

I'm a first-year MA student in Applied English here at Cal Poly Humboldt, with a central focus on local history. This semester, I had the incredible opportunity to intern with Special Collections, where a few weeks of close training under Hannah culminated in the chance to assess and inventory six boxes of material from the Emerald Creek Committee (ECC), a local watershed and old-growth redwood activist group that was once very active in Humboldt County and played a key role in securing the 1978 congressional expansion of Redwood National Park. The first three boxes had suffered serious fire damage, with many pages fused together by smoke and water. I spent some time carefully triaging and scanning (as well as doing some preservation work to make sure they survived the scanner) these fragile, brittle materials. The other three boxes, on the other hand, were a treasure trove of totally undamaged documents-- meeting minutes, all kinds of typed and handwritten correspondence, field notes, annotated maps, flyers-- some really exciting stuff that brought the group's legacy to life.

I also had the chance to speak with Steve Madrone, one of ECC's main organizers in the 1970s. He offered a wealth of context and fun anecdotes, helping me connect the dots between names scrawled in cursive and faces in B&W photographs. His insights helped me start envisioning how to organize this vast, huge collection into an accessible finding aid, or at least a roadmap for future students to begin that process.

One of the most rewarding parts of the internship was helping install our group exhibit in the BIG case on the first floor of the library (a big deal!). I learned so much about art handling and curatorial work, and how to write blurbs that are appropriately public-facing (a useful skill, as I have trouble with concision), and my co-interns were incredibly generous with their time and help throughout this process. We all made a great team.

All this hands-on experience has helped me bridge my academic interests in local history with practical archival work, and has confirmed that I want to pursue further research in the archives for my MA project. I'm so incredibly grateful to the Special Collections staff for trusting me with such meaningful materials and offering such a fantastic mentorship experience. I'd say this internship has greatly benefitted my practical skillset as well as my sense of connection to this place I call home.

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