

Featured Article: Reflections of a Virtual Librarian

eNews Edition: Fall 2020
Contributed by Gina Flores

Librarian Liz Cheney was ready and responsive to a quick adaptation when the CSUN Library closed the building under pandemic guidelines in March 2020. She thoughtfully shared her perspective on the transition to serving the CSUN community virtually.

Tell us about yourself and your Library role.

Before coming to CSUN, I earned my MLIS and then worked as a science and engineering librarian at UCLA. I began working at the CSUN Library two years ago as a research and instruction librarian and as the liaison to the Department of Childhood and Adolescent Development. This means I work closely with students in identifying research topics, finding resources, formatting citations, and more.

What was the experience like going from a physical reference desk service to a virtual mode?

Going from seeing students in person almost every day to communicating just over chat, email, etc. was an adjustment. Virtual services are great, but they're very different from talking with someone face to face. For example, if you're talking over chat, sometimes it can take much longer to clarify what someone is looking for. In general, you don't get to know students as people in the same way compared to talking to them at the physical reference desk.

There's also the fact that we don't bump into students virtually in the way we do in the Library building, where they might have come in to use a study room but then swing by the reference desk or my office with a question.

Recently, our web services coordinator and our systems librarian have made it easier for patrons to get in touch by placing the chat widget on frequently used pages (our resource discovery system - [OneSearch](#), [LibGuides](#), etc.) So even without the physical reference desk, help is just a click away, and for my part I've seen an uptick in questions.



Librarian Liz Cheney

What is the most frequently asked question from students?

Getting access to textbooks is a really common question, especially now! Students are curious about what options they have without being able to walk in and check out a book like they normally would. The Library decided to prioritize electronic textbooks as much as possible for the fall semester, and we've been encouraging faculty to consider switching to open access texts or eBooks that the Library already owns to minimize the impact on students. The students I've talked to have been excited to learn about eBook options and getting print books mailed to them, along with the other services the Library can offer.

My favorite part of the job is seeing students grow in confidence as they learn about critical thinking and the research process. It's really rewarding to see their excitement when they've had a breakthrough!

What are some challenges you've faced serving students virtually? What opportunities for improvement have come to light?

One big challenge is overcoming communication barriers in virtual services. Even though the Library has offered virtual options for a long time, for some questions, there are big benefits to talking them over in person. With email or chat, we can't rely on a patron's body language or tone of voice to gauge how they're feeling.

So I try to be extra thorough in checking in with patrons, asking additional questions to see whether we're on the same page and to make sure they're getting what they need.

As far as opportunities, I think that the shift to remote learning has pushed us to reconsider how we teach. I've tried to streamline lessons and to really focus on key takeaways in order to make online classes as accessible as possible. Again, there's the issue of not being physically present with students to see how they're doing, so I've been extra careful to leave time for their questions when teaching. But all of this makes you consider how best to communicate with students, and how to make instruction engaging, which is always a good thing!

What is your favorite part of working at the CSUN Library?

My favorite part of the job is seeing students grow in confidence as they learn about critical thinking and the research process. It's really rewarding to see their excitement when they've had a breakthrough! It's also great to be part of a department and a campus that prioritizes student learning and social justice, and to see that these values inform everything we do.

What advice do you have for students?

Remember that even though the physical Library is closed, [Library faculty](#) and staff are still here to help! We want to connect students with the books and other resources that will help them succeed, so don't be shy about reaching out.

What's New: Documenting COVID-19 at CSUN

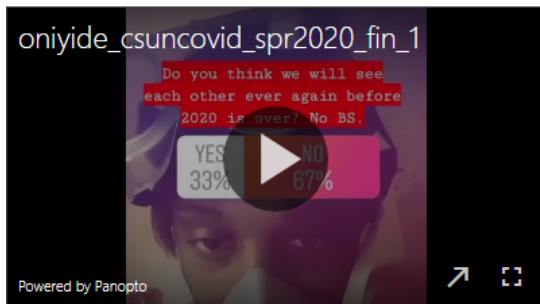
eNews Edition: **Fall 2020**

Contributed by April Feldman and Elizabeth Altman

As of October 2020, the CSUN community has been working and learning remotely for seven months, as has much of California, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Early on in this period, University Archives, a unit within the Library's Special Collections & Archives, launched the *Documenting COVID-19* project in an effort to collect expressions of Matadors' experiences during this crisis and preserve them for future generations. Project Archivist April Feldman talked with us about the endeavor.

