

6-15-2018

## Learn by Doing: Cal Poly Pomona's Efforts to Modernize Archival Practices and Increase Student Life Records in Special Collections and Archives Through Collaborative Partnerships

Katie Richardson

*California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*, [kjrichardson@cpp.edu](mailto:kjrichardson@cpp.edu)

Alexis Adkins

*California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*, [amadkins@cpp.edu](mailto:amadkins@cpp.edu)

Elizabeth Gomez

*California State Polytechnic University, Pomona*, [evgomez@cpp.edu](mailto:evgomez@cpp.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship>



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#), and the [Collection Development and Management Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Richardson, Katie; Adkins, Alexis; and Gomez, Elizabeth (2018) "Learn by Doing: Cal Poly Pomona's Efforts to Modernize Archival Practices and Increase Student Life Records in Special Collections and Archives Through Collaborative Partnerships," *Collaborative Librarianship*: Vol. 10 : Iss. 1 , Article 7.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.du.edu/collaborativelibrarianship/vol10/iss1/7>

This Peer Reviewed Article is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ DU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Collaborative Librarianship by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ DU. For more information, please contact [jennifer.cox@du.edu](mailto:jennifer.cox@du.edu), [dig-commons@du.edu](mailto:dig-commons@du.edu).

# **Learn by Doing: Cal Poly Pomona's Efforts to Modernize Archival Practices and Increase Student Life Records in Special Collections and Archives Through Collaborative Partnerships**

Katie Richardson (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

Alexis Adkins (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

Elizabeth Gomez (California State Polytechnic University, Pomona)

## **Abstract**

"Learn by Doing" focuses on the steps Cal Poly Pomona Special Collections and Archives staff have taken to modernize and align unit practices with other special collections and archival repositories in the field and their effort to increase the documentation of student life in their university archives. The article outlines steps taken, lessons learned, partnerships established along the way, and suggestions for those wishing to engage in a similar endeavor.

## **Introduction**

When it comes to documenting the history of a university, special collections librarians and archivists have noted that the bulk of their repositories focus on scholarly and administrative activities conducted by various departments and faculty. While important, these materials do not tell the full story of the university's history. A fuller picture would include documentation of activities in which students are engaged. Student groups and alliances reflect the changes that are taking place within the larger society and provide insight into evolving mores, values, and belief systems. Acknowledging the need to preserve this information, special collections librarians and archivists are encouraging fellow professionals to make a stronger effort to collect historical documents that pertain to student life on campus. With that in mind, the staff at Cal Poly Pomona Special Collections and Archives identified the need to increase documentation of student life in its University Archives. "Learn by doing" is the motto at Cal Poly Pomona, and it is the purpose of this article to discuss the steps taken to modernize unit policies and procedures and the methods attempted to gather student life materials.

## **A Brief Historical Perspective**

For many university archives, there is a structured system in place for obtaining administrative or operational records through records retention programs. The problem with this system is that these records only tell one side of the story. Special collections librarians and archivists have found that acquiring student life materials is necessary to provide a more complete picture of a university campus. However, defining what that entails can be tricky since student life materials encompass a vast array of topics.

In his 1994 article “From Classroom to Commons,” John Straw provides a comprehensive definition of the types of student life materials that should be collected. They include “social, recreational, cultural, political, religious, and all other aspects of the student experience beyond the classroom.”<sup>1</sup> In their 2012 article, Jessica Wagner and Debbi Smith specify that student life materials should contain “records of extracurricular activities, clubs, performances, sports teams and Greek life; materials reflecting residential life and commuting, samples of student work, photographs and ephemera, student publications and records of students’ social lives.”<sup>2</sup> These definitions describe a scope so large that a department can easily become overwhelmed. Nevertheless, special collections librarians and archivists agree that this collecting area cannot be ignored. In 2013, Wagner stated that in failing to acquire materials from students “university archives are excluding a key group from the documentary record.”<sup>3</sup> Archivist Michele Christian stated that “without a concerted effort on the part of the college or university archives to include and inform students, many aspects of campus life will remain undocumented.”<sup>4</sup> In a sense, by not adding student life materials to the university archive, the collection will fail to represent and serve its key demographic: students.

