

Featured - Diversity Check: Removing Dehumanizing Language from the Discovery System

eNews Edition: Spring 2020

Contributed by Elizabeth Altman

Ordinarily one might not find library subject headings particularly fascinating, but the Oviatt Library's OneSearch discovery system has a new story to tell that radically changes the way students engage with information on critical topics. Thanks to the collaborative work of Luiz Mendes, chair of the the Library's Collection Access and Management Systems department, and Israel Yanez, a cataloger at CSU Sacramento Library, in the display of certain library search results, *illegal aliens* has become *undocumented immigrants*.

The change was prompted by a resolution made by the American Library Association (ALA) that *illegal aliens* and related terms are dehumanizing, and should be changed in all search systems used by United States libraries. In 2016 the Library of Congress confirmed that the ALA resolution should be adopted into law, but this decision was subsequently blocked by the US Congressional Appropriations Committee.

Undaunted by this reversal, a committee formed within the ALA, the ALCTS Subject Access Committee (SAC) to consider alternatives to the offensive subject headings. SAC recommended replacing "illegal aliens" and related terms with "undocumented immigrants" and "non-citizens," depending on context. In 2019, ALCTS surveyed libraries to find out which, if any, had acted on the earlier ALA resolution. This

Because the Library serves a diverse population of students and faculty, and receives Title III funding as a Hispanic Serving Institution, we are now proudly supporting our mission by being responsive to social justice concerns through the language of our metadata.

sparked a discussion within the 23-campus CSU Unified Library Management System (ULMS) Technical Services Working Group. Mendes and Yanez proposed a series of changes to the

CSU Technical Services Open Forum in October 2019. Encouraged by feedback on the plan, they made a recommendation to the Council of Library Directors (COLD), which passed a resolution agreeing with the ALA resolution in early December.

The substitution of subject terms in OneSearch, the search system used by all 23 campuses of the CSU, was no trivial matter. All library systems in the United States use subject terms defined by the Library of Congress (LOC). These standardized “tags” (called *metadata*) are associated with a search system’s records of books, articles, and other items, and they help determine which results appear when you enter specific words in your search. LOC regularly revises subject terms to reflect contemporary cultural perception. For example, the term “African Americans” has been through several changes. You can find a summary of the LOC’s revision decisions on [Summary Decisions from the Weekly Editorial Meeting](#).

Libraries generally avoid altering their subject terms at the local level, and in considering these specific changes, the ULMS working group had to be cautious not to open the door to wide-ranging substitutions. “There are still subject terms that some may find offensive,” says Mendes “for example, ‘women scientists’ [*editor’s note: because there is no search term ‘men scientists’*]. Since subject terms change affect how the Library’s holdings are searched and discovered worldwide, all changes need to be weighed carefully. We wouldn’t have pursued this action if it had not already been recommended by the Library of Congress and the ALA.”



Possible practical strategies included (a) replacing offensive terms or (b) adding the more neutral terms alongside the offensive terms. Both had drawbacks. Deviating from the standard points of access by replacing the terms would mean you might search “illegal aliens” and receive a set of results completely different from what you would find in libraries outside the CSU Libraries system. Simply adding the neutral terms alongside would hardly solve the problem. Because of the way the record for each item in the system is processed before the user sees it -- a process called transformation -- a third possibility presented itself: masking the

LOC term with an inoffensive alternative. Searches that used the standard LOC terms and those that used the substitution terms would yield the same results, but the offensive terms would not be displayed in the record themselves. This is the strategy they successfully implemented.

The results of this action were not immediately apparent, but the Library’s records now provide a more inclusive terminology that respects the identity of more of those who are likely to be using them. Because the Library serves a diverse population of students and

faculty, and receives Title III funding as a Hispanic Serving Institution, we are now proudly supporting our mission by being responsive to social justice concerns through the language of our metadata. "Most of our students use the term 'undocumented immigrants,' so we expect this change will make OneSearch more useful to them," says Mendes. The change is also in line with terms already used in several of our databases. Increased searches using the more neutral terms might put pressure on our remaining database vendors to include those terms; if they find they are getting searched less frequently because they are using outdated, offensive terms, they will likely be forced to change them.

