As Director of Heritage Resources and on behalf of my staff, I’d like to extend a warm welcome to our new President Sabah Randhawa, as well as the numerous faculty, staff and students who are joining the campus community this year. Any introduction to this area must begin with an acknowledgment of the Lhaq’temish—the Lummi People—who are the original inhabitants of the northern coast of Washington State and the southern coast of British Columbia. WWU is situated on traditional Lummi land.

For newcomers eager to learn more about their new home and workplace, Western Libraries holds vast documentation—including photographs, manuscripts, maps and digital collections—related to regional, community and campus history. The stewardship of these archival and special collections resides with the Division of Heritage Resources which encompasses University Archives & Records Management, Special Collections, and the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies (CPNWS).

In these pages you will learn of numerous resources available in all three units that introduce you Western’s collective history and support teaching, learning and research. For example, Special Collections holds a large collection of photographs documenting campus history, as well as the Klipsun yearbook and the Western Front, our beloved student newspaper, dating from Western’s inception as a Normal School in 1899. University Archives is the legal repository for Western’s institutional records which document the growth and development of our campus and its administrative history. These holdings include the original Board of Trustees minutes, the records created by our Presidents and Provosts, evidence of student activities, and drawings and plans for campus buildings. CPNWS holds manuscript collections and organizational and business records documenting the campus and its relationships with the broader community, including a large collection of oral history interviews with former and current faculty and staff of Western.

All members of the campus and broader community are invited to visit Heritage Resources’ facilities, which are located in Wilson Library and the Archives Building on south campus. Please also join us for our upcoming distinguished lecturer, Western’s former Sports Information Director Paul Madison, who will be speaking about Carver Memories—a project to document Western’s athletic history—on Tuesday, Jan. 17, 2017 at noon. We hope to see you there.

Yours, sincerely,
Elizabeth Joffrion, Director
Western's Evolving Leadership: The Presidents of WWU

The recent election reminds us that colleges and universities also experience changes in leadership, which often impact the institution’s faculty, student body and curriculum. The records of Western’s past presidents—preserved in the units comprising Heritage Resources—reveal the history of previous administrations and also unveil pieces of our community, state and national stories.

Edward T. Mathes (1899-1914) was Western’s first president, arriving from Idaho in 1899, just ten years after Washington received statehood. All of Western’s first faculty and students came from outside the state. George W. Nash (1914-1922) followed, and during his tenure enrollment skyrocketed from 743 students to 1373. Western’s third president—Dwight B. Waldo—served only one year (1922-1923), after which he returned to Western State Normal School in Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Our fourth president—Charles Henry Fisher (1923-1939)—was a transformative figure in Western’s history. He skillfully navigated the challenges of the Great Depression, overseeing the first comprehensive master plan and a major curriculum expansion. In 1935 he was accused of being a Communist by local townspeople who successfully lobbied Governor Clarence D. Martin for his dismissal. Fisher Fountain in WWU’s Red Square is named for him.

William Wade Haggard (1939-1959) built on Fisher’s legacy by expanding Western’s academic programming to include Bachelors and Masters of Education degrees. He also oversaw the growth of the physical plant and presided over the biggest fluctuation in student enrollment resulting from World War II (from a low of 418 students to a high of 1557).

The 1960s saw several presidents at the helm: James L. Jarrett (1959-1964), Harvey C. Bunke (1965-1967), and Charles J. Flora (1967-1975). At that time there was greater emphasis on teacher training and several cluster colleges emerged. Enrollment grew from 3500 students to almost 10,000, bringing a large influx of new faculty. The turbulence of the 1960s continued into the early 1970s and was complicated by a major recession which led to budget cuts and a reduction in force.

Paul J. Olscamp (1975-1982) sought to re-make Western after the turbulent 1960s and 1970s by ending the All-College Senate and establishing separate faculty, staff and student boards. It was during Olscamp’s term that the institution became Western Washington University. The following two presidents—G. Robert Ross (1983-1987) and Kenneth Mortimer (1988-1993)—were both successful lobbyists committed to raising financial support through the Western Foundation. Mortimer also increased the diversity of faculty, staff and students, and sought more faculty involvement in governance.

