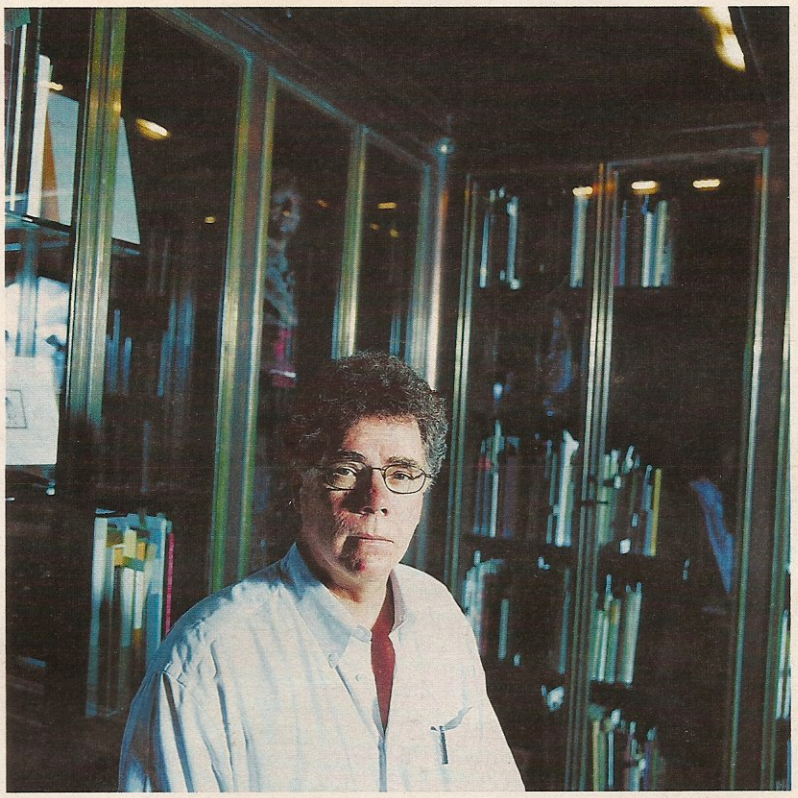
Antiquarian Librarians

Forget "quiet, please." Bibliophily is serious business at UCLA's William Andrews Clark Memorial Library. Celebrating its 75th anniversary year, this gated haven for rare books and manuscripts occupies a square block in L.A.'s West Adams district, and one tours the elegant rooms of the European baroque-style main building by appointment. Most volumes are under lock and key, with pillows and "book snakes" on hand to protect bindings when books are being read. "Use of pen and ink is prohibited," reads a sign atop the old wooden card catalog.

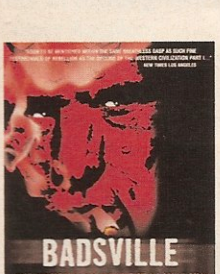
Behind the rarefied trappings, however, is a public-friendly resource doubling as one of literary L.A.'s hidden gems. The facility was built during the 1920s by book collector and philanthropist William Andrews Clark Jr., who later donated the property to UCLA. All are welcome at the Clark, where head librarian Bruce Whiteman encourages guests to "brown bag it in the lounge." The library also hosts chamber music, lectures and other events.

The Clark boasts a 17th and 18th century collection that includes a rare copy of Edgar Allan Poe's first book, "Tamerlane," printed in 1827; Isaac Newton's "Principia," from 1687; and the first collection of Shakespeare's plays, published in 1623 and valued at $2.2 million.

But the crown jewels may be the Clark's Oscar Wilde material. By 1928, Clark had accumulated perhaps the world's most significant Wilde collection. Along with scribbled notebooks and first editions, the trove includes letters, forgeries of Wilde's work and documents from his infamous trials for defamation and "gross indecency" with young gentlemen.



The anniversary festivities kicked off last month with a celebrity reading of Wilde's "Lady Windemere's Fan" and continue with a display (through the end of December) of Clark's choicest acquisitions. The main collection is worth a look as well. There's the inscribed first edition from Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas, the young blueblood who got him into all that hot water. Or if trouble isn't your business, there's the collection's oldest title, Cicero's "De Finibus," published in Venice in 1471, which isn't without relevance for our own era. As Whiteman points out, "It's a book about morals."—RACHEL ZIENTS



CINEMA VERITÉ COMES TO L.A.'S CLUB SCENE

For his new rock 'n' roll documentary, "Badsville," P.J. Wolff spent 18 months filming in L.A.'s smokiest, sweatiest underground music sanctuaries, where would-be rock stars pour their hearts out onstage night after night—often to hordes of loyal followers—but few seem able to break into the mainstream.

"I knew these bands had some interesting tales to tell," says Wolff, whose raucous film showcases local bohemian stalwarts such as Extra Fancy, Motochrist, Texas Terri and the Stiff Ones, Bubble, Pigmy Love Circus, the Streetwalkin' Cheetahs and the Hangmen. The latter's front man, Bryan Small, speaks for many of his colorful peers when he likens his band's early days to VH-1's "'Behind the Music,' but without the limos and the big bucks to back it up."

A struggling musician himself, Wolff saw making "Badsville" (a mix of interviews and live footage a la Penelope Spheeris' "Decline of Western Civilization"), as a way to bypass the corporate gatekeepers and snag attention for his favorite bands. The result, for sale at Tower Video in Hollywood, opens a window on a volatile milieu where drug problems, stage mishaps, personality conflicts, unappealing day jobs and record deals gone awry are just part of the game.

Despite its cautionary moments, Wolff's exuberant valentine to L.A.'s demimonde die-hards celebrates a subculture where music may not always translate into a career, but often becomes a way of life. "If Joe rock 'n' roller in Idaho picks it up and becomes a fan of one these bands, that would make me happy," he says. "There's such talent here, and hopefully this will help it get some exposure."—LINA LECARO

YIPPIE YI

Between bands at the nightclub the Smell, e red-and-white shirts a plaid miniskirts stand dience of rock fans. In phones, they carry po rather than sing, they

"Rule your bodies,
C'mon, get riled!
If you can't trust u
How can you trust u
It's pro choice
Or no choice
We must stand an
And fight, fight, fig

Angry rejects from outs? No, they're L.A. Cheerleaders, the loc national grass-roots a pep-rally mentality activism. Formed in 1 Florida women, Radi ers now has chapters dozen cities.

Along with the pr gerel, the L.A. squad bahs about smashin and celebrating dive preferences. "None c cheerleaders in high "Cocoa," whose squa blazoned across the shirt. Cocoa and her (including "Tank," "M "Dixie") haven't dor gymnastics at the ha fits where they've ap forming in May, but haven't seemed disa "Most people think angry people wavin says. "But this incor and it's fun."

It's also a 21st cen feminist twist on an scorned by tradition as putting women i roles on the sidelin athletic events. Per versive as their che cal Cheerleaders' de bership policy; there for this squad. Anyo including men—pro wear a plaid skirt.—

Photograph b