

# Phrenology craze hit Bloomington in 1838

Primary sources of historic information — those written by persons who made observations about events happening in their own time — are of infinite value to the historian. One such document is the Diaries of Indiana Professor Theophilus Wylie who taught from 1837 to 1886, all at IU with the exception of two and a half years at Miami University.

His diaries, long a possession of IU Archives, have been made available through the patience and persistence of three persons with considerable respect for historic documents.

They are Elizabeth Greene, archivist for the Chemistry Department; Harry Day, professor emeritus of chemistry, and Dolores Lahrman, former university archivist. To Greene and Day fell the task of deciphering



## Looking back

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9-3-1988

Wylie's handwriting, and Lahrman tackled translations of passages of Latin into which the professor suddenly shifted.

Without their efforts, few would know that Wylie and his fellow Bloomingtonians were caught up in curiosity about the new "science" of phrenology. The theory of a Viennese physician, phrenology purported that traits of human character could be discovered by "reading" the skull, including ridges and  
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