

NO.60 SPRING 2002

BENE LEGERENEWSLETTER OF THE
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The Library Associates

Join more than 6,000 other friends, book lovers, alumni, and faculty who recognize that the influence of a great research library reaches beyond the university it serves to the many communities of which it is a part.

Library Associates receive complimentary copies of the quarterly newsletter *Bene Legere*, as well as invitations to special occasions at the Library. For more information on the Library Associates program, please write or telephone: The Library Development Office, Room 188 Doe Library, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-6000; telephone (510) 642-9377. Or, [check our website](#).

NEWS FROM THE BANCROFT LIBRARY

SEA SERPENTS, CIVIL RIGHTS, SPANISH PALEOGRAPHY AND OTHER TOPICS OF INTEREST

A Day in the Life of Bancroft's Heller Reading Room

Hard to imagine the reading room of an archival and special collections repository standing at the nexus of our modern information age? At The Bancroft Library on the UC Berkeley Campus, these worlds truly collide. Poised next to researchers viewing leaves of Tebtunis papyri, manuscripts of Mark Twain, and letters of Gold Rush pioneers are the latest versions of laptop computers and the rampant but silent scurry of mice--the computer kind--across mousepads. While an occasional researcher approaches printed catalog cards, far more enjoy the powerful search engines of online catalogs and databases to "discover" and view centuries old treasures. *Welcome to A Day in the Life of Bancroft's Reading Room.*

A typical day begins at 7:00 a.m., with staff members opening the building for employees anxious to get a jump-start on the day, and who also prepare the Reading Room for our regular 9:00 a.m. opening. The Reading Room closes to the public at 5:00 p.m., but staff members often remain at work to complete important projects and secure the building for another day.

Archives and special collections repositories have now embraced the distinct advantages provided by information technologies, opening new doors for researchers to our voluminous collections of letters, diaries, manuscripts, and photographs. A fourth grade class in Fresno and a graduate seminar at North Carolina may now both enjoy a new-found access to the images and words of Japanese-American internment victims during World War II; to student protesters of the Free Speech Movement in the 1960s; or pioneers in bioscience and biotechnology during the 1970s.

Access to digital information on rare and unique materials certainly seems to breed increased scholarly inquiry. The once popular telephone number for the Bancroft Reference Desk is now outdone by our email reference address: bancref@library.berkeley.edu

Scholars and graduate students are delighted to identify our extensive holdings on a particular topic--but sometimes disheartened to learn that the entire collection of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition of 1915 (196 cartons, 146 volumes, etc.) or the records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People--Western Region (56 cartons) are not completely digitized and indexed for



their online review. The result is often a combination of telephone and email exchanges with various Bancroft staff, and, more often than not, a personal research visit to thoroughly examine historical collections.

The Reference Desk remains a portal for inquiry, as scholars and students focus, refine, and reconfigure their research projects through conversations with Bancroft staff. Fear of locating no relevant information in our holdings sometimes gives way to dismay at finding long lists of publications, manuscript collections, oral histories, and pictorial materials. For undergraduates--such as the hundreds who visit Bancroft in a given semester through their introductory History 7B course--the journey is as important as the result. Increasingly, faculty members wish to have undergraduates experience the full spectrum of academic research, and Bancroft works with librarians in the Main Library to coordinate this effort.

The Edward H. Heller Reading Room is a place where time may stand still, but scholarly inquiry never stops. As our typical day continues after the 9:00 a.m. opening, some forty to sixty researchers, including undergraduate and graduate students, faculty of all ranks, visiting scholars from around the globe, and a variety of local and regional visitors, may appear. One such day--February 11, 2002--offers a window into the *raison d'être* for The Bancroft Library.



Illustration from "A Report of a Committee of the Linnaean Society of New England, Relative to a Large Marine Animal, Supposed to Be a Serpent, seen near Cape Ann, Massachusetts, in August 1817."

For one researcher, that day is frozen in nineteenth century New England, as he reads the scientific and popular literature of the day to determine contemporary knowledge of large sea creatures. For another, time rests in post-World War II California, and involves an exploration of the blossoming Civil Rights Movement. For yet another researcher, the world focuses on sixteenth century European religious and political discourse.

All this activity keeps the Public Services staff quite busy, including staff members who help register patrons. Staff services include: retrieving and shelving the many books, cartons, and materials requested by researchers; reference desk help for researchers navigating our online catalogs and printed resources; photocopying documents and reproducing photographs and images; and maintaining security and comfort for those who work and study in the Reading Room.

The basic statistics for this sunny Monday in February tell a portion of the story--54 researchers visited the Reading Room and consulted 61 books, 29 cartons of manuscripts, 20 reels of microfilm, 2 pictorial items, and 32 items from the University Archives. Public Services staff produced 350 photocopies of documents, accepted 2 orders for photographic reproductions

for 36 items, approved 5 permissions for publishers to use and cite materials from our collections, requested 23 books and 11 cartons from our off-site storage facility, answered 6 formal written and electronic email inquiries, and responded to continuous reference and research questions throughout the day at the Reference and Registration desks, and via individual emails and phone calls--all the while coordinating the invisible delivery and return of materials from our vaults and shelves to the Reading Room.

On this day The Bancroft Library proudly displayed a new banner. Some eight feet long and three feet high, it proclaimed the opening of a new exhibit celebrating the centennial of Anthropology in California. Bancroft is home to the papers of several preeminent anthropologists including Joseph Grinnell and C. Hart Merriam. Bancroft Director Charles B. Faulhaber also taught his class, Spanish 246 (Spanish Paleography), in one of our seminar rooms, making extensive use of printed and manuscript collections.

It is appropriate that the last individuals in Bancroft this day were a faculty member and his students. The educational value of all that The Bancroft Library collects, preserves, and provides access to --either in manuscript, print, or digital format--supercedes all others. Although Bancroft remained dark and secure until the first staff arrived the next morning, the digital collections and online resources remained "open and ready for business" throughout the night. Statistics for the week of February 10-16 indicate that the Bancroft Website received 10,111 "hits," and that 5,915 of those Web visitors proceeded to explore online information for an extended time period. Bancroft is now a "24/7" online information resource, because the scholarly research process literally never ceases!

One can only wonder what changes the next decade, the next year, or even the next week will bring. But this day, Monday, February 11, has come and gone--and was quite a typical day for The Bancroft Library.

Bancroft staff members on duty February 11, 2002 include: Misato Araki, Emily Balmages, Tony Bliss, Bill Brown, Iris Donovan, Franz Enciso, Matt Gleeson, Laura Gonzales, Amy Hellam, David Kessler, Marisa Libbon, Erica Nordmeier, Dean Smith, Susan Snyder, and Baiba Strads.



Examples of advertising cards produced during 1881-1900. Collecting these souvenir trade cards was quite popular during the 1880s. They were distributed at fairs and expositions, given to customers with a purchase, or were often wrapped in coffee or tea packages. Some trade cards were sold by book stores to collectors so eager to acquire cards that they were willing to pay for them.

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