



LAKE COUNTY FOREST PRESERVES
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Preservation, Restoration, Education and Recreation

DATE: August 31, 2015

MEMO TO: Craig Taylor, Chair
Education Cultural Resources and Public Affairs Committee

S. Michael Rummel, Chair
Finance and Administrative Committee

FROM: Alex Ty Kovach, Executive Director

SUBJECT: Policy Direction Regarding the Transfer of Ownership of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives and Supporting Endowment to the University of Illinois

RECOMMENDATION: Policy Direction is requested on whether to authorize staff to negotiate the transfer of ownership of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives, along with the supporting endowment, from the Lake County Forest Preserves' Lake County Discovery Museum to the library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

BACKGROUND: The Curt Teich Postcard Archives (Teich Archives) was established at the District's Lake County Discovery Museum in 1982 when the industrial archives of the Curt Teich Company of Chicago was accepted as a gift from Regensteiner Publishing Enterprises, Inc. Funding to support the Teich Archives today is approved annually through the District's annual operating budget, through private donations, and an endowment, which was established by the Curt Teich Foundation in 1998 to help support the long-term care of the collection. Prior to the establishment of the endowment, and for the first 13 years that the collection was owned by the District, all of the funding to support the Teich Archives was provided by the Curt Teich Foundation. The current balance of the endowment is \$522,019.92.

The Teich Archives, which includes nearly three million items, includes the industrial archives of the Curt Teich Company of Chicago (1898 – 1978), other significant postcard collections made by printers, artists and photographers, and related artifacts. The Teich Archives is recognized as the largest public collection of postcards and related materials in the world, and one of the premier collections of images from the twentieth century.

Over the past 33 years staff has developed the Teich Archives into a “national treasure” by furthering our understanding of the collection, and providing public access through exhibitions and research. During the planning for the relocation of the museum's historic collections into a new Collections Care Facility at the General Offices several questions have come up regarding construction costs for the facility and long-term operating costs for maintaining the Teich Archives. In response to these questions, District staff initiated a conversation with the University of Illinois to gauge the university's interest in the collection, and to better understand the resources available at the University of Illinois to care for and provide public access to their archival collections. After an initial conversation the University Archivist and Associate Dean of Libraries

visited the Teich Archives and received a tour from District staff. Following the tour, and subsequent follow-up conversations, the university responded favorably to the possibility of a transfer, and provided this statement of their interest in the collection:

“(T)he (UIUC) Library and Archives are interested in the Teich Archives because they provide an unparalleled and well-curated resource for a broad range of cultural heritage research and study. The Teich Archives and associated postcard collections promise to be a valuable tool for campus faculty and student projects as well as a significant anchor for study by external scholars, students, and members of the general public. They will support study and scholarship on themes including graphic arts, the built and natural environments, local commercial life, ethnography, and popular culture. Because of the long-time careful curation of the archives by the Lake County Discovery Museum, this material promises to be an extraordinary addition to the Illinois collections that have made the University of Illinois a leading research archives and library.”

At this time staff believes that it is in the best interest of both the District, and the Teich Archives, to enter into negotiations with the University of Illinois to transfer ownership of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives to the University of Illinois, which is a major research institution and has the staff and resources to provide the appropriate level of public access and long-term care warranted by this important collection.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION: Committee approval is being requested prior to commencing formal negotiations with the University of Illinois.

REVIEW BY OTHERS: Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Public Affairs and Development, Superintendent of Facilities and Events.

FINANCIAL DATA: Transferring ownership of the Curt Teich Postcard Archives will reduce construction and operating costs of the District’s new Collections Care Facility. Construction costs to be build a storage area for the archives and collection at the General Offices will be reduced by an estimated \$800,000. The vacant Historical Resources Manager position will be taken off the inventory resulting in an annual savings of \$107,781. Data storage costs will be reduced by an estimated \$10,000 annually and an estimated \$30,000 in software and hardware upgrades can be saved. Estimated annual revenue loss from the archives is \$12,400.

PRESENTER: Alex Ty Kovach