Though research provides general guidelines of what student life materials consist of and their importance to the mission of the university archives, obstacles may arise when trying to acquire these materials. In fact, it has been compared to “hitting a moving target.”<sup>5</sup> What makes these materials so elusive? One explanation is that such an endeavor can place strains on departments that are already understaffed and overwhelmed with projects.<sup>6</sup> Developing student life collections requires time for outreach, processing, and so forth, which takes additional time and resources. Another well documented reason is the high turnover rates in student clubs and organizations.<sup>7</sup> The majority of students only stay for four years and many clubs elect a new board every year, so it is difficult to establish ties with students when leadership changes so quickly. In addition, it can be a struggle for exposure on campus; students are often not familiar with special collections and archives, their purpose, or the materials they contain.<sup>8</sup> Lastly, a great deal of student life materials from the past twenty years are digital. This raises issues for university archives that have not developed a plan or do not have the technological capabilities to ingest electronic records. While numerous pitfalls exist in collecting student life materials, surveys and case studies provide special collections librarians and archivists with insight into how other universities are tackling the issue.

Since there are different variables from one university archive to the next, there are many approaches for acquiring student life materials. According to a survey conducted by Wagner in 2013, just about half of the participating universities indicated that “liaising with student groups was key in acquiring student life materials.”<sup>9</sup> However, the survey stops short of asking about the effectiveness of this method. Case studies offer insight into how institutions have approached this issue. In 2012, the Bruin Archives Project (BAP) was created by library and information science graduate students at the University of California, Los Angeles to undertake outreach and

processing of student archival collections for the university archive. The project benefits both groups in the sense that graduate students gain significant archival experience and the university archive builds upon its student life collection.<sup>10</sup> While BAP is a great initiative for creating a collaborative strategy for collecting and processing student life materials, the project was only able to reach out to a fraction of the groups they contacted. The study notes that although roughly 800 student organizations were contacted, only about 75 responded to the survey.<sup>11</sup>

One option for raising student awareness would be to revisit methods of outreach and promotion of the program. At Iowa State University, Special Collections and University Archives staff identified gaps in their oral history collection and decided to actively pursue current students to get their unique perspectives on campus life and activities. While this approach was effective in that the archive acquired new records, it was limited in that it generated only one type of record (oral histories) that were mainly focused on student accounts of a particular on-campus event. A 2012 study by Wagner and Smith offers the most comprehensive directives for collecting student materials, including attendance at student orientation sessions, coordination with student organizations, and a streamlined process for students to donate their materials. Students are more likely to donate materials when the process is easier.<sup>12</sup>

Megan Atkinson, the University Archivist at Tennessee Technological University, also encourages archivists to attend events held by groups likely to hold student life records. At her institution, she would watch for upcoming class reunions and ask the organizers if she could set up a table with duplicate yearbooks attendees could annotate. This approach led to conversations with alumni about the University Archives' overall mission and provided connections for future collection development.<sup>13</sup> This method is similar to the Bruin Archives Project in that it utilizes

collaboration with students, student organizations and/or departments as a method of developing university archives. In this case, there is the potential for collaborating with alumni and partnering with alumni groups in order to fill gaps in the collection. This same approach can be utilized with current student groups so that the university archive can acquire recent student life materials.

Although there is acknowledgement in the archival community that acquiring student life materials is essential to university archives, there is room for exploration of the methods, such as collaborations, used to obtain these materials and the potential setbacks that may arise.

### **Laying the Groundwork: Reigniting a Stagnant Archival Program**

In August 2015, library administration began revamping the Special Collections unit at Cal Poly Pomona University Library. At the time, two previously separate units (Special Collections and University Archives and the W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Library) were combined and placed under the purview of Katie Richardson, who was hired to oversee the growth and development of Special Collections, standardize the policies and procedures that govern these rare and unique collections, and increase productivity and efficiency in the unit. Prior to Richardson's arrival, these units had been supervised by individuals who lacked formal training in managing special collections. Therefore, most staff practices did not align with industry standards and many collections languished without being properly processed. Since then, two other important hires have taken place, including the university's first-ever Archivist in May 2016 and Assistant Archivist in March 2017. With the appropriate staff in place, practices are being modernized, goals are being established, and priorities are being set to move the unit forward.

