Pollak Library archivist Patricia Pestinary looks over a wide range of "Dune" memorabilia including published works and manuscripts. Cal State Fullerton will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the publication of "Dune" in October.

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For Patricia Prestinary, archives and special collections archivist, the science fiction epic “Dune” is a story that has a timeless message.

“‘Dune’ is an ecological science fiction novel, and (author Frank) Herbert often said that ‘the highest function of ecology is the understanding of consequences,’” said Prestinary, who first read the book when she was 11 years old. “It’s as important for young people now as in 1965, to be aware of the consequences of our actions.”
Art professor Cliff Cramp, top, is curating the artwork for the "Dune" exhibit, which will include artwork created by Cramp and his students. Interim University Librarian Scott Hewitt has read "Dune" and the six-book series numerous times.

Prestinary and a host of ecology, political and science fiction experts will be sharing that message in October as Pollak Library celebrates the half-century anniversary of the seminal work’s publication.

An exhibit will include the university's Frank Herbert, artwork by campus artists, films and a costume contest.

The speakers series is an interdisciplinary collaboration featuring experts discussing the present-day relevance of the book’s themes and their implications to contemporary society.

“An generation of students who read it were exposed to some facets of ecology and the devastation that humans can wreak on the environment,” said Prestinary. “It is especially important now that we are in the midst of dealing with the effects of climate change and California is experiencing a record-breaking drought.”

Interim University Librarian Scott Hewitt, a huge fan of the book and its message, has read “Dune” at least four times, the six-book series twice and all of the continuing books written by and . Anderson is the keynote speaker to kickoff the exhibit and speaker series.
“This is an amazing book to build a program of seminars and panel discussions around because there are so many different layers within the book that are of interest to different academic departments,” Hewitt said. “It fits so well with the research many of our faculty members are currently doing. The fact that there are so many different layers is part of the reason that ‘Dune’ is a best-selling science fiction novel.”

The campus exhibit will feature original art by art professor and his students. Cramp said the works show how an artist visualizes the written word.

“I’m drawn to ‘Dune’ first and foremost because of the story,” said Cramp, who first read the book in high school. “‘Dune’ is a novel that has what I call ‘staying power’ because of its themes. The themes are timeless: the chosen one, political intrigue, survival, betrayal, environmental doom and deliverance.”

Cal State Fullerton acquired the "Dune" manuscripts in the late 1960s from Herbert. The late, professor emeritus of English and renowned science fiction scholar and critic, and Herbert had developed a close relationship over the years. McNelly edited the critically acclaimed "Dune Encyclopedia" and Herbert lectured in McNelly's science fiction classes.

Prestinary and Hewitt agree that having the collection on campus and being able to do a collaboration with so many from the campus community is special.

“I’m really excited about having been able to reach across the campus and develop a program that educates, as well as inspires students to think about our actions in the long term,” Prestinary said.

Hewitt said the collection, which is requested on average once a month, is hugely popular with scholars and student researchers. He added that Brian Herbert used the collection and his father’s notes at the University to help him continue to write about the
‘Dune’ world.

“People come from all over the country to see our materials,” Hewitt said. “This is one of a number of jewels within . Many of the items in our Special Collections are unique — you cannot find them anywhere else.”