

Annual Report 2024

California State Library
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Message from the State Librarian

The California State Library is unique in a lot of ways. There's certainly no agency like it in state government.

We don't oversee or regulate other state agencies and departments. We help other agencies perform better by supplying them with the information and digital tools they tell us they need.

This annual report highlights some of the ways the State Library does this.

Some state departments are referred to as "control agencies." The name says it all. The State Library is an "empowerment agency."

When lawmakers and the governor decided a portal was needed to make it easier for Californians to find state grant and loan opportunities, no one turned to control agencies to build it.

They called on the State Library. Why? Because people trust libraries and visit them to find what they need and because the State Library has a record of nimble and creative problem-solving.

During the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2024, the grants portal had nearly 1.9 million visitors. This IT project was completed on-time and on-budget – not as common a result as a taxpayer might like.

The State Library's commitment to empowerment extends way beyond the boundaries of California government's organizational chart.

The State Library offers access to the stories that describe who and what California is. Among many other things, it's the most diverse group of people ever brought together as equals in the history of human civilization of whom 43 percent were born in a foreign country.

Sharing those stories – that's my kind of mission. Challenging as it might be.

The State Library also empowers local cultural heritage entities like archives, museums and historical societies who safeguard so much of California's legacy.

The state devotes few resources to protect the treasures scattered across communities from Crescent City to National City. But, in the absence of that investment, the State Library has stepped up and funds a program that offers free help in creating a disaster preparedness plan to any archives, museums or historical society who wants it, grants to help buy needed preservation tools and a service that digitizes materials that should be protected and shared more broadly.

I'm just scratching the surface of the empowerment the State Library fosters and I'm out of space.

So read the annual report. You won't have to go very deep to realize the library needs more resources so we can do more empowering.

Respectfully yours,

Greg Lucas
California State Librarian

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2024 By the Numbers

- Number of Californians with library cards – 20.9 Million
- Dollars in grants administered to libraries and other organizations by the State Library - \$734 million
- Number of public libraries in California – 1,127
- Number of free State Parks Passes available at public libraries – 33,000
- Number of public libraries connected to high-speed broadband - 968
- Number of summer meals served to children through Lunch at the Library – 360,234
- Number of eResource checkouts: 66.4 million
- Number of visits to California libraries: over 74 million
- Number of investigations and searches on COMPASS: approximately 150 million
- Number of online tutoring sessions: over 600,000

About the State Library

Founded in 1850, the State Library collects stories about who and what California is, including millions of books, Gold Rush-era maps, suffragists' diaries, immigration logs, periodicals, photographs, paintings and posters. The State Library also stores and organizes federal and state publications, is home to the Bernard E. Witkin State Law Library and California's Braille and Talking Book Library, and serves as the lead state agency for library-related services throughout California.

The California State Library:

- Invests millions of dollars in state and federal funding annually to support local libraries, including early education initiatives, high-speed broadband access and literacy programs.
- Supports transparency and accountability in government by preserving and ensuring access to government publications, information and patent and trademark resources,
- Informs the decisions of policy makers by providing specialized research to the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and their staffs.
- Supplies state policymakers with the information and training resources they need to be effective, efficient and successful.
- Ensures access to books and information for Californians who are visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled.
- Connects Californians to the state's history and culture by collecting, organizing and preserving essential information on California, the United States and the world.

Building Resilient Communities

Building Forward

California's [Building Forward Library Facilities Improvement program](#) is the largest single investment ever made by the State of California for public library facilities, empowering local governments to transform libraries to meet 21st Century needs and expectations. The program has awarded more than \$484 million in grants to 278 local libraries for facility infrastructure upgrades, expansions, and even new facility construction.

The initiative focuses on high poverty areas and prioritizes capital projects that address life safety and critical maintenance needs, improve energy efficiency and sustainability, and expand digital and physical access.

From planning and design to construction, work is underway across the state. Four smaller projects were completed in 2024, resulting in new HVAC systems that increase efficiency and allow library facilities to serve as cooling centers during hot weather; security and fire alarm system upgrades for increased safety; and new library roofs that increase building resilience and help ensure libraries can continue to provide essential community support and services for years to come.

