

Casper College Western History Center: Archival Needs Assessment Report

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1 Executive Summary

The Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library Director sought out an archival needs assessment of the Western History Center (WHC) to evaluate the current state of the archives and determine a path for moving forward with the archives with consideration of budget cuts while also adhering to best practices for archival institutions. To identify the current state of the archives, the consultant interviewed and met with multiple community members, patrons, staff of the WHC, the library, administration, and colleagues of Casper College, as well as made in-person visits to the WHC, Casper College campus, Casper, and partner institutions. The consultant observed and concluded that the WHC is in disarray. The major issues that need immediate attention are the following:

- Mission and value statements and collection development policy that does not include Casper College as a primary target for archival activities;
- Archival materials are stored on the ground, stacked into corners and on top of cabinets, and housed in bags or other non-preservation quality storage containers with little to none environmental monitoring of the spaces;
- Ability to research, discover, and access collection materials is only available by visiting on-site or by contacting the archives staff to conduct the research and duplication for the patron; and
- Resources (human, financial, physical, and intellectual) to execute core functions of a professional archives and meet the institution and community need is severely limited.

In order for the WHC to be successful, it must align itself with key elements of a modern archive. Arranging and describing collection materials following professional standards, increasing access to collection materials and making the finding aids available via the internet not only aids in discoverability and search-ability of collections wide array of patrons and inquisitive browsers, but also lessens some of the major burdens on human resources. This report examines all aspects of an archival institution, identifies the current practice and need, and makes recommendations for aligning itself with the profession, while also providing some practical interim solutions until resources are available.

2 Needs Assessment

The purpose of this archival needs assessment is to provide an assessment of the Western History Center (WHC). This assessment will define WHC's role at Casper College and within the community and profession. The report will first and foremost identify the current state of the WHC and provide recommendations to enhance its services and align it with the best practices of the archival profession. Subsequently, the written report will include recommendations on how to re-define the mission and scope of the Western History Center that takes into account reduced funding from Casper College and improves the connection of the WHC to the educational mission of the college. Areas examined in the report include, but are not limited to, the WHC's legal authority and purpose, financial resources, administration, policies, physical facility, active records, acquisitions and appraisals, security, preservation and care of collections, arrangement and description of collections, access and reference services, outreach, disaster preparedness, and information technology.

To complete the project, the contractor interviewed administration, current and former archives and library personnel, patrons and donors, and partner institutions in Wyoming. Additionally, the contractor conducted a site visit to perform a first-hand evaluation.

This archival needs assessment was funded by the Casper College Foundation. The project coordinator is Katrina Brown, Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library Director. The contractor for the archival needs assessment is Sara Davis. Davis holds a masters of science in library science with an emphasis in archives management from Simmons University, formerly known as Simmons College. Davis earned her digital archives specialist certificate from the Society of American Archivists in 2017, and currently serves as the university archivist for the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center.

2.1 Introduction

This report evaluates the current state and needs of the Casper College Western History Center, referred to below as “the Western History Center” and “the archives” interchangeably. Casper College, located in Casper, Wyoming and its library were established in 1945, as Wyoming’s first public community college. The college and the library of Casper Junior College, as it previously named, were housed in the Natrona County High School and library until 1955 when they were moved to the College’s new campus. A new two-story library building, named the Goodstein Foundation Library, was completed in 1967. The new library space included a large area of the first floor reserved for the Western Room to house a significant donation of historical items from Casper historian Robert B. David. It was at this time that the college dedicated its first caretaker for these historical items, western history librarian Rose Mary Malone. This is also when the College formed the special collections department, which has grown into the current archives. By 2007, the archives had grown significantly, prompting the administration to separate it from the library. Since then the archives has been its own department, reporting to the vice president of Academic Services and the dean of educational resources. This separation and new reporting structure along with the archives’ mission and purpose were approved by the Casper College District Board of Trustees. This rearrangement included recognition of the archivist of the Western History Center as the executive director and manager of the archives. In July or December of 2020, this separation unofficially reverted, and the Western History Center is effectively, if not officially, reporting to the library director once again.

With its vast array of collections, the Western History Center serves the campus and the Casper and Natrona County community, as well as national and international patrons. The collections include books, periodicals, architectural drawings, obituary records, photographs, manuscripts, newspaper files, and a western vertical subject files index. The collections focus on Casper and Natrona County, Wyoming and the West, and Casper College. The collection of records related to Casper College itself is rather limited, and it should be noted that the records of Casper College are not managed by the Western History Center. The College is expected to follow the designated records retention and transfer schedules created by the Wyoming State Records Committee

and facilitated by the Wyoming State Archives. The Center is open to the public with reference services available Monday through Thursday, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

To complete this report, the consultant hosted numerous virtual meetings, spoke with individuals over the telephone, corresponded via email, visited Casper and the campus in-person, and reviewed publications relating to the Western History Center, Casper College, Casper, Wyoming, and current standards and best practices for the archives, library, and information science profession. Individuals consulted include: Katrina Brown, Director of the Goodstein Foundation Library at Casper College; Vince Crolla, archivist/executive director of the Western History Center at Casper College; Brandon Kosine, Casper College Vice President of Academic Affairs; Denise Bressler, Casper College Foundation executive director; Beth Floyd, Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library librarian; Sarah Mailloux, Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library librarian; Valerie Innella Maiers, Casper College School of Fine Arts and Humanities art history instructor; Leslie Waggner, Wyoming State Historical Society president; Dennis Kuhnel, National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC), Casper, Wyoming director; Paul Flesher, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center director; Jeremy Johnston, Buffalo Bill Center of the West historian; Tom Rea, WyoHistory.org editor; Kathy Marquis, Wyoming State Archives state archivist; Dale Bohren, Casper Star Tribune publisher emeritus and donor; Keith Rouse, Casper College Western History Center archives specialist; Con Trumbull, Fort Caspar Museum Association Board chair, Nevada Northern Railway engineer/fireman/archivist, author; Kevin Anderson, retired Casper College Western History Center archivist; Rick Young, Fort Caspar Museum director; and Michelle Bahe, Fort Caspar Museum museum curator. These consultations with individuals occurred from February 2021 to May 2021, with the in-person visit April 22-23, 2021. More details are included in the appendix.

2.2 Purpose of Assessment

Casper College, like many institutions that receive funding from the State of Wyoming, is facing a budget crisis. Due to this situation, the Casper College Foundation Executive Director with the coordination of the Director of the Goodstein Foundation Library signed a letter of agreement with an archival contractor to create a written report with “recommendations on how to re-define the mission and scope of the Western History Center that takes into account reduced funding from Casper College and improves the connection of the WHD to the educational mission of the college while also adhering to best practices set by the archives profession.” As such, the College is re-evaluating its services and internal structures. The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate and describe the current state of the Western History Center and offer recommendations that are archivally sound with considerations toward the current budget deficits at Casper College. This includes examining the impact that the Western History Center has on the academic mission of the College, as well as its impact on the larger community, and the archives profession. This report will also assess the infrastructure of the Western History Center including the physical facility and environmental conditions, security, technology and equipment, placement within

the organizational structure of the College, staffing, and financial resources. Lastly, the report will provide recommendations for the future of the archives based on professional standards for archives, community feedback, and input from partner institutions.

2.3 Legal Authority and Purpose

The library of Casper College began collecting historical items as early as 1964 with the donation of historian Robert B. David's papers and artifacts. These items became part of the special collections of the library, known at the time as the Western History Materials. As time passed, space was dedicated to these collections and further donations came in, documenting the history of Casper College, the Casper community, Natrona County, Wyoming, and the West. A few of these early collections, the Casper Star-Tribune, the Casper Journal, and Casper Area of Chamber of Commerce remain significant to this day. The special collections department was later officially named the Western History Department.

For a period of approximately 40 years, the Western History Department was part of the library. It became clear over that time period that the archives and library had different missions, purposes, and needs. On May 15, 2007, the Casper College District Board of Trustees officially authorized "the Western History Collections at the Goodstein Foundation Library to collect and preserve historical records and to make them available to researchers," and stated, "that the Western History Collection [would] be a department within the Educational Resources Division of Casper College as outlined in the institution's organizational structure." Further, then-President Nolte said that he had the authority to approve the mission statement as a sub-mission statement of the entire College mission. Thus, the Western History Center was created and separated from the Goodstein Foundation Library. The archivist of the Western History Center would now serve as the executive director and report to the manager of the Educational Resources Division. Eventually the Western History Center archivist would directly report to the associate VP for Academic Affairs until that position was eliminated. When that position was eliminated, the archivist reported to the VP of Academic Affairs. Note that all donors complete a deed of gift outlining the terms of the agreement of gifting collection materials; Prior to 2007 the donations are specified to be gifted to the Goodstein Foundation Library, but the deed of gift forms indicate that they are donating to the Casper College Foundation for the Western History Center from 2007 (when the Western History Center was officially separated from the Goodstein Foundation Library) to the present. Although this change occurred, the VP of Academic Affairs states that he has not identified documentation or the procedure authorizing this change in language. .

The current mission statement for the Center is "to acquire, preserve and provide access to archival materials of enduring historical value, focusing on Wyoming and the West, for students, educators and the worldwide community." The value statement for the Center is as follows:

The Western History Center will be widely known as an excellent source for past and present information concerning Casper, Natrona County, and the State of Wyoming. We will continue to expand our holdings and strive to achieve rapid and efficient access to our collections to the widest possible audience.

In July 2020 (according to the Goodstein Foundation Library Director) or December 2020 (according to the Western History Center archivist), the archivist was directed to start reporting to the Goodstein Foundation Library Director for the foreseeable future by the Casper College Vice President of Academic Affairs. It is not known if this change in hierarchical structure was approved by the Casper College District Board of Trustees. In January 2021, the archivist was informed by Casper College and Goodstein Library administrators that his appointment would end June 30, 2021, although his on-site appointment abruptly terminated on May 28, 2021.

Recommendations

The legal status and authority for the Western History Center to operate and acquire records was officially established by the Casper College Trustees in 2007. At that time, the Trustees specified the reporting structure for the Western History Center, assigning it to be directly supervised by the manager of the Educational Resources Division and part of the Academic Affairs units, before which it was a department under the supervision of the library director. In July or December 2020, the WHC again became a department within the Goodstein Foundation Library and the WHC archivist became a direct report to the library director. It is unclear whether this change was approved by the Casper College Board of Trustees. It is uncertain as to whether the WHC archivist was included as an active colleague within the library after the WHC was made a subunit of the Goodstein.

Organizational placement of the archives always has a major impact on the archives' success by impacting its ability to carry out its mission, level of financial support for its programs and services, and commonality of purpose of the archives and supervising department. The current structure is detrimental to the archives, considering the different goals and missions of the libraries and archives, especially in regard to capturing the essential records of Casper College, and it diminishes the archives ability to secure much needed collaboration and support from other units of the College.

The recommendation of this report is for the Western History Center to regain its autonomy from the Goodstein Foundation Library, and report directly to the President of Casper College. This placement within the top of the administrative chain increases the visibility of the archives, securing more authority and support in regards to collecting college records, and meeting the direct mission of the College. It also affords the archivist definitive status as a colleague on equal footing with peers in other units paving the way for more collaborations on projects college-wide. Furthermore, the activities and its purpose will be better understood by the top unit, which will strengthen efforts to increase educational, and financial resources, to achieve the goals of the archives and the College, as well as promote and document

the advances and accomplishments of the College. This proposed structural change may require approval of the Casper College Board of Trustees.

Furthermore, I recommend a revision of the mission and vision of the Western History Center. The current mission and vision statements fail to specify that Casper College is an audience and a focus of the Western History Center. The revision should include language in their mission and value statements to include Casper College and its educational mission.

