



Penn Libraries
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Zilberman Family Center for Global Collections

2024–2025 Year in Review





Greetings from the Zilberman Family Center for Global Collections!

We are excited to share news of our accomplishments, acquisitions, and enthusiasms from the 2024-2025 academic year with this year-in-review. Our new name honors the generosity of Penn Libraries Board of Advisors member Stephanie Zilberman, WG'01 and her husband Dan Zilberman, WG'01, whose naming gift—together with support from other donors—will fund a major renovation of our fifth-floor space in Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center. Scheduled to begin in late 2026, this will be the physical transformation to complement our ongoing growth in collections and global coverage.

In the pages ahead, you will read about an array of accomplishments in our first year as the Zilberman Center—exciting new collections, a growing range of programming, and international engagement by our librarians. We hope that you will come visit us, share your research and ideas, and continue drawing on our growing collections.

Sincerely,

Brian Vivier

Director of the Zilberman Family Center for Global Collections

Expanding Global Access

The Zilberman Center continues to broaden Penn's gateway to the world's knowledge, reinforcing the university's role as a leader in global scholarship and cultural exchange. Over the past year we advanced this mission through transformative acquisitions that bring distant histories and contemporary perspectives into immediate reach for researchers, students, and the wider community.

A prime example is the **Global Press Archive**, which joins a growing suite of historical newspaper databases that illuminate political change, social movements, and everyday life across Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and Latin America. With these resources, scholars can trace local developments and global connections without leaving campus, enriching research across disciplines from political science to art history.

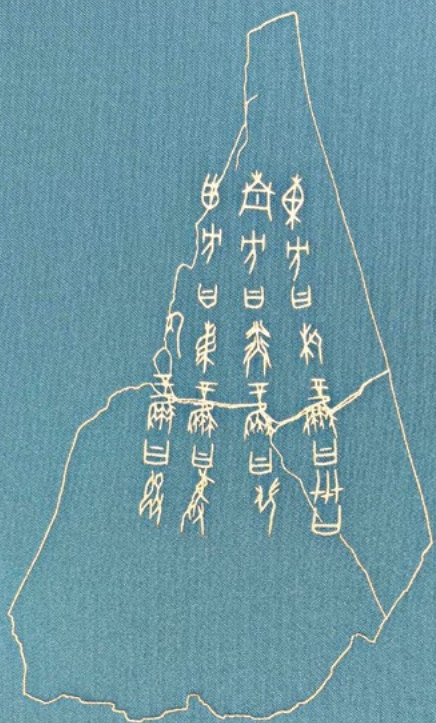
Equally important, the Center ensures that these collections are activated as well as preserved. Exhibitions and programs—such as the international panel **Rethinking Archives on Afghanistan**—invited faculty, students, and visiting experts to engage with rare materials and consider how archives shape contemporary conversations about identity, culture, and representation.

By pairing ambitious collecting with vibrant public engagement, the Zilberman Center transforms holdings into living resources, enabling Penn's community to approach urgent global questions with sources that are both authoritative and newly accessible.

Acquisition Features

This year the Zilberman Center deepened and diversified Penn's global collections with acquisitions that illuminate the richness of local cultures and the complexity of transnational histories. Our librarians sought materials across formats and regions, strengthening both longstanding areas of excellence and emerging fields of inquiry.

Among the year's highlights are impactful Chinese multi-volume sets on epigraphy, religion, and early graphic literature, alongside digitized missionary periodicals from Egypt that shed light on cross-cultural religious exchange. The Center also accessioned distinctive Indo-Caribbean materials gathered during fieldwork in Guyana and Trinidad, as well as a rare manuscript of kabalistic remedies and



charms. Each addition introduces fresh primary sources for research on politics, literature, and social change.

Fieldwork and relationship-building remain vital. From book fairs in Buenos Aires and Lahore to archives in Cairo and Latvia, our subject specialists have identified unique publications, one-of-a-kind manuscripts, and unusual ephemera that might otherwise be lost. Our work ensures that Penn scholars encounter sources in many languages and media—whether Japanese avant-garde lithographs, Ukrainian women’s journals, or handmade Latin American artists’ books—thereby expanding the evidentiary base for global scholarship and preserving the world’s diverse knowledge systems.