## Setting Priorities and Defining our Collecting Areas

One of the first priorities was to get a handle on the archival collections backlog. To begin, we performed a survey of the archival holdings. The survey also allowed us to get a better sense of what collections were present thus helping us better define a clear collecting focus, set processing priorities, better gauge what grant opportunities might be available to help tackle the backlog, and to identify possible gaps in the collecting areas.

Four collecting areas were more clearly defined using the survey and taking into account several key factors, including the curriculum offered at Cal Poly Pomona, user demand, and the collection strengths of nearby institutions. The collecting areas include:

1. The **Wine and Wine Industry Collection** which documents the history of the Southern California wine industry. Information is collected on Southern California wines, regional wineries, wine selling, wine competitions, wine organizations, and wine events.
2. The **University Archives** which documents the history of the university dating back to its time as the southern branch of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo to the present day. Included are papers of former presidents, administrators, faculty, campus departments, and student organizations.
3. The **Pomona Valley Historical Collection** which documents the history of the region and includes both published and unpublished materials on the history of Pomona and its surrounding areas from its earliest days to the present.
4. The **W.K. Kellogg Arabian Horse Library** which is one of the largest public collections of Arabian horse materials in the world. In addition to documenting the history of the Arabian horse, the library also documents the activities of noteworthy individuals, breeders,

artists, photographers, organizations, equine centers, racetracks, competitions, horse shows, and other events associated with the understanding of the Arabian horse and its history.

## **Getting a Handle on the Backlog**

Since a large number of Cal Poly Pomona's archival collections are unprocessed, establishing an archival management program was vital to moving forward. In the past, finding aids and inventories had been created in multiple ways including Microsoft Word, Excel, and Archivist's Toolkit. At the time, Cal Poly Pomona's instance of Archivist's Toolkit was being hosted by the California Digital Library (CDL) and as of December 2015, the CDL would no longer host instances for non-University of California schools. In addition, the software was no longer being monitored or developed, so we decided to migrate all of the finding aids and inventories to a new archival management system. ArchivesSpace was selected after careful thought and a review of the different tools available.

We then created a Processing Manual to ensure that collections are processed in a uniform and consistent manner following national standards and best practices. The manual was written in such a way that even a novice user will be able to create a finding aid in ArchivesSpace following the step-by-step instructions. With the archival management system in place and guidelines created, the next step was to address the backlog.

In order to help with the backlog, we applied for an Access to Historical Records: Archival Projects grant offered by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. In summer 2017, we were notified that our application was selected for funding. Over the course of the 18-month project, 600 linear feet of archival materials will be processed and 53 EAD finding aids and MARC records will be created. Through a combination of existing staff and



staff hired to work on the grant, we now have a clear plan in place to process the current backlog of archival collections within a five-year period.

With practices being modernized and a clear plan in place to tackle the backlog, we did not want to ignore one key piece central to our mission, which is collection development.

## **Identifying Collecting Gaps**

Cal Poly Pomona is part of the California State University (CSU) system, the largest system of higher education in the United States. The CSU system consists of 23 campuses and serves a diverse population of approximately 478,640 students, including 25,326 students currently enrolled at Cal Poly Pomona (23,731 undergraduates and 1,595 graduate students).<sup>14</sup> Engineering is the most popular major followed by Business Administration and then Science.<sup>15</sup> Roughly one-third of the student body is Latino, one-quarter is Asian, and three percent is black. Cal Poly Pomona is also designated a Hispanic-Serving Institution and is in the top 25 colleges for awarding baccalaureate degrees to Hispanics.<sup>16</sup> Currently, there are 400 registered student groups on campus.<sup>17</sup> In addition, there is nothing stopping students from forming groups for any purpose they see fit. For example, between 1988 and 1997 there was an underground student newspaper at Cal Poly Pomona titled *Low*, which published 27 issues and even expanded to other college campuses.