Other institutions have contacted Israel Yanez to discuss making this change in their discovery systems. In December 2019, Yanez and Mendes received a commendation as Radical ChangeMakers from the CSU Coalition for Undocumented Student Success.

What's New: Library Events, Looking Back and Looking Forward

eNews Edition: **Spring 2020**

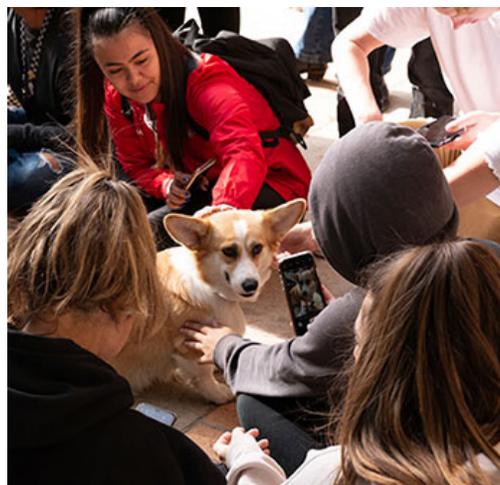
Contributed by David Morck

The Oviatt Library prides itself as a source of so many services and resources to explore. Unfortunately with the current closure we have had to find ways to extend our services online to continue to serve our students, staff, faculty and community which we have been doing our best to provide.

Of our many services, one that is sorely missed are our in person events. Last year was full of a lot of highlights, whether it was guest authors, finals relaxation events, panels, or film screenings -- they garnered new experiences, mentoring, and educational opportunities, and a lot of fun along the way.

While we may be apart, the Oviatt Library will continue to work towards providing resources for the community online and we are planning on continuing our event programming through online and collaborative services. Please check our [events page \(https://library.csun.edu/events\)](https://library.csun.edu/events) for upcoming events such as our National Library Week Staff and Student Book Suggestions and Raffle, and our Wish You Were Here: Virtual Graduation photoshop event.

See our [Services and Resources to Support You During COVID-19 \(https://library.csun.edu/covid19-closure\)](https://library.csun.edu/covid19-closure) and [Free Electronic Books/Textbooks, Articles, Media, etc. for CSUN Students and Faculty \(https://libguides.csun.edu/affordable-learning-solutions/covid-19\)](https://libguides.csun.edu/affordable-learning-solutions/covid-19) for more resources during this time.



Students petting a therapy dog at the Oviatt Library

Event Highlights from this Past Year

Right of Way: Justice and Equity in the Growth of Los Angeles

Special Collections & Archives tackled the environmental justice movement, and featured a reception with Dr. Loraine Lundquist.

State of OA 2019: Can California Transform Open Access?

The Library hosted the sixth annual Open Access Award and a discussion of transformative publishing agreements being pursued by both the UC and CSU.

Million Dollar Showcase: Affordable Learning in Action

As part of the CSU-wide Affordable Learning Solutions initiative, faculty at CSUN have already saved students over \$1,000,000. This event honored those professors that included low cost materials in their classes.

And so many other events

In the Fall we celebrated the Map Collection Grand Opening, did coding workshops, learned how to "map the news" on GIS Day.

Our Finals Break featured therapy dogs, arts & crafts, meditation and student survival kits.

We hope to continue to offer more programming in the future, whether it be in-person someday or continuing to support learning, education and fun online. Please consider giving a gift to the library; find out [Ways to Give \(https://library.csun.edu/give\)](https://library.csun.edu/give) to continue our mission.

2020/whats-
new#carousel-
event)



Attendees browse maps and other materials at the Grand Opening of the Map Collection at the Oviatt Library



Oviatt Spotlight: The Richard Cross Collection

eNews Edition: **Spring 2020**

Contributed by Gina Flores

In this Oviatt Spotlight, we're zooming in on a significant project in the Library's Tom & Ethel Bradley Center, where the talented team is digitizing thousands of images by American photojournalist *Richard Cross* (<https://digital-library.csun.edu/bradley-center-photographs/richard-cross>). This Q & A with Dr. José Luis Benavides takes us behind the scenes of this project.