2.4 Administration

As described above, the Western History Center is a department within Casper College. The Western History Center was officially established in 2007 as a free-standing unit, autonomous from the Goodstein Foundation Library. In July or December 2020, the WHC became a department within the Goodstein Foundation Library and the WHC archivist became a direct report to the library director. As noted, it is unclear whether this change was approved by the Casper College Board of Trustees. Additionally, the VP of Academic Affairs has since stated that these types of changes to hierarchical and departmental structures do not need approval of the Casper College Board of Trustees.

The previous independence of the Western History Center from the Goodstein Foundation Library made for clearly delineated goals and missions for each unit. At the same time, this independence ensured WHC's recognition as a peer providing an autonomy that eased the building of partnerships at all levels of the College, with cultural heritage institutions, local, state, and federal government agencies, businesses, and with historians, authors, and community members. The fact that the WHC still retains its own budget separate from the library augments the idea of it being a self-reliant unit. Having a separate budget for the WHC is valuable in providing for programming, preservation, acquisition, and other necessary archival activities. The Western History Center also has separate funding available from the Casper College Foundation.

The Western History Center has established itself as a premier archive. Being independent and higher up in the organizational structure enables campus units to more easily discover the Center and to recognize the importance of the institution which has made it more enticing to work with. In the past, the Center has hosted internships for the museum studies program and the paralegal program, the archivist has been a guest speaker for classes at the College and K12 schools, given tours of the facility to community organizations, K12, and college classes, and organized speaker series. All of these activities have built up the Center's reputation as a trustworthy and respected institution. This has given people the confidence to make monetary donations to Western History Center and deposit their personal papers, organizational records, manuscripts, and other archival materials with the Center.

Of special note are the relationships that the Western History Center has built with local cultural heritage institutions. These institutions have come to a cooperative

understanding regarding the types of materials each institution will collect, thereby reducing competition. As such, the Western History Center collects unique materials, not overlapping with other local institutions and works collaboratively with these other institutions to refer donors to the appropriate repository. This also means that Western History Center's collections are used heavily by these other institutions, such as the Fort Caspar Museum and National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC) in Casper, Wyoming, for exhibits, new interpretations of historical sites, and programming.

Recommendations

To meet the mission of Casper College while continuing to meet the needs of the community, the Western History Center should function as an independent unit within the upper levels of the administration of the College. Ideally, the Western History Center would report directly to the President in order to foster good internal communication, demonstrate the value of the archives, and to have equal status with other departments, which would facilitate collaborative efforts in records retention, collecting the history of the College, administering class instructions and special programming, and establishing and fostering relationships with donors and community members. The Western History Center has had great success in organizing public programming, working with other units on campus for programming and providing class instruction, tours, and serving researchers of all kinds. Increased staffing and financial resources would increase the Center's ability to collaborate with other units, thereby providing additional support for the educational mission of the College. At the moment, the Center has one full-time archivist fulfilling all the roles of the archives, which is not sustainable. This low level of staffing interferes with the Center's ability to support the goals of the College and operate according to standards and best practices of the profession. Furthermore, the cooperative collecting relationships with other institutions, the benefits of which have been described above, is dependent on the Center's ability to maintain the standards of a trustworthy and respected repository. The Western History Center must uphold its obligations to other institutions to collect and properly care for archival records. If the Center cannot fulfill these obligations, it will be necessary to renegotiate with these partner institutions to come to a new agreement on how to move forward with preservation and access to these invaluable resources. This new agreement should be in written format to help current and future representatives clearly understand the relationships between the institutions.

2.5 Policy Review

The most recent policies and purpose for the Center were authorized by the Board of Trustees in 2007. The Trustees established the authority of "the Western History Collections at the Goodstein Foundation Library to collect and preserve historical records and to make them available to researchers," and stated, "the Western History Collection [would] be a department within the Educational Resources Division of Casper College as outlined in the institution's organizational structure."

The Western History Center employs several policies and procedures for acquisitions and appraisals. The most important regularly used document is the deed of gift form. This form serves as an agreement between the donor and the accepting institution regarding the rights of use, ownership of copyright, and acceptable conditions for the separation of materials from the collection. The deeds of gift indicate that the donor is gifting the collection to the Casper College Foundation for the Western History Center to make accessible. Note that the terms and conditions of the deed of gift can vary. Additionally, the Western History Center has a collection policy that stipulates the types of items that are within its collecting scope, as well as procedures and acceptable justifications for the deaccessioning of items. The Western History Center has made it a priority to contact donors when an item is deaccessioned, destroyed, or separated from the collection, even if this is not a stipulation of the deed of gift. This is done in an effort to be transparent, build trust with donors, and foster positive donor relations.

Beyond the specific mission and purpose authorized by the Board of Trustees, Casper College and the Western History Center must be cognizant of, and abide by, Wyoming's Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) laws. Casper College is a community college and receives funding from the State of Wyoming; therefore, it is subject to laws applicable to state agencies. This is to address two state laws that this targets: Wyoming Public Meetings Law and the Wyoming Sunshine Law (otherwise known as the public records act). The Wyoming public meetings law states that any meeting called by a public body for the purposes of discussing public business must be made open to the public and advertised as such. The exception is for discussions regarding threats to security, personnel issues, parole, purchasing and leasing of property, and anonymous gifts to public agencies. The Wyoming sunshine law dictates that the public shall have access to public records at all levels of the government. This includes records in all formats that have been created or received by governmental agencies for the purpose of conducting business. The few exceptions to this include law enforcement, medical records, research projects, labor negotiations, school board and university disciplinary records, and testing materials. One further exception relates to student records maintained by a school's Office of the Registrar, such as student transcripts and degree audits, which are regulated by FERPA.

Recommendations

As the Western History Center is the only archives associated with Casper College and no other department or unit on campus has been identified that would fulfill this legally mandated records retention and distribution role, the Western History Center needs to establish a policy to collect the records of Casper College. As mentioned above, there is a records analyst from the Wyoming State Archives assigned to support community colleges in establishing a records retention schedule, and he is available to ensure that Casper College is abiding by regulations on how long to keep records. Dale Wedel, a records analyst appointed by the Wyoming State Archives, assists Wyoming community colleges with records retention and schedules. It should also be acknowledged that some of these records are of permanent historical value and should be maintained in the archives for future use by the College and external researchers.

Similarly, the Center should work with the college to clarify internal procedures for responding to FOIA requests.

Casper College must firmly establish the current role of the Western History Center. Although the Board of Trustees has authorized the Center to collect history and placed it within the Educational Resources Division of Casper College, a unit independent from the Goodstein Foundation Library, the VP of Academic Affairs recently directed the Western History Center's archivist/executive director to report to the library director. It is not known if or how much the archival staff have been included in the aforementioned purposes since the organizational restructuring took place. If this is to be the new reporting line in the organization, it should be an officially recognized change by the organization. Past changes to the reporting structure of the Western History Center required approval by the Casper College Board of Trustees. However, the VP of Academic Affairs stated that reorganization of the departments under the President do not necessitate official approval of the Board of Trustees, and that it is common to move a position under a different reporting line (like the loss of the associate VP of Academic Affairs spurred the Western History Center archivist reporting to the VP of Academic Affairs instead). Furthermore, the Western History Center personnel should be thoroughly integrated into the library through inclusion in staff meetings, as well as invitations to work on collaborative projects and towards common goals.

Another point to confirm is the ownership of the collections donated to the Western History Center. The deeds of gift post 2007 clearly indicate that donors are gifting their donations to the Casper College Foundation for use, preservation, and accessibility through the Western History Center, whereas those prior to 2007 gift the donations to the Goodstein Foundation Library. In the wake of this clarification, it will be necessary for the administration to consult with current donors about the ownership status.

2.6 Financial Resources

The Western History Center receives funding from Casper College and Casper College Foundation. The funding from Casper College pays for regular operations of the Center including: payroll for the full-time archivist/administrator, a part-time archivist, and student workers; office, building, and preservation supplies; computer software, hardware, and affiliated costs; advertising, printing, and speaker honoraria; professional development costs such as employee membership dues, the cost of travel for professional purposes; books; and services, maintenance, and repairs. The Western History Center's Casper College Foundation account is used for special projects, unusual equipment purchases, new storage, and preservation supplies. With the budget crisis, Casper College decided to eliminate the full-time archivist position, and the part-time archives specialist will be funded through the Casper College Foundation for up to one year according to the Casper College Foundation Executive Director. Recommendations are provided below to help alleviate the budget shortfall and restore and, where possible, augment archival staff at the WHC.

Recommendations

The Western History Center should continue organizing and hosting programming and promoting it to Casper College affiliates, businesses and community organizations, and the public. Programming offers opportunities to fundraise, encouraging attendees to support WHC activities as well as to solicit feedback on topics for future programs. Additionally, the Center personnel should be encouraged to ask donors to assist financially when gifting their collections to the Western History Center in order to provide for researcher accessibility through processing, finding aid creation, and potentially digitization. Moreover, many institutions have a “Day of Giving” or other fundraising drives at certain times of year. It is recommended that the Western History Center take a more proactive role in fundraising, employing such efforts as well as work with the Casper College Foundation to create endowments to support programming, positions, archives activities, and collecting.

The Western History Center should also look to partnerships and grants for funding opportunities. Creating partnerships with bigger institutions such as the American Heritage Center would be beneficial to both parties as it has the potential to share resources and ideas, and to increase awareness of the collections available. The Western History Center already provides archival resources for the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center in Casper, but should formalize the relationship. This has the potential to generate additional funding resources, as one of the many benefits of collaboration is the possibility of partnered grant opportunities. Recently the Wyoming State Historical Records Advisory Board (WY SHRAB) awarded a grant for a joint project between the University of Wyoming Libraries Digital Collections and the Laramie Plains Museum to digitize stereographs in the collections and make them digitally accessible. The Western History Center should pursue grant opportunities such as a WY SHRAB grant or those offered by other granting institutions such as the NEH and NHPRC to supplement its financial resources and meet some of its goals. For a more comprehensive list of financial opportunities, see the appendix.

2.7 Personnel

The Western History Center currently employs a part-time archives specialist, a part-time student worker, and a single full-time archivist, who also fulfills the role of the director. Before the pandemic, the Western History Center archivist stated that the Center would regularly have three to four volunteers to help with digitizing yearbooks and other documents as well as creating and entering metadata into the collection management database. Additionally, the Western History Center archivist said the Center would have one to two unpaid interns per semester, each working three hours per week. The interns would work on exhibits and other aspects of the archival work, depending on their interests and areas of study. In recent years, most of these interns have been recruited from the museum studies program, though some have been from the paralegal program. However, the Director of the Goodstein Foundation Library stated the information on the volunteer login sheets shows 190 volunteer hours

between July 1, 2019 and March 20, 2020. Additionally, the VP of Academic Affairs states the hardcopy records about volunteers show “sporadic volunteers and few consistent people.”

The current full-time archivist/director is a certified archivist as of 2013 with a B.A. and a J.D. from the University of Wyoming. He has been in this position of overall supervision and management of the archives from 2013 to the present. The current archivist had approximately two years of experience working for the Western History Center before assuming his current role, working for six months as the part-time archives specialist for the Western History Center in 2011, before being promoted to a full-time archives specialist. He held that position from 2011 until 2013, at which time he was appointed the full-time archivist and executive director. Some of the responsibilities of the full-time archivist and director position include:

- administration of research requests, which may be received in-person, over email, or over the phone;
- processing research requests, which entails researching the collections and sending publication ready images, scans of books and manuscripts, among other things, in the required sizes and formats;
- scheduling and providing reference services for in-person researchers, preparing for visits in advance, working hands-on with researchers, and retrieving requested materials;
- facilitating acquisitions, including drop-offs to the Western History Center facilities and picking up collections elsewhere;
- preserving the collections, work such as rehousing materials into to archival folders, boxes, and sleeves and which may include digitization;
- giving college class tours, as well as tours to school age students, and allowing teachers to borrow non-archival photos, newspapers, blueprints, maps, and other such materials for classroom use;
- arranging and describing collections;
- completing all aspects of personnel management, including advertising for student workers, interviewing, hiring, scheduling, assigning and monitoring projects, approving time cards, and monitoring student worker budget;
- representing the Western Historical Center at events by either serving as guest speaker or hosting a table;
- monitoring the operational budget and purchasing supplies and equipment;
- managing all aspects of newsletter production, including writing, editing, picture selection;
- maintaining and updating the mailing list;
- coordinating all aspects of events management, including planning, booking speakers, advertising, and supplying refreshments;
- conducting seasonal promotional activities such as Archives Month each October, Western History Celebration each March, Summer Movie Series and Passport to Adventure each Summer;

- maintaining physical upkeep of the archives, such as sweeping and dusting in the stacks; monitoring for temperature changes, leaks, and general building problems; troubleshooting technical issues; and
- meeting with other members of Academic Affairs leadership, including the library director, assessment director, and the director of digital learning to collaborate on projects and challenges.