It became evident during the archival collections survey that only a small percentage of these groups and student activities as a whole were represented in the University Archives and records indicated there had not been a new acquisition of student life materials since 2011. The gaps in the collection became more apparent in the fall of 2016 when the assistant archivist, then a graduate student intern, was given the task of putting together an exhibition on student life

from the 1940s through the 1970s. The exhibition, entitled “Degrees of Change,” encompassed the years in which Cal Poly Pomona transitioned from an all-male school to a coed university. It proved to be a challenge to find documentation of student perspectives and experiences from this time period, particularly that of female students and students of color. In addition, there were only a few student-donated materials from the time period and these materials had not been properly processed to archival standards and showed signs of deterioration from improper storage. Despite the challenges, the exhibit was popular and generated a lot of interest from students and the public. Considering the need to fill gaps in the collection and the high degree of interest from students, we decided to make student life a collection development priority.

### **An Unexpected Start**

Although we identified enhancing student life holdings as a priority for the University Archives, the way the program began was not entirely planned. We routinely collaborate with other departments to arrange for classes to come each quarter for orientations or specialized instruction sessions. During an upper-division public history class visit in fall 2016, Katie Richardson, the Head of Special Collections and Archives mentioned in passing that we were interested in doing more documentation of student life. In attendance were the student chapter President for the Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society and the Vice President of the History Club. After the class, the club officers asked Richardson if she would speak at an upcoming meeting about the special collections field and the path to becoming a special collections librarian. They also mentioned an interest in being involved in the documenting student life project, so Richardson took this opportunity to see what kind of interest she would get from the groups.

On November 10, 2016, Richardson attended the meeting where she spoke not only about the path necessary to become a special collections and archives professional but also about the unit's interest in documenting student life. From that meeting, one student in particular was extremely interested in the project, so we arranged for her to intern with us during the winter 2017 quarter.

We established a for-credit internship program in collaboration with the History Department in 2016. Students process archival collections, transcribe oral history interviews, help with exhibit displays, or work on other special projects. Two objectives were set for the internship: to process the Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers (OSLCC) Records and to create a LibGuide on documenting student life. The OSLCC is a unit within the Cal Poly Pomona Division of Student Affairs and is involved with student activities, cultural centers, multicultural programs and leadership development. In addition to creating development opportunities for students, the OSLCC works to enhance quality of campus life through co-curricular services and activities and has direct contact with many student groups. The OSLCC records date from 1957 to 2008 and include by-laws, lists of officers, re-chartering applications, flyers, and other records from over 150 clubs, councils, associations, teams, societies, sororities, and fraternities at Cal Poly Pomona.

The benefit of processing this collection would be twofold. First, it would provide us with a networking opportunity to further discuss our interest in documenting student life. Second, it would provide us with a proof of concept to show other student groups and organizations on campus how Special Collections and Archives preserves, organizes, and describes student life materials.

The second goal of the internship—to create a LibGuide titled *Documenting Student Activities and Campus Life at Cal Poly Pomona*—would provide a web presence for the project and would be geared towards students. The LibGuide includes an explanation of the kinds of records we want to collect and why. It also includes a section titled "Tips for Preserving your Student Organization's History" and examples of student life materials already included in the University Archives.

### **Collaborations in Action**

After processing the OSLCC records and doing further research on students and the services available to them, we identified the OSLCC as the primary target for this project and Associated Students, Inc. (ASI), Cal Poly Pomona's student government organization, as the second. We settled on a two-pronged outreach approach: contacting the staff at the OSLCC and ASI about becoming involved in official events, and contacting the students directly.

By combing through OSLCC's online club registration and membership management program myBAR (an acronym for my Bronco Activity Record), we learned the dates of several upcoming Club Fairs, events where student organizations registered with the OSLCC would set up tables in an open area on campus and distribute information to potential members. We also consulted with the president of the Library Club for ideas on opportunities to present to all of the club officers. She suggested the Bronco Club and Organization Registration Conference, an event offered five to seven times a year, which all club officers are required to attend.

It should be noted that myBAR is the locally branded instance of the scheduling software Engage, a product created by the company Campus Labs. Campus Labs specializes in assessment tools for college campuses and its products are used by over 1000 institutions.<sup>18</sup> This

popular scheduling software or similar products are likely to be in place at college campuses. Locating and following campus-run student activity websites is a good way to identify possible collection development and outreach opportunities.

