After one month on the job I have been struck by the extraordinary level of hospitality and goodwill from many different quarters in the Cache Valley. Certainly the staff of the Merrill-Cazier Library have gone out of their way to make me feel at home, but I have also had the pleasure of meeting a number of Friends at various venues across the Valley. In every instance I have been impressed by the level of deep interest in the library and the intense commitment to the success of the library and the university. Such Friends are a great asset to the library and I look forward to working with all of you.

I have been spending my time in meeting people and listening to them. I am taking the next few months to learn about the staff, the library and the university. Within the library I’m taking each person to lunch to learn all that I can. I’d be pleased to hear what you have to say as well, and perhaps we could have lunch too!

We all recognize that the Merrill-Cazier Library is an exceptional facility that in many ways stands as a beacon of the centrality of the library in the university. This is due in no small part to my predecessor, Linda Wolcott, whose legacy is visible to us every day. What is perhaps less visible, but even more important, is the quality of our staff. Not only is there a fundamental service commitment on the part of staff in the library, but what is most telling is that almost everyone enjoys working in the library. There is a real esprit de corps here. So with good support from the university administration and faculty, a state-of-the-art building, and a superb staff, we are well positioned to grapple with the challenges and transformations of a very uncertain but exciting future.

Now what about this uncertain future? It is characterized by a relentless shift toward digital content and access. As a historian of the book (in all its forms) I strongly believe that this is a context we must understand and accept. We may not like it, but we cannot ignore it, and if we are to succeed we must understand it. This is a transformation that affects all of society, not just the library. There is a general inclination today to equate the flood of information available through the Internet with the traditional role of the library as a provider of information. We often hear the assertion that the library is less relevant because of the Internet. In point of fact, the academic library at a research-intensive university such as USU is even more central to the institutional mission than ever before. The library will continue to provide traditional print-based collections, original and unique special research collections, and at the same time provide access to ever more high-quality research electronic databases and online journal collections.

The Future, Continued on Page 2...
The library also acts as a filter for the mass of undifferentiated information that floods in through the Internet, and librarians act as navigators in this sea of data to assist students, faculty, and researchers in finding reliable information critical to their success in learning, teaching and research. As the university (and society at large) is being transformed by technology, the library is increasingly critical to the success of the university. Librarians at USU are working directly with instructors to enable students to achieve a significant level of information literacy, a fundamental skill in today’s information-based society. Librarians at USU are teaming up with researchers to help manage the information overload and ensure researchers get the best information available for their projects. At USU we have one of the most advanced high-tech libraries in the country in the Merrill-Cazier Library, but we must not lose sight of the virtual library that we make available to the USU community on student laptops, in distance education classrooms, in research laboratories, and on computers everywhere. Technology has transformed the library and enabled it to become even more of an integral and essential part of the academic mission of the university.

This is an exciting time for universities and libraries. It is a time when the transformed library is truly the intellectual center of the university. I am honored to have been named Dean of Libraries at USU, and I look forward to engaging with all our Friends as we work to ensure that USU has the best library possible. We have a great deal of work to do in a time of considerable uncertainty, but I invite you to join me and share in the challenge.

— Richard W. Clement
Dean of Libraries

Thanks to the photograph, Utah State’s Special Collections and Archives and the Merrill-Cazier Library are in the spotlight, drawing attention to the resources that are not only available to Diane Keaton, but to everyone, according to Daniel Davis, photograph curator for Special Collections and Archives. Davis was contacted by an advertising executive at Conde Nast with a request to use the “Hanging Rock” photo.

“Someone from the organization saw the photo — probably online — and made the request. We scanned the image and sent it. Anyone can make a request like this.”

And while Conde Nast is a giant in the publishing world, Davis makes an important point — anyone can take advantage of the rich resources offered by Special Collections and Archives.

Continued ➤
“I get 20-25 requests a month,” Davis said. “They come in the form of a simple question — do you have a photo of such and such.”

The photograph requested by Conde Nast comes from a work originally published in 1870 by Ferdinand Vandeveer Hayden — Sun Pictures of Rocky Mountain Scenery, with a Description of the Geographical and Geological Features, and some Account of the Resources of the Great West; Containing Thirty Photographic Views Along the Line of the Pacific Rail Road, from Omaha to Sacramento. Whew! The title’s almost as long as the book. Its 30 albumen photographs are by Andrew Joseph Russell illustrating geological and man-made structures in Wyoming, Utah and California.

“The original glass-plate negative of that image is held at the Oakland Museum of California,” Davis said. “The negative is 10 x 13 inches in size, and the detail with a negative that size is truly stunning. This is a very interesting photograph that includes a view of Pulpit Rock. It is said that Brigham Young gave a sermon from the rock.”

The photograph also provides important documentation of a landmark that no longer exists, Davis points out. Pulpit Rock is gone. It was removed during road construction in the canyon.

Davis knows his stuff and can talk about any number of photographs in Special Collections and Archives. He and other staff in the division provide valuable advice and direction to patrons.