The State Library was not provided sufficient funding to support all library improvement projects submitted during Round Two of the Building Forward opportunity. With an additional investment of \$200 million from the State of California, the State Library could support the remaining 70 projects. With additional funding, a new round of funding could be undertaken to support more critical upgrades and new facilities.

Broadband for All

Bridging the digital divide is more critical than ever. Californians need reliable high-speed internet to access education, government services, healthcare, and emergency services. The State Library is working with local libraries to empower all Californians, regardless of circumstance, with the tools and resources they need to become true digital citizens.

The State Library's [Broadband Program](#) provides Californians with access to high-speed internet through their local public libraries. This year, the program maintained internet connections to the state's high-speed California Research and Education Network (CalREN) for almost 1,000 local libraries.

The State Library is also working with the California Department of Technology on initiatives that contribute to the state's Broadband for All program, including the development and implementation of the state's Digital Equity plan, which recognizes the important part libraries play in connecting Californians and communities.

Sustainable California Libraries

California is leading the way in addressing climate change, and local libraries are no exception.

Public libraries across the state are reducing their carbon footprint and rallying communities to action through initiatives like the [Sustainable California Libraries](#) grant program.

Now in its third year, the program is currently supporting projects at eight library systems working with community partners to build and share local sustainability solutions. Projects span the state from Inyo County to Orange County with a focus on climate education, environment-focused civic engagement, and support local climate action and resilience plans.

Projects include addressing food waste, wildlife protection, tool libraries, supporting home efficiency, creative reuse, increasing tree canopy, wellness walks, and workshops on building a healthier, more resilient future for all community members.

Supporting Children, Teens, and Families

Building Equity-Based Summers

During summer 2024, more than 1.4 million Californians participated in summer reading programs at their local libraries.

Summer reading programs help children and teens retain and enhance their reading skills when school is out. They also provide a haven and a community for readers.

The [Building Equity-Based Summers](#) initiative helps California libraries prioritize equity when planning summer activities and working with communities to address their unique needs and strengths. It emphasizes inclusive opportunities for underserved youth, families, and communities in subjects like literacy, arts, science, math, technology, and social skills.

2024 highlights include:

- 1.4 million Californians participated in summer reading
- 68,324 live summer reading and learning programs conducted, both at libraries and community sites
- 263,002 hours contributed by 14,120 teen volunteers and interns
- 645,299 free books distributed to help families build home libraries

All local libraries received copies of the [First Partner's Summer Book Club](#). These titles — aimed at preschoolers to high schoolers — were hand-picked by First Partner Jennifer Siebel Newsom and California librarians. Each book exposes readers to important social and emotional concepts and highlights values such as diversity, equity, and inclusion. Libraries also received funding to host Book to Action programs based on titles from the Book Club. Book to Action helps readers engage in community services and civic activities inspired by stories in the books.

Lunch at the Library

Food insecurity has a direct impact on a child's ability to learn, as well as their physical and emotional wellbeing. However, 1.6 million California children who qualify for free and reduced-price school lunches do not receive free meals during the summer.*

[Lunch at the Library](#) is working to help close that gap by serving free summer meals and snacks to children and teens while school is out. The program also delivers summer reading and learning programs for children and teens, along with wraparound services for their families.

In 2024, California libraries:

- Served more than 357,000 free summer meals;
- Set up 416 pop-up libraries at community meal sites;
- Presented over 10,000 arts, science, technology, and reading programs;
- Provided more than 166,000 books to families; and
- Distributed over 300,000 pounds of additional food to families.

Besides supporting children's academic progress, these programs help counteract the negative impacts of poverty on students' physical health, emotional well-being, and overall growth.

* Number based on updated comparative data of California's Free and Reduced-Price National School Lunch Program Average Daily Participation in School Lunch School Year 2022-2023 and Average Daily Participation in Summer Lunch in July 2023 listed in the Food Research & Action Center's August 2024 Summer Nutrition Status Report.

