

STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING A ROBUST ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM AT AN ACADEMIC LIBRARY

Chris Petersen
Special Collections and Archives Research Center
Oregon State University Libraries

Annual Meeting of the Oral History Association
Montreal, Québec
October 12, 2018

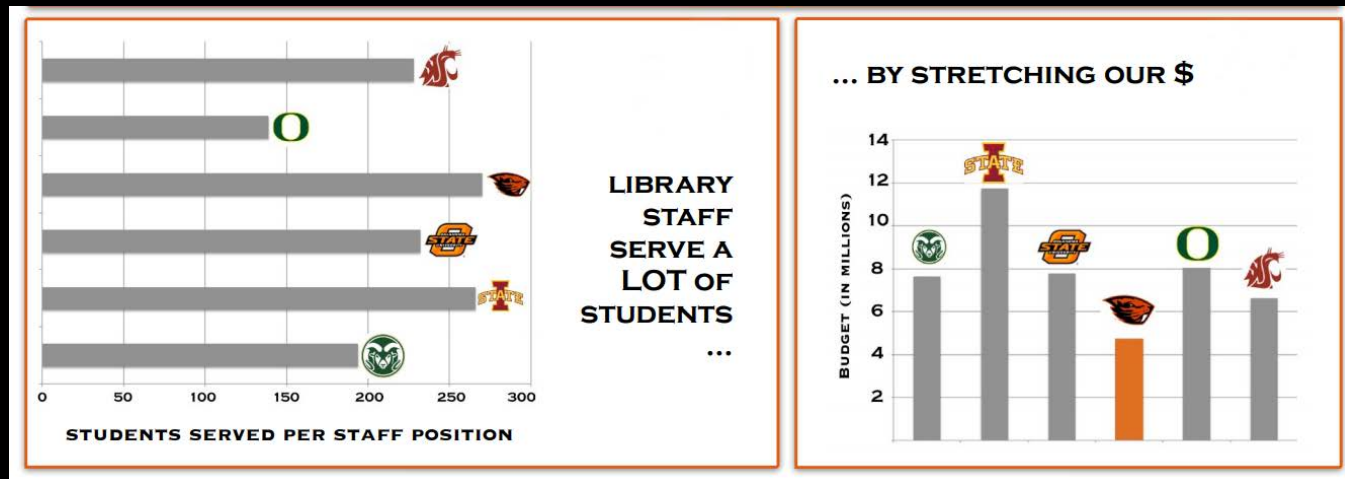


The Valley Library at Oregon State University



Institutional Context

- A medium-sized academic library...
 - \$12.7 M total budget (\$4.2 M for collections)
 - 58 FTE professional staff
 - 41 FTE student assistants
- ...that has learned to do more with less



The Resulting Point of View



Resulting Personal Context

- Library faculty are encouraged to be innovative in how they approach their work
- Seed money is made available for library faculty to explore new ideas
- Position descriptions are built with flexibility in mind, so long as one's primary assignment doesn't suffer from inattention

One Outcome: The SCARC Oral History Program

- 1975-1990 (pre-history): Oral history work falls under the purview of a campus museum
- 2011: SCARC faculty begin pursuing oral history as a scholarly interest
- 2016: SCARC formalizes its oral history program
- Today: ~1,900 interviews in 44 collections; 500+ conducted by SCARC faculty (3) and students since 2011

The Point of This Talk

- Convey our experiences (anticipated and learned) about:
 - Making your case (to administrators) to start or grow a program...
 - ...and doing the work in a way that will help to build momentum

