

Preserving History: A New Role for the California Judicial Center Library

BY FRANCES M. JONES

Some day soon, an interested reader may be able to pull off the shelf a biography of the longest-serving California Supreme Court justice, Stanley Mosk (1912-2001). The reader will savor the details of Mosk's life and the times in which he lived, but will probably have little sense of the "raw material" that went into the production of the book. Nor will the reader be aware of the considerable efforts that went into preserving and organizing that material. But, without the archiving of Mosk's letters, records, photographs, and ephemera, the biographer's task would prove impossible.

The California Supreme Court Historical Society realizes that the production of history starts with its preservation, and is committed to making available to scholars and others the raw material necessary to tell the story of the state's highest court. In fulfillment of its mission to preserve the legal and judicial history of California, the Society has helped to launch the California Judicial Center Library on a new path, as an archival repository of Supreme Court justices' papers. In 2003 and 2004, the Society awarded the Judicial Center Library grants totaling \$37,500 to build the Archive, grants made possible by the generous donations of thousands of California attorneys and judges.

Designed specifically and primarily to be a repository for the personal papers, records, and other memorabilia of members of the Court, the Archives now holds papers donated by the families of Chief Justice Niles C. Searls and Justices Otto M. Kaus and Frank C. Newman, as well as Justice Stanley Mosk. Additionally, the Archive is the repository for books and other memorabilia belonging to the late Bernard E. Witkin, the foremost expert on California law.

The California Judicial Center Library is the successor to the libraries of the California Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal, First Appellate District. Library staff provides legal and other research and information services to both courts, and to the staff of the Administrative Office of the Courts. CJCL's collection numbers approximately 250,000 volumes, in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Sacramento. The main library collection is located in the Hiram Johnson State Building, San Francisco, in a 45,000 square foot facility. In order to build the Archives, more than 6,000 square feet of the library were redesigned to provide the necessary climate control and security for the collections.

The CJCL's commitment to develop a comprehen-



Archives staff members Patrick Worrell, Pamela Williams, and Andrea Hinding peruse items from the Stanley Mosk Collection, donated by Justice Mosk's family to the California Judicial Center Library.

sive archive of Supreme Court justices' papers began in earnest in 2001 when Justice Richard M. Mosk and the Mosk family donated Justice Stanley Mosk's books; two hundred and fifty boxes of personal and professional papers; records (including those from Mosk's judicial and political campaigns); approximately two thousand photographs; and other memorabilia, including scrapbooks, albums, and awards, to the Library.

Although the Mosk family's invaluable gift gave the Archives its largest collection covering the longest span of history, it was not the first. That distinction goes to the family of Chief Justice Niles C. Searls (1825-1907), which made its gift in 1998. Prior to donating the collection, descendant Gwynne L. Searls and Thomas Brom gathered and organized law books, personal papers, and business records belonging to Chief Justice Searls and Fred Searls. The collection first resided in the family home in Nevada City; now that it has come to the Archives, pieces of the collection are on display in the Ceremonial Chambers in the Earl Warren State Court Building. The earliest records in the Archives come from the Searls Collection and date back to 1855. Some of the books in the collection date back to 1840, a decade before California gained its statehood.

As the Archive began to take shape with the Mosk and Searls gifts, it established three major goals for its development:

- Acquiring and collecting gifts of personal papers, records and other memorabilia of all current and former members of the Court;
- Preserving, organizing, and indexing the collections;
- Providing access to the collections for scholars of California history, especially its judicial and legal history, and political and social scientists.

With the generous grants from the Society, the Judicial Center Library wasted no time in working to

make the Mosk and Searls collections available to researchers. The CJCL hired consulting archivist Andrea Hinding, Professor Emeritus from the University of Minnesota and a Fellow and former President of the Society of American Archivists. Professor Hinding began visiting the archives three times a year, to review and organize the Mosk collection and provide staff training. Once Professor Hinding had trained all library staff members in basic archival processes and procedures, staff members were given the option to add archives functions to their other job assignments, and Martha Noble, Pamela Williams, and Patrick Worrell elected to do so. Working on the collections part-time, these staff members have processed and preserved more than three hundred boxes of the personal papers in the Searls and Mosk collections, and processing of the Searls papers is complete.

The goal of growing the Archive was furthered in 2002 and 2003, when gifts were received from the families of Justices Otto Kaus (1920-1996) and Frank C. Newman (1917-1996) respectively. Bernard E. Witkin served as Reporter of Decisions (1940-1949). His contributions to California legal scholarship are unparalleled, and his portrait, desk, and typewriter are among the objects given to the Archives through the generosity of Mrs. Alba Witkin.

To further the goal of providing access to the collections, the Archives is also working to produce crucial finding aids and databases covering the materials in the collections. Finding aids are descriptive tools that are produced by archives to establish control over their records. A preliminary finding aid for the Stanley Mosk Collection has been developed for use in the Archives, and the final version will be available to be published in late 2004.

Databases have been built to provide access to the contents of the speeches, publications, papers, and records in this collection. These databases are currently available in the Archives, and will be available via the Web early in 2005. Each database provides unique access to the contents of a collection. The speeches database, for example, permits a researcher to locate a speech by title, date, location, and organization or audience. Additional notes inform the researcher about newspaper clippings, programs, and correspondence related to the speech. The publications database identifies each of Justice Mosk's publications by date, title, co-author (if any), and publisher, and provides access to publications that are not indexed in standard periodical indexes. In addition, there is a database that lists the working inventory of all of his papers and records. This database identifies, by folder title and location, each of the approximately fifteen hundred folders of personal papers and business records con-



Among the accoutrements found on the desk of Bernard Witkin are his typewriter, a favored pair of glasses, and a sign that reads "Everybody is Entitled to My Opinion."

tained in the Stanley Mosk Collection.

Finding aids and databases will be available for the Otto M. Kaus and Frank C. Newman collections in 2005. Books in the Stanley Mosk and Bernard E. Witkin collections are accessible through the library's online catalog. Currently, this catalog is delivered via court informational networks; a Web-accessible version will be launched in early 2005.

Archives collections provide invaluable records of and insight into the work of the justices of the California Supreme Court and their opinions that have "helped shape our world, the society in which they lived, and the forces that touched them." (Hon. Malcolm Lucas, "Message from the Chief Justice, 1994 *California Supreme Court Historical Society Yearbook* v.) The Society's mission to preserve the Court's history has been advanced by establishment of the Archives at the California Judicial Center Library, and its generous and timely financial support are deeply appreciated, especially in this era of shrinking public resources.

Frances M. Jones (JD, MA) is Director of Library Services at the California Judicial Center Library. The Archives actively solicits additional gifts, both archival and financial, for future expansion and development.

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