



The Mari Sandoz Room in Love Library contains many of the books, letters and maps accumulated by the Nebraska author.

Photo by Kevin Higley

# Authors' thoughts, notes, mementos preserved

By Mark Young

To preserve the heritage of Nebraska authors, two rooms have been set aside in Lincoln Libraries. In Bennet Martin Library, the McKelvie Room contains the work of Nebraska authors great and small. Love Library's recently opened Mari Sandoz Room houses the written records of her career.

When the world-famous Sandoz died in 1966, she willed the books, letters and maps she had accumulated through a lifetime to the UNL libraries. These documents provide not only a treasure trove for scholars researching the author herself, but also a wealth of material for anyone interested in the Old West.

Boy Boyce, UNL special collections librarian, said, "Sandoz wanted her collection to be used." So, researchers and other interested parties may use the material located on the third floor of Love. Scott Grennwell, a UNL graduate student, has catalogued the notes and interviews with Nebraska historical figures.

The collection contains 25,000 pages of her personal correspondence and 350 maps, many of which were hand-drawn by Sandoz. A display traces the development of her most famous book *Old Jules*, a portrayal of her pioneer father. Also included is Sandoz's working library of approximately 1,000 books. It was from these books that much of the accurate historical body of her works was drawn.

Even to the casual observer, the collection provides insight into the author's multi-faceted personality. The large notebooks which contain the research for *Old Jules* are filled with scrawled notes made from her reading of panhandle newspapers of the period. The rough drafts of her works show the care with which she approached the materials.

In her collection of books are many volumes familiar to all writers—*Barclay's Quotations*, *Bullfinch's Mythology* and a dog-eared copy of *Writer's Guide*.

In addition to books used for research, the library shows Sandoz' diverse tastes. The Buffalo hunters and Indians shared her attention with H.L. Mencken's *The American Language and Philosophy*. The volumes are filled with marginal notations in Sandoz's handwriting. Caustic comments are directed at portions with which Sandoz disagreed. On a somewhat whimsical note a United Airlines flight map was found among the old hand-drawn maps of the Great Plains.

In contrast to the Sandoz room, the McKelvie room houses a wide array of Nebraska authors. First editions, manuscripts and memorabilia are all included in the collection.

The collection was started by Martha McKelvie, wife of Gov. Samuel McKelvie (1919-1922), who wished to contribute to the new library. Mrs. McKelvie donated her own collection of books and a set of rich, ivory inlaid

furniture. This donation comprises 90 per cent of the current collection. The Library's own Nebraska authors collection enhances the city library role in preservation of Nebraska authors' works.

Apart from the antiques and Sam McKelvie's boots (he had very small feet) the collection's chief attractions are its books and manuscripts by little-known authors. Not only are the books of some interest, but the authors often provide added color all their own. Former curator Ethel Mower has compiled brief biographies of the famous and near-famous authors, which may be published in the future.

Take, for example, Weldon Kees, a poet from Beatrice. After graduation from UNL he hit the artistic trail writing poems, producing films and dabbling in painting. In July, 1955, the same day that an article by Kees entitled "How to be Happy Installment 1053" appeared in the *New Republic* his car was found parked near the Golden Gate Bridge. He hasn't been seen since.

If Bennet Martin builds their planned addition a larger rare book room will be added. This new room, probably to be called the Nebraska Heritage room, will encompass the present collection and other items. Among the rare books is a copy of Machiavelli's *The Prince* printed in London in 1636. The larger room also will allow the furniture and glassware donated by McKelvie to be displayed better.

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