Making Your Case: Collection Development



Making Your Case: Community Engagement



OREGON MULTICULTURAL AND
OSU QUEER ARCHIVES



Making Your Case: Donor Relations



Tracy Daugherty

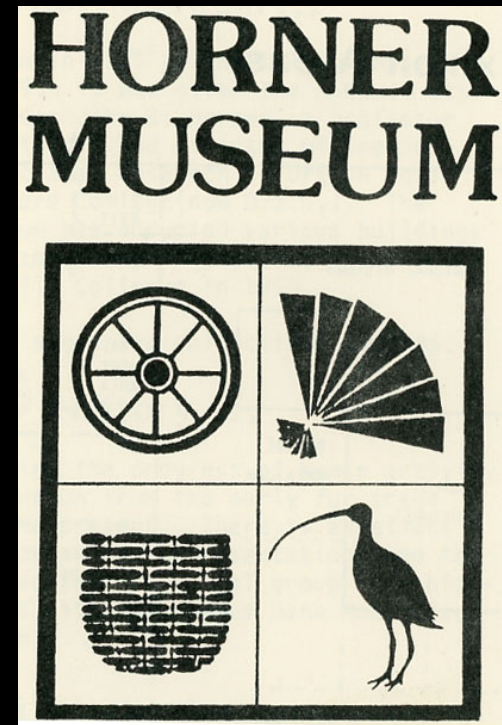


Jane Lubchenco



Bob Moore

Doing the Work: Get Your Legacy Collections in Shape

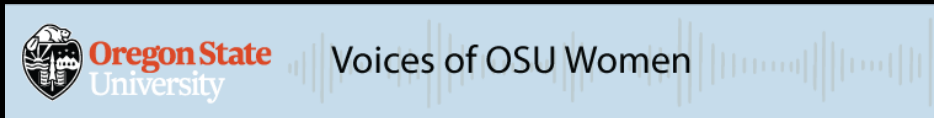


Doing the Work: Align with Your Strategic Plan

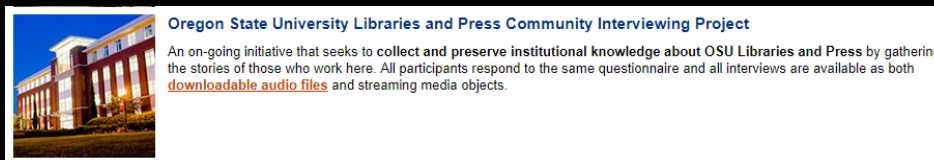
- In our case:
 - Undergraduate experiential learning



- Instruction



- Community building within the library



Doing the Work: Leverage Existing Resources



Voices of Oregon Agricultural College

MAIN WALDO BALL STANLEY BISHOPRICK EVA BLACKWELL GEORGIA CROW HERSCHEL DAVIS JOHN GARMAN BEULAH AND HELEN GILKEY
DELMER GOODE GLADYS WHIPPLE GOODE ELVIN HOY E.B. LEMON LINUS PAULING LOUIS RAYMOND ROBERT REICHART MINERVA KIGER REYNOLDS
T.J. STARKER G. BURTON WOOD LEVELLE WOOD ABOUT THIS PROJECT

MAIN

This exhibit consists of a series of interviews conducted primarily in 1979 with a collection of individuals who maintained a connection to Oregon Agricultural College, as Oregon State University was known until 1927. The majority of these interviews were captured by staff working at the Horner Museum, which resided on the Oregon State campus for seventy years.