Benavides is a journalism professor and the director of the Tom & Ethel Bradley Center, formerly known as the Institute for Arts & Media at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). He created the first interdisciplinary minor in Spanish-language journalism in the United States, and established the Spanish-language student publication, *El Nuevo Sol* in 2003, which he transformed into a digital site covering global Latino communities in 2007.

Q. How was the Richard Cross Collection acquired?

A. The Richard Cross Collection (RCC) was donated to CSUN by his father, Russell Cross, a resident of the San Fernando Valley until he passed away. Since Richard's death in 1983, his father looked for a place to house his son's photographic collection. Dr. Kent Kirkton, then director of the Center for Photojournalism & Visual History, a precursor to Tom & Ethel Bradley Center, persuaded Mr. Cross to donate his son's collection to CSUN for preservation and eventual dissemination.

Q. What is the significance of the collection?

A. The RCC consists of thousands of prints, slides, and negatives by Richard Cross. His photographs in Colombia and in Central America and Mexico compose the two largest segments of the collection. Prior to receiving funding, the RCC remained undigitized (except for a small sample of 14 images), dramatically restricting its availability to the public. In 2018, the Tom & Ethel Bradley Center received a [\\$315,000 grant](https://csunshinetoday.csun.edu/arts-and-culture/csun-tom-and-ethel-bradley-center-receives-national-endowment-for-the-humanities-grant/) (<https://csunshinetoday.csun.edu/arts-and-culture/csun-tom-and-ethel-bradley-center-receives-national-endowment-for-the-humanities-grant/>) from the National Endowment of Humanities to digitize and create metadata for 11,200 images.

The RCC photographs of San Basilio de Palenque in Colombia, for example, are significant because they are the *only* extensive visual record available of all aspects of life and cultural practices in this community, which was originally established by runaway slaves. These images, taken between 1975 and 1978, preserve a trove of imagery depicting a community of people of African descent whose traditions were established in the 16th and 17th centuries, mixing African and European influences. These images document every aspect of life: landscape,



Photographer Richard Cross holds a light meter against an elderly man in preparation for a photograph in Ciudad Delgado, San Salvador, El Salvador. The photographer is unidentified. ([View in Collection \(https://digital-collections.csun.edu/digital/collection/p17169coll1/](https://digital-collections.csun.edu/digital/collection/p17169coll1/))

architecture, interior design, transportation modes and routes, clothing, hair styles, cattle ranching, bullfighting, funeral practices, farming, cooking, religion, festivities, warrior culture, and entertainment. Nothing else like Cross's extensive visual documentation of Palenque has ever been attempted before or after.

For Americans of Central American heritage, the significance of the conflicts documented by Cross's photographs cannot be overstated, as those conflicts triggered refugee and migratory processes whose effects continue into the present day.

These unique images are important not only because there is a longstanding absence of extensive visual representations of everyday life in Black communities in the Americas, but also because they were created with, and for, the community to foster a deeper understanding of the culture of the people of San Basilio. Cross worked with the explicit consent of the community, who received regular updates about his work. His images were the first and only in-depth look at Palenque, which later gained more prominence in Colombia and the world, and was proclaimed by UNESCO as a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2005.

Two hundred sixty photos by Cross were included in the book, *Ma Ngombe: Warriors and Cattle Ranchers from Palenque*, published in 1979 as a collaboration between Cross and Colombian anthropologist Nina Friedemann. Anthropologist Jaime Arocha, a colleague of Friedemann in Colombia, describes this book as "one of the main world classics of visual anthropology."

The RCC images of Central America and southern Mexico preserve the memory of civil wars and conflict for people living in that region and for people of Central American heritage living in Los Angeles and other parts of the United States. From 1979 to 1983, Cross did significant photojournalistic work as a stringer for the Associated Press and major news publications in the U.S. and Europe, covering wars and turmoil in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, as well as the Guatemalan refugee crisis.

