

THE SOCIETY OF CALIFORNIA ARCHIVISTS: AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

The Society of California Archivists was established to promote cooperation and exchange of information among individuals interested in the preservation and use of archival and manuscript materials in California and adjoining areas, to disseminate information on research materials and archival methodology, and to provide a forum for the discussion of matters of common concern.

The Society originated from the meeting, in July 1971, at the invitation of Lynn B. Donovan, of a representative group of archivists and manuscript curators in California, to discuss the formation of an archival organization as a means of response to the burden of personal expense involved for California archivists in travelling to out-of-state professional meetings and the need for a locally-oriented forum. This group acted as an ad hoc steering committee until the Society was formally voted into existence in October 1971, at an organizational meeting attended by 48 persons drawn from the California membership of the Society of American Archivists, the Manuscript Society, the Rare Books Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries and the Conference of California Historical Societies. The meeting elected a Steering Committee, which developed the Bylaws by which, with a few revisions, the Society is still basically governed; and it instituted annual meetings and a Newsletter published several times yearly, both of which remain important channels of communication and information exchange for a membership which has always been somewhat heterogeneous and is separated by considerable distances from the north to the south. In addition to regular meetings and workshops, the Society has over the years, sponsored a number of special events and activities to further professional education and raise the profile of the archival community in California, usually working in conjunction with other organizations and institutions, including the Society of American Archivists and the National Archives and Record Administration.

Provision was also made from the very beginning for the creation of committees, which, while varying over the years as to title, charges and procedures, have remained informal enough to enable the Society to respond quickly to specific needs and to offer opportunities for any member to participate easily in devising and shaping activities, if wishing to do so. Committee achievements include the passage in 1978 of state legislation specifically relating to the theft of library property, by a committee on archival security, under the chairmanship of James V. Mink.

Other efforts of the Society to meet its ongoing aims have included a questionnaire and review of objectives (1976-77) and the Committee of the Eighties Report on Goals for the 80's (1981). The Society has made a major contribution to the dissemination of information on research materials by publishing a Directory of Archival Repositories in California in 1975, with an updated and expanded version in 1984.

Anne Caiger, January 1985

In July, 1993 the Society was formally recognized and recorded as a non-profit Corporation. Articles of Incorporation were written and legally filed as were the Revised Bylaws. In accordance with the non-profit corporation status the elected governing body name was changed from "Council" to The Board of Directors.

Dorothy Mackay-Collins, June 1993

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