

## Checked Out! Episode 10 Transcript

Joan Dalusung: Hello, this is Joan Dalusung, Assistant Director of the Washoe County Library System. It's my pleasure to introduce this episode of Checked Out, the official podcast of University Libraries and TLT, at the University of Nevada Reno.

Why is someone from the Washoe County Public Library introducing the show, you ask? Since the beginning of work from home at the start of the pandemic, we've been engaged in a special collaborative effort with the University Libraries to create a project called 1,000 Miles of Desert and Mountains. The project shares the diaries of George and Josephine Scott as they made a 1,000 mile long prospecting journey across Nevada in 1914. Those primary source documents are housed in the Special Collections Archives located inside the Mathewson-IGT Knowledge Center on the main university campus and are digitized and brought to life with photos, videos, recordings, maps, and other multimedia elements to give context and paint a picture of a Nevada adventure from more than one hundred years ago.

This week on Checked out, Sasha and Sean interviewed Robin Monteith, the University Libraries Events Manager who spearheaded the project, and Jeremiah Nelson, a voice actor who read and recorded the diary entries. We hope this will give you a little bit of a glimpse from behind the scenes and entice you to learn more. You can explore the whole 1,000 miles project at [library.unr.edu/1000-miles](http://library.unr.edu/1000-miles). Thank you for listening and enjoy the show.

Sasha Soleta: Thank you Joan for that introduction. As always, I'm Sasha.

Sean Busey: And I am Sean. Welcome to Checked Out. The University of Nevada Reno Library's Podcast. So, we have some really cool stuff in store today. Sasha, you....know it super well. You were enthusiastic about it all week. Why don't you tell everybody about it?

Sasha: I suppose I can.

Sean: And the enthusiasm drops.

Sasha: No the enthusiasm does not drop because it is awesome. And not only is it awesome for our listeners, who I assume are college-aged or older, it is awesome for the younger generation as well because this involves them and they can take part of this whole big awesome project. So what we're talking about today, we've, we've kind of uh "sneak peeked" it in some other interviews, is the 1,000 miles project that special collections here at the university, and digital services who we talked to two weeks ago, and Washoe County Public Library. They all got together and looked into the special collections archives and they found this awesome journal from 1914 about this couple traveling across Nevada.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: And they thought you know what? Let's make that an interactive edutainment situation for the kids in Washoe County. And not only Washoe County, basically like if you have the internet, you can do this, because it's just going to be up on our website.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: So I think it's pretty cool. Uh, you get readings from the great Jeremiah, who does a lot of voice acting here in Reno, and who does a lot of acting in Reno, at like the Bruka Theatre and with the Shakespeare Company. And you get some YouTube videos as well, you get the digital scans of the diary itself, and then there is also activities to really bring everything all together.

Sean: Yeah.

Sasha: So it's a really cool project, and I was really excited to interview Robin and Jeremiah about their little part in the--well not little part, their huge part in the project.

Sean: Yeah, yeah it's, it's the kind of thing just listening to them talk about it is fascinating by itself. The project I'm sure, is going to be just super to you know play with and have some fun with. I wish it had been there, you know, when I was a kid. I know it's geared towards, you know, the youths of today's Northern Nevada. I am going to eagerly just tear into it as an adult.

Sasha: Yeah I think it could be a lot of fun.

Sean: Yeah, yeah I hope it's as fun as I think it's going to be. I think it's going to be even more fun than I think it's going to be honestly. It sounds super.

Sasha: I think it's going to be awesome. I know I am going to make some of my relatives play it. You know just because I think uh...they've got nothing else going on. They need to learn about the history of Nevada.

Sean: You're in quarantine you may as well. Right?

Sasha: Yeah, may as well entertain the kids with some Nevada history.

Sean: Yeah entertain yourselves and you learn something.

Sasha: Mmmhmm.

Sean: It's, it's great. Win, win.

Sasha: So I think I am ready to do this interview.

Sean: Yeah, before we start it though, I have a challenge. I know we have a lot of listeners - surprisingly. But I want to see which of you are our most faithful. Our most attentive. There's something a little different about this episode, and come the outro we're going to have a little pop quiz. I want to know if y'all can spot it. Think that's fair?

Sasha: I think that's pretty fair.

Sean: Ok, alright.

Sasha: Alright take it away past selves.

Sasha: Alright, and welcome. We're mixing things up today, instead of Sean with me, I have somebody special from our production team. I have Luka with us today. Say hi, Luka.

Luka: Hi, hi thanks for having me. Fun to be on this side of things.