Additionally, the full-time archivist has made meaningful connections by assisting with community projects including providing space and equipment for a grant-funded oral history project to document skiing at Casper Mountain. Personal connections with researchers have been made as well, such as assistance provided to a researcher in digitizing family 8mm film.

The part-time archives specialist works 19 hours per week and has been working for the Center in this position since October of 2020, but served as a volunteer for the WHC from 2017-October 2020. The archives specialist has an A.A. in history from Casper College, a B.A. in humanities with an emphasis in history from the University of Wyoming, and is currently applying to remote history master's degree programs. He acquired his current level of knowledge about working in the archives while on the job, working and being supervised by the current full-time archivist.

The current student worker is a theater major at the College and works 10 hours per week. Similar to the archives specialist, most of the student's knowledge of archival work can be attributed to their work at the WHC and supervision of the full-time archivist. However, this student has other experience working with historians. The student worker's tasks are assigned by the full-time archivist and generally consist of scanning slides, organizing the newspaper donations, and fulfilling research requests.

Recommendations

The first step in determining the personnel of the Western History Center is to define its purpose. To accomplish this, I highly recommend establishing a mission and value statement that indicates that Casper College is a primary user and donor for the collection, as well as its purpose align with its educational mission. Once these are clarified, the Western History Center can determine how it wants to move forward.

The current full-time archivist is acting as executive director and administrator for the department, as well as a lone arranger, with minimal support to meet the expectations of the College, patrons, community, and professional archival standards. It is necessary to have professional archival expertise and support in order to have a successful program. A professional archivist is defined as a person who has earned a masters of science degree in the field of library science with an emphasis in archives management, a masters of library and information science with archives training, or some similar iteration. Although the libraries, archives, museums, and information sciences fields are closely related and may even overlap in some areas, the knowledge, areas of expertise, and methods of handling the various types of data, formats, media, and materials is distinct. Archives are composed of large quantities of unique, original

materials that are, by their nature, irreplaceable. Additionally, due to the irreplaceability of archival material, archives focus on the care of materials in order to enhance long-term access and preservation. Individuals without the appropriate educational background may not only put the materials in danger of exponential deterioration, thereby decreasing long term accessibility, but such an individual's lack of proper training may increase the time necessary to perform ordinary archival procedures due to the need to research appropriate methods of dealing with the materials. If the person does not have a master's degree in the aforementioned field, the archivist should at a minimum be a certified archivist through the Academy of Certified Archivists with professional archival experience.

Optimally, the staffing of the Western History Center would consist of a full time executive director/archivist with four assistant archivists with specific job related functions: processing archivist, digital archivist, outreach archivist, and reference/research archivist. The full time executive director/archivist is needed to manage the overall operations of the archives, be the front-facing representative to administration, work with donors, and solicit donations. The role of the processing archivist is to focus on arrangement and description of collection materials such as personal papers, organizational records, and college records. This work includes performing activities to preserve, provide access to, and ensure the discoverability of materials for the long term. With more and more materials created in the digital realm, a digital archivist is imperative to ensure that digital materials given to, and created by the archives are maintained in accordance with professional standards such as those for the creations of metadata records and for policies regarding the creation, storage, preservation, organization, description, and access to these materials. The outreach archivist will be responsible for the development and maintenance of instructional tools, programs, and relationships with communities on campus, K12 school programs, and others in Casper and beyond. Other functions of this role include writing and managing grants for community focused projects and programs, and supporting the development of exhibitions. The reference/research archivist will focus on communicating with people outside the organization, representing the organization to customers, the public, government, and other external entities. Other responsibilities include: disseminating information in person, in writing, or by telephone or e-mail; using computers and computer systems (including hardware and software) to program, write software, set up functions, enter data, or process information; identifying the educational needs of others, developing formal educational or training programs or classes, and informally instructing patrons. Additionally, the archives should include two archives specialists to help with processing, research requests, outreach, and other initiatives.

At a minimum, the Western History Center should be staffed by two full-time professional archivists with additional positions to support the activities of the archives. One of these archivists to be outward facing, in order to facilitate research requests, conduct tours and visits of both K12 and college level classes, develop exhibitions, schedule lecturers, and conduct all manner of outreach activities. The other archivist to be focused on arrangement, description, and preservation of

collections in physical and electronic formats in a variety of mediums. It will also be necessary to have at least one full-time archives specialist to support the functions of the archives. Having these professional archivists will be imperative to enhancing the services of the archives, creating and maintaining an internship program, supervising student workers to carry out a variety of archival functions, and working with volunteers.

Providing opportunities for students, interns, and volunteers is beneficial not only to these individuals, but to the archives as well. In Wyoming, there are not many opportunities for hands-on experience and mentoring at archival institutions. Providing internships allows students to get a different perspective on the field to determine whether they want to pursue it as a profession. Additionally, student workers and interns learn necessary skills that are applicable to all professions. These students learn how to perform archival research, provide internal and external customer service, and work with different mediums and formats. For the archives, these are a less expensive option to professional staff and having staff and interns from the local community provides an opportunity to learn more about users, their different perspectives, and knowledge bases. It is also a way to introduce archives to and build bonds within the community.

It is important to note that in the Casper College Western History Center, the budget for student workers has increased over the years, and students are eligible to work up to 20 hours per week. The archives can benefit from employing at least two concurrent student workers whose schedules on alternating schedules.

In addition to staffing the archives, it is necessary to provide support for continuing education and engagement in the professional community. The archives field is continually evolving to meet the needs of new technologies, new research about how users engage with collections, emerging ideologies on collecting, preserving, and ensuring the accessibility of collections, and innovative programs and practices. Allowing time and investing funding into professional development activities ensures that the archivists have a community to share ideas with and that their activities are up to the most professional standards.

To meet the request of the Goodstein Foundation Library Director and the VP of Academic Affairs and their emphasis on lack of funding available to fund a full-time archivist for the Western History Center, I recommend limiting the number of hours the Western History Center is open to the public in order for the part-time archivist to target and resolve key issues in the archives, specifically related to arrangement and description, storage, and access of collections. According to archival literature on MPLP (see section 2.13), a fully trained archivist can process at most two cubic feet (two records boxes) of archival collection materials within an eight hour period of time; the WHC holdings total approximately 5000 cubic feet of material and all materials need some level of processing. In addition to processing tasks, the archivist or an authorized personnel must monitor patrons engaging with archival materials in the Reading Room. Further, the archivist is required to facilitate programming and instruction within Casper College, the community, and in the profession. All of these

activities compete for professional archivist's time and will require assessing the priorities of the archives while balancing the relationships of its donors and patrons. One potential solution in the interim is to share resources of the library and other campus units and its partner institutions. These shared resources can receive some basic training on archival best practices in regard to handling materials, education, and outreach tasks, but it is also important to note that this will take some planning and time from the professional archivist to facilitate this effort. To elucidate, staffing the WHC with only part-time archivists to carry out the professional duties of the archives is not recommended for the long-term, and it will be critical for the administration, Goodstein Foundation Library, and the Western History Center to be transparent and communicate regularly with their donors, patrons, and community about the new policies and progress of the Western History Center in order maintain and create relations, credibility, and reputation. Further, the role of the director of the Western History Center is laborious and vital to the success of the archives. As mentioned previously, the full time executive director/archivist needs to manage the overall operations of the archives, be the front-facing representative to administration, work with donors, and solicit donations. Although the Goodstein Foundation Library Director has committed to fulfilling these duties, this is not recommended; this should only be an interim solution and not a long-term solution. The job of director of an archives, as well as director of a library, are more than full-time jobs on their own and a prolonged commitment to serving as director to both units will eventually lead to some tasks not getting the attention warranted. Moreover, there may be potential conflicts of interest in terms of fundraising, donations, or budgeting.

2.8 Physical Facility

There was minimal documentation provided for the information in this section. Most of the information was given to the consultant by word of mouth by the Western History Center archivist. This section will indicate when information was given by an alternative source. No documentary evidence was given by any of the sources.

According to a publication on the history of the Western History Center, the Center is currently located on the second floor of the Goodstein Foundation Library. The building was constructed in 1967 as a two-story, 35,700 square foot building with tinted insulated glass and solar screens to maximize the diffusion of light, increasing efficiency of air conditioning, and humidity control. It was built on a stylobate platform, resting on a hillside. A third floor was added to the library building in 1989, growing the square footage by 14,000 square feet. This addition also led to the redesign of the entrance, allowing visitors to enter from two sides: the public street sidewalk along College Drive and the campus entrance opposite.

The Western History Center archivist indicated that the building is constructed out of concrete. The roof is flat with HVAC, but external air conditioners were also installed in the storage areas. There may be structural damage to the roof as drainage can be heard inside the Center. Additionally, frost has been seen on the inside of some of the windows during the winters. The HVAC system is prone to leaking and, as the result

of continued renovations over the years, not all HVAC equipment is currently connected to the same system. The archival storage rooms, employee work areas, and reading room have LED lights that are not automated, but turned on and off manually by the employees during normal operating hours. There is no smoke alarm, though there is a water fire suppression system with heat sensors. This is a wet pipe system, and hand held fire extinguishers are stored in every room. These fire extinguishers are inspected regularly by outside personnel.

For pest control, the Western History Center archivist stated that the archives use sticky traps, snap traps, and poison for vermin and bugs. Using sticky traps allows the archivist to identify the type of insects infiltrating the archival spaces. This knowledge allows them to target the specific hazard directly. These traps are checked daily. There have been mice in the past, and the location of the building and continual construction projects in the vicinity make it impossible to prevent them from entering the building. To address these issues, the main part of the library building is regularly sprayed with poison that is not toxic to humans, which minimizes the presence of insects. Other preventative care includes regular housekeeping by the custodial staff, as well as cleaning two times per day by the archives staff. However, the VP for Academic Affairs and the Goodstein Foundation Library Director state that the aforementioned pest control and archival and regular custodial housekeeping of the archives spaces have not been done. The Western History Center archivist stated that food storage and consumption is limited to the breakroom and is not permitted near the collections; beverages are allowed in the archives, but they must have a lid and may not rest on the same surface as collection materials.

The Western History Center archivist said that the records storage areas, reading room, exhibit area, and staff areas are closely monitored. The archivist said that the temperature and relative humidity are checked daily. The temperature average from May to October is 63 degrees and November to April is 70 degrees, except in the rooms that store blueprints and newsprint, where it remains at 62 degrees throughout the year. The relative humidity rests at 20-30 percent year round. However, the Goodstein Foundation Library Director and VP of Academic Affairs indicated that this information is inaccurate.

Most of the archival storage areas use steel storage, meaning the archival boxes are stored on steel shelves and the filing cabinets are fireproof steel cabinets. Shelving and cabinets are generally in good condition, though the cabinet in which maps and blueprints are stored is in poor condition and should be replaced. The single deviation from the steel storage scheme is a set of wooden shelves that hold the books of the collection.