Exploring California's State Parks

California's abundant and diverse natural landscape offers Californians the opportunity to enjoy parks, coastlines, and trails. However, Californians from low-income households and communities of color often lack equitable access to nature, which can have a negative impact on their quality of life.

In partnership with California State Parks, California's 1,127 library branches offer free day-use passes for state parks through the Parks Pass program. This popular program is part of Gov. Newsom's Outdoor Access for All initiative. In 2024, the State of California renewed its commitment to the program and the passes will be available in libraries through December 31, 2025.

In the first half of 2024, passes were checked out more than 40,000 times. The State Library also provided free backpacks and stargazing kits to local libraries featuring high-quality hiking equipment, outdoor gear, and astronomy tools to encourage pass users to spend more quality time outdoors. Through the State Library grant program, libraries also delivered outdoor learning opportunities such as birdwatching programs, guided nature walks, author talks, and outdoor-inspired art activities.

Education and Workforce Development

COMPASS

The State Library continues to provide teachers, students and parents with free, easy access to online educational resources through [COMPASS: The California Online Media Program for Access and Student Success](#). Resources include research content, book and reading support, audio and video, interactive modules, and subject-specific content for all grades K-12.

COMPASS content and tools can be accessed on school devices, personal laptops, smartphones, or tablets through public schools and local libraries. There are over 20 distinct resources and collections that include some familiar names in education like Britannica, National Geographic Kids, and PBS.

Over 95 percent of California's almost 6 million K-12 students can access COMPASS through their schools and local libraries.

In 2024, COMPASS added history, social studies, performing arts, and drama content via ProQuest's Alexander Street platform. These include CNN documentary and History in Video collections, as well as additional content in the PBS video and Black world music video collections. Performing arts and English language arts teachers and students can now access over 11,000 drama texts from ProQuest and Alexander Street, including historical text, Contemporary World Drama, and ethnic-specific collections such as Black Drama, Asian American Drama and others.

Early literacy resources got a boost in 2024 as well. TeachingBooks added tools to find school-library books that reinforce fundamental reading concepts like phonics and phonological awareness (different sounds and their corresponding printed letters), as well as free practice sheets available for educators and families.

The early learning PebbleGo Science resource from Capstone -- available in both English and Spanish for pre-kindergarten through second grade students -- was incorporated into dozens of trainings to support early learning in the Next Generation Science Standards.

Program highlights include:

- California students and educators conducted over 500 million unique investigations and searches since the COMPASS program launched in fall 2018.
- During the 2023-2024 school year, approximately 150 million investigations and searches were conducted -- a 30 percent increase from the previous year.
- COMPASS staff and trainers reached nearly 5,000 educators and library workers. Sessions included online webinars, onsite professional development, and conference presentations.

Online Tutoring

The Statewide Online Tutoring Program was available from August 2022 until August 2024. It provided live access to online tutors and web-based educational resources such as tests and videos—all free of charge to students and families.

Tutoring was aligned with California's educational frameworks and standards and available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It was provided in multiple languages including Spanish, Tagalog, and Cantonese.

Students connected with tutors for over 600,866 live tutoring sessions, submitted over 15,000 papers for review, and visited the website 3,544,941 times for test prep content, videos, learning puzzles, and games.

It cost 1.6 cents each time someone accessed the resource. Looking at the live tutoring sessions alone, it cost just \$10.66 each time a student received tutoring.

More than 94 percent of users reported that the service helped them improve their grades. Ninety-three percent reported that the service helped them be more confident about their schoolwork.

The Statewide Online Tutoring Program succeeded in making tutors available to all California students—regardless of family income. The successful two-year pilot was funded with a \$6.4 million investment by the State of California.

California Library Literacy Services

California's public library [literacy programs](#) positively impact thousands of families annually, strengthening Californians' reading and writing skills and helping them achieve their personal, academic, and professional goals.

