Saturday, January 16, 1:30 PM, by Zoom

Indonesia and the Origins of Modern Humans

Christopher Wills, PhD
Professor Emeritus, Biological Sciences, UCSD

Indonesia is a vast archipelago of more than 17,500 islands, spread over an area as wide as the continental United States. Its people are incredibly diverse, Muslim, Christian and animist, and some have lived there for at least 50,000 years. Indeed, the islands of Indonesia have been on the path of major migrations of close relatives of our species for almost two million years.

Cave where Flores Man (girl) was found.

Indonesia has been at the center of human history and evolution. To trace this history, we will explore some little-known areas of the islands of Sulawesi, Borneo, Rinca, Flores, Ambon, Waigeo, and Batanta, along with the Indonesian part of New Guinea called West Papua.

We will learn how two groups of our distant relatives have contributed genes to our own species, through encounters that have left clear traces in our DNA. We will encounter a tribe in the West Papua highlands that has remained unchanged for tens of thousands of years and see how they have preserved their traditions. We will even visit the cave that was home to the mysterious Hobbits.  

(continued, page 2)
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Christopher Wills received his B.A. and M.Sc. in biology from the University of British Columbia, and a Ph.D. in genetics from the University of California at Berkeley. He was an NIH postdoctoral fellow at Berkeley from 1965-66, an assistant professor of biology at Wesleyan University in Connecticut from 1966 to 1972, and associate and full professor of biology at UCSD from 1972 until his retirement in 2010. His research interests include the maintenance of genetic variability in human populations, the forces that maintain variation in complex ecosystems such as rainforests and coral reefs, the evolution of diseases, and the evolution of our species.

Dr. Wills received the Award for Public Understanding of Science and Technology from the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1999. His book on human evolution, “The Runaway Brain” (1993) was translated into every major language. His 1998 book “Children of Prometheus: the Accelerating Pace of Human Evolution” was a finalist for the 2000 Aventis Prize, the most important English prize for science books. A more recent book, “The Darwinian Tourist: Viewing the World Through Evolutionary Eyes” (2010) was called “probably the year’s most important travel book” by Condé Nast Traveler.

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Get on our mailing list by contacting: sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com
**The Scholars Notebook** is issued monthly during the academic year, except December, by the San Diego independent Scholars (SDIS), a nonprofit organization founded in 1982.

**The mission of SDIS** is to promote opportunities for active learning and scholarship, both for its membership and for the San Diego community.

Public service activities of SDIS include: (1) monthly public lectures presented during the academic year; (2) discussion groups held in public libraries or online; (3) small grants awarded on a competitive basis for research projects and (4) various cooperative educational and other projects with local organizations.

More information about SDIS and its activities is available at [www.sdscholars.org](http://www.sdscholars.org). Questions: sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com

Members may submit a piece to the Scholars Notebook. Email it by the middle of each month to sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com

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**SDIS Board, 2020-21**

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SDIS’ COVID-19 book is published and available online!

Cover, designed by Gail Bamber

To view, download or print:

• Go to the SDIS webpage (https://sdscholars.org)
• On the top menu, click “PROJECTS”, then click “COVID-19 PROJECT”
• On the right side of the page, find the box that says “Full COVID-19 Book.” Click the button saying VIEW inside that box.
• At the top right of the viewing page are two icons that initiate downloading or printing, if clicked.
• On the left side of the “COVID-19 PROJECT” page are choices for viewing, downloading or printing of each individual writing by each author.

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➢ The Summary is reprinted on page 5 of this newsletter

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In March 2020, with the first “stay at home” orders because of COVID-19 in California, the San Diego Independent Scholars (SDIS) asked a question: “What could we, as a group, do to support each other during extended periods of lockdown, so that we would have the strength to follow physical isolation guidelines, help limit the spread of virus, and minimize deaths?”

Strengthening communication among ourselves and with others seemed a key to this goal. Although implementing virtual meetings helped, we rapidly realized that certain meaningful experiences and thoughts cannot be adequately conveyed over the internet, even with newfangled programs.

We therefore have also turned to the more traditional method of exchanging written descriptions of our impressions, problems, and solutions during the pandemic. The resulting booklet refers to events between mid-March and the first day of October 2020. We hope that it can serve as: (a) a historical record of individual experiences during the unusual year of 2020 and (b) a means of focusing and sharpening our own understanding of both our and others’ reactions to this crisis.

This anthology contains 31 sections that are organized in alphabetical order by the primary author's last name. Assigning a topic to a piece is difficult because many authors consider several issues, sometimes in one essay and sometimes in multiple ones. It is possible, nonetheless, to find themes that appear in several works, as attempted below.

