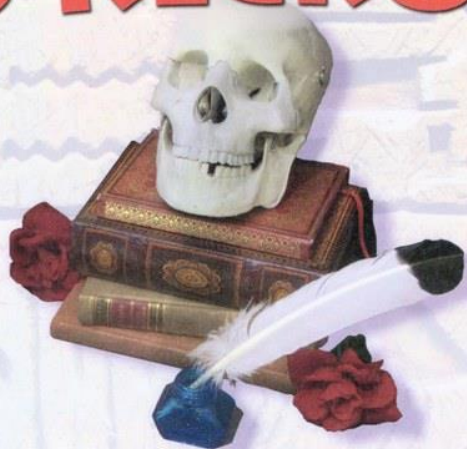


# DEAD RECKONING



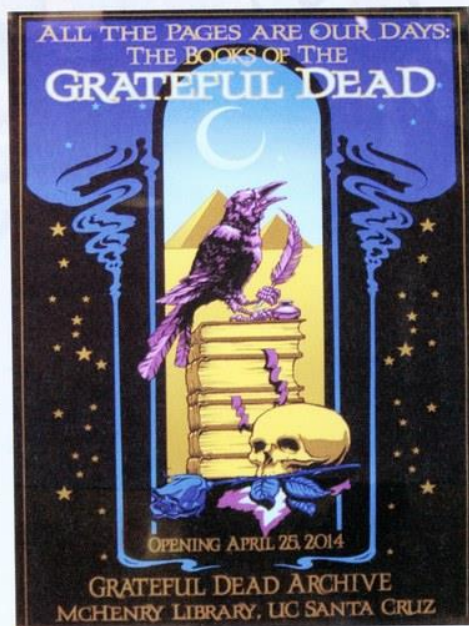
## SANTA CRUZ'S GRATEFUL DEAD ARCHIVES: NOTES FROM THEIR TRIP ALONG THE GOLDEN ROAD

By Peter Crooks

Earlier this year, more than 100,000 music fans packed Santa Clara's Levi's Stadium for two sold-out concerts by the Grateful Dead. These "Fare Thee Well" shows, scheduled to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the band, gave Deadheads one last chance to spin and noodle to the spiritual jams of their favorite band. The Santa Clara shows, and a trio of concerts in Chicago over Fourth of July weekend, were a smashing success. A half-century after the Dead's Bay Area beginnings, the band was the hottest concert ticket of summer 2015.

The concerts also gave thousands of younger music lovers — mostly those who came of age after the 1995 passing of guitarist Jerry Garcia — a chance to experience the whole Grateful Dead trip, from the grilled cheese sandwiches in the parking lot to the cosmic rhythms of the "Drums and Space" segment of the second set of every Dead show.

Should these newly converted Deadheads want to dig deeper into the band's cultural impact, they would be advised to head west to UC Santa Cruz, where McHenry Library houses the official Grateful Dead Archive. The



(Above) "All the Pages Are Our Days: The Books of the Grateful Dead" includes a screenplay by Jerry Garcia, Bob Weir's children's books, and works by Grateful Dead lyricist Robert Hunter.

Dead gifted its voluminous archives, which had been kept in storage near the band's San Rafael headquarters, to UCSC in 2008, feeling that the materials would be of value to the legions of fans who have followed the band to concert halls, arenas, and amphitheatres around the world.

"We looked around, and UC Santa Cruz seems the best possible home," said Dead guitarist Bob Weir in 2008, during the announcement of the archive donation. "If you ever wrote the Grateful Dead a letter, you'll probably find it there."

