

Interviewee: Sandy (Alexander) Craig
UoS Dates: 1972 - 2004
Role(s): Print Room Supervisor



Interview summary:

Summary of content; with time (min:secs)

Start 00:10 – SC was a Print Room Supervisor for thirty two years and comments they were very enjoyable days. The Department to begin with was based in both Pathfoot and Airthrey Castle. This was due to the Administration operating from Airthrey Castle so half the Department had to work up there. Photocopier operated by staff in Airthrey and Pathfoot along with duplicating machines which were a nightmare. The secretaries would type on to stencils and then the Print Room would run the quantities that they needed. Trouble was the same stencils were constantly used and they burnt out and sometimes Elastoplast was used to keep them together. SC's job wasn't advertised. He was actually recommended through a third party for the role. Gavin Thomson who was Assistant Secretary to Derek Lang became his boss. He was formally interviewed by Gavin Thomson and Bob McIntosh at Airthrey Castle. Got the job offer within the week of his interview.

04:10 – They were fortunate that it felt like one big family in the early days, however change was gradual over time. SC remembers working on the Court papers, and having to get the porters to put tables up in Pathfoot to put papers on. He would run up and down the hallway with fellow staff collating pages and putting them in the Print Room to be stitched together. The porter would take them to either Airthrey Castle or parts of Cottrell depending where the publication was for. They were reluctant to leave Pathfoot as it was a friendly place. However there was an excitement about Cottrell over its newness. They were originally going to be placed near the typing pool. Same corridor as Gavin Thomson and Tommy Lamb. Lamb had anxiety over whether the noise of machines in an admin area would cause problems so they were moved to level one in the basement of Cottrell. It was definitely the right place for the Department especially considering the noise of machines.

09:14 – The Print Room was used by every department in the university so SC felt he got to know everyone. So it was possible in the early days to know everyone you passed and say hello. As the staff grew this wasn't as easy and eventually stopped. Felt to be one of the saddest side effects of expansion.

09:53 – Nan Pickles was Senior Operator, Gail Bisset and Celia Rankin were fellow colleagues in Pathfoot. SC had to go between Pathfoot and Airthrey Castle. In the Castle worked Ida Stevenson who operated the IBM composing machine, Elsa Martin was a copier, Joanne Kelso operated the addressing machine for the universities outgoing correspondence. The machine was replaced with a better one, with progress in technology. John Teale in the Computer Unit helped take up some of the load in that area.

12:15 – SC recalls a few of the machines he worked with. The composing machine was similar to an electric type-writer with many different type faces. Ida could interchange to suit the jobs: there were a great deal of them. Often it was used for invitations or admissions cards. There were two foil printing presses, bindery had one which they used for students'

theses with gold foil headings. The Print Room had one which used multiple colour foils. It was often used to create door signs throughout Pathfoot. Often if a person left they would take their sign with them. It was a continuous role they had to do in the Department. They did it up to the '90s when technology improved. It was tedious to use the printing press but it served a purpose and worked very well. Believes University still has it but it is never used.

17:34 – The Print Room did a lot of work for the MacRobert Centre. The Centre's Publicity Officer Rosemary Harvey, would often bring people from the Centre over to the Print Department. Would bring over actors who needed copies of their scripts. Robert Innes, Head of Continuing Education, relied on the Department a great deal. Continuing Education was a very demanding department as it brought in money to the University. Jimmy Shand came into the department, SC knew his son. Shand had written six pieces of music he wanted to donate to the Queen Mother. They could copy music but not in the way he hoped.

22:10 – The department started doing private printing which brought in a lot of revenue. They would pass people on to other printers in the local area if they couldn't do it. Word of mouth spread really far. The Department did work for two hospices, Strathcarron and Marie Curie in Edinburgh, both at marked down rates. SC remembers helping two officers from the Argyll Highlander regiment. They wanted a quantity of books which would be presented to the Queen. Only twenty copies were made, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Queen being Commander-in- chief of the Argylls. He received a thank you note for doing the job and enjoyed it greatly.

26:00 – SC recalls being caught up in the student sit-in. He remembers Linda Quinn (then Student Union President) and John Davenport and the good relations the CSA had with the print room. Students were dependent on the Print Room for everything mainly up until the '90s before personal printing was available. Jobs ranged from lecture notes through to theses. Theses often had priority. When the sit-in came the print room was up to its neck in work. SC personally pleaded with Quinn and Davenport to allow the department to continue working. The whole building was chained shut, the students had taken over the print room and the porters. Due to their relationship they were allowed to continue to operate. What happened though was the hierarchy decided they wanted to print stuff that would get the students to rethink what they were doing. When students found out the staff were asked to leave.

31:48 – Nan Pickles, Senior Operator in the Print Room, was picked to be part of the welcome party for Princess Diana on her visit to the University. There was a special University newspaper printed to commemorate the event. SC helped pick photos for the paper and once done it was duplicated and distributed.

34:00 – SC recalls being friendly with an Egyptian PhD student. He used to frequent the Print Room. They chatted about papyrus paper. SC printed the student's thesis. A brown envelope from Egypt arrived from the student that held papyrus in it. SC also remembers students being stressed and also Ramadan. They helped how they could, the women staff would give the two students tea. Two Accountancy students going through resits were often in the print room and were stressed due to academic issues and religion. They invited the female staff round to their flat and intended to cook them a meal to say thank you. In the end, they cooked the meal and brought it over to the print room and it looked like a feast.

37:44 – Two students that SC remembers well were MPs Jack McConnell and John Reid who both frequented the Print Room, always wanting something and pleading poverty. Jack was a Councillor at the time. John Reid came back to the University through invitation when he was Secretary of State for Northern Ireland under Tony Blair. John had asked if SC still worked in the Print Room so instead of going where he was meant to, he came down to the Print Room requesting SC to do something for him - but he didn't pay for it.

40:40 – SC can remember hearing about Stirling University in the 50s. He went to Stirling High School and had a History teacher who he believes was brought in to teach History at the University: Jessie Thomson, local history buff. She told them one day in class that the University had been a long time coming and a promise from James VI of Scotland.

43:40 – One of the greatest issues was the ever changing size of the campus. It became so big that everyone began reminiscing about the early days. The work-load also became more demanding with more pressure on deadlines. The University was still trying to find its way. People had ideas about direction but that was only going to come through time. Computers also changed everything and brought frustrations as well as benefits. People came and went so you started missing them. SC recalls a funny moment with a Biology lecturer and his strange experiment for Birdseye.

48:10 – Fred Smyth became the University's first Registrar and they were very close. The Print Room was originally part of the university administration which was in the Cottrell building and they were told they'd be kept as part of the Administration. However, they were subsequently detached and were linked with the Library and ultimately the Department became part of Information Services.

53:08 – The Department tried to spend money responsibly but the equipment they had was basic and they had to spend a fair bit of money to update it. The photocopiers were on lease. They had equipment that would make other printers jealous. They were able to print newsletters for as far away as Lochearnhead. Bob McCutcheon, a local historian had a lot of pieces printed. He focused on small towns around Stirling. It was gratifying for SC to serve the public and it brought

money into the University. A lot of members of the public who used the printing services would also use other University services. Never heard anyone saying anything negative about the University beyond the car parking facilities.

[Ends 57:53]

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