Last year, the State Library invested \$10.7 million in local library-based literacy services and English as a Second Language (ESL) services. With 44 percent of Californians speaking a language other than English at home, the need for ESL learning opportunities is strong and this funding helps libraries at least partially meet community demand.

After falling sharply during the pandemic, enrollment in literacy services continued to grow in 2024. Adult enrollment surpassed 12,400 during the 2023-2024 fiscal year, with participants benefiting from nearly 450,000 hours of free tutoring and instruction. Family literacy programs served nearly 9,500 adults and 13,000 children.

Career Online High School

California has one of the lowest high school graduation rates in the country, with only 84 percent of adults 25 years or older holding a high school diploma or equivalency. These Californians are excluded from opportunities in the workplace and higher education, preventing them from reaching their full potential.

[Career Online High School](#) enables Californians to earn a high school diploma, free of charge, through their local public library. Now offered in 82 public library jurisdictions and their combined 889 main and branch libraries, the self-paced program is available online, 24/7. This allows students to complete their degree on their own schedule, which is critical for those juggling childcare, employment, and other obligations.

Currently, more than 1,400 Californians are enrolled in Career Online High School. Another 3,700 have already earned their diplomas.

Graduates of the program, which usually takes less than a year to complete, can also earn career certificates in high-demand fields as well as career guidance and resources, including assistance with creating resumes and career portfolios.

Career Pathways

California's public libraries helped shape a future-ready workforce with the [Career Pathways](#) program. This suite of online job training, workforce development, and educational resources was available for free to any Californian, either at the library or from home, between October 2022 and September 2024. Career Pathways users could earn professional certificates, study for exams, update resumes and cover letters, and explore courses in fields including digital literacy, business, law enforcement, graphic design, and management.

Over the two-year project period, Californians logged more than 957,000 hours of online learning and participated in more than 1,043,000 lessons using learning platforms like Coursera, Skillshare, GetSetup, and LinkedIn Learning. As an example of the value of these services, the annual cost of subscriptions to access all of Coursera's more than 5,000 online classes, Skillshare's 35,000 videos, GetSetup's interactive classes, and LinkedIn Learning's suite of courses would be over \$1,000 per year for an individual.

Thanks to a one-time \$10.2 million investment by the state, Californians had free access to these life-improving programs. Access ended September 30, 2024.

State Government Working for the People

California Grants Portal

In 2020, the State Library launched the [California Grants Portal](#), an interactive online tool to help Californians easily find state grant opportunities. To create this one-stop funding destination, the State Library collaborated with more than 60 state agencies, departments, commissions, and bureaus to understand and respond to their needs as well as the needs of Californians seeking state funding.

In the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the California Grants Portal published 455 grant and loan opportunities from state government entities—a jump of 12 percent from the previous year. The number of users increased by 58 percent to 1,868,551. More than \$48 billion in state-administered funding was available on the portal. For more details regarding the statistics, please visit the [California Grants Portal 2023-2024 Annual Report](#).

New legislation requires grant makers to submit post-award data to the California State Library, including data on the destination of state funding, a first for the state. This allows the State Library to provide unprecedented transparency on state-administered grant dollars. Comprehensive, up-to-date post award grant information is available on the [California Grants Portal Statistics Dashboard](#).

Government Publications

The Government Publications Section is a gateway to the decisions that shaped California's communities. While official records might not be go-to, daily reading, they reveal everything from why local parks exist to how California tackled its biggest challenges.

Government Publications safeguards it all—from crucial legislation to crisis responses. Millions of items from state, local and federal governments over the past 250 years.

