

## There's No Place Like Home: A History of the Halls of Residence Libraries at Indiana University, Bloomington

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The Halls of Residence Libraries (HRL) at Indiana University are considered by many as the finest in the nation. They were built by students, funded with profits generated from vending machines and blessed by their foresighted founders. From their unique inception to the newest success, the dormitory libraries of IU have enjoyed fifty years of positive student relationships.

### In the beginning

It was early 1940 when Dr. Herman B. Wells and the Director of the Halls of Residence, Mrs. Alice Nelson, each made trips to the Ivy League to examine the dorm libraries at Harvard and Yale. They returned to Bloomington convinced that the students of IU would benefit from a similar setup.<sup>1</sup> In a recent oral interview, Chancellor Wells recalled

how he used to say "... if something was good enough for Yale or Harvard or Princeton, it might be good enough for us."

"We had the belief that there was a positive educational advantage to group living," Dr. Wells remembered. "We wanted to realize the educational potential of group living and make the Halls of Residence a real part of the educational experience for students. We thought the basic reference sources should be available in every residence hall... good dictionaries, good encyclopedias, good atlases... the basic things and as much more as could be had."<sup>2</sup>

Dr. Wells and his staff knew that they wanted libraries in the halls, but were a little unsure of how to support them. They were also unsure if they wanted vending machines in the dorms, but during a Halls of Residence

Committee meeting on September 9, 1940, Mr. Harold W. Jordan suggested that they take a percentage of the potential vending machine profits and use it to purchase books for new dormitory libraries. A month later the committee voted the idea to a trial basis and decided to channel the profits to the newly formed book and art funds. Profits from the new candy, cigarette and Coca-Cola machines reached \$263.53 by the end of October and continued to grow.

The first library was in the Men's Residence Center (MRC), known today as the Collins Living Learning Center. A few bookshelves were installed in a room originally used as a lounge and the business of developing a library had begun. In December of 1940, Dr. Wells appointed two committees of carefully selected faculty members to help the students with their selection of materials.<sup>3</sup> While these two committees were gradually deciding on when they could first meet, the student library committee of MRC was busy deciding which books should be the first to occupy the shelves. The student committee quickly met and approved the original list of books for purchase.

By January 1, 1941, the vending machine profits had reached \$505.05

(even though the peanut machine at Forest had only provided three cents in December, the cigarettes and cokes were starting to bring in big bucks). The list of books the students put together was sent to the bookstore that day, two weeks before the faculty committees first met. A few of the titles on this original list were *Birds of America*, *Encyclopedia of Art*, *Physics Made Easy*, *Book of Oriental Literature*, *Nine Plays*, *Origin of Species*, and *War and Peace*. While several of the titles on the original list were of a lighter variety, it certainly appears that the students were careful in selection and interested in building a balanced collection.

When the two committees first met on January 15, 1941, they promptly decided that the libraries should not be set up simply as reference rooms for various university courses. It was the general opinion that if all of the materials were of this type, the students wouldn't use the library. The committee did want to have the basic reference sources like dictionaries and almanacs available, as well as some of the classics. However, they were more interested in a "good" type of leisure-time reading, as they felt this would "do much to develop the student's desire to know good books."<sup>4</sup>



Forest Library 1963

By February of 1941, seventy-five books and a set of *Encyclopedia Americana* had been acquired (even though the original approval was for *Britannica*). A “grand opening” was certainly in order and was scheduled for February 11, 1941. Faculty and students gathered to enjoy tea and witness the arrival of the new books, which were placed on the shelves in alphabetical order and circulated on the honor system. Later that year, a

second library was opened in the Women’s Residence Center.

This very promising beginning was soon interrupted by World War II. The MRC was converted to accommodate the Armed Forces and the library materials were moved to the Women’s Residence Center library (with the understanding that all lost materials would be replaced by the women). The concern over lost materials may have resulted from losing almost twenty

percent of the small collection in a previous move within the Men's Residence Center. For reasons not identified, the incident report stated that the loss, incurred during the move to the lower lounge of West Hall, was "thought to be unavoidable."

