



Maintenance supervisor John Johnston wades through the Shipman Library basement.

the Shipman FLOOD

*And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.
~Genesis 7:12*

When **Rev. Jim Simmons '52** went to bed on June 16, he no doubt drifted off to sleep with that sweet feeling that his long, hard tour of duty was finally over. After all, tomorrow would be the second time he would retire as archivist for the Detroit Annual Conference (DAC). The first time was after 13 years, during which time he toiled to put the collection of Methodist documents into a usable order. But the retirement didn't stick, and a short while later he was asked to fill a temporary vacancy. Tomorrow, he would turn the responsibility over to the new archivist once and for all.

Imagine the shock when he learned that in less than one hour that night, an estimated 3.25 inches of rain fell on the city of Adrian. Described as an "act of God" by city officials, basements all over town flooded – including the one under Shipman Library, home to the DAC archives and the Adrian College archives. Two and a half feet of water surged into the archival room, knocking over furniture and soaking through everything on the bottom shelves.

"When I saw all that water and destruction, it hurt," Simmons said. "All that work, and I thought it was for nothing."

Matthew Herbst, the new archivist for the DAC, says the flood was caused by a "fluke sequence of events." It started when drains in the street backed up and a pond formed outside the library. The building's window wells filled up like fish tanks, until the pressure became so great that it blew out a window and knocked in a metal door.

"That's something six football players couldn't have done," he said.

Roughly a third of the items in the archival room were saturated. Included in the archives were historic Bibles and hymnals, journals and letters of 19th century Methodist clergy, the minutes for 19th century literary and theological societies, and manuscripts and first editions of the writings of AC-founder Asa Mahan. Books, documents, microfilm, and photos were damaged.

"The archives contain the documentary history of the College," said head librarian Noelle Keller, who spent the past three years organizing the AC archives. "For example, the charter for the College was down there."

TAKING ACTION

The College acted quickly by hiring Munters, a world leader in document recovery and water damage services. Not all the wet items could be saved. About half of the wet materials were discarded, and half were packed into nearly 100 boxes and turned over to Munters, who transported them in a refrigerated truck to a facility in the Chicago area.

The items on the higher shelves, even though out of reach of the water, were at risk of being lost to mold and were moved immediately to a room upstairs in the

library. The library staff was assisted in the arduous, five- to six-hour task by football coach Jim Lyall and his wife Laurie, several of his players, student volunteers, conference coordinators, employees' kids, college maintenance workers and others. Even President Caine helped for a while in his dress shoes. The items were placed in a sealed room for several days for dehumidification. Even though the materials were "dry," more than 100 gallons of water were drawn out from them.

To dry out the basement, Munters pumped in heated, dry air (2 percent relative humidity) through large, plastic tubes for several days in a row. They also used several industrial dehumidifiers, and the area was treated for bacteria, mold and mildew.

Also lost in the flood were the bottom four feet of drywall throughout the basement, carpet, and at least one computer. Several other computers in an instructional lab would have been ruined if the water had risen just a few more inches to table-top level.

Although Shipman was the hit the worst, several other campus buildings also took on water during the storm.

STARTING OVER

On the day after the flood, Jim Simmons and his wife, **Charlotte Wint Simmons '50**, had the painful job of deciding which Methodist documents were most important to save, while Keller and fellow librarian David Cruse made the decisions for the AC archives. Keller said her rule of thumb for deciding what to keep was based partly on whether it was a complete loss to the world or not.

"Some things we knew existed elsewhere, or could be replaced," she said.

Items that did not fit this description were shipped off to the Chicago facility. They were freeze-dried to minimize the process of deterioration, all the moisture was removed, and they were treated for mold. About a month later, the materials were returned in cardboard boxes. The documents do not look like they did before the damage; they're wrinkled now.

"They look like they've been wet," Keller said. "But they are legible and usable, which is the main thing."

Neither Keller nor Herbst knows which items have actually survived. Things had to be sorted too quickly after the flood. And one thing that is lost for sure is the organizational scheme. Years worth of sorting disappeared as materials were yanked out of the room in a hurry, some of them after being sloshed with muddy

storm water, trucked to Chicago, and then returned willy-nilly in a bunch of boxes. It is predicted that it will take six months to a year to figure out what is still there and get it back into a usable order.

"We're basically back to ground zero," librarian David Cruse said.

The flood took its toll in other ways, too. After all, an estimated sixth of the total archives are gone forever, and the College incurred significant extra expenses beyond what insurance would cover. But to Jim Simmons (who really is retiring this time), it could have been worse.

"I'm glad to see that the items were returned in better shape than I was anticipating," he said.

"When I saw all that water and destruction, it hurt."

~Jim Simmons, archivist

Noelle Keller



Heavy rains led to 2.5 feet of water in the basement, which is home to the archives for both Adrian College and the Detroit Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Approximately a sixth of the archival materials were lost. Third photo from left: A plastic tube suspended along the ceiling pumps hot, dry air into the basement to dry the area out. Far right: AC Librarian Noelle Keller looks through flood-ravaged documents on the day that they are returned from being restored.