UC IRVINE LIBRARIES EXHIBIT

VOICES
of the People

CARING FOR COMMUNITY STORIES IN ARCHIVES

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UC Irvine Libraries' community-centered archives practice (CCAP) aims to address historical underrepresentation and empower communities to document their own stories. Rooted in the history of the Southeast Asian Archive, which was founded in the mid-1980s with a community-centered approach, this practice seeks to foster inclusive historical preservation and transform relationships between academic institutions and local communities. CCAP prioritizes community autonomy in preserving historical records, ensuring communities maintain control over their narratives and materials.

The Libraries' approach is exemplified by CCAP's four **CARE** core principles:

- **C**ollaborative: Sharing authority with communities and respecting their expertise and lived experiences
- **A**ttentive: Addressing inequities in archives and promoting inclusive historical documentation
- **R**esponsive: Adapting archival practices to meet community needs and priorities
- **E**ngaged: Empowering communities to document their histories on their own terms

Demonstrated through past and ongoing initiatives, this exhibit explores the Libraries' CCAP initiative by highlighting partnerships with community organizations and the involvement of UC Irvine students in projects like oral histories and archival processing.

Curated by
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Designed by
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Collaborative

through shared authority

IN A COMMUNITY-CENTERED APPROACH, the institution focuses on shared authority, making decisions together and respecting the value, expertise, and perspective brought to the partnership by the community.

"We trust in community expertise and lived experience as the impetus for building inclusive, community-centered archives."

— UC Irvine Libraries Orange County and Southeast Asian Archive Center (OC&SEAA)

1-3. **LGBTQ CENTER OC**

Image courtesy of the LGBTQ Center OC.

In 2022, UC Irvine Libraries supported the LGBTQ Center OC's vision to empower youth to tell their identity stories. For the "Mapping Orange County's LGBTQ+ Youth Through Photographs" project, UC Irvine undergraduate students, mentored by Libraries and LGBTQ Center OC staff, trained LGBTQ+ youth in oral history techniques. They helped collect community stories and photos, which were used to create an interactive StoryMap combining narratives with geographic data.

4. ***SHARING COMFORT AND CARE: STORIES OF MIGRATION, HEALTH, AND FOODWAYS IN CAMBODIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER DIASPORAS***. Edited by Shiphrah Fepulea'i, Shine Kim, and Phuc Duy Nhu To. 2021.

Led by UC Irvine faculty and staff in collaboration with The Cambodian Family and Empowering Pacific Islander Communities organizations, this initiative explored the intergenerational and intercultural sharing of stories related to migration, healthcare, and food within the Cambodian and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (NHPI) communities. From 2020–2021, student and alumni researchers conducted oral history interviews, created digital StoryMaps, and collected recipes into a cookbook.

6-8. STORIES FROM THE SEA

"Seals in the Sea," by Kaye Bilbao Regalado, inspired by the interviews she conducted during the Stories from the Sea project.

A collaboration of the UC Irvine Libraries, Newport Beach Public Library Foundation, and UC Irvine's Humanities Center, Center for Storytelling, and Department of History, this project taught UC Irvine students to conduct, record, and analyze interviews about sea-related experiences. The participating students creatively interpreted their collected oral histories through various media, including visual art, poetry, and film.

Attentive

to inequities reflected in archives

AN INSTITUTION SHOULD SEEK TO UNDERSTAND how communities have been misrepresented, absent, or maligned in historical documentation.

"Not seeing myself and my community reflected in my studies at school or in the media made me feel disconnected and invalidated. Taking this course has really changed my perspective and empowered me to consider my family's background and my community's history as a valid and significant part of American history."

— UC Irvine student CCAP workshop participant

9-10. PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHOPS

Vietnamese Prom flyer, June 28, 1987. Southeast Asian Archive, UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

UC Irvine students looking at primary sources in the OC&SEAA, c. 2018.

The absence of diverse representation in historical records can profoundly impact individuals and communities. To address this, we take a community-centered approach to primary source workshops. These initiatives teach primary source literacy and emphasize the importance of inclusive historical documentation. During hands-on workshops with archival items, the objective is to present materials that resonate with students' diverse backgrounds, foster meaningful connections to history, and encourage critical thinking about representation in archives.

