Grand Opening events

The Library Grand Opening event that a campus-wide committee had spent months planning was a casualty of the state budget crisis. Because of the state’s economic situation, a Grand Opening celebration was considered inappropriate. Instead, a scaled back ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on February 19. Seats for invited dignitaries were set up outside the entrance to the new building under a beautiful, sunny sky. University President John Welty spoke from a podium placed beneath a balloon arch. Other speakers were Dean of Library Services Peter McDonald, two California State University trustees, the Chair of the faculty senate, and the president of Fresno State’s student body government organization. After President Welty and Dean McDonald cut the red ribbon with a giant pair of scissors, people poured into the building, where they were greeted by Library faculty and staff manning a welcome desk. Tours were offered to guests, showing off the highlights of the new building.

A second event specially geared for students took place on February 27. There were tours all day and a scavenger hunt. Prizes were baskets of books, very appropriate for a library.

A third event was held on April 13, a ceremony with the Table Mountain Rancheria tribal council highlighting special features of the building’s décor that were funded by the tribe’s $10 million gift. The most distinctive feature of the building is the four story tower rising above the entrance. It is embellished with perforated metal panels and angled wood lattice woven together to symbolize a traditional Native American basket weave. The design of the hand-crafted granite floor in the entrance was inspired by a stair-step basket pattern. On the third floor, the reading room contains a 9 ft. by 30 ft. glass mural honoring the tribe.

Inaugural exhibition

On May 1, the Madden Library held a reception to celebrate its first exhibition in its spectacular $105 million new building. On view in the second floor Ellipse through May is The Pursuit of Beauty: California Indian Basketry and Art of Ansel Adams.

The show brings together two different art forms that reflect significant influences on the architects’ design for the new library building. The architects were inspired by the grandeur of the mountains ringing the Central Valley and by the art of the Native American peoples who made their homes here. Ansel Adams’ photographs are often considered the best representations of our dramatic scenery, just as the sophisticated basketry designs of the local Indian tribes best represent their artistry. The exhibition features rare Western Mono and Yokuts baskets from the collection of Table Mountain Rancheria, as well as photographs from the collection of Dr. Michael and Jeanne Falke Adams, son and daughter-in-law of Ansel Adams.

An enthusiastic crowd of over 200 people attended the reception adjacent to the 3,700 sq. ft. Ellipse. During a brief program, Library Dean Peter McDonald congratulated the show’s two curators, Jeanne Falke Adams and Bob Pennell, Cultural Resources Director for Table Mountain Rancheria.

Jeanne Adams said that the exhibition includes some of Ansel Adams’ rarest, most important work, as well as iconic images. Jeanne also informed the group of two other Ansel Adams exhibitions currently on view in San Francisco and Carmel. Dr. Michael Adams said that he and Jeanne share in the pride of the stunning new building because they are both Fresno State alumni.

Bob Pennell spoke about the history of the baskets on display, some of which are over 100 years old. He introduced basket weavers in the audience who have maintained and passed on our region’s important weaving traditions. Among them are Ruby Vargas, the mother and mentor of Lois Connor, whose image weaving a gaming basket can be seen on the 32 ft. tall Mediamesh® digital screen that projects through the Library’s glass curtain wall across the Peace Garden. Filmed over a 12 month period, the video shows the artist weaving the basket from start to finish, making this the longest performance art film ever made.
In memoriam

Richard Barnhart:

Richard Barnhart, the Madden Library’s 2008 Donor of the Year, passed away at home in Daly City on April 27. Barnhart was a passionate collector of world’s fair materials and spent his life devoted to amassing an important collection that he later donated to the Special Collections Research Center, augmenting in significant ways the Donald G. Larson Collection on International Expositions and Fairs.

In the official appraisal of his collection, book dealer Marc Selvaggio noted, “In donating this collection to the Special Collections Department of the CSU Fresno Library—home of the Donald Larson World’s Fair Collection, one of the finest collections on the topic in the United States—Mr. Barnhart has enriched and expanded the range and depth of the Larson Collection.” He added, “This impressive collection also represents an outstanding resource for research into this field.”

Barnhart also donated the research files of George R. Leighton, who entrusted his life’s work on world’s fairs to him after his death in 1966. In a 1964 letter to Leighton, Barnhart made a firm commitment “to make our combined collection a major source of information on World’s Fairs.” He also asserted: “I reaffirm that it is my intention to place all such material I collect in a permanent collection at some library where it can be used by all World’s Fair enthusiasts.” This he did more than forty years later, fulfilling a promise he made to Leighton and to himself.

Barnhart was a graduate of St. Ignatius High School in San Francisco and then the University of San Francisco. He spent most of his career as a journalist and editor and as a business instructor at San Francisco State University and Skyline College.

A funeral service for Barnhart was held on May 5 at St. Ignatius Cathedral on the campus of the University of San Francisco. In attendance were Tammy Lau and Don Larson of Fresno, many of Barnhart’s college buddies, lifelong friends, and several of his former students and neighbors. Richard Barnhart is buried at Holy Cross Cemetery in Colma, California.

We at the Madden Library honor Barnhart’s memory by preserving his beloved collection and making it available to researchers all over the world, which was his dearest and most enduring wish.

