

THE *Current*

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Beyond the Classroom: A video tour of Special Research Collections

There's a lot going on behind the scenes at UC Santa Barbara Library, particularly in the Department of Special Research Collections, home to rare and unique books, manuscripts, photographs, films and music recordings — plus a team of curators and archivists tasked with preserving the holdings and ensuring public access.

Headquartered on the mountain side of the library's third floor, [Special Research Collections](#) (SRC) oversees approximately 250,000 volumes, 16,000 linear feet of manuscripts, 100,000 photographs, and more than 200,000 early sound recordings.

For “Beyond the Classroom: Special Research Collections,” Director Cathy Williams leads a video tour of the department's reading rooms and exhibition space, as well as a behind-the-scenes look at the Henri Temianka Audio Preservation Lab and the “cold vault,” a climate-controlled room for storing analog audio tapes and photographic film.

Along the way, Williams touches base with California Ethnic & Multicultural Archives Curator Angel Diaz, Rare Books and Manuscripts Curator David Gartrell, Performing Arts Curator David Seubert and University Archivist Matt Stahl.

Recent acquisitions include the vast tango archive of [Argentine composer Astor Piazzolla](#) and last year's donation of first editions of [John Steinbeck's major works and rare audio](#) recordings of the Nobel Prize-winning author dictating early drafts

and story ideas. Among many long-term projects, the SRC team heads up the ongoing acquisition and digitization of [pioneering American music](#) from the early part of the 20th century — with tens of thousands of songs available online at the department's Discography of American Historical Recordings — and, close to home, the [Santa Barbara Community Archives Project](#).

SRC holdings are noncirculating but available by appointment for [in-person viewing and reading](#), and for class visits, to support teaching, learning and research: <https://www.library.ucsb.edu/special-collections/classes>.

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.