John D. MacDonald Collection Processing Plan

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George A. Smathers Libraries - Mini-Grant Application  
Principal Investigator – Florence M. Turcotte  
Secondary Applicant – Dina Benson  
Department of Special and Area Studies Collections  

John D. MacDonald Collection Processing Plan  
Funds Requested: $4,990.59  
Cost Share: $1,895.78  

The John D. MacDonald Collection Processing Plan grant project will produce a comprehensive inventory of unprocessed materials from the John D. MacDonald Collection. Grant activity will also yield an integrated and executable processing plan for this massive, currently unwieldy collection of more than 369 feet of manuscripts, correspondence, galleys, photos, books and magazines. In addition, development activity is proposed in the grant.  

Resources Required  
Besides the efforts of the principal investigator, Florence Turcotte, who will oversee the project, the bulk of the Libraries’ cost share activities will be performed by Dina Benson, Assistant Coordinator of Public and Support Services, who will supervise the grant-funded student archive assistant’s work. John Nemmers, Descriptive and Processing Archivist, will also provide professional and technical expertise throughout the project on a cost-share basis. We will also engage the services of two outside consultants, Calvin and Nola Branche, accomplished John D. MacDonald scholars who will assist with inventory preparation and with the decisions regarding arrangement and formulation of a processing plan. Travel expenses for the consultants, who reside in Pasco County, are also included in the proposed grant budget. A small amount of archival material will be used, and computer equipment currently residing in the department will suffice for the purposes of this grant activity.  

Background Information  
John Dann MacDonald was born July 24, 1916 in Sharon, Pennsylvania. Following his discharge from military service at the end of WWII, he began to write full-time. MacDonald’s first published short story, “Interlude in India,” appeared in Story magazine in the July/August 1946 issue. He continued selling his short stories to magazines while working on his first full-length novel, The Brass Cupcake, which was published in 1950. Two years and five novels later,
MacDonald settled into his longtime home in Sarasota, Florida, where he wrote over sixty novels, contributed to anthologies and magazines, assisted in film and television adaptations of his writings, taught at New College, served on the board of directors of the Ringling School of Art, and participated in local environmental preservation efforts. He is best known for his series of detective novels featuring the protagonist Travis Magee. He was named a grand master of the Mystery Writers of America in 1972 and won the American Book Award in 1980. He died on December 28, 1986.

**Narrative Summary**

The goals of the John D. MacDonald Processing Plan project center on improvement of this important and comprehensive literary collection for increased user accessibility and potential development. This is an opportunity to bring order to an overlooked collection that is truly unique, making the Smathers Libraries the paramount destination for present and future MacDonald scholars and devotees. The formulation of a reorganization plan in cooperation with expert MacDonald consultants will culminate in an ideal arrangement of the physical materials as well as a complete finding aid on the Department of Special and Area Studies website. With the digitization of this finding aid, the content of the collection may be studied by any number of patrons, whether they are local undergraduates interested in detective pulp fiction, longtime MacDonald fans, screenwriters hoping to bring more of MacDonald’s work to the big or small screen, or scholars from universities across the country and around the world. It is hoped that an increase in the visibility of this collection will open up development opportunities among stakeholders. Toward that end, some of these grant funds will be used to finance a visit to a prominent member of this community of stakeholders, Jean Shine.

**A Rich Collection in Dire Straits**

Currently, no online finding aid for the collection exists. There is a typewritten guide in a three-ring binder in the research room. The first accession of materials, which was deposited in the Smathers Libraries by the author before his death and subsequently bequeathed to the Libraries, consists of 229 boxes of material in a series described only as “General.” Successive accessions were arranged into other series described as “Manuscripts and Related Material,” “Biographical and Personal,” and so forth, as shown in the following table: