



CCWH

The Coordinating Council for Women in History

Volume 45:4
November 2014

Past Due?

Susan Wladaver-Morgan

In this, my final message as co-president of the CCWH, I would like to review how well the CCWH and I have met our goals, as well as consider possible prospects for the future. This also offers the perfect opportunity to thank several of the people who have accompanied me on this journey: Sandra Dawson, our dauntless Executive Director; co-presidents Barbara Ramusack and Rachel G. Fuchs; treasurer Kathleen Nutter; longtime newsletter editor Brittany Ferry; fundraising chair Nupur Chaudhuri; graduate student representatives Camesha Scruggs and Melissa Johnson (with whom I shared a panel on mentoring), Beth Hessel, and Erin McCullugh; and all the wonderful people who have served on committees, reached out to our affiliates, managed our website, and so much more. It has been an honor and a privilege to work with you.

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I went back to my candidate statement to see what I had proposed. In it I reflected both on how far organizations like the CCWH have come since their founding in the 1960s and 1970s, but also considered two prob-

“Women and people of color definitely do have a history. . . We owe these people a past that includes them.”

lems at which we could do better. The first had to do with women's marginalization in the profession, the structural and invisible barriers that keep women historians from the highest levels, and especially the growing problem of contingent (or adjunct) labor. I am very pleased to report that the CCWH has consistently addressed these problems not only in the pages of our newsletter but also in numerous panels at professional meetings of organizations like the AHA and the Western Association of Women Historians, where we discussed mentoring at every stage of professional life, the supportive role of organizations of women historians, the need to integrate the history of women into the larger historical narrative, and the

rank or institutional status. I also witnessed what would be my first venture into the culture of philanthropy, a perspective and tool that has served me well in my role in administration.

I returned to CCWH because it is my home. The women in this organization are the people I want to serve. As I navigated the role of a junior faculty member at a research-intensive institution, my heart was connected to service and the desire to pursue a path in administration. Thus, I failed to connect in meaningful and supportive ways to the incredible network of peers and leaders in and affiliated with CCWH. I stood on the margins of our discipline, served on panels when asked to and attended conferences when supported by my institution.

I had spent much of my time exploring other options to further my professional development in higher education and found mentors who helped me do so. I decided to leave an incredible department at a research-intensive university to take on the challenge of an associate dean position at a private liberal arts university. The reality I had to face is that most research-intensive institutions do not provide pathways to leadership roles and if they do there is only one, e.g. one woman, one person of color, or in some cases, one LGBTQ person. I did not have the desire to follow that long trail and I did not want to be an “only,” so I went off the beaten path to cut my teeth in a role that would open new doors or end my higher education career. Despite the move, I had the fortune of having long-time CCWH members keep me in their circles as I crafted my scholarship as a historian and simultaneously developed my career outside of a faculty position and the traditional trajectory of scholar to administrator.

CCWH is already leading or participating in the conversations relevant to the profession’s biggest challenges. CCWH continues to push on issues related to salary equity, how women history PhDs fare on the job market, how to improve the lives of historians in all career stages and all positions, while also challenging each of us to push outside our own comfort zone. Additionally, CCWH faces questions about how to increase its membership, and whether or not it can sustain a full effort to participate in the online journal world. My new role at Cal State Fullerton provides me with the opportunity to watch trends, inform, and provide recommendations on these matters. My foundation was built by CCWH and it would be a privilege to serve CCWH and its membership as Co-President with Rachel Fuchs.

Public History Column

The Isla Vista Memory Project

Sarah Case

In the wake of last spring’s deadly violence in Isla Vista (IV) on the student community surrounding the University of California, Santa Barbara (my home campus), graduate student in history Melissa Barthelemy took the initiative in creating a preservation project and memorial archive to preserve material created by students,

community members, and families to honor the memory of the victims. I recently spoke with Melissa about her motivations, plans, and goals for the project. Below is a condensed version of our conversation.

What is the IV Memorial Archive Project? How did you get involved?

