The Walter W. Stiern Library NEWSLETTER
California State University, Bakersfield

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Tales from the Vault #11

CSUB poet Matt Woodman is seventh Walter Stiern Library Writer in Residence

The Brief

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Layout/Printing: CSUB Reprographics Center

Issue 62 / Spring 2018

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DA Candidates squared off in debate in library

A debate between district attorney candidates Cynthia Zimmer and Scott Spielman gave both lawyers vying to be Kern County’s top law enforcer an opportunity to present their platforms and argue the issues.

Hundreds of people packed the library, filling the Dezember Reading Room with a standing room only crowd, as well as three overflow rooms throughout the building, where the event was livestreamed.

The mostly civil and at times contentious debate allowed Spielman, the Assistant DA under retiring District Attorney Lisa Green, and Zimmer, a 33-year veteran prosecutor and head of the office’s Gang Unit, to clarify their positions ahead of the June 5 primary.

Dr. Jeanine Kraybill, of the CSUB Political Science Department, worked with both sides to organize the event. Kraybill, Walter Stiern Library staff, the Provost’s Office, and Campus Police all worked together to bring the event to CSUB.

Debate questions were written by students in Kraybill’s legal reasoning class, as well as the Pre-Law Society and the Political Science Club. The event was moderated by Vice Provost David Schecter. Political Science Professor Dr. Ivy Cargile also assisted with the event.

“Dr. Kraybill has been absolutely tenacious in her efforts to bring this event to the CSUB library and without

Library helps make student’s success possible

Like many students at CSUB, Paola Pantoja has relied on the library for her success as a student.

“At home, I didn’t have a stable internet or a quiet place to study. I have five younger siblings,” she said. “They are very loud.”

Paola, a junior engineering major from a rural area of Kern County, said that the library allows many freshmen like her to make the transition from high school to college. First year retention is part of the critical role libraries play in student success. Nationally, more than 25 percent of students who start college do not return for a second year. Libraries help combat that trend.

She said that her freshman year was mostly spent in the library and she wasn’t

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See Debate, Page 2
For many students, the library also provides portable technology and printers that aid in their success. Resources available for checkout in the library like computers, iPads and other technology also help bridge “the digital divide,” a term that commonly describes the disadvantage that households without reliable access to personal computers and internet face.

Stiern Library is steadily being renovated and has created much more study space than existed a few years ago. Student usage of the library has quadrupled in recent years.

“During midterms or exams this place is super packed. You can’t even find a table sometimes,” Paola said.

The library has been working on solutions to the noise and crowding issues by constructing spaces that block sound and isolate group study from individual study areas. That work will be completed within two years. In the meantime, in a project that began this semester, the library has been divided into zones. The second floor, for example, has been designated a collaboration floor where quiet talking is encouraged, but the fourth has been designated silent. The entire library has received zone designations, which are clearly marked.

Huge acquisition buries archives in vital research materials

Hundreds of thousands of pages of court records, many dating from Bakersfield’s earliest years, deluged the archives in March, making the library a primary hub for researchers seeking information on Kern County history.

The Kern County Superior Court transferred its vast archive of historical records to Stiern Library with the understanding that CSUB would become the permanent her it would not have happened. I would also like to thank our incredible library staff – Terezita Overduin, Chris Livingston, Eileen Montoya, Kathy Driscoll, and Frank Aguirre -- for leading the logistics and promotions and helping with the organization of this event,” Library Dean Curt Asher said in his opening remarks.

“It was the library’s first political debate and it came together very well. I was very proud of the work our team did to promote and plan the event,” Asher added.

Kern County has had 22 district attorneys in its 152-year history. The first was Ezekiel Calhoun, who served from 1866 to 1867. The longest serving district attorney was Edward Jagels, who served from 1983 to 2010. Current District Attorney Lisa Green has headed the agency since she was elected in 2011. She was the first woman to serve in that position. She is retiring this year.

