An Experiment In Partnership: Building A Processing Consortium

Through a collaboration between the Society of Architectural Historians (SAH) and the University of California, and supported by a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant, the authors (Sonja Sekely-Rowland, UC-Riverside, and Jackie Spafford, UC-Santa Barbara) are working to develop a new approach to partnership-based preservation in response to a problem identified nearly a decade ago. Our aim is to advance the processing and sharing of digital assets by mitigating the factors that otherwise impede the preservation of significant 35mm slide collections, using a model that we hope to scale up to incorporate multiple partners and collections.

Over the years, the SAH has received numerous inquiries from members concerned about the fate of their 35mm slides. Constituents including historians, architects, preservationists, researchers, and other practitioners have amassed extensive slide collections that documented the built environment. In addition to photographing iconic architecture, members often gained access to sites that were off-limits to most visitors or captured views that have since been greatly altered or destroyed. (continued on next page)
The SAH has neither on-site storage nor funds to dedicate to collection preservation or processing. The SAH provides its members with a platform for digital storage, cataloging, and online discovery through its digital architecture archive, SAHARA, and its asset management component, Jstor Forum. SAH members contribute to SAHARA by uploading and publishing online files that are cataloged using an interface based on VRA 4.0, which utilizes the Getty Research Institute’s (GRI) controlled vocabularies. It is a self-service model that works well for contributors with digital files who have time to spend on light cataloging. But members with analog slides frequently lack the means to digitize or describe their collections. Often, these members are elderly or retired and no longer have access to institutional support. In some cases, family members or colleagues of deceased members reach out, anxious to find a home for a collection.

A survey of SAH members in 2013 identified over 60 collections of significance, which represents just the tip of the iceberg. The collections vary widely in size, scope, and quality, and include highly focused research collections, documentation of international SAH study tours, and others with a primarily pedagogical focus.

In 2020 the SAH, in partnership with image curators at UC Riverside (UCR) and UC Santa Barbara (UCSB), received an NEH-funded Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Program grant to study the problem at length. The core concept of the proposal recognizes the potential of the community to address preservation needs, as no one individual or institution can tackle a problem this large. The goals of the NEH grant are twofold: the identification and prioritization of those collections that urgently need care; and the development of a processing consortium that can advance those needs by offering flexible workflows and commitments of limited scope.

We envision a workflow that advances collection processing by moving tasks along an assembly line of consortium partners. These tasks may include some or all of the following: organization; transfer to archival housing; preparation of a finding aid; production of digital contact sheets; and eventually, item-level digitization, cataloging and sharing via SAHARA and other platforms. The collections can be taken as a whole or as subsets of as little as 100 slides.

Our initial work includes documenting the needs of a handful of collections identified early in the grant that are well-suited to the processing/sharing model, and the identification of subject content that can logically be parceled to produce desirable subsets for partners. In the interim, these sample collections are housed at UCR and UCSB, where we are engaged in various stages of processing, including transfer to archival housing, preparation of collection-level finding aids, and photography of digital contact sheets. The intent is to make the subject content and processing needs clear so partners can make informed decisions about participation.
To further facilitate collaboration, we’re able to share an internship plan that serves as a ready-to-go outline, or a customizable template, and has been modeled after successful credit-bearing academic internships at both universities.

We believe this model provides multiple benefits for both private and public interests. Through surveys, conference presentations, and listserv outreach, we’re developing a growing consortium of interested partners. Participation has the potential to advance collection preservation and access goals, increase institutional awareness and visibility through expanded outreach, and support the development of pre-professional skill-building opportunities. It also offers the means to build local collections that align with institutional missions and priorities or the interests of participants, faculty, or audiences.

If you are interested in learning more, please take our short survey, and do contact us with questions.

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Happy New Year to all! While this past year was not quite the “return to normal” that we were all hoping it would be, I hope this message finds you all moving a little bit closer to your normal every day. A review of SCA’s most recent activities and initiatives seems in order as we begin a new year, so I’ll take the opportunity here to provide some updates from the SCA Board, which met in November.

I’m pleased to report that one major initiative that has commenced is the moderation of the West_Arch listserv by SCA’s Communications & Outreach Committee. You have no doubt seen the announcement on West_Arch that introduced the salary transparency policy and noted the new moderators of the listserv. At the request of the SCA Board early last year, the Advocacy & Public Policy Committee drafted, and the Board approved, a salary transparency statement for job postings on West_Arch. SCA would like to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to Terry Boom for monitoring and maintaining the listserv for the past 20 years, and for permitting SCA to take over the reins this past fall.