Can you describe the vision behind this project?

The University Archives launched this effort to collect "in the now," to capture events as they happened. The level of disruption to daily life made it clear the pandemic would be one of the 21st century's defining moments. Not just the virus itself, the number of infections and the death toll, but what it's doing to economies, politics, food production and distribution, education, to people—the list just goes on and on. The science and statistics of COVID are one thing, but I think what will make it real for people that didn't live through it are the personal stories.



How do the items you hope to collect through this project fit in with the purpose of a University Archives?

While the primary mission of the University Archives is to collect, preserve, and make accessible the "official" papers of the university we also try to document the student, faculty, and staff experience. It's these experiences that make up the shared social and cultural environment of our community and COVID-19 has put enormous pressure on that environment. We've recently moved CSUN history collections into the University Archives, so materials relating to the administrative, political, structural, intellectual and social history of the university are gathered in one place. This new collection is analogous to the memorabilia and photos contributed to the University Archives following the 1994 Northridge earthquake, although its contents will likely be more personal.

Why is it important for the CSUN community to share stories?

Future researchers will make an effort to determine and understand how the community dealt with the unusual circumstances presented by the pandemic and how those circumstances affected daily life. What will make that seem real are personal stories. Storytelling has been and continues to be our dominant form of communication: music, film, theater, all of the arts, rely on storytelling and that's because stories are relatable. We can all see ourselves in stories. And besides—the act of telling a story can be very therapeutic. I think there are a lot of people in the world that need that right about now.

How have people responded to the project? Have you received any materials that surprised you?

Unfortunately, there's been a limited response, mostly, I think, because we began this project right about the time the spring semester ended, and summer isn't really the best time to reach out to students. I'm hopeful we can reach more students, faculty, and staff (alumni and local community members are also welcome to contribute!) now that we're back in session. We're working with several members of the faculty.

What will the University Archives do with the donated items once the project is complete?

Well, the project currently has no end-date. Since there's no way to know when all of this will be over, there's no way to know when to stop collecting. We plan to keep collecting well past the end of the campus closure because we believe that the recovery period will also be of interest: how did we settle into our new normal? how was the repopulation of campus handled? which local business didn't survive?

It's always been our intent to make the CSUN COVID-19 Community Archives available to our users as a digital collection via the Library website. To do that, we need several different units in the Library to coordinate efforts, so we have to sit down with everyone that needs to be involved and work out the details.

Meanwhile, we encourage the CSUN community to contribute reflections and keepsakes—digitally—so we can grow a repository of experiences so future generations can better understand this unusual time. Learn how to participate at [Documenting COVID-19 @CSUN](#).

Future researchers will make an effort to determine and understand how the community dealt with the unusual circumstances presented by the pandemic and how those circumstances affected daily life. What will make that seem real are personal stories.

Oviatt Spotlight: Special Thanks to our Library Student Employees

eNews Edition: Fall 2020

Contributed by Gina Flores

The CSUN Library, fondly known as the heart of the campus, is tremendously thankful for the amazing student workforce dedicated to supporting our operation during the 2019/2020 academic year. Not only did our student employees make use of the Library's resources themselves, but they also helped to make these resources available to their fellow students, staff, faculty, and community members.

We are proud to virtually present our 2020 Outstanding Student Employees from each department of the Library! Congratulations and thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the Library, and perseverance to reach your academic goals. You make us proud, and we will always remember the joy and positive energy you brought to the Library family!

