**Learn About The Mt. SAC Digital History Project! Episode 174**

00:00:00 **Michael**

It's really interesting to look at this picture and it's not just traditionally college-aged students going to this nursing program, it's a wide range of ages. And it's nice to see that the community college experience has always been that we're serving a range of ages and adults who are coming back to further their education, and that's always been part of the college's mission.

00:00:22 **Christina**

Hi, I'm Christina Barsi.

00:00:23 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, and you're listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:00:27 **Christina**

Our mission is to find ways to keep your ear to the ground, so to speak - by bringing to you the activities and events you may not have time to attend, the resources on campus you might want to know more about, the interesting things your colleagues are creating and the many ways we can continue to better help and guide our students.

00:00:44 **Sun**

We bring to you the voices of Mt. SAC, from the classroom to completion.

00:00:48 **Speaker 1**

And I know I'm going to achieve my goals, and I know people here are going to help me to do it.

00:00:53 **Speaker 2**

She is a sociology major and she's transferring to Cal Poly, Pomona! Psychology major, English major ...

00:01:00 **Sun**

From transforming part-time into full-time-

00:01:02 **Speaker 1**

I really liked the time that we spend with Julie about how to write a CV and a cover letter.

00:01:09 **Christina**

Or just finding time to soak in the campus.

00:01:12 **Speaker 1**

To think of the natural environment around us as a library.

00:01:14 **Christina**

We want to keep you informed and connected to all things Mt. SAC, but most importantly, we want to keep you connected with each other. I'm Christina Barsi, Mt. SAC alumni and producer of this podcast.

00:01:25 **Sun**

And I'm Sun Ezzell, Learning Assistance Faculty and Professional Learning Academy Coordinator.

00:01:31 **Christina**

And this is the Magic Mountie Podcast.

00:01:38 **Sun**

Welcome back to the podcast. This is your host Sun Ezzell. In today's episode, I talk with Mt. SAC librarians, Hong Guo, Jamie Castaneda, and Michael Emery about the digital history project, a growing online collection of historical photos of the campus and community.

00:01:53 **Sun**

In our conversation, Hong, Jamie and Michael discussed some of their favorite historical photos they've encountered so far, as well as the origins and future of the digital history project, and how the community can get involved. Enjoy!

00:02:06 **Sun**

Well, welcome back to the podcast. This is your host, Sun Ezzell, and I'm so excited today to welcome Mt. SAC librarians Hong, Jamie, and Michael to talk with us today about the Digital History Project. Welcome to the podcast.

00:02:27 **Sun**

Let's go ahead and have you all introduce yourselves, if you would and tell a little bit about your work at Mt. SAC.

00:02:37 **Hong**

My name is Hong Guo, I am the online learning librarian. My job duties involve providing online instruction, research support, and other services online.

00:02:50 **Michael**

I'm Michael, I'm an adjunct librarian at Mt. SAC and I work at the information desk, answering reference questions, do research appointments, teach the library workshops, and a variety of other projects like this one.

00:03:02 **Jamie**

And my name is Jamie Weber Castaneda. I am an adjunct librarian as well and work as at the reference desk, teach workshops, and do collection development.

00:03:10 **Sun**

Thank you so much. Let's go ahead and jump in and talk a little bit about the project that you're all working on now, the Digital History Project. I was wondering if you could just tell us a little bit what is the Digital History Project, and a little bit about what's the history of this project, how did it come about? What's the story behind it?

00:03:28 **Hong**

So, when I was first hired as a full-time librarian here in 2013, I looked on the Mt. SAC website but I couldn't find any information about the college history. During the first year, we had the new faculty seminar. In one of those meetings, we were shown this movie called Pioneer Beginnings about the college, and then also, came across a book called Mount San Antonio College, the First 50 years, which the library has copies.

00:03:56 **Hong**

Both of the video and the book showed the college has a rich history and it's really interesting, and I thought more people should know about it. So, back then, the library chair, which was Leanne Garrett and I went to the marketing department to talk about having this Digital History Project started, but we didn't have any funding.

