

## **Definition of Responsibilities and History of the Relationship Between LA as Subject and the University of Southern California Libraries.**

Compiled in preparation of an updated memorandum of understanding between LA as Subject and the University of Southern California Libraries in June 2022.

### **Background**

L.A. as Subject is a long-standing consortium of over 230 organizations and individuals dedicated to improving the visibility, access, research, and preservation of archives and collections documenting the rich history of the Los Angeles region.

In 1995, it started as a 4-year research project at the Getty Research Institute that culminated in a survey and the publication, *Cultural Inheritance/L.A.: A Directory of Less-Visible Archives and Collections in the Los Angeles Region*.

In 2000, stewardship of the LAAS directory and database was transferred to the USC Libraries, which remains the administrative and institutional home of the consortium to this day. Entities in the directory became members, and a formal executive committee was established. In 2006, the executive committee created a charter that solidified the organization's four major goals: to improve the visibility of and access to archives; promote a more inclusive narrative; promote services to archives; and advocate for the preservation and sustainability of Los Angeles focused collections.

Prior to this MOU, the relationship between LAAS and USC Libraries was described in the "LAAS Archives Forum & USC Libraries Joint Memorandum" dated August 5, 2009.

Currently, several public programs raise the visibility of member collections. One of these programs is the annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar that started in 2006 and has been held at the USC Doheny Library for the past decade. At this all-day event, members exhibit their unique collections in one place, allowing scholars, researchers, archivists, librarians, students, and history enthusiasts to interact with the alliance's members.

In alignment with collection strengths, USC faculty research and teaching interests, and other library programs such as the Collections Convergence Initiative (CCI), the libraries conduct significant academic and public outreach in support of the intersecting interests of both parties. Such programs include the Emmy-winning Lost L.A. documentary

series, significant archival residency programs with funding from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and initiatives with the California State Library, National Endowment for the Humanities, and other organizations.

Facilitating networking and the sharing of archival best practices remains a central goal of LAAS as well. Members meet bimonthly that allow participants to network, observe different preservation methods, and share best practices.

Today, the LAAS remains as essential as ever to building a more complete picture of L.A.'s past, especially in partnership and collaboration with USC Libraries. This is evidenced by the continual growth in membership, involvement with the archive and local communities, and support of grant-funded projects.

### **Scope and Responsibilities**

- **LAAS Coordinator**

- USC Libraries

- The LAAS Coordinator holds a part-time faculty position in the USC Libraries Programs and Planning Department. The LAAS Charter and Bylaws, Section III.B., contains a description of the LAAS Coordinator position.
- The Programs and Planning staff and other USC Libraries departments, as appropriate, partner with the LAAS Coordinator to develop, implement, and promote LAAS-related events, including the annual Los Angeles Archives Bazaar. Appropriate collaborating units are at the discretion of USC Libraries in conversation with the coordinator.

- LAAS

- In the selection and hiring of the LAAS Coordinator, the LAAS Executive Committee Chairperson shall serve on the Search Committee. The Executive Committee includes the LAAS Coordinator as a non-voting member.

- **LAAS Executive Committee**

- USC Libraries

- USC Libraries holds no role/responsibilities in terms of the LAAS Executive Committee.

- LAAS

- LAAS Executive Committee members are elected by and from the LAAS membership according to the LAAS Charter and Bylaws.

- LAAS membership and membership criteria are determined by the Executive Committee according to criteria outlined in the LAAS Charter and Bylaws.
  - LAAS Coordinator, as described above as a USC faculty member, is a non-voting member of the Executive Committee.
  - LAAS Executive Committee Chairperson will work in collaboration with the coordinator and in good faith with USC Libraries in support of programming, publicity, grant-seeking, and other initiatives of mutual benefit.
- **Administrative and Technical Support**
    - USC Libraries, as available resources allow, provides:
      - Technical and administrative support for the LAAS distribution list, [LASUB-L@usc.edu](mailto:LASUB-L@usc.edu). When and where the LAAS Coordinator is not available, the distribution list (aka listserv) will be monitored by USC Libraries communications staff.
      - Access to shared digital storage and video conferencing utilizing the accounts of the LAAS Coordinator.
      - At times, recordings will be posted on the USC Libraries' video content sharing platforms.
      - The LAAS Coordinator will primarily moderate the LAAS listserv.
    - LAAS
      - The LAAS Coordinator and Executive Committee will additionally manage the LAAS email, video sharing, and social media accounts.
- **Website and Directory**
    - USC Libraries, as available resources allow:
      - Provide technical and administrative support for the official LAAS website, [laassubject.org](http://laassubject.org), which includes the LAAS Directory Portal.
      - Appropriate USC Libraries staff may contribute to and edit site content at their discretion.
    - LAAS
      - Facilitated by the LAAS Coordinator, the content of the LAAS website will be populated, maintained, and updated by the LAAS membership and Executive Committee.
- **The Los Angeles Archives Bazaar**

The Archives Bazaar, held annually in October, is managed and presented as a joint effort between LAAS and the USC Libraries, as resources allow, to provide

access to the event as broadly and inclusively as possible. The Archives Bazaar involves and engages LAAS members and the public - in-person when possible - through programming that includes a member exhibitor hall, workshops, panels, and speakers; lunch for exhibitors; and a closing reception. In the case that the Archives Bazaar can not be held physically, it will be held virtually if USC Libraries, the coordinator, and the LAAS Chairperson determine that it is feasible to do so. This event is to remain free and open to the public. An exhibit curated from LAAS member collections may also be organized in conjunction with the Archives Bazaar.

- USC Libraries, as resources allow:
  - Provide a venue for the Archives Bazaar, including any virtual conferencing capabilities.
  - Logistical and marketing support for all Archives Bazaar programming.
  - The exhibitor lunch and reception as well as honorarium for speakers.
  - In-person venue and/or support for an online exhibition platform.
  - Contribute to programming development and implementation and other thematic elements of the bazaar.
- LAAS
  - LAAS membership and Executive Committee are responsible for developing and coordinating the programming including choosing panel topics and participants, in collaboration with USC Libraries and the coordinator.
  - LAAS membership will make up the exhibitors in the visitor hall.
  - LAAS membership will promote the event to their respective communities.
  - LAAS membership will curate, interpret, and lend objects to any associated exhibition.
- **Collaborative Ad-Hoc Projects**

USC Libraries and LAAS collaborate on projects that benefit USC, the LAAS membership, and the greater Los Angeles community. These include grant funded projects such as Institute of Museum and Library Services resident archivist programs, California Humanities *Monomania L.A.* video series, National Endowment for the Humanities community histories digitization project, and several initiatives with the California State Library.

  - USC Libraries
    - Administers grants, ensures reporting to sponsors, and develops, in partnership with appropriate LAAS membership or Executive

Committee, grant-funded collaborative projects and actively participates in collaborations with partner institutions and LAAS members.

- LAAS
  - LAAS members participate in and provide expertise for LAAS collaborative projects and special events including training, workshops, presentations and related activities.
  - LAAS Executive Committee actively solicits membership to contribute appropriate expertise, collections access, and other such support as may be useful in developing grant-supported programs.
- **Maintenance of the LAAS Institutional Archives**
  - USC Libraries
    - For the duration that USC Libraries are the host institution, the LAAS institutional archives will be included in the University Archives and deposits will be scheduled between the LAAS Coordinator and the University Archivist.
  - LAAS
    - Materials for LAAS archives will be collected and organized by the LAAS Coordinator before being deposited into the University Archives. These records will include both born-digital and paper-based material.