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Front Cover: The sparkling new entranceway of the Sutro Library and J. Paul Leonard Libraries on the campus of San Francisco State University.

Back Cover: Oil-on-canvas portrait of Adolph Sutro by A. A. Anderson, 1887.

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“Across the board, researchers, new patrons and returning patrons have unanimously loved the new facilities.”

Diana Kohnke, Librarian, Sutro Library.



The sparkling glass and steel front façade of the new Sutro Library and J. Paul Leonard Library provide an inviting entrance from the Quad of San Francisco State University. The Sutro Library is on the fifth and sixth floors. Courtesy HMC Architects.

The Sutro Library

Now Open in a Sparkling New Location

By Gary F. Kurutz



EDITOR'S NOTE

Mr. Kurutz is the Foundation's executive director. He wishes to express his gratitude to Supervising Librarian II Haleh Motiey, Librarian Diana Kohnke, and Special Assistant Lauranne Lee of the Sutro Library for their cheerful assistance with this issue of the Bulletin.

On August 1, 2012, State Librarian of California Stacey Aldrich greeted and welcomed researchers to the opening of the Sutro Library, the San Francisco branch of the State Library, in its attractive and spacious new home in the heart of San Francisco State University. Located on the fifth and sixth floors of the renovated and expanded J. Paul Leonard Library, this opening marks the end of nearly a century of temporary facilities for this noteworthy public research library bequeathed to the State Library by the heirs of Adolph Sutro. This date also marks the happy conclusion of over a decade of planning and construction. Ms. Aldrich was accompanied by David Cismowski, Debbie Newton, Jarrid Keller, and Gerald Maginnity of the State Library's executive committee along with a joyous Sutro Library staff led by Sutro Supervising Librarian Haleh Motiey. Diana Kohnke, the Sutro Library's invaluable new reference librarian enthusiastically observed, "Across the board, researchers, new patrons and returning patrons have unanimously loved the new facilities."

As researchers approach the J. Paul Leonard Library and look at its gleaming north façade and its inviting entranceway, they will see in large letters "J. Paul Leonard Library / Sutro Library." The main floor of this twenty-first century university library certainly gives a welcoming feeling. In recognition of its comely design, the building's architectural firm, HMC, won the 2012 Project of the Year Award by the Design-Build Institute of the Western Pacific Chapter. The space is filled with light and openness, and lounge chairs encourage study and quiet socialization. It is indeed an inspiring temple of learning. Off to one side is the hallmark of the modern academic library: a coffee service. In another direction, a large iconic letter "i" graces the wall, meaning this is the Information Center. Near the doorway, a sign with an enlargement of the Sutro bookplate leads the researcher to the elevators and the new Sutro facility. After a short trip to the fifth floor, the library patron enters an attractive entrance lobby. On one wall is a beautiful digitized portrait of Adolph Sutro, the amazing San Franciscan who created the nucleus of this great library. The reader will then be greeted by the friendly and helpful Sutro Library staff from behind a handsome and functional information and reference desk. The researcher is now poised to make use of one of the notable libraries of California.

On the north side of the fifth floor is a long bank of windows that overlooks the beautifully landscaped central "quad" of San Francisco State University. Open stacks filled with one of the nation's largest genealogy and United States local history collections beckons the



The attractive entrance to the new facility is graced by windows looking out to the Quad. Students and visitors enjoy comfortable seating and tables for books and a variety of electronic devices. Courtesy HMC Architects.

reader. Once library patrons check their belongings into nearby lockers, a series of handsome wooden tables and comfortable chairs on the north wall are available. In this age of laptops and tablets, all have ready access to power, and the facility is fully equipped for wireless connectivity. Behind the tables are stacks loaded with regional and county histories, directories, gazetteers, family histories, biographies, ship passenger lists, and periodicals.

The new facility provided the State Library's Information Technology Bureau with an opportunity to introduce new technology and equipment into the reading room. Digital and analog resources live comfortably side-by-side. As Kohnke noted, "Although slightly trepidatious about the new technology to begin with, patrons, in the end, embraced and lauded the new book scanners and microfilm scanners. Members of the Daughters of the American Revolution (D.A.R.) were especially

excited about the ability to use the microfilm scanners to obtain clearer and sharper images than before."

To the immediate west of the reference desk is the glass enclosed rare materials reading room. Here scholars studying rare books, manuscripts, maps, and pictorial material are segregated. To protect these invaluable and irreplaceable collections against ever so clever thieves that prey on libraries, researchers are literally locked into the room. Easily viewable from the reference desk, they have to request permission to exit. But, what a treasure trove of incunabula, Hebrew scrolls, botanical drawings, English diurnals, and early nineteenth century Mexican imprints await their eager eyes!