In 2024, Government Publications:

- Preserving California's Online History: [Our specialized web archiving team captures critical information before it vanishes from the internet](#). This year, they preserved over 461 million files—equivalent to saving the entire collections of more than 46,000 public libraries. From this vast digital archive, they create focused collections that respond to researchers' needs, [like our new AI Collection that brings together over 200 policies showing how California agencies are approaching artificial intelligence](#).
- Protected Historical Records: Thousands of records stored on deteriorating microfilm and microfiche were digitized. This work safeguards decades of California's history, from water rights records to mid-century energy policies. Digitization added 25,000 new items to our online collection in 2024, while training student assistants in vital archival skills.
- Made History Social: Government Publications tries to showcase California's past for today's audiences. Our "History in the Baking" series unearths recipes from historic government cookbooks and brings them to life—with the State Librarian acting as the official (and sometimes reluctant) taste tester. These social media adventures show how government publications can serve up both information and entertainment.
- Created Innovative Partnerships: Information was shared with wider audiences through partnerships like a webinar series with the National Park Service, which drew over 1,300 Californians to explore their parklands' history. The Patent and Trademark Resource Center continues supporting entrepreneurs in turning innovative ideas into reality.

Each government record preserved carries part of California's story—from historic decisions that shaped the state's communities to current policies that will guide its future. Making these materials accessible to all Californians not only protects important information but provides a foundation on which to build a better future.

Ethnic Media Outreach Grants

In summer 2023, the State Library awarded \$8.1 million in [grants](#) to 62 ethnic media outlets and media collaboratives serving communities impacted by hate incidents and hate crimes. This was the second round of funding for a project that has now awarded a total of \$14 million to 72 organizations.

A joint venture with the California Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs, the grants aim to raise awareness of the [Stop the Hate Program](#) administered by the California Department of Social Services. The Stop the Hate Program helps survivors of hate incidents and hate crimes – and works to prevent those incidents from happening in the first place.

The grants pay for specialized reporters and fellowships, news briefings and roundtables, digital and social media content, and partnerships with grassroots organizations. Grantees include, but are not limited to, media outlets and organizations serving California's Arab, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black, Latino, Native American, Slavic, and LGBTQ+ communities, providing coverage in 21 different languages.

From July 2023 through September 2024*, the Ethnic Media Outreach Grant recipients have supported the equivalent of 70.274 full-time staff and produced over 15,000 media items, including:

- 4,620+ online articles
- 1,295+ articles in print
- 475+ in-person and virtual events
- 60+ podcast episodes
- 225+ digital promotional ads
- 315+ print promotional ads, running over 450 times
- 120+ promotional ads on TV, running over 5,000 times
- 180+ radio programs
- 5,520+ social media posts
- 640+ TV segments that aired over 3,000 times
- 1,450+ videos

* Based on all grantees reporting for the first round of funding and 42/62 completed final reports from the second round of grants.

Improving State Government Operations

Information Services

The [Information Services](#) section of the State Library provides reference, circulation, and interlibrary loan services to State of California employees and the public, both virtually and in person. Information Services is often the first point of contact for new State Library users needing assistance with their library cards, navigating the catalog, and locating online and print resources. Information Services librarians offer tailored group training sessions and one-on-one help for state agency employees using these resources.

In 2024, Information Services continued to refine technologies first implemented in 2023, such as 24/7 article request fulfillment, which allows State employees to be served from wherever they are in California. New database and eBook titles were added to the library's catalog at the request of State employees from numerous government agencies.

The section continues to modernize and expand the online catalog to streamline access to the State Library's millions of titles, making it easier for users to find what they need to succeed.

In September 2024, National Library Card Signup Month, Information Services conducted its third annual State Library Card drive, resulting in another boost in active users.

Witkin Law Library

The Bernard E. Witkin State Law Library shapes decisions that affect the daily life of all Californians. When state policymakers tackle urgent challenges—from wildfire safety to water rights—they rely on the Witkin Law Library's unparalleled resources to ground their work in California's legal history. As the state's legal memory bank, the law library ensures today's decisions build thoughtfully on decades of experience and precedent.

In 2024, the Bernard E. Witkin State Law Library:

- Connected Californians to Legal Experts: Our virtual sessions connected over 1,000 Californians with leading legal experts who examined pressing legal issues, from the implications of AI for intellectual property and information security to COVID's transformation of public health powers.
- Powered State Decisions: Our new senior specialists strengthen our position as the State Library's most consulted section, helping agencies tackle California's complex legal challenges. Whether environmental regulators need insights into water rights disputes or other state agencies seek historical precedents, [we equip them with the resources they need to act with confidence](#).
- Strengthened Local Access: Through growing partnerships with Sacramento County Law Library and Sacramento Public Library, we're enhancing legal resource access in our capital region. These collaborations help ensure local residents can readily access the legal information they need.

