The library opened its long awaited new Historical Research Center, a hands-on training center in public history, a research destination for scholars and students, and an archive that will house community and campus memory, as well as historical treasures.

In his remarks at the opening, President Horace Mitchell said that the Historical Research Center not only collects the past but looks forward, using the latest technology to preserve history while offering opportunities for a variety of unique and practical learning experiences.

“While this center focuses on history, it is really about the future and about creating opportunities for students,” the President said.

The Historical Research Center (or HRC) consists of three spaces: a closed fourth floor storage site, a large second floor technology room, archives and vault, and the second floor California Rare Books Room, exhibit gallery, and conference room, which are open to the public Monday through Friday. The rare books room is modeled on an English drawing room and is a beautiful and comfortable place for researchers to work, said Chris Livingston, archivist and curator of the center.

“We are very happy with the way the room looks. It has that rich, warm feel of dark wood, old books and deep reading. People have been stunned by the transformation,” Livingston said.

Livingston designed the initial exhibit, in the gallery area, which displays archival materials from the collection. The exhibit, called “The World of Archives,” presents different types of materials currently held in the HRC, with explanatory notes.

“We chose this as an initial exhibit because we felt it was a great introduction to our archival holdings and an opportunity to explain what these resources are and why they are important,” Livingston said.

Included in the exhibit are campus memorabilia, Civil War letters, a diary from a pioneering rancher, hand-annotated scores from composer Maurice Ravel to his music publisher Lucian Garban, a 17th century Spanish will, and an 18th century indenture contract.

“The exhibit might seem a little disjointed, but that was the point. We are highlighting what we have and what archives are. That required presenting a range of materials. Our future exhibits will be more specific and focused. The feedback we’ve received so far has been really positive,” Livingston said.

Currently the rare books room houses books from a variety of regions, subjects and eras, but eventually it will house only rare and valuable books from California, Livingston said.

The workroom is equipped with digital workstations that include a scanner capable of scanning map and poster-sized documents.
and a microfilm scanner, which allows the HRC to build its digital presence and preserve collections it owns, as well as community collections it digitizes for others. Livingston said that one of the goals of the HRC is to make community collections and regional collections available to everyone on the internet and to teach students to design and build exhibits online, as well as physically in the gallery.

The HRC is also the campus center for oral history and will work with other community groups and other departments to collect the living memoir of the region. Currently, Livingston is negotiating a project with African American Dust Bowl migrants, which he describes as a forgotten piece of the migration that badly needs to be documented. The HRC has close ties to the CSUB Public History Institute and they are working together on campus oral history and other projects.

The HRC will teach students how to conduct oral histories and will engage them through internal and community internships and volunteer projects. A number of students have already experienced the benefits of working in the HRC, completing projects in oral history; exhibit construction; organizing and preserving historical materials; transcribing interviews; and searching for rare books and manuscripts.

Daniel Anderson, who has worked on numerous projects in the HRC and was instrumental in getting the current exhibit in place, said the experience he is getting is invaluable.

“I plan to work in public history after I graduate with my MA. I really have learned a lot from Chris and from my experience here,” Anderson said.

Livingston, who holds an MA in history in addition to his master's degree in Library Science, was a former archivist for Kern County. He is teaching classes in oral history and archival methods in consort with the history department’s proposed program in public history.

“We really want to build a culture where people know and understand the value of the historical record and how important it is to preserve it for future generations,” said Curt Asher, Interim Dean. “We can do that by getting students involved in these projects and teaching them to see and appreciate that the rich history that exists all around them needs to be valued and protected.”

While there are numerous internal projects already underway, the library is in the midst of developing an internship with the Historic Union Cemetery, which will document the graves there and organize their historical records which date back to the beginning of Bakersfield’s history.

“We want volunteers and internship applicants to get trained and to work on our projects with us. Volunteers don’t have to be students. I would warn people though that this work is addictive. It’s the greatest work in the world, as far as I am concerned,” Livingston said.

Contact Chris at 654-3253.

**Tales from the Vault #2**

By Chris Livingston, Archivist

This edition of Tales from the Vault takes us into the area of oral history. The Historical Research Center in the Walter W. Stiern Library has a vast inventory of oral histories that cover a variety of aspects of history (more about that will be covered in the next Tale). One of the most intriguing portions of the oral history collection is the faculty memoirs. This oral history project was initiated by the Public History Institute to document the early history of the campus. A highlight from this collection is the interview with the late Dr. Edwin Sasaki, who died on August 4, 2014. Dr. Sasaki served CSUB for forty years in many academic and administrative positions.

Dr. Sasaki was born in Sacramento, California in 1940. When he was still very young, he and his family were uprooted to Tule Lake Segregation Center in Newell, California. The reason for this was his family was subject to the relocation of the Japanese to camps after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Tule Lake was the only relocation camp that had a Federal prison associated with it. This camp was reserved for those the United States Government considered as “enemy aliens.” Dr. Sasaki explained why his family was designated as such: “My grandfather was put in prison because he was the vice-president of the Loomis Farmer’s Cooperative and it just so happened that all the members of the Loomis Farmer’s Cooperative were Japanese citizens or Japanese Americans.”