Paola Pantoja feels that the library is central to her success as a student.

Paola (Cont’d from page 1)

alone. For many CSUB freshman, the library is a refuge in the new and sometimes intimidating world of academia. More than half of students at CSUB are the first in their families to attend college and are unfamiliar with the demands of higher education.

“A lot of people depend on the library. This is the only place to study where there’s tables and rooms and a building where they can feel safe,” Paola said. “I spend a lot of time in here. Even when the library closed, I would use the 24-hour room.”

Students who come to the library to find silence have often been disrupted by students who come seeking a place where they can work together.

Libraries across the nation are working to find creative solutions to noise problems. At many universities, students who are seeking space to work together on group projects are bumping up against students who require quiet concentration. It creates frustration for both groups.

A group of librarians and library staff, led by librarian Sandra Bozarth, developed a plan to satisfy both types of learner by establishing silent, quiet, and collaborative zones throughout the library.

Debate (Cont’d from page 1)

Zones: Finding the balance between silence and sound

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Archivist Chris Livingston is buried by an archives acquisition.
Faculty Hall of Fame inducts first members

In a poignant inaugural ceremony, the Faculty Hall of Fame inducted its first six members, all of them legendary instructors, mentors, and contributors to the development of the university.

The inductees were English Professor and Shakespeare scholar Michael Flachmann, Physical Education Professor Jim Whitley, Accounting Professor Mary Doucet, Philosopher Charles Kegley, Political Scientist Stanley “Gene” Clark, and Education Professor Augustine “Gus” Garcia. Five of the six inductees are deceased.

Inductee Dr. Gus Garcia spoke eloquently about the cooperative nature of academic work and how all success is built on collaboration and sharing. Dr. Garcia taught in the School of Education, which was later consolidated into the School of Social Science and Education.

Dr. Clark had been planning to come to the event, but died from cancer shortly before it occurred. Tributes to Dr. Clark were delivered by Provost Jenny Zorn and Dr. Mark Martinez, both of whom gave heartfelt testimony about his legacy.

Library Dean Curt Asher, who came up with the idea for the Faculty Hall of Fame and began working to establish it six years ago, said it is extremely important to remember our past.

“As a library, we are concerned about the record that we have inherited from our predecessors and how we will preserve the memories of those who made this place what it is. We are a community here at CSUB that is ever changing. People who devote their professional lives and careers to CSUB are replaced, but their memory needs to be preserved. It should be with profound gratitude that we look back to those who built our programs and influenced the direction our university developed. Our faculty touch thousands of lives over the course of their careers. We need to remember the great teachers and thinkers who have influenced so many students and built this college,” Asher said in his opening remarks.

Each of the inductees will be memorialized on a plaque on the second floor of the library. A biography will also be developed by the library archivist for the library’s website. Inductions will occur annually.

A selection committee of faculty from all four schools and the library, as well as Student Affairs and the Alumni Association reviewed the nominations and selected the inductees. Nominees must be fully separated from the university and no longer teaching or working at CSUB.

Zones (Cont’d from page 2)

“When students are concerned about noise levels, it’s great that we can now direct them to a zone that meets their needs,” Ms. Bozarth said. “Students seem grateful to have these designated spaces for their work.”

Employing heavy use of free-standing color-coded signage, the zoning of the facility has had a noticeable effect on noise levels and largely alleviated complaints from students.

The entire first floor, with the exception of the two reading areas, is now a quiet zone, which means that talking in whispers is allowed. The Dezember Reading Room and Chaney Reading Area are designated silent. The second floor is collaborative, which allows quiet talking. The third floor is a quiet floor with collaborative study rooms. Finally, the fourth floor is designated silent with quiet study rooms.

Over the next two years, the library will be adding spaces for collaborative work and placing sound barriers between collaborative and silent spaces.

Many libraries have attempted to alleviate the noise problem with zones, with varying degrees of success.

