

Book theft is bereft of clues

by Wayne Paal
staff writer

Though the search for Oakland University's missing rare books has stretched from Cambridge, Mass., to suburban St. Louis, Mo., investigators are concentrating present efforts close to the Rochester area campus.

"We're looking very closely at the possibility of an inside theft," said investigator Mel Gilroy of the OU Department of Public Safety.

He added that the possibility of an inside felon receiving inside help is also being considered.

While Gilroy said there are no suspects in the theft, information gleaned from other rare book thefts indicates insiders are involved in nearly 90 percent of all cases.

A revised list of the books taken shows 336 missing titles, representing 10 volumes.

The missing volumes carry a value of \$77,600, based upon a 1979 appraisal of the university's 10,000-volume rare book collection, housed in a controlled access area of the Kresge Library.

Preliminary figures showed 352 missing volumes but Gilroy said additional, less expensive, volumes were also discovered missing during an inventory of the collection.

"These were volumes generally under \$100, many of which were uncatalogued," Gilroy said.

THE MAJOR discovery involved a collection of volumes by 18th-century poet William Blake.

Twenty volumes of a 23-volume Blake collection turned up missing during inventory, investigators said.

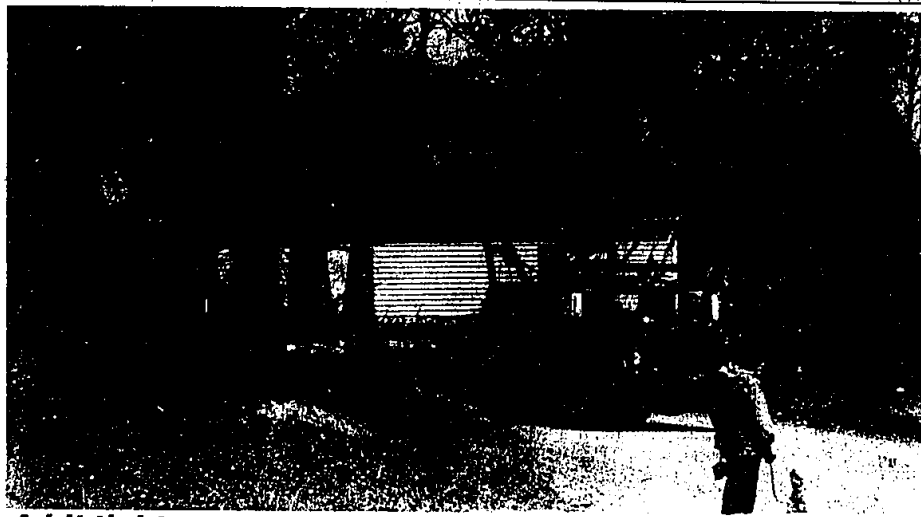
"We had a difficult time substantiating any of the Blake books at all," Gilroy said.

Though the time frame remains sketchy, investigators have been able to trace one of the less-expensive volumes back to last October. At least ten volumes were known to be in place in the collection at times during the past three years, according to investigators.

Investigators are continuing their study of a theft at Harvard University in Cambridge, Mass.

"I wouldn't necessarily say there was a link, but there is a similarity in that (catalog) cards were taken there, too," Gilroy said.

THEY HAVE, however, virtually ruled out any connection between the OU theft and a cache of books uncovered earlier this year in a St. Louis suburb.



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