

Headline:
History Provides a Road Map to the Future

Dear [],

In December 2005, Las Vegas Mayor Oscar B. Goodman presided over the sealing of 2 time capsules.

2005 was the 100th anniversary of Las Vegas' founding as a city, and the time capsules contain objects commemorating the first 100 years of Las Vegas history. Scheduled to be opened in the year 2105, the capsules will preserve a few artifacts of the 20th century for historians of the 22nd century.

Not to steal any of the Mayor's thunder, but the UNLV Library works every day to document and commemorate the history of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada. Creating our own time capsules, you might say. But no one will have to wait 100 years or excavate through tons of concrete to access that fascinating and important information.

In fact, at this moment, with just a few clicks of your mouse, you could have at your fingertips the world's most exhaustive and extensive collection of Las Vegas and Southern Nevada history.

One item in the 100th anniversary time capsules, for example, is a historic map of downtown Las Vegas. But our UNLV Special Collections Library has an entire department dedicated to preserving Southern Nevada and Las Vegas history in maps. The collection contains hundreds of digitized maps spanning centuries of the region's history and development.

Aside from simply being intriguing to browse through, the maps contained in this collection are useful in so many ways. For example:

- A third-grade teacher holds her class spellbound as she tells of John C. Fremont and Kit Carson braving a savage wilderness on map-making expeditions in the 1840's. She's able to show the students an image of the resulting map that served as the guide for thousands of early western settlers. This map was drawn by Fremont's own hand in 1845, and has been preserved forever by the UNLV Special Collections Library.
- A hydrologist utilizes the Library's maps of past geological surveys to formulate plans for averting a looming water-shortage crisis in Southern Nevada.
- An amateur prospector uses the Library's old Goldfield mining surveys to plan this weekend's dig (Yes, there's still some gold in them thar hills!).

Subhead:
Much of Our History May be Lost

Though our collection is impressive, there is so much more that should be added. The history of Southern Nevada and Las Vegas weaves such a rich and colorful tapestry that we feel compelled to preserve as much of it as possible, both for present and future generations.

But there are many threads yet missing from that tapestry. In spite of the fact that our Library boasts the world's largest and most comprehensive collection of Southern Nevada and Las Vegas history, the collection is incomplete.

And here's the real shame of it: there are countless artifacts, documents, photos, films and oral histories just waiting to be preserved and made available to the public. But we just can't do it all because we simply don't have the funds.

Multiple rounds of budget cuts have forced the library to reduce staff and eliminate many services. In fact, if the currently planned government budget cuts are carried out, we'll be facing a cumulative total budget cut of more than 32% in less than three years.

Subhead:

The Cuts Have Been Devastating...

We now purchase only half the number of books annually that we once did. The processing of many special collections documents is on hold. And the backlog of valuable historical documents continues to grow, awaiting the availability of funds to process and digitize them.

Many of these items are in fragile condition. Time is their enemy – and it's ours, too. If we fail to preserve and digitize these precious, one-of-a-kind artifacts, they'll continue to deteriorate, and eventually be lost forever.

And of course, history is always in the making. We owe it to future generations to not only preserve our past, but also our present, which will soon be a part of the flow of history. With today's modern technology, we have the ability to preserve and present a complete and comprehensive history to future generations. Shame on us if we fail to do so simply because we couldn't muster the resources.

Subhead:

Will You Help Us Preserve History?

I know that you value higher education. I know that you understand the crucial importance of preserving knowledge and making it freely available to all. And I know you will agree that the intriguing and important history of the Las Vegas area deserves to be preserved for all time.

And so I'm confident and grateful that you – along with our many other friends and supporters – will help us weather this financial crisis. It's our duty to preserve history for

our children, and for their children. We must not allow a mere lack of funds to rob future generations of their heritage.

Thank you for supporting the preservation and sharing of the most precious commodity on earth – human knowledge.

Sincerely,
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P.S.

Thanks so much for your help. For being a friend and supporter of the UNLV Libraries, you'll be recognized on our annual donor honor roll. We'll send you complementary copies of our newsletter, *Connections*, and you'll also be receiving invitations to special Library and UNLV events. Just small gestures of gratitude for your friendship and support during such difficult times.

Possible envelope teasers:

To grasp the future, we must embrace the past.

What lies ahead is determined by what has passed. Losing touch with our history threatens our future.

Our future is threatened by losing touch with our past.

We can't be prepared for the future without understanding our past.

Possible sidebars:

"...one of the most disastrous cuts in America's history to higher education..." Neal Smatresk, UNLV President.

"I worry about a library without books. I am concerned about running out of space for important collections that document the history of this fabulous region. I worry about what it means to live in a state where too few are willing to invest in an education infrastructure for itself, its work force, its citizens, and its children." Patricia Iannuzzi, Dean of University Libraries.

"During my five years at UNLV, I have been humbled and overwhelmed by the outpouring of support for the Libraries from so many in the Las Vegas community. I am optimistic that as Las Vegas rebounds, our many friends and supporters will continue to work with us to build the research library that our university, community, and state need to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future." Patricia Iannuzzi, Dean of University Libraries.