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## **HUNTINGTON RECEIVES NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION GRANT TO ARCHIVE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AEROSPACE HISTORY**



Amelia Earhart on factory floor, Lockheed Aircraft Co., Burbank, ca. 1930.  
Harvey Christen collection, The Huntington.

SAN MARINO, Calif.—The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens has been awarded a \$367,000 grant from the National Science Foundation to archive the history of the aerospace industry in Southern California.

The grant provides The Huntington with funding for two years to collect original documentary materials and oral histories and make them accessible for researchers. It is a project of the Huntington/USC Institute on California and the West (ICW), a research collaboration between The Huntington and USC’s College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences.

“The aerospace industry was born in Southern California and provided tremendous thrust to this economy throughout much of the last century,” said Steven S. Koblik, Huntington president. “To study it is to understand how the world’s sixth

largest economy came to be. Taken as a whole, the emergence of aerospace, its dominance, and then its decline in the region is one of the most fascinating stories in the history of Southern California. In fact, Southern California as we know it would not exist without aerospace.”

Chief among The Huntington’s library holdings is an extensive collection on the history of California and the West, including the overland migration, the early settlement period, and the Gold Rush years. The Huntington’s collections also address the development of Southern California and the forces that led to its astonishing growth.

“Much is said about how entrepreneurship and ambition have guided the growth of California,” said William Deverell, historian at USC and director of the ICW. “The aerospace industry is a prime example of that. For the last hundred years Southern California has been the primary home for the U.S. aircraft and aerospace industry. By the 1980s, about 40 percent of our missile and space businesses were here—employing more than half a million people in the region. Aerospace left its mark on Southern California and vice versa.”

The announcement of the NSF grant comes on the heels of Northrop Grumman Corp. announcing its plans to move its corporate headquarters from Los Angeles to Washington, D.C., signaling the end of an era.

Lockheed, Douglas, Northrop, Hughes, TRW, North American, and scores of other aerospace firms found their homes in Southern California during much of the 20th century. The region’s aerospace industry provided high-volume production and sophisticated technologies for national security during World War II and throughout the Cold War era, from propeller-driven airplanes and bombers to strategic missiles, reconnaissance planes, and stealth aircraft. The industry contributed as well to the landing of men on the moon and the robotic exploration of the solar system, and in doing so challenged and transformed the human imagination.

Yet, despite its importance for the history of science and technology, California and the West, and World War II and Cold War history, the topic has attracted surprisingly little sustained scholarly attention. “Until now,” said Peter Westwick, a

historian at USC and director of the aerospace history project. “With this initiative, we aim to examine two basic and largely unanswered questions: Why did Southern California become a focal point for aerospace? And what were the consequences of this concentration for the region, the nation, and for science?”

So far, Westwick and colleague Daniel Lewis, the Huntington’s Dibner Senior Curator for the History of Science, have managed to assemble several major collections, including the personal papers of Ben Rich, longtime head of Lockheed’s Skunk Works; Willis Hawkins, Lockheed designer for 50 years and first president of Lockheed Missiles and Space; Harvey Christen, one of Lockheed’s first employees; and Jack Real, longtime Lockheed designer and close confidant of Howard Hughes. The Hawkins and Christen collections include several thousand unpublished photos spanning six decades of American aviation, among them a spectacular group of photographs of Amelia Earhart.

Researchers working on the project also have completed a dozen oral histories, among them interviews with Donald Beall, former president and CEO, North American Rockwell; Frank Bullock, design engineer at Lockheed who began working there in 1946; Sam Iacobellis, former president, North American aerospace division; Tom Jones, former chair and CEO, Northrop; Bruce Murray, former director, Caltech/NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory; and George Paulikas, former executive vice president, Aerospace Corp.

Also under way, according to Deverell, is an anthology of essays on the Southern California aerospace industry, with contributions covering a range of topics from “Aviation Okies,” aerospace and Hollywood, and Asian Americans in aerospace to the environmental legacy of aerospace.

Said Lewis: “These are the moments that every historian treasures, taking a topic—like aerospace—and really unpacking it. It’s a dream to be able to put together this sort of collection, and then work with scholars as they use the materials to connect the dots, make new discoveries, and further enrich our understanding.”

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Read more on this subject at:



### **About The Huntington**

The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens is a collections-based research and educational institution serving scholars and the general public. More information about The Huntington can be found online at <http://huntington.org>.

### **About the Huntington/USC Institute on California and the West**

The Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West (ICW) is a center for scholarly investigation of the history and culture of California and the American West. Through scholarship and research, ICW draws on the resources of the University of Southern California and The Huntington to build an innovative collaboration between a research university and a research library. More on the web at: <http://college.usc.edu/huntington>

### **Visitor information**

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