

UCSC Special Collections Are For Use

"I suppose some people might think of library work as a dusty and dull vocation," says enthusiastic Rita (Mrs. Thomas) Bottoms, Special Collections librarian at UCSC. "They don't know what they're missing."

"Take Special Collections, for instance. One minute you're on the phone to New York, hot on the trail of an out-of-print book you've been tracking down for months; the next minute you're talking to a bibliophile who has one of the world's greatest collections of a particular author . . . his tales of slow, painstaking acquisition through the years are fascinating; then a student comes in to research an exciting idea for a paper, or a member of the local community asks about the fine points of a particular publication. I'm just thrilled with every phase of my work."

A graduate of UCLA with a B.A. in history and a Master's Degree in Library Science, Rita came to UCSC in 1965, just before the fledgling UC campus received its first students. It was her first full-time, professional employment. She spent her first year at the reference desk with a side interest in the special collections the new University Library was then acquiring. In 1966, she became Special Collections librarian.

Enthusiastic about her job as guardian of UCSC's rare and/or out-of-print books and documents, Rita says, "I just got to the right place at the right time. I enjoy everyone who comes in. Anyone is welcome to use our materials. We require no passes, permission or credentials of any kind."

Rita has a "thing" about putting UCSC's Special Collections to use. "When I was a student," she recalls, "I was simply curious to see a rare first edition of a particular book. It was in a Special Collections Library. Because I had no authorized permission or academic need to use that book, I wasn't allowed even a glimpse of it. Most Special Collections are handled this way. I was crushed and have never really recovered from the experience."

"I suppose I have what might be called a 'maverick' philosophy, but at UCSC, a layman who appreciates fine printing or enjoys handling a rare and beautiful book is just as important to use as the scholar or student doing research."

This is not to say that there is anything

lax or haphazard about the control of materials in UCSC's Special Collections. Quite the contrary. No pens are allowed to be used in the confines of Special Collections,



Librarian Rita Bottoms reviews new additions to UCSC Special Collections. Table and stool are from former San Francisco Office of the Henry Cowell Company.

only pencils, and Rita and her associate keep a close but circumspect eye on all materials in hands other than their own. "I don't believe in 'DO NOT' signs," says Rita. "We simply tell people what the rules are; because the rules are reasonable and obviously aimed at protecting the materials we have, we've never had any problems. People understand the purposes of this room and its contents and respect them."

Any book or document taken from the room for any reason is always in the personal custody of either Rita or her assistant, Carol (Mrs. Don) Champion. None of the material circulates.

If a visitor is interested in seeing an entire collection or is not sure of the exact poem or work he wants, either Rita or Carol accompanies him to one of the locked, temperature-humidity controlled rooms in which all Special Collections materials are kept. When not in use, the rooms are kept dark to prevent the possible fading of pages and bindings from a light source.

As a subdivision of UCSC's University Library, Special Collections has been fortunate in attracting a number of priceless collections to its stewardship. A major gift is the Norman and Charlotte Strouse Collection of Thomas Carlyle, an extensive library of works by and about the Scots essayist and historian.

With the intention that his complete archive reside at the UCSC campus, local science fiction writer Robert A. Heinlein has designated Special Collections as the repository for the original manuscripts and corrected proofs of all of his many books. Regularly augmented by the author, the collection will eventually consist of his notes, outlines and papers, his personal and business correspondence, and both his private and working library.

One of the major research collections is the Lick Observatory Archive, which dates from the last quarter of the 19th century.

Perhaps the most used collection is a body of Santa Cruz County and Monterey Bay Area historical pieces. Included are tape recorded interviews with long-time residents of the area, done by Elizabeth (Mrs. Anthony) Calciano, editor of the Regional History Project; more than 5,000 photographs of Santa Cruz County, dating

back to the 19th century, and a series of pre-Statehood documents concerning the county placed on deposit with UCSC's University Library by resolution of the County Board of Supervisors. The latter are carefully stored in acid-free folders and kept in acid-free document cases in the Special Collections vault.

Strong collections have also been made of the works of modern poets and writers, such as Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, John Steinbeck, Jack London, Robinson Jeffers, Robert Duncan, and William Everson (Brother Antoninus).

Extensive holdings of California history and literature, as well as rare materials relating to the South Pacific form an important part of Special Collections.

Another area of particular interest, according to Rita, is publications of small presses, such as the Perishable Press of Mount Horeb, Wisconsin; the Oyez of Berkeley, and the Allen Press of Kentfield. "These presses are currently producing works of the highest quality," notes Rita.

Fittingly, Special Collections is also a storehouse for materials published by or circulated on the UCSC campus.

Special Collections also houses a press room, containing an Acorn handpress (circa 1830), the gift of Mr. and Mrs. Lewis M. Allen of Kentfield and a more modern Chandler and Price press and a variety of type fonts and type cabinets, the gifts of Mr. and Mrs. Norman Strouse of St. Helena. Other type fonts, cabinets, and turtles (typesetting tables) were donated to the enterprise by the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian when the local newspaper switched to off-set production. The presses and type have been used by printers Roger Levenson and Adrian Wilson of Berkeley for demonstration purposes, but the campus is anxious to get underway a course offering in the art of handprinting. "All we lack now," laments Rita, "is a competent printer to act as instructor, and funding for the project."

Special Collections is open to the public from 1-5 p.m., Mondays through Fridays, "but we can and do make Special Collections available for group or individual use during off-hours by arrangement," says Rita.