CSUB Oral history project is underway

Librarian Curt Asher and historian Douglas Dodd are interviewing faculty, staff, and administrators who worked at CSUB during its early years for an oral history project that is an initiative of the CSUB Public History Institute.

Asher and Dodd are in the process of collecting the spoken memoirs of dozens of retired university employees. The interviews are being digitally recorded, transcribed, edited and indexed. In addition to preserving the history of the institution, the project will provide a rich collection of primary documents about CSUB to supplement archival records.

“If we are going to have an institutional memory, the collecting of these oral histories is essential,” Asher said.

Archivists and librarians have traditionally been the chief collectors and guardians of recorded knowledge, so the teaming of a historian and a librarian on the project makes sense.

Volunteer helps library and gains professional experience

Katie Schoorl graduated from University of California Davis and came home to Bakersfield to gain some experience before going to graduate school in museum studies. So she decided to volunteer in the library’s archives.

“The reason that I started volunteering at CSUB was mainly to gain hands-on experience. Since I’ve figured out what I want to build my career in, I’ve tried my best to gain as much experience as I can,” Katie said. “I honestly love the work and have learned so much since I first started volunteering here.”

She is currently in the process of deciding which graduate school she will attend, since she has been accepted at several.

For most of the 2010-2011 school year, Katie has been working one day a week in the Special Collections at Stiern Library. Much of her work has involved processing the papers of U.S. Representative William Ketchum. Ketchum, a Republican, served as the 36th District Rep-
READ & LEAD: Hundreds of interesting books on leadership presented

READ & LEAD" is a display of books about leaders and leadership. Currently available for check-out in the lobby of the Walter W. Stiern Library, the titles cover biography, business, civil rights, ethics, gender, history, politics, presidents, religion, skill development, sports, and many others. What makes this collection so interesting is the variety of materials,” said Johanna Alexander, Library Reference Services Coordinator. “CSUB students will find books relevant to every major, providing insight and perspective on leaders and leadership.”


In the adjacent box, top leadership titles are suggested but the ultimate goal of the display is to encourage students to investigate the collection and find their own must read leadership book.

To view subject lists, recommended titles from faculty, and selected video clips of leadership authors visit the READ & LEAD web site at http://readleadspring.wordpress.com/about/.

Donor honored

The Library has named an attractive reading area on the fourth floor The Phyllis Hershberger Memorial Reading Area. Her husband Gene of Arroyo Grande made a handsome gift to honor his late wife.

Many routes to reference help

Reference service has changed. Certainly, offering in-person research assistance at the desk is still a key part of helping library users but what has changed is the number of access paths to that help. The Stiern Library offers an array of reference services so that students have ready research assistance; in-person, by phone, online, by email, and through social networks. Here is a summary of those services.

**In-person and phone reference assistance** is provided from the Walter W. Stiern Library and CSUB Antelope Valley Learning Resource Center, providing nearly 120 hours of service between one and two locations in a typical week.

**The Library’s Distance Services** staff assists CSUB distance education students in accessing research materials.

**Librarian subject specialists** are available by appointment, via email or phone.

**Subject guides** to library resources by major are available.

**The Research Corner** is adjacent to the Stiern reference desk. Here students can get more in depth help in finding research.

**The Ask a Librarian chat service** provides immediate online assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to CSUB users.

An electronic message or email can also be sent to the library and a librarian will reply within a few days.

**The Walter Stiern Library Facebook** is popular with more than 1,500 friends and provides a network where notices are posted and questions are answered.

For more information on any of these services call the Reference Desk at 661-654-3231 or visit the Library’s home page and click on: Research Help (in-person | by phone | online | E-mail).

Oral history (continued from page 1)

the fall of 2009 that coincided with the Oildale centennial celebration. The conference brought Oildale natives Gerald Haslam and Merle Haggard to CSUB as keynote speakers. Haslam is a renowned writer, and Haggard is a country music superstar. Last fall, after receiving the backing of President Mitchell, the PHI went from a planning committee to a formal institute with bylaws. It launched its first oral history project in the winter of 2011. Asher and Vivian have sought funding for the institute.

The PHI is intended to become a regional center for the promotion of public history, particularly that of the southern San Joaquin Valley. It also has a goal of becoming a center for the collection, preservation and management of an oral history program.

After some preliminary research, Dodd and Asher developed questions for the interviewees, many of whom have been eager to participate in the project. Many recall a campus in early 1970s that was situated in a rather remote location and that had an open social dynamic between students and faculty. Many of the faculty had come from sophisticated urban areas and had to make cultural adjustments.

“CSUB has a rich and multifaceted history. We are hoping this project will preserve the stories that would otherwise be lost,” Asher said.
Volunteer (continued from page 1)

representative from the Los Angeles area from 1973-1975, and then in the 18th District as Congressman from 1975 to 1978. Ketchum died at Kern Medical Center on June 24, 1978 in the midst of his second term after suffering a heart attack. He was succeeded by Bill Thomas.

The papers were in disarray when Katie started, but she has almost finished reestablishing their original order and describing the contents of many of the boxes and files. When the project is finished, a finding aid to the papers can be developed.

“The work Katie is doing benefits both of us. She gains useful experience for her future profession and the library benefits by her accomplishments. She’s been great. Reliable and really interested in doing a good job,” said her supervisor, Curt Asher, coordinator of Special Collections.

In times of budget hardship, volunteers with skills like Katie’s are highly prized by libraries. She had experience working with special collections as an undergraduate intern prior to her volunteer stint here.

A number of years ago, retired dean Jack Coash, worked in the archives as a volunteer and was highly prized for his work.

Good volunteers approach their work like a paying job, arriving on schedule and keeping their employer informed of their work status and then performing their job with diligence. Many volunteers find it rewarding to have the opportunity to do a volunteer job that is interesting and needed and provides essential experience.

Librarians often have projects that volunteers can help them with, although the work is rarely glamorous. Because library work is often specialized, volunteers who have had some training or previous experience usually work out best. Because volunteer employees are often difficult to schedule, the best types of volunteer jobs are those that are ongoing projects that can be worked on independently for a long period of time.

The Walter W. Stiern Library Associates

INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP RESPONSE FORM

Please complete the form. Make checks payable to the Cal State Bakersfield Foundation and return with the completed form. Contributions are tax-deductible as provided by law. Membership covers one year from the date of contribution.

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