Let us begin with the broad perspective. Linda Holt discusses the origin of the word “pandemic” and ponders what that etymology means for the current situation. In *Pandemics and the Longue Durée*, Oliver Pollak describes a series of major “Natural and Manmade Population Catastrophes,” starting with the Antonine Plague of 165 (perhaps smallpox) and continuing through more than a dozen instances of bubonic plague, cholera, influenza, or HIV before ending with Coronavirus. Michael Sage (*Plagues of Ancient Greece and Rome*) discusses how stories in the *Iliad* illustrate ancient beliefs regarding plagues and how additional insights can be obtained from detailed records of the war between Athens and Sparta during 431-404 BC. Pertinent thinking of ancient philosophers is emphasized by Ashwini Mokashi in *Ancient Wisdom Leads to Happiness in the Time of Covid-19*.

Jill Swaim recounts how the death of her great grandmother in 1918 from Spanish Flu affected her family. Regarding polio in the 1940’s, Kenneth Krauss composed *Primo Lazaretto*, which he dedicated to his older sister, who cared for him in their quarantined home when his polio-stricken brother, accompanied by his mother, went to the hospital.

Another poem by Krauss -- the sonnet *On Endings and Beginnings* -- contemplates historical cycles and the changes that follow major calamities. This topic also interests Jack Cumming, who proposes that the increased prevalence of virtual communication, including telecommuting, and decreased automobile usage forced by the pandemic will persist into the future and trigger positive societal adaptions (*Benefits of Change*).

Not everyone is equally optimistic about the advantages of increased technological, as opposed to in-person, interaction -- or at least finds humor in it. These tongue-in-cheek
misgivings are expounded in *Coronavirus-induced Computer Dependency Disorder* by Dorothy Parker and *Ten Things I Have Learned from the Pandemic* by Arlene Gilbert.

Although most essays in this compendium pertain to California, Yvonne Groseil vividly portrays the *Dark Days* of the first Coronavirus surge in New York. Barbara Beaumont, who lived in France for 16 years and only recently moved here, contrasts American attitudes with those in Europe and Asia. Jill Swaim gives the example of her husband, who was trapped in Cambodia at the beginning of the pandemic, still remains there, and enjoys a life much less threatened by Coronavirus than ours. Faye Girsh recounts her eventual success in obtaining a flight out of Morocco after it shut down from the pandemic, as well as events in Morocco and during air travel, when masks were still rarely used.

A common underpinning of many pieces is fear -- of infection, of its lingering after-effects, of dying alone, of seeing others die *en masse*, of encountering persons without masks, of overcrowded hospitals, of societal collapse.

Nonetheless, like many Californians and especially privileged ones, most authors had not contracted COVID-19 themselves at the time of writing. A notable exception was Vidur Mahadeva, MD, whose medical practice serves largely uninsured or underinsured low-income workers in Reno, Nevada. Despite suffering two months of illness, Dr. Mahadeva devised a simple “go bag” and telemedicine strategy that constantly monitored patients at home and brought severe cases to the hospital as needed.

Loss of livelihood was most prevalent for the younger authors here. For example, Nina Gilbert suffered a greatly reduced schedule as a gig-working musician and explains the problems faced by community choirs or stage productions. Jill Swaim lost her beloved job as a tour guide. She fears for the survival of non-profit travel programs like Road Scholar.

Christopher Parker describes how he stepped up to help with the activities of his Special Needs brother, whose adult daycare school was closed because of COVID-19, a situation similar to that of parents whose children are enrolled in online education but who must still work while supervising family members. Parker, who had already telecommuted for 8 years, also provided reactions and advice for others who have begun doing so only recently.

In *During Covid, We Need to Grieve, Find Perspective, and Seek Safe Connection and Fulfillment*, Lara Freidenfelds applies her experience in handling chronic illness to the management of stress during COVID-19. Similarly, Randall Nicolas weaves the themes of progressive illness and COVID-19 into the set of 28 poems comprising *Plague Journal*. Teresa Norris, knowing that she would be home-bound anyway, utilized the isolation time to recuperate from knee surgery.

Beatrice Rose, a wise 105 years old, unflinchingly meets the issues of pandemic- and age-related isolation in *Lockdown Thoughts*. She describes how being alone since early February 2020 has given her time to be present with her thoughts, allowing her to explore and understand them. In *Hello Virus*, Gerry Horwitz, another long-term SDIS member, also looks inward. She compares the situation of America in 2020 to being on a “Bridge Over Troubled (Roiling) Waters” [apologies to Simon & Garfunkel] for which the end is uncertain, partly because of infection-related anxieties and partly because of social disparity and unrest. On the other end of the age spectrum, Tiffany Vakilian expresses both the personal and public concerns of a pregnant woman and new mother, in her poem *Nine Months of 2020*. 

