August 30, 2007

TO: Mary Lee Hummert  
Vice Provost for Faculty Development  
250 Strong Hall  
Campus

FROM: George E. Gibbs  
Libraries

RE: Report of Sabbatical Activity

I was given a sabbatical leave to continue work on a filmography of the Centron films produced in Lawrence from the late 1950’s to the late 1980’s. During the sabbatical I accomplished the following:

1. Viewed all 1000+ Centron films held by the Kansas Collection in Spencer Research Library and made a brief annotation about the subject matter of each film. In addition I collected information about the film (color or black & white, film or video format, Kansas Collection call number, Centron shelf number, running time, series, and an indication of the physical condition of the film) as well as technical credits which may or may not be present on the film itself (director, writer, narrator, sponsoring body, distributor, distributor’s number, technical advisors, etc.). I entered all of this information in an Access database.

2. Corrected all title information to that which appears on the film itself. In those cases in which there is no title information, the title as it appears on the film can has been retained. I also identified several Centron films that are not part of the Spencer collection.

3. Correlated the information I collected with cataloging data that appears in the National Union Catalog. Only a very small percentage of Centron films have NUC records.

4. Began to seek more of the information indicated above by reviewing the boxes of Centron business records.

5. Gave a copy of the Access database to Spencer Research Library staff for their uses.

6. Presented a public demonstration of the database to Spencer staff. A general invitation to this session was also extended to Library staff and to the faculty of the Film Department. As part of this demonstration I showed three representative Centron films, including the one that had been nominated for an Academy Award, to the group so that they could better understand the range of the films in this collection. A Kansas City star reporter attended the meeting to gather information and I understand from the reporter that there is likely to be a Sunday magazine article but so far nothing has appeared there.

7. Increased my knowledge of using Access and creating reports from the data in the file. I took an extended Access class taught on campus and have also utilized the personal consulting service provided as well.
Since completing the sabbatical, I have been checking the information I collected for completeness and accuracy. There are several small omissions for which I need to return to the films to ascertain the correct data. I have also been preparing a report that allows me to print all of the information in the database and several sub-reports by Kansas Collection call number and Centron call number. I am also reviewing the possibility of adding these reports and the Access file itself to KU ScholarWorks so that the information is readily available for others to use.

I have collected a lot of information about the films but in many cases I will need to review the Centron business files to find additional information not available on the films themselves. There are still many blanks that need to be filled in.

I could not have accomplished all of the above without the cooperation and assistance of the staff of Spencer Research Library. They provided me with a study carrel and allowed me extraordinary access to the Centron films and business records. I also appreciate the support provided by the library administration and to the library staff who assumed some of my responsibilities while I was on sabbatical leave.

This was my first sabbatical leave. Having time to concentrate on this research project was a great luxury and I enjoyed myself tremendously. I am now a great advocate for the sabbatical concept and very appreciative of the University's willingness to offer this opportunity to faculty.

I believe that the database I am building will enable the staff of Spencer Research Library to provide better service for users of the Centron collection and, as evidenced by the regular emails that I receive from scholars and laypersons, there is a more general interest in Centron films beyond the University and Lawrence.

Cc: Lorraine Haricombe, Dean of Libraries