

THE LIVING NEW DEAL ANNUAL REPORT, FISCAL YEAR 2012-13

It was a busy year for the Living New Deal – the best ever. With the help of a full-time managing director, we expanded the project team and extended our outreach across the country. We doubled the number of sites in our database and similarly doubled the number of visitors to our website and interactive map. We upgraded our home page dramatically and moved into social media. We merged with the New Deal Art Registry and launched new institutional partnerships on several fronts. We helped lead the fight against post office closures and began agitating for the nation's first New Deal Museum and Memorial. Locally, we contributed to the effort to restore the Coit Tower murals, put on art exhibits, helped create a smart-phone New Deal tour app, and create two maps of New Deal SF.

Expanding the Archive

The Living New Deal archive of New Deal-era public works and art has about doubled over the past year, to nearly 4000 sites. This has been due to the combined efforts of project scholar Gray Brechin, Mid-Atlantic Research Director Brent McKee, our able graduate research assistant Shaina Potts, and the input from a network of research aides around the country.

All this data appears on the Living New Deal map, which displays all sites on a Google map of the United States and allows users to bring up the full documentation and photographs of the sites by a click. The map is searchable in multiple dimensions, thanks to the efforts of programmer Ben Hass.

With the growth of the database and map, we are getting many more visitors to our website, *livingnewdeal.org*. Unique visitors to our web site have doubled in number since August 2012, to more than 5,000 each week or over 25,000 per year. This is a remarkable increase over past years, when we were a California-only project.

In addition, we arranged for a merger with the magnificent New Deal Art Registry—compiled by Barbara and John Bernstein of San Francisco—which has a database of over 1500 New Deal art sites (primarily public murals). That database is being integrated into the LND archive this summer and will greatly enhance our visibility and readership. Barbara Bernstein has joined the LND team as our public art advisor, which has greatly improved our ability to respond to queries from the public.

Reaching the Public Online

Over the past year we've increased our online visibility to achieve three goals: first, to make the variety of content on the LND website more attractive and accessible; second, to encourage more user-interactivity, comments and conversations, to build a national community invested in documentation and preservation of New Deal landscapes; third, to better tell the story of the New Deal, its magnificent legacy of public works and its relevance to public policy today.

To achieve these goals we have done three things:

- Made a major redesign of our home page. The new design improves access to the visual data on the site (which in the past was tucked away in the map) while giving users a sense of the variety of new things emerging on the site on a regular basis. The home page model will be used to redesign the entire site over the coming year.
- Increased the volume of information that we add each week to the site, including news postings, photographs and documents from the archives. This is a big reason for our increased visitorship to the site, noted above, and also for more substantive comments from readers.

- Developed a presence on social networking sites Facebook and Twitter. As a result, we have cultivated a steady stream of Facebook interactions (“likes” and re-posts), which were extremely rare before August 2012.

- Issued 3 more Living New Deal newsletters, prepared with the help of team member and communications consultant Susan Ives and sent to an email list of over 2000 (visitors to our website continue to sign up for the newsletter). Newsletters are posted on our website and their stories are features in news articles thereafter.

National Research Network

Because the LND only went national two years ago, this past year we focused on a systematic outreach campaign to increase the size of our team and expand our public reach in general. We contacted dozens of professors and researchers at universities and other institutions to identify new researchers in their areas.

As a result, we were able to expand our team of researchers around the country, adding representatives in Wisconsin, Texas, Missouri, Virginia and New York to our stalwart team member, Brent McKee, in Maryland.

We also developed an internship program in the UC Department of Geography, bringing on new student researchers and cartographers to work on several projects aimed at making our map data relevant and accessible to the public. Our first success was two New Deal maps of San Francisco, which were developed as a set of posters and full color brochures, and which will soon be available online.

Local Public Events & Outreach

The Living New Deal was an active presence in the Bay Area, with talks, quotes and media appearances by team members Gray Brechin, Richard Walker, and Harvey Smith.

LND managing director Rachel Brahinsky organized an LND table at the annual San Francisco History Fair, a weekend event at the Old Mint in March, and we prepared two maps of New Deal SF with the help of cartography students in the UC Department of Geography.

Gray Brechin is a featured 'talking head' on a new iPhone/iPad app on San Francisco created by public TV station KQED, which uses New Deal San Francisco as its inaugural subject matter. The app provides a guide to major New Deal public works and artworks in the city; it relies on the input and research of several members of our team, including Barbara Bernstein and Robert Leighninger, and will be released to the public soon.

Harvey Smith, Susan Ives, and the LND submitted a proposal for a museum project to the Presidio National Park, and made the long short list of candidates, in association with KV Associates. In the end we did not win the bid, but the process offered an opportunity to network with others and enhance our visibility and that of the National New Deal Museum idea. Going forward, we have been invited to discuss possibilities for developing a museum in other parts of the Presidio, which has many unused former military buildings.

