‘COMPLACENCY IS NO LONGER AN OPTION’
MacKie-Mason recognize that the work that lies ahead will not be easy. "Racism and systemic oppression are centuries-old problems in this country, woven into the fabric of our nation from the very beginning," we state. "We asked all Library committees to incorporate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion into their work. And we established mandatory implicit bias training for all employees.

The challenges are immense, and we’re not alone in this fight. “Implicit bias ripples through our organization,” we state. “And we can do better to fulfill our promise of inclusivity in how we collect, who we employ, and how we interact with one another.”

To start, we’ve committed to three initial actions: We created a task force on racial justice. We asked all Library committees to incorporate a commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion into their work. And we established mandatory implicit bias training for all employees.

The UC Berkeley Library spent the summer months exploring how we can stand more firmly in opposition to racism, discrimination, and systemic oppression. In step with many forward-looking organizations across the country, we published a statement to define and commit to the initial actions we will take to fight racism in our workplace, within our spaces, and in our support of the communities we serve.

"In many ways, the Library has long strived to be a champion for all — from pioneering a scanning service that creates accessible versions of books to collecting in more than 400 languages to serving as an international leader in the fight for free, immediate access to research," the statement reads. "But in other ways, we’ve fallen short."

Crafting this message was about much more than splashing words on the internet, for all to see. It pushed our organization to have long-overdue conversations about racism and our role in the fight for change — and to direct a critical eye to where we’ve been and where we should go.

"Implicit bias ripples through our organization," we state. "And we can do better to fulfill our promise of inclusivity in how we collect, who we employ, and how we interact with one another."

"Change is a direction, not a destination."

"Racism and systemic oppression are centuries-old problems in this country, woven into the fabric of our nation from the very beginning," we state. "We recognize that the work that lies ahead will not be easy. "Change is a direction, not a destination."

With that in mind, we share with you a Fiat Lux that examines diversity in the Library, casting light on our work, our collections, and the research we (and you, through your generosity) make possible. We hope that the complex topics explored in this issue open up a dialogue on some of the most critical issues of our time.

"Complacency is no longer an option," our message concludes. "We can, and we must, do better."

Read the Library’s statement on racial justice at ucberk.li/justice-statement.
A persistent pandemic. Horrific police brutality against Black people. Smoky skies on what should have been bright September days. These difficult realities have weighed on our minds and our hearts this year. While 2020 hasn’t brought much in the way of positive news, it has accelerated important conversations on science, social justice, and more.

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‘DISCREDIT, DISRUPT, AND DESTROY’

FBI records acquired by the Library reveal violent surveillance of Black leaders and civil rights organizations

STORY BY VIRGIE HOBAN

It was the late 1960s, and J. Edgar Hoover smelled trouble. The status quo — hallowed by hate, sanctioned by Jim Crow — was beginning to crack. Behind the scenes, Hoover’s Federal Bureau of Investigation was keeping watch. In 1967, the FBI quietly unleashed a covert surveillance operation targeting “subversive” civil rights groups and Black leaders, including the Black Panther Party, Martin Luther King Jr., Elijah Muhammad, Malcolm X, and many others.

The objective, according to an FBI memo: to “expose, disrupt, discredit, or otherwise neutralize” the radical fight for Black rights — and Black power.

Details of that sabotage platter internal FBI records, with thousands of pages scattered across a medley of databases. Now, the UC Berkeley Library is working to put those pieces together.

In May, just before the movement for Black lives cascaded over the planet, the Library acquired a digital database of FBI records on the surveillance of African Americans throughout the 20th century, expanding the trove of federal records the Library has assembled over the years. Today, the materials provide not only a window into the FBI’s past abuse, but also an unplanned guide for the Black activists demanding racial justice again, now 50 years later:

“These documents… reveal and confirm the kind of root investment in anti-Blackness and quelling dissent that has long been part of our government structure,” says Leigh Raiford, a professor of African American studies at UC Berkeley. “We can only imagine the extent to which the current administration, and the current FBI, is working to discredit, disrupt, and destroy Black Lives Matter and other movements.

“I’m hoping that a new generation of researchers will learn new lessons for how to oustmate these attempts.” »
One of the biggest lessons contained in the documents is abundantly clear: Whatever you do, don’t let them think you’re a communist.

For Hoover, an Ahab-type character in pursuit of his cursed whale, the mere whiff of such leanings could trigger the dirtiest of tricks in the FBI’s arsenal. “No holds were barred,” said Assistant FBI director William C. Sullivan in his testimony for the U.S. Senate’s Church Committee, as recorded in documents held by the Library. “We have used [these techniques] against Soviet agents. They have used [them] against us.”

The FBI’s surveillance of African Americans and Black rights organizations — whom the FBI called “Black Extremists” or “Black Nationalist Hate Groups” — grew out of the bureau’s larger espionage operation known as COINTELPRO, the now infamous program launched in 1956 to stifle out communists in the United States. (Other radical groups, including socialists and anti-war activists, were soon added to the agenda.)