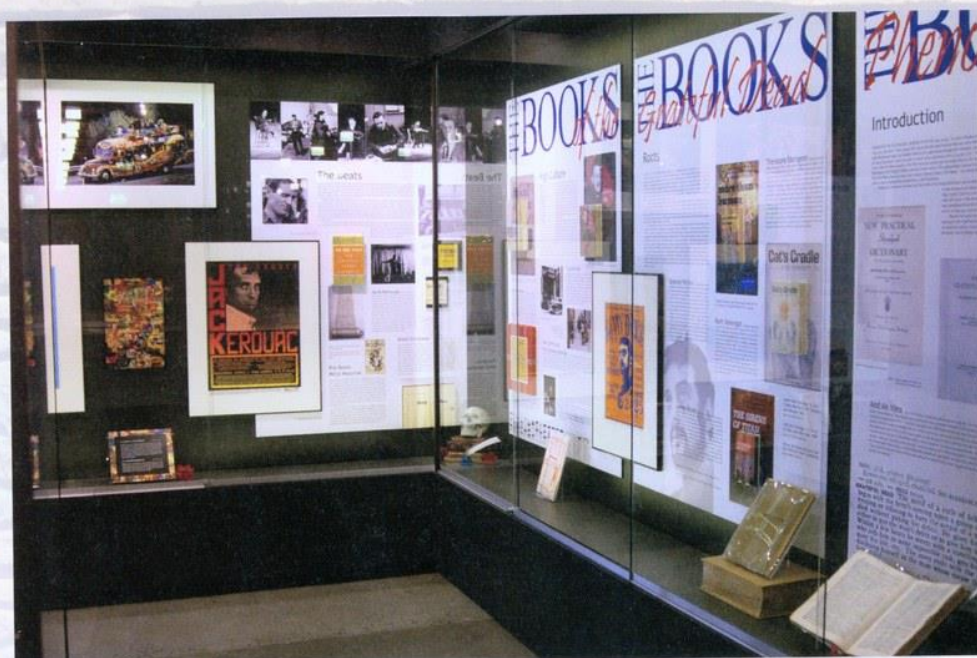
As I parked near McHenry Library on the UCSC campus, I felt a giddy excitement to visit the Dead archives for the first time. It wasn't quite the same feeling as my first Dead concert, a summer of 1992 show at Mountain View's Shoreline Amphitheater. That was a disappointing event, due to a monstrous Friday night traffic jam that caused my group to miss the entire first set. This time, walking through the redwoods toward the library stoked my inner sociologist, the part of my brain that always found the culture around the Dead to be as fascinating, if not more so, than the band's music.

On the second floor of McHenry Library, I discovered Dead Central, a

Poster: ©Richard Biffle/ Ol Crow Studio 2015

PHOTOGRAPHS MICKEY CARROLL



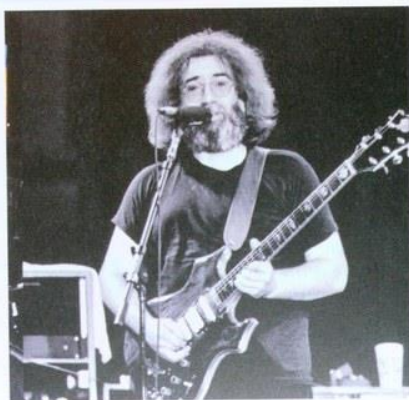


(Above) From Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Allen Ginsberg to Lenny Bruce, this Archive exhibit provides background on 60s culture and its literary influences on the Grateful Dead.

1,400-square-foot display area dedicated to exhibitions from the archives. The current exhibit recognizes the Grateful Dead's intersection with literature. Books about the band, life in the 1960s, and hippie culture are on display amongst concert posters, fan art, and psychedelic memorabilia. As I stared at book covers, I was reminded of an interview I had with Florida author Carl Hiaasen, whose hilarious crime novels were favorites of Jerry Garcia. I asked him about the "Box of Rain" lyrics he had included in a scene from his 1995 novel, "Stormy Weather." "I was invited to be on stage during a Dead show," Hiaasen told me. "As a huge music fan, and fan of the Dead, it was an incredible thrill."

Photo: © Grateful Dead Archives 2015

As I stood in Dead Central reminiscing about a favorite writer intersecting with a favorite guitarist, I was greeted by UCSC's official Grateful Dead archivist, Nick Meriwether. At first glance, Meriwether appears much more academic than hippie, with his neatly pressed dress shirt, short hair, and khakis. In



(Above) Jerry Garcia, one of Grateful Dead's founders, performed with the band for his entire thirty-year career (1965–1995).



Poster: © Wes Wilson 1967

(Above) Promoter Bill Graham was well known for the eclectic blend of performers he brought to San Francisco's Fillmore Auditorium. This bill mixed a Chicago blues legend, a L.A. boogie-blues band, and the San Francisco rock music of the Grateful Dead.



fact, he is wildly qualified for the position, as an archivist and library scientist and as a Deadhead.

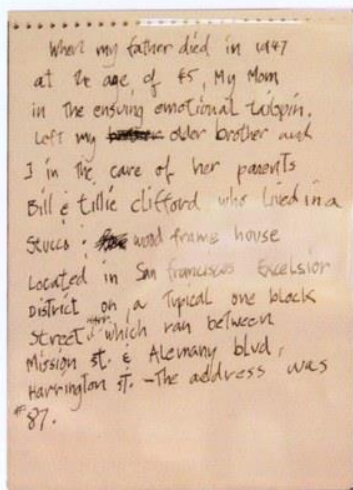
"I was entranced from the first time I heard their music because there was an intelligence that was enormously appealing," said Meriweather, who was introduced to the Dead by his college roommate. "It was among the most intelligent music in a popular idiom that I had ever heard. I was particularly taken by the song 'Wharf Rat,' the way the music and the lyrics worked together."