Cross was one of several notable American photojournalists working in Central America, including Susan Meiselas, Harry Mattison, and John Hoagland. But none of these photographers' collections has been archived and digitized for public use. In Nicaragua, the images captured gun battles in the streets, adolescent Sandinistas carrying rifles, and the suffering of civilians due to military bombings and street violence. These images were published by dozens of newspapers around the world and helped chronicle the last stages of the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua. In El Salvador, Cross's pictures portrayed all aspects of the internal conflict: military and paramilitary groups, U.S. advisors, guerrillas, barricades, the 1982 Constitutional Assembly election, and everyday life in the country during that time of turmoil. In Guatemala, Cross chronicled the escalating effects of the military counter-insurgency operation in Guatemala City and the countryside, as well as the refugee crisis that followed, when over 100,000 Mayan peasants fled to Mexico, 47,000 to the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Finally, in Honduras—where he was killed—his work showed the activities of U.S. advisors and the activities of the anti-Sandinista rebels (Contras), who used Honduras as their base of operation.

In whole, the RCC displays the versatility of work performed by Cross, as well as the ways in which he synthesized different modalities of photographic work. Dr. Richard Chalfen, Cross's academic advisor at Temple University, has written that Cross recognized the "differences between photographs made by tourists, visual journalists, fine art photographers, and/or visual anthropologists, and realized that each one of these tasks required different kinds of questions and different kinds of processes to achieve the desired product." Cross's images, and the stories they tell, offer avenues for current generations to understand their histories and identities, and can contribute to cross-cultural compassion and understanding.

Q. How does the collection impact students and faculty at CSUN?

A. The Pew Research Center estimates that Los Angeles County has the largest concentration of Salvadorans (more than 350,000) and Guatemalans (more than 200,000) in the United States. Today, the United States

has more than 5.2 million people of Central American heritage, with Salvadorans recently surpassing the number of Cubans in the country to become the third largest Latino group. CSUN has the only Central American Studies program in the nation, and a significant portion of our student population is of Central American heritage. We are thus particularly well suited to preserve the memory of the events that triggered the migration of Central Americans to this region—including our students, their parents and professors, and many of the students and parents in the K-12 schools in the area.

For Americans of Central American heritage, the significance of the conflicts documented by Cross's photographs cannot be overstated, as those conflicts triggered refugee and migratory processes whose effects continue into the present day. Cross's Central American images can assist in improving cross-cultural understanding of communities bearing the legacies of those armed conflicts, and in so doing, may lessen interethnic discord and polarization that have become a central challenge in national life.

This collection has inspired student employees in the Tom & Ethel Bradley Center. One student, Marta Valier, is doing her thesis on a series of oral histories of people from Central America who lived during that time. She is preparing a short audio piece on people's reactions to the assassination of Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero in El Salvador, the historical event that escalated the war in the country.

Another of our students, Guillermo Márquez, is preparing an essay to be submitted to a journal on Richard Cross's photos of Rosario Ibarra de Piedra, Mexico's indefatigable mother whose son was disappeared by Mexican authorities during the dirty war in Mexico.

I also help coordinate the work that Dr. David Moguel from the College of Education is doing, creating a curriculum component using Richard Cross's images of Central America. This curriculum will be available in digital form, thanks to the work of Professor Joe Bautista and students in the Art Department, for use by middle- and high-school teachers in Los Angeles and other parts of the country. Finally, I also coordinate with the members of an international advisory board of scholars and photographers in Colombia, Central America, and the United States, who have supported the work we are doing by helping identify subjects and situations in the photographs, disseminate their availability among scholars, students, and the public in general.

