

Liberian artifacts on display at library

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Over 60 Liberian artifacts from the collection of a UCLA ethnomusicologist are currently on display in the lobby of the Central University Library at the University of California, San Diego in connection with the Black History Month celebration.

The collection, predominantly of and by the Kpelle peoples, belongs to Cynthia Schmidt, a UCLA doctoral candidate. Ms. Schmidt was teaching at Cuttington College, Lofa County, Liberia, in the summer of 1975 when a group of students from UC San Diego traveled to the West African country to participate in an Ethnographic Media Institute conducted by Dr. Beryl Bellman, assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and the Communications Program at UCSD. Schmidt loaned her collection to the UC San Diego library because of the role it plays in community life.

The month-long exhibit also contains artifacts brought back by the UC San Diego students and photographs of the materials being used by the Kpelle in Liberia. A brochure available at the library describes the photographs and features statements from the students on their impressions of their stay in Africa.

The Schmidt collection includes jewelry, ornaments, fish nets, gourds, clay pots and eating utensils. Among the noteworthy items is a medicine shirt, a sacred item of clothing worn by the powerful "medicine man" among the Loma of Liberia. The shirt has been treated with the blood of animals and herbs. Attached to it are cowrie shells, leather, beads and antelope horns (items used for divination).

Coordinator for the library exhibit is Edith Fisher, ethnic studies bibliographer and reference librarian. The exhibition is free and open to the public. Library hours are 8 a.m.-10 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m.-6 p.m., Friday; 9 a.m.-5 p.m., Saturday, and 2-10 p.m., Sunday. For more information, telephone 452-3337.

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