ASI maintains a separate website that lists ASI-sponsored events and student government meetings. An ASI senate meeting was coming up so we emailed the ASI staff coordinator asking to give a brief presentation at the beginning of the meeting. The coordinator agreed, and we created a five-minute PowerPoint presentation with an overview of the Special Collections and Archives unit, our collecting areas, goals for documenting student life, and our location and contact information. We also brought highlights from the collection for show and tell, including the oldest club charter, and distributed flyers derived from the LibGuide.

A pattern began to emerge in which outreach efforts most quickly bore fruit with staff members and then with the students several months later. For example, the staff coordinator for ASI asked us to evaluate some old records in a storage area immediately after the presentation. Records of historic importance were identified and later transferred to the University Archives.

Then, a few months after the presentation, the Head of Special Collections and Archives was at an unrelated university committee meeting, which also has student senators appointed from ASI. One of the student senators mentioned to her that since the presentation at the ASI Senate meeting, the officers had been discussing how they might help with our efforts. The student also told her that he knew of old student life records in the Dean of Students office, where he worked as a student employee. The senator gave her his contact information and we sent him a follow-up email.

This delayed response was not surprising since students have so many demands on their time during the academic term. Also, students are usually unfamiliar with the Special Collections and Archives unit and the concept of an archive; they can be shy about engaging with faculty and staff from a unit they have never heard of. In contrast, other university staff members saw us as peers and did not hesitate to reply to outreach efforts, even if they were not familiar with the University Archives.

In addition to exploring collaboration opportunities on campus, we partner regularly with the California Preservation Program, whose mission is to provide “information, education, and expert assistance on preservation of collections to libraries, archives, historical societies, history museums, and records repositories in California.”<sup>19</sup> One of the ways the California Preservation Program carries out its mission is through digitization initiatives such as “California Audiovisual Preservation Project” and “California Revealed Project,” which allow institutions to nominate audiovisual and paper-based materials for digitization. The selected items are digitized free of charge (with the exception of shipping) and the materials are made available through the Internet Archive website.<sup>20</sup> Through these projects, we have been able to nominate and digitize several student oral histories and other recordings on student life from the university archives, including oral histories from alumni of the Voorhis School for Boys (a boarding school that operated in the 1930s and later served as the first Cal Poly Pomona campus) and a 1986 recording of a discussion on “The Black Student Experience and Gow Dow at Cal Poly.”

### **Create Your Elevator Pitch**

Based on the information gathered from the OSLCC website, we knew that at the start of the academic year there was going to be a Club Fair on campus. The Club Fair is an opportunity

for the different student groups on campus to come together at an appointed time in one of the campus quads in order to attract new members. Each group is given a table where they can exhibit information about their club and answer any questions by interested parties. Two of us, the Head of Special Collections and Archives and the Archivist, attended this event. In preparation, we created a flyer using information from the documenting student life LibGuide to pass out to the various clubs.

We started on opposite ends of the quad and then met in the middle, having gone up to almost every club present to discuss our efforts to increase documentation of student life. This took about an hour and a lot came out in these conversations. For example, a fraternity member mentioned that the Coordinator for Greek Life and Education was in the process of cleaning out her file cabinet. Also, the Mexican American Student Association (MASA) had a photograph on display of Cesar Chavez's visit to the campus in the 1980s and meeting with MASA students at the time. Surprisingly enough, one of our student employees was tabling for her sorority, and we are now working with her to transfer the group's records.

Greek Life and Education is a section within the OSLCC and is overseen by a dedicated staff coordinator. In addition to fraternities and sororities, there are several Greek Life councils that students can serve on and an overarching Executive Council. Some, but not all, of the Greek Life events could be found on myBAR. About a week after the Club Fair, the Greek Organizations had set up tables again, this time right outside the University Library. We were not expecting this, but went out anyway with flyers and our pitch ready. We had realized after the Club Fair that we should have taken notes during our conversations with students. This time, we were sure to ask for the organization president's name, and make note of any especially interesting facts the students had shared about their organization. About a week later, we emailed

12 contacts to reiterate interest in collecting their inactive records. There was one reply from the chapter president of Phi Delta, who was interested in transferring electronic records to the University Archives.

