From the President

A night at the museum, and then some

Our museums, when they are done right and when they find their greatest use, are often like the lives we lead. They are rich, multifaceted spaces where hard, quantifiable science or the papers and documents of history or the installations of painting and sculpture can take on beautiful, sometimes quirky, shapes and aspects.

Such are the many museums that dot the perimeter and the interior of our campus. As you will learn in this issue of Nevada Silver & Blue, our University actually features its own University District Museums, which includes museums on our campus or near the campus. Within this district live a dozen diverse museums, ranging from the relatively new Museum of Natural History (which opened its doors on the third floor of the Fleischmann Agriculture Building in 2014) to longtime favorites such as Special Collections & University Archives in the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center and the W.M. Keck Earth Science and Mineral Engineering Museum in our historic Mackay Mines Building.

Each one of these spaces represents different facets of museums and their value to a college campus and the community it serves. Three years ago, as I was preparing my remarks for my inaugural address, the entire history of the University seemed to spread out before me as I read the texts of previous inaugural remarks from our past presidents. The remarks had been gathered thanks to the able staff of Special Collections & University Archives, Special Collections & University Archives, on a daily basis, open the pages of our University’s life—as well as the life of our community—to our faculty and staff colleagues, students, friends and visitors.

Increasingly, our museums (and our libraries on campus) are re-defining the entire notion of how we interact with the items, artifacts, art and ideas before us. Whenever possible, we emphasize the experiential aspect of learning at the University. It is no accident, then, that not far from the Keck Museum, where tactile experience of rocks and rare minerals are considered an integral part of the experience, is the DeLaMare Science and Engineering Library, where the essence of learning quickly becomes multi-dimensional. The DeLaMare has been recognized as one of the most interesting makerspaces in the country thanks to its self-directed learning areas and emphasis on 3D technology for creativity, engineering and learning.

This intersection between material and metaphor, between how one interacts with a curated exhibit and then how one applies what is presented in a way that can change perception or perspective, will continue to become one of the defining and exciting features of our University.

Come take a look and experience our museums for yourself. In addition to weekday visits, we are planning to expand the days and hours of operation for many of our museums. This spring, we will again offer our successful “Day at the Museums” event featuring a Saturday in which all of our museums, all at the same time, are open to the public. We are also working on a schedule that will feature museums being open one Saturday per month, in addition to those already open on weekends on a regular or a recurring basis. The University Events Calendar is an excellent resource to learn about these efforts.

In sum, our University District Museums represents not only what we’ve achieved, but what we hope to achieve. It is a rich, multi-faceted resource to be enjoyed not just by the campus, but by the entire community.

Sincerely,

Marc A. Johnson
President
www.unr.edu/president