Meriweather attended his first of 88 Dead concerts in the mid-1980s. Before eventually moving from South Carolina to Santa Cruz to oversee the Dead archives, he edited several outstanding tomes about Dead culture, including "All Grateful Instruments: The Contexts of the Grateful Dead Phenomenon," "Dead Letters: Essays on the Grateful Dead Phenomenon," and "Studying the Dead: The Grateful Dead Scholars Caucus, An Informal History."

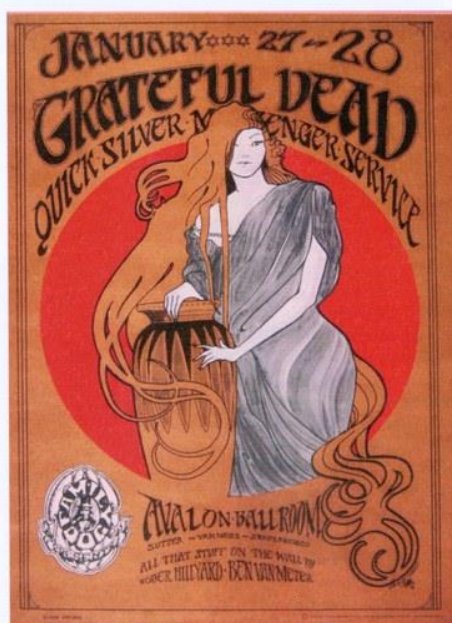
After a quick tour of Dead Central, Meriweather and I sat down to discuss the importance of preserving the band's archives. Meriweather's eyes lit up during a discussion about the Grateful Dead's appearance in the concert film, "Festival Express." Shot in the summer of 1970, the film documented a concert tour across Canada. The festival featured the Dead sharing a train with Janis Joplin, The Band, and other acts of the time. The tour's performances were spectacular,



(Above) The Lyrics of the Dead. Robert Hunter, one of Jerry Garcia's closest friends, contributed many of the band's most renowned lyrics including the line "What a long, strange trip it's been" from their song "Truckin'", which held a place in the Top 100 for eight weeks.



© Grateful Dead Archives 2015



Poster: © Rhino Records/Mouse/Kelly Studios 1967

(Above) The Family Dog and Chet Helms' Avalon Ballroom provided a venue for live music in San Francisco. Janis Joplin and The Quicksilver Messenger Service shared this bill in 1967.

(Left) A hand-written draft sheet by Jerry Garcia for his book *Harrington Street* describes his home's location in San Francisco.



(Above) Collections of memoirs by both band members and loyal associates fill one of the Archive's displays.

but the concerts were a financial bust. Consequently, the footage was shelved — and long thought to be lost — until it was miraculously resurrected and released in theaters in 2003. The documentary features amazing footage of the Dead jamming on the train, along with quiet moments featuring Jerry Garcia flirting with Janis Joplin.

"Festival Express" is just one nugget—albeit a serious nugget—that could have been lost to time had it not been preserved by archivists," Meriwether said. "It is amazing how fragile history is." The copious content held within the Grateful Dead archives has incredible value as a record of the 1960s and the Dead's place within the counterculture movement, he said.

"I see the Grateful Dead and its archives offering extraordinary opportunities for scholars to explore a host of different cultural issues and questions that are otherwise very difficult to address and answer," Meriwether continued. "These archives are so relevant to America's cultural heritage from the 1960s. Having these scholarly resources will be able to insure an honest accounting of the past."

Another celebrated expert on Dead history, music journalist David Gans, said UCSC made the perfect choice by hiring Meri-

weather to oversee the archives.

"Nick is so qualified and so committed to the culture. I was pleased beyond belief when I heard he had been hired. He absolutely knows his stuff," said Gans, longtime host of the syndicated radio show "The Grateful Dead Hour" and co-host of the satellite radio show "Tales from the Golden Road."

Gans recalled his first visit to the UCSC archives, when he came across one of the myriad treasures that will fascinate true Deadheads. In Gans' case, it was a typewritten letter sent by Phil McKernan, the father of Ron "Pigpen" McKernan. "Pigpen" was a founding member of the Dead who passed away in 1973; Phil McKernan was a longtime radio DJ whose heart was broken by his 27-year-old son's death.