MEET OUR OUTSTANDING STUDENTS

Library Administration/
Finance & Personnel - Facilities
SUPERVISOR
Jason Billick



Giovanni Curiel

SYSTEMS AND OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT

HOBBIES
Hiking and Photography
🎒 📷

Research, Instruction and Outreach Services
SUPERVISOR
Veronica Muncal



Valerie Abboud

B.S. KINESIOLOGY WITH A FOCUS ON EXERCISE SCIENCE

HOBBIES
Watching movies, going to concerts and cooking!
🎧 🍳

Teacher's Curriculum Center/Music & Media

SUPERVISOR

Ed Park



Camille Villaflores

ACCOUNTING

HOBBIES

Loves to dance



Pavitra Kanse

ENGINEERING MANAGEMENT

HOBBIES

Loves to dance



Reserves, Periodicals, and Manuscripts

SUPERVISOR

Ross Kendall



Prateeksha Mohan Kumar

ENGINEERING

HOBBIES

Cooking new recipes from the internet, playing board games, exploring new places, and painting

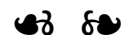


Mona Azami

DEAF STUDIES

HOBBIES

Dancing, hiking, and swimming



Guest Services - Front Desk

SUPERVISOR

Gabriel Castaneda



Katherine Pina

CHILD DEVELOPMENT
MINOR IN PSYCHOLOGY

HOBBIES

Practicing calligraphy and drawing



Sari Ajina

COMPUTER SCIENCE

HOBBIES

Soccer and video games



Guest Services - Automated Storage & Retrieval System

SUPERVISOR

Tony Ivankovic



Jaime Alcala

MARKETING

HOBBIES

Reading and practicing guitar



Guest Services - Shelving

SUPERVISOR

Carina Becerra



Matthew Sanchez

AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE

HOBBIES

Football and Rugby



Library Systems Group

SUPERVISOR

David Morck



Sam Thacker

COMPUTER SCIENCE
MINOR IN PHILOSOPHY

HOBBIES

DnD, reading, coding for fun, philosophizing, hiking, and musing about the meaning of mind



Creative Media Studio

SUPERVISORS

Eva Cohen & Rheana Laguardia

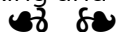


Hannah Maselli

TV PRODUCTION

HOBBIES

Cooking, baking and all things BTS



Library Technology Services

SUPERVISORS

Eva Cohen & Rheana Laguardia



Bhagesh Jain

ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING

HOBBIES

Traveling around the world



Arek Soulahian

COMPUTER ENGINEERING

HOBBIES

Studying and hanging out in the Library



Collection Access and Management Services

SUPERVISOR

Steve Kutay

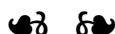


Adam Dennett

BUSINESS INFORMATION

HOBBIES

Amateur radio



Special Collections & Archives

SUPERVISORS

Holli Teltoe & David Sigler



Michael Thamas

MICROBIOLOGY

HOBBIES

Basketball, listening to music, working on
research in the lab



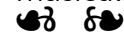
Cameron Takahashi

SOCIOLOGY

MINOR IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

HOBBIES

Developing games, reading books and watching
musicals



Interlibrary Loan

SUPERVISOR

Darnesa Morris

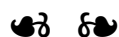


Betsaira Aguilera

POLITICAL SCIENCE

HOBBIES

Cooking



Map Collection

SUPERVISOR

Chris Salvano

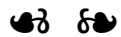


Sarah Termini

GEOGRAPHY

HOBBIES

I like to sew stuffed animals and sometimes even design patterns for them. My favorite is a winged pig I designed for the LA County Fair



Thanks & Recognition: Library Scholarship Students Share Heartfelt Gratitude with Donors

eNews Edition: Fall 2020

Contributed by Gina Flores

We are proud to announce the 2020 Library Student Employee Scholarship (<https://library.csun.edu/2020-scholarship-awardees>) recipients. Thanks to continued donor support, we were able to provide over \$25,000 in scholarships to deserving student assistants. The \$1,000 awards provide supplemental aid in offsetting the cost of higher education for students with a financial burden. The heartfelt appreciation expressed by the awardees demonstrates the priceless sentimental value and powerful impact of this honor. In a thank you note to donor Marianne Afifi, Clinical Psychology Masters student Mariana Marquez wrote, "I will never forget that CSUN was home to me for my undergraduate and graduate education, and I will never forget all the people who supported my education along the way."

