

November 27, 2018

Statement in Support of Temporary Archivists at UCLA

The Society of California Archivists (SCA) is issuing this statement in support of the [open letter](#) distributed by six temporary archivists from UCLA Library Special Collections in June 2018.

As a professional organization representing archivists in California, SCA is committed to advocating for the rights of archivists and the appreciation of their skills and contributions. We commend the stand taken by the archivists at UCLA and agree with their assessment of the precarious place such temporary appointments put both archivists and the institutions they serve. SCA recognizes that this issue is not limited to UCLA but rather is pertinent to archivists and archival institutions across the state and the nation. We therefore encourage an open and frank discussion about the use of temporary appointments to complete professional archival work.

Temporary appointments have become an all too familiar position for archivists, a practice that negatively affects the profession on many levels. The poor prospects for permanent and stable employment directly contributes to a lack of diversity amongst our colleagues, discouraging entry into our profession and driving qualified archivists to seek employment in other fields. The excessive dependence on temporary labor also harms the institutions that rely on it; the use of temporary labor causes low staff morale, deprives repositories of valuable institutional memory, and diverts precious resources to recruitment and training. Consequently, the rate of staff turnover and constant pressure to recruit and train new temporary employees drains intellectual and financial energy from our universities, historical societies, community organizations, government agencies, and other keepers of our cultural heritage. While we acknowledge that temporary appointments are often necessary for the completion of grant and other short-term projects, employees in these positions are often asked to perform duties outside the scope of these projects—including core functions that should be performed by a permanent staff member—which serves to further undermine the value of our profession.

The Society of California Archivists joins the UCLA archivists in asking that the UCLA Library convert all six temporary archivists to potential career Librarian positions and discontinue the unfair, damaging, and inefficient practice of hiring archivists in temporary roles to perform core duties and functions. As the UCLA archivists said so well, “By doing so, the UCLA Library will recognize the value archivists bring to our team, our collections, and our patrons.”

We thank and support our UCLA colleagues for taking a stand on this issue.

Respectfully,

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