Karen W. Morse (1993-2008) broke through the glass ceiling to become Western’s first woman president. She encouraged innovative teaching practices, increased faculty-student research collaborations, and oversaw another major construction boom. She retired just as the next recession took hold, leaving Bruce Shepard (2008-2016) to guide us through another challenging time. He secured solid Legislative budget support and built on the fundraising efforts of his predecessors by leading a successful capital campaign that raised $62 million.

On August 1, 2016, Western welcomed Sabah U. Randhawa to serve as our fourteenth president. We look forward to his leadership as we write the next chapter of Western’s history together.
One Brick at a Time: Reconstructing the History of Western’s Built Environment

The repositories that make up Heritage Resources have substantial material documenting over a century of Western’s history as an educational institution—but what about the history of Western’s physical and built environment? It may be easy to take for granted the extent of our campus which now stretches from one end of Sehome Hill to the other, but records in the University Archives reveal how this area was expanded over many decades to incorporate adjoining neighborhoods, roads, fields, and even farms.

When the Board of Trustees held its first meeting in July of 1895, there were no school buildings in which to meet so they gathered in a downtown Bellingham store owned by Trustee R. C. Higginson. The first order of business was, as one might expect, to plan for the construction of a “Main Building” (our familiar Old Main). With amazing speed, and despite delays including a budget crisis in the state legislature and a contractor lawsuit that went all the way to the State Supreme Court, the Main Building opened just four years later, providing space for the school’s first classes in 1899.

As the school grew decade by decade, the physical campus also grew piece by piece. The construction of Wilson Library in 1927 necessitated the closure of a section of Cedar Street that used to run parallel to the building’s main north door entrance, and displaced four homes that were ultimately auctioned off and either moved or razed. The part of High Street that runs through campus used to be lined with homes, and houses also dotted the landscape extending southward from Bond Hall down to Buchanan Towers. Where Harrington Field is today, horses grazed as late as the 1960s.

Property acquisition records in University Archives allow researchers not only to reconstruct—or rather, deconstruct—campus expansion, but also to study the evolution of a neighborhood in relation to factors such as the economy, demographics, urban growth and social change. Staff are working on a series of then-and-now images which include historic photographs coupled with images of the same locations at later dates. You can check out what we’ve done on Heritage Resources’ Tumblr site.
Among Heritage Resources’ rich and varied holdings documenting Western’s history are personal reflections and reminiscences told through oral history interviews. Collections at the Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, for example, include audio recordings and transcripts from the WWU Centennial Oral History Project, which sought to document campus history through a series of interviews with former faculty and staff. This collection provides telling insights into a variety of aspects of university history, including the administrations of different presidents (interviewees include past presidents Bunke, Jarrett, Flora and Olscamp), and the evolution of specific departments, programs and colleges.

Several interviews discuss the history of Fairhaven College, the College of Ethnic Studies, Huxley College of the Environment and the formation of the College of Fine and Performing Arts. Researchers can also find rich information about the campus built environment, cultural change at Western (including student protests during the 1960s), and the individual journeys, experiences and perspectives of members of the campus community.

A small selection of interviews with women faculty members can be accessed online as part of the Washington Women’s History Consortium digital collection. For more information about the larger collection, please visit the online collection guide or contact CPNWS Archivist Ruth Steele at Ruth.Steele@wwu.edu or (360) 650-7747.

The WWU Centennial Oral Histories are a tremendous resource for teaching and learning about campus history as well as the nature, methods and significance of oral history. Researchers interested in oral histories may also wish to explore interviews housed with Special Collections that have been gathered as part of an ongoing oral history program initiated in 2003. More information about the Special Collection oral history program (and access to interview transcripts) can be found online as part of Heritage Resources Digital Collections.

| Voices of Western: The WWU Centennial Oral History Project |

We would like to thank our volunteers and student employees for all they do in support of Heritage Resources. We would also like to thank the many individuals, families, and organizations who have made generous monetary gifts and contributions of collection materials. To donate to Heritage Resources, please email Elizabeth.Joffrion@wwu.edu or phone 360-650-3283. Donations can also be made online or by mail to the Western Foundation, MS-9034, Western Washington University, 516 High St, Bellingham, WA 98225-9034. Please designate your contribution to Western Libraries and identify “Heritage Resources” as the program you wish to support.