

Case Study

Number 11 - Library/Periodicals

The Customer

*Richland County Library
Columbia, South Carolina*

What Was Found

Switching from the traditional method of storing periodicals to a system using Oblique suspended filing compartments has enabled the Richland County Public Library in Columbia, South Carolina, to save up to 70% of the space normally required for such storage.

The Library receives 1,300 current titles on a yearly basis. These periodicals are kept on file for an average of 3 to 5 years before being microfilmed. Even then, some of the microfilmed magazines are returned to the files for further use by the library's patrons. Mrs. Carol Duggan, Chief Adult Services Librarian notes, "We feel that one of our strong points in this library is our periodical collection. We have 6 microfilm readers, but we have many more patrons than 6 people at a given time. So while we use the microfilm, we are able to keep an extra backlog of some magazines even though we have them on microfilm. I'd hate to think what that area would look like if they weren't filed in Oblique folders!"

What Happened...

The library first installed Oblique compartments for periodical storage in 1968. That first row of Oblique folders in the periodical section was to hold National Geographic magazines, four to a folder. Right next to it was a case of shelves holding the same number of National Geographics in stacks. Duggan says, "You could just see how many more magazines



you could get into that one row of space!" An equal amount of magazines stacked in the traditional method took up practically the whole case of shelves."

In 1969 the library began converting to the new system using the Oblique folders. Cantilever rail assemblies were used to retrofit the library's existing shelving.

The main problem in conversion, Duggan feels, is proper planning, "It's two things," she says. "It's a way of filing but it's also a system. You have to set it up as a system. You don't just get a lot of folders and put your magazines in them. You have to plan what you're going to do and then it becomes simple. Oblique worked with us and showed us the most efficient system for our purposes and he helped us design our System."

Periodical Librarian, Ms. Jackie Pierson, said, "There's no way we could have the backfile without this system. Not only would we not have the space, we wouldn't have the time to find anything. We operate with a small staff. At nights we have only one person in that area. That person can now retrieve everything we need for our reader's purposes. We just couldn't give

this service with a traditional system."

In 1994, Richland County Library proudly moved to its brand new location in a state-of-the-art facility in downtown Columbia (pictured above).

The J.E. Pope Company provided the static shelving for the new building and, once again—almost thirty years after their first Oblique installation—the library chose Oblique to house their extensive periodicals collection. After 31 years, the Richland County Public Library's staff is still elated with their system using Oblique folders. It's been a system that's been easy to move, easy to rearrange and easy to expand. It has been cost effective as well as time saving.

For aesthetic reasons, the original tan folders purchased in 1969 were replaced by new gray folders when they moved to the new building. However, Pierson notes, that the original folders were showing no signs of needing replacement.

Duggan adds, "It seems so logical, you wonder why somebody didn't think of it before. I wish somebody would invent something this easy and effective for books!"