11-12. CCAP IMMERSIVE STUDENT SCHOLAR EXPERIENCE

CCAP student scholars working on a project at LibroMobile, 2024. Courtesy of LibroMobile Arts Cooperative.

As part of a 10-week, paid opportunity, UC Irvine undergraduate students collaborate with community-based organizations across Orange County. These partnerships focus on community-driven archival initiatives that preserve and enhance access to the rich histories of local communities.

13. PRISONPANDEMIC

Courtesy of PrisonPandemic. Image credit: Genesis Silva and Elena Mo.

Every archive has gaps, and all communities possess unique stories deserving preservation. PrisonPandemic, a collaborative initiative between UC Irvine Libraries and UC Irvine faculty, students, and staff, addresses one such gap. This project aims to document and preserve the experiences of individuals within California's prison system during the COVID-19 pandemic. It captures the voices of incarcerated people, their families, loved ones, and facility staff, offering a comprehensive view of how the pandemic affected this often overlooked population.

Responsive

to the community's needs

AN INSTITUTION MUST BE FLEXIBLE, be adaptable, and take an iterative and ethical approach to responding to how community memory and evidence are preserved, described, and made accessible. This means being willing to bend and stretch how archival work is defined to reflect what matters to the community.

"I think CCAP is one of the very few initiatives that I have encountered that says, 'What do you need?' I think that should be the first question when working with the community, regardless of what you have access to, regardless of what your intentions are. CCAP allowed us to do things on our terms."

— Sarah García, founder of LibroMobile Arts Cooperative

14-16. SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH

Second Baptist Church History, 1923 thru 2019: Celebrating 97 Years, 2019. Courtesy of Second Baptist Church of Santa Ana.

The archival collection of the Second Baptist Church (SBC) of Santa Ana documents its more than 100-year history in Orange County. Founded in 1923 by Julia Sullivan and 12 congregation members, SBC served as a safe space for the Black community during racial segregation. The Libraries' collaboration with SBC is rooted in a noncustodial approach. Over the past several years, CCAP student scholars have inventoried and organized parts of SBC's collection, including clippings, photos, programs, plaques, and audiovisual materials. Once rehoused, the collection is returned to SBC.

17-19. VIETRISE

Instagram post promoting VietRISE's political tours of Little Saigon, 2025.

Instagram post from VietRISE's #KeepAnHome campaign, advocating for justice for community member An Nguyen, 2022

Founded in 2018, VietRISE is a community organizing and advocacy organization that seeks to advance social justice and build power with working-class Vietnamese and immigrant communities in Orange County. CCAP student scholars have archived VietRISE materials and conducted oral history interviews with community members. This documentation contributed to the creation of a political tour of Little Saigon and other initiatives that VietRISE has determined are effective ways to share the histories of the region.

20-22. LIBROMOBILE ARTS COOPERATIVE

LibroMobile book cart. Courtesy of LibroMobile Arts Cooperative.

"How to Oral History" zine, 2023. Courtesy of LibroMobile Arts Cooperative.

Founded by Sarah Rafael García in 2016, LibroMobile began as a pushcart in Downtown Santa Ana to honor working-class paleteros and fruteros (ice cream and fruit street vendors). Originally focused on Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) writers and literary arts, it has grown into a bookstore and cultural center offering free reading and writing programs, visual exhibits, and creative workshops in Santa Ana and nearby areas. CCAP student scholars have collaborated with LibroMobile to create instructional zines and videos in English and Spanish on conducting oral histories that teach community members how to record and manage their own histories.

Engaged

with the divergent priorities of communities

COMMUNITY-CENTERED ARCHIVES PRACTICE must vary depending on the needs of each community, from the level of involvement by specific contributors to decisions about what archival material to collect.

"I learned that the documentation of histories from marginalized communities is important in creating new knowledges. In this way, it is even more powerful to have communities themselves document their own history on their own terms."

