



City of Long Beach

Working Together to Serve

Memorandum

Date: April 11, 2016
To: Patrick H. West, City Manager *T.H.W.*
From: Glenda Williams, Director of Library Services *G. Williams*
For: Mayor and Members of the City Council
Subject: Preserving Long Beach History Collection

On January 5, 2016, the City Council requested a report on the timeline and costs associated with the following:

- 1) Hiring a consultant to assess and review the Long Beach Public Library (LBPL) newspaper and magazine collection for preservation;
- 2) Identifying potential funding sources for digitization of documents; and
- 3) Digitization schedule.

This memo provides the requested information along with an update on the progress the LBPL has made in regards to the preservation and digitization of its history collection.

Preservation Consultant

LBPL staff has worked with two preservation consultants in the past year to assess the history and newspaper collection.

In 2015, a grant was received from the California Preservation Assessment Project, which provided the services of consultant Susan M. Allen. Ms. Allen is the Director of the California Rare Book School. She has also served as Associate Director and Chief Librarian of the Getty Research Institute and head of the Department of Special Collections, Young Research Library, at UCLA. Her work for City of Long Beach included multi-day site visits, interviews with staff, an inspection of all physical facilities, and a random sampling drawn from all areas of the history collection to determine overall levels of damage. Her recommendations in priority order were:

- 1) Complete a disaster response and salvage plan for the history collection; train staff on disaster preparedness; purchase basic disaster response supplies; store copy of online catalog off-site;
- 2) Stabilize temperature and humidity in areas where history collection is stored; when planning a new facility bring all components of history collection together in one physical space;

- 3) House or re-house items in protective enclosures that are not currently properly stored;
- 4) Improve record-keeping of materials in-use;
- 5) Add UV filter to lights in all history collection storage areas;
- 6) Locate holders of master negatives of local and regional newspapers in the event replacement copies may need to be purchased;
- 7) Continue staff education and training as regards to digital preservation of assets; and
- 8) Library lacks automatic fire suppression system; future planning for new facility should include automatic fire detection and suppression system.

Staff has already begun to implement the above recommendations. To date, staff has drafted a disaster response and salvage plan, begun a massive effort to re-house items in our newspaper and photograph collections, and improved record-keeping. Staff has also shared recommendations for future facilities with the team working on the design/build of the new Civic Center.

In March of this year, LBPL reached out to local expert Brian Geiger, Director of the Center for Bibliographical Studies and Research (CBSR) at UC Riverside, which maintains the California Digital Newspaper Collection, for an on-site visit. CBSR offers free professional consultation to help guide California Libraries through the complexities of digitization, standards, access, preservation and copyright of newspaper projects. Mr. Geiger's report outlines the newspapers he recommends for preservation and digitization based on the following observations:

- 1) Newspapers not available on microfilm at any institution;
- 2) Positive microfilm of newspapers available at one or more institution;
- 3) Master negative microfilm of newspapers available at one or more institutions; and
- 4) Newspapers out of scope for library's collection.

Projected Costs to Implement Recommendations

Staff has obtained quotes for digitization services from two separate vendors. The scope of work requested included scanning, metadata collection, derivative files, and delivery media. Shipping of the materials was not included. From these quotes, staff estimates the total cost of such a project to be approximately \$75,000 to \$100,000. Both vendors contacted could begin this project immediately. It is important to note that the Department of Library Services currently maintains a digital archive database, which is linked to the Library's online catalog and offers a public interface for searching and retrieval of digital assets.

Costs for preservation for physical items, including supplies to safely re-house items such as acid-free archival document boxes, folders, envelopes, sleeves, and microfilming, which is the recommended option for long-term preservation, are approximately \$57,000.

Potential Funding Sources

At this time, there are no available grants for the preservation of newspaper collections in libraries. Staff, with assistance from the Long Beach Public Library Foundation, has kept abreast of funding opportunities from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Historical Publications and Records Commission, California State Library, and the Library Services and Technology Act. The Department of Library Services will pursue funding from the Long Beach Public Library Foundation in addition to other funding opportunities as they become available.

Through a donation to the Long Beach Public Library Foundation, the Library currently has funds to digitize other significant records in its history collection, including the scrapbooks from the Ebell Club of Long Beach. With these funds, staff has also been able to purchase acid-free document boxes and folders to re-house some items from the newspaper and photograph collections.

Digitization Schedule

The schedule of work would depend on the project scope. As recommended by both expert consultants, staff recommends re-housing all physical items first. This would ensure safe transport in the move to a new facility and add significantly to the life expectancy of the items.

As a next step, the staff would pursue microfilming all newspapers from the priority list that have not yet been filmed. As mentioned above, microfilming is the best preservation technique for these types of items, ensuring that content is preserved for at least 500 years.

Once newspapers have been filmed, digital files can be made from the films. Alternately, the LBPL can skip this step and have scans produced directly from the newspapers themselves. Once digital files are produced, these can be uploaded to the existing digital archive, or staff could investigate moving to a more robust digital asset management platform.

Summary

The preservation of, and access to, the local history collection held by the LBPL is of the utmost concern to staff. The collection is overseen by a single special collections librarian who is a graduate of the Western Archives Institute. The Western Archives Institute is an intensive training sponsored by Society of California Archivists and the California State Archives that provides instruction in archival practices including appraisal, arrangement, description, acquisition, preservation administration, reference and access.

With funding, the LBPL is well-placed to move forward on a project of this nature, having both staff expertise and contacts in the field to lend assistance. If you have additional questions or comments, please contact Glenda Williams at (562) 570-6016.

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