Q. How are things coming along with the digitization project and promotion of the RCC?

A. We currently have a total of 5,807 images published, 1,463 images awaiting subject assignments from catalogers, for a total of 7,270 images either complete or in the queue. I oversee as well the museum exhibitions done with these images. We have had until today, two museum exhibitions with the images of Central America: one at the Museum of Social Justice here in Los Angeles (August 2019–January 2020), curated by me and Professor Edward Alfano, and a second exhibition at the Museum of Word and Image in San Salvador (January 2020–present), curated by the museum's director Carlos Henríquez Consalvi.

As part of the work of the grant, I have also coordinated the visit of a number of international speakers, whose expertise is connected to this and other collections of the Bradley Center. *Margarita Montealegre* (<https://library.csun.edu/events/margarita-montealegre>) is a good example of this. She met Richard in Nicaragua while he was working there. Margarita helped us identify subjects and places. We recorded an oral history with her to add to the collection.

Come discover the *Richard Cross Collection* (<https://digital-library.csun.edu/bradley-center-photographs/richard-cross>) in our Tom & Ethel Bradley Center Photograph Collection, which is part of the Oviatt Library Digital Collections.



A group of men in colorful clothing and hats wait in a long line to vote on March 7, 1982. Some of them are running while others stand. Groups of Mayan men started lining up to vote at five in the morning. They were told that they would be killed if they did not vote.

[View in Collection https://digital-collections.csun.edu/digital/collection/p17169coll1/](https://digital-collections.csun.edu/digital/collection/p17169coll1/)

Thanks & Recognition: Recent Retirees

eNews Edition: Spring 2020

Contributed by Gina Flores

In December, four longstanding employees of the Oviatt Library bid farewell to embark on their next chapter: retirement. As integral members of our team with memorable comradery and collaboration along the way, these members of our team are surely missed!



Yolanda Greenhalgh, Special Collections and Archives

With 37 fruitful years of service at CSUN, Yolanda served in various areas including Urban Archives when it was under the History Department, and later moved to join the Oviatt Library. In her ultimate role in Special Collections and Archives, Yolanda is remembered as a kind and resourceful member of the team.

Meredith Lyon, Collection Access and Management Services (CAMS)

Meredith worked in CAMS for almost 19 years. In the Acquisitions department (formerly known as Orders & Approvals), Meredith developed expertise in acquisitions, especially in the field of monograph ordering and receiving.

Diane Moore, Collection Access and Management Services

(CAMS)

Diane served 36 years at CSUN, all in the Technical Services (later known as CAMS) department. She developed expertise on database maintenance and e-resources management.

Felicia Cousin, Interlibrary Loan

Felicia was on the Library team for almost 32 years, many of those in Interlibrary Loan. She dedicated herself to providing students, faculty, and staff with the very best service possible.

While these farewells are bittersweet, we are filled with appreciation for the many dedicated years of service from Yolanda, Meredith, Diane, and Felicia.

In Memoriam: Bernice Haber

eNews Edition: **Spring 2020**

Contributed by Gina Flores

We are deeply saddened over the recent loss of Bernice Haber, a longtime friend and supporter of the Oviatt Library and the CSUN community. Bernice passed away in January at the age of 92. As a volunteer at CSUN since 1991, Bernice was a beloved Friends of the Library board member. She once shared, "Volunteering enlarges my own life, and keeps me connected to the campus and young people. Promoting education and the arts rounds me out as a person." Having served two terms as the Friends of the Library President, Bernice was admired for her wise counsel and willingness to take on new projects and share fundraising ideas. She was dedicated and thoughtful about her role in shaping the success of the organization.



**Bernice Haber, Former President of the Friends
of the Library**

In her native state of New York, Bernice met and married her husband Leonard. After living in Galveston, Texas, and San Francisco, while Leonard finished his medical residency, the Haber family moved to the San Fernando Valley in 1959. Bernice enrolled in California State University, Northridge (then known as San Fernando Valley State College) in 1961, studying art, with an emphasis on ceramics and sculpture. She became a working artist, producing ceramics at a shared studio, and in 1981 ran a gallery called "The Workhouse" with other artists. Bernice served as the president of the American Ceramic Society Design Division from 1986 -1987.