Sasha: Yeah, thank you for being my cohost today. So today we're doing....a cool, a really cool interview. We've talked about this project in the past I feel like in previous episodes. And this is like the big reveal of it I feel like. So here we are, we're talking with Robin Monteith from the Library. She's in charge of the library events here in the building. And then we have Jeremiah Nelson, who is an alum of UNR and he is also, if you are familiar with the Reno theatre scene, he has been in Nevada Shakespeare productions as well as productions at the Bruka Theatre. So we're going to talk to them today about the 1,000 miles audio recordings.

Luka: And it's not just audio, right Robin? it's more than audio.

Robin Monteith: Right.

Luka: Can you give us a little overview of the whole project.

Robin: Sure, so the project is entitled: 1,000 Miles of Desert and Mountains, and it's based on the diaries of George and Josephine Scott which reside in...here in the building in Special Collections and University Archives. So the project itself, the diaries are all online, but what we did was we took highlights of passages from the diaries and turned them into a series of eight short video segments and eight accompanying podcast style recordings, which that's where Jeremiah came in. Lent his beautiful voice to those passages to bring George and Josephine's words to life about their trip. And the diaries are all focused on 1,000 mile trek that they took in 1914 in the hopes of finding a big bonanza.

Sasha: Awesome, so I know you guys are working with a bunch of different departments to make this come together. It's like truly a group effort so how did this project come about working with all the different groups you're working with?

Robin: So, in my role as sort of the outward facing face of the libraries, I deal with community, and I deal with donors, and friends of the libraries. And I was hearing from what I'll call some of our Special Collections and University Archives 'groupies.' We have a lot of fans for that area of the libraries. I was hearing how disappointed they were that the in-person aspect of Special Collections had been shut down by Covid.

Special collections was still working digitally and remotely and providing a lot of services, but the experience of sitting in the reading room and being able to touch and look at materials. That wasn't available at the time. And then simultaneously I was hearing from my parent friends and teacher friends in the K-12 system, that they were, they were having a hard time. That transition to remote instruction was so fast and sort of surprising in a lot of ways and it was just a big transition for everybody, and that got me thinking, gosh I wish there was a way that we could share these amazing materials that we have in Special Collections with people in a new way, and I just wondered if there was a way that we could identify a collection that had already been digital, because it had to be available online, but if we could take that collection and share it in a new way and potentially with a new audience. So kind of earmarked it for maybe fourth to seventh graders, and um so I approached

Kim Anderson who is the head of Special Collections and kind of, I tried to articulate the idea and she was game, and then I brought it to Dean Ray, and she was in favor of the project. And so then we started putting together a team within the libraries and we had Nathan Gerth and Emily Dunster and Laura Rocke and Kim and Katherine Dirk. And with that small group we started building out the parameters of what that project might look like.

Luka: A quick follow up question. How was this, this collection found by them, and how was it even given to Special Collections? That might be a Kim Anderson question, but like how do we even have these diaries?

Robin: You know, that is a Kim Anderson question, and I don't know exactly what the acquisition process was, but I know originally there were four diaries, and there are only three in existence. Kim was actually the one that identified the collection and I, I just thought there was sort of this beautiful aspect to exploring 1,000 mile trip of these folks in 1914 while we were all stuck at home. That seemed to just kind of be a beautiful thing. So, Kim found the collection, and Katherine had already digitized it, so that put us in a position to move forward with that one.

Sasha: Like as somebody who grew up in the Nevada elementary school system, I can already picture this unit happening like when I'm in the fourth grade like along with the Donner party unit. Like I already like sense that happening so. How did you uh get like community partners declare a role in this project like how did you bring it to the community.

Robin: Well as we, as we started exploring the project a little bit, that fourth to seventh grade audience is not our demographic at all. Obviously we're here to support students and faculty and we have a number of community patrons but they tend not to be in that age demographic. So I gave some thought about where we could find that audience and who we collaborate with and so I reached out to my colleagues over at the Washoe County Libraries. They were already working something through their Facebook page called the 'The Virtual Story Time' that they were finding good success with. And so they were totally game to get on board, and so once we had that partnership in place and it gave us a way to distribute the end product.

