FIRST STEPS

One of the first steps taken in preparing for participation in the Rice Historical Images Project was the assembling of a skeletal structure of terms specific to both Rice University and its earlier incarnation as the William M. Rice Institute.

The primary research tools used were archival maps and blueprints, newspaper accounts contemporaneous with the University's building schedule, campus telephone directories, and online entries (including Wikipedia). Alphabetical lists of building names, and names of University departments and schools, were cross-referenced for name changes effective during the University's history, and checked against the corporate LCNAF.

PEOPLE, PLACES, AND THINGS

It was clear from the start that an unusually large number of LOCAL headings would need to be constructed, the bulk of them in the form of corporate headings for departments and organizations, university buildings and structures, as well as headings related to the city of Houston.

Once the project commenced a large number of personal name headings were also required, for faculty, staff, students, members of the Houston business community, city and state politicians, and others.

The smallest number of LOCAL headings were reserved for 'things': in other words, for events or activities which were unique to the history of Rice as an institution.

THE DESIRE FOR CONSISTENCY

The use of LOCAL headings gave us the latitude to delve deeply into the metadata description of each image, but every attempt was made to model these headings upon valid forms already in LC, whether the LOCAL heading was for a building name, a student organization, or a member of the faculty.

We quickly learned that bannering consistency as one of the most important qualities of the thesaurus would demand patience and flexibility, as new image-types or additional archival information made our earlier entries obsolete or overly unique.

LOOKING FORWARD, LOOKING BACK

Building a progressive thesaurus which is both a melding of valid LC headings and LOCAL headings requires the flexibility of being able to return from time to time, sometimes to tweak, other times to undo earlier work and start from scratch. But the pattern we have found is that each return is both easier and shorter, as we digest the lessons of embarking on a project which extends both into the past via the images themselves, and into the future as the life of the University, its teachers and its students, continues to be documented.