

# QUEST FOR FUNDS

## Modern libraries must keep resources up to date

by Greg Harris

"In the modern world where change is rapid, a library just has to keep up to date... a university is an intellectual centre and it's important that the staff keep up with new developments in their fields."

If this unquestionable statement from U of A Head Librarian Bruce Peel is ignored by the provincial government it could spell disaster for U of A libraries.

The three year special Heritage Endowment Grant for libraries expires this year and there is still no word on whether the provincial government will make up the estimated \$1.5 million shortfall.

While extensive dialogue has taken place between the university and the government, Peel says that the fate of library funding won't be known until the government delivers its budget for the university on March 17.

University President Myer Horowitz is hopeful that he will receive word before then, but adds that it is even possible that an announcement won't come until some time after the 17th.

"If it's a special arrangement it may or may not come at the same time," says Horowitz.

Peel says the library "can make cuts in different ways, but the easiest way is to cut book purchases." He says that the library tries to avoid cutting

periodical subscriptions because of the gap it creates.

The library's discretionary funds which are transferred to departments that make their own purchases would also likely be trimmed.

A less immediate detrimen-

tal effect of library under-funding could be the absolute unavailability of books for future purchases.

Peel says that it might be difficult to make up lost book purchases in future years because high interest rates and high warehousing costs are forcing

publishers to print fewer copies.

"I think the analogy of a dearth of funds to keep a library up to date is found in some of the mediaeval libraries," which became 'fossilized' when they ceased to expand their collections, says Peel.

### The finer points of library strangulation

In the early 1970's, Faculty discretionary book funds stood at 75% of the total acquisitions budget. Since then, the proportions have dropped as low as 23% and in 1979-80, rose to only 30%.

*Study space and Library Hours*  
The Library in the past couple of years has felt a great deal of pressure from students to provide sufficient study space, in addition to extended library hours.

During the past decade, the Library has experienced an overall decline in numbers of both full-time academic and non-academic staff paid from operating funds. Numbers have also declined as a percentage of both the support department and total allocations. Only with the

temporary provisions of soft funds for additional part-time staff has the Library been able to maintain extended hours. The uncertainty of this funding necessarily puts this service in jeopardy.

In addition to staff constraints, the Library is now experiencing increasingly serious space and storage constraints.

*Projections for the Future*  
Without additional funding, basic Library objectives will remain in serious jeopardy.

It is anticipated that without additional funding, the entire acquisitions budget for 1981-82 will be depleted by December 1981.

It is conceivable that

without sufficient capital funding in the near future, the Library will have exhausted all available shelving space within 5 years.

Discontinuation of Heritage Library Funding severely effects the ability to acquire new texts.

*The Quality of Funding*  
The base budget for materials acquisition was at a high point in 1970-71. It had fallen to half that level by 1974. Since then, it has increased to \$2.1 million for 80-81. To quote the GFC Library Committee's Annual Report for 79-80:

"The total funding for acquisitions in current dollars has recently returned to the dollar levels provided ten years

ago with the help first of the MacCosham bequest (now exhausted) and more recently of the Heritage Funds."

Chronic funding problems have reached the point where Library objectives are in serious jeopardy.

The Library Committee's 1979-80 annual report estimated that the real purchasing power of the Library had declined by 50 per cent over the past decade.

Approximately 90 per cent of the Library's material must be obtained from outside the country. This means that the Library must contend not only with an inadequate budget and domestic inflation, but also, international inflationary conditions and the deflated value of the Canadian dollar.

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