

UCSD Arts Library Celebrates Tom Swift Centennial With Exhibit, Live Performances

July events include live radio drama re-enactments of Tom Swift adventures

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Tom Swift, the fictional boy inventor and adventurer who has been inspiring generations of budding young scientists and innovators since 1910 has hit the 100-year mark.

The UC San Diego Arts Library is paying tribute to Tom Swift and his quirky and amazing inventions with an exhibition of artwork, books, and various other Tom Swift treasures at Geisel Library (on the lower level of the West wing) through July 31, 2010. In addition to the exhibit, UCSD Arts Library outreach coordinator and musician Scott Paulson will orchestrate a live, radio drama re-enactment of "Tom Swift and the Visitor from Planet X" in Geisel Library's Seuss Room on Friday, July 16 at 4 p.m. Actors from San Diego's Write Out Loud will perform along with Paulson, who will provide live music and old-school radio sound effects. Paulson and San Diego's Write Out Loud actors will also perform a live, radio drama re-enactment of "Tom Swift and His Airship" on July 17 at the Tom Swift 100th Anniversary Convention being held in San Diego July 16-18 at the Sheraton Mission Valley.

At the July 16 performance in Geisel Library, guests will be offered treats from the Tom Swift Refreshment Laboratory that will include Pop Rocks, Atomic Fireballs, and aerosol cheese and crackers (suitable for zero gravity space travel). In addition, an Old-School Tom Swift Concession Stand will provide chocolate coins and Payday candy bars (representing the Shopton Bank robbery), Catnip iced tea (mentioned by Tom's father in the story), Mr. Damon's pretzel cigars (a plot point in the story), and breadsticks (from Mrs. Baggert's secret recipe which was in her family for 70 years). Plastic beakers and test tubes will be used to mix new drink combinations.

James Keeline, an avid Tom Swift fan and collector and the impetus behind the Tom Swift 100th Anniversary Convention, will speak about his longtime interest in all things Tom Swift at the Geisel Library event. Keeline, whose knowledge about the Tom Swift character is nothing short of encyclopedic, is working on a biography of Edward Stratemeyer, creator of Tom Swift as well as numerous other popular childrens' series books, including Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and the Bobsey Twins.

"Many scientists and innovators have acknowledged the influence Tom Swift had on them in their formative years," said Keeline. "Steve Wozniak, co-founder of Apple, science fiction writers Robert Heinlein, Isaac Asimov, and adventure writer Clive Cussler were all inspired by Tom Swift to dream and think outside the box. When you consider that a character who was first developed in 1910 invents things like a photo telephone, a flying submarine, and a portable movie camera, it's clear that some of Tom Swift's inventions actually presaged actual technology."

According to Keeline, the Tom Swift Convention will include a primer on the history of the Stratemeyer syndicate (by Keeline), as well as presentations on a host of Tom Swift-centric topics including: the science behind Tom Swift, the artists who illustrated Tom Swift books, and "Tom Swiftie" jokes. The convention will also

include a variety of library and museum tours (including a trip to Geisel Library), and a wide range of Tom Swift memorabilia will be available for purchase.

Tom Swift (and Tom Swift, Jr.) books were published in five series totaling more than 100 volumes. While, like many of the other Stratemeyer books, Tom Swift adventures were written over the years (from 1910 to 2007) not by a single author but by various ghostwriters, the majority of the books were published under the pseudonym of Victor Appleton. While the books have been translated into many languages, according to Keeline, no television shows or feature films have been developed around the Tom Swift character, although several attempts have been made. For more information about the Tom Swift Centennial visit: <http://www.tomswiftenterprises.com/>

The UC San Diego Arts Library, which supports award-winning faculty research and teaching in Music, Theatre and Dance, Visual Arts, and Literature, has been a leader and early adopter in the development and delivery of digital reserves for image, audio, and moving image. As the first major contributor to ARTstor, a digital image database developed to support scholarship in the arts and other disciplines, the Arts Library was the first academic library in the nation to digitize their entire slide collection. The Arts Library is also known for its outstanding contemporary music collections, especially its holdings in experimental and 20th century music, and its lively and novel arts events, including toy piano concerts and not-so-silent film festivals.

The UC San Diego Libraries, ranked among the top 25 public academic research libraries in the nation, play an integral role in advancing and supporting the university's research, teaching, patient care, and public service missions. The nine libraries that comprise the UCSD Library system provide access to more than 7 million digital and print volumes, journals, and multimedia materials to meet the knowledge demands of scholars, students, and members of the public. Each day, more than 7,300 people stream through one of the university's nine libraries. The Libraries' vast resources and services are accessed more than 87,500 times each day via the UCSD Libraries' Web site.

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