What sets the State Law Library apart isn't just the rare legal texts or advanced digital tools—it's acting as keeper of California's legal memory. When policymakers craft new legislation or agencies update regulations, the law library's collections provide the crucial context behind existing laws. By bridging California's legal history with present-day governance, state decisions serve all Californians more effectively.

California Research Bureau

The California Research Bureau provides nonpartisan, confidential public policy research, analysis and information services to the Governor's Office and the Legislature. Requests include researching legislative intent, legal precedent, and regulatory history as well as locating, analyzing, and curating data to help address public policy questions and information needs.

The Research Bureau provides online training and consultations to legislative and gubernatorial staff on how to conduct their own research. The bureau also produces weekly newsletters highlighting free public policy talks and research of interest to California policymakers.

In 2024, the Research Bureau:

- Updated the [You Count Hub](#), a dashboard that tracks and consolidates data on youth experiencing homelessness across California, to include a timeline going back to 2011 to track state budget investment and legislation to curb youth homelessness. The hub was developed by the California Homeless Youth Project, an

initiative focused on helping policymakers understand the numbers and characteristics of homeless youth in California.

- Launched [CRB Nexus: Where Policy Meets Research](#) that led to nine virtual policy topic discussions in 2024 between California public researchers and legislative and gubernatorial staff as well as a searchable database of California public researchers who can assist with California policymakers' information needs.
- Produced the [California Statewide National Security Economic Impacts study](#) showing national security activity generated an estimated \$197 billion in economic activity statewide in the 2023-2024 fiscal year. The bureau was tasked with the study by the Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and the Governor's Military Council with financial support from the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.
- Launched a monthly survey of legislative and gubernatorial staff that currently shows 100 percent satisfaction with the Research Bureau's research and information products, customer service, and deadline performance.

Ensuring Equitable Access

Braille and Talking Book Library

The [Braille and Talking Book Library](#) provides access in 48 Northern California counties to alternate-format reading materials and other information for Californians who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print disabled. This collection of audio and braille books, as well as audio playback and electronic braille reader equipment, can be accessed free of charge by mail, download, or via other assistive technology devices.

In 2024, the Braille and Talking Book team:

- Supplied 574,674 audio and braille books, magazines, and descriptive videos to 8,368 patrons.
- Increased outreach to Spanish-speaking populations, delivering Spanish language presentations and creating and distributing a Spanish-language brochure.
- Expanded its assistive technology device lending program, which increases reading opportunities for Californians, and held 59 technology trainings for patrons.
- Produced 27 audiobooks in its local recording studio, which recruits volunteers to narrate and record books about California and makes them available to library users around the United States, when they are not provided by other publishers.
- Created an online application to simplify applying for free Braille and Talking Book Library service.
- Partnered with public libraries to promote Braille and Talking Book Library services by distributing more than 24,000 large print bookmarks to 57 public libraries throughout the state.
- In partnership with the Braille Institute and the American Library Association, initiated the "Power to Certify" campaign, an effort to encourage public library staff to certify eligible patrons for service. Through public service announcements, webinars, and conference presentations, the "Power to Certify" campaign educated thousands of public librarians nationwide about National Library Service network libraries like the Braille and Talking Book Library and the Braille Institute.

Braille Institute Library

The [Braille Institute](#) is the State Library's partner in serving adults and children in Southern California who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print disabled. With six regional branches, the institute offers more than 100,000 titles and 1.2 million volumes in its library plus a wide range of free services, such as a Telephone Reader Program that allows users to listen to national and local news, magazine articles and other publications in both English and Spanish.

Protecting California's Cultural Heritage

California Revealed

[California Revealed](#) digitizes and preserves archival materials from hundreds of community cultural heritage organizations across California. It now shares a digital collection of more than 165,000 diverse objects.