Recommendations

The biggest concerns regarding the Western History Center's physical facility are the lack of adequate storage areas, limited security, inability to expand, sparse space for exhibits, programming, and classroom instruction, and inconsistent environmental controls. Due to a lack of space, some of the collections are being stored on the floor,

leaving them susceptible to pests and water damage. Faulty storage increases the chance of deterioration, and can make it impossible to provide access to the collections. These urgent dangers to collection materials must be addressed either by modifying existing facilities, building a new structure specifically designed to address the Western History Center's current needs and support future growth, or reducing the size of the collection to what can be safely stored. The facility should have separate areas for administration, processing, exhibits and displays, classroom instruction, research, and permanent storage, preferably with compact shelving, steel shelving and fire proof cabinets, a safe for highly valuable materials, environmental controls, fire blocks, fire suppression, and anti-theft security measures. It will be critical to redefine the mission and value statement of the Western History Center to aid in determining the future of the Center.

Note that deaccessioning, or reducing the number of collections, needs to be considered carefully. The amount of storage space occupied by the collection material could be reduced through organizing and weeding the collections, specifically for duplicative materials, personally identifiable information, or materials that do not have permanent historical value. Deaccessioning is possible, but it can also cause bad publicity and mistrust with donors of archival materials and time as well as financial support if not done correctly. It is recommended to hire an experienced professionally trained archivist as a consultant, potentially through grant funding, to create a collections assessment and the Casper College administrators to define the ownership of collections and redefine the mission and value statements of the Western History Center prior to deaccessioning collections.

Additionally, it is highly recommended that the archivist for the Western History Center create a log and checklist for personnel to use for environmental monitoring. The information included in this report was provided verbally by the archivist, but a shareable document with long-term tracking would be ideal for tracking changes, mitigating issues, and providing evidence of conditions. This information will also be useful for the campus maintenance as a useful tool in their care of the building.

2.9 Active Records

The Western History Center maintains most of its own administrative records. After asking many people within Casper College including the Western History Center archivist, former archivist, the Goodstein Foundation Library Director, and the Casper College Foundation Executive Director, it is unclear who maintains the records of the College. However, the VP for Academic Affairs stated "we have a records management policy and system, and different offices keep different records." After consulting with the Wyoming State Archives, they indicated that Casper College has a record analyst that works with the community colleges on their records retention schedule. This records analyst has created a records retention schedule for Casper College and has worked with the College to facilitate the storage of records. To this end, they provide Casper College with microfilm of a limited number of records.

The Western History Center has not adapted a lifecycle model for their records. The Center keeps multiple manuals for operating the different types of equipment in the archives, maintains the collection management database, and keeps various everyday administrative records. The Center also maintains the physical copies of the deeds of gifts for donated collections.

Recommendations

Most of the record types being stored and maintained by the Western History Center are described by the current archivist as permanent records. The Casper College Foundation also has additional copies of the deeds of gift. The Center should create digital surrogates of any analog material, to be stored on Google Drive as a backup. This is especially important for any and all deeds of gifts. The personnel of the Western History Center should perform a more formal appraisal of their own records to determine if there are any old files that no longer have value to the archives. Manuals should also be brought up-to-date and be adjusted to document current procedures for the operation of the archives. To mitigate the risk of litigation, I would also recommend creating a centralized location and transparent policy and workflow for preservation of official records of the college.

2.10 Increasing Archival and Manuscript Holdings (Acquisition/Appraisal)

The Western History Center has a written collection development policy. This policy includes sections defining the philosophy, mission, collection objectives, selection process, gift process, deaccessioning process, and removal requests. This policy document also includes information on materials that the Center does not accept, along with recommendations on other repositories for which this material may be better suited. The Center aims to collect “printed materials, primary sources, and digital files on the topics of Casper College, the City of Casper, Natron County, Wyoming and the West that support instructional, institutional, and individual needs of the students, faculty, staff and the community.” Traditionally, the Center will direct donors to the Veteran’s Memorial Museum for military history and the Fort Caspar Museum for objects and Fort Caspar records.

The Western History Center does not actively solicit collections. There is no budget specifically dedicated to the purchase of collections or collection material. The collections that are included in the Western History Center have been acquired from donors actively seeking out the Center and gifting the collections. This extends to the records of Casper College, as well. Casper College has a records retention schedule produced by the Wyoming State Records Committee and facilitated by Wyoming State Archives, but it is unclear who manages it at Casper College. Additionally, the current storage areas are almost to, if not at, their maximum capacity, which limits the Center’s ability to be a good steward to new additions to the collections.

When collections are donated to the Western History Center, all donors or their designated representatives sign a deed of gift. The deed of gift form indicates that the donor is donating the materials to the Casper College Foundation for use, preservation,

and access to patrons through the Western History Center. It also stipulates that the Western History Center may use discretion in disposing of material considered inappropriate for inclusion and return any unwanted materials to the donor. The donor is given the option to sign over copyright to the Casper College Foundation. The donations are not usually appraised, though if they are, it is the responsibility of the donor to obtain the appraisal. Jack Rosenthal, unaffiliated with the College, or another outside vendor have performed appraisals for a limited number of the collections.

Recommendations

As the Western History Center is the only archives associated with Casper College, the Center must fill the role of an official college archives and be more active in collecting the records of the College. Although there is a records retention schedule from the State of Wyoming, the identity of the party responsible for implementing the schedule is ambiguous to the current archivist, library director, and many of the representatives consulted for this report. As such, one can deduce that no one is actively collecting this one-of-a-kind history. As time goes by, the chances of losing institutional memory rise exponentially, especially in terms of volatile digital records. The Western History should recommit to collecting materials in all formats that document the administrative, intellectual, cultural, and social history of Casper College from its founding to the present. The Center should serve as the principal repository for institutional records, faculty and personal papers, publications, associated organization records, and historical materials. Collecting this material will provide a consistent space for researchers to seek out insight into Casper College's development, activities and achievements, and challenges and solutions. The collections that currently reside at the Western History Center are used regularly by the alumni association for their Footprints newsletter, but efforts should be increased to serve as an important information source for campus offices. The President and Provost, Trustees, Foundation, Public Relations, and Facilities Operations are all offices of the College that would benefit from the Center's development of a more comprehensive collection of College records. Such records will also be useful as a resource for grants and academic study.

Most of the Western History Center collections relate to Casper and have been donated by the Casper community. It is highly valuable and beneficial to the community to have records on their own history in a trusted repository that will ensure long-term preservation and access. Individuals within the Casper community value these archival materials because they represent a person's roots, cultural heritage, and community. The majority of the patrons and donors of the Western History Center are community members, local historians and authors, businesses, and city, county, and federal government agencies. Even with the advances in technology, which allow some records to be viewed online, many individuals conducting personal research experience a greater sense of connection and satisfaction from interacting with the material in-person. Additionally, it is not feasible to digitize all materials in the archives due to costs of digital storage and the maintenance required to adhere to professional standards for digital preservation. The Western History Center has been

cognizant, transparent, and cordial in their collection development policy. They recommend other repositories for items that are outside of their scope of collecting as well as for items that they cannot properly care for. It is important to note that there is no other repository within the immediate vicinity that is collecting the same materials or providing the same services. Other local and regional museums, archives, and cultural heritage institutions regularly use the Western History Center collections. The Center is limited in its storage, and it is close to capacity. To move forward with collecting, Casper College must invest in the Western History Center's capacity to maintain its current collections, increase its square footage for additional donations, and boost its digital capabilities.

If the College is not willing or able to address the needs of the Western History Center and its current mission, the College should evaluate and redefine the purpose of the Western History Center. With this newly identified purpose and mission, the Western History Center's collections scope will need to be redefined, as will the collections themselves. The donor agreements and the deeds of gift will need to be analyzed to determine subsequent procedures particularly in regard to deaccessioning. This re-evaluation and new focus should take into consideration that Casper College is a community college, with an obvious emphasis on community, and that any changes will likely have an impact on donor relations and reputation.

During the information gathering process of this report and as people became aware that this assessment was being requested, many of the donors, patrons, and partners of the Western History Center, as well as other interested community members voiced concerns about the potential closure of the Western History Center, the Center's lack of support from the administration, continuing access to these collections, and the fear that focus would be redirected from the entire community to serving only academic researchers. Many of the partner institutions have come forward to express their willingness to ensure care for and access to these collections. Specifically, the Fort Caspar Museum, a high frequency user of the Western History Center's collections, expressed their willingness to accession, preserve, and make accessible collections that fit within their collecting area. The Fort Caspar Museum already has plans to build a new wing onto their repository, and have the potential to add to the scope of work for this new addition. Recognizing that many of its collections and patrons are focused on Casper and Natrona County, the American Heritage Center is also willing to adopt these collections in order to ensure long-term preservation and increase accessibility. Other repositories such as the Buffalo Bill Center of the West and the Wyoming State Archives have expressed interest in keeping these collections available to researchers. When selecting a new home for deaccessioned material, it will be imperative to determine if the institution has proven they are capable of and proficient at meeting archival standards and best practices in terms of preservation, arrangement and description, accessibility, and reference services. It is also imperative that one recognize the different areas of expertise between and functions of libraries, museums, and archives. Some donors and concerned community members have started to ask for their donations back and rallied together to identify other options to ensure that these resources remain available to the public. One such example of this type of request was

emailed to the VP of Academic Affairs and shared with the consultant and the Goodstein Foundation Library Director, and referred to in the appendix.

2.11 Security

With its location inside the Goodstein Foundation Library, the Western History Center is generally secure. There have been no known incidents of vandalism or theft in the past 11 years. Additionally, keys that allow access to the archives areas are held only by the archives executive director/archivist, archives specialist, and student worker, the library director, Information Technology, Physical Plant, and campus mail personnel. The library has multiple cameras that are monitored by library personnel and campus security. The security footage can be viewed by logging into the system online. One of the cameras monitors the entrance to the archives, but there is no other camera in the archives. The library building has automatic locks.

Recommendations

The Western History Center areas include high end computer equipment and other technological equipment in addition to valuable collection materials. It would be optimal to have more security to monitor these areas. This can be achieved by expanding the security camera system or upgrading to a keypad system with unique codes for each person to help identify access in the event of damage or loss.

2.12 Preserving Records

The total physical size of the collections housed at the Western History Center is 4332.32 cubic feet. Approximately, 1721.11 cubic feet, or 39.7%, of the collections are unprocessed. The unprocessed section of the archives mostly comprises the manuscript collections, books, and maps. The collections that are used and requested most frequently, including the photographs, blueprints, and newspapers, make up the majority of the processed collections. Many of these processed collections have been digitized and uploaded to the Microsoft Access database used for collection management or to the Preservica system. The Preservica system allows files to be checked for adherence to digital preservation standards, but this system is not used to its full potential. Additionally, some of the records in the collections are regularly sent to the Wyoming State Archives for microfilming, another form of preservation.

The physical collection materials are stored in archival rooms that are monitored daily for temperature, relative humidity, pests, and other environmental factors. As the collections are a mixture of materials in a variety of formats and mediums, all of the rooms in the archives are kept at a neutral 63 degrees with 25-30% relative humidity in the summer months and 70 degrees with 25-30% relative humidity in the winter months. The reason for this fluctuation in temperature is due to the conflict between the campus heating system and air conditioners. Wyoming has a dry climate, which means that the dangers of mildew, mold, and rust in the collections are low compared

to a humid climate. This also means that the archival environment is ideal for the continued implementation of Dennis Meisner's and Mark Greene's innovative MPLP (More Product Less Process) processing strategies, which allows archivists to devote less time and effort to removing staples and other ancillary tasks involved in rehousing the collections, and more to tasks necessary to make the collections available in a timely manner.