While the Board established two task forces earlier last year, their work has only slowly been moving forward. I’d like to thank Jessica Gambling for agreeing to chair the SCA Records Management Task Force, whose charge is to review the state of SCA’s records and recommend preservation and storage options for the mostly-digital materials. If you’re interested in records management and would like to help direct SCA towards being a competent steward of our own records, please reach out to Jessica at jgambling@lacma.org. A second task force to review the sustainability of SCA’s Annual General Meeting is being assembled. If you’re interested in all the possible ways our annual meeting could be re-imagined to better meet the needs of SCA’s members, please get in touch with me at president@calarchivists.org.

Many of you are familiar with the Western Archives Institute, an intensive archives-instruction program that has been held almost every year for the past 34 years, co-sponsored by SCA and the California State Archives. This program is also being re-imagined to better meet the needs of its students. As a result of committee changes and the need to restructure the program, a joint decision by the SCA Board and California State Archives was made not to offer the WAI program in 2022. We hope to have a structure in place — most likely a hybrid program — for the 2023 program, so watch for those announcements. If you’re interested in serving on the Western Archives Institute committee, the positions of Chair and Program Subcommittee member are open, so please reach out to me at president@calarchivists.org.

Finally, once again I’d like to thank the members of SCA’s various committees and task forces. Everything done by these committees is on a volunteer basis and none of SCA’s work would move forward without the dedication and commitment of its members. If you’d like to join this work, please visit the committee web pages on the SCA website: https://calarchivists.org/About_SCA/Committees.

Leilani Marshall
SCA President
The Society of California Archivists, Inc.

The Society of California Archivists, Inc. exists to support and develop those who collect, care for, and provide access to the documentary heritage of California and adjoining areas. To this end it:

1. acts as a vehicle for dissemination of information about archival collections, issues, and methodology to the profession and the public;

2. provides a forum for the discussion of matters related to the creation, preservation, and use of historical documents;

3. develops, offers and supports archival education programs;

4. cooperates with individuals and organizations on matters of common concern; and

5. advocates the identification, collection, preservation, use, and appreciation of historical records and manuscripts.

The SCA Newsletter is published quarterly in January, April, July, and October. All submissions and advertisements for the newsletter should be directed to the Editors of the Newsletter:

Newsletter Editors
The Bancroft Library
University of California, Berkeley
Berkeley, California 94720-6000
Email(s): newsletter@calarchivists.org

Copy deadlines: September 1, December 1, March 1, and June 1.

Format for Submissions: Articles and other items submitted for consideration should be sent via e-mail attachment.

SCA Newsletter editors
Marissa Friedman, Sue Luftschein, Alison Quirion, Shaula Stephenson, and Sue Tyson

The Journal of Western Archives

The Journal of Western Archives is a peer-reviewed, open access journal sponsored by Western regional archival organizations. The journal focuses on contemporary issues and developments in the archival and curatorial fields, particularly as they affect Western archives and manuscript repositories.

Journal Contents

The Journal of Western Archives gives archivists, manuscript curators, and graduate students in the American West a place to publish on topics of particular interest and relevance to them. The journal features research articles, case studies, and review essays on regional topics. These include:

- Important Western regional issues in archives and manuscript repositories;
- Unique archival developments in the western United States;
- Technological innovations and their effect on archival theory and practice;
- The history and development of the archival and curatorial professions in the American West;
- Collaborative efforts and projects between various cultural institutions.

Contributing to the Journal

If you are interested in contributing to the journal or serving as a peer reviewer for journal content, please contact the managing editor, John Murphy (john_m_murphy@byu.edu). Article submissions may also be made online at the journal website.

JWA
http://digitalcommons.usu.edu/westernarchives/
California Land Case Files from the 1850s to be Digitized

In January 2021, the Bancroft Library launched a mass digitization project to provide online access to more than 127,000 pages contained in over 800 California Land Case Files dating from 1852 to 1892. The information in the cases offers evidence of life in early California from the perspective of Mexican Californians, or Californios, and provides a unique view into the transition from Mexican to American rule in the state. The project, *Land, Wealth and Power: Private Land Claim Cases in California 1852 to 1892* (Mary Elings, Principal Investigator) was awarded a 2019 grant through the *Digitizing Hidden Special Collections and Archives: Amplifying Unheard Voices* program, funded by the Council on Library and Information Resources. These digitized cases, along with the roughly 1,450 previously digitized corresponding Land Case Maps, will create a comprehensive online resource for an important and heavily used collection documenting California history.

