



Student Name:
Class Period:
Date:

Meet the Originals

Texas Originals is a radio series about people who made an impact on Texas. You can hear it online and on radio stations around the state. Read or listen to the episode on Harry Hunt Ransom. Then, answer questions about it.

Harry Hunt Ransom 1908–196

The Gutenberg Bible, completed in 1454, is the first substantial book printed with movable type. Of the twenty-one complete copies in existence, one is on view at The University of Texas at Austin's Harry Ransom Center. This book—and the center that houses it—are the proud legacy of Chancellor Harry Hunt Ransom, known as “The Great Acquisitor.”

Born in Galveston in 1908, Ransom came to UT in 1935 as an English instructor. Over the years he served as dean, provost, president, and chancellor. Ransom firmly believed that a strong library system was critical for a successful education, and he spent his career working to strengthen the university's collection.

Ransom founded the Humanities Research Center in 1957. He knew he could not compete with the rare collections that institutions such as Harvard and Yale had built over many years, so he focused on modern authors. The result is one of the world's finest collections of twentieth-century writing, with materials from such luminaries as James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, and George Bernard Shaw.

Ransom's ultimate purpose was not simply to amass valuable books and manuscripts. He sought a collection of what he called “knowledgeable people.”

After Ransom's death in 1976, the Humanities Research Center was renamed in his honor. Today, its treasures continue to draw scholars to The University of Texas, creating a continuing flow of knowledgeable people of which Ransom would have been proud.

Check for Understanding: Answer the questions below based on evidence from the episode on Harry Hunt Ransom. Refer to the text included above if needed.

1. What was Harry Hunt Ransom's nickname during his time as chancellor at The University of Texas at Austin?
2. How did Ransom try to strengthen UT's library system?

Going Further: Write or discuss your answer to the question below, supporting your answer with evidence from the episode or additional information you have learned in class.

3. **Taking a Position.** Do you think that technology is changing the need for physical libraries?