Connections Newsletter Winter 2014

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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College days—they go by fast. And for most, treasured memories from this precious time fade into the past forever. Photos are lost. Names are forgotten. Much disappears without a trace. Unless you are a UNLV alum.

The UNLV Libraries recently digitized the complete run of the Rebel Yell (1956-2010). “The Rebel Yell digitization project originated out of the desire to document the activities of students, something the Libraries are always eager to do,” said Cory Lampert, head of UNLV Libraries’ Digital Collections Division. “We are here, we are listening, and we are proud to serve our constituents.”

Interestingly, UNLV students first expressed the desire to increase access to UNLV’s collective memory. In 2011, Sara Saenz, then-president of the undergraduate student government, Consolidated Students of University of Nevada, Las Vegas (CSUN), approached the Libraries about the project. “I felt this was something that should have happened already, in this day and age,” Saenz said.

After obtaining information from Digital Collections about the project’s cost, Saenz successfully argued for funding through CSUN. “This gave us the important signal that students were truly and passionately behind this,” Lampert said.

CSUN provided important funding for the project, but sadly, it was only enough to cover part of the project’s cost. Luckily, then-president of UNLV’s Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA), Michael Gordon, became a strong supporter of the project as well. With additional financial assistance from the GPSA, the Rebel Yell digitization project became a reality.

Continued on page 10
Winter, for me, is the perfect time for the act of reflection—for both what has passed and what the future will bring. We slow down to spend time with family and friends, reminding ourselves and each other of all we have to be grateful for and recharging just a brief moment before kicking off another year in high gear.

As 2014 comes to a close, I cannot help but reflect on all the UNLV University Libraries have accomplished thus far and consider how much more, with the generous help of friends like you, we will accomplish in the future.

I am simply astounded by all the Libraries were able to accomplish this year with the help of our friends, only a sprinkling of which you will read about in this issue of eConnections. Our preservation efforts continued in full force: We wrapped up the Rebel Yell digitization project—a project so near and dear to UNLV students that their student governments funded this important work. Our staff began digitizing historic Nevada newspapers through a grant awarded to the Libraries by the National Endowment for the Humanities. With support from our Advisory Board, instructional outreach efforts such as the Libraries’ K-12 Institute continued to assist the Clark County School District to better prepare its students for the future. And, of course, with the help of all our friends, we continued to engage the UNLV community, providing our students with educational events such as the Banned Books Buffet and opportunities to gain invaluable professional experience, including those reaped by graduate students who processed special collections right here in the Libraries this past summer.

Of course, 2015 brings with it a whole new set of projects. I look forward to seeing the history of our Jewish community come to life through the Southern Nevada Jewish Community Digital Heritage Project; the Libraries recently received a grant to launch this exciting initiative.

Although another year is about to conclude, the work of the Libraries truly never ends. As always, I am grateful for you, the friends who make the dreams of winter the realities of spring. May your 2015 be as full of possibility and hope as you make ours!

Patricia Iannuzzi
Dean, University Libraries
What do you get when you combine proven success with newspaper digitization projects, passionate staff dedicated to the most challenging of grant-writing processes, and a strong commitment among partners to preserve the history of an entire state? In the case of UNLV Libraries, it’s the largest award the organization has ever received: a $311,000 National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) grant.

As part of the National Digital Newspaper Program (NDNP), a collaboration between the NEH and the Library of Congress to preserve historic United States newspapers and share them via the Chronicling America website (http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/), UNLV Libraries will lead a team including the Nevada State Library and Archives as well as the University of Nevada, Reno’s Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center to digitize Nevada newspapers. Over a two-year period, 100,000 pages of information previously stored on microfilm or found only on old paper copies of Nevada newspapers will be reclaimed and made accessible to researchers around the world. Nevada is joining 37 other U.S. states and territories currently engaged in this landmark endeavor.