With this said, the wall mounted air conditioning units located in some of the archival spaces are known to leak, introducing environmental inconsistencies into the archives. The collections have been moved from the proximity of these known leakages, but the collections still reside in the same rooms, as there is insufficient alternative storage space. As many construction projects are ongoing throughout the College campus, the library building's proximity to open spaces, and the architectural peculiarities of having been built into a hillside, have left it vulnerable to mice and insects. The main library areas are sprayed regularly to minimize the presence of insects in the building, but the archives spaces are not included in this spraying. The archives spaces use sticky traps for mice and insects, as well as snap traps. To help ease these risk factors, food is only permitted in the breakroom, and beverages are only permitted if in leak-proof containers, and are not kept on the same surfaces as collection materials. Custodial staff regularly clean the areas, and the archives staff dust, sweep, and vacuum storage areas and other archives spaces daily.

Though the books are stored on wooden shelves, most of the other collections are stored in bankers' boxes, acid free document and textile boxes and folders, and in or on steel cabinets and cases in archival rooms with limited access. In most cases the boxes are stored to their maximum suggested capacity. When not filled to capacity, acid free paper is used to pack these boxes and containers, minimizing damaging movement, and to creating a barrier between different types of mediums such as newspapers and paper correspondence. The photographs are largely reboxed in the archival standard photograph sleeves. The maps are either stored in the steel map cases or rolled and tied with linen tape and tagged with appropriate information that indicates what is in the roll. It is important to note that the map case, although made of steel, is worn and should be upgraded. As the size of the storage areas was reduced from two floors to one floor, the collections storage areas are limited, which has led to some of the materials being stored in boxes on the floor. This increases the risk of water damage and pests infiltration. It also serves as an unavoidable indication to donors, potential and current, as well as researchers and other visitors that the Western History Center cannot properly care for the materials in its charge. Generally, only the archives staff (archivist, archives specialist, and student worker) have keys and are allowed to access the storage areas, but campus security, IT, mail delivery personnel, the library director, and physical plant personnel also have keys. However, visitors are exposed to these areas on select tours of the facilities, unintentionally allowing them to witness these conditions.

Recommendations

The Western History Center has done the best they can with the resources afforded to them. The Center has a budget line dedicated to purchasing preservation supplies for the archives such as acid free sleeves, boxes, and photograph sleeves. They also take care in packing the materials in the boxes to ensure minimal movement of the materials without overfilling the boxes. When possible, they have digitized materials in the collection in order to reduce the wear and tear on the original materials as well as to increase accessibility of the items. These digital files are then backed up on an external hard drive, stored on a Google drive, and uploaded to the Microsoft Access database used for collection management and searching, while some are uploaded to Preservica, which is backed up on Amazon S3.

The Center needs to address the limited storage space for the collections. Professional best practices for digital preservation include the creation of three master copies of digital files stored in at least two geographical diverse locations. The Western History Center meets the lesser requirement of at least two digital copies in two geographically diverse locations through upload to the Google drive and storage on external hard drives. However, not all of the collections are uploaded to Preservica. The Western History Center should use the Preservica platform to its fullest capabilities and implement the use of this software for all digital files as well as for collection management in lieu of the homegrown Microsoft Access database. Preservica is a top rated digital preservation application that has automation tools to carry out essential functions and activities, to ensure that files are not corrupted, do not have bit rot, and are accessible for the long-term. It also has the capability to work with obsolete formats.

Another option to address digital preservation and access is for the Western History Center to consider using the Wyoming Digital Archives. This is a service offered by the Wyoming State Archives, described as, “a secure repository where state agencies can store, manage, and access electronic records with long-term or permanent value. The Digital Archives uses HPE Content Manager software to provide agencies a way to preserve and manage their electronic records in much the same way the State Records Center does for paper records. The State Archives works with participating agencies to provide training on the software and to set up the digital archiving process in the most efficient way possible.”

The Western History Center’s physical collections used to be stored on two floors, but they were recently directed to move onto only one floor, significantly shrinking the storage space. As a result, there is limited space to store the materials. There are boxes being stacked on top of each other and resting on the floor. A space evaluation should be conducted to determine how to add more steel shelving to accommodate these collection materials. An alternative to this course of action is to move the Western History Center into a new space that has increased security, better climate control, and more space for the staff to process collections, host lecturers, and provide classroom instruction. Additionally, it would be beneficial to create a log and checklist for archives housekeeping and environmental monitoring of the spaces.

2.13 Arrangement and Description

The collections held by the Western History Center are primarily managed through a home-grown Microsoft Access database. Each collection has been accessioned and listed with minimal information in the database, but only 60.3% are inventoried and processed to the current standards at the Western History Center. The total cubic feet of the collections 4332.32 with 39.7% or 1721.11 cubic feet unprocessed. These unprocessed files are mostly manuscripts, books, and maps. The collections that are used the most, the photos, blueprints, and newspapers, have been given the most attention and make up the majority of the arranged and described collections.

There is a very limited number of collections that have traditional finding aids, however these finding aids do not meet current archival standards. Finding aids are extremely useful as they provide an overall picture of a collection with identifying provenance, original order, and background information that gives context to the collection. They usually organize collections into series, which helps researchers understand the types of items that will be in each folder of the collection. The focus of the archives has been to enter data into the Microsoft Access database, which was built by former Western History Center archivist Kevin Anderson in the 1990s to early 2000s. At the time, this database was state of the art, though it is now outdated. It consists of multiple databases for each type of holding: obituary database, photo collection, periodical collection, oral history database, manuscript collection, book collection, and blueprint collection. The researcher has to open and perform a separate search in each database in order to find materials on their topic. These databases include metadata fields for collection title, accession number, collection date range, general description (abstract), architect/creator, and location. As it is a database, the functionality allows for a keyword search, which will pick up words in any of the above mentioned fields, or for a search by date. Unfortunately, it is only possible to search the database and finding aids while physically on site at the Western History Center. There is no way to access the Microsoft Access databases without using an on-site terminal. The Center's books were once cataloged in WYLD, which is a statewide online library database that can be searched from anywhere, worldwide, but those records were deleted in the mid to late 2000s for reasons unknown. Additionally, there are no reference guides. In order to gain access to, and search the collections, the researcher must contact the Western History Center or go to the Western History Center Reading Room. When consulting with users of the archives for this report, most users were pleased with the turnaround of research requests and the speed at which the archivist can locate pertinent information, however this system is not standard, and this speed is only possible because of the archivist's high level of familiarity with it. The archives specialist and student worker also have a lower level of familiarity with the system, allowing them to retrieve better and faster search results than any external researcher, though not at the level of the current full-time archivist. Users have also reported that it would be beneficial to have the ability to search the collections outside of the reading room.

The Western History Center pays for a yearly subscription to Preservica, which is a digital preservation software that allows users to upload, preserve, organize and share

records and other content online. Unfortunately, this software is not being used to its full potential and it is not advertised on the Western History Center website as an option for searching. The Preservica account includes a limited amount of uploaded data from the manuscript collection, obituary collection, newspaper collection, book collection, blueprint collection, and oral history collection. Most of the content in Preservica is from the photograph collection.

It is unclear if the current archivist has received any post-degree professional training in arrangement and description of collections or attended other professional archival workshops while employed in his current position. The archivist indicated that, though the Western History Center purchased the Preservica software, it is not being utilized to its full extent due to a lack of training and a corresponding lack of time to get support for the software. Further, the archives field is continually evolving to meet the new demands of technology, research into methods of arrangement and description, and overall culture. To remain a relevant and trusted repository, the archives must be actively involved in the profession.

Recommendations

The most important element in any archive is ensuring accessibility. If archival materials cannot be used or even discovered, it is hard to justify preserving the materials at all. As mentioned earlier, the Microsoft Access database, created by the retired Western History Center archivist in the 1990s and 2000s, was innovative for its time. It continues to serve the purposes of tracking acquisitions, research requests, and collections metadata, and it can be searched easily, provided that one knows how to use it and has the ability to visit the Western History Center in person. If either of these two conditions is lacking, researchers must be willing to have the archivist search the collections for them. The archivist and his employees have received high praise from users who appreciate their quick response times upon receiving new research requests, but even the most mundane search involves contacting the Center and using staff time. The Preservica platform, for which the Western History Center pays a yearly subscription fee, has a user interface that empowers users to search the collections. However, this software is not currently advertised on the Center's website. Furthermore, none of the traditional finding aids available in the Microsoft Access database are available online. Lastly, the Western History Center's book collection used to be catalogued and discoverable through the Casper College library's online catalog, but these records were deleted and are no longer widely accessible.

The Western History Center needs to invest time, money, and personnel into improving the accessibility of collections through increased arrangement and description efforts that meet professional archival standards and comply with contemporary best practices. The Western History Center needs to fully migrate their data to Preservica or find another collection management system such as ArchivEra or ArchiveSpace. These collection management software options all have a module that can be used to create finding aids. Finding aids should be created that follow the most up to date version of [*Describing Archives: A Content Standard \(DACS\)*](#). The Society

of American Archivists (SAA) had endorsed the use of [encoded archival description \(EAD\) finding aids](#) since 2015. EAD is defined by the SAA as “a non-proprietary standard for the encoding of finding aids for use in a networked (online) environment.” The creation of EAD finding aids allows them to be searched by keyword and increases the analytics of searches. Finding aids should be hosted by a consortium website such as [ArchivesWest](#), which allows increased discoverability across the nation, thereby increasing awareness of the collections. To increase discoverability, each collection should have a catalog record in OCLC. Such catalog records will increase visibility of the collections, allowing them to show up in search results in WorldCat and ArchivesGrid.

Another option offered by Travis Pollock from the Wyoming State Library is “The Colorado Virtual Library, run by the Colorado State Library, has opened their Omeka CMS platform up to both Wyoming and Colorado institutions that have smaller digital collections they want to add to DPLA, through the Plains to Peaks Hub. This service could provide smaller institutions, like Casper College, the ability to get their collections online without having a CMS system in place. This partnership includes the development and creation of a site for the partnering institution, hosting services, and the training and support for the Omeka software and the addition of records and site management. This service is free to the partnering institution, provided the collections are under 2GB of storage. Collections larger than 2GB will be charged a cost sharing fee for storage. More detailed information of the program can be explained by Leigh Jeremias, Digital Collections Coordinator at the Colorado State Library.”

Every archive will have a backlog of collections that need to be processed. However, arrangement and description have become a low priority given the demands that searching the collections and digitizing materials have placed on the staff’s time. With close to 40% of the collections unprocessed and the limited ability of researchers to discover collections already processed, addressing this backlog should be a top priority. The archival storage rooms are monitored for environmental conditions and are climate controlled, which provides an ideal scenario to implement [More Product Less Process \(MPLP\)](#) for arranging and describing collections. MPLP expedites the process of arranging and describing collections, making it preferable to traditional methods. With this said, I would recommend that the archives make sure that collections are housed in appropriate boxes and labeled for identifications, rather than bags, isolate the boxes for a few weeks at intake, and inspect the collections for other potential pests and dangers immediately upon accessioning to prevent potential discard, spread of hazardous materials to the rest of the Western History Collections, and better store the materials on shelves until fully processed. processed.

2.14 Access Policy and Reference Services

Casper College’s Western History Center is a public archives open to the Casper College campus, K12 schools, the local community, and national and international researchers. Collections have been used by the New Yorker, the History Channel,

Newsweek, Lynne Cheney, among many other notable persons. As mentioned in the previous section, patrons rely on archives personnel to gain access to the collections because the finding aids and inventories of collection materials are not available for research outside of the reading room. As a result, many of the high frequency users, such as the Casper Star Tribune, rely heavily on the archives staff to search the collections and create a digital copy of the materials for their research. This is not sustainable for the WHC, although it is a responsibility of the archives, but the WHC can work with the newspaper or other power users of the archives to create an internship or paid part-time position to do this type of research.

