

LA AS SUBJECT  
ANNUAL REPORT  
AUGUST, 2012

*“The only thing new in the world is the history you don’t know” – Harry S. Truman*

It is my pleasure to submit to our general membership this first annual report on the activities of LA as Subject.

I believe there is value in regularly assessing how we are meeting the mission set forth in the LA as Subject Charter. Our annual August meeting seems like the perfect time to look back at the preceding year and set the stage for the next twelve months of our efforts.

Our current Executive Committee has been at the helm for one year and has been working hard to strengthen the organization, determine a course of action to move us forward and to develop new learning opportunities.

This year has witnessed significant movement toward fulfilling the goals that LA as Subject outlines in the Charter:

- Improving visibility of and access to archives
- Promoting services to these collections
- Advocating for the interest of archives which focus on the Los Angeles region
- Expanding research on Los Angeles by encouraging researchers and helping to develop new collections

## **A New Executive Committee & A Strategic Plan**

When I began my term as Executive Committee Chair of our organization, I promised that I would lead us in developing a process by which to explore and identify those activities which would best serve both our membership and the public.

A new Executive Committee was seated beginning August, 2011. Your LA as Subject Executive Committee members for 2011-2012 are:

- Rebecca Fenning, Manuscripts and Archives Librarian, William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, Los Angeles
- Florante Ibanez, Archivist, Filipino American Library; Loyola Law School
- Michael Palmer, Archivist, Claremont Colleges
- Dale Stieber, Special Collections Librarian, Occidental College Library

Photojournalist Shelley Gazin continues her term on the Committee until August, 2012. Christina Rice, Acting Senior Librarian – Photo Collection at Los Angeles Public Library begins her term this month. Liza Posas continues to serve as our University of Southern California Libraries staff coordinator.

Although LA as Subject had been in existence since 1997, it had never established a formal process in more recent years to map out its future, communicate its goals on an ongoing basis, and inform members and potential members of future long-term activities.

I convened our incoming Executive Committee to begin brainstorming on a Strategic Plan in July, 2011. From that meeting, we began a process to identify possible strategic directions for the organization over the next few years.

The Committee met several times throughout the year to discuss and distill the many goals, projects and tasks considered to be worthwhile pursuits.

We polled the general membership, asking them to rank these concepts according to importance to them, their users, and the LA as Subject membership overall.

We are now on track to complete the Strategic Plan this summer and we are working with the USC Library Communications team to produce a publication in October.

The Strategic Plan will help our network of multi-type institutions and collections work together in the following core strategic directions:

- To develop resources and foster collaborative projects
- To build closer relationships with information seekers and research communities
- To facilitate member involvement and participation while expanding our activities

The key drivers for success in these activities include leveraging new technologies, communicating more effectively amongst ourselves and the public, and playing a proactive role in demonstrating the value of preserving and providing access to Southern California history and culture.

## **Measuring our impact**

LA as Subject has embarked on an ambitious social media agenda. As a diverse array of passionate, capable leaders, we are working to take advantage of new technology to bring local history and culture alive.

Our recently redesigned LA as Subject website serves to bring together information about members, their collections, our activities, meetings, exhibits and more. It has logged more than 68,000 page views this fiscal year and more than 131,000 since its re-launch in September, 2010.

Our Twitter followers now number more than 2,100 and more than 1,350 people “like” us on Facebook. We hosted a hands-on computer lab workshop for novice LA as Subject members to experiment with Twitter and Facebook for their institutions and collections.

LA as Subject leaders have spoken with numerous media outlets and scholars about promoting our mission and how we can facilitate networking amongst those who study the Los Angeles Region locally and from afar.

I encourage all members to seize social media opportunities wherever possible to take advantage of both the extended reach of our numerous members as well as the viral nature of our high-interest content and activities.

## **Collaborative ventures**

Our weekly contribution to KCET’s SoCal Focus webpage has been met with extraordinary enthusiasm. This year, more than 200,000 unique visits to these engaging stories drawn our collections have been recorded .

This venture has spread publicized our network’s existence and member collections further than we could possibly do on our own.

We are extremely fortunate to have the University of Southern California library staff for developing this project, soliciting ideas and feedback from the membership, and consistently producing a quality product on our behalf week after week.

Earlier this year, our network sponsored a joint-meeting with the Los Angeles Heritage Alliance to share ideas and mutual understanding of each other’s missions. The Heritage Alliance is an association of more than two hundred groups working to promote and preserve the region’s history. We met with the the Alliance to identify future ventures such as a “Los Angeles Summit” to foster greater networking among scholars and researchers studying Southern California beyond our members’ collections.

We also participated in LAHA’s Los Angeles Heritage Day at El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument alongside dozens of other likeminded organizations striving to promote the importance of local history and culture.

