Uyuuweesabira! (Let's Celebrate!):
A Special Year for Okinawa Collections at Two Universities

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
WASHINGTON, DC

2025 was a momentous year for the Okinawa collections at libraries of both the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and the George Washington University. Both institutions celebrated important milestones with opportunities to showcase their unique collections.

UNIVERSITY of HAWAI'I MĀNOA
Ke Kulanui o Hawai'i ma Mānoa

The Okinawa Collection at George Washington University (GW) is celebrating its 10th anniversary during the 2025-26 academic year. Former Vice Governor of Okinawa, Dr. Kurayoshi Takara, donated 300 items to start the collection during his tenure from 2013-14. Dr. Takara is also a colleague of GW Professor Mike Mochizuki, who also made large donations to the collection and served as a pivotal faculty partner as the collection has grown.

Dr. Takara and his books

Okinawa Collection Opening Ceremony

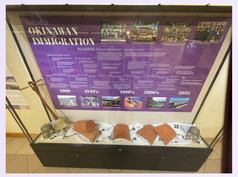
"Okinawa's Subnational Diplomacy: Promoting Cooperation and Preventing Conflict in East Asia"

"Okinawa Governor Tamaki on the Islands' Changing Security Situation"

The collection now contains over 7500 volumes and focuses on international affairs, law, government, economics, public policy, literature, music, folktales, and language.The collection has received contributions from Professor Steve Rabson, Professor Ed Drea, journalist Jon Mitchell, and musician Tatsumi Chibana, who also collected recordings from artists across Okinawa. The collection also holds ephemera, including a photo collection, military base materials, and minikomi, as well as a sound archive. Special projects include an ongoing oral history collection about the Okinawa Reversion, a digital folktale exhibit, interviews with scholars, and more. The collection regularly receives visitors from the Okinawa Prefectural Government and hosts webinars and symposia yearly.

10th Anniversary Celebration Special Events:
10th Anniversary Oral History. The collection is currently interviewing key stakeholders affiliated with the inception of the collection to those who fostered its growth and key faculty in Japan Studies at the university. Upon completion of the project, the oral history recordings and transcripts will be available through Special Collections.
10th Anniversary Okinawa Collection Exhibit and Showcase. Drawing inspiration from prior Okinawa Cultural Days, this event will feature special items from our collection, hands-on activities, food, and collection tours for faculty, students, staff, and members of the community. The event will conclude with a demonstration by a renowned local karate expert and eisa performance.

The University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Hamilton Library commemorated the125th anniversary of the arrival of the first Okinawans in Hawai'i. From February through June 2025, it hosted an exhibit titled ***Miree Ya Kugani: A Bright Hopeful Future - Celebrating the 125th Anniversary of Okinawan Immigration to Hawaii*** by the Hawaii United Okinawa Association. It was a successful partnership promoting community engagement, inviting the community to learn about the 125-year history of Okinawans in Hawai'i, while pondering the future with the young.



Concurrently, a second exhibit titled ***From Okinawa to Hawai'i and Beyond: A Worldwide Uchinanchu Diaspora*** was on display at the Hamilton Library's Asia Collection Reading Room. This focused on the Okinawan diaspora around the world, beginning with Hawaii and going to all corners of the earth.

Okinawa Gov. Denny Tamaki, who came for the annual Okinawan Festival, visited UHM in August to see the Okinawa special collections.

Wrapping up, a public screening of the 1965 film Hawai ni Ikiru (Life in Hawaii), which covered the first 65 years of Okinawans in Hawaii, was held in September.