



Library, Archives, and Museum

As an inevitable consequence of Yellowstone's long and colorful history as a place of exploration, research, recreation, and the evolution of the national park idea, the park has accumulated a wealth of information and objects that are a testament to all who have contributed to that history. However, that wealth is diminished when its tangible evidence is not adequately preserved or made available to the public.

THE PARK'S PAPER TRAIL

Among Yellowstone's most extraordinary and little-known cultural resources is its archives, a priceless documentary collection that provides first-hand evidence of the complex evolution of all aspects of Yellowstone management, from trail construction to concession operations, and politics to predator control. Maintained by the park through a cooperative agreement with the National Archives and Records Administration as one of its few official affiliated facilities (West Point has another), the archives are a major scholarly resource for park staff in many management situations and for a variety of researchers.

The archives include 2,500 linear feet of historic documents and nearly 90,000 photographic prints and negatives, including a large number of glass, nitrate, and other fragile negatives in varying stages of deterioration. Almost all of the pre-1918 records are also available on microfilm. A full-time archivist, occasional temporary employees and volunteers, and part-time librarians funded by the Yellowstone Association assist park staff, visiting researchers, and the general public in finding reference materials. One park curator is responsible for the museum collection.

Research materials. Yellowstone's research library contains about 20,000 titles, including bound publications, vertical files, maps, and a collection of rare books and manuscripts. However, limited funds have made it impossible to purchase new publications related to Yellowstone's natural and cultural history; to ensure that copies of books, relevant journal articles, theses, and other reports that result from research done in the park find their way into the library's collection; or to replace basic reference materials such as dictionaries, atlases, and field-specific references that are more than 10 years old.

Most of the library collection has been cataloged only on an inefficient and difficult-to-maintain card file. Its conversion to a computerized database, with funding provided by the Yellowstone Association, is expected to be completed by 2000.



THE STUFF OF HISTORY

The Yellowstone museum collection contains nearly 200,000 cultural objects and natural science specimens, including paintings by Thomas Moran, photographs by William H. Jackson, historic hotel furnishings, touring cars, stagecoaches, American Indian artifacts, fossils, wildlife and geological specimens, and one of the most complete herbarium collections in the region for high-altitude environments. While the overall condition of the collection is fair to good, not all museum objects have been preserved, cataloged, and made available for use according to NPS standards. There is also a growing demand for access to the collection by researchers.

Cataloging. Since 1996, nearly 20,000 artifacts and specimens have been added to Yellowstone's collection, including photographs, souvenirs, archeological materials, insects, and birds, mostly donations to the park or specimens collected under research permits. Although special funding has helped to catalog 3,000 to 6,000 historic objects each year, the park continues to acquire items more quickly than they can be cataloged. A backlog of about 75,000 items still needs to be addressed.

Outside repositories. Most of the thousands of natural science specimens that have been collected during Yellowstone's long history are held elsewhere in the U.S. or abroad, and little documentation of them remains in the park. Because so much information on past collections and research is inaccessible, unnecessary duplications have surely occurred. Regardless of where they are held, specimens collected under research permits issued since April 30, 1984, are federal property by law and must be held to Department of Interior and NPS standards regarding museum property management.

STORAGE OF COLLECTIONS

Most of Yellowstone's archives, library, and museum collections are housed in the basement of the Albright Visitor Center in Mammoth Hot Springs. Without adequate space, security, fire protection, and climate controls, the facility fails to meet the standards of the NPS or the National Archives and Records Administration.

A SOGGY CHRISTMAS EVE

Yellowstone experienced a near disaster on December 24, 1998. As preparations were underway to close the Albright Visitor Center for the Christmas holiday, someone reported that a water pipe had burst in the boiler room adjacent to the park archives, located in the basement. In the archives, staff found about two inches of water covering the floor, threatening valuable records piled waiting to be properly stored. The staff worked quickly to shut off the flow and plunge away the water which had pooled because of a clogged drain. Using mops, a wet/dry vacuum, fans, and space heaters, they salvaged the damaged materials. Fortunately, the leak was discovered before the employees left for a long weekend. After the holidays, cultural resources staff arranged for the drains and pipes to be repaired, purchased water alarms that will be wired into the building's central alarm system, and began preparing to address future disasters.

Program Needs

- **STAFFING.** Additional staff are needed to address the backlog of inventory and cataloging duties, maintain the collections, and assist visiting researchers.
- **PRESERVING RECORDS AND ARTIFACTS.** The park needs to hire a contractor to duplicate its collection of historic prints, negatives, films, and audio tapes in formats that can be used by researchers while preserving the original version. To minimize the handling of rare books and archival materials, each document should be electronically scanned and available on computer.
- **IMPROVING ACCESS.** Additional equipment is needed so that users of the library and archives can access historic audio tapes, microfilmed records, digitized photos, and information stored on CD-ROM disks. The library staff should also have the training and technology required to make the library catalog available to off-site users, either directly through the Internet, or through partnerships with other libraries that share on-line catalogs. Museum staff need to determine the status of Yellowstone items held in outside repositories, so that they can be included in the NPS catalog for research purposes.
- **ACCOMMODATING THE COLLECTIONS.** An assessment of the feasibility of adapting existing park facilities to meet the variety of museum, library, and archive needs has led to the conclusion that a new building will be required. Funds are being sought from outside sources to support a proposed Yellowstone Heritage and Research Center that will be designed to include collection storage, visitor exhibits, and laboratory facilities for natural and cultural history research.



LIBRARY, MUSEUM, AND ARCHIVES

STEWARDSHIP GOALS



Professionally trained staff provide protection and storage to NPS and National Archives standards for Yellowstone's cultural objects, natural science specimens, library materials, and archival materials.



The park's library, archives, and museum collections receive periodic upgrades of equipment and technology as well as acquisitions of important material.



Users have safe, convenient access to collections via the best available technology.

CURRENT STATE OF RESOURCES/PROGRAMS



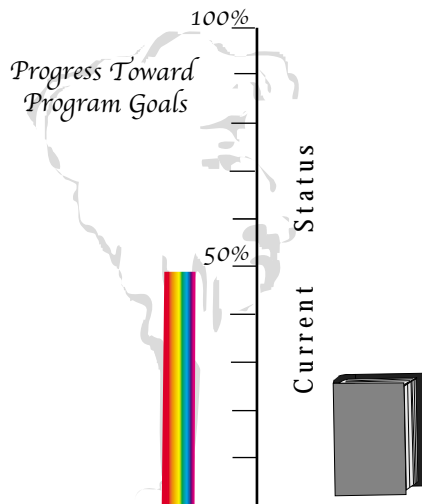
A park curator, an archivist, and part-time librarians oversee protection of the park's historical and library record in existing facilities that are old, cramped, and fail to meet modern safety and preservation standards.



Few funds are available to add important books, references, ephemera, natural science specimens, and cultural artifacts to collections.



Museum and archival references are not always available using current technology (e.g., CD-ROMs, World Wide Web, and computerized catalogues of information); the historic vehicles and other museum objects are crowded into a warehouse without safe or convenient access.



1998 FUNDING AND STAFF

Recurring Funds	
Yellowstone N.P. Base Budget	\$ 94,500
Non-Recurring Funds	
One-time Projects	\$ 142,600
Fee Demonstration Program	\$ 31,000
Staff	6.0 FTE

The human resources and funding necessary to professionally and effectively manage the park to stewardship levels will be identified in the park business plan.