

Carnegie
Mellon
University



UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES DISTINCTIVE COLLECTION

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

Distinctive Collections (DisCo) brings together a wide range of professional expertise and specialized functions that collectively advance the University Libraries' and University's strategic goals.

This integrated expertise model positions Carnegie Mellon University Libraries as a strategic asset for institutional storytelling, research support, and community engagement. Each function amplifies the others, exhibitions draw researchers to archives, oral histories enrich special collections, and digital preservation enables broader access to our holdings. This working model allows us to deliver unprecedented impact across all university priorities while establishing CMU as a leader in cultural heritage innovation and public scholarship.

To learn more about the *University Distinctive Collections*, research, and donation strategy, visit: library.cmu.edu/distinctive-collections



PART I

UNIVERSITY *Archives*

The University Archives is dedicated to preserving, interpreting, and sharing the story of Carnegie Mellon University—its people, its research, and its enduring culture of innovation. Through outreach and educational programming across campus, close collaboration with Central Marketing and External Relations, and sustained engagement with scholars and researchers, the Archives advances storytelling that highlights CMU's history and global impact. Notably, the past year marked an extraordinary period of collaboration surrounding the University's 125th anniversary, with the Archives leading major initiatives, including the University-wide timeline and the development of 125 Points of Pride, helping to frame and amplify CMU's legacy at a pivotal moment in its history.

REFERENCE & RESEARCH SERVICE GROWTH

SERVICE TYPE	2025 VOLUME	GROWTH SINCE 2021
Reference Interactions	496	+110% <i>(from 236)</i>
External Reference Requests	187	+68% <i>(from 111)</i>

OUTREACH & EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

PROGRAM TYPE	2025 VOLUME	REACH
Total Documented Events	22 events	500+ students
Class Instruction Visits	13 visits	Included in Total
Campus Collaboration Partnerships	12 partnerships	SLICE, Center for Student Diversity, LEAP, Central Marketing, Bridges Conference, Athletics
Signature Events	Archives Ambassadors	107 attendees

STRATEGIC *Partnerships*

The Archives' strategic partnerships demonstrate sustained collaboration with key university offices and initiatives, positioning Distinctive Collections as essential infrastructure for institutional memory and alumni engagement. These partnerships leverage archival expertise for high-visibility projects while building relationships that generate long-term value for the university.

ONGOING STRATEGIC COLLABORATIONS

PARTNERSHIP	DURATION	2025 DELIVERABLES
125th Anniversary Campaign	2024-2025	Historical research, fact-checking for "125 Points of Pride," content development for year-long campaign
Athletics Hall of Fame	Annual <i>(ongoing)</i>	Research and digitization support for annual induction ceremonies
Alumni Relations	2019-	Class reunion presentations; historical content for alumni engagement
Vice Provost for Academic Budget & Financial Planning	2025-	Working to develop an official records management program for the University
Business Innovation Office	2025-	Working to develop a business case for digital preservation infrastructure

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

The Oral History Program relaunched in 2025 with an expanded strategic focus on building thematic collections around CMU history. New partnerships with the School of Computer Science, the Robotics Institute, and the School of Drama enable the systematic documentation of institutional memory from key figures who have shaped the university's trajectory. This approach transforms oral history from occasional projects into a comprehensive archival strategy that captures first-person accounts. At the same time, principals remain available and are creating invaluable primary source material for future researchers.

2025 PROGRAM RELAUNCH

FOCUS AREA

STATUS

Interviews

8 interviews in 2025;
2 scheduled for 2026

Active Partnerships

School of Computer Science,
Robotics Institute,
School of Drama

Strategic Approach

Thematic collections documenting CMU institutional history and projects, such as NavLab

ROBOTICS PROJECT

The Robotics Project continued to strengthen Carnegie Mellon’s capacity to preserve and share the material history of robotics by advancing core archival work and building new collections that support teaching, exhibitions, and research. Throughout the year, the project focused on ongoing processing of existing robotics collections, outreach to potential donors, and active participation in Archives outreach and education activities. In close collaboration with the Oral History Program, the team supported the development of specialized collections—including the NavLab and Autonomous Vehicle collections, led by archivist Kathleen Donahoe—expanding the documentation of CMU’s robotics leadership through both recorded narratives and archival materials. The project also contributed substantially to planning for the Robotics Innovation Center (RIC) exhibit, including identifying and selecting robots and visual assets to help tell these stories through public-facing interpretation.