In Hoover’s view, it went something like this: There were communists in the civil rights movement. Never mind that there were Black people fighting for their lives.

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In Hoover’s view, it was something else: There were communists in the civil rights movement. Never mind that there were Black people fighting for their rights.

“The threat of communism became a way in which to undermine Black radical movements,” says Ula Taylor, a campus professor of African American studies who used underground newspapers held by the Library and FBI surveillance records on the Nation of Islam for her book The Promise of Patriarchy: Women and the Nation of Islam. “All of these Black organizations understood that the way in which the federal government could take down their organization was by being labeled as communists.”

“It was like a double evil,” notes Jesse Silva, scholarly resources manager at the Library. “We have used (these records) against our own people.”

No holds were barred...
It is a moonshot, a mindset, a rallying cry: The UC Berkeley Library aims to digitize and share all 200 million items in its special collections. But in its race to the moon, the Library has, in some ways, already flown too close to the sun. In 2016, the Library shared digital copies of ethnographic documents that include information on the cultural lessons, ceremonies, medicines, and sacred sites of Native California tribes — information that many tribes consider sensitive, and, in the wrong hands, harmful. Following community pushback and backlash, the materials were taken down. In the years since, the Library has rebuilt its digitization program on a foundation of transparency, inclusivity, and respect. This past spring, the Library released a draft of policies and practices to guide the digitization and takedown of Indigenous materials, in close collaboration with tribal members. But this is just a start. On these pages, community members reflect on the Library’s ethical duties as a steward of Native American collections, and how the university can better serve the communities these materials represent.

SENSE AND SENSITIVITY

We as a library community need to work more collaboratively with Native American students on campus and with California Indigenous peoples to share the Library’s rich holdings related to those communities.

Theresa Salazar, curator of Western Americana, The Bancroft Library

“The way the university and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology have handled the ancestral remains of Indigenous communities is grounded in disregard of tribal traditions. The university needs to do much more to recognize and correct these wrongs. There are materials in the archives that contain sacred tribal knowledge. The museum holds many human remains. As a Native woman, as a librarian, as a person who values history, culture, and preservation, I do feel as though the libraries are starting to do more. My main wish is for the libraries to have a Native American archives specialist, someone who is familiar with California Indian tribes and who is familiar with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act policies. This person would be able to interpret the archives to users and be that voice for tribal concern in the room. This is a necessity, and this is something there should be funding out toward. To tribal members, it feels like there’s really no urgency around, ‘We need to hire this person as a way to correct historic wrongs, as a small step to respect the indigenous heritage of this land.’ Colonization is real. The university recognizes it — they say they do. But the Native community on and off campus have been waiting for decades for the university to do something significant. The Library’s new workflows are the first steps toward bringing Native people to our campuses. Including inviting community members to share their opinions is a positive first step in building trust back with tribal members. And that’s where it needs to start. It doesn’t start with digitization. It starts with creating a relationship, and that takes time.”

Melissa Stoner
Native American studies librarian in the Ethnic Studies Library

“Sense and sensitivity are key for the digitization of Indigenous material. When discussing digitization and access, we need to think about the digital world as a future in which we can imagine a future of free access to Indigenous knowledge. So at the other extreme, we can imagine a future in which everything is freely available online. Yet this would create real obstacles for those who wish to make their material that is probably not culturally sensitive, such as grammatical information about Indigenous languages. Clearly the best solution is one that involves creating a new type of stewardship, informed flexibility, and the ability to modify the accessibility of digitized materials. This is easier said than done for collections as deep and heterogeneous as those at the Bancroft.”

Andrew Garrett
UC Berkeley professor of linguistics and director of the campus’ Survey of California and Other Indian Languages

“The Bancroft Library holds a wealth of information for us California Indigenous communities. Our stories, ceremonies, culture, medicines, and the sacred. I don’t imagine our elders who provided the data forecasted how it would be shared. Technology has been a game changer, allowing random people to access delicate information. There is a great deal of culturally sensitive material in these spaces that families living today may not want others to see. On the contrary, if the information were restricted, many of those seeking answers about their heritage would not have access. There is a fine line between the two, and there is no one easy answer for every situation. For starters, there should be a contact list where one can request permission to publish information obtained from sensitive documents. I have heard countless complaints from Indigenous people about academics publishing inaccurate articles about their families without their knowledge or consent. These blunders damage reputations and can even stigmatize tribal efforts for federal recognition. This is not acceptable. There is a need for policies, procedures, and protocols to begin to remedy this ongoing issue. I shared these thoughts with my relative Deborah Morillo, from the yak titu titu yak tilhini Northern Chumash tribe. She had the following suggestion: ‘The Bancroft Library should create an Indian advisory committee of cultural leaders and families of custodians to discuss protocols and access issues’ — an idea I think is worth consideration.”