Then started thinking about what each episode might entail, and we knew that we want--we had looked at the standards for the elementary school, various grades, and we knew kind of some things that we wanted to address in episodes, but we also are not elementary grade teachers, and so it thought it might be really cool to reach out to some of our community talent to bring different kinds of lessons into the mix, so for example I approached Michael Branch and he was totally game. So he does a segment on how to turn your boring life into an awesome story. Terri Farley also jumped on board and did a segment about how to write from an animal's perspective. Artist Emily Reed jumped on board with how to draw an animal, and Garrett Barmore who's our curator over at Keck gave a couple segments, one on mining, and one on different kinds of rocks and minerals and then we also, I reached out to Desert Research Institute and AJ Long was instrumental in hooking us up with Tiffany Pereira who is a rangeland ecologist and did a couple segments on high desert vs. low desert and what reptiles you might find in the desert. And what was really, really wonderful about this was how enthusiastic they were to jump right in, they were super concerned about our kids and our community and wanting them to have other avenues of learning and just felt like this is a really fun and kind of novel way in the scope of everything else that was going on to share these materials that they all really love and believe in.

You know, the teacher friends that I had reached out to were so excited about the idea of having this as a springboard to bring history into the, into the mix in a different way. To you point earlier, Sasha, about you remember the Donner party, and it, you know, feels like that unit fits right in there. It is, and what's cool about this project is that the diaries themselves are a primary source. So rather than the kids having to pick up about, you know, the beginning of Las Vegas and what it looked like in 1914, they're hearing it from George and Josephine who were there. That primary source aspect is just really, really rich.

Luka: I've got to listen to quite a few of those recordings and I think that the audience is well beyond K-12, and I think part of that is testament to you Jeremiah for bringing it to life, so Robin do you mind telling us about how you and Jeremiah got involved and how he brought this primary source to life for the audiences?

Robin: Well back a while ago, Jeremiah and I worked on a project together called voices in the life. That was part of art town, and I think was that 2013 Jeremiah?

Jeremiah Nelson: Yes it was.

Robin: Yeah, so I got to know Jeremiah through that project and when I started reading the passages, I immediately started hearing Jeremiah's voice, and originally I was kind of struggling with how to bring the passages into the segments and I just thought wow, if he would be willing to step on board with this, I just, it would be so rich and so wonderful and sort of, you know, it's that, it's that sort of almost radio kind of imagination provoking experience when you listen to those recordings, and so I reached out to Jeremiah and proposed my whacky idea and as I hoped he embraced it and was happy to step on board and did a phenomenal job of bringing these reading to life.

Sasha: So Jeremiah what was like the driving force behind you wanting to be a part of this project?

Jeremiah: Well part of it is my respect for Robin and the work we've done previously. Then when she sat down at my dining room table and presented the eight episodes to me, I just started reading the first episode aloud to her, and I could see her eyes sort of light up, and I thought I was on the right track. Obviously there's a lot more work that goes into it, but it's such an interesting project. And to me, to think of a couple, middle-aged couple in their fifties starting out from Las Vegas in the spring of 1914 and traveling all the way through to the Sierras by fall, it was just such an interesting project and then as I read more about it, I really enjoyed it even more.

Luka: And as you recorded those passages, did anything stand out for you about George and Josephine, and like anything that the listeners should pay special attention to?

Jeremiah: Yeah, particularly in part of my research, what I do is obviously I read the first episode with Robin in my house. Then she left them all with me. Then I did research, investigation. I watched a YouTube video about the early days of Las Vegas, which I never knew about, I've been to Las Vegas several times, but to think of it as a little watering hole to begin with, and then eventually the railroad came through and to this, for this middle-aged couple from Orangevale, California to even attempt this at that time, to me was phenomenal. Then I started reading about burros and why they're so important to use in the desert, and I just, I got so excited about it, and each episode I learned more about them and more about their trek.

Sasha: How'd you like get into that role as an actor of being George Scott, of being somebody from 1914 traveling across Nevada where I don't even want to travel across Nevada right now it's so hot. How'd you get in that mindset as an actor?

Jeremiah: Well, for an actor it's always about script analysis. That's the way I approach it. And so I read all eight episodes which gave me a better feel for it. Then I bought a book called "A Mine of Her Own: Women Prospectors in the American West 1850-1950" which has quite a few passages about George and Josephine Scott in it. And then through doing the analysis on the script, he wrote because it was a journal. He wrote in short declarative sentences. And so it.. you know it was easier for me as an actor to close my eyes and just let his voice come out of me, and after the first episode I felt like I had his voice. And so I just carried on with it from there.

Luka: It's really effective, it really helps, I think Robin said it, it helps your imagination just take it that much further. If you see the pages when you can see these online, you read the handwriting, it's tricky handwriting to read in the actual primary source and so being able to actually hear someone else read it really makes it come to life that much better, and then when you see the actual primary source now I can hear your voice reading that handwriting it's really cool.