Brad Cole, Associate Dean for Special Collections and Archives, speaks highly of the staff, noting that all have advanced degrees — primarily in the humanities — and years of experience in their areas of curatorial expertise.

“We are lucky to have a dedicated, talented staff that loves what it does and enjoys passing its enthusiasm along to our patrons,” Cole said. “Our primary goal is to link users with one-of-a-kind primary source material.”

USU’s Special Collections and Archives collects and preserves the university’s special collections materials while making them available to everyone.

“Researchers often need unique primary source materials,” Cole said. “Freshmen English students might need a source document for a composition assignment. Grad students working on a thesis or dissertation need source materials. Family historians take advantage of our resources as well.”

What items are housed in Special Collections and Archives? Unique items. Fragile items. Old items and rare items. All are housed in a secure, monitored, closed-stack environment and include manuscripts, photographs, rare books and serials, book arts and art works on paper. The site also houses the permanent, historical records of the university.

The photo area hosts a number of fully digitized collections including the one selected for the promotion of the Nature series. There are 11 fully-digitized collections with 25 partially-digitized. Some include only a handful of images, while others have hundreds, including that of legendary USU Art Department faculty member H. Reuben Reynolds that holds upwards of 236 images, many of the USU campus and Cache Valley. The Compton Studio Collection includes 554 images of regional historical importance.

“Today’s patrons are more tech savvy than only five or six years ago,” Davis said. “Their expectations have gone up considerably. To meet those expectations, we’re working hard to provide more digital copies of photographs.”

Davis has fielded requests from around the world and from all 50 states. There are more than 90,000 images individually described in registers available on the Web and searchable through a Google-based search engine on the Special Collections site. It is no wonder people around the world find the USU-based photos.

“Recently, a Polish scholar who publishes a journal about American Indians contacted me,” Davis said. “He works in a factory by day and publishes the journal out of his home at night. We photocopied everything we had of Shoshone Indians in Utah, Idaho and Wyoming. He was ecstatic to receive the photocopies and it only cost about $30.”

As Davis said, anyone can access the resources at Special Collections and Archives — Diane Keaton, Polish scholars, anyone.

Special Collections and Archives is a department in the Merrill-Cazier Library and is located on the ground floor of the facility. More information can be found at its Web site: http://library.usu.edu/specol/

— Patrick Williams
Senior Writer/Utah State Today Editor
Public Relations and Marketing
John Mark Sorensen passed away in Salt Lake City on June 21, 2008. He was 74 years old. John Mark was the first Humanities and Arts Librarian at the Merrill Library, serving the USU community from 1965 to 1981.

John Mark was a pioneer in university library service during a period when the concept of an open stack divided not by a classification system, but by subject specialist, was in vogue. The theory was that patrons would be best served by a subject specialist housed within this subject centered collection. As Head of the Humanities and Arts Division, John Mark was this scholar in residence. As a poet and a serious student of literature and art, he served both the faculty and students at a very high professional level.

Although the divisional organization in university libraries has given way to central reference and electronic access to information, John Mark’s pioneering efforts continue as a lasting legacy. Certainly this is so in two critical areas of Library Service. The selection of new materials during these critical years was outstanding and is represented in the core of our present day holdings in key areas of literature. The second area is one easily overlooked, but appreciated in the years that followed John Mark’s tenure at USU: the key staff members he mentored during those years became mainstays of our collection development effort for many years that followed.

In thinking of John Mark Sorensen, we remember an idealist, peace loving, romanticist – even as we recall a man rightfully proud of his military service in the U.S. Air Force. We remember a poet, whose writings and conversation focused on his loves and concerns: his daughters, Utah State University, Cache Valley, his roots in family and Mendon. We remember students who viewed him as their co-author on reports and theses, and the many who thanked him for his passionate involvement in support of their learning. We remember his gentle, kind manner, his willingness to help, and his easy acceptance of others. We remember the times he brought out his guitar and sang favorite songs while dressed up in boots, plaid shirt and a wide-brimmed hat that never seemed to have the bend in the pattern of a Stetson.

It is our wish – we who knew and loved John Mark – that our memories and Mark’s contributions not be forgotten. He should be remembered as a part of the history of the Merrill Library and Utah State University.

— Max Peterson (Retired)
Former Director, USU Libraries
Special Collections Welcomes New Intern

Emily Gurr, a recent graduate in history from BYU-Idaho and current Utah State University history graduate student, has become the first Special Collections and Archives graduate intern. For the past year she worked as a temporary archivist for the Utah State Archives in the processing of the Judicial Records Preservation and Access Project. This internship is being supported by funding from the N.E. Munk Family endowment and by a generous donation from USU’s Agricultural Economics Department. This funding comes from an endowment established by former USU Board of Trustee member and President of the Utah Cooperative Association (UCA), W.B. Robins. Emily will process collections related to the cooperative movement in Utah, including papers of W.B. Robins and W. Preston Thomas. Emily will also examine other collections associated with the University’s long relationship with Cooperatives including the papers of Joseph A. Geddes, papers of Gary B. Hansen, and records of the Utah Agricultural Experiment Station and the Utah Cooperative Extension Service. Finally, Emily will work with the Digital Library to create a digital collection about Utah Cooperatives.

