



Guide to the Perkins Library Suggestion/Answer Book, 1982-2006

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Summary

Collection Title:

Perkins Library suggestion/answer book, 1982-2006

Creator:

Duke University Library

Abstract:

The Perkins Library Suggestion/Answer book was a loose-leaf binder set up in the lobby of Perkins Library from 1982 until about 2006 in which people could write comments, suggestions, or questions, which were answered in the book by the Answer Person, a librarian. The collection consists of the original pages of the Perkins Library Suggestion/Answer book ranging from 1982 to approximately 2006. These pages have handwritten questions and typed responses as well as some items or materials attached to the original pages.

Extent:

3 Linear Feet

Language:

English

Language:

Materials in English

Collection ID:

UA.08.07.0003

Permalink:

<http://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/findingaids/uaperkinsanswerbook>

Preferred Citation

[Identification of item], in the Perkins Library suggestion/answer book, 1982-2006, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

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Background

Scope and Content

The collection consists of the original pages of the Perkins Library Suggestion/Answer book ranging from 1982 to approximately 2006. These pages have handwritten questions and typed responses as well as some items or materials attached to the original pages. A number of single pages are missing throughout the collection, and may have been removed or lost by individuals while pages moved around in the answering process. The collection also includes loose photocopies of some runs of pages as well as a bound photocopy version of the first 1,000 pages and a copy of the undated selected excerpts compiled by Library staff in the 1990s.

Biographical/Historical

The Perkins Library suggestion/answer book was started in September of 1982, as a loose-leaf binder set up in the lobby of Perkins Library, by John Lubans. Each page in the book had a spaces for three suggestions/questions and three answers. Beginning in October of that year, groups of pages with written suggestions and questions were removed periodically, taken home by Lubans, who wrote out answers which were then typed directly onto the original pages by an administrative assistant, and placed back in the book for the public to read. Most people not on the Library staff did not know the identity of the Answer Person, which was a popular mystery for many years.

For some years, the binders were available in the Reference area after the pages filled up; then photocopied versions were bound into volumes and included in the Perkins and Lily Library stacks. In 1993, a "best of" selection was printed in a limited run in-house, and another similar set of selections were compiled into a printed version at an unknown date around that time. Starting in the early 2000s, the suggestion/answer book went online, with a version that included past excerpts, and eventually went all digital, with users able to submit questions directly through the website.

John Lubans, the librarian behind the suggestion/answer book, came to Duke in 1982 as a Public Services Librarian and brought the idea with him from a previous position at the University of Colorado's library. He answered the vast majority of the questions/suggestions in the early years, soliciting help from other University persons outside of Perkins Library as appropriate. He retired in 2001 and several others in Perkins Library assisted in contributing to the book in its later forms. At some point in the late 1990s, Reference Librarian Ken Burger became the Answer Person, and starting at some point in the early 2000s, John Little contributed significantly as well.

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Administrative Information

Publication Statement

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Access Restrictions

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Use Restrictions

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Processing Information

Processed by: Tracy M. Jackson, 2015, and University Archives staff, unknown.

Finding aid derived from MARC record, November 2014; edited to include description and instances.

Acquisition Information

The bulk of the collection was the gift of John Lubans, 2015. Other portions were transferred to the University Archives in multiple accessions.

Accessions described in this finding aid: UA2015-0053, others.

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Related Materials

Related Material

Electronic excerpts available for contents dated 1999-2006 in Perkins Library Online Suggestion Book: <http://blogs.library.duke.edu/answerperson/>

Bound copies of the photocopied original pages and the selected excerpts are available in the circulating collection: [Perkins Library suggestion/answer book, 1992-2006](#) and [Perkins Library suggestion/answer book : a sampling of exchanges between Duke University faculty, library staff, and students](#). Both are available through the library catalog.

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Names and Subjects

- Academic libraries -- Reference services -- North Carolina -- Durham
- Libraries -- User satisfaction
- Duke University. Library
- Duke University. Library. Answer Person

Collection Inventory

Page 1-2099, 1982-1992	Box 1
Page 2100-3159, 1992-circa 2006	Box 2

Page 3160-3504, 2004-2007	Box 3
Scope and Contents	
Some pages are missing.	
<hr/>	
Born-digital Q&As, 2000-2004	Box 3
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Loose photocopies of pages 2700-2818, 1997-1998	Box 2
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Loose photocopies of pages 2774-3299, 1999-2006	Box 3
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Loose photocopies of pages 3300-3550, 2006- circa 2007	Box 4
<hr/>	
Bound photocopies of pages 1-1000, 1988	Box 2
<hr/>	
The Answer Book, excerpts, undated, approximately 1993	Box 2
<hr/>	
Press coverage, 2000-2004	Box 3
<hr/>	
Answer Person Live, 2002-2003	Box 3
<hr/>	
Online book (web design), 2002-2004	Box 3