The signing of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo at the end of the Mexican-American War established that privately held land grants in Mexican territory ceded to the United States would be “inviolably protected.” Three years later, in 1851, the U.S. Congress passed “An Act to Ascertain and Settle Private Land Claims in the State of California,” which required all holders of these land grants to present their title for confirmation before the Board of California Land Commissioners. This Act placed the burden of proof of title on landholders and initiated a complex litigation process, with most decisions appealed all the way to the Supreme Court. This lengthy legal procedure required lawyers, translators, and surveyors, and took an average of 17 years to resolve cases, with a few cases litigated into the 1940s.

The resulting documentation contained in these Land Case Files, including transcripts, witness depositions, and materials presented as evidence, provides rich details about land use, ownership, and the environment on the early California ranchos. The grant project’s theme of Amplifying Unheard Voices is a fitting one, as the files record the testimony of a people largely excluded from the explosive growth in prosperity and power of California after American annexation, and provide primary evidence of systematic disenfranchisement by the U.S. Federal Government. As a whole, the Documents Pertaining to the Adjudication of Private Land Claims in California manuscript collection tells an important story about the distribution of land, wealth, and power in early California.

Given that this is one of the Bancroft Library’s oldest, most widely used collections, it is imperative that the library digitize and provide online access to these fragile materials. Out of the 840 case files, only 10 are currently available online. This project will digitize

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Additionally, the project will include updates to the collection finding aid as well as an online exhibit titled *Land, Wealth and Power: Private Land Claim Cases in California 1852 to 1892*, which will be made available in the Calisphere exhibition portal near completion of the project in late 2022. This long-awaited project will provide modern scholars with more opportunities to continue to tell the story of California, the West, and its communities. The Land Case Files will be available online through UC Berkeley’s digital collections repository at [digital.lib.berkeley.edu](http://digital.lib.berkeley.edu) under the search terms “Adjudication private land claims.”

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the remaining cases, which will serve such diverse users as genealogists, lawyers litigating current-day boundary disputes, city planners, and ecologists. Conservation treatments are currently being carried out on many of the most fragile materials in the collection to prepare them for imaging. With the digital objects becoming the primary method of access to the collection, these important documents will be preserved from further damage.

Digitization of the collection will mean a huge improvement for patron access and research, but hopefully is not the end of the road. Over 90% of these documents are handwritten, and the ability to make this text machine-readable and keyword searchable would unlock even greater research opportunities, particularly in areas of digital scholarship. The Bancroft Library is currently exploring strategies for a mass transcription project of these materials, possibly through collaborative undergraduate/graduate student class projects, crowd-sourcing through engagement with regional history groups, or a hybrid approach including text recognition using artificial intelligence/machine learning.
New West_Arch Management

The West_Arch listserv is now being moderated by the SCA Communications & Outreach Committee. Thank you so much to Terry Boom for his dedicated work over the last two decades in making sure the listserv survived and for helping us transition as new managers. With the implementation of the salary transparency policy, which can be found on the SCA website, it is necessary to moderate the listserv to ensure that posters are adhering to the new guidelines. For any inquiries please email west_arch@calarchivists.org or the listserv managers, Steve Kutay, Co-Chair (Stephen.kutay@csun.edu) and Anna Lynn Martino, Vice Chair (anna.martino@nick.com).

Processing LGBTQ Performing Arts Collections at the GLBT Historical Society

The GLBT Historical Society is excited to announce a one-year grant awarded by the National Archives' National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) called Sing Out: Processing and Digitizing LGBTQ Music and Theater Collections. This $75,000 grant supports the processing of ten unique archival collections related to music and theater, including specialized preservation work and the creation of updated catalog records and detailed finding aids. Among the collections are the Finocchio's collection, which contains materials about the legendary drag venue in North Beach; the Sylvester collection, which follows the San Francisco disco diva’s recording career; and the Maria Sanchez papers, which document the life of a Cuban-born DJ who spun records at iconic Bay Area venues, including the Sutro Bath House. Other collections include: the Janet MacHarg papers; The Kinsey Sicks collection; the San Francisco Gay Men’s Chorus records; the Steve Scholl collection of San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Marching Band and Twirling Corps materials; the Thrillpeddlers collection; and the Lesbian and Gay Chorus of San Francisco ephemera and scrapbook collections. The grant also funds the digitization of approximately 300 items (about 30 per collection) to increase remote access to these resources.

Project Archivist Megan Needels has joined the team to work on this project.