Quirina Luna Geary
Mutsun and Tamiien Ohlone

“I am no means speaking for the tribal communities that I have worked with, but what has been communicated to me is that the hardest part for communities that have had ethnographies written about them is the issue of ownership and stewardship. To this day, I believe, UC Berkeley and the Bancroft feel they own that information, and it’s theirs to do with whatever they please. We need to raise a flag to say, hold on, this information is culturally sensitive and could cause a lot of harm. The decision of what is culturally fragile should be up to the tribe. And we can all agree 40 people in a tribal community are not going to see things the same way. It’s going to take a while to come to an answer — and they may not come to an answer. The most important thing is to ask before the university takes any action. And if the tribal community says no to that, that is that. The Library’s new policies are a step in the right direction. It would be nice to see those collections be met with invitations for young Native scholars: ‘Come work with these archives.’ I literally hold stories about their grandparents. There is a gratitude for having that information preserved, and also a vulnerability. Staff and faculty at Berkeley need to recognize the intensity of both of these dynamics. For the tribal community, there is so much to be learned and deciphered. The information in these ethnographies is beautiful. But if you have even one tribal community saying this is hurting our community, then you can’t continue to harm that community.”

Mark Johnson ’81, M.S.H. ’00
Author of the senior capstone project “Decolonizing the Bancroft”

“Our Digital Lifecycle Program’s community engagement policy sets forth the ethical foundations governing how and whether we host Indigenous materials online, as well as a clear process for the public to learn more and ask about our decision-making. The principles in that policy apply any time that digitization could create the possibility for harm or exploitation. Merely having transparent ‘ethical principles’ is not enough, though. Those principles need to be carried out in specific ways to establish accountability. That is precisely what we sought out to do in creating the draft of our Indigenous collections local practices. In preparing these practices, we were guided by general ethical commitments as well as the specific recommendations set forth in the UC Berkeley Native American collections report. We developed these practices to recognize the social, cultural, and political contexts in which the materials under our stewardship have been created, collected, and used — and to begin making decisions about access to these materials in consultation with cultural communities, where appropriate. As we work with Native American communities and campus stakeholders to finalize these practices, we hope that our discussions can serve as a springboard for other institutions, leading to more responsible access across the board.”

Rachael Sandberg
The UC Berkeley Library’s scholarly communication officer and program director

THE LIBRARY HOPES TO CONTINUE TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECTS WITH INDIGENOUS CALIFORNIANS, INCLUDING THROUGH THE LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION PROGRAM BREADTH OF LIFE, AND TO PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO WORK WITH NATIVE COMMUNITIES AND INDIVIDUALS IN CAMPUSES INSTRUCTION AND OTHER FORUMS.
It is a moonshot, a mindset, a rallying cry: The UC Berkeley Library aims to digitize and share all 200 million items in its special collections. But in its race to the moon, the Library has, in some ways, already flown too close to the sun. In 2016, the Library released a draft of policies and practices to guide the digitization and take-down of Indigenous materials, in close collaboration with tribal members. But this is just a start. On these pages, community members reflect on the Library’s ethical duties as a steward of Native American collections, and how the university can better serve the communities these materials represent.

“Sense and Sensitivity”

Librarians, researchers, and Native community members discuss ethical access to Indigenous collections

**Compiled by Virgie Hoban**

**We as a library community need to work more collaboratively with Native American students on campus and with California Indigenous peoples to share the Library’s rich holdings related to those communities.**

THERESA SALAZAR, curator of Western Americana, The Bancroft Library

“Sensible and sensitive” is an oxymoron. The Bancroft Library is exploring a way of thinking with my relative Deborah Morillo, the way to say: ‘The Bancroft Library should create an Indian advisory committee of cultural leaders and families of collaborators to discuss protocol and access issues’ — an idea I think is worth consideration.”

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**MARK JOHNSON ’16, M.S.W.**

Author of the senior capstone project “Decolonizing the Bancroft”

“We need to hire this position as a way to correct historic wrongs, as a small step to respect the indigenous heritage of this land. Colonism is real. The university recognizes it — they say they do. But the Native community on and off campus have been waiting for decades for the university to do something significant. The Library’s new workflows are a positive first step in building trust back with tribal members. And that’s where it needs to start. It doesn’t start with digitization. It starts with creating a relationship, and that takes time.”