— UC Irvine student CCAP workshop participant

23. AN EDUCATOR'S GUIDE TO ORANGE COUNTY

A collaborative curriculum project, this initiative sought to foster a more inclusive understanding of the region's past and present. Involving the authors of the book *A People's Guide to Orange County*, Educate to Empower, Groundswell, UC Irvine Libraries, UC Irvine Teacher Academy, UC Irvine History Project, and Heritage Museum of Orange County, the project supported educators across various disciplines and grade levels in developing teaching tools to integrate Orange County's multifaceted narrative into their curricula.

24-25. B.A.D.A.A.S. AT UC IRVINE

ESCAPE (Ethnic Students Coalition Against Prejudicial Education), 1991. Cross Cultural Center records, UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

The Beginnings of Activism for the Department of Asian American Studies (B.A.D.A.A.S.) at UC Irvine was a project created for the 25th anniversary of the Asian American Studies Department. By sifting through UC Irvine Libraries' archival material and collecting oral histories of the activists, the group (led by Dr. Judy Wu of Asian American studies and Dr. Thuy Vo Dang, former CCAP co-lead) sought to uncover the foundations of the department. The resulting B.A.D.A.A.S. archival collection, which includes these newly gathered records, is now housed in Special Collections and Archives. curricula.

26. VOICE PROJECT

"VOICE: Visualizing Our Identities and Cultures for Empowerment" exhibition at the OC&SEAA Center, 2023.

The Visualizing Our Identities and Cultures for Empowerment (VOICE) project (previously known as Through Our Eyes, Hear Our Stories) trained 24 UC Irvine students to become photo-ethnographers to document the experiences of Asian American and Pacific Islander community members during the COVID-19 pandemic in Orange County, California.

27. BLACK PANTHER OAKLAND COMMUNITY SCHOOL RESEARCH CLUSTER

Led by historian Angela LeBlanc-Ernest, with support from Dr. Judy Wu, Dr. Krystal Tribbett, and Desha Dauchan, the Black Panther Oakland Community School Research Cluster (BPOCSRC) annually engages UC Irvine students in exploring the Black Panther Oakland Community School's history. The Libraries play a supportive role, offering workshops, mentorship, and collaborating on events to support students' diverse memory-keeping activities.

Empowering Communities for Over 35 Years

The development of UC Irvine Libraries' CCAP is deeply intertwined with the history of the Southeast Asian Archive (founded in the mid-1980s) and the OC&SEAA Center (opened in 2015). Supported by grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) and Mellon Foundation, this approach has fostered inclusive historical preservation, ensuring representation of traditionally underrepresented voices and transforming relationships between academic institutions and local communities. Over the years, this work has included

- Partnering with local communities on memory keeping initiatives.
- Leading campus workshops on primary sources and community history.
- Providing students with hands-on archival experiences.

These collaborations empower communities to document their own stories while enhancing student engagement with diverse historical perspectives.

28. **SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHIVE (SEAA) FOUNDING CURATOR ANNE FRANK**

Image credit: Allan Helmick.

Orange County is home to the largest Vietnamese community outside Vietnam, along with significant Hmong and Cambodian refugee populations. Recognizing the need to preserve these communities' histories, Anne Frank collaborated with local Southeast Asian leaders to establish the SEAA. This archive documents the experiences of the Southeast Asian diaspora, ensuring their stories are preserved for future generations.

29-30. SEAA VERTICAL FILE COLLECTION

Cambodian Humanitarian Organization for Peace on Earth (HOPE), 1998. SEAA Vertical File Collection, UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

25th Anniversary of the Fall of Saigon, 1975–2000. SEAA Vertical File Collection, UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives.

The cornerstone of SEAA, this collection is an eclectic accumulation of thousands of items that document the life of Southeast Asian American communities. A wide range of topics is covered in the collection including cultural events, pertinent issues of the day, organizations and businesses, student activities, local politics, health concerns, and family relations.

31. PRIMARY SOURCE INSTRUCTION IN LANGSON LIBRARY

Image credit: Thuy Vo Dang.

Former Southeast Asian Archive Curator Thuy Vo Dang teaches a group of students in an old SEAA location in Langson Library.