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Social instability and differing cultural attitudes are the focus of poems by Judith Offer, especially: *All Gone Batty* and *You Can Be Whatever You Want in the U.S. of A*. Those issues also dominate in some of Kenneth Krauss’ poems, such as *Unheroic Couplets in Plague Time*, as well as *Notes by a Shut-In on the Final Night of the Publicans’ Irrational Contention*.

Especially noteworthy is the variety of often ingenious adaptions used to find emotional nourishment during this sad time. These endeavors often involved being absorbed in the creation of art, as with Robert Glick’s painting *Harmony*, accompanied by the poem *Microcosm*. While playing with her computer during quiet days of the pandemic, Nanette Oselett discovered a way to convert her underwater photographs into striking pieces of abstract art, shown in *Underwater Photography Meets Weak Generative AI*.

In several cases, the restorative power of ongoing natural cycles was an important component of writings that also contained arresting photographs. For example, Nigella Hillgarth took charming head shot portraits, in-flight closeups and other views of migrating or resident birds that frequented her garden (*Yard Birding*). Liz and Christopher Wills, who planted milkweeds in their yard to provide habitat for Monarch butterflies, produced a detailed video of all stages of that butterfly’s development and include an accompanying description of Monarch migration patterns (*Monarch Butterflies as Therapy for Covid-19*).

Rigdon Currie organized an extensive collection of travel and nature videos, placing them on the web with a public link listed in his *Reaction to the Covid-19 Pandemic*.

However, the “return to nature” strategy did not always end as expected. When David Parker and his wife Dorothy sought virus-free solitude on a wilderness camping trip, David lost his way on a challenging trail and had to spend a chilly night alone without shelter in harsh wilderness (*When Social Distancing Almost Caused Tragedy*). In another incident, Kevin Knauss became disoriented after smoke obscured a mountain trail; he endured some hair-raising moments before finding his way back to the trailhead (*Covid Hiking Break*).

Others chose strolls in their own neighborhoods, where they observed previously unnoticed flowers and sights, as in *Flower Walks* by Arlene Gilbert. Inga Liden noted many striking features of nearby streets but was particularly taken by how considerate passersby were in early phases of the pandemic, when they wore masks and shared greetings while stepping out of the way of others, but how some had become more slipshod by September.

Members of a cellphone photography group led by Kim Signoret-Paar captured snapshots of items inside their homes or along nearby streets, met by Zoom to view each other’s creations, and eventually combined several photos into a collage that accompanies *Cellphone Photography as Solace in a Pandemic*. Contributors to that collage are Barbara Bank, Liz Bonkowsky, Martha Dennis, Janet Goff, Nancy Groves, Nigella Hillgarth, Thespine Kavoulakis, Ursula Moede and Kim Signoret-Paar. The cooperative spirit of that collage represents the group feeling that we have tried to engender in assembling this anthology. Its description therefore brings this introductory summary to full circle and a close.

The successful completion of this project required the imagination and sustained effort of many people. I especially wish to thank all participating authors for their patience with my frequent emails and for providing such artfully written, interesting copy. Gail Bamber generously contributed her professional artistic skill in designing the book cover and suggesting how best to translate the title’s meaning into visual symbolism. Jill Hansen and David Parker suffered many hours of careful proofreading, attending to details and
bloopers that most of us would have missed. The booklet’s advisory committee (John Alexander, Arlene Gilbert, Gerry Horwitz, and Kenneth Krauss) and the SDIS Board (Donald Bamber, Joan Casale, Edwina Curtis, Alvin Halpern, Jill Hansen, Barbara Heckler, Kenneth Krauss, David Parker, and Thomas Samaras), as well as NCV liaison Inga Liden, endured endless discussions and phone calls, especially in the beginning when this initiative might have taken several different directions. Later on, Jack Cumming stepped in with stimulating procedural and technical advice. Kim Signoret-Paar and Nigella Hillgarth helped with questions regarding photographic resolution and other issues. Thank you. Without any one of you, this project would have foundered!

