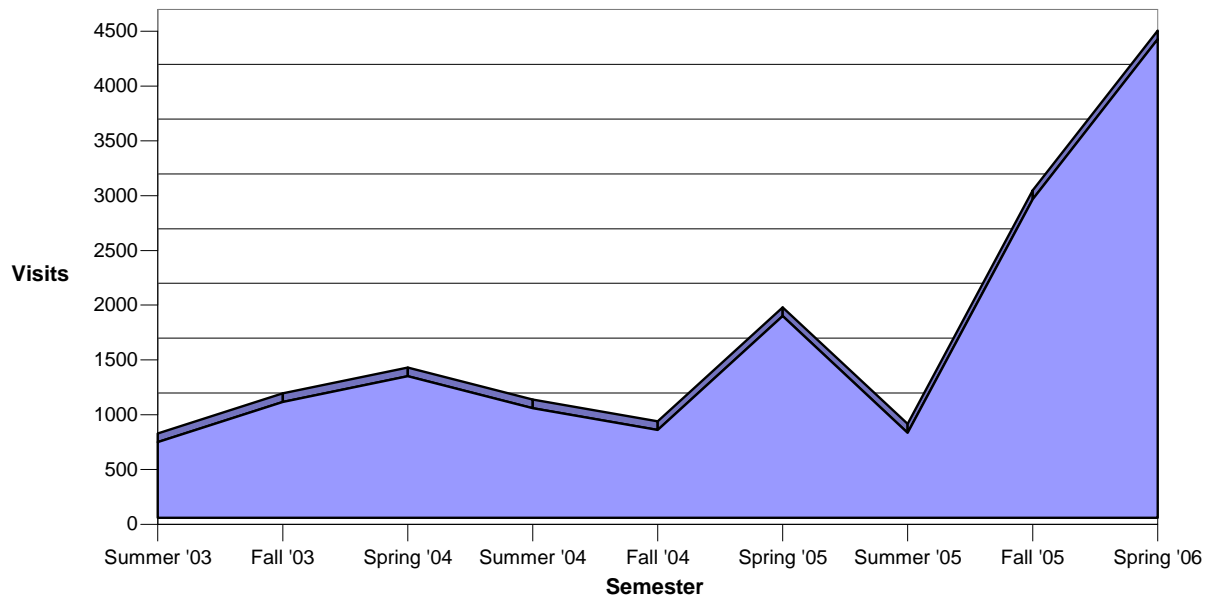
To achieve this goal, some improved strategies would be of benefit. As the Archive has only one main staff person, there are limitations on what can be accomplished. This can be improved through providing ongoing funding for a graduate student, ideally through an assistantship that could be offered through the History Department, thus strengthening the collaboration there.

The imminent creation of an advisory board for the Archive will also help achieve a lot in the next five years. A board can assist with outreach, fundraising and acquisitions. Additionally, creating an acquisition strategy will help the Archive be proactive in that area. Ongoing outreach activities will also help, but additional strategies should be examined, such as how to inform researchers and potential donors in other states.

Finally, the water and research communities overall will benefit from strengthened collaborations with the Water Resources Archive. Working with other repositories locally (the Denver Public Library, Fort Lewis College, etc.) and nationally (the Water Resources Center Archives at Berkeley, the University of Utah, etc.) can help in numerous ways. Collaborating more closely with campus departments (engineering, history, natural resources, etc.) and state water organizations (the Colorado Water Congress, the Colorado Foundation for Water Education, DARCA, etc.) would be fruitful for their constituents and ours. Doing this could also informally illuminate the needs of users. As the Archive is here to serve, it serves the Archive well to know what users want.

Appendix 1

Water Resources Archive Website Usage



Appendix 2

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