Beyond the rare materials reading room are additional tables and stations for viewing the Sutro's immense collection of microforms of U.S. local histories, city directories, cemetery records, U.S. census

records, and film copies of Sutro Library special collections such as the Mexican pamphlet collection. To help researchers as they gaze into the screens of microform reading machines, the windows are blocked off. This side of the public area is also filled with open stacks containing more genealogical material and a sizeable collection of California history.

As a reminder of the library's origins with Adolph Sutro, the walls that are not covered with bookshelves are embellished with framed reproductions of treasures the great man collected. The most imposing is the aforementioned full-length, seven-foot high digital portrait of Adolph Sutro in the entranceway. This is flanked by a full-color reproduction of Sutro's own cigar box label "Flor de Adolph Sutro." The chromolithograph for his Havana cigars features a profile of Sutro along with his Cliff House, gardens, and baths. On another wall is a beautiful full-size reproduction

(79 x 82 inches) of a colored lithograph of the Sutro Baths; a photograph of Sutro's elegant Cliff House; and the celebrated world map (78 x 50 inches) by Pieter van den Keere, c. 1610. The originals are now securely stored. Another framed picture is an enlargement of a striking photograph showing a very happy Sutro in his library at his home in Sutro Heights. Supplementing these are handsome wood and plexi-glass exhibit cases designed to showcase library treasures. One of these, however, permanently protects a beautiful marble bust of Sutro. The sculpture at one time was actually on display at Sutro's museum in his famous natatorium overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

Elevators take staff and visitors to the top floor of the building. The vast majority of the square footage on this level is devoted to a high security vault housing the Sutro's remarkable rare book and manuscript collection. At last, the books and collections can, figuratively speaking, breathe. They are no longer crammed onto towering compact shelves or double and triple shelved. Furthermore, they will not have to move again. It is indeed an impressive sight to walk into this high security area and see stack after stack of vellum and leather-bound volumes covering scores of fascinating topics from ancient theological tomes to a first edition of Charles Darwin's famous voyage on the *H.M.S. Beagle*. State of the art fire suppression, fire-rated doors, humidity and temperature control, and electronic security will safeguard these precious collections for generations to come.

In the middle of the north side of this floor is an attractive seminar room. Here staff will be able to give orientation sessions and workshops related to collection strengths and the fascinating history of Adolph Sutro and his library. It is also hoped that visiting scholars and other researchers will be able to share information about their own projects and how they are using the library's collections and services. Of course the room is equipped with



internet access and will be able to handle a variety of electronic media. With ever-changing technology, flexibility is the key.

The remainder of this lofty space is devoted to staff and volunteer offices and workrooms. Answering reference questions via email, packing materials for interlibrary loans, processing gifts to the collection, performing minor repairs on books, copying documents, and digitizing collections are just some of the multitude of functions conducted behind the scenes. Staff and volunteers, however, will be working in a cheerful space with new furniture and equipment. Moreover, offices have windows—a real bonus in any work situation. The north side windows overlook the green lawns, trees, and pathways that make up the central quad of the university. On those rare cloudless or fog-free days, the Pacific Ocean and hills of San Francisco offer a soothing vista. If one looks to the northeast, Mt. Sutro is in view. How appropriate!

Importantly, the Sutro Library's staff will be able to work more directly with the university's students and faculty. Already, staff has conducted several tours and met with the library faculty of the university's Leonard Library, and the future promises a bright and productive relationship. The university's provost of academic affairs toured the collections and expressed

great delight in its size and richness. For decades, the Sutro Library has been known primarily for its incomparable genealogy and local history collections with busloads of family historians delving into its resources. Now with the Sutro located in the heart of the campus, it will open the rare book and other special collections to a new user group. One can only imagine the delight of an English major as he or she opens a First Folio Shakespeare from 1623 (the first collected works of the bard); the incredulous faces of geography majors as they study maps from the seventeenth century showing California as an island; or the gasps of delight as art history students turn the leaves of botanical books illustrated with hand-colored plates. It is anticipated that the various humanities and liberal arts departments of San Francisco State and other state universities will find a Golconda of original source material on the upper floors of this sparkling new facility.

It seems only appropriate to extend a sincere round of applause to present and past Sutro Library and California State Library staff who have had to move this great collection many times, discover and negotiate for new spaces, handle innumerable building emergencies, and fend off the budget cutters who would threaten this great library. 🍷