Jeremiah: Thank you. I researched every word that I didn't know in the script, and there is still one word that I have not found the definition for, but I just used it in the context of how George wrote it, and that word is Laraby, still don't know what it is.

Sasha: Yeah I got nothing, I don't know what it is.

Robin: That was one of the things that I thought was interesting about the diaries was, you know, how much the use of language has shifted just since 1914, there's several terms in there that we don't use in that way anymore and like you say some words that we don't use at all, and yeah it was super interesting, it's that historical piece that, that sort of has its tendrils in all things. It's not just history, it's language and mining and geography and maps and I mean just...

Jeremiah: Geology.

Robin: Geology, yeah lots and lots of just subjects that are just, you know, great, the passages are just great catalysts for - for getting your imagination sparked by what else you might want to know from the time.

Luka: Robin how do you envision that students are going to act, interact with the videos and with the audio segments and just the project as a whole?

Robin: Well, so basically there's sort of three components to the project. One is the wonderful recordings by Jeremiah, and the other are the video segments and then the activity sheets. So what we'd really like the students or the anybody who wants to follow along with the project is to listen or read or both the passages in advance of watching the video segment, because you'll need that understanding of that couple pages that we're referring to in order to understand what we're trying to do in the video segments. We're looking at where Josephine and George have gone, where they're headed, there's lots of adventures with their burros. They have four burros, a cat, and a dog along with them on the trip. And there's vocabulary and concepts that we're looking at and so having that knowledge of the passages in advance would be great. I actually think that I could envision if my kids

were still smaller that I might play those podcasts for them at night as a great wind down or even a bedtime story kind of. They have that quality. Jeremiah is just so soothing to listen to.

And then once the students or anybody who wants to follow along has seen the video segments, then we have an activity sheet that takes some of those concepts and pushes them a little further. One of the things that we're trying to get students to do while they're part of the project is to keep their own diaries, and the reason for that is to have them have one central place where they can keep all their notes and thoughts and doodles and everything that they create during the course of the project but the other reason is we are in this historic moment right now being in the middle of a pandemic and as the kids can see these primary sources lend an understanding to the era that you wouldn't get from a normal textbook. And what we would like to reinforce for them is that your diaries might be the key to someone understanding what life was like in the middle of a pandemic in 2020 twenty years down the road from now.

Sasha: I love that idea where, you know, your story can be history and you've got to do more than just write on the internet on twitter, you know, you should write things down and, you know, you don't have to share everything with the world but eventually the world can see your thoughts and it will be a nice little glimpse into how that Covid world was all those years ago ,hopefully.

Robin: Yeah hopefully, yeah. Yeah exactly.

Sasha: Hopefully. So what do you think has been the most challenging aspect of this whole project? I know everything is kind of a little bit harder in these times, but what was the biggest hurdle you guys kind of had to overcome.

Robin: Well I think, I think first and foremost it was just trying to conceptualize what, what the end product was even going to look like you know. Like I said originally we were thinking of just a Facebook live where someone would talk about the passage, and then when we decided to go with a pre-recorded version it shifted everything monumentally. So from my perspective by far the hardest part has just been the production piece of it. There is a lot that goes into creating even a ten to fifteen minute video, and it's been sort of mind boggling - the, the depth of detail and just everything that goes into that. It's been, it's been tough but it's been good. And I also think that, I'm excited to see what, what happens with the project, because I think, I don't think we're through with this pandemic anytime soon unfortunately, so if we can create another mode of learning a different way to deliver this sort of historical material then all the heartache will have been worth it.

Sasha: So when all this is ready to go live, where can we find the project?

Robin: Well Nathan and Emily created a beautiful landing page for the project which you can actually find at [www.library.unr.edu/1000-miles](http://www.library.unr.edu/1000-miles). And that landing page will feature links out to the podcast recordings and to the videos and transcripts and all of the various pieces that are part of the project.

Sasha: Awesome, well thank you. And so Luka you're lucky because you got to hear all of these podcast right?

Luka: Yeah.

Sasha: You edited, you did the editing for them?

Luka: Exactly.

Sasha: I haven't gotten to listen to Jeremiah and how he reads these passages, and I'm really hoping Jeremiah will do a nice little reading for us to include in our episode of the podcast. So Jeremiah, do you have a passage you'd like to read, one that might be your favorite?

Jeremiah: Yes actually I have the start of episode two which is a very short little passage that I'll read if you're ready.