Walking through IV in the days after the tragedy, I noticed hundreds of cards, letters, origami cranes, paintings, photographs, and other objects at the memorial sites where the violence occurred and began thinking that these items should be preserved and documented. Once, I found a card, written by the mother, father, and brother of one of the victims, blowing down the street and I rescued it from falling into the gutter. At that moment I decided to do something to save these items.

I emailed the head of special collections at the UCSB library, and he expressed interest in receiving the materials. At his suggestion, I convened a committee of librarians, students, and faculty, and soon found myself directing this project.

What are your goals in creating the archive? Who do you see as your potential audience?

I view the most important audience as the friends and family most closely connected to this tragedy. Early on, I contacted the families to discuss my vision for the archive project, asking for their consent and involvement. As a result, I corresponded with a number of the parents by email and in person. The fact that this project means so much to them is one of my main sources of motivation.

At present a professional photographer is taking pictures of the artifacts left at memorial sites and documenting the memorial events still occurring. These images will be combined with videos and music created by students and community members. Some families are sending DVDs, photographs, and other items. I think this close collaboration is unique in comparison to other university memorial archives. Ultimately, in addition to holding onto the original items, UCSB Special Collections will host an open-access digital archive collection.

In the future there may be an exhibit as well, ideally one that demonstrates how impressively the campus responded in the wake of this tragedy. This tragedy was reported around the world and sparked national conversations about gun control, student mental health, and violence against women. We have documented local student and community activism around these topics, as well as the resulting passage of legislation in California (AB 1014) which restricts the ability of those with mental health issues and who pose a threat to others to have a gun. Our project emphasizes the historical significance of, and powerful response to, these events.

Any problems or concerns?

Some of the initial challenges were the sensitivity of the subject matter and the difficulty of working within four separate and active memorial sites. It was a challenge explaining to business owners, apartment property managers, and sorority house moms why these items would have scholarly and community importance in the future as well as the present. One of the most difficult tasks was deciding when the memorial items should be removed from the site for preservation in the archive.

Similarly, I was unprepared for the emotional toil of the task I had undertaken. I often ended up consoling individuals at these memorial sites, most often UCSB students and those who had recently graduated, some of whom were very distressed.

Another difficulty has been the lack of infrastructural support. Because this is a project that I created myself in response to extreme time pressures, there were no funds available or any long-range plan to follow. I have performed over 300 hours of work as an unpaid volunteer; it has been a labor of love.

Despite these issues, it has been fulfilling to know that one person can make a difference—everyone else involved in the project has said that if I did not spearhead this effort there never would have been a collection at all.

What are your ultimate hopes for the project?

In addition to preserving the artifacts for the families, I hope that our undergraduate interns and others involved feel empowered because such a tragedy can give one a feeling of hopelessness and powerlessness. This type of project makes it so that the perpetrator doesn't have the last word because it is documenting the outpouring of compassion and love that came from the community. I think it is important to document the impressive way that our community (especially the undergraduates) came together to create amazingly beautiful memorial events, to chase away the predatory media, and really find ways to rebuild and celebrate our community. In this way I think that we can help tell our own stories for ourselves.

Graduate Corner

Of Bedbugs and Alligators: Coping with Research Travel Outside the Archives

Erin McCullugh

For many students, part of the appeal of graduate school is the promise of months of research in far-flung archives. Sifting through archival sources offers a welcome reprieve after months and years of coursework spent digesting monograph after monograph, a chance to rekindle a passion for the materials of history that brought us to graduate study in the first place. In this spirit, this summer I eagerly packed my bags and headed to Florida in search of a Scottish slave trader and his African wife. Along with a list of pertinent boxes, files, and call numbers, I threw in a swimsuit—just in case. Florida promised new sources, a potential dissertation topic, and sunny beaches to boot. As I embarked on my trip, I felt prepared and ready to conquer the archives. What I had not anticipated were the challenges of life outside of the reading room.

After settling in to my new Floridian accommodations it dawned on me that while I was well-prepared for the archives, I had no idea where the closest grocery store was or how to get there using public transportation,