In the Western History Center Reading Room, collections are available for anyone to research, but researchers must adhere to specific policies. Currently, the archives is only accepting researchers by appointment, and not allowing walk-ins. Before the pandemic, the archives allowed walk-in researchers in addition to research appointments and tours, so long as there was personnel to monitor the collections. When in the archives, patrons are monitored by the archives staff. The archives staff help the patrons to use the online database and give suggestions on related materials relevant to their research. Archivists frequently spend a significant amount of one-on-one time with the patrons, listening carefully to the details of their projects in order to provide optimal customer service and research support. This builds trust between the archives staff and patrons and may lead to donations or recommendations to other researchers in the future. The only reading room restrictions are those prohibiting food and beverages. Visitors may use the reading room computers to search the databases to identify research materials without the supervision of an archivist. Once the desired materials have been identified, the Western History Center personnel then retrieve the research materials from the restricted storage areas. The materials do not circulate; researchers can only view them in the reading room. However, patrons are allowed to obtain digital images of the collections provided there are no restrictions indicated in the deed of gift for the collection.

The Western History Center has a fee schedule posted on their website, explaining the price for copies of their materials. The fees posted online are as follows:

Western History Center Fees For Copies

- Customer and Staff made photocopies:
 - Black and white paper copies
 - Students/Faculty = \$0.10 each after first 25 copies
 - Researchers = \$0.10 each after first 10 copies
 - Color paper copies
 - Students/Faculty = \$1.00 each after first 5 copies
 - Researchers = \$1.00 each
 - Digital Copies:
 - Photographic digitization – first 3 free
 - Photographic digitization – 4+ = \$8.00 each
 - Paper/textual scans – first 5 free
 - Paper/textual scans – 6+ = \$.75 each

- Staff printed Photographs:
 - 5" x 7" = \$5.00
 - 8" x 10" = \$10.00
 - 11" x 14" = \$15.00
- If requested information is sent on a Compact Disc (CD)
 - \$5.00 per CD (holds approximately 60 images) + photograph/textual fees
- Commercial Use Fees –
Commercial use fees are assessed on a project basis between the researcher/requester and the director of the Western History Center using industry standard guidelines.

The Western History Center checks the rights of use specific to each collection before allowing researchers to use the collections and make digital images. However it has been noted that it is rare for the Western History Center staff to actually collect the applicable fees for copies of the materials, even when the fee schedule indicates that they should.

Recommendations

Intentional and unintentional theft are quite common in archives. For this reason, it is important for archives staff to monitor patrons using collections. The Western History Center would benefit from having formal reading room procedures for researchers such as a form for the researcher to sign that would effectively register them to use the collections, as well as indicate knowledge of, and agreement to abide by specific regulations. Additionally, researchers should be directed to check their bags, coats, and briefcases before using the collections; they should be allowed minimal outside supplies and equipment to use when using the collections to mitigate risk of damage and corresponding loss of collection material.

The Western History Center would greatly benefit from making their collections searchable outside of the Reading Room. This lack of searchability outside of the physical bounds of the Western History Center is a burden on staff time and a strain on researchers. It also limits the equity of access to information. If archives staff continue to have to perform searches and make digital copies, the Western History Center should charge the users the posted fees. To increase accessibility, the Western History Center can provide a link to their current user-interface for Preservica on their website, which will allow researchers some autonomy in the initial stages of their research. Additionally, the Western History Center should explore the possibility of building partnerships with institutions such as the University of Wyoming American Heritage Center. The American Heritage Center makes their digitized materials accessible through their Luna database and hosts their online encoded archival description finding aids through a consortium of archival repositories, currently the Rocky Mountain Online Archive (RMOA), though it is in the process of migrating from the soon defunct RMOA to ArchivesWest. Another option is work with the Wyoming State Archives' Wyoming Digital Archives to preserve and make accessible digital

records. Additionally, as not everything will be available digitally, the Western History Center and/or power users of the archives should create an internship or paid part-time position to do this type of research.

2.15 Outreach

The Western History Center has been very active in outreach and proactive in gathering statistics in use of materials and participation in events. The Western History Center archivist has historically provided an annual report to his direct supervisor, who was, until recently, the Associate VP of Academic Affairs; when the Associate VP of Academic Affairs position was eliminated, the duties were transferred to the VP of Academic Affairs. This annual report includes the mission, vision, and purpose of the archives, as well as usage statistics, goals, and needs including upcoming budget requests. Additionally, the Western History Centers puts together and distributes a yearly newsletter each summer, providing an overall picture of reference requests, visitors, programming over the past year, new and ongoing initiatives, and upcoming trajectory. For the time period spanning July 2019 to June 2020, the Center reported 237 research requests and 140 visitors, whereas the statistics for 2018-2019 included 347 research requests and 319 visitors. The lower statistics reflect the pandemic's impact on use.

Campus collaborations are a major focus of the Western History Center. The Center has hosted museum studies and paralegal classes in the archives, and it has awarded internships for students in these programs. Most recently, Professor Valerie Innella Maiers and her museum studies students used artwork contained in the Western History Center's collections to curate an exhibit for display in the Fine Arts building. The Western History Center collaborates with other units on campus for displays, exhibits, and publications. The Western History Center staff work with the Casper College Foundation and Public Relations Department on relevant projects, providing photographs, articles, and historical research assistance. They also regularly work with the Alumni Association to provide information for their Footprints magazine. For the 75th Anniversary of Casper College, the Western History Center archives specialist, Johanna Wickman, edited and revised a new edition of the Spirit of the Thunderbird book, including more information on recent years.

Additionally, the Western History Center conducts community outreach through regularly recurring, as well as one-off programs. Each fall, the Western History Center organizes an archives month presentation, usually featuring a local author. This presentation had 30 participants last year. In March, the Center held their yearly western history celebration featuring a presentation on history with between 40 and 50 participants. Additionally, the Summer Passport to Adventure (formerly organized by Casper Museums Consortium but currently made up of mostly campus partnerships with the museums, library, archives) had between 30 and 50 participants, a significant decrease from the 100 to 120 participants in years past. A new program, the summer documentary series, is a collaboration between Wyoming PBS and the Western History Center to screen three documentaries and provide snacks to attendees. This

new series had 30 participants last year. In addition to the above mentioned programs, the Western History Center staff have been guest lecturers or speakers for special events such as the Alumni Board meeting, Humanities Festival, and programs hosted by the Daughters of the American Revolution. Even when featured as the main speaker, the Center has participated in a support position by hosting tables for events and bringing informational brochures about the Western History Center, as well as branded Frisbees, bookmarks, postcards, or replicas showcasing the archives.

The Western History Center has gotten the local community involved through projects. In past years, the elementary schools, specifically third graders, have visited the archives to learn more about them and use them for projects. The Center created a worksheet matching game for their regular summer camp visitors. Additionally, the Western History Center has coordinated with a few local historians and teachers on oral history projects. Students, volunteers, historians, community members, and the Center staff perform and transcribe interviews, and the transcriptions are then checked by two parties for quality control. Oral histories serve the purpose of supplementing what is recorded in official records and provide greater insight in the culture of the time. Providing transcriptions of oral histories enhances accessibility, making them available to a larger audience, including the hearing impaired, and increases ease of use for researchers.

The Western History Center has also invested in their online presence. They maintain a Facebook page that provides updates on initiatives and upcoming programming, such as the COVID-19 Community Survey created by the Western History Center in 2020. This survey is an opportunity for participants to share their quarantine stories, how their lives have changed, and what they think should be remembered about this time. The WHC received 31 responses, and plans to preserve these surveys so future generations can learn about experiences in the Casper community during the pandemic. The archivist for the Western History Center stated that their Facebook page has one of, if not the, highest followings of any Facebook associated with the College. Another popular outreach initiative is the “If you grew up in Casper” Facebook page. Although not monitored by the Western History Center, the Center participates regularly and receives many community likes.

Recommendations

The Western History Center current outreach efforts are remarkable especially considering the limited staff and resources. The Western History Center’s outreach efforts reach K-12 schools, the campus community, historians, authors, researchers, and the general public. Their efforts emphasize the belief that archives are for everyone and that anyone can play a role in shaping and preserving their history. The Center has made sure to be true to the profession with their involvement in the official Archives month each October, by offering a regularly scheduled presentation, as well as participating in other regularly scheduled events such as the Casper College Humanities Festival. Taking part in regularly scheduled programming increases the public's familiarity with the archives, and cultivates an environment in which people expect and look forward to interacting with archives personnel. The Center has been a

good collaborator on campus by providing units photographs, information, and other resources to enhance their publications and projects. It has also been a good steward of the academic mission of the College by creating internship opportunities, collaborating on projects, and providing instruction on the purpose and use of the archives. It is important to note that there is only one full time archivist, one part time archives specialist, and one student worker to support all these efforts. The Western History Center has the collections to support more of the academic programs on campus and the expertise to facilitate more projects to engage students, faculty, and staff in more initiatives such as an oral history project, photograph identification project, or digital preservation program. As discussed in the personnel section and alluded to in other sections of this report, the Western History Center would greatly benefit from having more than one full-time professional archivist to facilitate all the necessary functions of a successful archives. Casper College should invest more financial and human resources into this invaluable resource, and the Casper College Foundation should be more proactive in fundraising for the Western History Center. Furthermore, as evidenced by the community input and concern expressed by other repositories, there is a significant amount of local and professional interest in the archives, and a strong desire to make sure the Center is successful; this is a prime opportunity for the Center to grow and take on partnerships with other repositories such as the Buffalo Bill Center of the West, Fort Caspar Museum, the Tate Museum, or the American Heritage Center to host a symposium or other outreach or fundraising initiative.

2.16 Disaster Preparedness

The Western History Center has not kept its disaster preparedness plan up to date. In 2013 Balfour, a consulting group, visited the premises and spoke with the staff about creating a disaster preparedness plan. The resulting emergency plan is the one that the Western History Center continues to use today, and has not been updated since 2013 or 2014. The emergency plan is accessible for employees only through an internal computer network folder and, as it has not been updated in over six years, it includes outdated information. It is unclear if anyone other than the archivist is aware of the plan's existence, or of what to do in various emergency scenarios. Further, the fire department, police department, and campus security all lack copies. The archives do have fire extinguishers that are regularly checked by special personnel. Although the Western History Center is built into a hill, and the Casper area is subject to flooding, snow storms, wildfires and tornadoes, the Center has not experienced any disasters that caused significant harm to the collections, nor any data loss for at least 10 or 12 years.

Recommendations

It is critical for an institution, especially an archival institution with one-of-a-kind collection materials, to have an up to date disaster preparedness plan, to identify essential records, and to perform scheduled activities to mitigate risk of disruptions of operations. A disaster preparedness plan provides essential guidance for how to respond to natural disasters such as floods, hurricanes, and earthquakes, emergencies

resulting from accidents such as burst water pipes, those resulting from deferred maintenance, such as a leaking roof, or those that result from negligence, such as fire or mold. Essential elements of a disaster plan include a listing of the in-house emergency team with roles and contact information, locations of emergency systems, contact information for emergency services (such as insurance companies, legal advisor, architects, security, fire department, plumbers, etc.), locations of the collections salvage supplies, details about locations of where this plan is on file, and the date that the plan was last updated. Essential records are defined as records essential for emergency response, for the resumption or continuance operations, and protection of the health, safety, property, and rights of personnel. Essential records are also those that require massive resources to reconstruct, as well as those that document the history of communities and families. They may include, but are not limited to, records related to computer infrastructure, employee compensation, fiscal obligation, future directions, location of records, maintenance of public health, safety, and order in emergency situations, operating policies, past management, physical building records, productivity, proof of monies owed, proof of ownership, records to protect individual's rights and interests, and research findings and product development. To create these documents and ensure the accuracy of the plan as well as to mitigate other risks, one must be diligent in keeping disaster plans up-to-date, regularly monitor and restock supplies and emergency equipment (fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, and other such equipment), and survey the environment daily.