Sasha: Oh I'm ready.

Luka: Please.

Jeremiah: Las Vegas, Nevada. Took a snapshot of the seven saloons. The carpenter who was inspecting the building of the new courthouse invited me to come into his shop to make my pack saddle. Jack got loose while we were gone but stayed around the camp. Mr. Condee was getting away on the afternoon train, but concluded to stay over. No mail. Mr. Condee said they came through Dry Lake on his way back from Moapa. He saw the agent walking alongside the train. He stuck his head out and asked if Scott was there. The agent answered you will find Scott at Las Vegas. The engineer who was with him asked him who Scott was, and he told him he was a man who was traveling overland through the country. The engineer then asked if the agent was supposed to know every man who traveled through this country overland. He answered no, but he would know this one alright. He tells me to keep a bell on one of the burros day and night and the animals get used to the sound and even if they get loose will not scatter, and when you start to find them and hear the bell you will find them all.

Sasha: That was awesome. Thank you. And thank you guys for sitting down with us today. I'm just really excited about this project as somebody who wanted to be a teacher at one point in their life this is just very interesting and exciting.

Robin: Thanks for having us.

Jeremiah: Thank you.

Sean: So what was different about that episode everybody? I want, I want, I want fan letters, I want mentions on social media, I want to know the answer. If you're wrong you're not allowed to listen anymore.

Sasha: Please, please don't make that the rule because I...we need listeners Sean, this isn't...

Sean: We do, we do

Sasha: We're not one of them there fancy podcasts with thousands of listeners.

Sean: Yeah, also not only keep listening but tell your friends to start listening.

Sasha: Yeah, But do we want to tell them what it was, what the secret little Easter egg was there Sean?



Sean: So, so you may have noticed, I don't know it sounded very similar I know, but in all seriousness I have to give a big thanks to Luka for stepping in for me. There was some "hectic-ness", we'll call it this week. And he stepped in sort of at the last minute and filled in and made everything continue to flow smoothly so...

Sasha: Yeah, thanks Luka.

Sean: Golf clap, Golf clap.

Sasha: And now I know I'm not being held hostage by Sean and I can totally get another co-host so that's awesome.

Sean: Yeah, I mean and honestly like what are you waiting for. C'mon I know I'm replaceable.

Sasha: I know you're really like holding me back I feel like I could be number one on the podcast charts.

Sean: That's what I am, that's what I am. I'm the stepping stone. You break away and then you just fly like the free little bird.

Sasha: But you know what I'm ok with being humble so I will stick with you and my roots.

Sean: Oh, ok wow I feel, I feel so blessed.

Sasha: As you should.

Sean: Dang, see this was my way out. Sorry. So that was really cool.

Sasha: It was.

Sean: I'm jealous that I had to miss that. Jeremiah and his readings sound incredible, the project sounds incredible. I can't wait to partake in it as an audience member.

Sasha: I know I'm really looking forward to it, I didn't even know we had those diaries in Special Collections, so I'm really excited to see how the journey goes across the state of Nevada, because I just, again, I can't even think about traveling across Nevada now and I have like an air conditioned car. So I can only imagine what 1914 Nevada was like, so...

Sean: So, I move we stopped calling them NPR voices and begin calling them Jeremiah voices.

Sasha: I mean I don't think I could live up to that, but I mean we could try.

Sean: No but we have to try. If we fail miserably next week or next episode we'll go back to NPR voices.

Sasha: Ok.

Sean: Ok?

Sasha: So I will try to sound distinguished as Jeremiah, I don't think it's going to work.

Sean: No, I don't think so either.

Sasha: Let me stretch, let me get going, some vocal exercises alright here we go might have pulled something alright. So today's hosts were Sasha Soleta and Sean Busey. Our guests today were Jeremiah Nelson and Robin Monteith.

Sean: Thanks as always to the Libraries podcast team. Maggie Ressel, Michelle Rebaleati, Luka Starmer, thank you twice, Jill Stockton and Landon Renwick. And then we'd also like to add in a super special shout-out to friend of the show, former guest of the show, and super-duper tech and website guru Jasmine Arevalo. All that stuff by the way her official title.

Sasha: And I'd like to say a special thank you to Joan Dalusung, the Assistant Library Director for Washoe County. Episode music by 'Better Days' by Lewin Wilkstrom courtesy of Universal Production Music.

Sean: Thank you for listening again, tell everybody to listen to us and like us on all the social media platforms we're on. Jill, tell everybody which ones we're on. Until next time this Checked out Checking out.