

What's in Your Attic?

Preserving Mundelein College History

By: Elizabeth Myers

Esteemed author and educator Louise Otto once quipped that, “The history of all times, and of today especially, teaches that...women will be forgotten if they forget to think about themselves.” Though Otto wrote in the 19th century, her wisdom still rings true today; indeed, in the dramatic political climate in which we live, women’s contributions, stories, past, and participation seem ever more relevant to the larger historic record. As such, the collecting of women’s history continues to be an important and ongoing task. The work is done primarily in two steps: first, to fill the gaps in the distant past when and where women’s records were not kept and second, to capture women’s history as it happens, saving more contemporary records for future generations. The Women & Leadership Archives engages in both types of collecting, as well as continually and carefully maintaining those collections already under our care.

As one of many custodians of the records of Mundelein College, I feel that I have inherited a long and esteemed tradition of women’s education, accomplishment, and triumph. The proud heritage of the BVMs who famously built their college literally from the ground up in the darkest of economic times remains a testament to the determination, sheer will, and organizational talents of women. The college records reflect this tradition which served as an inspiration to the many thousands of women who crossed the threshold of the school during its sixty year existence. Not just the official records of the college, these cherished documents, photos, and memorabilia are the stories of administrators, students, faculty, visitors, speakers, parents, and alumnae. Collectively, they echo the essential personality of the school, its very spirit and memory.

In part due to its renown, my fellow archivists occasionally ask me about the Mundelein College Records Collection. Who uses it? Do I ever get “new” material to add? Where does the material come from? I am happy to reply that the Mundelein College Records are one of our most heavily used collections. Professional scholars, undergraduate and graduate students, local historians, genealogists, and alumnae make regular use of the records. Although the administrative records regrettably no longer grow, other areas of the collection are supported and maintained, largely by the alumnae. Proudly reflecting on this act of generosity—the donation of personally owned Mundelein College material—inspired me to renew the archives mission to always be open and ready to accept materials related to the college and its dynamic culture. In turn, I hope to inspire alumnae to check their attics and basements, closets, storage boxes, crawl spaces, and garages for any materials related to the school that they may wish to see become part of the permanent Mundelein College Records Collection. But what to donate and how?

The Women & Leadership Archives is interested in acquiring any materials related to Mundelein College including, but not limited to, personal or official photographs, yearbooks, handbooks, scrapbooks, memorabilia and objects (very broadly defined), notebooks, class notes, schedules, records, audio-visual, art, school work, club records, newspaper clippings, and diaries/journals reflecting on school days. Once received, the material will be conserved and added to the collection where it will remain a part of the school’s legacy in perpetuity.

If you are interested in donating Mundelein material, please contact Elizabeth Myers at (773) 508-8837 or emyers@luc.edu. Materials can be mailed, dropped off, or if in the Chicago area, we are more than to happy pick items up.