It is imperative that the Western History Center update the existing emergency disaster plan immediately, create multiple copies, and place it on file with internal personnel, the library director, and emergency response teams such as the fire department, police department, and campus security. Archival staff must also identify records that are essential to the operations of the archives. Electronic records should be placed in a location that is backed-up regularly and can be accessed offsite. Physical records should be placed in a specially marked box that can be easily carried out of the archives in an emergency situation. It is always beneficial to have more than one copy of such records, especially digital records. For digital records, it is recommended to have three copies with at least two of the copies in geographically dispersed locations. The archives should also create a log to track the data regarding when fire extinguishers were last checked, when supplies were replenished, and other similar disaster preparedness activities.

2.17 Information Technology

The Western History Center has multiple computers, as well as other equipment, to carry out archival operations. There are three offices dedicated for each regularly held position: the archivist/director, the archives assistant, and the student worker. Each office includes a desktop computer with the Microsoft Office Professional Suite, Adobe Acrobat Pro, and Adobe Photoshop software, as well as access to Newspapers.com and multiple Epson scanners with corresponding scanning software. Additionally, the WHC Reading Room has five desktop computers, two laptops, another Epson scanner, and a microfilm viewer with a printer. These computers and

laptops also have the same software as the office desktops, as well as internet access, and access to Newspapers.com. The Reading Room computers and laptops are used by researchers and additional volunteers, interns, and student and part time workers. According to the Western History Center archivist, he was primarily responsible for maintaining the equipment in the archives. The VP of Academic Affairs states that the Western History Center also has the support of A/V services on campus to assist with any technical support.

The archives uses Microsoft Access heavily for collection management, searching and accessing collections, and collecting research statistics. The archives also has a subscription to Preservica, a cloud hosted digital preservation and access solution, for which the Center pays \$3950 per year. Preservica is OAIS (open archival information system) compliant and has the capabilities required to carry out the standard workflows for ingest, management, storage, access and long-term preservation of digital content. It also has a user interface that allows researchers to search collections that have been loaded into the system.

Data storage at the Center occurs in multiple ways. Preservica is backed up by Amazon S3, a trusted cloud service. The Microsoft Access collection database, digitized materials, and born digital records are stored on Google Drive, as well as on external hard drives. The archives used to store materials on campus servers monitored by IT, but this option is no longer stable and accessible. Additionally, some of the records in the archives are sent to the Wyoming State Archives where they are converted to microfilm.

Recommendations

Although the Microsoft Access database currently used for collection management and tracking of research requests was innovative when it was created and is currently doing a sufficient job of data storage, it lacks a user-friendly interface and is not available outside of the physical premises of the Western History Center. The Western History Center has invested in Preservica and continues to pay a yearly subscription fee to use it as a collection management system, but it is not being used to its full capacity. The Western History Center needs to migrate its data from its current collection management Microsoft Access database to Preservica or another archives collection management software such as ArchivEra or ArchiveSpace. These proprietary softwares are backed up to prevent data loss, provide a user interface that researchers can access online, assist with many essential functions, and are specialized to meet archival needs in accordance with professional best practices. To do this migration, the Western History Center will need to hire a software developer or data manager to perform the necessary tasks to transfer the data into the system. Additionally, as lack of knowledge and training is one of the chief reasons that Preservica is not used to its full potential, it will be crucial to provide training and support to the Western History Center personnel for the new collection management system.

Digital files are highly volatile and susceptible to bit rot, corruption, or other forms of data loss. To mitigate these risks, it is necessary to monitor these files, create multiple

copies, and migrate the files to a standard format when applicable. To meet best practices for digital preservation it is recommended to have three copies of digital files in two geographically dispersed locations. When these items are uploaded to Preservica, the Western History Center meets this guideline. When not uploaded to Preservica, there are only two copies of the materials. With the amount of staff time it takes to create digital copies, add metadata, and then upload them to the database, the expense will be doubled or tripled if the original digital copies are not cared for properly and have to be replaced. This does not take into consideration the reputational impact of data loss and the resulting inability to provide these resources to internal and external users.

In addition to upgrading the collection management system, the Western History Center should invest in activities to make the collections more discoverable globally. One way to achieve this goal is to create OCLC WorldCat catalog records for each collection. In addition to making records visible on WorldCat, once there is an OCLC record for a collection, it is usually added to ArchivesGrid, which harvests information on archival collections held by thousands of libraries, museums, historical societies, and archives around the world. The Center should also create guides on certain topics to help steer researchers to collections that will be of the most interest to their research. It can also look to partner institutions and world-wide initiatives to enhance discoverability. For example, many of the Wyoming institutions upload their digital images to the Digital Public Library of America (DPLA). The DPLA hosts images and data from all over the US in one location online, making it easier for researchers to perform a broad search on a topic and identify repositories to contact. Having Western History Center images on DPLA would help steer new researchers to the Center. It may also be worthwhile to reach out to the American Heritage Center or the Wyoming State Archives for assistance in uploading digital files to their Luna databases or for general guidance on digital preservation. The Wyoming State Archives offers a service called the Wyoming Digital Archives, which allows agencies to upload their electronic files to a long-term preservation and access database for a minimal price.

The Western History Center must be sure to keep its technology up to date. The Center should create a schedule to regularly update their computers with the newest software. Additionally, the Center should create a computer replacement plan that prioritizes the archives staff computers.

3 Action Plan

The above sections of this report identify many ways that the Western History Center can successfully move forward into the future. As this report highlights several areas of concern, it will be imperative for Casper College to take steps to address the issues. Below is an action plan to move forward.

1. Casper College must clearly define the purpose, vision, and mission of the Western History Center. The WHC is a valuable asset to the college and the college should consider the extent of financial resources it is willing to invest in the Western History Center. Additionally, Casper College should take into consideration that the placement

of the Western History Center within the organizational structure of the College, as a whole, and the Goodstein Foundation Library greatly impacts its ability to carry out certain functions critical to the success of the Center.

2. The Western History Center needs to update its policies and procedures. Of the most importance is an update to the disaster preparedness plan. The collection policy may also need to be updated based on the agreed upon mission and purpose of the Western History Center. Furthermore, there should be a research policy and form that should be signed when people use the collections as well as consistent enforcement of new and existing policies.
3. With a newly defined mission and purpose of the archives as well as an updated collection policy, a full collection assessment is needed to determine whether the currently held collections fit into the newly defined scope of the Center. Deaccession may be necessary, although donor agreements and relations must be considered.
4. It is recommended that Casper College appoint a minimum of two full time professional archivists to manage the Western History Center, carry out the newly identified purpose and mission, perform essential duties of the archives, and monitor the collections and the physical spaces. An assessment of how these responsibilities should be allocated, as well as how many full and part-time professionals are needed to successfully run the Center can be found in section 1.7 of this report.
5. The Western History Center needs to gain intellectual control over its collections by evaluating information available through the MS Access collection management database, arranging and describing collections (including weeding of non-archival materials), and making those inventories available online. Arrangement and description will most likely result in lessening the amount of storage space necessary. Optimally, the Center will create finding aids for each collection and make them available online to increase accessibility and use, as well as to ease some of the burden currently placed on reference services by empowering users to conduct their own initial research.
6. The Western History Center should migrate its MS Access collection management system to a new system with the functionality to track donations, collection metadata, and research requests. Optimally, this system would also have a public interface that allows for external searching. As the Western History Center already pays for a yearly subscription to Preservica that includes the aforementioned functionality, the Center must determine if this system will suffice as the new collection management system or if they will pursue another system such as ArchivEra or ArchiveSpace. Part of this migration must include training for Western History Center employees on how to use the system as well as standards for data entry.
7. The concerns regarding the physical spaces allocated to the Western History Center described in section 1.8 need to be addressed. Climate controlled archival storage prolongs the life of materials in multiple formats. As the collections contain photographs, paper, blueprints, film, and artwork in a variety of mediums, and as the Center's archives rooms only have one system to control the areas, finding and keeping an appropriate temperature and relative humidity to prolong the life of these items will be critical for long-term preservation. The reported fluctuating temperatures, as well as the frost on the inside of windows, leaking AC units, and audible dripping within the archives should all be investigated. In addition to environmental controls, the ways in which items are stored should be reanalyzed, and adjustments must be made to shelving

and layout. Some archival materials are stored in boxes on the floor due to the limited space, a situation that is simply unacceptable. The Center should analyze the available space to determine if there is a more efficient layout for the storage of archival materials and purchase additional shelving as needed. If this is not possible, the boxes currently on the floor should be placed on pallets. The collections also include the artwork and papers of several artists. With the new visual arts building security, climate controls, and storage capabilities, the Western History Center should consider creating a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the visual arts building to house the artwork. There is also limited space in which to work with classes and for visitors to conduct research. The reading room has a block of tables in the center of the room with computer terminals around the perimeter. If the Center enhances its classroom instruction and cross-campus collaborations, space will be needed to accommodate classes larger than 10 people, the current maximum. Additionally, the Center would benefit from increased security to monitor behavior within the reading rooms and access to the storage areas.

8. The Western History Center should make a schedule for regular maintenance and monitoring of its equipment and spaces. The temperatures and relative humidity of all the archives rooms should be taken twice daily, in addition to checking the areas for pests, vermin, mold, mildew, and dust. Details regarding the daily housekeeping of the archives should also be included in a log. Computer software must be checked for updates once a week, and a schedule for updating computer hardware and other equipment should be created.
9. The Western History Center should increase its outreach to, and engagement with, Casper College and its community, other libraries, archives, museum and cultural heritage institutions, local businesses, government agencies, and the public. The Center should make its presence and collaborative opportunities better known to the Casper College community through email blasts discussing the programs and collections, having staff participate as speakers at orientation, hosting open houses, and reaching out to instructors about ways to integrate archival collections into their classes. This can be as simple as attending departmental meetings to discuss how collections relate to specific courses as well as the services offered through the Center. Partnering with external institutions to sponsor special events, host guest speakers, or work on collaborative grant opportunities together will help develop and maintain a network of professionals for ongoing collaboration and support.

4 Short-term and Long-Range Goals

Included in this section are attainable goals for the organization, as well as a list of long-range goals the organization can work toward, using this assessment as a dynamic planning tool for the future. The Western History Center may elect to alter or add goals to those below as the situation develops.

Short-term goals:

- Create a purpose, mission, and value statement for the Western History Center with approval and support from upper administration as well as the board of trustees.

- Investigate and pursue grant opportunities to help with collection assessment and processing of collections.
- Hire two full-time, professional archivists, preferably with a master's degree in library science with an emphasis in archives management, to manage and execute essential functions for preservation, arrangement and description, outreach, access and reference services, acquisitions and appraisal, and overall maintenance for the Western History Center. These archivist positions may be grant-funded.
- Construct policies, procedures, and workflows for the operations of the Western History Center.
- Identify the Western History Center's place within the College's organizational structure and its authority to collect and preserve the records of Casper College as well as other historical materials.
- Update the collections policy and complete a collections assessment.
- Update the Western History Center's website to include links to pdf finding aids and an access point to the public facing interface for Preservica, allowing patrons to research collections online. Include a section of the website to promote the Center's holdings.
- Outline reasonable and realistic expectations and schedules for response to reference and research requests. Clearly define and indicate the order in which research requests are to be answered and a standard time window in which researchers can expect their requests to be addressed.
- Generate a schedule and log to document the monitoring of physical environmental conditions of the archives.
- Develop a plan to reach out to academic units across campus to discuss implementing use of the archival materials in their classes.