00:04:17 **Hong**

So, fortunately, last year, fall 2022, we got some funding from VP of Student Services, Dr. Audrey Yamagata-Noji, she gave us some equipment money and we applied for exceptional services. So, that's how the project got started.

00:04:36 **Michael**

We got some of the images from the marketing department. Originally, we thought we were going to be getting photo prints, but it turns out that these are negatives from all the way back into the fifties. And so, we've been kind of starting with the oldest materials first because they're old and getting them digitized more quickly is a priority.

00:04:55 **Michael**

And we've been slowly working our way through digitizing the materials. Unfortunately, scanning negatives is a significantly more involved process than scanning prints. And so, it's been a little more slow than we like, but we are keeping up with our plans. It's just taking a little more work.

00:05:12 **Sun**

So, for listeners who might not be familiar, can you share a little bit more like what does that mean, digitization? Like what are you starting with, and then what do you end up with at the end?

00:05:22 **Michael**

So, when we are scanning something like a print, we would want to use a flatbed scanner, which isn't that different necessarily than taking a picture say with like your phone. Just a flatbed scanner lets us have a flatter surface.

00:05:35 **Michael**

There's less indirect light - if you've ever taken a picture with your phone camera before, you end up with like all the different lights are reflecting off at a different angles. A flatbed scanner lets you just get a much cleaner image, it's flatter, there's one source of light.

00:05:49 **Michael**

And it just is going to do a better job in terms of all the reflections. But with a print, that works pretty straightforward, it scans really quickly and you're done. With negatives, you can't shine light on it, you have to shine light through it. So, you need a negative scanner where the light is coming through the image.

00:06:07 **Michael**

Additionally, a print is a finished product, so when you're scanning a print, you're scanning a finished product. But negatives, just like in the real world, a negative isn't a finished product, you create a print from the negative. And so, in the same way when you're scanning a negative, it's a lot more involved.

00:06:22 **Michael**

So, where scanning a print takes less than 30 seconds, it can take five, six minutes to scan a negative. Just setting it up, making sure the angles are right, getting everything set up and it just has to scan much slower because it's scanning at a much higher rate.

00:06:35 **Michael**

You know, if you think of a 35 millimeter film, if anyone remembers what those are, it's very small. You wouldn't want an image that size, so you've got to enlarge it, which requires the scanner working at a much slower rate.

00:06:46 **Sun**

Thank you. For all of us non scanning, non-photography folks, that's really helpful to be able to imagine like what's involved in a project like this. Could you share a little bit like what kinds of negatives are you looking at? Like what are the photos of? Are they people, are they places at Mt. SAC? Help us to imagine a little bit about that.

00:07:05 **Jamie**

We have a variety of images. A lot of them were promotional photographs done in the early days of the college. So, we have everything from photographs of construction of the original buildings to student activities and some classroom views as well. So, at the moment, we're still working on from the founding of the school to probably about the mid-fifties, mid-late fifties.

00:07:27 **Sun**

That sounds really fun to see those old photographs. Are there any like interesting or unexpected images that kind of stick with you that you've discovered in the course of working on the project?

00:07:39 **Michael**

I think the two categories that stand out the most to me are some of the shots of the campus as a whole. A range of photos from like the mid-fifties taken from the hill that's kitty corners Southwest where Temple and Grand meet, there's a big kind of hill there, and there's some pictures that were taken there looking back on the campus with Mount San Antonio, Mount Baldi in the background, covered in snow.

00:08:02 **Michael**

And then there's another shot that's like an aerial view that's literally an aerial view. It's taken from a plane, you can see parts of the plane from the shot. So, those are really interesting to see the campus as a whole from back then, and how limited access it was back then.

00:08:14 **Michael**

Grand didn't exist going up over the hill. You had to access it from Pomona. And then the other is just all the students. It's really interesting to see the outfits of students, what students were wearing in the fifties, and the range from, "Oh, I could see someone wearing that today," to "Wow, that really looks like it's from the 1950s."

00:08:30 **Sun**

That sounds really fun to go through and make those discoveries. Hong, did you want to jump in too?

