

About Marymount Manhattan College's Yearbook File

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Updated January 11, 2023

During 2021, Marymount Manhattan College's archives, taking into account increases in remote work and learning and reductions in library space and personnel undertook to digitize frequently consulted archival documents. With the help of the Registrar and Office of Academic Affairs staff, the archives collected and digitized hardcopy college catalogs from 1950 to 2004, the year in which MMC began issuing digital catalogs. The next logical step was to digitize the yearbooks, as the Office of Institutional Advancement consults them frequently for planning college and alumni events. Digitizing the yearbooks seemed the next logical step in this project.

The earliest yearbook at MMC dates from 1943 and reflects MMC's origins as a two-year post-graduate program at the Marymount School on Fifth Avenue and 84th Street. In 1948, MMC moved to 221 East 71st Street. In 1950, the college produced the first yearbook for graduates of a four-year college program. MMC's Office of Student Development and Activities continues to has continues to produce hardcopy yearbooks, and to ensure the archives gets at least one copy.

Yearbooks have always been an priority for the archives. When in 1975 Sister Agnes Elliott, RSHM, became the college's first archivist, she began collecting yearbooks, receiving some of the earliest publications from long-time faulty member and college administrator Margaret M. (Peggy) Sheahan. Institutional Advancement is another place where yearbooks pile up, as the staff uses them to do research for alumni weekends. After 2002, the yearbooks were transferred from the bookcase where Sister Agnes kept them to archival boxes that would protect them from light. The yearbooks are kept in the archives, with one exception: they are lent to the Office of Institutional Advancement for research and for use during alumni weekends. At the start of this scanning project, Neil Gouveia, Director of Alumni and Family Engagement for the

Office of Institutional Advancement, collected yearbooks in that office and arranged for their return to the archives.

Although modern yearbooks are laid out via computer software, those computer files are not shared with the archives and might not be searchable by researchers even if they were available. All years are scanned using an Epson 12000 scanner and software that permits the creation of searchable texts. The resulting files are stored in five places: on hard drives kept in the archives and with the archivist personally, in Box, Marymount Manhattan College's Internet-based storage system, on the P drive, the server-based system that had been in use prior to Box and that continues to exist alongside it, and on the U drive, where each staff member, including the archivist, has an account.

Three issues limit the usefulness of this file of yearbook scans. First, despite a search of the archives and the college generally, the following yearbooks remained missing: 1944, 1966, 1967, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1981, and 1996. It is possible that no yearbooks were produced in those years but this cannot be confirmed.

Second, the yearbooks are not entirely searchable. The software that created the searchable .pdfs could not search texts in some yearbooks for reason that seem to have to do with the way the yearbooks were composed. For example, if there was a physical layout, with text pasted into place, the software read the pasted bits as photos with no text to search. Even when the yearbook production became computerized, the search function could not read all the different display fonts used over the years.

Third and finally, the yearbooks reflect their times, and image or text from one period may be recognized for their offensiveness in later generations. This in turn raises a question of the purpose of this scanning project. This scanning is intended to preserve the yearbooks. That

intent drove the decision to scan whole yearbooks. The archivist recognizes the potential for harm but reasoned that trying to hide the past adds dishonesty to the original insensitivity.

Access to the yearbooks, therefore, is by request. Please email the archivist, currently mbrown1@mmm.edu, for an appointment or to request yearbooks or scans from yearsbooks.

This essay has mentioned the names of individuals who ought to be thanked for their roles in creating or preserving the yearbooks. Usually, there are also people to than for their assistance with the scanning project. In this case, the archivist scanned the yearbooks. However, thanks are due to Lauren Grabon for the initial draft of this “about” file.