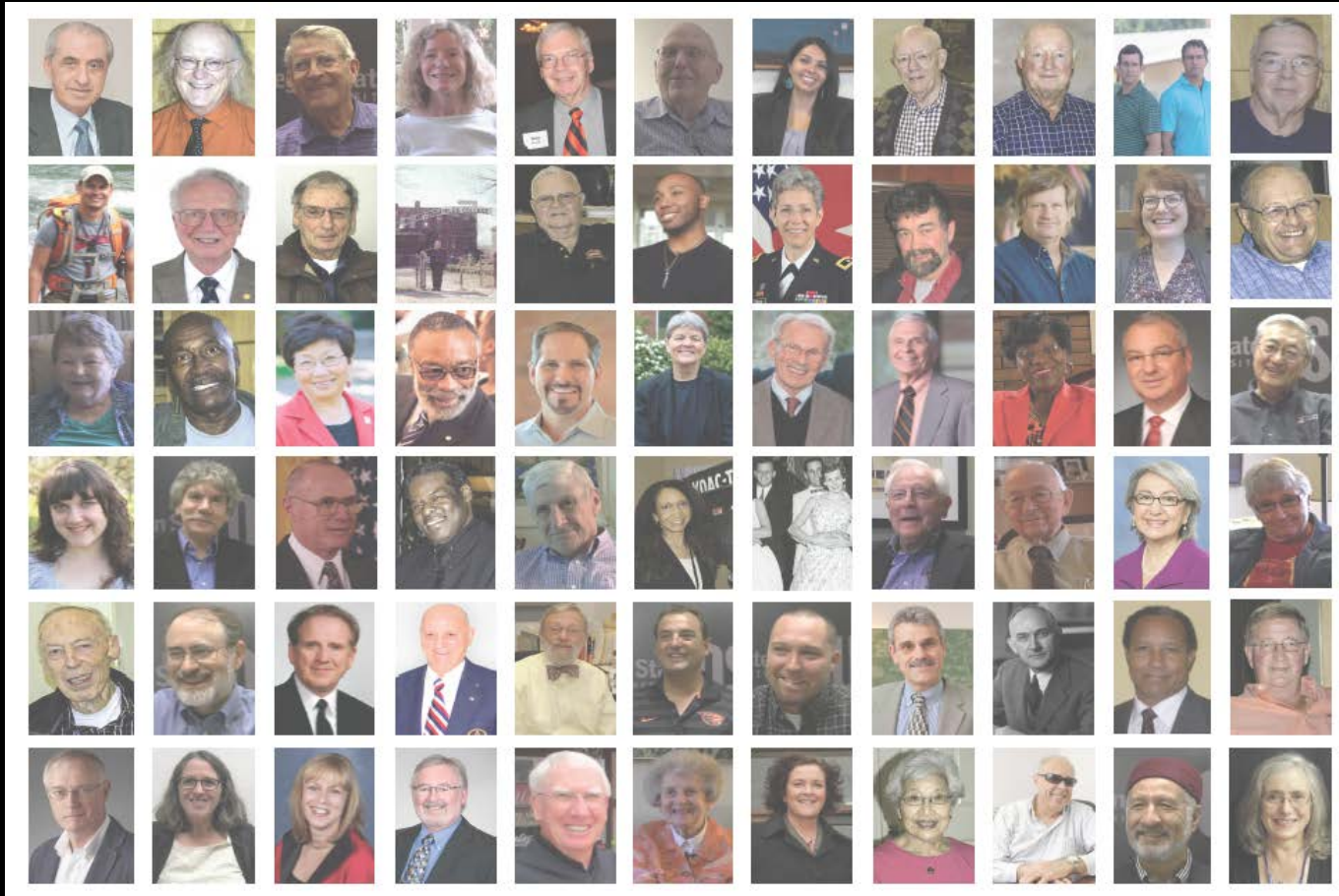
From 1975 to 1992, the museum provided support for a vibrant oral history program that collected the stories of individuals who were important to campus life and, indeed, to the fabric of Oregon on multiple levels. Read today, the narratives offered in this exhibit by alumni, retired faculty, and more casual acquaintances of OAC, stand as just one example of the richness, vision and lasting value of the museum's oral history work.



Presented by the Oral History Program at the Special Collections and Archives Research Center, Oregon State University Libraries.

Powered by [Omeka](#) and the [Oral History Metadata Synchronizer](#).

Doing the Work: If the Iron Heats Up, Strike



And Last But Not Least...



Once you feel you are ready, define yourself as a program!

- Easier to market yourself
- Easier to attract potential funding
- Very useful for internal organization

Conclusion

- Libraries and Oral History are a great fit!
- Building an Oral History program on limited funds is do-able!
- Library administrators have a vested interest in many types of oral history work...
- ...think strategically and get them on board.

Thanks!

chris.petersen@oregonstate.edu

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oralhistory.html>

