Founded as a Normal School in 1893, Western has always had a core mission to educate and train teachers, and the records in the University Archives reflect this emphasis. Many of Western’s student clubs and societies were likewise grounded in this purpose. For example, the Women’s Recreation Association (WRA) provided for the organized expression of athleticism, recreation, and school spirit by women students from the 1920s into the 1970s. The club was also affiliated with the Physical Education Department, itself among one of the oldest departments at Western.

In our varied collection of WRA records, and supporting the group’s educational foundations, are recreational activity books for children and adults. In these artifacts, one can find the underpinnings of many school, camp, assembly, parks department, and other organized youth activities of the last 100 years. Included are sport handbooks for women and girls, rules for simple games (“games of low organization”), instructions for soap carving, a handbook of day camping, and a book of trail tunes compiled by the Normal School faculty. Together, these materials were likely retained by the WRA’s faculty sponsors in the Physical Education Department, and they exemplify the ways that WRA members applied the


Above: songbooks from the Women’s Recreation Association Records, UARM.
As Director of Heritage Resources, I am particularly proud of our growing collection of rare books and other materials written for and by children and young adults. These holdings include a wide range of early readers, primers, grammar and spelling books, a large collection of historic U.S children’s books, and several foreign language books written in Norwegian, Russian, Hungarian, Finnish, and Czech. Heritage Resources is also home to the Helene Whitson Collection of unique format children's books, commonly known as “pop-up books.” Collectively, these unique resources provide exceptional opportunities for teaching and learning about cultural history, social change, child-rearing and educational practices.

Our children’s literature collection is also deeply connected to the history of Western Washington University and its origins as a normal school for teachers. Our benefactor, Miriam Snow Mathes, enjoyed a long professional career at the Bellingham State Normal School from 1934-1971, during which time she served as Professor of Library Science, Campus School Librarian and Librarian of Children’s Literature. Her passion for children’s literature and librarianship is evidenced in her expansive collection of reading figurines and her 1999 endowment, established to share the figurines with the community and “promote a love of reading to future generations.” Recently, in an innovative effort to better meet the teaching and research needs of Western faculty and students, Heritage Resources worked closely with the Mathes family to renegotiate the terms of their generous endowment, and we are now engaged in a joint initiative with the curator of the Children’s Literature Collection to enhance collecting efforts and support public programming related to children’s literature.

The Children’s Literature Collection is part of an overarching collecting strategy within Western Libraries to build upon our core resources in support of teaching and learning. We rely on donors to assist in our collecting efforts, and welcome inquiries about how to provide financial sponsorship for our activities and/or donate materials that fall within our collecting mission.

Sending you best wishes for the holiday season,

Elizabeth Joffrion, Director
Elizabeth.Joffrion@wwu.edu / (360) 650-3283

Recent Donation from Noted Children’s Author & Illustrator Doris Burn

Heritage Resources recently received a rich collection of materials from Doris (Wernstedt) Burn, noted author of Andrew Henry’s Meadow, The Summerfolk and The Tale of Lazy Lizard Canyon, and illustrator of a range of other children’s work. The collection contains artwork, manuscripts and first-edition copies of children’s works written and/or illustrated by Burn. Together, these materials will help document the cultural and artistic history of the Pacific Northwest region. The collection will be preserved and made available for use at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, in association with Western Libraries Children’s Literature Interdisciplinary Collection.

Left to right: Director Elizabeth Joffrion, siblings Skye, Lisa and Mark Burn, WWU Librarian Sylvia Tag, and CPNWS Archivist Ruth Steele gather around Doris Burn’s papers. Photo courtesy of Clarissa Mansfield.
Most of us start out living a lyrical life. Whether through lullabies, rhyming games, or our own inner musings, poetry is a constant companion. Educators David Booth and Bill Moore* state that, “Like film makers or photographers, poets manipulate our ears and eyes at the same time, using close-ups, long shots, slow motion, fast-forward, and soft focus; ...The poet gives form to feeling, thereby allowing us to recognize our own responses as we begin to make sense of them, developing in us the intelligence of feeling. As reader or listener, we are educating our imaginations, using symbol, metaphor, allegory, without fear or pain, making meaning with our eyes, ears and imaginations. That is a special kind of learning.” In this spirit, poetry written for, and by, children and teens is worth celebrating.

The Poetry CHaT collection and associated programing is growing due to several generous donors, including Marian Alexander (WWU Faculty Emeritus & former Director of Special Collections), Carol Janson (WWU Faculty Emeritus, Art Department), Nancy Johnson (WWU Faculty, English Department), and Sam Sebesta (University of Washington Faculty Emeritus, College of Education).

Poetry CHaT is co-directed by Sylvia Tag, Curator of the Children’s Literature Interdisciplinary Collection, and Nancy Johnson, Professor of English. The Advisory Board consists of librarians, educators, poets, and community leaders. Additional information about the collection can be found on the collection website: http://library.wwu.edu/poetrychat, or you can visit their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/poetrychat.

skills developed through club participation.

While the WRA provided an important athletic and recreational outlet for women, it also fostered and showcased their acumen for leadership, teaching, creativity, and social organization, as they prepared for careers in education and beyond. View the full guide to the University Archives WRA collection online at http://archiveswest.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv38546.

We would like to thank our devoted volunteers and student employees for all they do in support of Heritage Resources. We would also like to thank the many individuals, families, and organizations who have made generous contributions of materials and/or monetary gifts. To donate records or make a financial contribution, please email Heritage.Resources@wwu.edu or phone 360-650-3283. Donations can also be made online or by mail to the Western Foundation, MS-9034, Western Washington University, 516 High St, Bellingham, WA 98225-9034. Please designate your contribution to Western Libraries and identify “Heritage Resources” as the program you wish to support.