

Knowing Christ's Love – Answering God's Call

Everything you wanted
to know about...

Central District Conference Archives

At Bluffton University

We recently talked with Carrie Phillips, Archives and Special Collections Coordinator, at Musselman Library on the Bluffton University (Bluffton, Ohio) campus.

What's a typical day like for the CDC archives?

As we receive materials from various CDC churches and other organizations, my students and I sort these materials, clean and/or repair any documents that need such attention, record that the items have been received, and file them in the appropriate archival boxes. If questions come to us by phone, email, or letter, we will work on researching those. At present, we are working on a condense-and-shift project to reclaim additional shelving space for the CDC and Bluffton University collections.

Who's in charge there, anyway?

Allow me to introduce myself! I am a 1999 Bluffton graduate with a B.A. in computer science, and in April 2006, I completed a Master of Library and Information Science degree from the University of Washington's Information School. I had the opportunity to tailor my graduate studies to focus on archives and document preservation, and to those ends, I completed a 200-hour internship in the early summer of 2005 with the Bowling Green State University Center for Archival Collections, working with university archives materials, archives reference, manuscript collections, and document conservation.

At Bluffton, my responsibilities include all facets of the University Archives (including the archives for CDC, Bluffton University, and various Mennonite



Carrie Phillips examines a First Mennonite Church Berne, Ind., report housed in the Archives

mutual aid organizations) and oversight for the Mennonite Historical Collections and other special collections of Bluffton's Musselman Library.

Do you work in the Archives alone?

For the 2005-2006 school year, I have had three very talented student workers who have helped with all aspects of the work that goes on in the Archives and in the other areas I supervise.

How large is the collection?

Archival collections are usually measured in linear

feet – that is, the added-up length of all the shelving used to store a collection. Presently, the CDC Archives occupies just over 350 linear feet, and there are additional materials, which when processed, will make this number grow.

How far back in time does the collection go?

There are materials in the CDC Archives that date back to before the conference existed; we have some materials from both the Central Conference and the Middle District Conference, prior to the merger.

How often is the collection used?

At present, the CDC Archives are used very sporadically. Users include Bluffton University researchers and member-congregation staff or laypeople. I have also received questions via telephone and e-mail that I have answered by using materials in the CDC Archives.

How can someone look at the materials in the CDC archives?

It's easy! Simply call me (419-358-3275) or send an e-mail (phillipsc@bluffton.edu) to make an appointment. Describe your question, or tell me which files you would like to see, and I will prepare the materials for your visit. The CDC Archives is part of the University Archives at Bluffton.

What else is in there?

The University Archives contains the Central District Conference Archives, the institutional archives for Bluffton University, and the archives of various mutual aid organizations – a project of the late Howard Raid during his time as archivist here. There are also a number of manuscript collections – most of which are the personal papers of various Mennonite pastors, current and former Bluffton University faculty, staff and students.

How do you acquire materials for the CDC Archives?

Congregational documents like bulletins, newsletters, or annual reports usually come to us directly from individual congregations. We also receive such materials from Fred and Mary Steiner after they have read them for newsworthy content for the Central District Reporter/Focus.

Is there anything a congregation should do to prepare their materials for deposit in the Archives?

If you'd like to send us materials directly from your church, here are a few pointers to consider:

- Our first preference would be to have actual hard copies of bulletins and newsletters mailed from you.
- You may send us your bulletins each week, or you

may save up several months' worth and send us a larger package. Either way is fine. The same goes for newsletters.

■ We would prefer not to receive materials via email, but if you must use email for whatever reason, please send bulletins and newsletters as email attachments. This will allow us to print the documents so that they'll look as close to the original copy as possible.

■ When stapling your bulletins and newsletters, save out the set you'll be sending to the Archives and don't staple them. If you must fasten them together to send them to us, use a paper clip instead. Did you know that, if left intact and filed, staples and paper clips can rust and damage your documents? As materials come to us, we remove all staples and metal paper clips and replace them with Plasti-Klips, which are paper-clip-like fasteners made of plastic.

What are some of the most interesting items in the CDC Archives?

Most of the materials in the CDC archives are paper documents, and those from the earliest days of the CDC are very interesting to review. We also have a small collection of photographs from various CDC groups and congregations, and a few pieces of realia – three-dimensional objects of various kinds – including a communion serving set from the Lima Mennonite Church.

How can we contact the CDC Archives?

To send materials to the Archives, use the following address:

**Central District Conference Archives
Musselman Library
Bluffton University
1 University Drive
Bluffton, OH 45817**

To reach Carrie Phillips personally, call 419-358-3275 or send email to phillipsc@bluffton.edu

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Items from several CDC congregations are stored in the Archives