“Our students tend to be respectful of others. We’ve provided them with a way to do their work through zoning without disrupting or being disruptive and they appreciate it,” Ms. Bozarth said.

Acquisition (Cont’d from page 2)

stewards of them. The court records include civil lawsuits, business law, land transfers, criminal cases, small claims, probate and family law from the mid-1800s through the 1960s.

“This is an incredible acquisition because the history of Kern County is contained in these records,” said Library Dean Curt Asher. “Our archivist Chris Livingston did a great job negotiating this for us.”

The collection has court records dating back to the 1870s, before Bakersfield was the county seat, when the gold-mining, mountain town of Havilah was the center of county government.

“We now have a century of court records,” Livingston said. “Civil, criminal and probate records, early family law, civil commitment, business licenses, blueprints, it’s all here. These pages are full of stories of justice and injustice waiting to be told.”

Livingston predicts that it will take him and his crew of students and volunteers months to get the collection organized and arranged so that it will be useful to researchers. Getting the collection to CSUB took six large moving vans.

“Now the work really starts,” Livingston said. “Our goal is to make this stuff accessible and open, so that people who are interested in researching the history of our region can tap this rich collection of materials.”

The archives, which has the square footage of an average sized house in Bakersfield, was filled to the brim with the materials. Additional shelving and cases are being added to hold the items.
Students, staff get free health check at library

Native Americans tell their story in nuanced interactive exhibition

A nuanced and wide-ranging interactive exhibition focusing on Native American concepts of health and illness drew a diverse audience to the Walter Stiern Library.

Two of the world’s most important health organizations, in a joint venture with the American Library Association, selected Stiern Library as a host for the traveling exhibition. The National Library of Medicine, the National Institutes of Health, and the American Library Association awarded the exhibition to CSUB from among a highly competitive field of contenders. It ran from February 1 through March 9 and drew viewers from around the region.

“We took part in this project because Native American health issues are often misunderstood and mischaracterized. The library wants to raise awareness about this important issue,” Archives Librarian Chris Livingston said. Livingston authored the proposal that allowed CSUB to hold the exhibition.

The exhibition, entitled “Native Voices: Native Peoples’ Concepts of Health and Illness,” explored the connection between wellness, illness, and cultural life through a combination of interviews with native people, artwork, objects and interactive media. Drawn from hundreds of hours of interviews, the exhibition featured native people from across the nation, some living on reservations, some in tribal villages, and some in cities.

It explored such issues as native views of land, food, community, nature, and spirituality as they relate to Native health, as well as the relationship between traditional healing and Western medicine, and economic and cultural issues that affect Native communities.

“We were all very pleased to host this exhibition. It was an insightful project and a great learning opportunity,” said Walter Stiern Library Dean Curt Asher.

The CSUB Nursing Program brought a health clinic to the library on March 3, attracting students and staff to the Dezember Room to get their blood sugar, cholesterol, and blood pressure checked by student nurses.

The student nurses also counseled participants on healthy lifestyle choices. The nurses were joined by staff from CSUB Student Health Services, who tested body fat and other indicators of potential health problems and provided information about their programs and services. Kern County Behavioral Health Services was also on hand to provide attendees with information on the many services they provide to the community.

“We really appreciate the work these three groups do for our community and we’re glad we could collaborate with them to help students and staff take charge of their health,” Library Dean Curt Asher said. “This entire Native Voices project has been a kind of intersection for caring people from across our communities.”

According to recent studies by health research groups, about a third of young adults across the US are at risk for...
Journalist Mark Trahant received the Native American Leadership Award from the National Congress of American Indians in Washington, D.C. on February 13, but he wasn’t there to receive the honor. Instead, he was in the Walter Stiern Library giving a talk about the Native American health care system.

Trahant was invited by the library to speak as part of its Native Voices Project and was already in California when the award was announced.

“Mark is a tough, principled journalist who has devoted his career to speaking up for the marginalized and standing up for what’s right,” Library Dean Curt Asher said. “I’m sorry he missed the awards ceremony, but I’m glad he was here. We all learned a lot from his talk.”