Megan is a recent graduate of the media archival studies MLIS program at UCLA and a former Archives Intern and Project Archivist at the GLBT Historical Society. They have worked at various Bay Area archives including Canyon Cinema, San Francisco Cinematheque, and Frameline Distribution, and are thrilled to be contributing to the preservation of this vital aspect of San Francisco queer history.

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Preserving and Digitizing Bay Area LGBTQ History

Introduction
In late 2019, the California State Library awarded funding through its Preserving California’s LGBTQ History grant program to institutions throughout the state. This program supports the preservation and digitization of queer materials that relate to California history and culture. The GLBT Historical Society; San Francisco Public Library’s (SFPL) James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center; and the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Archives and Special Collections all received generous support through this program. These three San Francisco archives are longtime partner institutions that, for decades, have documented the rich and diverse LGBTQ history of the Bay Area.

In this article, Kelsi Evans, Director of the Dr. John P. De Cecco Archives and Special Collections of the GLBT Historical Society; Dee Dee Kramer, SFPL DIGI Center Manager and former Program Manager of the James C. Hormel LGBTQIA Center; and Edith Escobedo, Project Archivist at the UCSF Archives and Special Collections will detail each institution’s grant projects and share how they accomplished project goals despite the challenges of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

GLBT Historical Society
Founded in 1985, the GLBT Historical Society collects, preserves, and exhibits materials related to LGBTQ history, culture, and arts. When the pandemic limited our ability to work onsite, the California State Library support enabled us to increase online collection discoverability, implement a new Digital Asset Management System (DAMS), and digitize a periodical and selected oral history audiotapes.

Specifically, we pivoted away from some of our initial collection processing goals and focused more on catalog updates. We repurposed 50 backend collection inventories into public finding aids and created over 550 catalog entries on the Online Archive of California. We were also able to invest in a much-needed Islandora DAMS; we have completed initial implementation and migrated our legacy digitized content. While we continue to build out the system, it has already reshaped our digital preservation capacity. Finally, we digitized dozens of selected oral history audiotapes and our holdings of the periodical, Onyx: Black Lesbian Newsletter (1982-1984). Onyx provides abundant documentation of Bay Area Black lesbian history.

San Francisco Public Library
The LGBTQIA Center at SFPL is part of a large urban public library system that serves people with varying levels of familiarity with archives. As such, we wanted the selections of this grant to appeal to both casual users and seasoned researchers. We digitized materials from five collections that give palpable “inside views” into 20th-century queer San Francisco. Materials include: the
speeches of Harvey Milk; a scrapbook compiled by lesbian bar owner Grace Miller that covers the 1954 police raid of Tommy’s Place and her subsequent arrest and trial; a set of photo negatives from the San Francisco Police Department documenting their surveillance of businesses being investigated in 1948-1969 for “gambling, vice, and sodomy”; four photo albums belonging to Lee Raymond, founding Director of the Ducal Court; and over 350 snapshot photographs of the denizens of Bradley’s Corner Bar.

Though the pandemic temporarily reduced our staff, we were still able to work with Two Cat Digital to have these items scanned. Staff are finalizing the ingest and making content publicly available via SFPL’s Islandora DAMS.

University of California, San Francisco
UCSF Archives and Special Collections collects, preserves, and makes accessible material related to the health sciences and medical humanities. With this grant, we were able to process and digitize two collections documenting the LGBTQ health equity movement in California: the San Francisco AIDS Foundation Magnet Program records and the UCSF LGBT Resource Center records. The Magnet Program is a health and wellness program that offers sexual health services; substance use counseling; and PrEP, HIV, and STI testing. The LGBT Resource Center provides consultation, educational workshops, and training to the campus community and medical center about issues that impact the LGBTQIA+ community.

While the pandemic prevented us from physically transferring the entirety of the LGBT Resource Center records to the archives, we were able to accomplish our digitization goals. The State Library grant supported the digitization of 66 items containing 868 pages from these two collections. Materials included posters, founding documents, photographs, community art, and more.

Conclusion
We are grateful to the California State Library for its generous support and ongoing commitment to documenting California’s LGBTQ history. We are proud of what our teams have accomplished in spite of pandemic challenges. There is much more work to be done, as LGBTQ history remains underrepresented within archival repositories and online digital hubs. We look forward to future projects together to ensure that the rich diversity of the Bay Area’s queer past is preserved and shared for generations to come.

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Fifty Years and Counting

The Society of California Archivists marked its 50th birthday last year, and the anniversary committee hopes you enjoyed the interviews and the slide show of members and activities that was shown at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). This year there is another milestone to commemorate: the 50th anniversary of our first AGM. This meeting, held on March 24 and 25, 1972 in Reiber Hall at UCLA, can rightly be called the beginning of the year that SCA laid down the foundations that still support us today.

