

UC SANTA BARBARA

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## **GRANT PROPELS HISTORICAL BOTANICAL COLLECTION INTO THE 21ST CENTURY**

A botanical collection housed at UC Santa Barbara that surpasses the breadth of the Smithsonian in its class will be accessible for the first time to the international botanical research community, K-12 teachers, and the public due to a \$342,000 grant from the Edwin W. Pauley Foundation, of Los Angeles.

The collection of preserved plants, microscope slides, and photographs is part of the university's Museum of Systematics and Ecology, and is considered one of the world's best collections of monocotyledons, the large subclass of plants which includes palms, orchids, and lilies, collected from Cuba, New Zealand, Australia, Africa, and the United States, some dating back to the 1930s.

They were all carefully collected and documented by the late Vernon I. Cheadle, a botanist and former UCSB chancellor, and his longtime collaborator, the late UCSB botanist Katherine Esau.

"The Pauley Foundation has provided the opportunity for us to preserve and curate the valuable and historically significant collections of two of this century's most eminent botanists," said Jennifer Thorsch, curator of the collection of 6,000 bottles of fluid-preserved plant specimens and over 60,000 slides.

The project will be a novel effort to make the collection of botanical specimens accessible worldwide via the Internet which will provide vital information on plant structure, systemics, ecology, and evolution.

"The excellence of the anatomical preparations of Drs. Cheadle and Esau is legendary and the opportunity to prepare digital images of slides from representative families in the collection will be a wonderful resource for a broad spectrum of plant biologists and educators," said Thorsch.

Until now, the general care and maintenance of the collections had come from an endowment from the Vernon I. Cheadle Memorial Fund.

But it was not enough to keep the collection going indefinitely, to organize it according to current standards, or to make it broadly available.

After reading a newspaper article about the Cheadle-Esau Collection and Thorsch's efforts to search for a donor or agency that would see the importance of saving it, the Pauley Foundation stepped forward.

"We are extremely grateful to the Pauley Foundation for this generous gift to our campus, which will support innovative teaching, research, and outreach activities associated with the Cheadle-Esau Collection," said David Chapman, Dean of the Division of Mathematics, Life, and Physical Sciences in UCSB's College of Letters and Science.

The foundation's support for the project will also allow for the creation of an outreach program, including a Museum Science Week and botanical web site that will educate young scientists and the community about the importance of collections as a basis for understanding ecosystems and how they are the underpinning for conservation efforts.

"The Cheadle-Esau Collection will serve as a wonderful example of the importance of historical collections and how information and specimens in the collections are relevant for education and research in the 21st century and beyond," said Thorsch who will direct the project.

"The Edwin W. Pauley Foundation hopes that UCSB will use the Cheadle-Esau collection as a useful tool in teaching school children the importance of sustainable environmental practices," said Stephen Pauley, president of the foundation.

The Pauley family knew Vernon Cheadle for many years.

"We believe that kind of environmental outreach education at the elementary and high school level is vital to the future health of the planet," said Stephen Pauley.

The Museum of Systematics and Ecology is located within UCSB's Department of Ecology, Evolution and Marine Biology.

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## **About UC Santa Barbara**

The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.