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Maintaining Our Legacy

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Maintaining our Legacy

BY MELODIE ROSCHMAN

The collection of rooms in the basement of the James White Library on the campus of Andrews University may seem unassuming to most, but for Juliette Johnson, digitization manager at the Center for Adventist Research, they're a treasure trove.

"There are some really interesting things here that no one knows we have," she says, "and there are so many things that we don't even know we have. We find things every day that were given to us in the '50s, '40s, '30s, and were never processed, so we're discovering new stuff all the time."

The Center, which receives support from Andrews University, the White Estate and the General Conference, is a concentrated effort to collect any and all materials pertaining to the history and legacy of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. These can range from the expected — such as editions of Ellen White's books and early issues of *Signs of the Times* — to the strange or extraordinary.

"We have the cane that Uriah Smith used," Juliette says with a laugh, "and we have his prosthetic. It's funny, in the collection it says that we have Uriah Smith's leg in our vault!"

The thousands of items in the archives range from a complete catalog of *Student Movement* (Andrews University's student newspaper) to letters home to General Conference president William Spicer from his daughter, who was a missionary in China; from William Miller's pen and



The digitizer in the Center for Adventist Research will allow anyone access to electronic versions of everything in the Center, including 3-dimensional images of objects and artifacts.

Joseph Bates' pocket watch to the complete DVD series of "Gilmore Girls" which featured an unflattering portrayal of Adventism in the character of Mrs. Kim.

"If it mentions Adventism, it's there," Juliette explains. "We're not just trying to promote our church; it's basically to give someone a view into our history, 'warts' and all."

Juliette has been working on digitizing and scanning

the Center's contents since 2005, but now she has a new project: the Adventist Digital Library, which will launch January 2016. The library seeks to make a vast number of full-text books, articles, letters and images available online for free to anyone interested in Adventist history.

"It's not just the digitized materials," she says, "we're also planning to have articles, and that kind of thing, to get people interested in going deeper into searching." She hopes the digital library will be a special resource for Adventist educators who seek to get their students passionate about the heritage of their church.

With this in mind, Juliette's personal passion and project is to raise \$10,000 for the equipment and labor necessary to use a 3D digital scanner to recreate some of the Center's

more unique holdings — like evangelist William Simpson’s paper-mâché beasts from Revelation — as fully explorable models on the web.

“Being able to see these tangible representations of Adventist history can make it real for many members,” says Juliette. “I’m connected. I know who I am now.”

Ultimately, she hopes the upcoming digital project — and the Center as a whole — can help Adventist children and

adults remember where they come from, and what their purpose is.

“I want to highlight artifacts and say, ‘Look, these are our people who spread the gospel and sacrificed so much, but they were just like you and me. Maybe we can do something like that. Maybe we can change the world, too.’”

Melodie Roschman is a graduate student writer for the Division of Integrated Marketing & Communication at Andrews University.

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needed to,” he smiles, “but I understand where that came from.”

In March 2015, Kenley traveled to Columbia, Maryland, to teach a one-week intensive class for a master’s in pastoral ministry. The class met every day from Sunday to Thursday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., and at 5 p.m. on Thursday, Kenley prayed a blessing over his 22 students. When he had finished, they gathered around him and explained that they liked to give gifts to their professors as thanks. “The best gift we can give you is the gift of prayer,” they said.

“So they gathered around me,” Kenley remembers, “laid their hands on me, and this woman, a lay pastor, begins to pray. Unbeknownst to me, when she’d seen me on Sunday night, she said, ‘God, I know what you want me to do this week,’ and she literally went on a complete fast through this entire intensive class, fasting and praying for a stranger. That was mind-boggling for me.”

As his students prayed, Kenley began to pray too — a very different prayer.

“I was saying ‘God, I’m at peace. When they’re done praying ... I don’t want it to be devastating to their faith when I don’t jump up, throw off my leg braces and start running around the room.’”

The moment the prayer ended, though, Kenley’s eyes widened. For the first time in months, he felt a prickling sensation in his toes. Within seconds, he was wiggling his toes. “You know, this may not be significant to you,” he exclaimed, “but this is huge for me!” He smiles. “In that moment, we praised God that I could wiggle my toes.”

When Kenley returned to his hotel room that night, he wondered if anything else might happen. He slowly removed his leg braces and stood up. “The next thing I knew, I was walking back and forth across my hotel room,” he says

excitedly. “I had complete nerve regeneration in my upper and lower legs.”

Kenley flew home on Friday, and Monday morning he went in to see his physiotherapist. Greg ran a few tests, but it quickly became clear: Kenley’s legs and feet were restored to almost perfect strength. “You’re done; you’re healed,” his therapist said.

“There was nothing left for me to do,” Greg shakes his head. “I’ve been doing this 18 years, and I’ve never seen anything like it. God still does really amazing things sometimes. There’s just no denying what he did.”

Today, Kenley can move and walk without difficulty. While the future is unsure — he could suffer another relapse, Kenley remains confident and at peace.

“I have no idea what eight years from now is going to look like,” he says, “but I really don’t care because I’m just going to live with God right now in this moment. Whatever happens, it simply doesn’t matter, because God’s got my back.”

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