Bernice mourned the loss of her husband in March 2016, after an emotional journey as a loving caregiver throughout his progressive illness. In Leonard's illustrious career, he served as Chief of Medicine and Cardiology at Olive View Medical Center, and later the Director of Cardiology at Providence Holy Cross Medical Center.

As a dynamic couple, Leonard and Bernice shared a passion for the Oviatt Library, creating an endowed study room and generously supporting the Library Student Employee Scholarship Fund. Leonard found the perfect home for his James Joyce collection, donated to the Oviatt Library in 2010.

Bernice had a fruitful social life. She generously supported and attended theater in the Los Angeles area, and participated in the CSUN Arts Council. She enjoyed close and enduring relationships with family and many dear friends. She is survived by her daughter, Deborah, her son, Kenneth, and his wife, Barbara. The Oviatt Library family extends our deepest condolences to Bernice's cherished family and friends.

We Would Like you to Meet: Crystal Johnson, LA as Subject Resident Archivist

eNews Edition: **Spring 2020**

Contributed by Kathy Dabbour

Introduction

LA as Subject is a research alliance dedicated to preserving and improving access to the archival material of Los Angeles history, which is preserved in libraries, museums, other cultural institutions, and by private collectors. With an online directory of more than 230 separate collections, LA as Subject ensures that researchers know what materials are available, where they are located, and how to access them.

The LA as Subject residency and training program is a collaborative effort between the LA as Subject alliance and the libraries of California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSUDH), CSUN, and USC, and is made possible through a generous grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The program provides training and experience for three recent Masters in Library and Information Science graduates as well as staff and volunteers at 30 LA as Subject member archives in skills related to digital collections management and access.

"LA as Subject." *LA as Subject*, USC Libraries, 9 Mar. 2020, laassubject.org/ (<https://laassubject.org/>).



LA as Subject Resident Archivist Crystal Johnson

Could you start by talking about your job as LA as Subject Resident Archivist? What are you

working on for your residency? What is a typical day or week like for you?

As the LA as Subject Resident Archivist, I work with community organizations to assess their archival collections and get them ready for digitization. Over the course of two years, I'll work with at least ten different community organizations, providing training and assisting with implementation of new procedures. Some of my projects include working with a Girl Scout who is digitizing scrapbooks as a part of her Gold Star Award project; assisting the Archivist at the Glendale Central Library start their own digital collections repository; and Helping the Tom and Ethel Bradley Center streamline their workflows for transcribing oral history videos. I'm also working on projects with the Corita Art Center, Ebell of Los Angeles, San Gabriel Mission Playhouse, and San Fernando High School, among others. My typical week usually includes working with my student assistants on digitization projects, researching best practices, project planning, and visiting sites for project meetings.

My favorite part of my job is meeting people who are really passionate about preserving the history of their community or area of interest. Their enthusiasm can be really heartwarming and I'm happy to be able to assist them in even a small way. I grew up on the East Coast, so this has been a great opportunity for me to learn more about the history of Los Angeles and gain a greater understanding of my new home.

My favorite part of my job is meeting people who are really passionate about preserving the history of their community or area of interest. Their enthusiasm can be really heartwarming and I'm happy to be able to assist them in even a small way.

How did you get interested in archival work? What kind of training do you have versus other library professionals?

I've had an interest in librarianship since childhood. Growing up, I was a voracious reader and spent a lot of time at my public library. I developed an interest in archival work as an undergraduate student at the Rhode Island School of Design, where I was getting a BFA in Printmaking. I was a

frequent user of the RISD library's Special Collection and Archives while doing research to support my studio practice. Much like printmaking, archival work is very process oriented and I saw that connection. I was really intrigued by how artists were influenced and how they made decisions. Archives are a great place to see these inner workings. While I was getting my MS in Library and Information Sciences at Simmons College, I concentrated in Archives Management and had a few really impactful internships. Those experiences really cemented my desire to work in archives.

What do you think are the most important functions of archives, especially in a university library?