The National Coalition of Independent Scholars (NCIS), and each of its constituent partner groups boosted this project by mentioning it in their newsletters, inviting their members to contribute pieces, and generally offering encouragement. Special thanks to Amanda Haste (President of NCIS), Barbara Williams Ellertson (NCIS Partner Group Liaison), Yvonne Groseil (NCIS Membership Officer), Linda Holt (President of the Princeton Research Forum, PRF), Karen Reeds (Newsletter Editor of PRF), Margaret DeLacy (President of the Northwest Independent Scholars Association, Oregon and Washington), Ann Harlow (President of the Institute for Historical Study, Berkeley, CA), Shirley Randell (President of the Independent Scholars Association of Australia), Lucy Brusic (President of the Minnesota Independent Scholars Forum), and Linda Baines (President of the Forum for Independent Research Endeavours, United Kingdom). It is indeed a pleasure to interact with such vibrant Independent Scholar communities worldwide.

We send our appreciation to the UC San Diego Oceanids, as well as North County Village. We are fortunate to have these organizations as friends who have cooperated with us in many endeavors, including this booklet.

We hope that you will enjoy this small attempt to document the 2020 pandemic. Keep learning. Act wisely. Stay safe and well.

Dorothy L. Parker, San Diego, December 2020
In keeping with our December tradition of showing a movie with good music, on December 2 the Film Group watched Agnes Varda's second film, *Cleo from 5 to 7* (1961). In this, her second feature, Varda brings us into the life of Cleo, a successful pop singing star, whose concerns at first seem rather trivial but telling: Her attention to her appearance, to how people see her, and to the everyday strains of life in fashionable Paris, cover her anxiety about a diagnosis that she is about to receive from a recent test. The revelation of her condition comes with a release from her ordinary cares and an appetite for life. Among the small roles, the late composer Michele Le Grand plays Cleo's piano accompanist, and the hero of the silent movie she stops to watch is portrayed by director Jean-Luc Goddard, who as favor to Varda agreed to remove his omnipresent sunglasses. Corrinne Marchand is delightful as the lovely and charming Cleo.

Ken Krauss
On Saturday morning, December 5, our regular SDIS Inside Politics study group met at 10:00 a.m. on Zoom. This was our first meeting following the 2020 presidential election. Similar to the presidential election in 2016, this election was decided by the results of a few battleground states which were highly contested. But unlike 2016, when President Trump won a surprise victory by prevailing in a small number of votes in four states, this time President-Elect Biden won the presidency by prevailing in an even smaller number of votes in three states. Trump immediately claimed the election was rigged and the announced vote totals were the result of fraud. According to the polls, the majority of GOP voters believe the Democrats stole the election. Another surprising result of the election was that the Republicans made substantial gains in the House of Representatives. We discussed these issues during our study group meeting.

Another issue we discussed at length during our meeting was the successful development of a Covid 19 vaccine. What should be the order of priority for receiving the vaccine? Should Trump receive credit for the speedy development of the vaccine? Should there be a new lockdown to slow the surge of Covid cases? Will you take the first vaccine offered, or wait to see how well it works? Should children be allowed to return to school? A lively exchange of ideas occurred during the discussion of these issues related to the Covid 19 pandemic.

If you are not a SDIS member but would like to try our Zoom Inside Politics study group, please contact me by email to sandiegoindependentscholars@gmail.com. Members of other independent scholar groups are especially welcome. Al Korobkin

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**Science Group**

1:00 p.m., ordinarily 2nd Friday of month but next is on 3rd Friday (January 15)

At our last few meetings, the Science Group focused on how Artificial Intelligence assists or revises the way we create art: writing, painting, and music. Even as I write this, on the day after Christmas, I’ve received an email with a new, artificially generated, version of *Rudolf the Red-Nosed Reindeer*. That I was not impressed speaks to the potential decline of art created by AI—as opposed to Al’s prospective enhancement— as AI becomes trendy and popular.

The Science Group now is focusing on the field of **genetics**. Studies range from the possibility to create more perfect human beings, to the use of DNA studies. For example, a major report has just been released showing how DNA studies changed what historians believe about early populations in the Caribbean region of the Americas.

Arlene Gilbert
Biography has been the current concentration for this Study Group. November’s discussion of ”The Sun and Her Stars: Salka Viertel and Hitler’s Exiles In the Golden Age of Hollywood” by Donna Rifkind took the members from the previous focus on Behind the Silver Screen into the present exploration of personalities. Viertel, an actress in pre World War II Vienna and Berlin, became in Los Angeles of the late ‘20s, the ‘30s and ‘40s, a screen writer and hostess to the many creative and well-known Europeans who fled Hitler during that period.

December’s selection of Neal Gabler’s “Winchell: Gossip, Power and the Culture of Celebrity” brought our attention to Walter Winchell, the American columnist, radio and then television personality who took gossip from the personal and private realm into the public one, revealing private activities and foibles of the well-known, creating celebrity. Gabler portrays Winchell from his beginning as a vaudevillian in the 1920s through the various stages, successes, struggles and failures of his own private and public lives.