LA as Subject also co-hosted an event with the Special Library Association – Southern California Chapter celebrating the grand opening of the new West Hollywood Public Library. Students and recent graduates of local graduate programs in library and information science were invited to meet members from both organizations to familiarize themselves with local internship and employment opportunities.

During the past year, we also met with and presented two workshops in conjunction with Historypin. This not-for-profit venture is collaborating with over 200 libraries, archives and museums around the world to help them share their content with a global community of users – sharing our content while claiming no ownership or copyright status for itself.

Working with Google, Historypin has captured the attention of several of our users, offering us yet another platform in which to share our unique individual and collective memories regarding the history and culture of the Los Angeles Region.

Through Historypin, LA as Subject members have begun making their content available for people to explore and interact with in new ways: exploring augmented reality by comparing images from the past and present throughout time, soliciting personal memories and stories for content and creating customized collections and tours online.

Their new mobile app, educational opportunities, free tools and dedicated support for archival collections hold great promise for LA as Subject to expand the sharing and promotion of images, film, digitized manuscripts and other content, which in turn allows us to tell stories in a compelling manner in context with resources from other collections.

## **6<sup>th</sup> Annual Archives Bazaar**

Our marquee event this past year drew a record number of both attendees and exhibitors. Approximately eighty LA as Subject members displayed a vast array of archival material in the Doheny Memorial Library to more than 1,500 researchers, history buffs, journalists, and other enthusiasts.

Los Angeles Times architecture critic Christopher Hawthorne delivered a compelling keynote address, and several other programs lured visitors away from the fascinating exhibits. These included “West Coast / West Wing: The Nixon and Reagan Presidential Libraries,” “Researching L.A. 101,” “Historypin: Pulling Photography Into The Fourth Dimension,” “Ready For Its Close-Up: L.A. In The Movies,” “Lalo Guerrero: The Father Of Chicano Music,” “On The Record: Getting Started With Oral History,” and two documentary film screenings/discussions.

We are fortunate to have seasoned Archives Bazaar planners both within the organization and on the University of Southern California staff to ensure a successful event year after year where “history comes alive.”

At the 2011 Archives Bazaar, the LA as Subject membership bestowed the Avery Clayton Spirit Award in memory of our beloved colleague.

The Award was established in 2010 to annually honor the dedication, enthusiasm, spirit and character of Avery Clayton (1947-2009), a dedicated and unceasingly enthusiastic member of LA as Subject.

This year's recipient is Carol Wells, Executive Director of the Center for the Study of Political Graphics. Carol is an activist, art historian, curator, lecturer, writer and poster collector. She founded the Center in 1988 and leads what has become the largest collection of post-World War II political posters in the United States.

## **Moving forward**

LA as Subject is taking steps to ensure that the history and culture of the Los Angeles Region continue to be collected, preserved, interpreted and available for education and public consumption.

Our Strategic Plan, scheduled for completion in October, 2012, will serve as a roadmap to guide our way.

The Executive Committee has identified three core strategic directions around which to focus our activity in the coming years.

We will develop and foster collaborative projects to help members promote their efforts in collecting, preserving and providing access to our vital resources. This includes bringing our collections to our users (and potential users) in new and exciting ways. We will begin assessing how we can develop online exhibits, mobile apps and new partnerships to assist members in surfacing their valuable assets.

We will build closer relationships with information seekers and research communities to align our activities with our mission and charter. We will focus on making learning fun through creation of participatory experiences for both members and the public. We will explore the viability of meta-searching member holdings across institutions, the options for evolving our website into a research portal, and for convening a "Los Angeles Summit" to bring together those who the region and all its myriad facets.

We will facilitate member involvement and participation while expanding our activities. We have already begun planning for training, workshops, site visits and other activities which go beyond our bi-monthly membership meetings. We will look for new ways to encourage member participation and analyze our membership profile to begin examining how we can engage our less active members and connect with collections in our community who have never joined LA as Subject.

The Plan will establish a clear direction forward with benchmarks to assess our progress. This will improve the University of Southern California Library's ability to assist us in growing more vibrant, more relevant, and more valued.

I recognize that we would not be able to accomplish the goals outlined in the Plan without generous assistance from our host institution. The University of Southern California Library's help with staffing,

communications, and other resources regarding the aforementioned key drivers for success have continued to move our organization forward.

Lastly, while this is merely an overview of some of our more formalized activities during the course of the past year, I hope that they have also inspired creative ideas, new professional and personal relationships and a greater appreciation of each other as well.

I am looking forward to an incredible year!

Sincerely,

Kenn Bicknell

Digital Resources Librarian

Dorothy Peyton Gray Transportation Library and Archive

Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority