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Kansas State University Libraries

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BACK ON THE SHELVES



BY CAILIN RILEY

The Libraries collections steadily return to Hale Library

After the 2018 fire damaged and displaced Hale Library's entire physical collection, the challenge of cleaning, reorganizing and curating the collection for the return to Hale Library became an important goal.

Luckily, less than one percent of the collection was damaged beyond repair. The remaining materials which were cleaned and then stored, mostly in caves in Kansas City, have been in the long process of being sorted and slowly moved back into Hale Library by Libraries staff and Belfor, a disaster recovery company. Michelle Turvey-Welch, head of metadata, preservation and acquisitions, said their goal is to make sure the circulating collection is curated so that it best fits the needs of the campus and community. Hale Library's physical collection includes more than 1.2 million books—that number doesn't even include the multitude of multimedia, such as DVDs and recordings.

"We've faced a unique challenge in that Hale's collection had not undergone a comprehensive review before, and we're doing so now as we move books from the caves back to campus and then back into Hale," Turvey-Welch said.

Throughout 2020, semi-trucks delivered boxes of the cleaned materials to Executive Court, a temporary off-campus location which served as a staging facility. Libraries staff used the collection review decisions to inventory the books before Belfor staff put them in order. The call numbers of each book were then carefully read to double check they were in perfect order. The books were re-packed, delivered to Hale Library, put on the shelves and then checked one last time to make sure they were in the correct order.

Staff and Belfor crew members started reshelving materials in the summer of 2020. Currently, more than 300,000 print items in the general collection from call numbers A through PN are back in Hale Library, completely filling four stack levels. Additionally, the music and art print collections are shelved on the third floor. The juvenile literature and curriculum materials collections are also now housed in the Virginia Carlson Family Reading Room on the first floor.

Wendy A. Matlock, associate professor of English, said that having access to books and materials again is an important part of supporting her research.

"It gives us great joy to see more boxes of books coming back and people starting to browse the shelves again."

— MICHELLE TURVEY-WELCH,
HEAD OF METADATA,
PRESERVATION AND ACQUISITIONS

"Losing access to the Hale Library collection after the 2018 fire affected my literary research much like closing labs during the current pandemic interrupted scientific study," said Matlock. "I am so excited that the books are coming back, and I once again have immediate

access to the specialized materials humanities scholars rely on university libraries to provide."

Remaining items to be filled include the rest of the main print collection and multimedia such as DVDs, CDs and microfilm. Turvey-Welch said that even though they are hoping to have the entire collection back in Hale Library by early fall of this year, staff are encouraging patrons to come check out the books that are already on the shelves.

"If it's on the shelf, it's available for you to take home," Turvey-Welch said. "Everything is open for browsing, and we welcome everyone to come visit the stacks. It gives us great joy to see more boxes of books coming back and people starting to browse the shelves again."