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UCSB Digital Library Brings Holdings From Special Collections to the Web

With more than 500,000 volumes, photographs, and early sound recordings -- not to mention 16,000 linear feet of manuscripts -- many of the holdings in the Special Collections Department of UC Santa Barbara's Davidson Library date back to periods well in advance of modern technology. A few thousand of those items have been brought into the 21st century thanks to the new Digital Library, which makes the images and audio recordings available to anyone with an Internet connection.

"The library wanted to reveal its hidden collections and highlight its unique holdings," explained Lisa Koch, metadata librarian at UCSB. "The Digital Library is a resource for people who want to explore the materials but can't come to the building. Scholars and users can view items at home, and teachers can bring the archives into their classrooms."

The Digital Library is available [here](#).

"The images in the Digital Library provide a glimpse of the variety and richness of our holdings in Special Collections and help make our resources instantly available to researchers around the world," said David Tambo, head of Special Collections. "At present, only a small percentage of our collections are available digitally, but we are very interested in expanding our digital collections and continue to do as much as possible, given the resources available in these financially challenging times."

Approximately 3,000 items are currently contained in the Digital Library, with more being added regularly. "Right now we primarily have items from Special Collections, although we hope to add government documents, videos, and maps from the Davidson Library's Maps and Imagery Lab," Koch said. "We started by choosing collections we could digitize without coming up against copyright issues, that were small enough to be manageable, and were likely to be of interest to users."

Current formats in the Digital Collection include historic and artistic photographs, poster prints, music scores, audio recordings, videos, and picture discs. Among the highlights are photographs from Ghana, Britain, and Australia from 1910 to 1921; poster prints from contemporary San Francisco artists; picture discs from the 1940's; and artistic photographs of California and the United States from 1970 to 1990. Audio recordings include discussions and talks by famous political thinkers, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The recordings are drawn from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions Collection. Among other audio recordings in the Digital Library are 78 rpm Vogue picture discs from the Todd Collection.

Koch described the Digital Library as a collaborative effort, with assistance coming from audio and scanning technicians, faculty members, librarians, and even scholars from the community who access the material and contact the library with additional information about items. The Flying A Studios collection, which features more than 300 glass plate negatives of actors, actresses, and film sets from the movie studio that was based in Santa Barbara from 1912 to 1917, is a perfect example, she noted. Not all the details in the photos could be fully identified. "We hope that someone might see a photo and recognize a person, or a place, or something that will enhance the metadata."

A special feature of the Digital Library is the ability to geo-locate an item on a map. For example, a visitor to the Digital Library might access a photograph of the Bowers Mansion in Nevada. He or she can see the photographer's image and then see the building on a satellite image, or even see a current street view through Google Maps. There is also an advanced search feature that allows users to find all items by proximity to a specific location -- an address, a city or state, or even geographic coordinates.

Related Links

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[Special Collections](#)

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