

# McHenry Library is its name; and information is its game

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**S**ANTA CRUZ — In the information age, a good library is like a thinking person's Disneyland.

Yet, the one in our own backyard, UCSC's McHenry Library, is sadly underused by the off-campus community, according to library staff.

If it's information you want, McHenry the right place. But don't bother looking for the ultimate col-

lection of Harlequin romance novels or children's learning materials.

"We get people once in a while who come in thinking they'll find a better collection of children's education materials, but there are some things you're better off looking for at the public library," said Margaret Robinson, head of reference services for the university library.

It is a research library, but don't be intimidated. It's also a public resource — paid for with your tax dollars — and there are more than

two dozen staff members eager to help you learn how to use it.

"We're not worried about over-usage," said Robinson. "A great investment has been made here and it would be the same whether it was just used by the campus population of 8,000 or many more."

There are a couple of other ground rules: Expect to yield to students (especially around finals time), and be prepared to take the bus up to campus or park away and walk up. Some things are worth the extra effort.

Also, don't ask the librarians for legal advice or tax assistance. Their specialty is showing you how to find information so you can draw your own conclusions, not not memorizing and interpreting the information for you.

And, as the librarian points out, they are not lawyers or accountants.

**T**HE LIBRARY is open and free to the public for browsing and research, but books may only be checked out by students, faculty and staff, or by people who join "Friends of the Library" for a minimum membership fee of \$15.

With those things in mind, the place is your oyster. And what an oyster: More than 800,000 books and a computer system listing millions more throughout the UC system.

That sounds like a slice of heaven to a person for whom getting past a bookstore is like trying to get a dog past a fire hydrant; a person who spends an occasional weekend looking for out-of-the-way antique stores that have small collections of old books hidden in dusty corners.

Although many students spend lots and lots of time at McHenry during their four or more years of matriculation, Robinson said the university library really is not the borderline social center that public libraries sometimes are.

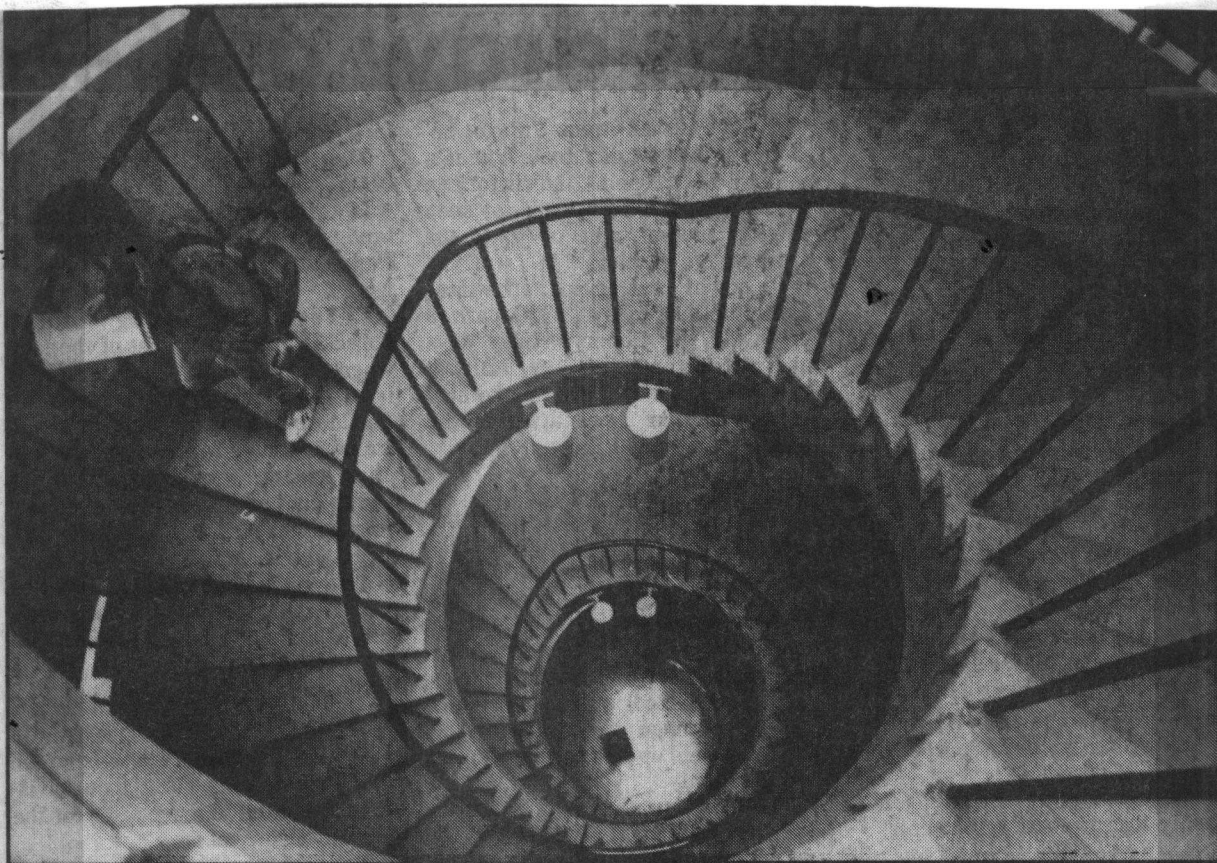
"People are usually very focused when they come here. They've got research to do and papers to write. You don't find many people coming here to relax," Robinson said.

