

DOCUMENT PRESERVATION: THE ENVIRONMENTAL CENTER PROJECT

by Kieko Matteson ❖ 14 October 2020



Krauss Annex 19

The Environmental Center (EC), established at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa in 1970, houses a substantial collection of historically significant material on land use, conservation, economic development, and ecological change in Hawai‘i. The material reflects the EC’s seminal role in state environmental research and planning from the passage of the National Environmental Policy Act (1970) and the Hawaii Environmental Policy Act (1974) onward.

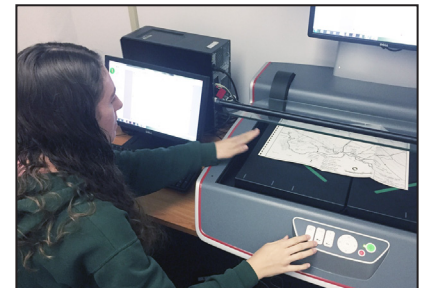
The EC closed in 2013, its mission largely supplanted by the state Office of Environmental Quality Control and a new generation of independent planners. Nonetheless, its unique document collection—almost all of it existing in hardcopy form only—remained in Krauss Annex 19, quietly moldering in the humid Hawai‘i climate.

Concerned about the disposition of these important materials, Scott Glenn (then Director of the State Office of Environmental Quality Control [OEQC]), and Kieko Matteson, Associate Professor of Environmental and French History in the UH History Department, launched an effort in 2018 to digitize the Center’s Environmental Impact Statements (EISs) and Environmental Assessments (EAs) and make them publicly available and keyword-searchable.

Professor Matteson, the project’s Principal Investigator, was joined from the start by Dr. Sara Bolduc, an urban planner who organized the EC’s holdings while a doctoral student and whose knowledge of the collection is unparalleled.

With the assistance of four hardworking student assistants, the project has catalogued and scanned about a third of the EC’s collection of 1,400 hardcopy EISs so far. The EISs with no known hardcopy duplicate were then delivered to UH Hamilton Library for preservation in its Hawaiian Collection archives.

The process has been painstaking and logistically challenging. Many documents are crumbling, and their brittle bindings have to be carefully disassembled before processing. The numerous foldout maps and oversize images, moreover, require an extra-large scanner—equipment not available to the project on campus. As a workaround, Matteson and Bolduc formed a partnership with the Office of Hawaiian Affairs, which generously provided access to its **Hale Noelo** Research and Technology Center. Hale Noelo is now off-limits due to the pandemic, but the effort continues via equipment borrowed from the UH History Department.



Student assistant Madeline scanning oversized maps



This massive undertaking has been made possible via initial funding from the OEQC in 2018–2019 and subsequent 2020–2021 grant from the WRRRC authorized by Darren Lerner and his successor as Director of WRRRC, Thomas Giambelluca.

Much more work remains to be done, but the fruits of the effort are already paying off via the uploaded scans on the **OEQC’s online EIS library**. By preserving the documents for present and future generations and making them freely accessible on the web, the Environmental Center Project is assuring that environmental decision-making and development in Hawai‘i can be fully investigated and understood.

Link to Hale Noelo: <https://www.oha.org/halenoelo>

Link to OEQC’s online EIS library: http://oeqc2.doh.hawaii.gov/_layouts/15/start.aspx#/EA_EIS_Archive/Forms/AllItems.aspx