Long-Range Goals:

- Identify ways to increase funding for the archives. This includes grant opportunities, active fundraising, advocating for more funding from the College by demonstrating impact of the archives and potential for growth, and creating partnerships with other institutions.
- Develop a staffing plan to increase the Western History Center's capabilities in terms of outreach, processing, digital (born-digital and digitization), and reference and research services, culminating in at least four full-time, professional archivists. These professional archivists should supervise and mentor part-time workers, student workers, interns, and volunteers.
- Increase access to archival collections through use of finding aids searchable online, platforms that provide access to digital files, catalog records that make collections discoverable world-wide, and trained personnel dedicated to these efforts.
- Publicize holdings via press releases, flyers, social media, newsletters, blog posts, and open houses targeting Casper College, professional organizations, local museums, libraries, and businesses.
- Create a plan for an improved physical facility to address limited storage, exhibit/display, classroom, and research spaces. The upgrade must also include plans

to address environmental conditions, climate controls, security, and information technology.

- Dedicate staff time and funding to address the backlog of unprocessed collections.

Attachment 1: Site Visit Itinerary, April

Tuesday, April 20, 2021

3 – 6:30 p.m. Drive from Laramie to Casper, Wyoming

Wednesday, April 21, 2021

7 - 10:30 a.m. Meeting with Kevin Anderson, retired Casper College (CC) Western History Center (WHC) archivist

3:30 – 4:30 p.m. Meeting with Katrina Brown, CC Goodstein Foundation Library director

4:30 – 5 p.m. Meeting with Vince Crolla, CC WHC archivist

Thursday, April 22, 2021

8 – 8:45 a.m. Meeting with Rick Young and Michelle Bahe, Fort Caspar Museum director and museum curator

9 – 10 a.m. Meeting with Tom Rea, WyoHistory.org editor

10:15 a.m. – 2 p.m. Meeting with Vince Crolla, CC WHC archivist

2 – 3 p.m. Tour of CC campus with Brandon Kosine, CC Vice President of Academic Affairs

3 – 4 p.m. Meeting with Katrina Brown, CC Goodstein Foundation Library director

4 – 6:30 p.m. Drive from Casper to Laramie, Wyoming

Attachment 2: Additional Interviews

<i>March 15, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Vince Crolla, CC WHC archivist
<i>March 19, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Sarah Mailloux, CC Goodstein Foundation Library librarian
<i>March 19, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Denise Bressler, CC Foundation executive director
<i>March 22, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Beth Floyd, CC Goodstein Foundation Library librarian
<i>April 12, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Valerie Innella Maiers, CC School of Fine Arts and Humanities art history instructor
<i>April 12, 2021</i>	Meeting with Leslie Waggener, Wyoming State Historical Society president
<i>April 16, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Brandon Kosine, CC Vice President of Academic Affairs, and Katrina Brown, CC Goodstein Foundation Library director
<i>April 16, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Dennis Kuhnel, National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC), Casper, Wyoming director
<i>April 19, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with WY Cultural Heritage Institutions representatives – Paul Flesher, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center director; Jeremy Johnston, Buffalo Bill Center of the West historian; Tom Rea, WyoHistory.org editor; Leslie Waggener, Wyoming State Historical Society president; Kathy Marquis, Wyoming State Archives state archivist
<i>April 26, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with WY Cultural Heritage Institutions representatives – Paul Flesher, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center director; Jeremy Johnston, Buffalo Bill Center of the West historian; Tom Rea, WyoHistory.org editor; Leslie Waggener, Wyoming State Historical Society president
<i>April 26, 2021</i>	Meeting with Paul Flesher, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center director
<i>April 26, 2021</i>	Zoom meeting with Kathy Marquis, Wyoming State Archives state archivist
<i>April 29, 2021</i>	Telephone meeting with Dale Bohren, Casper Star Tribune publisher emeritus and donor
<i>May 7, 2021</i>	Telephone meeting with Keith Rouse, CC WHC archives specialist

May 10, 2021 Zoom meeting with Con Trumbull, Fort Caspar Museum Association Board chair, Nevada Northern Railway engineer/fireman/archivist, author

May 13, 2021 Zoom meeting with Vince Crolla, CC WHC archivist

Attachment 3: List of Resources Consulted

1) General

- Anderson, Kevin S. “A Brief History of the Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library and the Casper College Western History Center.” *Goodstein Good News Library Newsletter*, circa 2009-2010.
- Anderson, Kevin S. [Untitled Excerpt for the Casper College Alumni Association on Casper College experience.] *Footprints*, 2010 May 17.
- Casper College District Board Meeting Minutes [Twelfth Item of Business: Designation of WHC as a Department within Educational Resources Division and Thirteenth Item of Business: WHC Authority To Collect And Preserve Historical Records And Make Them Available To Researchers], 2007 May 15.
- Casper College Western History Center: Strategic Plan for Western History Center 2015-2020, Revised 11/19/2014.
- Crolla, Vincent. “Justification for the Casper College Western History Center.” Undated.
- Memorandum of Understanding between the Western History Center and the Goodstein Foundation Library, 2010 June.
- “Mission Statement and ‘Authority to Collect,’” Kevin Anderson, Western History Archivist, memorandum to Lois Davis, Head of Educational Services, 2007 April 27.
- Western History Center: Annual Report 2019-2020, 2020 August.
- Western History Center: Annual Report 2018-2019, 2019 July.

- Western History Center: Annual Department/Program Report 2013-2014, 2014 February 15.
- Western History Center: Departmental Report 2012-2013, Revised 1/31/2012.
- Western History Center: Return on Investment, 2020 September 30.

2) Collections

- Casper College Western History Center: Collection Development Policy, Revised 9/30/2020.
- Western History Center: Legal Records Finding Aid, Revised 11/11/2014.
- Casper College Western History Center Preservica webpage, casper.access.preservica.com
- Gift Agreement, Signed by Nathan Belle on behalf of the Casper Star Tribune, 2007 August 11.
- “Western history Center @ CC.” Holly Waatti-Thompson, e-mail communication to Brandon Kosine, 2021 May 10.
- Western History Center MS Access Databases
 - i. Administrative
 1. WHC Research Requests-Master 20200709.
 2. WHC Acquisitions-Master 20200709.
 - ii. Research
 1. WHC-ObituaryDatabase, Last modified 20200108.
 2. WHC Photo Collection, Last modified 20200624.
 3. WHC Periodical Collection, Last modified 20200625.

4. WHC Oral History Database, Last modified 20200625.
5. WHC Newspaper Collection, Last modified 20200625.
6. WHC Map Collection, Last modified 20200302.
7. WHC Manuscript Collection, Last modified 20200306.
8. WHC Book Collection, Last modified 20200312.
9. WHC Blueprint Collection, Last modified 20200302.

- WHC Total Collections and Size, Compiled by Vince Crolla, 2020 May 6.
- WHC Collections Unprocessed, Compiled by Vince Crolla, 2020 May 6.

3) **Human Resources**

- Casper College Governance Chart, <https://www.caspercollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/governance-chart.pdf>.
- Casper College Organization Chart, <https://www.caspercollege.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/cc-org-chart.pdf>.

4) **Financial**

- Western History Center: Report on Budget Actuals Fiscal Years 2018-2020, Compiled by Katrina Brown, 2021 April 30.
- Casper College Foundation: Western History Center, Account Summary as of August 31, 2020.
- Casper College Financial Support for Western History Center, 2021.

5) **Other**

- Casper College Goodstein Foundation Library Website:
<https://www.caspercollege.edu/library/>
- Casper College Website: <https://www.caspercollege.edu/>

- Casper College Western History Center Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ccwhc>
- Casper College Western History Center Website:
<https://www.caspercollege.edu/whc/>
- If You Grew Up In Casper, WY You Remember... Facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/268360579846000/>

Attachment 4: Funding Opportunities

- **BLM Grants:** <https://www.blm.gov/services/financial-assistance-and-grants>. The Western History Center and the National Historic Trails Interpretive Center (NHTIC) in Casper, Wyoming has a collaborative work environment where the Center provides many of the resources and records for the NHTIC exhibits and interpretive programming. To help support these types of partnerships, the BLM issues financial assistance through grants and cooperative agreement awards to institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, state and local governments, foreign entities and Indian tribal governments for projects that meet the BLM mission and falls in line with the Department of the Interior's top priorities.
- **IMLS American Rescue Plan Grants:** <https://www.imls.gov/grants/available/imls-american-rescue-plan>. These grants are based on funding the agency received from the federal government. Grants are due June 28, 2021 and are \$10,000 to \$50,000. The grants are for "addressing community needs created or exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and in assisting with recovery. Projects may continue, enhance, or expand existing programs or services, or they may launch new ones to address emergent needs and unexpected hardships."
- **NEH Infrastructure and Capacity Building Challenge Grants:** <https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/infrastructure-and-capacity-building-challenge-grants>. This grant can be used for capital projects that support the design, purchase, construction, restoration, or renovation of buildings or sites of national, historical, architectural, or cultural significance and facilities that house humanities collections or are used for humanities activities. This includes the purchase and installation of related moveable and permanently affixed equipment and critical building systems, such as electrical, climate control, security, life safety, lighting, utilities, telecommunications, and energy management. Expenditures must be shown to bring long-term benefits to the institution and to the humanities more broadly. Funding range is up to \$750,000 for a project up to five years. Eligible HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs, and two-year community colleges must match \$1 in non-federal gifts for every \$1 in federal funds, regardless of the awarded amount (this is actually less than for other types of institutions).
- **NEH Preservation Assistance Grants for Smaller Institutions:** <https://www.neh.gov/grants/preservation/preservation-assistance-grants-smaller-institutions>. Funds preservation education and training; general preservation assessments; digital preservation assessments; collection-level assessments; consultations (including advice from a professional on: developing a disaster preparedness and response plan; environmental monitoring; developing plans to improve storage; developing preservation plans or digital preservation plans; assessing conservation needs of selected items; implementing preventive conservation strategies); and purchase of preservation supplies, storage furniture, or environmental monitoring equipment. No cost sharing or match required. Maximum award is \$10,000 for up to 18 months.
- **NHPRC Access to Historical Records: Archival Projects:** <https://www.archives.gov/nhprc/announcement/archival.html>. Seeks projects that will

significantly improve online public discovery and use of historical records collections. All types of historical records are eligible. Projects may preserve and process historical records to (1) Convert existing description for online access; (2) Create new online finding aids to collections, and (3) Digitize historical record collections and make them freely available online. Grant is for one or two years and for up to \$150,000. There is to be a cost share for this grant, but it can be in-kind contributions.

- **SAA State and Federal Grant Resources:** <https://www2.archivists.org/groups/regional-archival-associations-consortium-raac/state-and-federal-grant-resources>. The Society of American Archivists, the official professional organization for archivists in the United States, has a section of its website dedicated to grant resources.
- **USDA Forest Service:** <https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/prc/tools-techniques/funding/?cid=STELPRDB5200611>. Collaboration and partnerships are the way of the future in managing the nation's forests and grasslands and its many other program areas, including international programs, non-Federal forestry, private land interests, Job Corps, and research. Increasingly, the USDA Forest Service's role is to bring people together through on-the-ground, community-based projects. A partnered or collaborative approach builds commitment to and ownership of the results of forestry-related projects. This work often helps diverse groups find common interests and enables them to leverage resources to get work done. The Forest Service uses legal instruments called Grants and Agreements (G&A) to facilitate many of its partnering opportunities.
- **WY SHRAB Grants:** <http://wyoarchives.state.wy.us/index.php/about-archives/state-historical-records-advisory-board>. Wyoming SHRAB by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission offers grants to Wyoming cultural heritage organizations for projects to process, preserve, and provide increased access to historical records. Projects eligible for funding should focus on making collections of historical records more accessible, with preference given to projects for digitizing and providing online access to historical records, hiring consultants to provide guidance in these areas, or attending training that will improve your organization's ability to make your historical records accessible to a wider audience. Grant awards are of the amount of \$2500 or less. Applications generally open in the late spring and last a year. The current grants are available for the period of August 1, 2021 thru July 31, 2022.