"It was so fascinating to read it, to realize that the band had kept it for all those years," said Gans. "The letter was the father's way of making peace with the band."

Gans, who attended the only Dead concert in the Santa Cruz region — a 1983 show in Watsonville — also emphasizes the value of the archives as documentation of the Grateful Dead's success as an independent business.

"There are amazing records of the band's business meetings," said Gans. "It's a fact



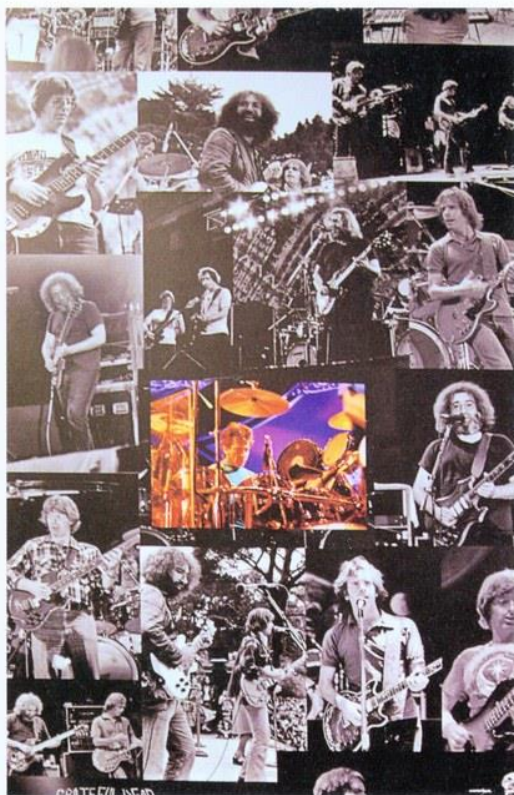


Photo: © Grateful Dead Archives 2015

(Above) The Grateful Dead Archives consists of thousands of items including one of the largest collection of performance photographs exhibited anywhere.

that they were a fascinating business model and a powerful economic model. They were making \$50 million a year in merchandising and ticket sales. They ran their own ticketing operation. They were incredibly creative and successful as a business entity, and the fact that the archive is there makes it possible for scholars to look at all of this and understand it in the future. That has great value.”

#### If You Go

Check out the online archive at [gdao.com](http://gdao.com) or visit the campus archive on campus.

##### Dead Central

**Where:** UCSC, McHenry Library, second floor

**Hours:** Monday-Thursday 8 a.m.-midnight,

Friday 8 a.m.-8 p.m., Sat 11 a.m.-7 p.m.

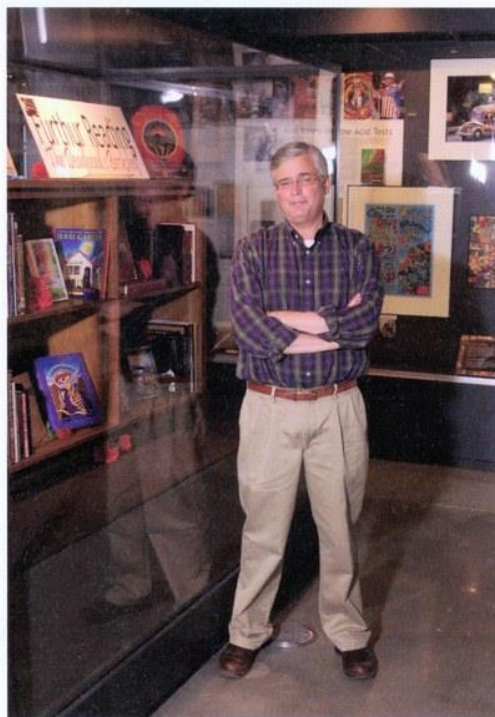
Sun 10 a.m.-midnight. (During school breaks: Mon-Fri 8 a.m.-5 p.m.)

**Admission:** Free

**Info:** <http://library.ucsc.edu/grateful-dead-archive>



(Above) Further Reading. A tribute to author Ken Kesey, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, was very visible in Santa Cruz during the mid 60s and held his First Acid Test at his Spread in Soquel at which the Warlocks (soon to be the Grateful Dead) provided the music.



(Above) Though not dressed in tie-dye, archivist Nicholas Meriwether qualifies as a bona fide “Dead Head.” Meriwether, the author of several scholarly volumes on the Grateful Dead, was chosen from hundreds of applicants for the Archive’s coveted position.