Our scholarship recipients have an average GPA of 3.5 or better and exhibit an exceptional commitment to their fields of study. The gallery below demonstrates the tremendous gratitude our students shared in their thank you messages to our generous donors. We are forever thankful to our donors for sharing their gifts to support the dreams of our hardworking student assistants, as they have dedicated their time to the integral operation of the library to support the CSUN community's quest for knowledge.



Over the last five years, my journey at CSUN has influenced my passion for community and education. Regardless of where I go after my graduation, I will always remain a CSUN Matador at heart and I will never forget everyone who supported my education along the way."

Mariana Marquez

Clinical Psychology
Marianne Afifi Scholarship,
Mary & James Cleary International Scholarship



"Thank you also from the utmost part of my heart for awarding me this scholarship and every other opportunity I gained working at Oviatt Library. It has been more than a blessing to my family and I and I'm forever grateful to everyone who contributed to my success."

Maryann Erilim

Accounting
Library Employees Scholarship



"It's been an honor working at the Oviatt Library for the entirety of my CSUN undergraduate career so I am deeply grateful to be chosen. The Oviatt has had a major impact on me as an employee, student, and person."

Valerie Abboud

Kinesiology
Dr. Karin J. Duran Scholarship,
Mark Stover Scholarship



"Thank you so much for granting me this scholarship. This gift will truly help in furthering my studies and my accounting journey. I'm so grateful that students are able to get such amazing opportunities offered by the University."

Camille Villaflores

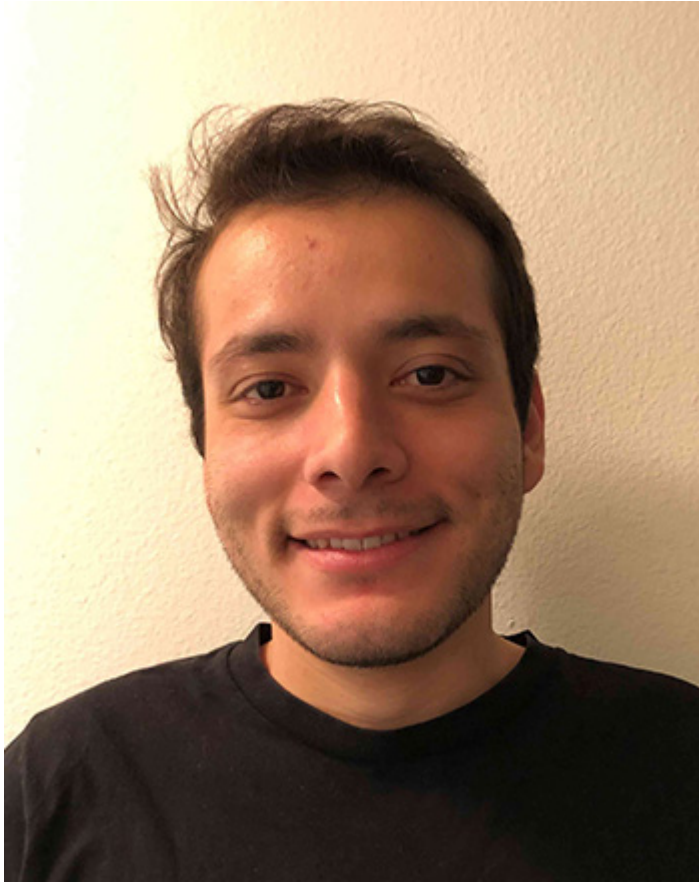
Accounting
Library Employees Scholarship



"I would like to thank you for your kindness and generosity. I found my way at CSUN, and your scholarship has reinforced what a great support system it has for students. I truly appreciate your family's recognition!"

