



# Behind-The Times

A Newsletter of Loyola University of Chicago Archives

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Best wishes for a HAPPY THANKSGIVING with family and friends. This academic year the Archives staff consists of three part-time student assistants, Terence Joyce, William Lum, and Lorraine Ojeda, all in their second year of archival work. Ms. Ojeda, a senior, spent the last academic year at the Rome Center. It seems that most years the Archives has a former student worker studying at LURC, and this academic year is no exception. Margaret McShane is enjoying LURC very much and is visiting all the museums she can after classes and study.

For this issue, I feel an urgency to interrupt my commentary on the Archives Statement of Purpose and the functions of the Archives at Loyola to discuss the need for a conservation program, a shared concern of archivists and librarians. The need for conservation and preservation measures is not restricted to academic institutions. It extends to all other institutions, including the home. For too many years we have considered most objects disposable, and that thinking has affected the minds of us all. We have created a "disposable mentality" and now it has begun to haunt us. It is not too late to reverse this mentality and to educate ourselves about the proper care of the resources given to us wherever we may be, and especially here at LU!

All around us, one sees valuable and cherished research materials and books slowly disintegrating into fragments. The main culprit is the poor quality paper made from wood pulp which has been produced since 1840.

Disintegration is then accelerated by constant exposure to the ultraviolet light of the sun and ultraviolet lamps, excessive moisture, fluctuations in temperature and humidity, the use of paper clips, dog-earing of pages, and the needless marking of documents or

books. Any combination of these factors will eventually render the document useless to the next researcher or reader.

An example of an important conservation measure was undertaken recently by the Archives. With the approval of Ellen J. Waite, University Librarian, and after consultation with Physical Plan personnel, the Archives obtained ultraviolet filters for the fluorescent lights in rooms 218, 219, 220 (Rare Book Room), and on Deck D. This installation reduces significantly the fading and deterioration caused by ultraviolet light.

After sufficient reflection, an institution, such as LU, has to formulate a plan to preserve archival and library holdings, which will also include installation of proper lighting as well as stabilized ventilation and heating. Finally, any institution, including LU, needs a disaster plan. If there is no plan when disaster strikes, much money will be wasted, not to speak of damage to materials, before the cleanup and restoration begins.

I recommend that all interested parties see, and perhaps see again, Slow Fires: On the Preservation of the Human Record, narrated by Robert MacNeil and lasting fifty-eight minutes. It can be requested in the VHS format from the LSC or WTC Audio Visual Services Department. This video can be watched by students, faculty, and staff with profit. Furthermore, the printed literature on preservation and conservation is growing constantly. In addition to the private sector, there are state and federal agencies willing to advise on these kinds of issues. With a plan in hand, Loyolans of the 1980s can leave a legacy to the Loyola researcher and reader of the 2080s!

--Bro. Michael J. Grace, S.J.  
University Archivist

## ARCHIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

Fifty years ago, 16 July 1938, Samuel Insull, renowned Chicago public utilities magnate, died in Paris, France. His life, extraordinary by any stretch of the imagination, is documented in his papers, donated to the Archives by his son, Samuel Insull, Jr., who was a member of Loyola's Board of Lay Trustees for 40 years.

Samuel Insull was born in 1859 in London, trained as a stenographer, and emigrated to the United States in 1881 to become Thomas Edison's private secretary. His organizational abilities were recognized by Edison, and Insull rose quickly in the fledgling electric industry, becoming vice president of Edison General Electric Company in 1889.

In 1892 Insull moved to Chicago to accept the presidency of Chicago Edison Company, the predecessor of Commonwealth Edison. He left an indelible imprint. Through his pioneering work in the economics of electric power supply, the Midwest was electrified. In the process, Insull built a vast public utilities empire and soared to great heights of power, prestige, and wealth. He saved People's Gas from bankruptcy, chaired the Council of Defense of Illinois during World War I, was a leader in providing employee benefits, and built the Civic Opera House.

In 1932 Insull became the focus of public bitterness after Insull securities crashed and Insull's top companies went into receivership, taking with them the savings of many small investors, and Insull himself. He left the country, was indicted by a Cook County grand jury, and extradited to Chicago where he stood trial in the federal courts on charges of mail fraud and violating the federal bankruptcy laws and in the state courts on charges of embezzlement. He was acquitted on all counts during 1934 and 1935.

Insull married actress, Margaret Anna Bird (stage name, Gladys Wallis) in 1899. They had one child, Samuel Insull, Jr., born in 1900. The family's loving support of each other was galvanized by the trial period.

The Samuel Papers reflect the fact that Insull, Jr., took care of his father's affairs after 1932 and was executor of his estate. Totalling 60 linear feet, the papers span the years, 1799 to 1962 (primarily, 1898-1938), and are divided into the following series:

1. General Correspondence of Samuel Insull, 1883-1938, relating to personal and business activities, the bulk between Insull, his wife, and his son.
2. General Correspondence of Samuel Insull, Jr., 1922-1945, relating to business and personal affairs, including condolences at the death of his father, acquittal congratulations, letters of encouragement, and correspondence with unhappy former investors.
3. Samuel Insull's 25th Anniversary with Commonwealth Edison Celebration, 1917.
4. Cyrus Eaton Correspondence, 1930, relating to Eaton's sale of a large block of Insull stock prior to the Insull crash.
5. George Fruh Death Threats, 1933.
6. Memoirs of Samuel Insull and His Conversations with His Arresting Officer, 1934-1962.
7. Insull Ledgers, 1899-1934.
8. Insull Enterprises, 1907-1938, 1957, including selected minutes, correspondence, prospectuses, agreements, annual reports, and other documents relating to companies with which Insull was connected.
9. Samuel Insull Estate, 1931-1942. Correspondence, solicitations, and legal documents concerning the trusts which controlled the estate.
10. Extradition and Trials of Samuel Insull, 1932-1925, including trial transcripts, Federal Trade Commission report on Corporation Securities Company of Chicago, and other documents relating to his extradition, first and second federal trials, and his state trial.
11. Clippings, 1916-1948, relating to Insull and his family.
12. State Council of Defense of Illinois, 1917-1919. Minutes, reports, and letter books.
13. Speeches of Samuel Insull, 1914-1937.
14. Insull Family and Miscellaneous Records, 1799-1938.

--Valerie Gerrard Browne  
Assistant University Archivist