## **Student Life Records are Largely Digital**

We are in the process of establishing a digital archives program at Cal Poly Pomona. We have not had one up to this point for a variety of reasons. One advantage of this is that we can start fresh and draw upon the best practices established over the past 20 years. The California State University system is moving towards a unified digital content management system that all campus libraries can use. It is likely that Samvera will be implemented at Cal Poly Pomona in the 2018-2019 academic year. We have decided to use Phi Delta's born-digital records as a test case for how well Samvera handles born-digital materials.

With Greek Life fresh in mind, we contacted the Interim Greek Life and Education coordinator about the records a fraternity member had mentioned at the first Club Fair and set up a meeting with her the following month. At this point, we decided to also send follow-up emails to officers of the groups that expressed interest at the Club Fair. This was probably about 20% of the groups we spoke to.

We knew from the OSLCC website that the Bronco Club and Organization Conference (BCOC) was coming up in about three weeks, so we requested a meeting with the acting director of the OSLCC to discuss the documenting student life project and the possibility of being added to the BCOC agenda. At the meeting, the coordinator explained that clubs are required to submit their essential records—mainly constitutions and bylaws, but also rosters and photographs—electronically to myBAR. These records are available as PDFs to anyone with a university ID



and logon. Initially, we proposed requiring students to submit the documents to the University Archives as well, but it appeared easier for us to simply download the PDFs from myBAR. Moving forward, the plan will be to develop a workflow for this once the digital content management system is in place.

The OSLCC director agreed to add Special Collections and Archives to the BCOC agenda, to transfer four record boxes of old paper registration materials no longer needed to the University Archives, and to add us to the mailing list for future events. She explained that this upcoming conference was the last one of the calendar year and that there are several conferences between May and October. We gave the same five-minute PowerPoint presentation to the club officers gathered at the conference as we did to the ASI senators. This was quite different from the ASI Senate meeting as it was a large crowd and we were not able to bring physical examples from the collection. In the future, it would be preferable to bring materials for display since the students are more engaged when they can examine original documents and objects.

### **Collaborating at Various Levels**

It is important to work through official channels and find contacts and opportunities on official university websites. But it is equally important to pay attention to the day-to-day activities on campus and listen to the students. For example, we noticed yet another gathering of student club tables taking place in front of the Engineering Building. We had not heard about it and didn't even know precisely what it was, but went out there with flyers nonetheless and visited each table collecting club officer contact information.

In November 2017, the first of three meetings with the Interim Coordinator of Greek Life and Education took place. At the first meeting, we assessed the records she was interested in

transferring and she provided a list of current contacts for the Greek organizations. The following week, we returned to collect the records and noticed additional binders of Greek Life records on a different shelf in her office and asked if they could be added to the list of transferred materials. Since assuming her position, the coordinator had been reviewing the many paper records created by her predecessors and judged that these too were inactive and could be transferred. While on this topic, she showed us an additional storage area where we found more paper records that would make strong additions to the University Archives. We packed up all of the materials that we could carry and made arrangements to return later for the rest.

Toward the end of the academic term, we heard back from the ASI coordinator about the records she wanted to transfer. She had sorted them and they were ready to be collected. That same week, we heard back from the ASI senator we had emailed two months prior. As mentioned above, he was a student employee in the Office of the Dean of Students in addition to serving in the student government. We quickly contacted the ASI coordinator to double-check that there was no overlap between the two departments (there wasn't) and it was arranged to meet the student senator at the Dean's office to see the records.

The Office of the Dean of Students, along with the OSLCC, is located in the "old stables." The Cal Poly Pomona campus is on the site of cereal mogul W.K. Kellogg's Arabian horse ranch. Kellogg built the ranch as his winter home in 1925 and donated the horses and land to the state of California in 1932, with the stipulation that the gift be used for educational purposes and the horse breeding program continue. It eventually became part of the California State University system. Several of the original ranch buildings remain, including the stables, in which the spacious stalls have been renovated as modern office suites.

