This year the University of California celebrates fifty vibrant years of Southeast Asian Studies on this campus. This exhibit displays some noteworthy treasures of the Library’s extraordinarily rich Southeast Asian collections from and about the six insular countries (Brunei, East Timor, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, and Singapore) and five mainland countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam) in the region.

The University inaugurated its Southeast Asian Studies program in response to an extensive interest in that area in the years following World War II. It also aimed to fulfill a national need to collect publications that were traditionally hard to obtain for U.S. research libraries. With the initial assistance of the Ford Foundation, the Library’s Southeast Asian collections have grown to number over 400,000 volumes and are considered to be the strongest holdings of such materials west of the Mississippi River. These collections emphasize the social sciences and humanities in both western and vernacular languages, with a preponderance of materials published in the second half of the twentieth century. In the past academic year the collections supported over thirty courses in Southeast Asian Studies in fourteen departments.

This exhibit recognizes the scholars who founded the program, their precursors, and those who continue to lead Southeast Asian Studies in Berkeley. It demonstrates the academic achievements of Berkeley Southeast Asianists, often in inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary areas, and also features Berkeley’s theses and dissertations from the past five decades in relevant fields. Through its display of library materials held in the South/Southeast Asia Library, The Bancroft Library, the Media Resources Center, Doe Library and in other campus libraries, the exhibit demonstrates the evolution, breadth, and remarkable success of Southeast Asian scholarship at Berkeley.