

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Johannes Steffens

Bringing radio history to life

From golden-age radio scripts to rare recordings of legendary broadcasts, the American Radio Archives (ARA) hold a trove of stories that shaped the airwaves.

Now, thanks to a \$100,000 grant from The Ahmanson Foundation, UC Santa Barbara Library will be able to bring those stories to a wider audience. The funding supports the cataloging and digitization of the archive's rare materials, making them accessible to researchers, students and the public — and ensuring that the voices of radio's past continue to be heard.

The collection was [acquired by UCSB Library](#) in 2021 from the Thousand Oaks Library Foundation, which was supported for many years by the late Robert Ahmanson, founder of The Ahmanson Foundation. The ARA, one of the nation's largest collections documenting the history of radio broadcasting, comprises over 50 collections, including the papers of radio legends Norman Corwin and Rudy Vallée, the archives of the Pacific Pioneer Broadcasters (PPB) and KNX radio materials. With thousands of scripts, tapes and transcription discs, this remarkable archive complements UCSB Library's extensive collections on broadcasting, media and the performing arts.

"The American Radio Archives hold an extraordinary place in preserving our cultural and media history," said [David Seubert](#), curator of the library's [Performing Arts Collection](#). "The continued support from The Ahmanson Foundation ensures that we can complete the work of cataloging and digitizing this essential collection, making it accessible to scholars, students and the public."

The recent award is The Ahmanson Foundation's second grant in support of the ARA. The first, made in 2022, supported the initial processing and cataloguing of the collection by UCSB Library staff, and the integration of collection inventories and finding aids into library systems. To date, approximately 40% of the ARA has been processed.

With the new grant, the library will complete cataloging the collection and further integrate its materials into library systems. The project will also digitize select high-research-value materials, making fragile audio recordings and rare documents accessible online to support research and scholarship in broadcasting and media history.

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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.