A side effect of the war that was unavoidable was the decline of the vending machine revenue indirectly caused by the rationing of sugar. Coca-Cola was in such limited supply that the Halls of Residence approached the local milk company about the possibility of supplying milk vending machines. They were turned down, of course, because there wasn't exactly a surplus of milk either.

### Expansion

It wasn't long before the Halls of Residence Committee agreed to develop the collection in other formats. The Student's Art Council, partly responsible for steering the evolution of the libraries, was now pushing for the inclusion of music. Of course, just like the books, the music was going to require careful review by a qualified faculty member before any purchases could be made. The IU Band Director, Mr. Gerald H. Doty, was chosen to chair the Halls of Residence Music Committee and informed the MRC Headmaster that "the committee,

which was set up largely to insure wise expenditure of the money, will approve anything which seems to be of permanent value." Doty added, "this would eliminate all popular music from purchases from this fund."<sup>5</sup> This idea didn't last.

Approval for movies came soon after and a new account was set up with \$700.00. This too was subject to early control, as the Halls of Residence Committee gave special attention to insure that the films would be shown in "closed programs" and would be "of an educational nature and not for recreational type of entertainment."

At the close of the war, construction plans for new residence centers were swiftly underway. Dr. Wells made sure that there were plans to include space for a library in each new dormitory. The first HRL structured into a new hall was at Joseph A. Wright Quadrangle in 1949. This was a beautiful, state of the art dorm library with built-in shelving and leather lounge furniture. The University Library also became involved at this time when they voted to help establish the initial collection by matching the funds of the Student's Art Council. The Main Library not only provided \$2,996.20, but also helped with the selection and ordering of materials.

Mr. E.L. Craig, Reference Librarian, acted as the chief consultant for the selection of standard literature and reference materials.

The Director of the IU Libraries at the time, Dr. Robert A. Miller, suggested that the libraries should be supervised by trained personnel. This idea was unfortunately rejected and resulted in many years of mis-direction. There was no centralization, great losses of materials and generally erratic growth. This led to the eventual withdrawal of the Main Library's involvement and funding. The funding wasn't a problem at the time, as the vending profits were reaching the tens of thousands of dollars, but it would one day prove to be a hardship.

While the students at Wright Quad were enjoying their wonderful new library, the students at Rogers Center were not so thrilled. The Rogers Library, located in a basement which periodically flooded, was not opened in 1950 because the physical character of the library was said to be "utterly repulsive." Letters to the Arts Council Coordinator explained that "the books and records, haphazardly strewn over the shelves, desk, table, chairs, and floor are covered with a repulsive film of dirt." The Black-widow spiders found there caused some alarm as

well. A letter to Dave Robinson, Rogers Center Head Counselor, said "the black-widow spiders love the dungeon atmosphere." Another letter stated "Janitors and maids avoid the Hell-hole as if it contained a fearful and awesome virus," and went on to describe the "psychological repulsion of working there."<sup>6</sup>

Things did get better for HRL before they got worse again. In 1954, Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey gave 500 records of classical music from his personal collection to the Men's Quad Library. Many of these were considered collector's items and even though they were the "old" 78-rpm discs, they were in quality condition. This was because of the "meticulous care Dr. Kinsey gave his collection." The April 25, 1955 Halls Echo reported, "He used only cactus needles in his phonograph." It was decided that these records should not circulate and "upon approval of the Electronics and Music departments, a high fidelity phonograph was installed" <sup>7</sup>(with a diamond needle no less).

In 1956, the Halls of Residence Committee approved the motion to rename the Men's Quad Library after the late Dr. Kinsey. It was felt that "in appreciation of his love for the arts and the betterment of the lives of students at Indiana University" the

library should be renamed the Alfred C. Kinsey Memorial Library. The Indiana University Names Committee had other ideas for Dr. Kinsey's memorial and disapproved the motion even though it was understood that "such recognition would not preclude further and greater recognition of this outstanding and world renowned faculty member's valuable contribution to science and the university."<sup>8</sup>

During the next few years the system continually expanded, but not in a systematic fashion. The authority shifted from the Halls of Residence to the Graduate School and later to the Dean of Students, making budgeting and bookkeeping nearly impossible. Significant changes were necessary.

