FROM THE EDITOR: HONORING THE OHS CO-FOUNDERS

In the last issue of Hindsight we highlighted the fact that the Optometric Historical Society had been founded 50 years ago, and we featured articles on the history of the OHS and on the circumstances surrounding its formation. In this issue we continue the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of OHS by bringing you articles honoring the OHS co-founders Maria Dablemont and Henry Hofstetter.

Dablemont and Hofstetter each brought to the OHS a combination of professional skill, passion for the history of optometry, and a desire to involve others in that history. Dablemont served as Secretary of OHS for its first 18 years and Treasurer for its first 17 years. Hofstetter was President of OHS for its first five years and variously editor, co-editor, or contributing editor of the OHS newsletter for over 30 years.

Important in their leadership was their conviction that optometry has a grand history. Dablemont declared that optometry has a “glorious past.” Hofstetter wrote that optometry has “an honorable heritage,…a truly proud history which includes many prominent and accomplished personalities.” Together they got the OHS off to a good start. We hope you find these articles about Maria Dablemont and Henry Hofstetter to be informative and inspiring.

References

David A. Goss, OD, PhD

GUEST EDITORIAL: MARIA DABLEMONT’S MUSEUM

“I didn’t know you had all this stuff!” is the most common reaction of visitors to the Archives & Museum of Optometry (AMO). The truth is that, up until recently, even we did not know what we had, but we knew that we needed to find out, and that it needed to be shared. Since I joined the staff of Optometry Cares – The AOA Foundation in 2013, I have seen how the artifacts in the museum never fail to inspire astonishment and fascination in seasoned optometrists, students, and members of the public alike. I also have come to understand that our ability to unlock their full potential for increasing public awareness of optometry is limited without the assistance of the academic community.

In this issue, we focus on one of the first collaborations between organized optometry and academia to build the infrastructure for preserving optometry’s historical legacy—the relationship between the American Optometric Association’s Maria Dablemont and Indiana University’s Henry W Hofstetter. Among the many projects undertaken by the co-founders of the Optometric Historical Society, the construction of a pipeline for channelling donations from private collectors to the International Library, Archives and Museum of Optometry (ILAMO) may be one of the least known but most important. Sometimes in drips and drabs, and at other times as a flood, the ILAMO correspondence files between 1965 and 1990 chronicle the steady flow of

Maria Dablemont, Librarian, contemplates an optometry history exhibit at the International Library, Archives & Museum of Optometry, 1971.

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ophthalmic antiques to the E. LeRoy Ryer Museum through a network held together by Dablemont and Hofstetter. Dablemont’s work was the first leg of a long journey. During the course of the last five years, we have taken the baton, enlisting the help of our partners in academia to lay the groundwork for finally bringing these long-hidden collections into the light. Through our relationship with the University of Missouri – St. Louis’ Museum Studies program, we have received invaluable assistance from graduate student interns in cataloging, photo-documenting, and rehousing the objects in our collections, reconnecting 50 years of donor records to objects, and developing a clearer picture of the breadth and depth of our holdings. With our goal to share our collections with the public in sight, we are ready to take the next step.

In the fall of 2018 we made another giant leap forward. On September 27, Optometry Cares entered into a collaborative agreement with the University of Pikeville and the Kentucky College of Optometry to transfer our general optometry collections—thousands of antique ophthalmic instruments and devices that document the evolution of optometric technology—to the Frank M. Allara Health Sciences Library. Working with the dedicated and excellent, Edna Fugate, UPIke’s archivist and special collections librarian, the first phase of this transfer was successfully completed in December.

In March 2019, Edna and her team put almost 200 objects online in the library’s digital repository (bit.ly/AMOCollections). In the months ahead, Fugate will be installing exhibitions, using the collections to educate visitors to UPIke’s campus about optometry’s contributions to science and public health. At last, Dablemont’s vision to make optometry’s “glorious” history accessible to a national audience is coming to fruition in ways she never could have imagined, but through a partnership that she and Hofstetter pioneered. In the next two years, we will be working to complete the second phase of the transfer which will include small handheld instruments and, eventually, spectacles. Stay tuned for more updates and additions to the collections on their way into the public eye courtesy the University of Pikeville!

Kirsten Hebert, Heritage Services Specialist
The Archives & Museum of Optometry

GUEST EDITORIAL: AMO COLLECTION MOVES TO UPIKE

The University of Pikeville has had a wonderful experience working with Kirsten Hébert and the Archives and Museum of Optometry. While there is still much yet to be done, we are excited about our current progress.

The mission of the Archives and Special Collections at the University of Pikeville has been to preserve the history and culture of the institution and the Appalachian area from which it grew. Over the past few years, however, the institution has grown in amazing ways. One of the developments has been the opening of the Kentucky College of Optometry, the first optometry school in Kentucky. This addition added a new facet to the institutional history and has led to our partnership with the Archives and Museum of Optometry to provide more accessibility to a unique collection.

In addition to offering physical storage, the University of Pikeville has a digital library and a digital catalog of materials available for researchers. In almost any archival situation, making sure that good, searchable data is available for researchers is the most time-intensive part of the preservation process. Kirsten and her team have worked hard to collect information about the items, and my team is now working to get that information organized for use in research. The process would not have been so seamless without all the hard work by the Archives and Museum of Optometry.

Now that the University of Pikeville has started the process of organizing the material here, we will soon be putting together exhibits. We have the space and the cases ready so that we can begin setting displays up once the organization is complete. The display space is a 675 square feet area in a well-trafficked section of the new Health Professions Education building. Free standing cases and wall mounted cases will provide a variety of display spaces, along with the possibility of a later digital component.

The University of Pikeville Archives and Special Collections, along with the Kentucky College of Optometry, are excited about the potential of this collection and honored by the opportunity to work with the Archives and Museum of Optometry. We look forward to sharing more about the development of the collection and its exhibition.

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