The Congress of American Indians described Trahant as a someone who advances “the authentic histories, stories and modern issues facing tribal nations and their citizens.”

Trahant’s talk in the library’s Dezember Room was wide ranging, focusing on both the failures of the Indian Health Service and the innovative solutions that have arisen on tribal lands, such as the use of telecommunication technology and paraprofessional services. Trahant, who has also written extensively on the national health care debate, said some of these innovations could serve as broader treatment models for health care in the United States.

Trahant grew up on the Shoshone-Bannock reservation in Idaho. His journalism career has been distinguished. He has written widely on indigenous issues, and on energy and climate, health care, and technological disruption.

The former editorial page editor for the Seattle Post Intelligencer, he currently teaches college and publishes the blog “Trahant Reports”. He has been a publisher, an editor, Pulitzer-nominated reporter, and columnist at some of the nation’s top newspapers, as well as several tribal papers. He was also a reporter on two PBS Frontline series, most recently “The Silence,” about sexual abuse by clergy in Alaska. He is the author of several books.

Trahant is the former president of the Native American Journalists Association and is a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

He is currently the Charles R. Johnson Endowed Professor of Journalism at the University of North Dakota.

Acclaimed journalist Mark Trahant discussed Native American health care in a talk in the library on February 13.

Health (Cont’d from page 4)

becoming diabetic and Kern County has one of the highest rates in the state for heart disease. Clinics like these can alert people to problems and help them adjust their lifestyles to fend them off.
Murder at Long Tom

The last edition of Tales from the Vault noted that the Yellow Aster Mining Company was founded with a gold discovery east of Red Rock Canyon in 1895. This was not the first time gold was discovered in this area. Prospectors had been rushing to Kern County since 1851 to inspect Kern River placers. The first eureka moment came in 1853 when a lump of gold weighing forty-two ounces was found near Keysville. Soon after, mining claims began popping up all over the Kern River Valley area. One of these claims was the Long Tom mine.

Established by Hamilton Tucker in the 1870s, the Long Tom claim quickly came into dispute. Two brothers, William and Thomas Yoakum, claimed interest in the Long Tom mine. A series of disputes between Tucker and the Yoakum brothers, both legal and domestic that spanned five years, finally exploded into murder on the morning of April 13, 1878. That morning Hamilton Tucker was traveling up the Granite Road with his wife and children. His business partner, William Johnston, was traveling behind in a wagon with Tucker’s sister Sarah Burdett. Two shots rang out striking Johnston and Tucker killing the two miners.

The Yoakum brothers were soon arrested and ordered to stand trial. Their father, Isaac, retained prominent San Francisco attorney, Alexander Campbell. Campbell successfully lobbied a higher court to change the venue to Fresno County. Rather than let that happen, some unknown Kern County citizens formed a lynch mob. On the evening of May 28, 1879, the Yoakum brothers were lynched in their cells. Many in the Bay area cried foul and called for the vigilantes to be brought to justice. In the end, old west justice prevailed.

CSUB poet Matt Woodman is seventh Walter Stiern Library Writer in Residence

For Matt Woodman — who was named 2018 Walter W. Stiern Library Writer in Residence earlier this year — writing is a means of confronting the world. Rich in natural imagery from the region where he grew up, some of Woodman’s poems contrast the darkness of political and social problems against the underlying cycles of nature. Others lose themselves in musing on the complicated art of Mexican modernist painters.

At a reading in March, Woodman used the opportunity to present his poems and to open students’ minds to the power of the spoken word.

This is the second time that a CSUB writer has been selected as the library’s Writer in Residence. Former Arts and Humanities Dean Richard Collins served as the first Writer in Residence in 2012. The following year, the library received a grant from PG&E for five years of funding. The grant expired last year. Current Arts and Humanities Dean Bob Frakes is planning to assist with funding for the project in the future.