Academic archives provide the opportunity for students to connect with the subject they're studying on a deeper level. There's something really impactful about viewing historic documents in person. It makes history more personal to be able to physically hold a small part of it. There's also a lot of room for discovery and plenty of rabbit holes to go down when you get deep into a collection. Students have the chance to discover connections and draw their own conclusions rather than relying solely on secondary sources.

What is your favorite part of your job?

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Message from the Dean: Resilience in Seasons of Stress

eNews Edition: **Spring 2020**

Nelson Mandela, the great South African political leader and statesman once said: "Do not judge me by my success, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again." And that is the essence of resilience: the ability to bounce back from adversity, not just once, but multiple times. Resilience is a core value for leaders at CSUN; an excerpt from the University's Leadership Principles states that a leader at CSUN "perseveres even when faced with challenges or setbacks." Perhaps we focus on it so much because it is in the DNA of our institution, going back to the Northridge earthquake of 1994.

As I write this, in April of 2020, Los Angeles (and the entire world) is engulfed in an unprecedented pandemic that is seemingly affecting almost every aspect of our lives. Those of us who are still fortunate enough to have jobs are working from home, with all the challenges that entails. We are often isolated, bound to our places of residence except for those rare trips to the grocery store where we must keep our distance from others and wear masks to protect our fellow shoppers. Some of us have fallen ill, and of that group, some have lost their lives. It is a time fraught with danger and fear.

But the employees of CSUN's Oviatt Library have responded to this "season of stress" with a resilience that makes me proud to work at Cal State Northridge. We kept the physical library open until it was no longer safe to do so, providing computers to dozens of students who did not have appropriate devices, and then we seamlessly transitioned to a virtual model of service. Our reference librarians reached out to faculty members and students, offering online assistance with research questions and providing instruction via Zoom on how to use library databases, streaming media, and ebooks. Our staff worked from home to provide students and faculty with digitized journal articles and book chapters through interlibrary loan. Our reserve collection staff facilitated access to electronic textbooks that are needed by many of our students. Employees from all over the library labored from home to ensure that 90% of the information resources our students and faculty need were available, either through our own collections or the shared collections of other libraries or publishers. We were disappointed that the physical library needed to be closed, but in response we doubled down on our efforts to serve students and faculty in every way possible.

While the pandemic still rages, we nonetheless have learned valuable lessons from our

experience thus far. These lessons are in the category of “common sense,” and not profound observations that could only be generated by an erudite mind. Still, resilience reminds us to keep these fundamental tenets at the forefront, lest we lose our way and skew our priorities.

First, though it may seem obvious in retrospect, we have discovered that almost any obstacle can be overcome. How does one keep a library running when no one is allowed in the building? That’s a huge undertaking, but thus far we have been able to provide nearly the same level

of services in a virtual environment that we did in a physical one. Twenty-five years of investing in premier electronic resources and fifteen years of librarians offering online research assistance has ultimately paid off.

Second, we have never forgotten CSUN students are our top priority. A crisis magnifies our commitment to students’ needs. CSUN students are why we are all working at this great university, and the pandemic has helped us to focus our attention first and foremost on their academic success and well-being.

Third, we have discovered that no matter the severity of the emergency, life eventually returns to normal. As I write these words, normalcy is more aspiration than reality. Nevertheless, history teaches us that crises have an end point, and while we are proud to have demonstrated resilience during this international emergency, we will be very happy to return – eventually -- to our regular routines, our face-to-face library instruction, and opening up the building for all the additional in-person services and resources we can provide in a physical environment.

Seasons of stress, especially when the stressors are the results of an international pandemic, make it difficult to function using our “regular” skills and coping mechanisms. But these times of calamity can also bring out a rich reserve from within all of us, demonstrating that we are often capable of doing more than we think we can. Truer words were never spoken than those by the poet Maya Angelou, who once said that “My mission in life is not merely to survive, but to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some compassion, some humor, and some style.” May we all follow her example as we seek to come through these difficult times stronger than ever.



Oviatt Library Dean Mark Stover

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