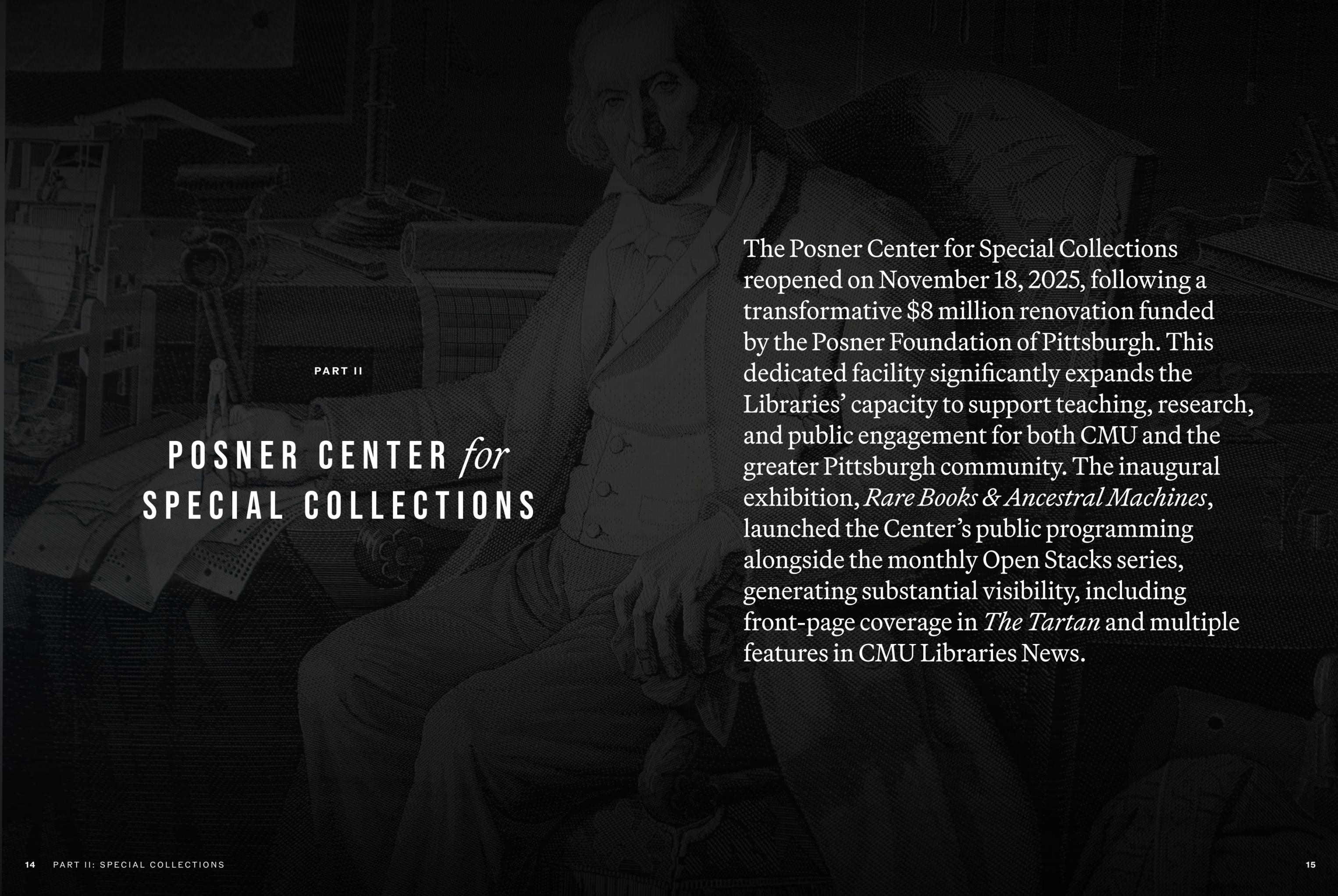
DIGITAL ARCHIVES

The Digital Archives program advanced from conceptual planning to an operational preservation program in 2025, establishing a digital preservation lab, implementing core infrastructure, and initiating a transition to a self-hosted Browsertrix web archiving environment to improve sustainability and cost efficiency. In parallel, a ten-month partnership with the Business Innovation Office positioned the Archives to seek long-term institutional support through a formal UITPM proposal.

INFRASTRUCTURE & TECHNICAL CAPACITY

COMPONENT	2025 ACHIEVEMENT	IMPACT
Storage Audit	27.3 TB <i>Analyzed</i>	1.3 TB redundant data identified; established baseline fixity for all digital holdings
Web Archiving (Browsertrix)	74 <i> crawls completed</i>	381,279 pages captured (960GB); cost-effective alternative to Archive-It subscription





PART II

POSNER CENTER *for* SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

The Posner Center for Special Collections reopened on November 18, 2025, following a transformative \$8 million renovation funded by the Posner Foundation of Pittsburgh. This dedicated facility significantly expands the Libraries' capacity to support teaching, research, and public engagement for both CMU and the greater Pittsburgh community. The inaugural exhibition, *Rare Books & Ancestral Machines*, launched the Center's public programming alongside the monthly Open Stacks series, generating substantial visibility, including front-page coverage in *The Tartan* and multiple features in CMU Libraries News.



