

*The following remarks were delivered to the staff of the Texas State Library and Archives Commission on the occasion of the second Learning Engagement Opportunities Day, November 8, 2019.*

## **Nor Is This All**

### **The Spirit of the Texas State Library and Archives**

#### **Introduction--Motto**

Do you remember your senior year in high school? What about the little saying or motto you contributed to the yearbook with your picture? In my wife's and my senior yearbooks, I found this variety with advice, reflection, philosophy:

One, never let your parents get the upper hand.

I had the world on a string. . .until I woke up.

No one knows the value of victory better than the one who has suffered defeat

And, perhaps the one that both tickles and perplexes me the most: Yes, dear.

Not just high school seniors, but public entities these days need a motto—that is: “a phrase meant to formally summarize the agency's general motivation or intention”

Of the mottos of the 174-plus Texas state agencies in the TRAIL list on your website, some are just lengthy, grinding mission statements. Some are brief maxims designed to capture the imagination. Perhaps the motto heard most frequently in these parts is: UT-Austin's: What starts here changes the world.

So, do you know the TSLA agency motto—the one on the website? Maybe you think it is or should be “Yes, dear.” No, that's not it. It is: “preserving yesterday, informing today and inspiring tomorrow.”

Yes, that's good. But in studying the first century and a half of the TSLA history, I found that the agency has an informal motto that predates even the 1909 enactment of the statute under which the agency functions today, 110 years later. In fact, I'll bet you have the oldest and most historic agency motto of all Texas state agencies.

It is only four words long. Rather than focusing on the agency contribution—what the agency does and what patrons get from the agency doing it—this one proclaims and highlights the essence, the soul, the spirit of the Texas State Library and Archives.

So, picture it: just below the name “Lorenzo de Zavala Texas State Archives and Library Building” hangs a huge banner with these four words: “NOR IS THIS ALL!” Cadwell Walton Raines, head of the state library and archival functions of Texas for eleven years, 1891-1895, 1899-1906. Raines wrote those beautifully expressive words in describing the true greatness of the state library and archives.

“Nor is this all.” What did he mean by the term? Well, here is how Raines laid out the meaning for state leaders:

“The agency should be the treasure house—treasure house—of information relating to Texas and the Southwest”

“It is to be the armory whence may be drawn, if need be, the weapons with which to defend the truth of history”

“The agency, too, should serve the government of which it is a part . . . This involves the maintenance of a well equipped, up-to-date reference department and careful classification of the documents of the various States.”

“By its relation to the state government, the agency is the office of record for everything issued by the several departments; not only the printed books, pamphlets, maps, etc., but also the manuscript records” (read: archives) “of historical value after they are no longer necessary to the current duties of said departments.”

Then, seemingly pausing to catch his breath, he continued: “Nor is this all.”

“To furnish to the student these sources the agency must reach out and collect everything relating to the past / as well as conserve the vast output of materials of the present.”

Whoa!

How historic is Raines’ vision?

He wasn’t the only one to have it. Who knows, maybe he fashioned it for Texas from New York State Librarian Henry A. Homes’ even broader description of state library functions published in the United States Department of Education’s report on libraries issued in the nation’s centennial year of 1876.

Okay, but how impressive is Raines’ vision?

Three years later, it was solidified in law. With Raines no longer on the scene, creation of the Texas Library and Historical Commission was driven by the Texas Federation of Women’s Clubs calling for a robust library function and the Texas State Historical Association pursuing a history function grounded in collecting archives, both public and private.

Texas was the first state to make a vision as Raines part of the fabric of government. 110 years ago, Texas became the first state to formally, by law, join the library and archival functions on an equal footing.

**How important is having an agency of government with this mission?**

In my view—essential. It couples the two information functions that form the bedrock of democracy and are the foundation upon which civilization in the age of literacy rests. Nothing more, nothing less.

Democracy. Essential to a democratic government is transparency—the ability for citizens to monitor the actions taken in their behalf by government leaders.

Transparency is vital to trust in government.

What other reason than obscuring transparency and compromising trust in government would there be for a legislative enactment excluding legislative records from being treated as all other agency records under the state records act—what other motivation than powers that be wanting to hide ill-motivated and unethical activities?

Archives are information as accurate, factual, truthful in historical context as we Americans, we Texans, we human beings have.

You know, as I do, the importance of open access to information and of library and archival service to people with all points of view. Reference to information sources in the TSLA means that all interested in a matter begin on the same page.

Civilization-- Civilization is the sum of human experience put to work. Libraries and archives are humanity's equal-access repositories of that experience (defined as broadly as you can define it—written, pictorial, sound, contemporary, historical, digested, and described in fiction)—in whatever form or format.

My mother used to say that you have to crawl before you walk and walk before you run. It is true for us physical humans--you and me and my two-month old great granddaughter. But not with regard to information. By studying works in archives and libraries, one can compress the time required to gain experience—that is, wisdom distilled from experience—the experience of others crawling, walking, and running.

While performing the day-to-day chores of our work, it's easy to lose sight of this when we see corners cut and bad things done in halls of power.

So, is what you do in the library and archival trenches really meaningful in the face of powers that can subvert it?

YES, yes. And we as the custodians of experience contained in archival and library materials must keep our eyes on the meaningfulness of the work we do.

In time the ship will right, the pendulum will swing, reaction will occur. Remember the 1970s when reaction to corruption and dirty dealing led to--Open records act, open meetings act, sunset act—all designed to make state government more open and accountable.

