

June 27, 2016 | By Dolores Davies

## Hail to the Chief! Exhibit Showcases UC San Diego Library's Presidential Papers

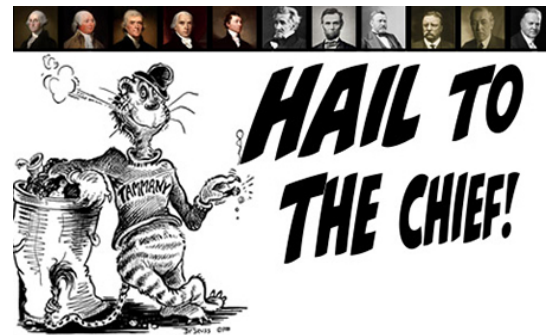
Every four years, American voters go to the polls to cast their ballot (or, increasingly, mail in their ballot) to elect the nation's commander-in-chief.

With less than six months away from this year's presidential election, the UC San Diego Library's Special Collections & Archives has mounted an exhibit of presidential papers that takes the long view, back to the nation's first president, George Washington.

*Hail to the Chief!*— which is on display in Geisel Library until September—includes a wide range of materials from the manuscript and book collections of the Library's Special Collections & Archives. According to Lynda Claassen, director of Special Collections & Archives, although the presidency has never been an area of focus for the Library, a number of intriguing items have accumulated over the years. The Library's holdings now include at least one item related to each of the nation's 43 presidents, said Claassen, from a letter written in 1778 from Valley Forge by founding father George Washington, the first U.S. president, to a citation sent by President Barack Obama to UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep Khosla.

One item featured in the exhibit was actually owned by America's third president, Thomas Jefferson. A copy of C. F. Volney's *Les ruines, ou Meditation sur les revolutions des empires* (1791), a book Jefferson reputedly loved and agreed to translate it into English. Anonymously, as Jefferson was mindful of both controversial issues in the book and the fact that a presidential election year was coming up.

Other highlights of the exhibition include: a broadside address by Thomas Jefferson; a facsimile of Abraham Lincoln's handwritten autobiography; and Ronald Reagan's greetings to beloved children's author Theodor Seuss Geisel, better known as Dr. Seuss, whose personal



*Hail to the Chief!* exhibit on display in Geisel Library until September 2016.

papers—the Dr. Seuss Collection—

are housed in Special Collections & Archives. Also included in *Hail to the Chief* are several items from the Library's Leo Szilard Papers, including the draft of the fateful letter by Albert Einstein to Franklin Roosevelt, which led to the creation of the Manhattan Project and the development of the atomic bomb. John Kennedy's correspondence with atomic scientists, Leo Szilard and Nobelist Harold Urey, reflects Kennedy's interest in and support of science during his senatorial and presidential years. The papers of Harold Urey are also held in the university's Special Collections & Archives. Urey was lured to La Jolla in 1958, where he played a key role in building up the ranks of UC San Diego's science faculty. The nation's 34<sup>th</sup> president, Dwight D. Eisenhower, is represented in the exhibit via his commendation to Jonas Salk—whose personal papers are in the Library's collections—for his discovery of the polio vaccine. A Christmas card from Bill Clinton to the poet David Ignatow, whose papers are held in the Library's Archive for New Poetry, is also on display in the exhibit.

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