“This NEH grant recognizes the success UNLV Libraries has achieved in our collaborative efforts, our ability to build trust among partners, and the reputation we have built as a leader,” said Cory Lampert, head of UNLV Libraries’ Digital Collections. The grant stands as a testament to the efforts of Lampert, Jason Vaughan (director of Library Technologies) and Peter Michel (head of exhibits for UNLV Libraries), who co-wrote the 70-plus-page grant, which has the potential to be renewed in the future.

A 15-member advisory board composed of teachers, oral historians, archaeologists, and other professionals with extensive knowledge of the state’s history and considerable experience using historic newspapers for research will review and prioritize Nevada newspapers produced between 1836 and 1922 and provide a ranked list of materials to be digitized. This is no easy feat, as a variety of perspectives must be represented. “Nevada is different from many other states in the program because of the mining boom and bust, where

Continued on page 10
Each year, our nation celebrates one of the most important gifts libraries have to offer: free and unhindered access to information for all. Banned Books Week (http://www.bannedbooksweek.org/) represents the stand several organizations across the U.S. have taken against book censorship. This fall, UNLV Libraries added a new event, the Banned Books Buffet, to engage students in this discourse outside the classroom.

On September 24, students entered the “buffet” awaiting them in the Goldfield Room of Lied Library and feasted their eyes on tables shouldering between 300-400 books from one of four categories: challenged books, challenged authors, controversial content, and controversial formats.

Students received menus that explained Banned Books Week and provided a place to rate up to seven books they could “taste” simply by reading each for five minutes. Amanda Melilli, head of UNLV’s Curriculum Materials Library (CML) and the library faculty member responsible for the event, noted that many students spent a much, much longer time on their selections than was suggested. “Students were sitting, reading, and sharing with their friends, which was fantastic,” she said. “One community member was pleasantly surprised by what she was observing and remarked that she was thrilled the students actually came to the library to read books!”

Alongside the book-reading activities of the day was a mug shot wall, where students could have their photo taken with a framed version of their favorite challenged title, then post the image on their social media pages. Additionally, an interactive wall titled “Hall of Shame?” provided a place where students could write down comments and engage in a conversation about classic—but challenged—books with their peers. Many students, in fact, were not aware that book banning or challenging was still happening, least of all to some of their childhood favorites—which is exactly why events like the Banned Books Buffet are so important.

Comments like “I wasn’t aware that so many books I’ve read have been banned” and “Never thought people would try to ban so much knowledge” were...
The University Libraries are well known for their efforts to promote UNLV student and faculty success. A lesser known activity is the work the Libraries do to help educate the educators of the Clark County School District (CCSD). The Teacher-Librarian Institute for Integration of Research Into the K-12 Curriculum, or the “K-12 Institute” for short, helps CCSD teachers and librarians integrate research into curricula to better prepare students for their future academic and professional lives.

Funded by the Libraries’ Advisory Board, the K-12 Institute is now in its third year. “UNLV’s librarians are well positioned to serve in this way and address these needs because we see all disciplines, can talk about best practices across disciplines, and are focused on teaching and learning,” said Melissa Bowles-Terry, head of Educational Initiatives at UNLV Libraries as well as the K-12 Institute planning leader.

K-12 teachers (typically department heads) and librarians throughout Clark County schools paired up, developed ideas for research-based assignments they hoped to implement at their respective schools, and submitted these ideas to the K-12 Institute. From the applications received, UNLV Libraries selected 18 participants (forming nine teacher-librarian teams) to join four UNLV library faculty for three days of collaboration on curriculum maps, learning outcomes, and many other teaching activities designed to bring the CCSD projects to life within the Common Core State Standards framework recently adopted by the CCSD.

