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Sac State part of project to preserve Japanese American history

Sacramento State’s Department of Special Collections and University Archives is participating in a California State University project to digitize and create a website for collections relating to the Japanese American internment during World War II.

The project is funded by a $40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and involves five other CSU campuses: Dominguez Hills, Fresno, San Jose, Northridge and Fullerton.

Sacramento State’s contribution will be textual material from its award-winning Japanese American Archival Collection (JAAC). The JAAC documents the immigration, settlement and internment of Japanese Americans, primarily those who lived in the once-thriving farming community of pre-war Florin in the Sacramento region.

Digitization of the documents and publications in the collection will complement the 1,312 photographs and artifacts already available online in the JAAC ImageBase (http://digital.lib.csus.edu/jaac) that was created by the University Library in 2004.

Throughout the last half century, the archives, libraries, oral history projects and history departments at several CSU campuses have collected archival and manuscript materials, objects and media documenting the forced relocation and internment of 120,000 citizens of Japanese descent during the war. The collections represent approximately 300 linear feet of archival materials that focus on one of the most striking events related to the unconstitutional treatment of minorities in U.S. history.

The central goal of the CSU Japanese American Archives Digitization Planning Project is to identify Japanese American collection materials in six university libraries in need of digitization and develop a “ready-to-go” plan.
“Digitizing the combined collections of rare and unique Japanese American archival material and making them accessible at one website will be a boon to scholars, students and researchers worldwide,” said Julie Thomas, special collections and manuscript librarian.

The NEH grant is the first to be awarded to a CSU library consortium.

For more information about the project, contact Thomas at (916) 278-5240 or jthomas1@csus.edu. For media assistance, call Sacramento State’s Public Affairs office at (916) 278-6156. – Craig Koscho

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