32-34. ORANGE COUNTY AND SOUTHEAST ASIAN ARCHIVE (OC&SEAA) CENTER

Opening ceremony of the OC&SEAA Center, 2015. Image credit: Allan Helmick.

OC&SEAA Center. Image credit: Allan Helmick.

Primary source pop-up display in the OC&SEAA Center, c. 2023. Image credit: Unknown.

As the Southeast Asian Archive grew, so did the need for a larger space. Opened in 2015, the OC&SEAA Center features a flexible reading room space for teaching, events, and research. The center collaborates with partners to curate exhibits, conduct oral and digital history projects, and engage in initiatives to better preserve the memories and records of the UC Irvine campus, the Orange County community, and the Southeast Asian diaspora.

35-36. TRANSFORMING KNOWLEDGE, TRANSFORMING LIBRARIES (TKTL) PROJECT

From Out of Sherwood Forest, c. 1970. Orange County Regional History Collection, UC Irvine Libraries Special Collections and Archives. Primary sources like this underground alternative newspaper are used in Special Collections and Archives' in-class workshops to educate UC Irvine students about the importance of communities telling their own stories.

In 2017, the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) funded the Libraries' three-year TKTL research project, which explored the intersection of academic learning, personal background, and practical archival work in shaping students' perspectives and skills. As part of the project, the Libraries began offering in-class primary source workshops focused on community memory keeping and partnering cohorts of UC Irvine students with community organizations to support historical documentation projects.

37-38. CCAP TEACH INITIATIVE

Students engaging in "circle painting," a collaborative memory-making activity at the OC&SEAA Center, 2015. Through participatory activities like memory-making, CCAP promotes inclusive access to and representation of community histories.

Funded by the Mellon Foundation, the Community-Centered Archives Practice: Transforming Education, Archives, and Community History (CCAP TEACH) initiative seeks to further establish a model for inclusive archival practices that bridge academic resources with community knowledge:

- Train students in archival stewardship and community-centered projects
- Provide funding for community-driven archival projects
- Assess strategies for ethical representation of marginalized histories
- Support academic libraries in implementing community-centered archives practice
- Establish a national coalition of community-centered archives practitioners

History Is Being Told

The Libraries' CCAP initiative prioritizes community autonomy in preserving historical records. This approach ensures that communities maintain control over their own historical narratives and materials, respecting their right to determine how their histories are preserved and shared. Although the Libraries offer repository services when requested, the emphasis remains on supporting communities in stewarding their own historical legacies.

Through the CCAP program, undergraduate students assist various local organizations in processing their archives. This involves supporting the missions of local organizations like the Southern California Library, Vietnamese American Arts and Letters Association (VAALA), The Cambodian Family, and Heritage Museum of Orange County (HMOC) to preserve local history and make valuable records accessible for future generations. At the same time, UC Irvine students gain valuable experience in archival practices.

39. **ARCHIVAL STORAGE BOXES**

    To protect items from light, pests, and environmental damage, materials are placed in acid-free archival folders and boxes. This helps preserve and maintain collection items for future generations.

40. **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA LIBRARY**

    The Southern California Library, founded 60 years ago and based in South Los Angeles, is a community library and archive that documents and makes accessible histories of struggles that challenge racism and other systems of oppression.

41. **THE CAMBODIAN FAMILY**

    Located in Santa Ana, The Cambodian Family is a grassroots, community-based nonprofit that helps refugees and immigrants become socially healthy by improving their lives and their community.

42. VIETNAMESE AMERICAN ARTS AND LETTERS ASSOCIATION

Based in Fountain Valley, VAALA is a community-based nonprofit that works to connect and enrich communities through Vietnamese art and culture.

43. HERITAGE MUSEUM OF ORANGE COUNTY

Heritage Museum of Orange County is a nonprofit history and events center in Santa Ana dedicated to preserving, promoting, and restoring the heritage of Orange County and the surrounding region through educational programs, community events, exhibits, and environmental stewardship opportunities.

44. ARCHIVAL STORAGE MEDIA

Archival collections may include a variety of formats, such as audiovisual materials like cassette tapes, CDs, and DVDs.