### **The Pratt Years**

On September 3, 1959, the Dean of Undergraduate Development, Samuel Braden, appointed Barbara Pratt on a half-time, ten month basis as the first professionally trained HRL Librarian. The reorganization had begun. Mrs. Pratt wasted no time surveying the situation and initiating change. Inventories were performed and a union catalog was quickly developed. By this time there were five libraries and a system-wide collection totaling approximately 18,000 volumes.

Mrs. Pratt immediately began plans

for further expansion. She was soon reappointed on a full-time basis and a second professional was hired in 1963. The HRL office was relocated that year to the Main Library and moved again when the new Main Library opened in 1968. During this time, six new HRL libraries were established.

Mrs. Pratt was practically buying a library a year. "We saw a basic Rock 'n Roll collection listed in one of the library journals and we bought the whole thing for each library," remembered Doris Koch, long-time assistant to Mrs. Pratt. "We sort of agonized over whether to buy eight-tracks or cassettes... and we chose the cassettes." (Good choice!)

"We had quite a bit of money those days," said Mrs. Koch. "There were a tremendous amount of books all over the floor. They were really coming in at a terrific rate."<sup>9</sup> At this time HRL was purchasing over 6,000 books per year and the patron count was approaching 100,000 per year, but difficulties were approaching.

In 1971, vending machine revenue was anticipated at \$54,000. It actually reached only \$21,748 and later fell to around \$16,000. The dorm room refrigerator was taking it's toll. Mrs. Pratt, apparently unaware of the Halls of Residence Committee decision

to allow low-wattage refrigerators in dorm rooms, questioned whether or not HRL was getting its total share of the vending commission."<sup>10</sup> They were, and HRL was now running on a deficit.

Dr. Cecil Byrd, Assistant Director of the University Libraries at that time, wrote to the administration, "If the Halls libraries are to be continued (in my opinion they are educationally and politically necessary), a new source for acquisition funds must be tapped."<sup>11</sup> His idea of using fine money from the IU Libraries was rejected, but the HRL staffing and funding mechanisms were transferred to the IU Libraries in 1974. This helped, but it was not nearly enough.

A much needed student activity fee was finally approved after five years of battling and the future was once again encouraging. It was actually approved several times by the students and rejected each time by the Board of Trustees. The \$3.00 increase would go directly to the materials budget and be returned to the students in the form of books and music. HRL has enjoyed continued growth and support since then and is still considered a highly successful operation.