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**“The way the university and the Phoebe A. Hearst Museum of Anthropology have handled the ancestral remains of Indigenous communities is grounded in disrespect of tribal traditions. The university needs to do much more to recognize and correct these wrongs. There are materials in the archives that contain sacred tribal knowledge. The museum holds many human remains. As a Native woman, as a librarian, as a person who values history, culture, and preservation, I do feel as though the libraries are starting to do more. My main wish is for the libraries to have a Native American archives specialist, someone who is familiar with California Indian tribes and who is familiar with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act policies. This person would be able to interpret the archives to users and be that voice for tribal concern in the room. This is a necessity, and this is something there should be funding out toward. To tribal members, it feels like there’s really no urgency around, ‘We need to hire this position as a way to correct historic wrongs, as a small step to respect the indigenous heritage of this land. Colonism is real. The university recognizes it — they say they do. But the Native community on and off campus have been waiting for decades for the university to do something significant. The Library’s new workflows are a positive first step in building trust back with tribal members. And that’s where it needs to start. It doesn’t start with digitization. It starts with creating a relationship, and that takes time.”**
WAR OF THE WORDS

Library catalog adopts new term for ‘illegal aliens’

STORY BY TOR HAUGAN

Editor’s note: This article contains a term that, while offensive, is included to provide context.

Gisèle Tanasse’s class visits come with an apology. “You’re going to see some things that are really othering and problematic,” says Tanasse, Berkeley’s film and media services librarian, recalling her message to students as she introduces them to the UC Berkeley Library and its online catalog. “And I’m sorry.” The “things” Tanasse is referring to aren’t controversial films or antiquated tomes in the Library’s collections. They’re subject headings, woven into the Library’s catalog itself.

Subject headings usually exist outside of the realm of dinner-table banter. But in recent years, the heading “illegal aliens” and its ilk shot to national attention. After a hard-fought war of the words started by students at Dartmouth College, which would have changed the subject headings used by libraries across the country, the UC Berkeley Library saw an opportunity to act, adopting alternatives to the controversial heading — a step toward greater inclusion.

If the topic of subject headings seems wonky, that’s because it is. But subject headings are also incredibly powerful, bundling materials by topic within and across libraries, and opening up worlds of information that otherwise might be lost through the cracks, for example, in a keyword search. But where do subject headings come from?

Based in Washington, D.C., the Library of Congress is America’s de facto national library. And its subject headings — from “Absentee voting” to “Gynecologic surgery” — serve as the authoritative standard for catalogers in libraries across the country, including UC Berkeley.

These subject headings establish a “controlled vocabulary,” with obvious benefits. As terms inevitably change — “Aeroplanes” becomes “Airplanes,” for example — materials across history on the topic will remain united.

The way the Library’s materials are discovered has changed throughout the years — and so have the terms that are used to describe them.

“That’s kind of the beauty of it,” says Susan Edwards, social welfare librarian and head of the Library’s Social Sciences Division, who started the effort to adopt alternatives to the “illegal aliens” heading at Berkeley. “But the problem with it is it’s incredibly vulnerable to the bias of the times.”

What started as a grassroots effort to drop “Illegal aliens,” a term widely condemned as offensive, from the Library of Congress’ subject headings wound its way to the halls of Congress, only to be thwarted by conservative lawmakers. The pushback was unprecedented: Never before has Congress intervened in the routine, and decidedly mundane, process of updating Library of Congress subject headings.

For now, the Library of Congress’ subject heading remains unchanged. But in the meantime, libraries across the country have taken matters into their own hands. Like some other libraries, Berkeley didn’t scrub “illegal aliens” from its catalog altogether: Instead, the Library’s IT team layered an alternative subject heading, “Undocumented immigrants,” into the 5,000-plus records with some version of the “illegal aliens” heading.

“It’s not the ideal solution,” says Randal Brandt, head of cataloging at The Bancroft Library. “We hope this is temporary.”

For Robert Toyama, cataloging coordinator at the Ethnic Studies Library, the move is a “teachable moment.”

“What’s important is to familiarize them with the proper terms.”

It was a racist policy enacted over 80 years ago, but its aftermath drags on — all the way to the babies born today, new research shows. Using historical maps and modern birth data, UC Berkeley researchers have found that babies born in California neighborhoods historically redlined — denied federal investments based on the discriminatory lending practices of the 1930s — are now more likely to have poorer health outcomes.

The study was published open access, freely available to the public, through the UC Berkeley Library, ensuring that evidence of redlining’s insidious effects can be shared as widely as possible — and acted upon.

“People often say, ‘That was a racist policy from the 1930s — 80 years have passed, and we don’t do that anymore,’” says Rachel Morello-Frosch, an author of the study and a professor in UC Berkeley’s School of Public Health and the Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management. “Studies like this show that these legacies of structural racism, even though they happened many, many decades ago, are still exerting their health effects today.”

The research team compared publicly available birth outcome data from 2006 to 2015 with maps drawn by the now-defunct Home Owners’ Loan Corp., or HOLC — the government-sponsored body tasked with assessing lending and insurance risks. A dominant factor in those assessments was race, with entire communities of color shaded in bright red.

The new study, published in the open access journal PLOS One, looks specifically at health disparities in Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Oakland. Researchers found that babies born in neighborhoods with worse HOLC grades today experience significantly more cases of preterm birth, small gestational size, and infant mortality.

“The effects of racism are not vanquished by simply changing a law,” says Anthony Nardone, lead author of the PLOS study and a medical student in the UC Berkeley-UCSF Joint Medical Program. “It will take intentional dismantling of power structures, regular critical reflection, and collective action to undo these deeply embedded problems.”