“(Our research project) will be very beneficial when put into action and should encourage more collaboration at the school,” one participant said. “What we do will benefit students’ college experience as well!” said another. Perhaps equally important to supporting K-12 student learning and information literacy in this innovative way was providing a space and time in which teachers and librarians could collaborate. “What I noticed the most is that the CCSD teachers and librarians were just so appreciative of having the chance to work together and having a peaceful moment to develop assignments together,” said Amanda Melilli, head of the UNLV Curriculum Materials Library and one of the four UNLV library faculty leading the K-12 Institute. Bowles-Terry agreed: “The participants got so much out of working intimately as teams, and this is what UNLV Libraries is all about—collaboration,” she said.

Speaking of collaboration, the relationship between the CCSD and UNLV was further fortified by the K-12 Institute; this is extremely
Embarking on a great adventure to uncover hidden treasure is one of those dreams many of us have as children. As we age, though, we tend to stop believing a dream like this could ever become a reality.

However, the University Libraries’ Special Collections Division recently made this dream possible for several UNLV graduate students. Special Collections has an amazing array of “relics” of Southern Nevada’s past, and this summer, the division sought additional help in processing archival collections and preparing online descriptions for researchers. Who better than our campus’s very own history scholars for the role? “UNLV Libraries recognized that a solid education in the field of history equips students with critical thinking skills, the ability to synthesize information from a variety of sources, and the advanced writing skills needed to communicate the information to the public,” said Cyndi Shein, head of UNLV Libraries’ Special Collections Technical Services. “These students were a perfect fit for the tasks at hand, and compensating them fairly for their unique skills helped them support themselves while in school.”

These internships were highly competitive, so the students began their adventure with good old-fashioned interviews. Mindful that some applicants had never held professional positions before, Special Collections staff treated the interview process as a learning experience for the students. “Special Collections faculty viewed the internships as opportunities to demonstrate the value and practical application of the campuswide university learning objectives as well as opportunities to mentor the students in a way that would prepare them to compete for and land entry-level professional positions,” Shein said. Special Collections invited interns to biweekly staff meetings, during which project goals were discussed and individual accomplishments were highlighted. Staff also discussed students’ career goals, gave feedback on interviewing skills, helped students represent the internship on their curriculum vitaes/resumes, and coached students on how to create online professional profiles.

Meanwhile, the work of uncovering hidden treasures was underway. “That’s where students really got excited because they got their hands on Nevada’s history,” Shein recalled. Students dug into the collections; sifted through box after box; and began conducting research, gathering information, and consulting curators to piece together and accurately describe what they had found. Special Collections staff taught the students national professional descriptive standards and trained students to use the ArchiveSpace collection management system. Students then published work online for the world to discover, utilize, and enjoy.

Students also actively
contributed to the scholarship surrounding the collections by interpreting both the historical and present-day significance of the materials in blogs they wrote (https://www.library.unlv.edu/whats_new_in_special_collections) as part of their employment experience. Students connected with the treasures in a variety of ways. UNLV grad student Hannah Robinson wrote, “As my knowledge about Jewish culture and history is limited to family stories and food, I jumped at the chance to assess, research, and learn more about Jewish history in Las Vegas while writing a collection description for the Nat Hart Papers (MS-00161) as part of my summer internship in the UNLV Special Collections. … Overall, this experience … has been really interesting to me on both personal and academic levels.”

“My favorite part of working with the Robert Beckmann Photographs (collection) has certainly been seeing Mr. Beckmann’s process,” wrote UNLV grad student Lindsay Oden. “To me, these kinds of photographs underscore the importance of archival work because they provide the context and setting for works of art that seem to uniquely blend into the background of daily life.”

Students were inspired personally and professionally by the experience. Shein indicated that two students are now considering pursuing careers in archives. One of the former interns has integrated Special Collections materials into the curriculum of an undergraduate course he teaches and sends his students to embark on their own adventures in Special Collections. Most of the interns have returned to Special Collections to conduct independent research, leveraging what they learned last summer to support their current studies.

