

Library acquires 750,000th volume

November 20, 1970

The University of California, San Diego library will reach another milestone at 10:30 a.m., Tuesday, November 24, with the acquisition of "The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling," the 750-thousandth volume in its collection.

The commemorative literary work, selected and purchased by The Friends of the UCSD Library, will be housed in the Mandeville Department of Special Collections. Elliott Cushman, Friends' President, and Dr. Francis Smith, Chairman of the Friends' Acquisitions Committee, will present the gift to UCSD Acting Chancellor Herbert York in a ceremony in the new Central University Library on the UCSD campus.

"The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling," by Henry Fielding, was printed in London in 1749. The gift is a first edition of the six-volume set, "printed for A. Millas, over-against Catharine Street in the Strand," and is beautifully bound in contemporary speckled calf with gilt backs and leather labels. The books, preserved in two cloth drop-boxes, become volumes 750,000 to 750,005 to be added to the UCSD collection.

The addition of the 750-thousandth volume represents a rate of library growth not often equalled in a young university. The libraries at UCSD reached 50,000 volumes only nine years ago, in September, 1961. By April, 1963, there were 100,000 volumes and by May, 1965, 250,000 volumes. The half-millionth book arrived in May, 1968.

According to Ronald Silveira, head of the Mandeville Department of Special Collections, nearly all critics agree on Henry Fielding's place of eminence in English literature and accept "Tom Jones" as Fielding's masterpiece. Many scholars deem the work to be the greatest English novel ever written.

"Tom Jones' is the third of four works of fiction by Fielding and represents the zenith of his literary powers," Silveira said. "It is without doubt the finest English novel of the eighteenth century. Fielding's novel exerted a great influence upon the development of fiction and was much copied by later writers, including Charles Dickens, William Thackeray and George Eliot.

"Fielding is considered to be the founder of the novel of incident and to have broadened the novel form by his development of character and a well-planned plot being an accumulation of episodes. His writing became very popular due to his skilled use of wit, satire and realism," Silveira said.