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THE UNIVERSITY SOUTH CAROLINIANA

SOCIETY

Caroline McKissick Belser, President; Arney R. Childs, Chapman; J. Milling, Mary C. Simons Oliphant, Vice-Presidents; Robert T. Meriwether, Secretary and Treasurer. The Executive Council—The incoming officers and J. J. Ubear, James O. Steppard and Virginia S. White.
SPECIAL REPORT

The Repair and Care of Manuscripts in the South Caroliniana Library

COLUMBIA
1957
ILLUSTRATIONS

FRONTISPIECE  A Corner of the Manuscripts Stacks.

FIG. 1.  The Presses in the Repair Room of the Library.

FIG. 2.  The Samuel C. Mitchell Papers, 1908-1913.

FIG. 3.  The John Stapleton Papers, 1790-1839.

FIG. 4.  A Leaf from a Charleston Account Book, 1725-1731, Showing the State in which the Paper was Received.

FIG. 5.  The Manuscript Repaired and Silked.

FIG. 6.  The Leaf from the Charleston Account Book Mounted and Bound into a Society Folder.

FIG. 7.  One of the Library’s Manuscripts Boxes and two Book “Jackets” for Manuscript Volumes.
FOREWORD

From 1937 to 1944 the Library printed annual Reports which noted the chief gifts made by the Society during the year, and listed the members. The printed program of the spring meeting now serves these purposes, but at this meeting, when the Society may be said to come of age, the Library is presenting the first of a series of special reports on phases of its work and on the methods it uses to carry out the trust reposed in it by the members who have contributed their dollars and their papers. The subject of this report is the care and maintenance of a large collection of manuscripts—a problem so nearly identical with that of a number of other libraries of severely limited means, that the Library staff trusts that some of the devices described in it may present helpful suggestions.

It is twenty years since the late Ex-Governor Duncan Clinch Heyward addressed the fifty-five persons who attended the organization meeting of the University South Caroliniana Society, the meeting at which Milledge L. Bonham, Chief Justice of the State, was elected first President. Founded in the conviction that here on the University campus, and in the oldest college library building, should be gathered the state's greatest library of South Carolina books, newspapers and manuscripts, the new Society pledged to that purpose its entire income and likewise efforts to inform owners of South Caroliniana of the need and the advantages of such a collection. Thus the Society addressed itself to the great problem of South Carolina's published, private, business and institutional records—as distinguished from the state's public records, which are the immediate problem of the state and local governments.

The Society's early success moved the University Trustees, at the instance of President J. Rion McKissick, to assure ample as well as appropriate space by designating the Old Library building with its brick and concrete wings as the South Caroliniana Library. A large state collection is a standard feature of state university libraries, but the Trustees recognized the need and the opportunity to make up for long-lost time by establishing this as a separate library, though still under complete University control and under the supervision of the University Librarian. Incorporation of the Society in 1951, at the suggestion of its second President, Dr. J. Heyward Gibbes, gave the Society legal status and improved its position for accepting trust funds, but did not change its relation-
ship to the University. The results of this partnership of state and private enterprise have been gratifying indeed. They have been achieved by members of the Society who have had little spare time and by members of the Library staff whose service to the Society is largely confined to the acceptance and handling of the books and papers given by it. The expenses of the Society as an organization are correspondingly small—postage and stationery and the programs and the simple supper or refreshments at the spring and fall meetings. These expenses are borne by the Library, from its University appropriation, in order that the members of the Society may have the satisfaction of knowing that their contributions go direct and intact to the purchase of Caroliniana. Publications of the Society are financed by a special fund derived from contributions made for that purpose.

Books, pamphlets, and newspapers present many problems to the custodian, but item for item, or ton for ton, perhaps we should say, they are simple compared with the task of him who in good faith accepts the responsibility for a representative collection of manuscripts ranging over the entire life-time of one of the older American states. Some libraries solve this problem by seeking only papers of such high individual value that the collection remains relatively small and the expense correspondingly so. But the plans of our Society and of the University called for a comprehensive program, so that in the fields of private, business, and institutional records no phase of the state's history might be neglected. To do this work, to care for these papers and keep the Library's budget within the same percent of the University's total library budget of 1941, when the South Caroliniana Library was established, has taxed to the utmost the ingenuity of the Library staff and its friends.