For Morello-Frosch, the goal is for this study, and others like it, to make its way to city planners, public health practitioners, and policymakers who can use the literature to address structural inequities.

That’s why it was so important to make the study freely available to the public.

she says. The study was published open access using funding from the Library’s Berkeley Research Impact Initiative, or BRII, which covers the article processing fees for Berkeley authors publishing in open journals.

“This funding help was essential in enabling us to get that study out there,” Morello-Frosch says. Ultimately, Morello-Frosch and Nardone hope that evidence of redlining’s legacy can help pave the way for justice.

“I hope our study can serve as a bullet point, or a footnote to a bullet point, in the case for reparations and for future housing equity legislation,” Nardone says. “These fights are ongoing and demand justice.”

To support the Library’s open access efforts, contact the Library Development Office at 510-642-9377 or give@library.berkeley.edu.

THE END OF THE LINE

With help from the Library, open access study reveals impact of redlining three generations later

STORY BY VIRGIE HOBAN

Library catalog adopts new term for ‘illegal aliens’

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

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“For me, it’s very important, particularly at a young age, to familiarize them with the proper terms.”

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UC Berkeley undergrad urges us to think before we share

Wong hadn’t avert her eyes. Instead, she immersed herself in the subject, penning a paper as a freshman called herself in the subject, penning “Digital Blackface: How 21st Century Internet Language Reinforces Racism.”

The project not only earned Wong a Library Prize honorable mention in 2019, it has also garnered a big audience, popping up in venues across the internet, from academic papers to Yahoo News. With any luck, Wong hopes her project will raise awareness about the practice, which so often goes unnoticed — and will inspire people to think before they share.

The institution where Wong was a student, UC Berkeley, recently voted to become the first major university to divest its holdings from fossil fuels and its investments in the Amazon. Wong, who was not a part of the decision-making process, has noticed the impact of the decision on the campus.

The paper Wong handed in, “Digital Blackface: How 21st Century Internet Language Reinforces Racism,” was reviewed by the Library Board of Directors and awarded a Library Prize honorable mention. Wong says the award has given her confidence to continue her research.

The project will be supported by the Library Prize, which recognizes student work. Wong says she is grateful for the support and plans to continue her research.

Wong is quick to point out that she didn’t come up with the term “digital blackface,” nor was she the first person to identify it. In fact, the term was popularized by Lauren Michele Jackson, gaining wide prominence with the publication of a seminal (and viral) Tom Vogue article in 2017. “Digital blackface,” Jackson writes, “uses the relative anonymity of online identity to embody blackness.”

Carmen Acevedo Butcher, a full-time lecturer in Berkeley’s College Writing R4B class, remembers Wong approaching her one day after her College Writing R4B class.

“She said, ‘What would you think about a research project on digital blackface?’” Acevedo Butcher recalls. “And something in me went click.”

During her research, Wong turned to course texts, news articles, a meme database, and social media. She also consulted the Library of Congress and the National Black Archives, and searched for peer-reviewed journal articles on the UC Berkeley Library’s website. Every semester, Acevedo Butcher invites librarian Corliss Lee to lead a workshop for her class. Lee teaches students the fundamentals of library research, opening a door to a wealth of information — all in a “magical hour,” Acevedo Butcher says. (Lee also tailor-made a Library research guide for the class.)

“Digging into the nitty-gritty of the research project through both Lee’s workshop and discussions in Acevedo Butcher’s class proved tremendously helpful,” says Wong, who is majoring in business and media studies at Berkeley.

In her paper, Wong contends that people who aren’t Black but lean on expressions and portrayals of Black people to communicate and convey their emotions on the internet co-opt elements of Black culture while, intentionally or not, perpetuating harmful stereotypes. Wong’s project places digital blackface in historical context as a repackaged form of minstrel blackface, a practice dating back to the early 1800s in which white actors would use makeup to play Black characters in stereotypical fashion. But unlike its historical antecedent, digital blackface is easily shared and re-shared, mixed and remixed, in massive volumes. Like advertising or propaganda, Wong states, digital blackface normalizes these caricatured depictions through its sheer ubiquity.


And all the attention has left Wong feeling conflicted. “I feel like this could go to someone else,” she says. Yes, Wong did write an award-winning paper on digital blackface. But she’s clear: It’s not her place to say what digital blackface is and isn’t. But she hopes that a heightened awareness will inspire people to pay closer attention to their own online behavior and other facets of life that might go unexamined.

Which could mean taking that extra step to stop and think before reaching for that GIF that seems just right for your tweet, but actually might be part of a harmful trend. “There are so many other GIFs and memes and ways of speaking you can use to communicate and show love and show your emotions,” Wong says.