Welcome aboard Emily! Anyone interested in contributing to the Special Collections and Archives internship endowment fund should contact Brad Cole at 435-797-8268.

Last Chance to Change Course

Bear River: Last Chance to Change Course will be on view in the foyer and lower floor galleries of Merrill-Cazier Library from 22 September through 2 November. Organized by the Utah Museum of Natural History, the exhibition’s 39 photographs were taken by Craig Denton, a University of Utah communications professor, documentarian, photographer and author. His recent book of the same name was published in 2007 by Utah State University Press.

The Bear River is one of the longest rivers in America never to reach the ocean. Its 500-mile journey begins in northern Utah's Uinta Mountains, hugs the border with southwestern Wyoming, loops through southeastern Idaho, and heads back to Utah where it empties into the Great Salt Lake west of Brigham City. Denton's photographs document the Bear River as he follows its sometimes rugged, sometimes lazy course.

With camera in hand, Denton recorded the dynamic hydrology and unique morphology that still ties the river to ancient Lake Bonneville. "I've tried to capture a glimpse of the complex, diverse ecology that the river nurtures in less developed places. I've situated my camera at points along the Bear's course where important historical moments in the development of the West took place. I've also chronicled the stories of the stakeholders who rely on the river and who increasingly place more demands upon it."
The New Information Commons in the Merrill-Cazier Library has been an invaluable asset to Utah State University. The phrase, “And with all thy getting, get understanding,” welcomes all who pass through its doors. The first floor near the entrance comprises the Information Commons and was carefully designed to cater to the needs of all the students in terms of aesthetics and functionality. Appropriately titled, it is a headquarters for information, staffed with reference librarians and computer lab consultants, working together to help students with any questions they may have. It truly is a common area, open and flooded with natural lighting in order to facilitate the interaction between students and teachers alike.

To accommodate the rapidly expanding technology and the changing nature of how we do research, the Information Commons is equipped with 150 university computers.

In order to remain true to the “commons” environment, computer access differs substantially from that of other lab on campus. The open area allows the students to casually wander in and out quickly and quietly. Only a log-in screen, requiring a personal ID and password, verifies that the user is indeed a student. During the 2007-2008 school year, the Information Commons experienced a very high volume of traffic between 8 AM to 3 PM. Nearly twice as many “log-ins” as there are machines have been recorded in a single hour. For the quick visitor only desiring to check their email, use the internet or look up a book, the Information Commons supplies several Kiosk stations and a row of open-access computers.

Many group rooms scattered throughout the area are available for reservation. These give the students control over their study environment and provide the adequate privacy to meet in a group setting, exchange ideas, and work on projects without disturbing the concentration of others around them.

The Assistive Technology Learning Center (ATLC) is available for qualified persons with disabilities, providing training and equal access to the educational and technological resources available at Utah State. Some technology that is available at the ATLC includes: screen readers, voice recognition software and the system to provide enlarged text.

The Information Commons is an extremely popular location among students. Located at the heart of campus, it has the resources and the atmosphere to provide students with everything they need, whether it be a place to escape and study, do research, socialize or just take a nap and relax.

— Gary Egbert, Manager Classroom & Lab Computer Services
In 2007, Utah State University’s Special Collections & Archives conducted the Latino/Latina Voices Project, an oral history effort to add the underrepresented voices of Cache Valley’s Latino/communities to USU’s repository. The Project was very successful; we gathered 45 oral histories, exceeding our goal of 40. All 45 interviews are transcribed and six translated from Spanish to English with more translation planned for the fall of 2008. The collection can be accessed through our digital library at http://digital.lib.usu.edu/latino.php and in physical form in Special Collections.

While reviewing all the oral histories, Ellie Mendez, Assistant Project Director, noted several reoccurring themes: social/political (immigration), family, work and community. On 28 September, USU Library will host a Symposium for LVP participants toward community analysis. The idea of analyzing the experiences shared by the LVP participants and those that they live amongst is necessary in order to lay the capstone on the project. Using the themes as our lead, we will break into four groups with USU professors Lucy Delgadillo, Eduardo Ortiz, J.P Spicer-Escalante, and Maria Luisa Spicer-Escalante as moderators, to discuss each theme and work toward short essays on each of the symposium themes for inclusion in the LVP collections. As well, we hope to host a blog on the LVP digital site to continue the dialog. The Symposium is sponsored by the Merrill-Cazier Library, the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences and the Mountain West Center for Regional Studies.

— Randy Williams, Fife Folklore Archives Curator
One Night Only!

Thursday, 23 October, at 7:00 p.m.
Friends Fall Lecture & Special Book Sale

Dean Richard Clement will speak on
“The Transformation of the Book, the Library, the University (and Everything Else, too).”

Looking back to the long history of books & written communication, Dean Clement will attempt to use that context to peer into the digital future as it directly relates to Merrill-Cazier Library, USU, and society at large.

Book Sale Will Follow Lecture

At the Merrill-Cazier Library