![Fig. 1. The Presses in the Repair Room of the Library](image-url)
THE REPAIR AND CARE OF MANUSCRIPTS IN THE SOUTH CAROLINIANA LIBRARY

The Library has nearly five thousand manuscript volumes and over a million separate manuscripts. For the problems of physical repair and care the latter may be roughly divided into four classes. About a tenth of the total may be described as "marginal" papers, little used, and to a considerable extent covered by other records. A good example of this group are the many thousand papers from a certain law office for the years 1890-1915. These are filed in the Library's manuscript boxes, but are left, for the most part, in their original state and arrangement.

The next group of manuscripts consist of business or personal papers which—as a whole rather than individually—are of considerable value and will receive a fair amount of use, but which are written on the typical perishable paper of the present day. The microfilm is a common recourse for preservation of such records, highly recommended for its economy of space and the relative permanence it assures. But with space still available and scanty funds for microfilming, the Library has done pioneer work in simple and temporary binding which will give these papers their utmost in life and put them in a form far more convenient for use than microfilm. When the break-down of the paper on which they are written brings them near their appointed end they can then be microfilmed;

Fig. 2. The Samuel C. Mitchell Papers, 1908-1913
meanwhile the saving of time in handling the bound volumes, as compared with the inconveniences of loose papers, will have more than repaid the cost of binding. The 117 Volumes here pictured of the University papers of President Samuel C. Mitchell include over 23,000 papers, bound by the Library with plain board and cloth tape, with spines reinforced by cord and plastic adhesive. The total cost of binding was $70; the rolls of negative microfilm reels alone would have cost over $300.

The third class of manuscripts consists of papers written or typed on relatively permanent paper—either old-time rag or first quality of wood-pulp—which need little repair. These are mounted on sheets of soft, high-grade paper, and bound, usually in groups of ten, in folders of a kraft paper which was made for the library under special conditions to assure its purity. Minor repairs are
expeditiously made with strips of tissue pasted over breaks and tears. Manuscripts thus repaired, mounted, hinged and bound are put in form for frequent use for an indefinite period, with little or no wear on the papers themselves, and with a maximum of convenience in handling. The illustration (Fig. 3, p. 2) shows one of a collection of 113 papers, the total cost of repair and binding of which was $12.00.

Fourth in the list of manuscript groups are those of importance which are in such condition that highly skilled work is necessary for their restoration—removal of the destructive Scotch tape, smoothing out of folds by proper use of moisture and pressure, mending holes and breaks with matching paper, covering, front and back, with a fine mending tissue or silk chiffon. Properly done these covers are invisible and permanent. The papers are then mounted and bound into folders like those of the third group described above. The repair and care of the library's manuscript volumes involves most of these processes and presents some additional problems besides.

The beauty of these old papers, thus restored by skilled fingers, puts this craftsmanship in the realm of the fine hand arts. Sufficient skill to do most of the work required can be ac-
quired in an amazingly short time by those with the knack for it, but the pitfalls are many, and are to be avoided only by long experience and loving care. A collection like that assembled by the Caroliniana Library and the Caroliniana Society demands either a complete and effective system or the employment of approved and expert commercial restorers. Libraries and depositories, great and small, in the United States are all too full of the evidence of blunders which vigilance and determination could have avoided. The process here described, selected by the Library and its advisers after careful investigation, was decided upon as being the most appropriate and the most practical—the most appropriate because the papers are kept in their original form, and most practical and economical because it makes it possible to do just the needed amount of work on each piece and no more.

The next, and very essential step in the Library's work is to get the bound folders of manuscripts into proper containers. The boxes here pictured are of the Library's own design and making, costing about one-third as much as their nearest rival on the market. For economy of space and money manuscripts boxes should be shelved

Fig. 7. One of the Library's Manuscripts Boxes and two Book "Jackets" for Manuscript Volumes.
vertically. The special virtue of the Library box is that, instead of the manuscript folders being put in a box with rigid sides—so that if they are put in loosely they sag, if tightly, they suffer damage in insertion and removal—they are set in a box with two hinged covers, which, when shut down, compress the papers with no possible damage, and allow the boxes to be shelved on end. The construction of these boxes is made practicable by the fact that the many processes of pamphlet and newspaper binding, and the making of simple "jackets" (shown in Figure 7) to hold undersized volumes, as well as box making, necessitates the maintenance on the staff of one or more students who can be trained to do this work.

The goal of the Library staff, in the care of its manuscripts, is the repair of all papers needing it, and their appropriate binding into folders or volumes. Besides taking care of annual accessions, it is slowly but steadily working through the accumulation from earlier years. Experience has shown that this binding process is not less essential for economical management than for proper care, for loose manuscripts suffer greatly in use, and require endless checking and re-arranging as they are used.