

01-83-05-01

Harris Shelton

Fairbanks, Alaska

1984

Steve Lay

University Focus series

Harris Shelton said the addition of more residential space for students will have many positive effects. There will be a total of 250 bed spaces added to campus housing. The units can also be used when school is not in session for visiting faculty, married student housing and so on. Adding the units will take the artificial cap off of the enrollment. Students have been turned away because of the lack of housing. Students that do get housed will be more comfortable. This is phase one of the construction plans. This will allow the university to grow normally. This will retain more students, make students happier and give them a better learning environment. This has been planned the building for two years. The complex has been in the plans since 1972. In 1971 they experienced overcrowding. In 1972 there was an approved bond issue that allowed a two million dollar complex. They started plans for new residency halls. The legislature did not release the funds because the university was losing students. Between 1972 and 1973 they began to lose students. The occupancy dropped and there were two empty residence halls. In 1976 there was an upturn in enrollment and they started to plan for an upcoming need. They started to make a lot of noise about the lack of housing about two or three years ago.

He talked about the reasons for changes in enrollment. The construction of the pipeline was a factor in the early 1970s. They had a hard time finding help. There were also high school students going Outside for their education about that time. There were reputation, image and retention problems. Chancellor Cutler and Chancellor O'Roark are responsible for the upturn and retention at the university. He sees continued growth. Applications from out of state and instate are up and he talked about the financial help available to students.

Harris Shelton said all of the other residential facilities that they have are typical of dormitories. The new residence halls are not traditional. They are designed to be apartments where they have more flexibility. The apartments will have two bedrooms with a kitchen, dining room and study area. There will be four students per apartment. The apartments are furnished and within walking distance of the campus. They have considered parking, green belts and open spaces around the complex. He said they are townhouse style. There will be handicapped apartments. They hope to open in August. They have discussed who will be able to live in the apartments. They surveyed other institutions with similar living arrangements. They were always positive. There was some concern about maturity of residents in the surveys. They anticipate less need for janitorial help. They may need more maintenance of appliance. He talked about the appearance of the complex. They have taken the habitat into consideration in their plans.

01-83-05-01

Bill Schneider

Fairbanks, Alaska

1984

Steve Lay

University Focus series

Bill Schneider talks about the Oral History Index. He said that it is the first tool to finding out what exists in the way of recordings. It was developed based upon their inquiries and based upon information send them from throughout the state. It is the entrée to where sources of information exist so that researchers and the interested public whether the topic be something that happened yesterday or whether it happened one hundred and fifty years ago that type of material is referenced in that index. He talked about searching for something like reindeer. When you go to the index there is a list of key words. Reindeer would be one of those key words. Under that topic would be citations which alphabetically follow in natural order. Under the topic reindeer there are references from the North Slope, the Seward Peninsula and from parts of the Interior. The collections represented under would come from radio stations, individual research projects and interviews by people at the university. So there is a great deal of variety of different sources which can be brought to bear on the same question of reindeer. And that is true of many, many other topics. The sorting process is critical in having the resources to any sort of balanced judgment on an issue. And they are in a position now with the oral history index to be able to do that type of sorting rather quickly. The index references citations both here at Rasmuson Library and in other parts of the state. You will be able to find some of the material here or contact other places to get other sources. Some of the materials are quite readily available, those that are in Fairbanks. Other sources outside Fairbanks may involve sending a blank tape and getting a copy. In some cases the material is restricted and that is listed, too. This is so people at the local level have a chance to protect the information that they have recorded. The material is in one sense more readily available than if it wasn't listed at all but it is less readily available than if it was in hand. They feel that that intermediate step of having to deal with someone where the collection exists is an important one. That will give them an opportunity to do the filtering and sorting that they need to do and also give them a chance to give you some clues to other sources.

Bill said some of the interviews on are cassette tapes, some of them are on reel-to-reel, video tapes and a few wire recordings. They have some films, too. They are doing this project because for Alaskans the oral record is a very important record. It is important to people's identity, their sense of place and everyday activities to know how it fits in with what the elders have said who have come before them. There is an excitement about being in Alaska and an excitement about the activities of those that have come before us. He said people in Alaska really want to know what life was like at the personal level. At that is where oral history is at its best – at the personal level – the personal experiences of the people. It's that eye witness first-hand account that makes oral history exciting.

Bill Schneider said the quality of the tapes varies. In some cases it is very poor and others are broadcast quality. It depends on the particular collection. They attempt to indicate that on their citations. They have collections from federal agencies such as the Forest Service, the National Park Service, from individual researchers, and groups like the Alaska Humanities Forum. A great variety of different groups have made their collections available. As the oral history program and as the index makes more popular this format they get many more requests and people begin to use them as a repository for their collection. Knowing how fragile one-of-a-kind collections are then people are willing to have their collection put in the oral history program. He said they have some cooperative agreements with individuals and radio stations where they are producing high quality materials. They want to obtain copies and not the originals. They are concerned about the legal rights of the people who did the recording are protected. The technology of copying is advanced enough to make the material readily available.

Bill talked about the total concept of the oral history program. He said his purpose of the oral history program is to create collections which will assist researchers and the interested public in their pursuit of knowledge about Alaska and the North. At the same time they want to demonstrate how that record can be used to enhance the other historical sources. They actually do some recording and they develop some research projects as well as archiving and index copying of other people's collections. It is two-fold. He feels very strongly that this emphasis on preserving a record to last afterwards as well as an analysis of that record is going to change how social scientist do research. It enables the researchers down the line in the future to go back and look at the original source material. They don't have the benefit of the complete context that the original researcher had, but they do have the chance to re-examine what people have said. That is exciting in terms of drawing new conclusions or testing new hypothesis. In the past there were field notes, but they are never as complete as when someone is talking. He said the written record here in Alaska is rather short. The paper trail is limited in a way that it isn't in other parts of the United States. In Alaska the rich oral traditions have served to enhance people's appreciation of the past. This is true elsewhere. In Alaska there are Native traditions of storytelling, legends, and the time of year when the stories were told. There's something about being in Alaska that makes people want to reflect on it personally and share that reflection with others. They do that in storytelling and in what we relate to others. He said he feels a little stiff being interviewed and he understands why people get tired when they are interviewed. He said he is rarely in this position and it is good for him to experience it. He said the first step in recording interviews is to find out what exists. What has already been done on that subject or that individual? Have a clear idea of what you want to do. Give you interviewee enough time to think about what you want to ask them about. You aren't going to capture everything. It is necessary to develop a full-fledged program or be aware that you are only going to capture a small part. It is important to know what you are going to do with the recollections. There is a tendency to feel that once they have the recording made then nothing more needs to be done. You have to provide the context for the listener or reader. The job is really just beginning once you have the recording. You need to apply it. You need to communicate what has been captured.

Bill Schneider talked about how they care for the tapes. They store the tapes in the archives and they attempt to have the patrons listen to a copy instead of an original. This way the original is preserved. The tapes are stored in an atmosphere that is as close to fire protection as they can provide. It is atmospherically controlled in terms of humidity. They are protected as much as they can against flooding and robbery. The alarm system is quite extensive. They receive as much protection as they can possibly provide. They are cherished possessions. That is the responsibility of the archivist and head of the Alaska and Polar Regions Department head, Paul McCarthy. This is an ongoing program with permanent funding. He would like to think that as long as people have important things to say and there is someone there recording it then the oral history program will be appropriately capturing that record.