Given the valuable contributions of these enthusiastic, hardworking students, Special Collections worked to keep two students on board part-time, using the opportunity to deepen the students’ knowledge of archival management by providing additional training in the physical processing and arrangement of materials. The division hopes that it will be able to find the funding required to continue the summer program so this invaluable collaboration can continue. “In ten short weeks, these students helped accomplish what it would have taken years to do without them,” Shein said. “Funding this internship is an investment in preserving the history of Southern Nevada as well as an investment in the future of very deserving UNLV students, and we are eager to ensure that it continues.”

For more information on how you can help UNLV students grow with the Libraries, contact Director of Development Tamara Josserand at tamara.josserand@unlv.edu.
Every day UNLV Libraries’ new director of Special Collections, Michelle Light, comes to work, it’s a bit of a homecoming. A Las Vegas native, Light has not only seen the transformation of the city, she has spent many years living it.

Although her studies and career initially took her far from our city, Light could not stay away from her life’s calling to collect and preserve Southern Nevada’s history. Light began her work in libraries as a graduate student of history at University of Michigan and quickly realized she stood at the forefront of a major academic revolution. “I took a job in Michigan’s digital library right in the early days of the World Wide Web,” Light said. “I realized how digitization of key historical texts and images would fundamentally transform scholarship—that is, how knowledge might be discovered, created, and shared. I wanted to be a part of that.”

After making her mark professionally at Yale University, Northeastern University, and the University of Washington, she landed at the University of California at Irvine, where she served as head of special collections, archives, and digital scholarship. In March of 2013, it was finally time for Light to come home. “Joining UNLV Libraries gave me the wonderful opportunity to return to my roots and play a major role in preserving the history of my hometown as well as shaping its historical record,” she said.

With such commitment to what she does, it is no surprise that Light earned two awards this year: She received the highest honor the Society of American Archivists bestows upon its members when she became one of the youngest fellows in the organization’s history, and she received the University of Michigan School of Information’s 2014 Distinguished Alumni Award this fall. Both peer-nominated awards recognize Light’s decorated 15-year career as well as the transformation Light has inspired at each repository she’s worked for.

Accomplishing even more here at UNLV Libraries is No. 1 on Light’s list of priorities, and she is grateful to work with both new and familiar faces in the community again. “I love helping people preserve their legacies for future generations to appreciate,” she said. “It’s very fulfilling to see people make a personal connection to an item we preserved from the past. They realize how powerful it is to connect the past with the present and future.”

The turnout for the event was tremendous—262 people total, which was more than double the initially anticipated number. “We were dedicated to raising students’ awareness of censorship issues that continue to pervade our society and illustrate the role libraries play in protecting information,” Melilli said, “so we were particularly excited about the turnout.” And next year’s event promises to be even bigger and better!
One of the enduring missions of the UNLV University Libraries is to preserve the dynamic history and culture of Southern Nevada. However, the region was built by a variety of important communities whose voices have not always been well represented by traditional outlets. One such community is the Jewish community, an important presence in Las Vegas since the city’s inception that has contributed to the growth and development of our region in a number of significant ways.

UNLV Libraries recently received a grant through the Institute of Museum and Library Services’ (IMLS) Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) to fund the first year of a three-year Southern Nevada Jewish Community Digital Heritage Project. This comprehensive project will document the history of Las Vegas through the lens of the Jewish experience. With this grant, efforts are underway to collect oral histories, videos, documents, photographs, and other materials. These items will be preserved, digitized, and made available online.

Four advisory boards are charged with engaging a broad segment of the community, helping identify interviewees, assisting the Libraries in finding materials to collect, and advising on matters of interest to the region’s Jewish community.

For information on how you can get involved and to learn more about this exciting project and the many members of the community already participating in it, please visit us at http://digital.library.unlv.edu/jewish.

K-12 INSTITUTE

Critical to both students’ and educators’ success. Student work created from projects developed during the K-12 Institute will be followed by UNLV Libraries and showcased with the CCSD Library Association for all to learn from and enjoy. “I for one think we need more chances for CCSD and UNLV staff to work together,” Melilli said. “We got a ton out of the K-12 Institute by opening these doors.”

