

**\*\* N E W S R E L E A S E \*\***

For Immediate Release

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**\*\* Caltech Unveils New Virtual Exhibit for Historical Earthquake Archives \*\***

PASADENA , Calif. -April 18 marks the centennial of the great 1906 San Francisco earthquake. In commemoration of that event and the landmark developments that followed it, the California Institute of Technology Archives is presenting a new digital exhibit, Documenting

Earthquakes: A Virtual Exhibit in Six Parts. This online display, for use by the public, media, and educators, can be viewed at  
<http://archives.caltech.edu/exhibits/earthquake/index.html> .

The Documenting Earthquakes virtual exhibit is replete with historical earthquake information, archives, rare photographs, and personal accounts, from as early as the 1500s to modern times. With beautifully illustrated renderings and excerpts from rare-book collections, the site is presented in an easy-to-navigate, user-friendly format. Compiled from materials in the Caltech Archives' own collections, the six-part interactive exhibit will be presented serially, over the course of the next several months.

Part I, "Documenting the 1906 Quake," offers an in-depth look at the earthquake's social, political, scientific, and economic repercussions. Included are excerpts from the Earthquake Commission Report, which not only heralded new research findings, but also introduced the public to a significant seismic feature of the local landscape that, up to that time, had largely escaped notice: the fault then described as the "San Andreas Rift."

Part I also features a selection of early, rudimentary seismograms, along with many historical photographs graphically depicting the devastation in and around San Francisco , and a recap of California 's efforts at postquake "spin" for the benefit of both residents and tourists. There is also a sampling of what Caltech senior archivist Shelley Erwin calls the "sensationalist literature" that appeared in the aftermath of the quake, chronicling the "San Francisco horror" in which, among other outrages, soldiers compelled even the "fashionably attired to assist in cleaning" streets.

Caltech's pioneering contributions to earthquake science are the subject of the exhibit's next two segments, scheduled to go live later this spring and titled "The Beginnings of Seismology at Caltech" and "Charles Richter and the Earthquake Magnitude Scale."

Components four and five will showcase the fine collection of rare, historical earthquake-related books and artwork, including a series of Japanese woodblock prints, that have been donated to the Archives by George Housner (Caltech PhD 1941), the Institute's Braun Professor of Engineering, Emeritus, and internationally acknowledged to be the

father of modern earthquake engineering. The Housner collection contains one of the earliest printed books on earthquakes, published in 1531 in Germany by a successor of Gutenberg and purchased by Housner in Rome from a rare-book dealer. This segment will also present the Namazu-e woodblock prints, published following the 1855 Tokyo earthquake, that recount the intriguing Japanese folklore of the "giant catfish" believed to cause earthquakes.

The final section will highlight yet more artistic and historical commentary on earthquakes, volcanoes, and other geologic hazards, and will include images from Sir William Hamilton's *Campi Phlegraei*, published in the 1770s. This rare, one-of-a-kind book prepared for the Royal Society in London, was a gift to the Archives from the estate of Caltech professor of physics, emeritus, Ernest Watson.

Documenting Earthquakes is curated by Erwin, in collaboration with archivists Judith Goodstein, Kevin Knox, and Elisa Piccio. Design and production are by Wayne Waller and Leslie Maxfield of Caltech's Digital Media Services.

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