#### What's New?

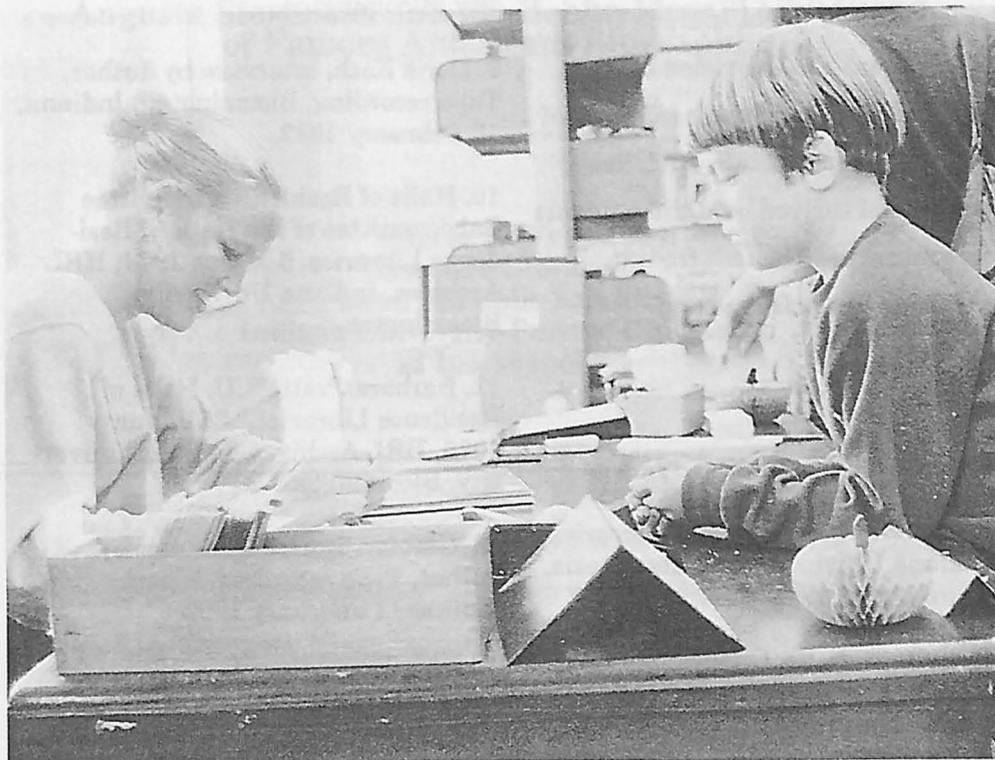
The most recent success for HRL

was the opening of the new Family Housing Library. This is a unique endeavor, serving not only students, but their spouses and children as well. Opened in September of 1991, the Family Housing Library has already proved to be wildly successful.

"We always thought it was a natural extension. . . All of the other centers had libraries," said Carolyn Tynan, HRL Coordinator and UGLS Assistant Librarian. "We're helping develop another group of library users... the children. There are many that can't easily get to the public library."

The next major accomplishment for HRL will be to get the collection represented in the university's online catalog, IO. "The main thing we need to do is get in the online catalog. We have a lot of good materials, especially books, that would circulate heavily if people knew we had them," said Carolyn Tynan. "A lot of the current topics often chosen for papers are covered thoroughly in the Halls. With the money being tight, the Undergraduate Library may have one copy of a book. HRL may have another copy or two, but they won't find it on IO."<sup>12</sup>

"Money being tight" is an all too familiar situation for libraries and one that has always demanded HRL to



### The New Family Housing Library (Opening Day)

prove its worth within the system. Like many other institutions, Indiana University is currently experiencing constraints and is looking for areas of relief. Once again, HRL is in a position where it must successfully defend its legitimacy or face a tragic extinction.

There are now twelve libraries in the system, each one equipped with IO stations (IU's online catalog for books and periodicals) and InfoTrac CD-ROM terminals. A combined collection of over 30,000 volumes

includes best-sellers, reference sources and nonfiction covering most of the hot topics. There are over 2,000 video cassettes system-wide and huge collections of audio cassettes and compact discs. Each library subscribes to numerous periodicals and major newspapers and is operated entirely by students. Since 1969, the individual libraries have been supervised by graduate assistants from IU's School of Library and Information Science.

It has been an interesting and

rewarding fifty years for the Halls of Residence Libraries at Indiana University. Thanks to the vision of Dr. Herman B Wells and the hard work of many students and staff, HRL has survived and thrived, and the students have continued to benefit from it. Here's to the next fifty years!

#### NOTES

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3. Minutes of the Meeting of the Halls of Residence Committee, 5 December 1940, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
4. Halls of Residence Libraries Committee Report, 15 January 1941, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
5. Gerald H. Doty, to Robert Irrmann, 21 June 1945, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
6. Robert J. Weber, to John F. Deethardt, 2 October 1950, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
7. "Arts Council Gets Hi-Fi," Halls Echo 25 April 1955, 3.
8. Minutes of the Meeting of the Halls of Residence Committee, 8 November 1956, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
9. Doris Koch, interview by author, Tape recording, Bloomington, Indiana, 18 February 1992.
10. Halls of Residence Committee Subcommittee of the Halls of Residence Libraries, 5 March 1974, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
11. Barbara Pratt, "I.U. Halls of Residence Libraries," 26 January 1976, HRL Archives, Indiana University, Bloomington.
12. Carolyn Tynan, interview by author, Tape recording, Bloomington, Indiana, 7 February 1992.