FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: **Peter Persic,** Los Angeles Public Library, (213) 228-7555, ppersic@lapl.org
Amy Bonetti, Alta, (415) 407-9008, amy@altaonline.com
Laura B. Cohen, LC Media, (310) 867-3897, lcmediapr@gmail.com

$10,000 Reward Offered for Information Leading to the Recovery of Long-Lost L.A. Central Library Sculpture "Well of the Scribes"

Alta Magazine and Los Angeles Public Library Seek Public's Help in Solving 50-Year Old Mystery

LOS ANGELES – Feb. 5, 2020 – A reward of up to $10,000 is being offered to anyone with information leading to the recovery of sections of the long-lost sculpture, "Well of the Scribes," which disappeared from the Los Angeles Public Library's Central Library 50 years ago. The 1926 bronze fountain went missing from the Central Library in the 1960s when the West Lawn was razed for a parking lot. The sculpture's fate was unknown until last year, when a section was discovered in Arizona. *Alta* magazine and its publisher William R. Hearst III, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Public Library, today announced a reward for information leading to the return of the Well's other three pieces. Anyone with information should contact *Alta* magazine at tips@altaonline.com.

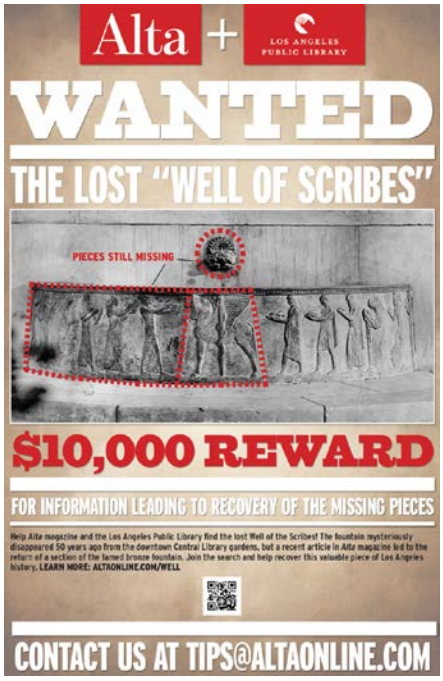


(I to r) Alta Editor-at-Large Mary Melton and City Librarian John F. Szabo unveil $10,000 reward poster for missing sections of the Well of the Scribes.

The mystery of the missing sculpture first captured the imagination of Susan Orlean, who wrote about it in her 2018 bestseller, *The Library Book.* Prompted by the book, *Alta* managing editor Blaise Zerega assigned journalist Brandon Reynolds to chronicle the Well's disappearance and theories about its fate. When the article was published in July 2019, the sculpture was still nowhere to be found.

Meanwhile, an antiques dealer, Floyd Lillard, in Bisbee, AZ, knew for years that he had acquired something special. Lillard would conduct occasional Google searches to help him identify the object in his possession. Shortly after the *Alta* magazine article was published, Lillard's Google search yielded the image he had been waiting a decade for, and he immediately recognized it. He had a section of the Well of the Scribes.

Lillard contacted *Alta* magazine and Los Angeles City Librarian John F. Szabo with the news that he had one of four pieces of the sculpture. Szabo traveled to Bisbee, met Lillard, and verified it as a portion of the Well of the Scribes. On October 4, 2019, the section of the bronze was returned to its rightful home, and unveiled at a press conference at the Central Library.



The search for the rest of the Well intensified. *Alta* magazine hired a private investigator, who tracked down several promising leads. Although these efforts did not lead to the missing sections, the investigation is ongoing.

Not to be deterred, *Alta* magazine, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Public Library, is asking for the public's help and offering a reward of up to $10,000 to anyone who provides information leading to the recovery of one or more of the missing pieces.

The Well of the Scribes was designed by artist Lee Lawrie, the artist responsible for the many sculptural embellishments adorning the historic Central Library building and its grounds. The semi-circular bronze sculpture formed a basin that greeted visitors at the entrance to the gardens, which faced the library. Rendered in a subtly detailed relief, the sculpture's design featured three sections: a Pegasus, symbolizing

inspiration, flanked on each side by a procession of elegantly detailed figures representing scribes from eastern and western cultures, and a spout located above the pool. The basin graced the gardens from the library's opening in 1926 until 1969 when the gardens were paved over and the sculpture disappeared.



LOS ANGELES PUBLIC LIBRARY

A recipient of the nation's highest honor for library service—the National Medal from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the Los Angeles Public Library serves the largest and most diverse urban population of any library in the nation. Its Central Library, 72 branch libraries, collection of more than 6 million books, state-of the-art technology accessible at www.lapl.org, and public programs provide everyone with free and easy access to information and the opportunity for lifelong learning.

ALTA

Based in San Francisco and founded by William R. Hearst III, *Journal of Alta California* is a quarterly magazine devoted to California and the West. Big trends start in California; *Alta* identifies them and offers smart, witty, and literary coverage of the people, history, and ideas behind them through its print publication, website, podcasts, newsletters, and event series. *Alta* treasures great journalism, great storytelling and beautiful images. For more information, go to altaonline.com.

To keep up with the latest on the search and for complete terms and consitions of the reward, visit: altaonline.com/well

Contact for Information about the Sculpture and Reward: tips@altaonline.com

SOCIAL TAGS: #findthescribes #altatips

###