One never knows when the pendulum will swing. But it seems to happen after the powerful are discovered having subverted the system and finally go too far as has been done this year exempting legislative records from the state records act.

And that brings me to the most important element of the motto—Nor Is This All.

### **That is the importance and vitality of the role you play in the big picture**

Raines focused on the activities and functions that constituted the work of the state library and archives. That was necessary to be sure, especially in the day when the agency was being shaped. But in focusing on shape and breadth, he left out the most important element—*the engine* that makes the agency function. He left out the role and contribution of the workers who make the Texas State Library and Archives live. Without you, archives and books are nothing more than a pile of, oh it hurts to say it, but so it would be--just stuff.

I suspect there were two reasons Raines neglected to mention the staff.

One was that he focused on using Texas History and Texas' place among the states in the support of library and archival matters as his lever for getting the legislature's attention

The other was that at first, he himself was largely the staff. Be that as it may, staff, even when it was Raines almost alone, has been the backbone of the agency, without whom the agency's holdings and collections would not exist, and if they did exist, would be inaccessible.

Who were some of Raines' successors who gave life to the engine?

Ernest William Winkler. He had solid credentials in both the library and the archival/history fields.

Of course, Winkler had to manage with a strangulated budget resulting from the legislative philosophy for libraries voiced in response to the first proposal for a library for government made during Texas Revolution—namely, that libraries are good and needed, just not now and not at this cost.

But with a philosophy that “when the need for action and the promise of good results are so great, who could sit down and wait for the assembling of another Legislature to remedy even so important a defect as [inadequate funding]?”

And he was so effective in the use of his resources that the Texas Library Association not only elected him president, but kept him in office for three years—the longest of any president to date.

Elizabeth Howard West. Had an “abiding loathing for political interference in library business.”

As state archivist, she resigned when she saw incoming Governor James Ferguson intent on using state offices as reward, not for accomplishing the work for which they were created.

Then in the reform-minded period after Governor Ferguson was impeached and removed from office, she as state librarian was principal in securing legislation staggering commission terms to lessen the political influence of a single chief executive.

She accomplished creation of the state Board of Library Examiners to ensure through exam that persons hired for county library positions were competent in the work

West was so effective in library development that American Library Association called on her to apply her ideas throughout the southwest.

She began service to African Americans against the grain of the time.

On one occasion when West became unusually apprehensive for the budget, she went to the governor and asked him to see that it remained intact.

“Miss West, what do you do that you need such a large appropriation?” the governor asked.

Apparently taken by surprise, all she could think to answer was, “Governor, if someone should come and ask you what you did, what would you say?” Her reply apparently stunned the governor in turn . . . He signed the appropriation she wanted.

Fannie May Wilcox. She was the only one who would take the state librarian job at the salary to ensure the agency’s functioning.

She fought reorganization that would have reduced the state library to the single activity of legislative reference and transferred the rest to the university.

Are these just historical examples with little meaning in our time? Not on your life. Neither Winkler, West, nor Wilcox, nor others like them functioned in history knowing the consequences of their actions. Rather they grappled with the challenges of their day. They made their decisions in the heat of the moment, as do you.

And don't forget your Friends—those outside your ranks who go to bat in support of the value and robustness of the work you do

Of the examples, this is the best:

After the state archives had been squeezed into a Quonset hut at the Highway Department repair facility just north of 35<sup>th</sup> street (where I began my archival career in 1959), the Texas State Historical Association initiated what Texas folklorist J. Frank Dobie called the Second Archives War. (You know the first archives war which is commemorated by the plaque in front of your building and by the statue of Angelina Eberly on Congress Avenue firing the canon igniting the first archives war and thereby saving the government archives for Austin and thus Austin as the capitol of Texas.)

The TSHA president called the attention of one Price Daniel to the distress of the archives in the Quonset hut. The very next day, Daniel was elected governor. Appreciating history, he moved events until he had the money to build the Lorenzo de Zavala Building. And the rest, as they say, is history—the history of which you are an integral part.

### **Importance and vitality of the role you play**

Your job is all the more important in the face of those in positions of power who won't support it because they don't understand it, or don't seem to want to understand it. And those who understand it too well and move to circumvent it.

In the end, your job is you—your pride in your profession, in your performance of your job, in your service to all comers. That you have this pride is a given. Without it, you wouldn't be in this line of work. You wouldn't be here. And no malignant action or initiative from outside can ever take it from you. As you have seen in even the few examples I talked about, TSLA leaders have had this pride, have been motivated by it, have sustained the agency in appalling circumstances because of it, and have achieved their successes thanks to it.

### **Conclusion**

Now you know the reason I believe Cadwell Raines said more than he knew and spoke for all of us when he wrote those four words regarding the TSLA—Nor Is This All.

The designated functions of the agency are not all that it is. You—you, the librarians, archivists, oral recording specialists, records managers, workers promoting and facilitating library service throughout the state—YOU make the Texas State Library and Archives what it is. What it is as the bedrock of democracy. What it is as a cornerstone of civilization. You do it every day in delivering archival and library service to all comers—state government agencies, lone individuals, and libraries and archives across the state

What moves the Texas State Library and Archives to being all it can be? You.

So, to bean counters, indeed, to all who judge the Texas State Library and Archives to be just the functions listed in the agency's biennial appropriation, I hold up Cadwell Raines' four words. *Nor Is This All*. Those words represent the true worth of the agency, because that worth is *YOU* who give the functions life:

Behold the Texas State Library and Archives--*Nor Is This All*.

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