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A Visit to the Dr. Seuss Archives at UC San Diego

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A Visit to the Dr. Seuss Archives at UC San Diego

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For more information on the collection, visit:
<http://tinyurl.com/cqdc43>

About ten years ago when I was conducting research on Dr. Seuss, I discovered that his archives were housed at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) in La Jolla. Since then I've wanted to go visit the collection. Little did I know that my dream to visit would come true many years later as a member of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) Special Collections and Bechtel Fellowship Committee. My committee had the opportunity to visit the Dr. Seuss archives during ALA Midwinter in January 2011.

Dr. Seuss, also known as Theodore Geisel, was a long time resident of La Jolla up until his death in 1991. He and his wife Audrey were long time supporters of UCSD libraries. It was his wish to donate his archive collection to the university, which was fulfilled by his wife in 1992. Thanks to other generous gifts from the Geisel's over the years, the main library

building on campus was named and dedicated the Geisel Library in December 1995. The building, designed by William Pereira in 1970 looks as if it's a spaceship ready to take off into orbit, or perhaps something that would come out of a book on outer space, if Dr. Seuss had written one.

The librarian who served as our host displayed all of the materials and communications that were used from *Dr. Seuss' Sleep Book*. Every detail that was involved in the creation of the book was laid out from beginning to end. We saw the original drawings, sketches, proofs, and manuscript drafts for the book. It was interesting to see some of the edited artwork, which had notes and markings on it telling the printer what percentages of colors to use on each page. There were also files that went with the creation of the book that contained all of the written communication and letters between Dr. Seuss and his editors at Random House. I was amazed by the lengthy communication needed for publishing just one book!

The complete Dr. Seuss collection has approximately 8,500 items which date back to 1919, when he was in high school. The items are kept in special map drawers in a climate controlled storage room, along with materials from other special collections housed by the library. The drawers contain the contents from each of Dr. Seuss' books: original artwork, text, communication with his publisher, and other related materials. I even got to take a peek at the original artwork from *The Seven Lady Godivas*, baring their backsides. The collection also contains audio and videotapes, photographs, sculptures, his commercial art, political cartoons from World War II, and other memorabilia. A most impressive piece was the pages from one of his college notebooks decorated with doodles in the margins. A special library display is created annually on the anniversary of Dr. Seuss' birthday, March 2nd. 🌿



The Geisel Library at dusk, looking as if it is about to take off into outer space.



An original sculpture by Dr. Seuss.

