

## Ask the Archivist: Are D'Lions Still Rampant?

*A question for Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian.*

**I was in D'Lions, a women's service club made up of sophomores who provided all sorts of assistance to freshmen. It was an honor society for which you were chosen. I'm wondering how long it continued, and if it is still around. I'd be surprised if it were, but that would be nice.—Diane Tolomeo '70, Victoria, British Columbia**

Like their namesake, D'Lions can still be found on the River Campus: 2016 marks the group's 60th anniversary, and a remarkable 1,625 alumni list it among their undergraduate activities in the online alumni directory, the Rochester Alumni Exchange ([rax.rochester.edu](http://rax.rochester.edu)).

As you note, D'Lions got their start as a sophomore women's honorary service group in the spring of 1956. The timing is significant—in the fall of 1955, the women joined the men on the River Campus, where there was already a well-established cadre of “honorarys,” including Mendicants (juniors), and Keidaeans (seniors). Up until the time of the merger, the College for Women had had only one honor society for seniors, called the Marsiens (and it really is pronounced like the name for the inhabitants of the red planet).

For sophomore men, there was Yellow Key (not to be confused with Golden Key International Honor Society). D'Lions and Yellow Key members had similar responsibilities relating to hospitality: to welcome freshmen and help them move in, to usher at special events like commencement ceremonies and the Christmas concert, and to conduct campus tours for prospective students.

Wearing white or navy blue blazers with the University shield on the pocket—jackets that were popular with many students—these select sophomores



**SUITED UP:** Wearing their signature white blazers, D'Lions are ready to greet freshmen in a 1969 *Interpres* photo.

were the student organizers of University Day, an opportunity for high school seniors to visit the campus and see what life as a student would be like. The very first University Day—later called “Open Campus”—was held in 1931 on both the River and Prince Street campuses, with the Keidaeans and Marsiens as student organizers.

In the 1970s, the number of campus tours given as part of the admissions process increased, but the number of available guides decreased. The Yellow Key Society made its last appearance in the 1973 *Interpres* and may have ended in 1976. To meet demand and also to provide more consistency in the content of the tours, the Admissions office established a dedicated group of volunteer tour guides. In 1978, the group renamed itself the

Meridian Society, after the marker on the Eastman Quadrangle. The meridian marker is engraved with the campus's longitude and latitude. In a 1982 *Campus-Times* piece, Rose Antos '84 wrote, “The marker tells people where the UR is in relation to the world, but the tour guide . . . can lead people . . . in a way the marker never can.” During 2015-16, 96 Meridians were on call to give over 4,000 scheduled tours.

D'Lions remained predominantly a women's group into the 1980s. A 1985 *Campus-Times* article written by Duncan Fuller '87 reported that 14 of the 66 D'Lions that year were male. When he and his roommate went to apply, “we got a rather funny look from the girl at the info desk. She'd probably never seen a couple of guys pick up a D'Lion application before, for it has always been left to sophomore women.”

According to its current Students' Association page, the purpose of D'Lions is to “promote community spirit within the

residence halls and the University as a whole, and help incoming students with their transition to campus.” They also “plan programs that the entire campus can take part in,” including blood drives and Wilson Day, the College's annual day of community service.

In “The Perks of Being a D'Lion” (<http://enrollment.rochester.edu/blog/the-perks-of-being-a-dlion/>), a post for an Admissions blog maintained by students, Sophie Zhang '17 notes that being in D'Lions is “a stepping stone toward being an RA” and that the experience is no longer reserved only for sophomores. At this year's College orientation, the Class of 2020 was greeted by D'Lions, with 39 students on its current roster.

### Need History?

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