

Special Collections Snags Two Grants

By Ann Hodges



Making biscuits on the plains, n.d.

From the W. D. Smith, Inc. Commercial Photography Collection.

Smith Collection, which was featured in the Fall 1998 issue of *The Compass Rose*, was acquired by Special Collections in 1997 and contains well over 100,000 negatives. W. D. Smith opened a commercial photograph studio in Fort Worth in 1941 and, working with his son, Gordon, quickly established the company as the leading photographic firm in Fort Worth and the surrounding area. His clients included major businesses in the area, social clubs, fraternal organizations, individuals and families, and government entities. In the process of building his business, Smith documented the visual history of Fort Worth and environs, including their rapid growth after WWII.

The earliest items in the W. D. Smith Collection, approximately 8,670 negatives dating from the 1940s, were selected for preservation for two reasons. First, they are not only the oldest in the collection but are also the most heavily-used, and consequently are the most at risk from age and handling. Second, these negatives also include approximately one thousand copy negatives that Smith made from the work of some early photographers when he opened his company. Smith began working as a photographer in Fort Worth during the 1920s, and, since that time, built numerous relationships with the photographers he called "the old timers." These "old timers" allowed him to copy their images of Fort Worth and North Texas dating back to the 1890s. All of these photographers are now deceased; their collections have not survived, except in part in the W. D. Smith collection. Consequently, while Smith's negatives were actually made in the 1940s, the subjects that they document date back to the late-nineteenth century. In short, from a historical perspective, these negatives are the most important in documenting the early history of North Texas.



Will Rogers Center, Fort Worth, n.d.

From the W. D. Smith, Inc., Commercial Photography Collection.

The University of Texas at Arlington Libraries have taken a step forward this year in raising external funding in support of library projects. Gerald Saxon and Ann Hodges collaborated in the spring of 2001 to write three proposals seeking funding for projects to improve access to Special Collections materials. At the time of this writing, positive responses have been received to two of the proposals. The award deadline for the third proposal, a request to the Institute of Museum and Library Services for funds to catalog and digitize Mexican War materials, is pending.

A National Endowment for the Humanities Preservation Assistance Grant will provide \$3,839 to purchase supplies to rehouse a portion of the photographic negatives in the W. D. Smith, Inc., Commercial Photography Collection. The W. D.

NEH Preservation Assistance Grants are given to assist repositories



The circus comes to Fort Worth, n.d.

From the W. D. Smith, Inc. Commercial Photography Collection.

to enhance their capacity to preserve their humanities collections and to increase their availability for research and education. The funds furnished by the NEH will allow the purchase of archival polypropylene negative sleeves; buffered, acid-free negative storage envelopes; and acid- and lignin-free storage boxes in order to rehouse the negatives according to professionally accepted preservation standards. Archivist Shirley Rodnitzky will direct the project, which will be in effect from September 1, 2001, through August 31, 2002. Student help is being used to create a database from the information present on the original negative envelopes. The database will enable the printing of the information on the new envelopes, and will also improve access to the collection by allowing electronic searching of information about the 1940s negatives. Access to the W. D. Smith Collection presently is achieved by use of Smith's client card file. It is hoped that the project will serve as a prototype for future extension of treatment to the remainder of the

W. D. Smith Collection.

The TexTreasures program of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission awarded UTA Libraries \$20,000, the maximum amount permitted under the program's guidelines, to increase access to its holdings of oral history interviews with Tejano leaders. The TexTreasures program, which is supported by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, is designed to assist public and academic libraries in Texas to provide access to their special or unique local collection holdings and to make information about those holdings available to library users across the state. UTA's proposal was ranked first among all applicants in the competitive evaluation process conducted by the TexTreasures review panel.

The project, known as Tejano Voices, will provide access to 77 oral history interviews conducted during the 1990s by UTA political science professor, José Angel Gutierrez. The interviews emphasize the personal stories and struggles of Tejano leaders, many of whom are the first individuals of Mexican descent in their communities elected or appointed to government office. The interviews uniquely reflect the history of the Tejano community as it pressed for an end to racial segregation in the state and access to political power in the post-WWII period.

The Tejano Voices project will run from September 1, 2001, through August 31, 2002, and will be under the direction of Ann Hodges, Special Collections Projects Manager. Julie Williams, Kris Swenson, and Sarah Jones of the Libraries' Digital Library Services program area will create digital files and will design and implement the project web site. Digital Library Services Coordinator, Marie Irwin, is technical advisor to the project. In addition to staff resources, the Libraries will contribute the use of the equipment required by the project.

Grant funds will be used to pay the salary of a professional cataloger, who will work on the project half-time for one year in Special Collections. Carolyn Kadri, who has worked half-time in Special Collections for four years as Virginia Garrett Map Cataloger, has been selected as Tejano Voices Project Cataloger. She will be a full-time Libraries employee for the duration of the project and will continue her work with maps. Kadri's contribution to the Tejano Voices project will include creating full-level catalog records for the interviews and contributing information to the project's database and web site. In other words, she will create the descriptive information that will permit greater access to the interviews.

A preliminary web site will provide an explanation of the Tejano Voices project and of the activities being performed by project staff, as well as biographical information about Professor Gutierrez and insight into his role as interviewer. When completed, the project web site will be a vehicle for access to the interviews. It will present a mechanism for searching the interview transcripts and will feature a list of the project interviews, with links to individual pages for interviewees. Each interviewee page will link to a text file of the interview transcript and to a streaming audio file of the interview. Additionally, each interviewee page will display a still image of the interviewee and biographical information about him or her, and will link to the interview's catalog record in PULSe, the Libraries' online catalog.

We are pleased that the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Texas State Library and Archives Commission found our proposals worthy of funding. Libraries staff are already at work on the projects. Researchers can look forward to improved access to the materials being addressed by the grants, thanks to the funds provided by the granting agencies and the hard work of Libraries staff members.

All of the resources being addressed by the projects are housed in Special Collections at the UTA Libraries. They are available for use by the public during Special Collections' normal operating hours of Monday 9:00 am-7:00 pm and Tuesday-Saturday, 9:00 am-5:00 pm. Please telephone (817) 272-3393 to confirm these times, as evening and Saturday hours vary with the academic calendar. Special arrangements can be made in advance for the convenience of researchers traveling from a distance.

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This page last update on Wednesday, June 25, 2003