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## Partnering with the Post Office: Southwest Missouri State University Libraries' Advantageous Relationship

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# Partnering with the post office

## Southwest Missouri State University Libraries' advantageous relationship

by Karen L. Horny

**O**n May 10, 2000, Southwest Missouri State University Libraries (SMSU) held a celebration of the Meyer Library expansion and renovation project while honoring the Library of Congress (LC) bicentennial through its commemorative stamp. This was yet another event in a long-standing relationship far beyond routine mail services between Meyer Library and the Springfield Post Office.

The first link was established through the Ozarks Labor Union Archives (OLUA), founded by adjunct faculty member Neal Moore and economics professor David Lages, and acquired from the Economics Department by the library in the 1995–96 academic year. American Postal Workers Union (APWU) Local 888, already a major donor to the collections, was inspired to set up an endowment fund for OLUA.

A \$5,000 donation established the endowment in November 1995, and APWU's continued donations, including the most recent \$1,000 gift (January 26, 2001) have increased the fund to more than \$16,800. The APWU

connection also resulted in the library hosting a marvelous exhibit of documents and memorabilia on the history of the letter carrier as part Missouri's annual celebration of Labor History Month.

As OLUA's outreach program developed, the postal workers indicated they would like to sponsor a biennial paper prize competition to encourage the study of labor history

by awarding \$200 for the best SMSU undergraduate or graduate research paper about organized labor. The most recent winner, graduate student Sandy Peters, authored "Death by Demographics: The Defeat of the 1978 Missouri Right-to-Work Amendment." The

prize was presented at Springfield's Labor Day Picnic, September 4, 2000, attended by some 5,000 people.

### Planning for a Second-Day Issue celebration

The most recent event in partnership with the post office was the LC Commemorative Stamp Second-Day Issue celebration. This



The LC bicentennial stamp with the SMSU Libraries seal.



### About the author

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celebration came to fruition with the help of a wonderful planning kit furnished by Kathy Woodrell, LC's project manager for the Commemorative Stamp Second-Day Issue, Bicentennial Program Office. The kit was filled with detailed information about planning such an event and emphasized the need to get an early start in working with the local postal services.

The LC First-Day Issue took place on April 24, 2000, and was followed by a one-month period in which Second-Day Issues could be scheduled. Several months' lead time was required, because both an envelope "cachet" picture and a special cancellation needed to be designed, approved, and actually produced before the event took place.

The substantial time required to set up the celebration was undoubtedly a major factor in determining that SMSU was the only Missouri sponsor of a Second-Day Issue for the LC stamp.

SMSU was particularly interested in organizing an LC bicentennial stamp event not only in support of LC and our campus building project, but also because of the university's statewide mission in public affairs education and the libraries' participation in two of LC's Local Legacies projects.

SMSU Music Cataloger Drew Beisswenger prepared a set of audiovideo materials featuring the Ozarks' musical heritage represented by local fiddler Bob Holt. Allison Level, head of reference, worked with Tamara Jahnke, head of the chemistry department, to document the emphasis on science education in Southwestern Missouri, with a particular focus on interesting young women in pursuing careers in science.

Guidelines were provided in the LC planning kit about the size and content of the "cachet" cover design and special can-

cellation. The design developed by SMSU Libraries used a number 10 envelope instead of the frequently chosen, smaller number 6 3/4. The picture is the architect's rendering of the Meyer Library complex with the addition now under construction. Although the design fit much better on the number 10 envelope, it meant that an even larger envelope had to be used to mail the covers to persons unable to attend the actual issue. The libraries' Media Services Graphic Designer, Jeanne Stephens, did the layout for the cachet along with the special cancellation design.

Springfield Postmaster Robert Roberts was enthusiastic about the Second-Day Issue project and supported Wanda Sillyman, supervisor of the university's postal substation, in making arrangements and providing a philatelic clerk to do the custom cancellations between 10

a.m. and 1 p.m. on the day of the celebration. A number of envelopes were actually stamped and cancelled before the ceremony so that the ink would be dry.

## The stamp

The LC bicentennial stamp itself is a very striking view of the golden interior of the dome of LC's Main Reading Room. The unseen painting within the circle or "eye" of the dome is the image of a woman representing human understanding. As LC has announced, this logo and theme symbolize the bicentennial goal of stimulating creativity and ensuring a free society through the greater use of libraries everywhere. Ethel Kessler, known for her design of the breast cancer stamp, designed the stamp.

## The Missouri celebration

SMSU obtained copies of the poster replica of the stamp and had them laminated



Neal Moore (co-founder of Ozarks Labor Union Archives) and Karen Horny receiving latest contribution to Postal Workers Endowment from APWU President Bob Olson.

for display at the Meyer Library and the university postal substation. We also were able to acquire an LC first-day cover to frame with our second-day cover. The university's news service assisted in issuing a press release, which generated considerable media coverage, including both print and television. Invitations were sent to donors who had contributed to the Meyer Library Addition and Renovation Capital Campaign and to state and local library leaders.

After the event, covers were mailed as tokens of thanks to Missouri government leaders, including all legislators from the university's 24-county primary service area, in appreciation for their support in the state's budget process that funded the major portion of the building project. Each of the 20 prime building contractors was also given a cover in recognition of his or her work on the project.

A ceremony at 10 a.m. marking the official Second-Day Issue was well attended and festive, with a cake frosted in the cancellation design. Roberts offered remarks on the history of the Library of Congress

and the many reasons LC was being honored by the special stamp. He then indicated that it was customary for the postmaster and the head of the sponsoring organization (i.e., SMSU's dean of library services) to autograph the envelopes for collectors at the official ceremony. Our hands were cramped from all the signing by the end of the morning's celebration! A local television station filmed the event and ran a very nice story the next day.

We learned from Roberts that collectors would be continuing to request covers after the event, so Meyer Library set aside some 500 covers to make available for the nominal sum of \$2 each (for the stamp itself, envelope "cachet" with special cancellation, and handling).

The experience of working with our local postal personnel on ceremonial events, educational activities, and collection endeavors continues to be highly productive and exceptionally pleasant. The post office, the APWU, the university, and SMSU Libraries all benefit from much positive publicity and gain the satisfaction of successfully meeting their shared goals. ■

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