Michael Thamas

Biology
Ann & David Perkins Scholarship



"I would like to thank you for your generous financial support that you have provided towards my higher education. One of my most fond experiences has been working at the Oviatt Library, which provided me with the opportunity to meet various people that have helped me grow as a student and individual."

Ollin Rocha

Chiana/o Studies
Ann & David Perkins Scholarship



"In these incredibly tough times, I am extremely thankful to be a recipient of these scholarships because your generosity has inspired me to help others and give back to my community. I hope one day I will be able to help students achieve their goals just as you have helped me."

Roxana Ortiz

Civil Engineering
Bonita J. Campbell WISE Scholarship,
Friends of the Library Scholarship



"I am very honored that I'm able to graduate from CSUN with a scholarship. People like you inspire me to keep doing what I'm doing. I will continue to work hard to achieve my goals for a better future."

Prateeksha Mohan Kumar

Engineering Management
Grimm-Pannunzio Scholarship



"I send my most sincere gratitude and thanks for making the Purcell IGRA Endowment possible, and want you to know just how much this scholarship has helped me as a student of the guitar at CSUN. Time is a precious resource for a music student, and this award has contributed to helping me get more time to practice and focus on studies, rather than spending that time working more hours and worrying about the cost of living while being a full-time student."

Joseph Piellucci

Classical Guitar Performance
Purcell IGRA Endowment Scholarship



"Education is very important to me and I am honored to accept and receive this award. Because of you, I have less weight on my shoulders with trying to come up with tuition money for the upcoming semester. Once again, thank you for your confidence in me and my vision."

Brianna Rhodes

Criminology
Ann & David Perkins Scholarship

We Would Like you to Meet: Hai-Ling Tang, Web and Digital Support Specialist

eNews Edition: **Fall 2020**

Contributed by Katherine Dabbour

Besides admiring the work ethic, loyalty, and longevity of long-term Library employees, it's always a good idea to capture their experiences to create a living history of the major changes that have happened in American academic libraries over the years. Hai-Ling Tang, currently the Web and Digital Support Specialist in the Collection Access Management Services department, has worked for the CSUN Library since 1980 and has been a part of its rapid technological changes.

When Hai-Ling started at CSUN, the first automated library circulation system was an IBM key punch card system, which was housed in the Circulation Department on the main floor (now called Guest Services), which was used to track the Library's inventory. Books came with IBM punch cards and users had plastic library cards, and both were fed into an IBM card reader system that produced a separate punch card linking the book to the user. Part of her job was to collect the IBM cards every day, and send them to the CSUN computer center to be processed, resulting the next day in a large green and white printout for the previous day's book checkouts and overdue books. A copy of the printout was kept at the circulation desk where users could check to see if the book they needed was already checked out.



Hai-Ling Tang, Web and Digital Support Specialist

As the Library transitioned to online circulation systems, her next position was working with the campus photo ID system, which not only was the ID card for all students to use for campus services, but also served as the library card. Instead of a plastic punch card, student ID cards had barcodes to use to check out books. Hai-Ling was also in charge of a team of Student Assistants who issued the first campus-wide photo IDs. It was six months of hard work, but they had a great time, and Hai-Ling still keeps in touch with many of those former students all these years later.

After working in Circulation, Hai-Ling's next position was with the Fine Arts Service Desk, which contained music recordings in vinyl and tape, and VHS videos, along with equipment for students to listen to and watch recordings in the library. In addition, the department also had a large collection of

Hai-Ling was in charge of a team of Student Assistants who issued the first campus-wide photo IDs. She still keeps in touch with many of those former students all these years later.

art prints and music scores for students to check out.

After learning HTML coding through on the job training/self-instruction, one of the first things Hai-Ling created was the Library's first reference librarian's desktop calendar on the web. Her web skills have expanded since then to match the needs of the Cataloging unit. When asked which of her jobs were her favorite, Hai-Ling responded, "I like all of my jobs in the

Library over the years, because I'm always learning new skills and I have always tried to keep work fun." Despite the new and rapidly changing technology, her favorite part about working at the Library is still being around all the books. She shared, "It's one of my happy places." Furthermore, when asked what changes she felt had the biggest impact on her and other library employees, Hai-Ling responded, "The coffee shop in the library. I always thought the library should be a no food and drink environment." Given that academic libraries went from years of strict rules about this policy, along with enforcing no noise, having coffee shops inside the library to encourage student visits and collaborative learning is a huge change, so one can see her point!