To learn more about how you can support undergraduate research, contact the Library Development Office at 510-642-8377 or give@library.berkeley.edu.
You’ve probably seen it before. In fact, if you spend any time on social media, it can seem impossible to avoid, tucked between inspirational quotes on your timeline or infinitely looping in a stream of reaction tweets to the trending topic du jour.

Most troubling of all, you may not have noticed it.

Erinn Wong ’21 had seen it before, too. But it wasn’t until 2017, while watching a New York Times Snapchat video, that she discovered it had a name: “digital blackface.”

In recent years, digital blackface has become a far-reaching phenomenon. It comes in many forms, from turns of phrase in Snapchat Bitmojis to bite-sized TikToks to memes and GIFs. You've probably seen it before — anything from memes and ways of speaking that people who aren’t Black use to communicate and convey their emotions on the internet co-opt elements of Black culture while, intentionally or not, perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

That’s what inspired UC Berkeley undergrad urges us to think before we share

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During her research, Wong turned to course texts, news articles, a meme database, and social media. She also consulted the Library of Congress and the National Black Archives, and searched for peer-reviewed journal articles on the UC Berkeley Library’s website. Every semester, Acevedo Butcher invites librarian Corliss Lee to lead a workshop for her class. Lee teaches students the fundamentals of library research, opening a door to a wealth of information — all in “a magical hour,” Acevedo Butcher says. (Lee also tailor-made a Library research guide for the class.)

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The paper Wong handed in, Acevedo Butcher says, was “groundbreaking” work. But Wong wasn’t finished yet.

A few months later, Wong came back and said she wanted to expand upon her project. “She really, really ran with it,” says Acevedo Butcher, who wrote a glowing statement to support the reworked project’s consideration for the Library Prize. Wong’s work is but one example of the deep dives the Library Prize honors each year. “While I am happy the Library Prize recognizes student work, I am most happy to know it motivates, sparks, and ignites student interest in exploring the university’s extensive research resources,” says Charlene Conrad Liebau ’60, a Rosston Society member of the Library Board, whose endowment makes the Library Prize possible. “For undergraduates, the University Library provides one of those great research opportunities.”

As with all Library Prize honorees, Wong’s finished paper was deposited into eScholarship, the University of California’s open access repository. As of press time, Wong’s paper has racked up nearly 8,500 hits and around 2,500 downloads.

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IN TIMES OF HARDSHIP, RESEARCH FORGES AHEAD

Students flex ingenuity, resourcefulness in winning projects

On trips to museums, Jennifer Yang would look at Chinese paintings, struck by the effortless flow between poems and images. Yang endeavored to explore this connection—the dance between words and visuals in the Chinese artistic tradition—but it was only when she narrowed down her topic that her project began to crystallize. In her paper, “Word and Image in Chinese Literati Tradition: Analysis of The Way, a spiritual path,” Yang focuses on Kim Hwa-Teem’s 2005 work, exploring how the text and imagery intertwine to express the concept of “oneness” of humans and nature. Relying on a range of Western and Chinese sources, Yang’s project grounds her creative thinking and analysis in a rigorous study of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy and Chinese arts.

The look of Portsmouth Square, in San Francisco’s Chinatown, has been in a near-constant state of change. For her project, “Identity Politics and Cultural Placemaking: The Americanization of Portsmouth Squares,” Divya Jain pored over brochures, travel guides, numerous archival images, and other materials, including many from the Ethnic Studies Library, to track the evolution of the square’s design with the changing historical tides. During the Gold Rush—and amid the backlash against immigration from China—the square’s European-inspired design echoed sentiments of exclusion. More recently, the look of the square has mirrored a turn toward inclusivity, with homages to Chinese culture—a vision filtered through an American lens.

Generations of scholars have pointed to the Peace of Westphalia as a turning point in history. As the thinking goes, not only did the peace settlement end the Thirty Years’ War, restoring order in Europe, but it also ushered in modern international relations, built upon the idea of secular state sovereignty. In his paper, “Inventing Westphalia,” Nicholas Pingitore traces the roots of this myth—long held as truth— which stretch and twist across history. Relying upon information gleaned from a range of places, including the digital repository HathiTrust and The Bancroft Library, Pingitore maps the evolution of an idea, casting light on the historical forces and figures at play.

What story does the art in the Oval Office tell for her paper, “The Cowboy in the West Wing: On Western Artworks in the Oval Office,” Sarah Kersting assembled what might be the first inventory of artworks displayed in the Oval Office under each presidential administration. During the course of her research, Kersting corresponded with presidential library historians, studied news photos, and scoured the Library’s digital resources. The Western frontier, Kersting found, is a visual throughline that starts with John F. Kennedy’s Oval Office and works its way to the most presidents’ artistic choices since. While favoring frozen-in-time imagery that signals a rugged self-reliance and bravery, she writes, presidents have glossed over the West’s complicated history and environmental challenges.

