UC SANTA BARBARA

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Documenting the Working Life of a Physicist

The papers of Walter Kohn, winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, will be preserved at the University of California, Santa Barbara for use by students and scholars nationwide.

Kohn, a condensed matter theorist, donated his extensive collection of notes, articles, manuscripts, research documents, and correspondence to Special Collections in Davidson Library.

Biographers and historians of science will be drawn to the collection, which documents the working life of a physicist and includes materials related to Kohn's opposition to UC's peacetime nuclear weapons research and development and his work with organizations dedicated to international peace and the advancement of human rights.

"The history of science is an area of special strength at UCSB, yet it is often a challenge to document the work of contemporary scientists," said UCSB Librarian Sarah Pritchard.

"The Walter Kohn papers will be of great historical import for these kinds of studies and for understanding the interdisciplinary culture of modern science."

Kohn has made seminal contributions to the understanding of the electronic structure of materials. He shared the Nobel Prize for his development of density-

functional theory, which has revolutionized scientists' approach to the electronic structure of atoms, molecules, and solid materials in physics, chemistry, and materials science. With the advent of supercomputers, density functional theory has become an essential tool for electronic materials science.

David Tambo, head of Special Collections, said, "The papers of such a distinguished faculty member and Nobel Prize winner will be of inestimable value to researchers for years to come.

They show not only Professor Kohn's research contributions, but also his involvement in university and community concerns, and provide a personal view that otherwise is impossible to obtain.

Special Collections is delighted that Professor Kohn has chosen to donate his papers to our institution."

Kohn spent 19 years at UC San Diego before moving to the UCSB in 1979.

At the San Diego campus, he helped build the Physics Department and the Judaic Studies Program.

He also served for 10 years on the advisory board for the UC Institute of Global Conflict and Cooperation, and he was a member of the Academic Senate's Review Committee of UC-Managed National Laboratories.

At UCSB, Kohn was founding director of the Kavli Institute for Theoretical Physics (KITP), an international research center that brings together prominent scientists to pursue research that leads to new insights and discoveries at the frontiers of science.

He helped found the Global Peace and Security Program, which is now affiliated with the Global and International Studies Program. In 1994, the building that houses the KITP was named Kohn Hall in his honor.

Among his many accolades are the 1988 National Medal of Science from the United States and the 1998 Niels Bohr gold medal from the United Nations.

The UCSB Libraries's Special Collections Department plans to publish an on-line guide to the Kohn Papers.

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.