One Size Does Not Fit All

CCAP takes a flexible, collaborative approach to preserving community histories. Working closely with diverse organizations and leveraging student involvement, the Libraries support a variety of projects, ranging from oral history collections and creative documentation initiatives to educational tool development and youth engagement through art and reflection. These efforts reimagine how historical information is preserved and shared, ensuring diverse stories are captured for future generations. This community-centered approach recognizes that each group's needs are unique, tailoring preservation methods to best serve each community's vision for their history.

45-46. ORAL HISTORIES

Oral history provides invaluable firsthand accounts of personal experiences, filling gaps in historical records. The Libraries have supported oral history projects for organizations like Viet Rainbow of Orange County (VROC) and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, helping preserve diverse community stories for future generations.

47-50. COMMUNITY RESOURCES

Through CCAP initiatives, UC Irvine undergraduates have collaborated with local organizations to realize their visions for sharing community stories through the creation of unique community resources. A notable example is their work with CRECE Urban Farms, where students helped create a scrapbook chronicling the cultivation and cultural significance of the *cempasúchil* (marigold) flower.

51-52. EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

Example of youth project zine created by UC Irvine students and community youth.

As part of CCAP initiatives, UC Irvine undergraduate students have helped to develop educational tools with community partners. For example, they have supported workshop development with Black Leaders of Orange County and facilitated youth reflection on personal histories through art at Christ Our Redeemer (COR) African Methodist Episcopal Church. These efforts aim to empower young people with tools to tell and preserve their own stories.

Coalition Building Beyond UC Irvine

Our vision is to foster a nationwide coalition of academic institutions dedicated to community-centered archives. A grant from the Mellon Foundation enabled us to initiate this effort by supporting development of a digital hub of resources, hosting gatherings, and awarding strategic subgrants to academic libraries across the country. Creating a robust network of institutions — subawardees, partners, and collaborators — committed to preserving and celebrating local histories and cultures solidifies the ability and responsibility of academic libraries to engage critically and contribute to social justice-focused scholarship, training, pedagogy, and partnerships. Together, this work helps sustain community-centered archival efforts long term.

PARTNERS & COLLABORATORS:

53. **WASHINGTON**

54. **CALIFORNIA — SUBAWARDEE**

    A partnership between a state university and a community organization focuses on archival engagement and processing. This effort aims to support immigrant communities in their journey toward full civic participation by enhancing their political and economic well-being. The project's primary objective is to physically process and describe the community organization's records, making them more accessible and useful.

55. **ARIZONA**

56. **TEXAS — SUBAWARDEE**

    A community-focused historical documentation project aims to celebrate and document the history of community research and service in two neighboring counties. The initiative highlights key milestones, initiatives, and individuals who have contributed to this legacy over a significant period of time.

57. **NEW YORK**

58. **MASSACHUSETTS — SUBAWARDEE**

A university archive, through its community-based digital history program, will collaborate with a teachers' union, a local historical society, and a cultural heritage organization to create new collections of photographs, stories, and videos. This partnership will empower these organizations to sustain the participatory archiving efforts initiated by the digital history program.

59. **PENNSYLVANIA**

60. **MARYLAND**

61. **NORTH CAROLINA — SUBAWARDEES**

• A prepilot initiative pairing college students with local communities to understand the impact of significant global challenges tackles two main questions. (1) It explores how a university's academic library can utilize its resources to document the needs of communities impacted by climate change and a global pandemic, and (2) it seeks to identify the essential elements required to establish a successful pilot program for student curators.

• A heritage preservation project aims to safeguard local religious institutions' materials through digitization, oral history interviews, community genealogy workshops, and organizing their records.

62. **SOUTH CAROLINA — SUBAWARDEE**

An LGBTQIA+ oral histories and archives project focuses on enhancing the outreach component of an institution/community partnership. The project's goals are to (1) identify strategies for increasing representation of and awareness within the LGBTQIA+ community and (2) improve access and utilization of the collection in educational and community settings.

63. **FLORIDA — SUBAWARDEE**

A community archiving project aims to document two historically underrepresented neighborhoods facing demographic changes due to urban socioeconomic shifts. The project focuses on preserving memories and stories from current and former residents to chronicle these evolving historic communities.