

APPENDIX 8

LETTER FROM STEVEN KOBLIK OF
THE HUNTINGTON LIBRARY



THE HUNTINGTON
LIBRARY, ART COLLECTIONS, AND BOTANICAL GARDENS

STEVEN S. KOBLIK
President

January 16, 2008

Mr. David M. Attaway
Environmental Supervisor
Department of Recreation and Parks
1200 West 7th Street, 7th Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Dear Mr. Attaway:

I write in support of the Autry National Center's efforts to provide for adequate conservation, storage, and display of its collections through its site at Griffith Park.

In 2002, when the Southwest Museum's Board of Trustees was looking for institutional partners to save its building and its collections, it approached The Huntington. We considered taking on the entirety of the Southwest Museum's collection, library, and archives, and moving these materials to The Huntington's campus, given our collecting emphasis on the history of the Southwest. Ultimately, we realized we were not the appropriate repository given the sheer size and scope of the collection and the very fragile state of many of the objects.

From the beginning, The Huntington determined that we would need a minimum of \$50 million to integrate the collection, and preserve and exhibit the material. Knowing that, we concluded that we did not have the capacity at the time to raise this level of funding for the collection, and so we recommended that the Southwest merge with the Autry.

We nevertheless knew that the Southwest building itself was not suited to serve as a museum space by today's standards. The hilltop site simply is not adequate for collections storage given the space required to house such a world-class collection and given the lack of environmental control in the existing facility. The building was not built to be adapted to the types of environmental controls necessary for collections maintenance today. Costs to attempt to retrofit the building, given what I know about renovating old museum spaces (we just finished renovating the 1911 Huntington Gallery building) would be, in my opinion, prohibitive. In fact, only by the willingness and commitment of the Autry has the collection been saved for future generations.

My strong sense, given our experience with the Huntington's collections, is that a centralized collection storage facility will allow for efficient collections management and

cataloguing, with one set of staff members in one location, with one set of equipment, while providing the opportunity to maintain the Southwest Collection as a distinct inventory. This will provide, too, for a centralized research function that will serve scholars well, providing ready access to the two collections, and a multitude of opportunities for stimulating and enriched dialogue. Such a centralized research space will also stimulate dialogue among researchers, scholars, and visitors.

Finally, the Autry plans for the collections to be displayed in a way that never could have been achieved by keeping the Southwest Collection exclusively in the Arroyo location. The new overarching plan for exhibition and display is ambitious and comprehensive, and demands square footage that only the Griffith Park campus can provide. A centralized space will also allow the various functions of the museum to synergize into one cohesive experience. At the expanded Griffith Park location, the conservation and interpretation of collections will be harmonized with the education and community outreach functions that the Autry also provides to the community. The Arroyo location, with its historic buildings, can also be used for education and community outreach efforts that are aligned with those of Griffith Park.

In considering the mission of the Autry National Center and its capacity to teach about the history of the Southwest in an expanded manner, and the opportunities these two collections together present, I strongly support the Griffith Park campus as the location for conservation, preservation, storage, and display of the collections.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Koblik', written in a cursive style.

Steven S. Koblik

SSK/ksh

cc: John Gray