Professor Lyman Heine:

Professor Lyman Heine, Jr., a member of the Advisory Board of the Madden Library’s Central Valley Political Archive (CVPA), passed away on April 19. Heine was a Professor Emeritus in the Political Science Department at Fresno State where he served with distinction from 1968 until his retirement in 2004. As a member of the CVPA Advisory Board, Heine supported the Madden Library’s efforts to document the political history of the Central Valley through the acquisition of political papers and the recording of oral histories.
Hello Friends,
The new building looks fabulous. Every day I find something new and wonderful about our library that makes all the wait and work of the past few years worthwhile.

The fact that we do not have all of our furnishings, state budget crisis aside, has had hidden benefits. We now know where students want to sit, and how they use different parts of the Library. From this we can better gauge how to lay out the planned furnishings when the reading desks, chairs, and soft seating finally arrive. We are also better able to assign “quiet” status to study spaces where the most students choose to sit.

Starbucks continues to be hugely successful. We’ve also been pleasantly surprised that the foot traffic to the Arne Nixon Center and the Special Collections Research Center are up, despite being sequestered on the upper floors of the South Wing.

It has been a busy time for events. On April 13, those portions of the Library enhanced by Table Mountain Rancheria’s $10 million gift were honored in a private ceremony with tribal elders: the elliptical tower, the 32’ digital screen on the side of the North Wing depicting Mono basket weaver Lois Connor, and the Table Mountain Rancheria Reading Room on the third floor. Our first exhibit, The Pursuit of Beauty: California Indian Basketry and Art of Ansel Adams, also opened that day.

On April 22, the Peace Garden, the newly planted Richard D. Ford Memorial Grove, and Earth Day were all celebrated in one upbeat ceremony in the beautifully landscaped area north of the Library. Two days later the Library held its first gala event, the Outstanding Faculty Publications recognition reception, in the Table Mountain Rancheria Reading Room. On April 29, in front of the Library, Fresno State academics were honored again for the Best in Show contests.

Finally, on May 1, with more than 200 people in attendance, we held a reception for our first exhibition to thank Michael and Jeanne Adams for their generosity in lending some of Ansel Adams’ finest works of art, and the Table Mountain tribe for showing their incomparable baskets in what is arguably a world-class exhibit of exquisite beauty.

We are now in the home stretch to finish the 2008/09 academic year. Thank you all for your support.

On November 14, 2008, Richard Barnhart of Daly City was honored as the Library’s Donor of the Year at the Downtown Club. Barnhart, a lifelong collector of world’s fair materials from 1851 to the present, donated his entire collection to the Special Collections Research Center at Fresno State earlier in the year. Previously, Barnhart donated the world’s fair research files of George R. Leighton, a journalist and editor who had tried to publish a book on the history of world’s fairs back in the 1960s. Together the two collections represented more than 32 boxes full of thousands of items ranging from guidebooks, posters and postcards to correspondence, official reports, rarely seen photographs and world’s fair memorabilia from all international expositions between the Great Exhibition in London, 1851, and the World Expo in Aichi, Japan, 2005.

Richard Barnhart’s gift singlehandedly expands the Donald G. Larson Collection on International Expositions and Fairs to the present (previously it only covered fairs from 1851 to 1940). Donald Larson, who started the collection by donating his own extensive world’s fair collection in 1973, was also honored as the Madden Library’s first-ever Advocate of the Year. It was through Larson that Barnhart’s gift was secured, and their longtime friendship with a shared interest in world’s fairs was also celebrated at the event.

Notables at the event included President John Welty, Congressman Jim Costa, former Congressman John Krebs, and County Supervisor Phil Larson. KMPH 26 Fox News interviewed Larson and aired the piece on the news that evening.
ANCA, the Arne Nixon Center Advocates, hosted a record-breaking crowd of 215 at their seventh annual Secret Garden Party on Sunday, April 19. The Beatrix Potter-themed event was held, appropriately, in Mr. McGregor’s garden—the lovely formal garden of John, Rebecca, and Katharine McGregor, in Fresno’s Old Fig Garden neighborhood. Master Gardeners Jessie Ciancetti, Mary Perez Dong, Sue Kendall, and Sharon Matson welcomed party goers with information about the beautiful flowers and plants. The guests, including people who had attended the Arne Nixon Center’s Beatrix Potter conference earlier in the weekend, came from all over California, from nine other states, from England, and from Fresno, of course.

Special guests included officers of the British-based Beatrix Potter Society; Beatrix Potter herself, as played by Linda Spalding; and Peter Rabbit, aka Milford Miles, wearing a warm, furry costume provided by Petunia’s Place bookstore. Warm was the key word as the afternoon high reached 92˚F, tying an all-time record for the date.

Iced lemonade and champagne helped to keep things cool as Event Chair Cynthia MacDonald welcomed guests. ANCA President Denise Sciandra then emceed, introducing President John Welty, Library Dean Peter McDonald, and director Dan Pessano, who presented five performers from Roger Rocka’s Dinner Theatre singing selections from their upcoming musical “The Wiz.” Howard Watkins was the event photographer; his pictures can be seen at www.arnenixoncenter.org.

The party brought in $20,000 in sponsorships. Funds raised, which are essential in this year of ongoing budget crises, will be used to supplement the Arne Nixon Center’s programs and collection.

“A jolly good time was had by all!” says Jemima Puddle-duck.