Manuscripts for science-fiction book will be displayed in Library

BY ALEX FAIRBANKS – POSTED ON APRIL 6, 2015
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In a room tucked away on the third floor of the Pollak Library at Cal State Fullerton are rare books, precious scrolls and a collection of the original manuscripts of the enormously popular science-fiction book *Dune*, written by Frank Herbert.

The University Archives and Special Collections Department at CSUF will display these manuscripts and other *Dune* collectables, along with a series of presentations about the book in the gallery of the Pollak Library next semester from October to December in celebration of the *Dune* 50th anniversary.

"It's the most popular science-fiction book ever," said Scott Hewitt, CSUF Interim University Librarian and chemistry professor. "It talks about ecological issues, about power and politics, religion—there's just a whole bunch of different themes that are embedded in that book."

Hewitt is a huge fan of *Dune*. He owns and has read Herbert's original six book series, as well as the continued 13 book series written by his son Brian Herbert and Kevin J. Anderson, author of over fifty international bestsellers.

*Dune* broke new ground for the genre of science-fiction, Hewitt said. Prior to *Dune*, all science-fiction writings were short.

Having the manuscripts for this prolific story is important because it reveals Herbert's writing process throughout the series, Hewitt said.

"It is just interesting for people to see how a writer's original ideas end up getting morphed into what becomes the final version that people actually read," Hewitt said.

For example, the main character in the final *Dune* book is a completely different character in the original manuscript. The revisions completely change how the reader views the *Dune* world.

Seeing the transitions in a manuscript helps writers learn the process of how professionals in the publishing industry edit.

"I think it's just instructive for anybody that wants to be a writer, to see that process, to look at those manuscripts," Hewitt said.

Brian Herbert has even come to CSUF to see his father’s manuscripts.

The *Dune* exhibit will be an opportunity for students to learn about the writing process from Herbert’s work. Also, since *Dune* is a story about a number of societal and world issues, the exhibit will be an opportunity for students from any major to learn something.

Patricia Prestinary, CSUF special collection archivist, read *Dune* when she was 11 years old and is helping out on the *Dune* exhibit.

"It was the first real adult book that I had ever read," Prestinary said.

Prestinary said she was amazed to be able to understand all of the intricacies between religion, government,
economics and our personal lives. It opened her mind to the fact that all those things are deeply interconnected, she
said.

Prestinary also found interest in a “strong messianic character” within the book.

“I think people, especially in the western world can relate to this messianic character who’s the chosen one to lead
these folks out of what is perceived to be an oppressive situation,” Prestinary said. “So I think in that way it has a
mythological quality that, carried into the future, allows us to take a step back and look at some of those beliefs more
objectively.”

The original manuscripts for this powerful science-fiction book that has captivated so many would not have been
obtained by CSUF without the help of the late Willis McNelly, Ph.D., a former English and CSUF faculty member.

“He introduced the curriculum of science-fiction studies into the English department,” Sharon Perry, CSUF special
collection archivist and librarian said.

Science-fiction was not considered academic during his time. In order to shift the culture, he began to introduce
science-fiction as a core class in the English program and reached out to other writers of this genre.

“In the process of doing that, he himself became active by going to the science-fiction conventions among the
authors,” Perry said. “He made personal friendships with many of them such as Frank Herbert and Philip K. Dick and
he prevailed upon them to donate their manuscripts to our special collections.”

The Dune exhibit next semester will feature Herbert’s work in an organized display and will be open to anyone
wanting to learn about the epic work of science-fiction.

The Dune manuscripts are the “jewel in the crown of our special collections,” Prestinary said.

TAGS: Brian Herbert, dune, Frank Herbert, Kevin J. Anderson

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