00:08:35 **Hong**

Yeah, I have a few photos that I really like and some of them, we gave them away as postcards during the winter events. So, one of them was the world's smallest post office on campus. It's 10 by 12. Back then, it was really cute.

00:08:51 **Hong**

And another one, it's called Farm Day from the fifties, and I showed that picture to a student at the library workshop, and she started noticing, "Oh, this student shouldn't be smoking because it's Farm Day with small, young kids." And then this student that I'm showing the photo to said, "Oh, they're wearing interesting pattern skirts." So, it was very interesting.

00:09:19 **Sun**

Sounds like some neat conversations to be had just about the changes in the campus, but also campus culture and our society at large as well.

00:09:28 **Hong**

Yeah.

00:09:30 **Sun**

So, those sound like really cool postcards. I'm wondering like what are the opportunities for folks to get to see some of these photos that you're talking about?

00:09:39 **Hong**

So, the postcards, I still have some, but we have the online collection where folks can see all these photos. We'll share the link at the end.

00:09:49 **Sun**

Great. And we'll share that link in the show notes so folks have easy access. I think I've seen the tiny post office but I definitely want to see it again after you shared about it. So, some interesting opportunities to have conversations about, I don't know, just how things have changed over the years and maybe how they haven't changed over the years.

00:10:08 **Hong**

Yeah, Jamie must have some favorite photos too.

00:10:11 **Jamie**

I don't know, I think some of the photographs that showed how the curriculum has changed, we have a lot of photographs of home economics and home at Proctor's House, which wouldn't happen now - kind of focusing on how to keep the home, how to cook, flower arranging, all of this sort of thing.

00:10:28 **Jamie**

And the house is essentially, a model house where it shows almost exclusively female students cleaning the house, hanging out in the house as if it's kind of their home. It's a really odd photo shoot, but not all the curriculum has changed, but you can see the makeup of the classes, business classes that are largely male with maybe one female student, a lot of agriculture, which I think was a very important aspect of the college curriculum at the time.

00:10:54 **Jamie**

So, a lot of things have changed. Some things I would have to say I'm glad to see those changes. I'm glad to see the strides we've made in the last 75 years.

00:11:04 **Michael**

I think another set of photos that I think is really interesting from the fifties is some of the shots of the nursing programs that shows a diverse range of ages in terms of the student population, lots of adults coming back, definitely primarily women entering the nurses, but there is at least one photo with a male nurse, even in the fifties.

00:11:23 **Michael**

But it's really interesting to look at this picture and it's not just traditionally college-aged students going to this nursing program, it's a wide range of ages. And it's nice to see the community college experience has always been that we're serving a range of ages and adults who are coming back to further their education, and that's always been part of the college's mission.

00:11:43 **Sun**

Thank you so much. Those sounds so interesting. Like we could have a lot of really great conversations and now I'm like ready to click the link and go to the online ... you said that there's a way for folks to be able to see some of these photos.

00:11:53 **Sun**

You're going through this collection of negatives, right? And you're in the forties and fifties, so you have a ways to go on the project. Tell us a little bit about like what's the vision, like when we finish, then here's what we're going to have or is it like an ongoing project?

00:12:13 **Hong**

It is ongoing. So, for right now, the immediate goal we really want to take care of is historical photos. So, the college history and heritage is preserved, properly preserved and people who know the information about these photos are still available to help us identify the information in the photo.

00:12:34 **Hong**

And it's really an ongoing project to include current history of the college. We want to get students involved, so they are telling the college history. And long-term, we're thinking about doing sabbatical reports and also archive those old Mountaineer newspapers.

00:12:54 **Hong**

We would like to promote the collection so to increase use of the collection. So, integrate the collection into classroom, into curriculum and then to also get the community involved to contribute to tell the richer history of the college and the community.

00:13:15 **Sun**

That sounds really amazing and that you have this opportunity right now to do this work and this academic scholarship as part of the Mt. SAC community, and the wider community as well. And it sounds like you're getting some interest already from students and faculty and community members.