These "snapshots" of California living, are a valuable resource for educators seeking local perspectives and Californians.

Highlights include: Footage of women's track and field trials for the 1956 Olympics, videos of the 1960 Chinese New Year parade in San Francisco Chinatown, and photographs and videos related to the history of wildfires in California from the Cal Fire Museum. The past is brought to life through thousands of oral histories including the Tule River Tribe, women radicals and organizers from the labor struggles of the 1930s to 1950s, and survivors who helped found of the Holocaust Museum LA.

California Revealed has also digitized numerous community newspapers such as North Bay Progress, a Black woman-owned newspaper for Vallejo; Street Spirit, which covers homelessness; *Mom Guess What!*, an LGBTQ newspaper which has generated more interest in studying the LGBTQ community in Sacramento County; and North Bay Progress, a Black woman-owned newspaper for Vallejo.

Besides documenting California's unique diversity, 88 percent of the collections this year document marginalized communities, helping to ensure that all Californians see themselves represented in the collections California Revealed preserves.

California Revealed continues to collaborate with the California History-Social Science Project at UC Davis to support an Educator Fellowship to develop teaching materials using primary sources from its collections and offers mentorship and skill-sharing through training and individual consultation.

California History

In 2024, the [California History](#) Section focused its collection development and outreach efforts on documenting and promoting awareness of California's diverse history and the people and events that have contributed to its complex past. With an emphasis on including works by people from marginalized and underrepresented communities, they expanded their holdings of cultural history materials either created by Californians or focused on California, including fiction, memoirs, poetry, music, art history, and art exhibition catalogs. To provide broad access to the people of California, many of these books are available to State Library card holders or to the public through interlibrary loan.

The section also continued its California History Speaker Series, hosting four events aimed at exploring the state's complex history. Topics included an artist's perspective on his immigrant mother's history, told through a suite of silkscreen art prints; a conversation with two California poet laureates on the power of poetry to explore the realities of Black women's lives and poetry's power to generate social change; the significance of oral history and community archives for giving voice to Chicana/o elders' reflections on the Civil Rights era; and the potential for Indigenous practices involving temporary dams to benefit the Klamath River Basin and the Hupa, Karuk, and Yurok people that live there. All talks were recorded and are available on the [State Library's YouTube channel](#).

To preserve future access to some of California History's most historically valuable collections, the section identified over 500,000 photographic negatives that are in poor condition due to environmental conditions outside of the library's control. These negatives are being stabilized to prevent further deterioration and then digitized.

The California History Section continues to make more materials easily available to the public, including selecting items for digitization and describing them in finding aids accessible to researchers through the Online Archive of California. This helps make California's rich history more accessible to people locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

Ready—Or Not

California's archives, historical societies, libraries, museums, and tribal nations are home to a vast array of cultural artifacts and collections. However, the State Library's California Cultural Collections Protection Survey, first administered in 2021, showed that over 1,200 cultural heritage organizations lack disaster response plans, leaving them vulnerable to risks like fire, flood, and earthquakes. In response, the State Library is providing organizations with expert help and grant funding to protect their collections.

The State Library has partnered with the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC) to develop the [“Ready—Or Not”: Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness Project](#). Any archive, museum, library, historical society, or tribal nation that sign up for a consultation from the “Ready— Or Not” emergency preparedness consultants will receive a collection protection assessment and support for the creation of a [disaster preparedness plan](#)—free of charge. So far, the project has helped over 300 California organizations assess their collections for disaster readiness.

The library has also partnered with Myriad Consulting & Training, Inc. to provide organizations with grant funding to help them implement their disaster preparedness plans and recommendations. To date, over 70 cultural organizations have been awarded a [Groundwork Grant](#) to safeguard California’s cultural heritage for generations to come.

Digital Concierge

The Digital Concierge Program is a content creation, digitization, and digital preservation center dedicated to protecting and sharing the historical materials hidden throughout California state government. The Digital Concierge team works with state agencies to identify and showcase the most culturally significant, sought after or at-risk parts of their collections and records.