Enlivening Collections and Fostering Engagement

The Zilberman Center transforms collections into vibrant resources through exhibitions, classroom activities, partnerships, and public programs that invite dialogue across cultures.

A highlight this past year was a series devoted to the Ainu, an Indigenous people of northern Japan. The exhibit ***From Manuscript to Manga: Ainu Representation in Media*** juxtaposed historical documents with contemporary graphic art to reveal how Ainu identity has been portrayed—and reclaimed—over time. A screening of ***Ainu: Indigenous People of Japan***, accompanied by a conversation with the filmmaker and a book display on global Indigeneity, invited broad public conversation on Indigenous rights and cultural resilience.

Class visits also demonstrated how new acquisitions and longstanding treasures become integral to teaching and learning. Students in ***Soviet Childhood*** analyzed Russian picture books to explore the politics of children's literature, while a landscape history seminar examined rare South Asian maps to understand cartographic expressions of power and place. These sessions, coupled with our growing programming, demonstrate how the Zilberman Center's collections energize coursework across disciplines and transform primary sources into springboards for original research and critical discussion.





Building Partnerships Worldwide

International collaboration remains central to the Zilberman Center's mission, ensuring Penn's collections reflect a diversity of voices and that stewardship of cultural heritage is shared equitably. Our librarians cultivate relationships with publishers, archivists, and scholars worldwide, forging pathways for both acquisition and co-creation of knowledge.

A vivid example this year was Latin American Studies Librarian Brie Gettleson's acquisitions travel through Argentina and Uruguay, where she strengthened ties with local booksellers and identified unique publications seldom available outside the region. Similar fieldwork in South Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe enriched Penn's holdings and opened opportunities for joint projects such as digitization initiatives.

The Center also joined Penn's Forerunner events in India and China, a decade-long program that helps new international students and their families connect with alumni, faculty, and administrators before arriving on campus. Participation in these gatherings extends the Center's partnerships beyond libraries, reinforcing ties with Penn's global community and future scholars.

Through these collaborations, the Zilberman Center broadens global access to information while supporting local knowledge producers, ensuring that Penn's collections grow in ways that are inclusive, sustainable, and globally connected.



Professional Leadership

The Zilberman Center's librarians help shape global librarianship through active leadership and collaboration. Heather Hughes's presidential address to the Middle East Librarians Association on academic freedom exemplified our commitment to thoughtful professional dialogue and advocacy. Colleagues presented their work at international conferences, from the Association for Asian Studies to the Africana Librarians Council, sharing innovative practices in equitable collecting, metadata strategies, and open access initiatives.

By combining scholarship, service, and advocacy, the Zilberman Center's team ensures that Penn remains at the forefront of global collection development and that research communities worldwide benefit from shared expertise and inclusive approaches.

Looking Ahead

The coming year will bring significant changes to the Zilberman Family Center for Global Collections. Planning is underway for a complete renovation of the Center's stacks, seminar rooms, and event spaces on the fifth floor of Van Pelt-Dietrich Library Center. This revitalized hub for engagement will support teaching with primary sources, public exhibitions, and collaboration with the specialized librarians who steward these collections.

The Center will also host the inaugural Park-Choi Global Lecture, expanding the reach of its programming and spotlighting scholarship rooted in global collections. We also look forward to welcoming the first Holman Fellow for African Health and Medicine Research, a scholar whose work will link Penn students, global collections, and innovative inquiry.

In the year ahead, digitization of rare holdings, new partnerships for shared stewardship, and advocacy for open-access publishing remain priorities, ensuring that unique resources—from Ottoman cookbooks to Russian dissident zines—are available to scholars everywhere. By combining visionary collecting with innovative teaching and global collaboration, the Zilberman Center will continue to connect Penn with the world's knowledge and creativity.



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