The Dean of Student records were located in the tower of the stables. The senator led us up a steep, spiral staircase that had probably not changed much since Mr. Kellogg's day. There, under the rafters, were two file cabinets of records that appeared to date back to the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the files were for student clubs and organizations that still exist at Cal Poly Pomona. It appears that student life was under the purview of the Dean of Students before the formation of the OSLCC. This was a fantastic find! As previously mentioned, most of our staff is new to the University and there seems to be a lot of turnover in the departments involved in student life. It is very unlikely that we would have guessed that these records existed.

### **Conclusion: Moving Forward and Key Takeaways**

Over the past year, the process of enhancing the documentation of student life at Cal Poly Pomona Special Collections and Archives involved a lot of trial and error. But working through the process led to a better understanding of what strategies would help us acquire materials in the future. Reaching out to students directly and making presentations at student organization events was helpful in gathering information and insight to the type of materials student groups had in their possession, but these contacts yielded very few actual acquisitions. However, the information gained from interactions with students was invaluable. Students led us to important contacts with ASI, the Dean of Students, and the OSLCC, and the most significant acquisitions came from collaborating with these departments. Since the beginning of the student life project, we have acquired approximately 16 linear feet of student material, processed 16.11 linear feet of student life archival materials already acquired, and had seven oral histories on student life selected for digitization by the California Preservation Program.

As stated before, we are new to the university, so it was necessary to learn about the different departments on campus and their functions. Partnership and collaboration with the departments directly involved in student life is essential to collection building. These departments function as a clearinghouse for essential student life records. Furthermore, students are likely more responsive to communication from the department that administers their club's operation. There is little incentive for busy students to make an effort to gather and transfer their records directly to the University Archives; if it is not required or not essential to the operation of their club they probably won't do it. Through this collaboration, the departments are able to release documents with the assurance that they will be properly housed, while we are able to make important acquisitions to the University Archives collecting area.

Going through this process has allowed us to develop a much more streamlined and efficient approach. Now that we have identified key partnerships with Associated Students, Inc., the Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers, the Office of Greek Life, and the Office of the Dean of Students, we will continue to collaborate with these departments to further document student life. Specifically, we plan to do more targeted presentations to the student groups supported by these departments and will check in with the coordinators periodically about transferring inactive records. These presentations will take place at the start of each academic year rather than at multiple events throughout. This will likely be a much more efficient use of staff time to promote the project.

In-house, we plan to further develop our digital archives program in collaboration with the Digital Systems & Technology unit within the library, campus IT, and the CSU Chancellor's Office. As mentioned earlier, records created by student groups on campus over the last 20 years are largely digital and we plan to be able to ingest and store those materials accordingly. Work

on this process will begin in summer 2018 when Samvera is implemented and ready for testing across the CSU system. We plan to create a workflow for acquiring electronic records directly from myBAR and also establish a platform for student groups to directly transfer their digital files to us.

Work with student interns will continue. Establishing a for-credit internship program is beneficial in that it gives students practical experience performing the tasks of special collections professionals while at the same time helping us meet our goals. We have found that students enjoy learning about prior student experiences at the university through class visits. Therefore, when talking about potential internship projects there tends to be an interest from students to help with this project. Currently, we have an undergraduate intern processing the records acquired from the Office of the Dean of Student Life in January 2018.

Future partnerships with Alumni Affairs, the Library Club, and Strategic Communications are on the horizon. Alumni Affairs produces the *PolyAlumni* newsletter, which is distributed monthly to 40,000 alumni.<sup>21</sup> We are in discussions with Alumni Affairs about contributing articles to the newsletter. We plan to alert alumni to the documenting student life project and solicit materials from them. In addition, the Library Club was formed to provide outreach to students about library services and opportunities for students to communicate with the library.<sup>22</sup> We will be discussing a partnership with the Club in which members talk with other clubs about their records. We hope this peer-to-peer interaction will resonate well with other students and encourage them to transfer their inactive records. Finally, Strategic Communications recently hired a Social Media Editor for the university. We met with the editor who plans to do more posts focusing on campus history, especially in the form of "Throwback

Thursday." Strategic Communications will collaborate with us frequently to identify topics and we in turn can use the platform to promote the project.