We were involved in the effort to restore the Coit Tower murals, among the best-known of the New Deal's artworks in San Francisco and nationally. LND team member Harvey Smith was tapped by the San Francisco Arts Commission to be the lead author for new public signage on that project, and team members Barbara Bernstein and Gray Brechin are advising. This means that the Living

New Deal is playing a key role in shaping the knowledge about the New Deal to which the general public will have access for decades to come.

This year team member Harvey Smith organized a series of museum exhibitions at two galleries in North Beach, designed to highlight the need for a national New Deal museum and study center. Together with the Presidio competition, these exhibits acted as a useful fundraising tool, and helped push forward the conversation about the New Deal and its relevance today.

The LND organized a half-day mini conference at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers in Los Angeles. Our call for papers drew twelve papers on a range of New Deal landscape topics, from the presence of the New Deal in film, to untold park histories and the role of New Deal public libraries in social change. The convergence offered a great opportunity to network and pull in new scholars to the project.

Organizational Partnerships

The Living New Deal is based in the Geography Department of the University of California, Berkeley, as a research project of Professor (Emeritus) Richard Walker and Visiting Scholar Gray Brechin. The department provides the LND with an office, mail and phone service, staff support, and a computer server for our database and web presence.

The Living New Deal continues to partner with the National New Deal Preservation Association. LND team member Harvey Smith is the President of the NNDPA and Gray Brechin served as Vice-President until his term expired. LND is involved with an joint NNDPA-LND fundraising effort through Harold Ickes, Jr. in Washington, DC.

The LND began a partnership this year with the Prelinger Archives in San Francisco, a unique collection of public reports, films and 'ephemera' overlooked by most regular libraries and archives. We have begun to take advantage of the collection to assemble a bibliography of films on the New Deal and will be working toward putting some of those online this coming year. We have a deal with Rick and Megan Prelinger to create a public showing of New Deal films in the coming year. (The Prelingers' annual public showings of historic clips from industrial and home movies about San Francisco and other cities, known as *Lost Landscapes*, attract thousands of people).

Recently, we established a partnership with the Institute for Public Accuracy, a progressive media organization based in Washington, DC. We hope to use this partnership as a basis for fundraising and expect it to help us further develop our national media contacts, which will help us educate the public about the New Deal and its continued relevance.

We are developing a partnership with the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian, where researchers are documenting the native American presence in New Deal artworks. Most of this art is in the form of murals in US Post Offices across the country, many of which are under threat of sale into private hands.

We have been in conversation with the National Park Service through their regional historian. There is considerable interest in New Deal improvements at National Parks, but the NPS staff are heavily committed to other projects and without further political pressure at the top, an active partnership will be difficult to get off the ground. We also partnered with the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley on a grant proposal to support New Deal oral histories.

Several of our team members work in partnership with various preservation groups on the question of New Deal era post offices and New Deal post office art, both of which are threatened by the current program of cutbacks within the postal system.

Administration and Personnel

This year we were able to hire a managing director, Rachel Brahinsky, in the form of a Postdoctoral Scholar in the Department of Geography. Dr. Brahinsky led the much-expanded outreach effort, the overhaul of the website and social media presence, the merger with the New Deal Art Registry and other efforts at forging new partnerships. She also oversaw day-to-day operations of the project and worked on grant-writing and other development efforts. Unfortunately, Dr. Brahinsky is leaving us this summer to take a faculty post at the University of San Francisco. We are currently seeking funding for a new postdoctoral fellow and/or graduate student assistant to serve as Managing Director.

We supported two part-time graduate student Research Assistants throughout the year, Shaina Potts and John Elrick, both graduate students in Geography at UC Berkeley. The former focused on taking in new data, communicating with those submitting the data, and entering the data into the system database; she entered almost 2000 new sites over the year. The latter focused on working with the Prelinger Archive to come up with a bibliography of films on the New Deal.

We recently contracted with Susan Ives Consulting for advice and aid in seeking donations and grants over the coming year.

IT work, including the overhaul of the website, was done by our long-time IT consultant, Ben Hass. Ben is moving on to full-time web work and we will be seeking a replacement this summer.

Advisory Boards

We doubled the size of our advisory board and split it into two boards, advisory and research. On the Advisory Board, existing members Robert Reich and Peter Wiley have now been joined by Columbia University historian and political scientist Ira Katznelson and Roosevelt family member Janet Roosevelt Katten. On the Research Board, we now have University of New Mexico historian Jason Scott Smith, retired New Deal historian Robert Leighninger, UC Berkeley historian Robin Einhorn, and cultural critic Joni Palmer.

Report assembled by Richard Walker & Rachel Brahinsky, May 2013.