00:13:34 **Hong**

Yes, we get feedback from a variety of students, community members, faculty, managers, staff.

00:13:41 **Sun**

Can you share a little bit about like what kind of response are you getting? Are folks saying "Hey, I've got photos from the fifties and sixties, I'd like to share," or "Hey, I know who that person is in that photo from 70 years ago?"

00:13:54 **Michael**

Well, we've had two open houses, one for the campus community, one opened up to the public. We kind of thought of it as a little bit of a soft launch. We're still trying to grow the collection, it's still fairly small compared to even the materials we have waiting to be digitized, and we know that there's a lot of more materials out there.

00:14:11 **Michael**

The collection we have of these negatives that we've been talking about, primarily is from the fifties, and then there's a whole range of negatives from the seventies, and then more negatives right around the year 2000. But there's still some surprising gaps, like there doesn't seem to be a lot of negatives from the sixties or any from the eighties, and nineties, or anything more recent.

00:14:31 **Michael**

And of course, more recent things would possibly be things taken with digital cameras, so boring digital items And we're definitely interested if there are places on campus that have large collections of photos or negatives, we would definitely be interested in talking to you about having some or all of those materials added to the collection because we definitely want those to be be representative of the campus's whole both in terms of the entire history of the college.

00:14:55 **Michael**

Because college history is also today, not just 70 years ago, but also, we have a big diverse campus with lots of different things going on and lots of different departments and we would definitely like to get all of that represented in this collection.

00:15:08 **Sun**

That's very cool. And I think earlier, you mentioned just those opportunities for students to get involved in telling the story of the Mt. SAC community. And I don't know if this is getting ahead of things, but do you have any ideas of how students might be able to get involved in the future?

00:15:25 **Hong**

So, for this, we just got approved for exceptional services for spring and summer, so one of our goals is to collect photos from student centers on campus, and later on, we would want an opportunity for students to contribute photos.

00:15:45 **Sun**

That sounds really amazing and it sounds like since you're getting the project underway, you'll be able to be really intentional and thinking about in addition to the photos, what maybe identifying information needs to be included so that when folks are looking at the photos 50 or 70 years from now, what are they going to want to know? What are they going to be curious about? How can we include that information so that the materials are useful to folks in the future?

00:16:12 **Jamie**

Yeah, I have to say one of the things, one of the challenges that we have is the lack of information about a lot of the images that we're digitizing. Often, there are images of administration, faculty, events, and there's not a lot of information for us to go on.

00:16:27 **Jamie**

So, we might be able to identify the people but we don't know what the event is or if it's a commencement, a convocation, whatever it is. So, that is something for people to think about in the present when they're taking photographs, when they're donating photographs or negatives, it's just a photograph doesn't have a lot of research value if there's no accompanying information to go with it.

00:16:49 **Jamie**

So, we try to provide as much information as we can along with the image in the collection, but we can only include as much as we have. So, we're looking to hopefully help people provide that information and hope that they have information that we didn't receive with the images so that they can help us with more complete information.

00:17:09 **Hong**

So , I want to share a few feedback that we collected during the events. So, faculty said, "So much to learn, all the images look great, and I love history. I will be utilizing the photos for my classes." And a community member said, "Great way to connect with surrounding communities from a manager." This one says "Such a wealth of history for this great college. Preserving history is important."

00:17:35 **Hong**

And staff also provided feedback. They said "Preserving history is fun. Mt. SAC has always been a place for many opportunities for young students."

00:17:46 **Sun**

That's great, thank you so much for asking those questions so that folks can share their feedback. It sounds like there are so many ways that this project is important to the academic scholarship, and teaching and learning at the college as well as just kind of understanding our history as a college community, and as part of the larger community as well.

00:18:06 **Sun**

So, you shared a little bit about the link so that folks can take a peek and have access to some of the photos that have been digitized. Are you planning any future events for folks to get an opportunity? I think you mentioned maybe at the art studio. Could you share a little bit about that?

