Library Holds Past and Future

by Pat MacPherson,
CDSS Director of Education and Publications

My colleague Rowena Roodman and I recently took a road trip to the CDSS Library and Archives to deliver a car full of records and magazines. As soon as I entered the library workroom, I regretted not being able to stay more than a few hours, because it is a fascinating place.

The CDSS Library and Archives are housed at the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Music and Dance at the University of New Hampshire in Durham, created in 1992 to collect and provide access to the University's music collections. The Library reflects a range of the world's music, but the principal focus is on English and American music and dance. And its main purpose is to serve researchers: historians, folklorists, musicians, callers, and dancers—in other words, dear reader, you!

Kate (Kitty) Van Winkle Keller (co-author of *The Playford Ball* and prolific editor of historical dance manuals) was the early mover in getting the CDSS material to such a good home. Through her visits to the early Ralph Page weekends, Kitty met Professor Bill Ross, Head of the Milne Special Collections and Archives at the UNH Library. Bill's predecessor, Robert Reed, had worked with Marianne Taylor and Ted Sannella to bring Ralph Page's mammoth archives to the University in 1986. It was clear to Kitty and Bill that the CDSS collection would fit in well with Ralph's collection. When CDSS moved from New York City in 1987, the library and archives were moved to Kitty's home in Pennsylvania for processing, pending a decision as to where they should eventually be housed. Kitty worked on the collection, sorting archives, identifying duplicates, filling in magazine runs, etc., and around 1990, produced an electronic catalog. By then she had moved to Maryland (and moved the library along with everything else!). In 1993, CDSS's director Brad Foster and the Library Committee gave the official thumbs up and Brad arranged the move. Bill Ross drove down to Kitty's to carry off the whole library, some one hundred book cartons.

Photos courtesy University of New Hampshire, Durham.

For Rowena and me, our visit to the Library and Archives was akin to a pilgrimage. Rowena especially has spent many hours cleaning, processing, and cataloguing new material to add to the collection. Our first order of business was to meet Bill and the archivists, Roland Goodbody and Nancy Mason, and their first order of business was to give us a tour of the library. First we examined the beautiful reading room, and then their workroom, a real "behind-the-scenes" place. It is a large, light-filled space, full of recent deliveries, like ours, work tables, tools to repair books, computers, massive shelving units operated by hand-turned cranks, and carved out of the back corner, space for Roland and Nancy's desks. The work associated with the traditional dance and music collections is only a fraction of their responsibilities. They also are caretakers and guardians of, among many collections, the papers of the New Hampshire poet Donald Hall, a substantial set of books and art on angling, a collection of wonderful pop-up books, currently on display, and the New Hampshire Library of Traditional Jazz.

After a lovely lunch, our guides opened the door to the main storage room, full of fifty-seven feet long, double-sided shelves, standing over six feet high, tightly packed and mechanically operated. You open up a set of shelves, they slide smoothly apart, and you sidle down the row, wanting to open every box and book—Betty White's (not *that* Betty White) paperback on popular dances, Evelyn K. Well's correspondence, the complete

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run of *Sets in Order*, and on and on.

Our far-ranging conversations with Bill, Roland, and Nancy encompassed their hopes of collaboration with the University of Denver which houses the Lloyd Shaw Collection and the papers of Bob Osgood, current archival practices, and how to make the library website more user-friendly, to a discussion about the difficulty of creating archives in the electronic age. Working against budget cuts and short-staffing, they are excited by and dedicated to their work. Before we left, Bill was already making a plan to create a more user-friendly landing page for the collections.

Rowena and I are determined to visit the library again, to delve into the treasures kept on those shelves. I encourage anyone who is planning a visit to the seacoast of New Hampshire to do the same.

The website links are:

Library home page
NH Library of Traditional Music and Dance
CDSS page