

UC SANTA BARBARA

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Johannes Steffens

UCSB Library wins prestigious national award for UCSB Reads

UC Santa Barbara Library has been named a recipient of the [2026 John Cotton Dana Library Public Relations Award](#) by the American Library Association (ALA). Widely regarded as one of the most prestigious honors bestowed in the library profession, the award recognizes outstanding public relations efforts that elevate the visibility and impact of library services. UCSB was recognized for its highly successful [UCSB Reads 2025 common book program](#), which centered on “The Book of Delights: Essays” by Ross Gay. Notably, UCSB was the only academic library to win the award this year, a distinction that highlights the rarity of academic institutions securing this honor.

Established in 1946 and administered by ALA’s Core Division in partnership with EBSCO Information Services, the John Cotton Dana Award celebrates library marketing and communications excellence achieved through creative and impactful campaigns. The award recognizes up to eight libraries across the nation each year for outstanding public relations efforts. As part of the award, UCSB Library received a \$10,000 grant funded by the H.W. Wilson Foundation to help further elevate the visibility and impact of its library services.

“Effective communications allow us to bridge the gap between our extensive collections, services and resources and the diverse communities we serve,” said University Librarian Todd Grappone. “Receiving the John Cotton Dana Award is a remarkable validation of our team's dedication to creating innovative, engaging

outreach campaigns that resonate deeply on campus and in the local community.”

The award was officially presented during a ceremony and reception on June 27 at the ALA Annual Conference and Exhibition in Chicago, where library leaders from across the country and around the world gathered to celebrate excellence in the field. Also at the conference, UCSB Library received an ALA [2026 PR Xchange Award](#), in the category of Advocacy, Fundraising, Annual Reports, and Strategic Plans, for its printed [2024-2025 Impact Report](#). The John Cotton Dana Award is the second major accolade for UCSB Reads 2025; the program was also awarded the [inaugural Best of Marketing Award](#), academic/special library category, by the Library Marketing Conference Group in late 2025.

The American Library Association is a nonprofit organization based in the U.S. that promotes libraries and library education internationally. It is the oldest library association in the world and, with more than 47,000 members, also the largest library association in the world.

[UCSB Reads](#) is an award-winning program that fosters a shared sense of belonging by bringing the UCSB campus and Santa Barbara communities together to read a common book that explores compelling issues of our time. The program is sponsored by UCSB Library and the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost. Each year, a committee of UCSB faculty, students, staff and community members selects a thought-provoking, interdisciplinary book written by a living author that encourages a wide range of readers to engage with a contemporary social, political or cultural issue. Topics of UCSB Reads books have included climate change, human memory, racial justice, women in science, globalization and wildfires, among many others. “The Book of Delights” marked the first and only poetry collection selected in the program’s twenty-year history.

Tags

[Awards](#)

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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.