In 2024, the Digital Concierge Program:

- Completed the digitization of thousands of items on behalf of the California State Railroad Museum, including employee timetables from the Southern Pacific Railroad and photographic negatives from the Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg Collection.
- Initiated a partnership with the California State Parks Archives to digitize the meeting minutes of the California Recreation Commission, the California State Park Commission, and the California State Park and Recreation Commission.
- Worked with the Government Publications Section at the California State Library to prepare and begin digitizing three historically significant collections.
- Networked with state agencies to identify new potential partners, assess their collections, and learn more about how Digital Concierge’s services can best meet their needs.

Sutro Library

The Sutro Library, the State Library’s only “branch,” acquires, preserves, and makes accessible rare and unique resources for scholarship and the education of students, faculty, and independent researchers.

Located on the top floor of the undergraduate library at San Francisco State University, Sutro’s vault holds more than 90,000 rare books and manuscripts purchased in the 19th century by Adolph Sutro, a businessman and former mayor of San Francisco. One highlight is a Shakespeare First Folio, printed in 1623. Sutro’s Mexicana collection is one of the most comprehensive anywhere on early Mexican history and politics. And Sutro has one of the largest genealogy collections in the United States.

The Sutro Library holds both genealogy and academic classes, online cultural enrichment events, and provides faculty and students with specialized archival research training. Some of this year’s presentations focused on Polynesian genealogy, the queer history of the women’s suffrage movement, and the story of a Jewish family narrowly escaping Nazi Germany during World War II. The Sutro Library hosted 50 different academic classes this year, providing on-site instruction to 931 San Francisco State University students to help them develop archival and research skills.

Three exhibits were mounted by Sutro Library staff exploring topics such as the South Pacific, the use of caricatures in politics and culture, and the history of the railroad in 19th Century Mexico.

The Sutro Library continues to work on increasing access to their rich collections through processing archival materials. Sutro Library staff completed 10 new inventories for various collections of family papers which are important resources for genealogists.

In 2024, Sutro partnered with a professional conservator to stabilize a historically and internationally important collection of Jewish materials dating from the 1200s to the 1800s. The collection includes fragile scrolls, bible fragments as well as books and documents ranging in subject matter from Bible commentaries to prayer books, poetry, and medicine. The project to stabilize the collection is expected to conclude in 2025.

Preservation and Exhibits

The Preservation & Exhibits Section ensures that cultural treasures entrusted to the State Library will be accessible to Californians today and into the future. In 2024, Document Preservation technicians performed the hands-on, day-to-day work of repairing and conserving approximately 200 artifacts in the library's collection. This work includes repairing tears and hinges, re-attaching text blocks, rebinding books, and creating custom enclosures for books and other material.

Technicians also closely monitor the library's climate to ensure that collections are protected from humidity, mold, and pest damage.

To make more of the State Library's collection available to the public, Preservation continues to digitize rare and significant items. In 2024, staff created over 5,000 digital surrogates for a variety of collections, including Gold Rush era collections and Chinese newspapers from the 1870s.

Other unique collections digitized were the Tom Mooney collection and the Bean collection. Mooney was an early California labor rights organizer and activist who spent 20 years in prison before being pardoned in 1939. The Bean collection is a series of letters written by Nellie Blair Green that provide an intimate account of a California family during the Great Depression of the 1930s.

Californians can play a role in preserving history by participating in [FromThePage](#), and transcribing text from handwritten documents like diaries or letters. Transcription allows these important materials to be searched and viewed by researchers, scholars, and anyone else with Internet access. Once the transcriptions are complete, they are uploaded to the State Library's catalog where they can be accessed and downloaded by the public. In 2024, over 800 pages were transcribed and indexed by 129 collaborators. (Thank you for all your help!)

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This report covers activities during the 2023 calendar year. Some initiatives and partnerships may have changed since that time. For information about any of the programs and projects included here, visit the State Library's website.

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