When Special Collections and Archives set out on this project we did not know what would happen. Luckily, it has helped not only fill important gaps within the student life collection but has also raised awareness for Special Collections as a whole across the campus. It has even led to other important connections and acquisitions outside the realm of student life such as the Cesar E. Chavez Center for Higher Education Records. The success of this project thus far has been contingent upon the partnerships established. As we look to continue to enhance this collecting area or any of our others an important take away is that collaboration is key.

---

<sup>1</sup> John Straw, "From Classroom to Commons: Documenting the Total Student Experience in Higher Education." *Archival Issues* 19, no. 1 (1994): 19-29.

<sup>2</sup> Jessica L. Wagner and Debbi A. Smith, "Students as Donors to University Archives: A Study of Student Perceptions with Recommendations," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 2 (2012): 539.

<sup>3</sup> Jessica L. Wagner, "The Student as Subaltern: Reconsidering the Role of the Student Life Material Collections at North American Universities," *Archival Issues* 35, no. 1 (2013): 38.

<sup>4</sup> Michele Christian, "Documenting Student Life: The Use of Oral Histories in University Archives," *Archival Issues* 27, no. 2 (2002): 112.

<sup>5</sup> Wagner and Smith, "Students as Donors to University Archives: A Study of Student Perceptions with Recommendations," 539.

<sup>6</sup> Wagner, "The Student as Subaltern: Reconsidering the Role of the Student Life Material Collections at North American Universities," 42-43.

<sup>7</sup> Christian, "Documenting Student Life: The Use of Oral Histories in University Archives," 111.

<sup>8</sup> Wagner and Smith, "Students as Donors to University Archives: A Study of Student Perceptions with Recommendations," 545-48.

---

<sup>9</sup> Wagner, "The Student as Subaltern: Reconsidering the Role of the Student Life Material Collections at North American Universities," 42.

<sup>10</sup> Sarah Buchanan and Katie Richardson, "Representation through Documentation: Acquiring Student and Campus Life Records through the Bruin Archives Project," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 205-24.

<sup>11</sup> Buchanan and Richardson, "Representation through Documentation: Acquiring Student and Campus Life Records through the Bruin Archives Project," *The American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 217-18.

<sup>12</sup> Wagner and Smith, "Students as Donors to University Archives: A Study of Student Perceptions with Recommendations," 553-557.

<sup>13</sup> Megan Atkinson, "Fast, Good, Cheap! Golden Grads Reunion Pop-Up Exhibit" (presentation, Society of American Archivists Annual General Meeting, Portland, OR, July 23-29, 2017).

<sup>14</sup> "Facts about the CSU," *California State University Office of the Chancellor*, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/about-the-csu/facts-about-the-csu>.

<sup>15</sup> "Facts and Figures," *Cal Poly Pomona*, accessed January 1, 2018. <https://www.cpp.edu/~aboutcpp/calpolypomona-overview/facts-and-figures.shtml>.

<sup>16</sup> "A Diverse Community," *Cal Poly Pomona*, accessed January 1, 2018. <https://www.cpp.edu/~aboutcpp/why-cpp/diverse.shtml>.

<sup>17</sup> "Organizations," *myBAR, Cal Poly Pomona*, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://calpolypomona.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations>.

<sup>18</sup> "Our Member Campuses," *Campus Labs*, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://www.campuslabs.com/about-us/member-campuses/>.

<sup>19</sup> "California Preservation Program," *California Preservation Program*, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://calpreservation.org/>.

<sup>20</sup> "Cal Poly Pomona," *Internet Archive*, accessed January 4, 2018. <https://archive.org/details/calpolypomona>.

<sup>21</sup> "PolyAlumni E-NewsLetter," *Cal Poly Pomona Office of Alumni and External Relations*, accessed February 7, 2018. <http://www.cpp.edu/~alumni/signup/polyalumni.shtml>.

<sup>22</sup> "The Library Club," *My Bronco Activity Record*. Accessed February 7, 2018. <https://mybar.cpp.edu/organization/na>