**M**OST non-students go to McHenry for tax, legal and business information, accord-



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

There is solitude among the stacks.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

## The depths of the McHenry Library yield a treasure chest of information.

ing to the librarian. But far more people don't go there than do.

The library doesn't see nearly as many people in this so-called information age as one would think, according to Wayne Mullin, head of access services and 20-year veteran of the info biz.

"It seems to me that over the last few years, the increased need for library services has paralleled the growth in population. People need information, but there is competition that didn't exist before," Mullin said. "There are vendors of information, sort of information brokers, that have popped up."

He used to work for one several years ago, before returning to library services. "People are paying for information that they can get from the library for free," he said.

Part of the reason may be that they don't know they can get the information themselves, he said, but a lot of the reason is that it's faster and easier to pay someone to do it for you.

Robinson said she and other reference librarians happily field some requests, by phone and in person, for

answers. Occasionally though, the request is outrageously complicated. "If someone calls and asks something like how many people are using computers in Santa Cruz right this minute, there's a way to figure that out, but I'm not going to take on questions that take four hours to answer," she said. She'll tell you to come in so she can show you how to find out for yourself.

Research is a lot more fun than it used to be, she said. "The questions you're answering are a lot more interesting, and the tedium of the search doesn't exist in the same way."

**C**OMPUTER technology is a large part of that. For example, McHenry has no card catalog, only computer and microfiche. But manual resources have also improved, Robinson said.

There are dozens of bound sets of abstracts and guides. In the psychological abstracts, Robinson looked for information on stress among journalists. Embarrassingly enough, she found studies of incidences of alcoholism among journalists and a curious entry about "fear of redundancy."

If the manual sources don't produce what you're looking for, the library offers computer database searches for a fee. Costs vary with each of the approximately 100 databases, and are charged according to computer time used and number of entries searched. The more specific or unusual your topic, the less time used.

If you request all information about Santa Cruz, you'll end up with thousands of listings.

A search for information on surfers in the psychological database turned up two: A study on "Conflict, Stereotypes and Masculinity in Australian and New Zealand Surfing," and "The Antecedents of Chosen Joblessness."

Access, time and other charges would be 85 cents for that.

The staff offers tours of the library at the start of each quarter, with the most at the start of the fall term. During the tour, or at other times if they're not busy, staff can show you how to use all the fancy equipment, Robinson said.

A new quarter starts next week, and tour information is available by calling 429-2802.