2025 POSNER CENTER OPERATIONS (NOV 18 - DEC 31)

ACTIVITY TYPE	VOLUME	PARTICIPANTS
Class Visits	8 classes	147 students
Tours	9 tours	35+ participants
Public Events	3 events	65+ attendees
Research Appointments	4 researchers	/



PART III

EXHIBITIONS *in* DISTINCTIVE COLLECTIONS

The Exhibitions Program continued to strengthen its role as a collaborative, campus-wide platform for storytelling and engagement, deepening partnerships with the President's Office, the School of Design, and the Robotics Institute. *The Room to Imagine* 125th Anniversary exhibition engaged every college at Carnegie Mellon and multiple administrative units, reflecting a shared curatorial approach that emphasized collaboration, institutional history, and creative exchange. Exhibitions also extended beyond Hunt Library through major installations, including *Rare Books and Ancestral Machines* and the first-floor Robotics Innovation Center (RIC) exhibitions, *Life and Livelihood* and *The History of Robotics*, positioning exhibitions as a campus-wide platform for public engagement. The program continued work toward a long-term curatorial calendar designed to expand opportunities for sustained collaboration and partnership across the university.

EXHIBITION PROGRAM

EXHIBITION & EVENTS	ATTENDANCE
<p><i>“Room to Imagine”</i> (125th Anniversary), through December break</p> <p>HUNT LIBRARY</p>	<p>4,645 Visitors</p>
<p><i>“Like, Totally Transformative”</i></p> <p>HUNT LIBRARY</p>	<p>16,755 Visitors</p>
<p><i>“Rare Books & Ancestral Machines”</i></p> <p>POSNER CENTER</p>	<p>/</p>
<p><i>“Life and Livelihood” & “History of Robotics”</i></p> <p>ROBOTICS INNOVATION CENTER</p>	<p>/</p>
<p><i>Archives Exhibit Events</i></p> <p>VARIED</p>	<p>600 Attendees</p>

DIGITAL REACH & ENGAGEMENT

125TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN, FALL SEMESTER

METRIC	PERFORMANCE
Total Views/Impressions	357,508
Total Accounts Reached	85,675
Total Interactions	8,286
Shares	744
Viral Posts (10K+ ACCOUNTS REACHED)	5

PRESIDENTIAL EXHIBITION PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIP	STRATEGIC IMPACT
Robotics Innovation Center	Connects Archives to university-wide innovation narrative
World War I Exhibition	Demonstrates Archives’ capacity for major institutional storytelling
Tata Executive Conference Center	Present objects and stories from Distinctive Collections to the Board of Trustees.

ARCHITECTURE Archives

PART IV

The Carnegie Mellon University Architecture Archives (CMUAA) expanded its scholarly reach and community engagement in 2025 through publication partnerships, professional collaboration, and hands-on educational programming. The Archives played a central role in two major publications: *Time Well Spent: An American Architect in Europe, 1893*, the inaugural title of the new CMU Press, and *after school*, an exhibition catalog produced with the School of Architecture and the Carnegie Museum of Art. Technical and educational initiatives further strengthened access and impact, from migrating the Berndtson Collection into ArchivesSpace to facilitating workshops for summer camps, pre-college programs, and the 2025 UDream cohort.



2025 PUBLICATIONS & SCHOLARLY IMPACT

PUBLICATION	PARTNERSHIP
<i>Time Well Spent: An American Architect in Europe, 1893</i>	CMU Press
<i>after school</i> exhibition catalog	School of Architecture, Carnegie Museum of Art

PROFESSIONAL PARTNERSHIPS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

ORGANIZATIONS

Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation	AIA Pittsburgh Chapter
Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy	Churchill Midcentury Modern Committee

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING

PROGRAM

Center for Architecture Explorations Summer Camps	2025 UDream Cohort
Pre-College Architecture Program	/



PART V

ART *Properties*

Art Properties advanced both public access and collections stewardship in 2025 through close collaboration with the Public Art Program and with support from the College of Fine Arts and Operations. The program launched a new public collection portal and website, introduced two interpretive tours on Bloomberg Connects, and completed a conservation assessment and rehousing of the Nakashima collection. Significant collections work also included relocating Peaceable Kingdom and Pittsburgh Horse Market to secure vault storage pending a comprehensive security assessment. Behind the scenes, Art Properties completed a major systems transition, configuring and importing the full artistic properties collection into new collections management and public-access platforms to support long-term preservation and discovery.

