

Digital Portal

The State Bar of Texas Archives Department rolls out its collection online.

BY ERIC QUITUGUA

The State Bar of Texas Archives Department has launched a new digital portal that bridges the present with the past, giving the public access to the State Bar's vast collection of photos, board of directors meeting minutes, and other records.

"I think it's important for anyone invested in what the bar does—they can find what the bar is working on," said Caitlin Bumford, the bar's archives director. "Internally, it's important for decision-making. *Why did we do certain programs this way?* It can help us operate better."

The portal's homepage appears like a collage teaser of the State Bar's past. Rows of photos show an applicant for admission into the bar sitting with the Board of Legal Examiners of Texas in 1939, the partners in Sinderson, Daffin, Flores and Stool (one of Houston's first all-women law partnerships), and a 1974 studio shot of the State Bar's *Ask A Lawyer* television program, among others. Hover above each photo and a description with names and dates appears. Click "View More" and the user is taken to a separate page that says who created the photo, where it appeared and when, and how to get a digital copy.

With your knowledge of your search subjects, you can use the advanced search and filters to find accurate results, Archives and Records Management Specialist Emma Martin said. For example, to find a PDF of board meeting minutes,

it's best to provide a numerical date—the archives duo and database vendor MINISIS have uploaded the records of every one since 1940.

Since 2017, Bumford and Martin have been tucked away at the Gov. Bill and Vara Daniel Center for Legal History, in the lower level of the Texas Law Center, using a single Epson scanner to bring about 80 years

of State Bar of Texas history to the web. Working with MINISIS, they began with a bulk transfer of about 1,500 digitized documents to the portal—there are about 726 photos and more than 600 past versions of governing documents (State Bar Act, State Bar Rules, etc.) available now. They've also scanned other documents like published studies, the entire archive of the *Texas Bar Journal*, and photos of the bar's 1991 Soviet attorneys visit, handling delicate copies that are often the *only* existing ones.

How do they determine what gets uploaded? If it's something requested by the public or media, a copy will be made for the portal.

"We scan primarily for access and not preservation purposes," Bumford said.

The portal offers a look at the evolution of the bar since its 1939 inception. A search of board meeting PDFs can reveal the issues the bar and its leaders were most concerned about each

decade, reflecting patterns and legal and political climates of the day. With the portal, the history of the State Bar of Texas is easily available, allowing the user to become his or her own researcher.

To view the online portal, go to texasbar.com/digitalarchives. **TBJ**



Archive photo of the State Bar of Texas meeting being held in the Texas Senate Chamber in Austin on June 30, 1939, during the bar's 1939 Annual Meeting. In front of the group are State Bar President Judge Ben H. Powell (in white suit) and State Bar Executive Secretary William B. Carssow (dark suit, to the left of Powell).

PHOTO BY TEXAS BAR JOURNAL, STATE BAR OF TEXAS