While working for the University Library, Hai-Ling has also been an active member of the CSUN chapter of the CSU Employees Union (CSUEU), including serving as the current president. She finds this work satisfying by learning to see both sides of the coin (manager and employee), how different points of view can cause conflicts, and that by helping the CSUEU member solve their differences, everyone can live with the end results.

When asked what keeps her busy outside of work, Hai-Ling mentioned photography and camping. She also enjoys catching up with her former student assistants, and how it brings her joy to know that they are all very successful members of our society. After graduating from CSUN, some went on to become dentists, lawyers, pharmacists, and engineers, and she's been able to watch how they all grew up, and one even became the Library's Associate Dean! While Hai-Ling said she enjoys watching the world go by and seeing how everything changes from day-to-day, she has been an active participant in those changes, too.

Message from the Dean: One True Thing

eNews Edition: **Fall 2020**

As I write these words, the sky in Northridge has become dark and ominous from distant fires, perhaps symbolic of the fear and uncertainty that lies beneath the surface for many of us during these challenging days. The spring 2020 pandemic and the early summer societal upheaval surrounding our country's social justice reckoning have caused many of us to seek out that "one true thing" that can anchor us to solid ground and give us more meaning in our jobs and our personal lives. The search for "one true thing" is especially poignant since most of us are isolated from our friends, colleagues, and loved ones, and we cannot process and clarify our thoughts and feelings in the same ways we did pre-COVID-19. Nevertheless, finding and embracing core values is critical if we are to live lives of purpose and intention in this changing and fraught world. On that note, I would encourage the reader to look at the [Library's Mission, Vision and Values](#) where you will find the closest thing to "one true thing" on our website.

Our interview with librarian Liz Cheney in this issue of the Oviatt Library eNews reminds us that for all the changes brought on by the pandemic in the world of library reference, instruction and outreach, one true thing remains: the value system that binds together the work of pre-COVID librarians with post-COVID librarians. This ecosystem of values includes providing access to information, ensuring clear communication, fostering critical thinking skills, and focusing on student success. It is important to note that all of our CSUN librarians, just like Liz Cheney, have transitioned remarkably well from a largely physical teaching environment to a primarily virtual atmosphere, all the while maintaining their core values. This was a difficult endeavor, all the more so given the physical and emotional disruption that most of us have experienced over the past several months.

One of the key roles of librarians is preserving the past, and it was this value that spurred University Archivist April Feldman to initiate her *Documenting COVID-19 at CSUN* project back in the spring of 2020, a project that is described in this version of the Oviatt Library eNews. Through this initiative, we hope that many in the CSUN community will be motivated to share their lived experiences and thus the "one true thing" that has emerged for them out of the events of the past few months. While the pandemic experience has been challenging to all of us, we



Oviatt Library Dean Mark Stover

each have our own story, and some will want to write down what they have learned through adversity to share with future generations via the Library's Special Collections and Archives.

Our annual recap of library student scholarships reminds us of the "one true thing" that lives in the heart of each staff and faculty member in the Library: the fact that our "raison d'être" is to assist and serve CSUN students and to help them achieve success. I am always inspired by the stories of the students who work in the CSUN Library and the barriers that they have overcome to reach CSUN, often as the first person in their family to attend college. I hope that you will consider joining the dozens of donors to the Oviatt Library Student Scholarship Fund. Despite all of the hardships that many of us have experienced this year, this act of selfless giving could become your "one true thing" for 2020.

Former President Barack Obama once said, *"We consider ourselves a nation of citizens who are bound by ideals and a set of values."* What are your ideals and your values? How do you find meaning in your life and work? Or, to put it another way, what is your "one true thing"?