

What really happened? The answer is in the Archives...for now.

Archives provide insights into puzzles from the past. And historical puzzles often have many pieces. To get a balanced picture, you need to look at events from more than one point of view, and in the words of the people who were actually there.

In March 1967 a student at Templeton High School in Vancouver was suspended for writing a parody of the school's literary magazine. Five teaching assistants from SFU went to the school to hold a rally in support of the student's right to speak out.

Radical hotheads...?

According to the minutes of SFU's Board of Governors, the rebellious teaching assistants damaged the reputation of SFU by leading the protest. "Their conduct was a negation of the democratic process and further in the letter they recommended contempt for the law and these actions reflected discredit on the University."

The Board promptly fired them for their sins.

...or martyrs?

The next day, *The Peak* published a special edition that reflected the views of students and most faculty: five bold TAs were unjustly punished for their off-campus activities in support of free speech. Student Society president Stan Wong angrily declared, "The Board's action showed more concern about our image than the rights and academic freedom on which this university was founded." Tom Bottomore called the Board "hasty and intemperate" and resigned as Dean of Arts in protest.

While the Board of Governors held a ten hour debate to reconsider their decision, hundreds of students attended a day-long rally in the mall and prepared for a general strike. A chastened Board had to rehire the teaching assistants. Stan Wong suggested that the Board deserved applause for admitting they were wrong.

The issue quickly garnered the university a 6.5 grade in *The Peak* of March 17, 1967.



the peak
Special council meeting called

McFog regrets affair, issues call for unity

EMERGENCY MEETING

Board of Governors Minutes, March 16, 1967, SFU Archives. >



The *Peak* of March 17, 1967.

A voice for calm

University President Patrick McTaggart-Cowan, interviewed on tape in 1986, thought that it should have been left to faculty to tell the TAs, "Chums, cool it a little. That was sort of stupid." But "Gordon Shrum got roughed up in the snakepit of the Vancouver Club" by the business community. He brought it before the Board and "all hell broke loose." McTaggart-Cowan didn't agree with the Board's action. "The only thing I did wrong was not resigning on the spot."



Patrick McTaggart-Cowan was SFU's first President. Looking back on the 20th anniversary of the beginning of the end for him at SFU, he was fired in May 1968 after almost five years. SFU Archives.



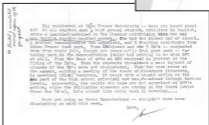
Until recently, oral histories were commonly recorded using analog audio tape.

The view from outside

Ann Messenger, an English instructor at UBC, described the "big excitement at Simon Fraser University," in a letter to her parents in Pittsburgh. Her thoughts reflected the faculty point of view that the Board should not dismiss instructors for expressing their opinions as private citizens. Messenger herself joined the SFU faculty the following year.



Ann Messenger and her husband lived at the University of California at Berkeley to check out Vancouver universities. UBC Archives.



Letter from Ann Messenger to her parents, March 10, 1967. SFU Archives.

Fighting digital amnesia

When Hugh Johnston wrote *Radical Campus: Making Simon Fraser University* he drew from records that covered the University's first ten years. He found information in minutes, newspapers, letters, oral histories and photographs. What sources will be available to a researcher in 2065 who wants to write about SFU for our 100th anniversary?

Many records that were once created on paper or in analog form are now created electronically. But digital records are ephemeral. To remain accessible with ever-changing hardware and software, they must be regularly backed-up, refreshed, and migrated. Without a plan and resources to preserve electronic records, the 2065 researcher will be out of luck.

The SFU Archives is keeping abreast of research on solutions to this challenge, and looking at best practices in other institutions. Ultimately, it's up to all of us to make an institutional commitment to maintain SFU's electronic records for the future. It will take policy, people, and systems.



Newspaper demonstrates rapidly because of high acidity. >



Which of these would fit into your computer today? Could you still retrieve the records stored on them?



Your Archives. Your University.

Join the SFU Archives in working to ensure the preservation of one of our university's most precious assets – its digital heritage.