On the first day of this meeting, nine members spoke about the rich archival resources of California. At the dinner that night, Lawrence Clark Powell, famed librarian, author, and a founder of UCLA’s School of Library and Information Science, gave a talk titled “California’s Archival Institutions: Reflections of an Author & Researcher.”

The next day was all about SCA as an organization. Attendees were invited to an open meeting to discuss the new group’s objectives, and after lunch the first business meeting was called to order.

That April, the following officers were chosen and committees established:

- President, James V. Mink
- Vice President, Jean Preston
- Secretary and Treasurer (divided into separate positions in 1978), J.R.K. Kantor
- Council (Board), Silvia B. Flores; Robert D. Jordan; Leslie O. Merrill; and Anne G. Schlosser
- Local Arrangements, Jo Ann Williamson

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SCA’s Bylaws were also approved in April, and the organization was off and running.

In May the new Council decided to charge $5.00 a year for dues and started a newsletter with Ralph Hansen as editor. Then, as now, SCA’s leadership saw the importance of archival education, so the Council made plans for the first workshop, “Processing Manuscript and Archival Materials,” held jointly with the Conference of California Historical Societies. Participants traveled to Bakersfield in November for the event. As mentioned in a newsletter article last year, there is an SCA legend about the size of the bar bill during the happy hour after the event’s first day. Track down one of our veteran members at the Palm Springs meeting and ask for the details.

Archives in general were in the news in 1972. In January of that year, the de Young Museum in San Francisco and the University Art Museum in Berkeley opened an exhibition titled “Executive Order 9066: The Internment of 110,000 Japanese Americans.” Organized by the California Historical Society, the exhibit featured images from the War Relocation Authority collections in the National Archives. On January 28, the Friends of the Anaheim Public Library invited the public to an illustrated talk given by David Smith, titled: “It All Started With a Mouse: The Walt Disney Archives.” And about a week before the first AGM a treasure trove of notes, diaries, letters, and photos belonging to Dr. W. W. Campbell, former director of the Lick Observatory, was donated to UC Santa Cruz.

So let’s remember the accomplishments of 1972 as we head toward this year’s AGM: there’s more to celebrate!

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Palm Springs: Your Next AGM (and Perhaps Vacation) Destination

The 2022 Society of California Archivists (SCA) Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held at the Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel from May 18-21, 2022.

This will be the first in-person gathering for SCA members since 2019, a fact that sparked the AGM theme Archives Represent. The theme also acknowledges how the last two years have affected the practices, achievements, and critical examination of the archives field. The Program Committee looks forward to scheduling presentations that cover varying aspects of “representation” in the archives and among archivists.

Although the Program Committee is still working on finalizing the schedule, we are pleased to announce that the Awards Luncheon Speaker will be Kim Stringfellow, an artist, educator, writer and independent curator based in Joshua Tree, CA. Her Jackrabbit Homestead art installation commissioned by Desert X 2021 examines multimedia memory-keeping and archives within a sense of place.

The Local Arrangements Committee (LAC) is also organizing repository and local museum tours in several locations including the Agua Caliente Cultural Museum, Palm Springs Art Museum, and the Palm Springs Historical Society.

Palm Springs is not only ideal for professional meet-ups, but is also a destination for mid-century modern architecture, great food, poolside cocktails, cultural sites, and scenic hikes. We encourage you to come early and stay late to explore all that Palm Springs and the surrounding desert have to offer. Conference registration will be available on the SCA website beginning early February.

We look forward to seeing you in Palm Springs in May 2022!

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DEADLINES:

SCA AGM 2022 Program Proposals
January 10, 2022
https://forms.gle/JYaPypY7PRdAhL9G7

Nominations and Applications for SCA Annual Awards
February 28, 2022
See list of awards and scholarships here

EXHIBITIONS:

Rights and Rituals: The Making of African American Debutante Culture
Open through February 27, 2022
California African American Museum

Hayao Miyazaki
Open through June 5, 2022
The Academy Museum of Motion Pictures

Pioneers of Queer Cinema
January 7 - February 27, 2022
The Billy Wilder Theater @ The Hammer Museum

Tupac Shakur. Wake Me When I'm Free
January 21 - May 1, 2022
The Canvas @ L.A. Live

MEETINGS:

SCA Annual General Meeting (AGM)
May 18-21, 2022
Renaissance Palm Springs Hotel
https://calarchivists.org/AGM-2022