You’re on a mountaintop, soaking in the beauty of the valley and bubbling creeks below. Awe-inspiring, right? Yes—but there might be more to that feeling than you think. For her project, “Cultural Variations in the Appraisals of Awe,” Enna Chen examined responses from more than 2,000 people, spanning 26 countries, reflecting on their most intense experiences of awe. Chen’s paper, drawing upon those recollections, plus heaps of research from other scholars, points to a range of differences in how awe is experienced across cultures. For example, those from individualistic cultures, like you see in the Western world, were more likely to attribute the awe they experienced to themselves and not to outside factors—including the supposed awe-inspiring situation itself.

For their project, “Exploring a Decision-Trigger for Maintenance of a Remotely Monitored Arsenic Remediation System Planned for Low-Income Community in Central Valley, CA,” Samyukta Shrivastava and Aarti Viswanathan conducted an experiment, buttressed by Library research, to take on the real-life problem of inequitable access to safe drinking water in California’s Central Valley. The project shows promise of a solution: a system that uses a disposable iron cartridge—to be monitored remotely via a phone app so users know when to replace it—for the process of removing arsenic from groundwater.


The photographs span about a decade, but the stories are timeless. The images, made almost entirely by news photographers, capture moments from the everyday to the extraordinary. People work, celebrate, and mourn. Kids don costumes for Halloween. Protesters call for change. Worshippers rejoice. Familiar faces surface: jazz legend Duke Ellington, politician Willie Brown, Black Panther Party co-founder Bobby Seale. Together, these images make up the photographic collection of African Americans in the San Francisco Bay Area, 1960-1974, collected by James de Tar Abajian. A bibliographer and historian with a lifelong interest in the African American community, Abajian served as the chief librarian of the California Historical Society from 1949 to 1966 and the director of the Martin Luther King Jr. Special Collection at the San Francisco Public Library from 1969 to 1971. The photographs are but one facet of The Bancroft Library’s pictorial collection on African American communities in the Bay Area—an area that Bancroft is actively working to expand, curators say. Other significant collections include David Johnson’s photographs of Black life in San Francisco, particularly the Fillmore district; Black Panther photographs by Stephen Shames; images of Bay Area storefront gospel churches and blues clubs by Michelle Vignes; and Barry Shapiro’s images of Hunters Point in the ’70s and ’80s.
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ON TAP IN FALL 2020

2020 CHARLENE CONRAD LIEBAU LIBRARY PRIZE FOR UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH

UPPER DIVISION PRIZEWINNER

Sarah Yang

Chinese arts.

Buddhist and Taoist philosophy and analysis in a rigorous study of Chinese sources, Yang’s project grounds her creative thinking and analysis in a rigorous study of Buddhist and Taoist philosophy and Chinese arts.

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It was a grand display: On a Saturday in late February, Nobel laureates, Olympic athletes, and campus stalwarts poured into Memorial Stadium, bathed in the soft glow of blue and gold light. The occasion? The launch of the Light the Way: The Campaign for Berkeley, the university’s historic endeavor to raise $6 billion by the end of 2023. At the event, Chancellor Carol Christ illuminated a bold vision for the future. A key part of that future, intertwined with the goal of enriching the undergraduate experience, is the Center for Connected Learning. Taking over the entirety of Moffit Library, the Center for Connected Learning will redefine how a library can serve students in the 21st century, putting at the center of the learning process as they connect with information, technology, and — once the fog of the pandemic has lifted — one another.

AN ANCHOR IN THE STORM

Before the pandemic, Olivia Sandoval ’21 would study at the UC Berkeley Library, favoring the quietude of Main Stacks. “I always loved the Library, but during quarantine I started missing it more and more,” she says. But for Sandoval, the Library is not only a repository of information and (in better times) a ideal place to study — it’s also her workplace. Even in the thrall of the pandemic, the Library remains one of the leading student employers on campus, through its Work-Learn program. Sandoval worked at the information desks in Doe, Moffit, and Main Stacks. This semester, Sandoval’s work includes staffing Oxli Xpress, the Library’s new contactless pickup service. “This is our second year of supporting the Work-Learn program,” says Susan Sturman ’84, a member of the Library Board who, along with her husband, Mark, is offering a $20,000 matching gift to encourage others to give gifts of $50 and above to support the Work-Learn program. “We love it because it gives us the opportunity to support the two things we love most about Cal — the students and the world-class Library!”

COMMUNITY CHEST

For years, the Library has committed to digitizing its bounty of treasures, turning books on shelves into digital renditions that can be accessed anywhere. But nothing has quite underscored the importance of these efforts like the pandemic. Well over 100,000 of the Library’s one-of-a-kind gems are on its Digital Collections website (digital.lib.berkeley.edu), which launched this year. And with full instruction continuing online, the Library has worked tirelessly to provide students with free electronic versions of course readings and videos, digitizing print materials and — in what might be a first for a program of its kind — sharing them nationally. The result is a much-needed dose of financial relief at a time when students are facing steep challenges. “As the pandemic forced the Library to shut down its physical operations, the Library’s digital initiatives ensured that our users could still continue to access and consume the millions of items that we’ve digitized and made available online,” says Salwa Ismail, associate university librarian for digital initiatives and information technology, who oversees the Library’s digitization program. “This is a positive sign of the investments made by the Library, which will benefit our users for generations to come.”