This is just one incredible story out of many in Dr. Sasaki’s life. Do you want to learn more about the remarkable life of Dr. Sasaki? Come visit us! You never know what you’ll discover!
**Walter Presented Some Engaging Events in September**

What do environmental sustainability, Jewish music, and communism in the 1930s have in common? They were all topics of this quarter’s Walter Presents, the event series that brings scholars, speakers, writers and performers to the library. Numerous other Walter Presents events are planned.

**Amber Beeson: “Growing Healthy Communities”**

Amber Beeson spoke earlier this quarter on the status of her vision to improve the food habits of Bakersfield residents through community gardens and a rethinking of the way food is distributed. She is a community activist, who has led efforts to place gardens in public schools and to educate children about the food they eat. She is now working with the CSUB Sustainability Committee to establish a community garden on campus.

Beeson started the Giving Tree Project in 2011 to raise awareness about the importance of community gardens and eating locally grown produce. “In an area like ours, where poor air quality and unhealthy eating have caused problems, Amber’s voice is a voice of reason, promoting a better quality of life for all of us,” said interim Library Dean Curt Asher.

Beeson has presented a plan to the Sustainability Committee for a garden that will produce vegetables and fruit for a food co-op on campus, which the committee hopes to establish in the next few years. The garden will also serve as a classroom and lab, giving students and faculty opportunities to develop some practical curriculum around sustainable agriculture.

**Robert Cherny: “Communism and Anti-Communism in California in the 1930s”**

The CSUB History Forum, in consort with Walter Presents, brought Dr. Robert W. Cherny, a leading scholar of California politics and labor, to campus to discuss his current research on communism and anti-communism in California during the Depression years. The talk was one of many activities that have taken place over the year relating to the Public History Institute’s 75th anniversary celebration of the publication of John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath.

Dr. Cherny is a professor emeritus of history at San Francisco State University, co-author and author of many scholarly books and articles, the most recent of which deal with communism and anti-communism on the West Coast. “The struggle between communism and anti-communism in depression-era California forms the backdrop for Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath, which was written when the upheavals of the San Francisco General Strike and the Pixley Cotton Strike—mostly forgotten now—were still fresh in the public mind,” said Dr. Douglas Dodd of the CSUB History Department. “We are very fortunate to have Professor Cherny speak at CSUB. He is an Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecturer and a foremost scholar of California’s turbulent 1930s.”

He is currently researching a biography of Victor Arnautoff, a leading muralist in San Francisco and an officer in the White Siberian army during the Russian Civil War who became a member of the Communist Party in the late 1930s and emigrated to the Soviet Union at the end of his life.

Since 2000, the History Forum quarterly speaker series has featured more than 30 historians and other scholars engaged in historical inquiry. History Forum is organized and sponsored by the Department of History, with generous support from the Associated Students, Inc., Instructionally Related Activities Committee. Additional support for this History Forum event has been provided by the Walter Stiern Library and the CSUB Public History Institute.

**Lily Hirsch: “Jewish Music after the Holocaust”**

Musicology scholar Dr. Lily Hirsch, who spoke at CSUB in 2012 about Jewish music under the Nazis in Germany, presented her latest research on October 1 on post-Holocaust Jewish music, developed from her latest edited volume Dislocated Memories: Jews, Music and Postwar German Culture.

Dr. Hirsch received her PhD in musicology from Duke University and was formerly a music professor in Ohio. She is the also the author of A Jewish Orchestra in Nazi Germany and Music in American Crime Prevention and Punishment.

**Upcoming Walter Presents for October**

**Crisis on the Border: Immigration Enforcement and Juveniles on Wednesday Oct. 15 at 6 pm**

This Walter Presents is a panel discussion associated with the One Book One Bakersfield One Kern series of events. The panel will consist of community activist Paola Fernandez, political scientist Dr. Mark Martinez and Bakersfield Californian executive editor Bob Price. CSUB Interim Library Dean Curt Asher will moderate the discussion.

The subject of the discussion is closely tied to the best-selling book Enrique’s Journey, that is being featured throughout the county and across CSUB, written by Pulitzer Prize winning journalist Sandra Nazario. Both a harrowing adventure and a touchstone for the debate on immigration reform, the book is the centerpiece of the countywide reading promotion, as well as the book being used in CSUB’s First Year Experience Program.

The University will host Nazario in the Icardo Center on October 30 and the library will be holding a special invitation-only reception for her with the Stiern Associates at 3:30pm that day.

**Children of the Dust Bowl with Jerry Stanley on Tuesday Oct 28th at 6 pm**

Scholar and former CSUB history professor, Jerry Stanley, is scheduled to speak on migrant children of the Dust Bowl era. The author of the renowned book, Children of the Dust Bowl, Dr. Stanley is an expert on Dust Bowl era history in California.
Walter W. Stiern Library Associates

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