Woodman has worked as an English teacher at CSUB since 2000. His poetry has been widely published in literary journals.

“Matt is a poetry activist, promoting the literary arts in Bakersfield,” said Curt Asher, dean of the Walter Stiern Library. Each year, Woodman works with the library to ensure that our local poets event is well attended and that it offers students and community members a venue for their work. He publishes a chapbook each year of the poems read at the event.

In addition to Woodman and Collins, previous selectees were short story writer Angie Chau in 2013, novelist and screenwriter Marisa Silver in 2014, novelist John Hampsey in 2015, novelist Brian Evenson in 2016 and poet Brendan Constantine in 2017.
Haight Ashbury Free Clinic founder speaks in library

During the Summer of Love in 1967, Dr. David Smith found his calling, bringing free health care to people who needed it, coining the motto: Healthcare is a right, not a privilege.

On April 20, Dr. Smith gave a talk in the library to a small but engaged group. Dr. Smith, a Bakersfield native, is one of the world’s foremost addiction medicine specialists and the founder of the iconic Haight Ashbury Free Clinic. The clinic became famous in the 1960s and 70s when it catered to the many young people who flocked to the city.

The group that attended the event asked many questions about the current opioid crisis and the state of the health care system. Many of the attendees worked in health care and social services.

Dr. Smith, an East High graduate, also administers a scholarship to East High students pursuing nursing degrees. “It was an honor to have hosted him,” Library Dean Curt Asher said.

CSUB authors shine at new showcase event

At the first annual CSUB Author Showcase event, held in the Dezember Reading Room on February 6, writers had opportunities to discuss their work with the community, students, and staff, as well as one another.

The event was sponsored by the Walter Stiern Library and the Divisions of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs.

CSUB is home to many faculty and staff authors — both fiction writers and research-based non-fiction. Bringing them together for an annual event offers a chance for faculty and staff colleagues to share their research and opportunities. “This event gave colleagues and the community an opportunity to learn what inspired some of the writing and research taking place on campus,” said Library Dean Curt Asher.

Authors attending the event included Kathleen Madden, Dean of the School of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Engineering; Robert Frakes, Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities; Mark Novak, Dean of Extended University; Liora Gubkin, Associate Dean of Arts and Humanities; professors Mustafah Dhada, Louis Wildman, Penelope Suter, Stafford Betty, Matthew Woodman, Mark Martinez, Steve Frye, Charles MacQuarrie, Hossein Bidgoli; and staff members Rita Coria and Steve Walsh.
ASSOCIATE PROFILE: Sherry Bennett

Sherry Bennett began giving to the library in 1997, which was the year her father LeRoy Hughes died. She’s been giving in his memory ever since.

“Giving is a way to honor someone’s memory and a way of helping patrons get what they need to further their educations,” she said.

Sherry knows firsthand what benefits the library can provide because she is the Manager of Library Services, and a familiar face and helping hand to the students who come through the door. Sherry is a Stiern Associate because she believes in the mission of the library.

“In order to make it through life and provide for yourself, education is essential,” she said.

One of six siblings, Sherry was born in the Texas panhandle, she grew up in Bakersfield, where she excelled in high school academically and as a sprinter. She received her degree in Business Administration in 1978. Sherry married Kervin Bennett in 1978 and started her career at the library in 1987. Sherry worked her way through the ranks, taking the lead as head of Library Services two years ago. Her job requires her to manage staff and processes for all the areas of Library Services, including interlibrary loan, cataloging, acquisitions, circulation, and distance services.

“I like people from all different backgrounds,” she said. “I get a lot of enjoyment talking to people.”

She has three daughters, one of whom is a CSUB alumni, while the other two are graduates of USC. Like their mother and father, all the girls were sprinters.

Sherry is active in her church, People’s Missionary Baptist Church, where she is involved in the Leadership Program.

“I meet a lot of students on my job,” she said. “I try to encourage them and let them know that going to college is the best thing they can do with their lives.”