CAMPAIGN CORNER

Library’s latest chapter includes lifeline for students, treasures for all

EVIDENCE OF THE PAST, A WINDOW INTO THE FUTURE

On the path toward racial justice, Library materials line the way

“One spring morning in 2017, I spent a few hours digging through boxes of century-old materials. Returning home that evening, I wrote in my diary, ‘EUREKA at the Bancroft!’ The Bancroft Library houses more than 400 volumes, or around 40 linear feet, of materials related to the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition. I hoped to find materials relating to three of the primary figures in my most recent book, The White Devil’s Daughters. My chance of finding mentions of them in this collection were as slender as a bamboo reed. But the letters were there — and they provided crucial evidence of how these figures opposed racism and fought for social justice. I’m deeply grateful to Berkeley’s world-class library for helping me unearth this inspiring history.” JUlia Flynn Siler, author and council of the Friends of The Bancroft Library member

“When I visited the Bay Area during my junior year of college, I was amazed at the world I saw. I felt like I had been transported to the future: a more ethnically diverse, tolerant place, where the playing field felt less tilted toward any one group. This future became my reality when I enrolled as a student at Cal. As California’s flagship public university and an epicenter of student activism, UC Berkeley has played an outsized role in the movement toward greater racial equality. The Library’s collections document the debates and controversies on campus and in society around ethnic studies, civil rights, and affirmative action. What happens in California and at UC Berkeley foretells what America will see in the coming years. The Library’s books, documents, films, and other materials provide a window into the future of this country.” RAY LIN M.B.A. ’93, M.A. ’93, Library Board member

“The UC Berkeley Library plays an integral part in shaping our understanding of racial justice. A crucial first step to being a racial justice advocate is learning about the history of racism in the United States. This is accomplished through research on systemic racism and oppression of marginalized groups and by, for example, reading factual accounts of slavery and reviewing statistics on racial disparities in the criminal justice system. The intellectual and emotional texture of our discourse around racism and anti-racism is better informed and better shaped by the overwhelming data on systemic racism and the lived experiences of people of color. As notions of inclusion and diversity become more widespread in higher education, it is our duty to ensure that tangible, meaningful, effective actions follow institutional mission statements. The Library plays a key role in our efforts to correct injustices against minority communities and identify how those injustices affect us all.” SAMANTHA RUSHNIS ’20, program administrator and executive assistant for the Executive Leadership Academy, UC Berkeley Center for Studies in Higher Education
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Library’s latest chapter includes lifeline for students, treasures for all
BEHIND THE SCENES
Documentaries shine a light on the Black experience, from everyday racism to the power of stories
BY A. HAMILTON

It was during my freshman year of college, May of 1992, when the Los Angeles riots erupted. Fires blazed, and stores were looted as police tried to regain order. News stations televised vivid images of the city unraveling following the public beating of Rodney King, an unarmed Black man. The scene was like watching a modern-day lynching, pushed out through the media for millions to see.

I grew up in one of two African American families in our neighborhood. When the riots broke out, it seemed like my own frustrations were amplified a hundredfold. The ongoing conflict between Black residents and law enforcement was living proof that the feeling of oppression still lingered in the everyday lives of poor and rich Black Americans.

The savage, inhumane treatment under slavery has affected so many lives, its impact rippling across generations. To mark four centuries since American slavery began, the UC Berkeley Library highlighted documentaries (available through the Library) that help illuminate the Black experience, filling the gaps in history with perspectives that are often overlooked.

Learn about more films that lift and center Black voices at ucberk.lib/400.

American Denial: The Truth Is Deeper Than Black and White (2014)

As a Black person, it’s difficult to explain to someone the racism you experience in life. American Denial: The Truth Is Deeper Than Black and White accomplishes this by making a connection between sociologist Gunnar Myrdal’s observations and contemporary theories on bias. This is an American story that makes sense. Recounting Myrdal’s experiences while investigating Jim Crow racism for his 1944 study, An American Dilemma, the documentary confronts how America continues to fail Black Americans. This documentary is a timely follow-up to Myrdal’s investigation, providing evidence that anti-Blackness is still very much a part of our society.

Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise (2016)

A relatable story about love, heartache, empowerment, and faith, Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise honors the life and work of an African American icon. Offering a rare window into Angelou’s life, the filmmakers explore the purpose and style behind her writing, which embodies the Black experience in the tradition of the slave narrative. The film balances recollections of Angelou’s youth and friendships to explain how she became the woman reflected in her work. As a tribute, the film celebrates Angelou’s eloquence and creativity, along with her achievements in breaking down barriers as an author and a Black woman. If you aren’t familiar with her work, this film may motivate you to change that.