00:18:26 **Hong**

Yes, we are currently investigating the opportunity of having an exhibit of historical photos from the collection at the campus art gallery in the summer. But normally, the art gallery is not open in the summer.

00:18:41 **Sun**

But an opportunity for folks to come be together on campus to see the photos and maybe meet other folks from the community or from the campus who are also interested in history. That sounds really amazing.

00:18:55 **Sun**

So, thinking about our conversation today, thank you so much. I'm just wondering is there one takeaway that you would like for listeners to have from our conversation today?

00:19:07 **Michael**

We're really thankful for the opportunity to get started on this project, which again, was through a couple different funding sources. Hong mentioned one earlier, but also the exceptional service, we're really thankful and we've gotten that extended so that's helping us kind of get started. And we're definitely looking for other ways of continuing to fund this project.

00:19:25 **Michael**

We think this is important and valuable to the campus community and the wider community, and in order to keep it going, we need to have funding to keep it going.

00:19:34 **Hong**

Yeah, me too. I'm grateful to have the opportunity to work on this project and Trustee Chow came to one of the winter events and he actually advocated for the project at the last board meeting, the February board meeting. We're grateful.

00:19:51 **Hong**

So, for one takeaway, I would really like the campus community to learn about the online collection and use it for personal educational purposes and also, in any way anybody can to contribute because we really need funding. This needs to be an ongoing project so it needs to be funded by the college.

00:20:13 **Michael**

We've scanned about a thousand images so far. We have funding for the spring and summer to get another thousand images or so. We're hoping to get some of those from some of the student centers on campus. And just the negatives we still have to get scanned.

00:20:26 **Michael**

There's probably 10, 20,000 easily negatives yet to be scanned, and we know that there's other images on campus, whether they're negatives or prints or digital files. We know there's more and we would like to get all of that gathered together so that as we keep saying, the rich history of the college could be represented.

00:20:44 **Sun**

So, if folks are super excited listening to this, this and maybe they have photos they want to share or they just want to get in touch and learn more about the project, what's the best way for folks to get in touch with you? And we'll put that information in the show notes as well.

00:20:57 **Hong**

So, we have a team email, it's digitalhistory@mtsac.edu.

00:21:03 **Sun**

Perfect. We'll make sure to include that in the show notes so folks can connect with you if they'd like.

00:21:09 **Michael**

And we'll also include the URL in the show notes. I'm not sure saying the URL is useful. But we'll include the URL in the show notes so people can click and actually start looking at the materials that we've had a chance to upload.

00:21:20 **Hong**

I also want to add, we are currently developing assignments, integrating these photos so faculty can adapt for their class use.

00:21:30 **Sun**

That sounds great. Did you want to tell a little bit more about that or are they at the beginning stages?

00:21:35 **Hong**

So, at the winter event, some faculty, they shared information. They said we could have used photos as inspiration for creative writing. So, they're looking at photo, what do you think is going on? They can write stories about it, and some said they can use these photos for local history projects in their classes, and photo analysis assignment. So, how things change.

00:21:58 **Hong**

In the collection, we have I think at least two photos of new faculty. One is from the 1950, so that could be like over time, you could see changes, that could be a photo analysis assignment. And also, there was a fun idea mentioned to have students add now photos to the archive.

00:22:19 **Hong**

And then another suggestion is to use these photos for presentations about new programs, about first student enrollment activities.

00:22:30 **Sun**

Those all sound like really amazing teaching and learning experiences, and it's making me think when some of those things start to happen, let's connect again because we'd love to be able to share with the community about how folks are using the digital history project for teaching and learning on campus.

00:22:45 **Hong**

Yes.

00:22:45 **Sun**

Well, I want to thank everyone for the incredible work that you're doing on the digital history project and for taking the time out to stop and chat today for the podcast. I'm excited to click that link and start looking through some of the photos that you're sharing about, and I'm really looking forward to all the great conversations to come that arise out of the work that you're doing. So, thank you.

00:23:09 **Hong**

Thank you so much.

00:23:13 **Christina**

Thank you for listening to the Magic Mountie Podcast, and don't forget to share your favorite episodes.