

**MEMORANDUM**

**Date:** January 5, 2021

**To:** Ashley Atkinson, AICP, President

APA California Board of Directors

**From:** Steven A. Preston, FAICP and J. Laurence Mintier, FAICP, Chapter Historians

**Subject:** **Status of APA California Archives at California State University, Northridge**

We are writing to inform the Board of recent developments concerning the APA California Archives. Since 1998, the Chapter has maintained its official archives at California State University, Northridge (CSUN).

1. **Collection Closed to Public.** As the pandemic has affected the operations of universities and colleges across California, so has our collection been affected. The archives, housed in the University’s library, have been closed to the public and to us since last March, and there is no date in place yet for a reopening. Most CSUN staff continue to work from home, and it is our understanding is that only a skeleton staff is in place in the Library to handle requests from faculty and students.

2. **Ongoing Transmittal of Records.** Despite that, we have successfully maintained contact with the University’s archives staff, and have been able to continue transmitting records to CSUN through the end of December, 2020. For reasons covered later in this memo, we are uncertain of what will happen for the next several months.

3. **Archives Receives City Songs Collection**. We have also received a significant donation to the Archives: in October we received the “City Songs” collection of Dr. David E. Bess, the former chair of the urban and regional planning program at Cal Poly, Pomona. Dr. Bess served as the Chapter’s vice president for public information in the late 1970s/early 1980s.

The collection includes indexed research, titles, lyrics and music for hundreds of songs, most written at the turn of the last century, promoting California towns and cities. How the songs were used to promote the glories of California, while supporting development, promotion and attraction efforts, represented a line of Dr. Bess’ research over more than 30 years, spawning several academic and conference presentations, including a performance some years ago before the California Planning Roundtable.

Archives staff was thrilled to receive the collection, as it represents a particular and unusual topic of research. The Archives staff made special arrangements to take possession of the collection in November.

4. **Staffing Changes**. Faced with significant financial issues related to the pandemic, we are advised that CSUN is making some staffing changes that will affect our archives collection:

* **Holli Teltoe**, the CSUN Coordinator of Special Collection and Archives who has provided us tremendous support and assistance, has taken an early retirement buyout from the University, leaving CSUN on December 31. Ms. Teltoe will continue working with the Glendale Public Library system in its Special Collections unit, and has offered to make herself available if we have questions during the transition.
* For the immediate future, we have been advised that her former supervisor, **Ellen Jarosz,** Head of Special Collections, will be our contact. It is our understanding that Coordinator position may not be filled for up to two years, so there is some uncertainty that we have about the level of support that will be available to us. We are attempting to make contact with Ms. Jarosz.

5. **Digitizing of Collection**. At the time the pandemic struck, the Archives staff and student assistants were working to digitize a significant part of our collection: some 3,600 pages of California Planner and its predecessors going back to the 1950s. That project was funded by a roughly $15,000 grant by the Chapter, and supplemented by a gift from the Dean’s office. At the time the pandemic struck, CSUN estimates that this work was about 70% complete, but because the work is heavily reliant on paid student assistants, no work has been completed since. One of our principal efforts in the coming year will be to try and get this work back on schedule.

6. **Permitted Forms to Deliver Records**. Before her departure, Ms. Teltoe informed us that the University would now accept certain of our records in digital form, meaning CD, thumb drive, or other agreed medium. Once we are able to establish a line of communication with the staff, we hope to get further clarification on this issue, which we believe would help reduce the amount of work needed to transfer records to the Archives and to process the collection.

7. **Change in Name:** Until recently, our communications were with the University’s Delmar T. Oviatt Library, named after the first Dean of the then-nascent San Fernando Valley State University. Oviatt died in 1971. Recent discussions over Oviatt’s statements on matters involving race and ethnicity have caused CSUN to reconsider this name, so we have been informed that going forward, the institution will no longer be referred to as the Oviatt Library, resuming the more prosaic name “University Library” for now.

While none of these recent decisions directly impacts viability of the collection itself, the challenges in accessing staff and materials in the collection will significantly impact our ability to process existing donations and retrieve information from the archives. We will continue to make our annual $1,000 contribution to the Archives program (this is a term of our agreement with CSUN). The Historians are working to establish contact with the new CSUN staff liaison, and will advise the Board as soon as we have more information to report.

**Action Required**

No action required; this report is for the Board’s information only.