For more information on the K-12 Institute and how you can support it, visit https://www.library.unlv.edu/faculty/institute/2012/k-12.html.
Although two of UNLV’s student organizations provided funds, still more was needed to ensure that all 25,000-plus pages of the Rebel Yell would ultimately appear online. UNLV Libraries sought a grant through the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and was awarded one to further fuel the project, thanks to the strong support and dedication already demonstrated by UNLV students. With one last bit of in-kind financial assistance in the form of staff time and expertise approved by UNLV Libraries Dean Patricia Iannuzzi, the project was finally off the ground.

Today, the full run of the Rebel Yell is now available to anyone anywhere via the Rebel Yell Digital Collection website (http://digital.library.unlv.edu/rebelyell). Issues are fully searchable thanks to optical character recognition (OCR), and individual articles can be “clipped” to full-version pull-outs with one click thanks to the archive’s built-in article segmentation feature.

The stories of UNLV students and the university have been brought back to life through this important project. “In a city that hasn’t traditionally been great at preserving its history, UNLV has now ensured that student traditions and activities will exist for posterity,” Gordon said. “Sometimes it’s up to the current generation to preserve the past, but the hope is that this will become a new engagement tool for all who care about the university.”

It’s a gift that the Libraries in particular has been proud to make possible on behalf of all UNLV students—past, present and future.

SEVERAL SHORT-RUN PAPERS CAME IN AND OUT OF BUSINESS QUICKLY, MIRRORING THE BOOM AND BUSTS OF THE TOWNS THEMSELVES,” VAUGHAN said. “IT WILL BE AN INTERESTING CHALLENGE FOR THE ADVISORY BOARD TO ADDRESS.”

The deliverables will be well worth the hard work put forth by all involved, as the information once confined inside these early newspapers will soon be accessible worldwide. Lampert noted that digitized newspapers from other states involved in the Chronicling America project are used in schools, scholarly books, and the production of documentaries. “People are creating amazing things with this information that’s now available to all,” Lampert said. “That’s when it really hit me how exciting it will be, having Nevada’s history represented alongside these other states’ histories.”
The Annual FUND

Dear friend:

Today and every day, I think about the big picture—for this state, for our nation, and for the world. So although I’m writing you to ask for your support of UNLV University Libraries, I want you to consider what I’m really asking for by doing so: your commitment to our past, which exists only if we care enough about its preservation; your commitment to our future, which rests in the hands of our children and is shaped by how we educate them; and your commitment to our present, which is the only time we have to take action and make a difference.

The UNLV University Libraries are different from other libraries and are positioned to serve a variety of communities in a truly unique capacity. UNLV Libraries have a one-of-a-kind collection that immortalizes the rich history of Southern Nevada, vital to the success not only of the Las Vegas community, but of casino and hospitality industries around the world. UNLV Libraries are innovative, bringing cutting-edge technologies and resources to students and faculty alike so they can become leaders in their fields. UNLV Libraries empower learners of all ages from all walks of life to evolve and achieve greater heights through unique programs, exhibits, and events.

However, the UNLV University Libraries cannot do any of this without your help. Therefore, I humbly ask you to consider the following gift amounts and what they can provide:

$50 covers the cost of a podcast or the production of an instructional YouTube video

$100 covers the cost of an e-book, textbook, or an hour-long session with a research specialist

$200 covers the cost of processing a small box of special collections materials

$300 covers the cost to digitize and preserve one oral history

$500 covers the cost of a research clinic for graduate students

The above examples highlight specific ways that your generous support helps the UNLV University Libraries serve our communities, but any and all gifts matter. Your gift’s impact begins at UNLV University Libraries but continues well beyond those walls, transforming inquiries into information literacy, researchers into leaders, and individuals into collaborative communities.

Please help the UNLV University Libraries accomplish this.

With hearty thanks in advance for your investment,

Caty Crockett, Chairperson
UNLV Libraries Advisory Board

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