January’s meeting, Monday the 18th at our usual 10 a.m., will be a discussion of Nigel Nicolson’s “Portrait of a Marriage: Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson”. The book, published in 1973, is the author’s story of his parents’ union, which today would be called an open marriage. Both had same-sex affairs with others although they continued to be devoted to one another. Harold Nicolson was a diplomat, politician and author in England; his wife was a writer and gardener. A lively discussion is certainly expected.

Gerry Horwitz
Starting with our meeting of Nov. 11, the Physical Sciences Group has met essentially biweekly. During this time, we have started our journey into an exploration of Quantum Field Theory and the Standard Model. The Standard Model of physics is the enormously successful theory, based on Quantum Field Theory. It explains the existence, behavior, and relationships of all known elementary particles and by extension all known physical phenomena – with the exception of gravity. Quantum Field Theory is an extension of ordinary quantum mechanics that incorporates Special Relativity and accounts for the existence of anti-particles, and the creation and annihilation of particles and anti particles as well as photons. It quantitatively describes the Strong, Electromagnetic and Weak forces, three of the four known forces of nature, Gravity being the fourth, and forms the foundation of the Standard Model.

Our text is "Introduction to Elementary Particles" by David Griffiths (2nd edition). So far (Introduction and chapter 1) we have covered a historical overview of particle physics through the first half of the 20th century, a review of the sources of elementary particles (cosmic rays, radiative decay, accelerators,) and their detection and description (cloud chambers, bubble chambers, geiger counters, spark chambers, etc.). Griffiths then introduces us to the large array of elementary particles that were already known by mid-20th century, and the efforts to organize them in a consistent way, which led to the eightfold way, and the beginnings of quark theory. Griffiths then gave a quick introduction to quantum chromodynamics which underlies the Standard Model - which describes a vast number of physical phenomena with remarkable accuracy. We then proceeded to chapter 2, where Griffiths gives a phenomenological introduction to Feynman Diagrams as a way of viewing the various interactions between particles. We digressed from Griffiths briefly to get a quick view of the underpinnings of Feynman Diagrams in terms of time evolution of a quantum field theory scattering system and the infinite series of terms that are generated - in 1 to 1 correspondence with Feynman Diagrams. We hope to complete chapter 2 on Jan. 6.

Alvin Halpern
Colloquy Cafe
1:30 p.m., 3rd Wednesday of month -- next is January 13

“Protest” was the topic of November’s meeting. To protest is to object, and an organized public demonstration is an attempt to influence those in power. The Civil Rights movement, the Vietnam War, and Atomic testing have all created protests. Films of violence during protests aiming at school integration caused public outrage, which resulted in the federal government’s stepping in to protect the minority children attempting to enter school.

Violence can result when “protest” becomes rioting, turning to looting and even to arson, as well as injury to both protesters and police. But, said several, protest has a place in our society no matter the outcome. Some prefer not to take part but to watch and analyze, feeling that letters are a better way to reach the powerful.

December’s participants discussed “fake news”, defined as propaganda, to manipulate. It is one-sided, aiming to create false impressions. The term is now unique to Trump, but one discussant said that the term “alternate fact,” used by one of his staff, is even more disturbing. Another voiced her belief that our education system is a failure and read a letter she had written to Bill and Melinda Gates, asking them to use their assets and influence to reform it.

The subject of the group’s January 20 meeting (Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.) will be “class.” Many meanings to consider!

Gerry Horwitz

Documentaries by Ken and Faye
12:30 every Saturday - next is January 2

CENTRAL ASIA
Uzbekistan & Tajikistan
12:30, Saturday January 2

To be placed on the mailing list, contact kmw@ucsd.edu.
**North County Events Open to SDIS Members:**

Even before the pandemic, several SDIS members living in North County found it difficult to attend events in La Jolla because of traffic congestion, time constraints or other factors. To better meet their needs, SDIS has established a cooperative relationship with North County village (NCV), a non-profit grassroots organization that emphasizes interdependent, help-each-other living. The goal of NCV is to make aging at home easier.

NCV and SDIS have agreed to allow each other’s members to visit their activities during a trial cooperative period. All NCV events currently are offered on Zoom.

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**North County Village (NCV)**

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**North County Village Activities for January 2021**

1/5 – Film Club 3:30 – “Mank” – the story of Herman Mankiewicz, writer of “Citizen Kane” RSVP jek123@msn.com

1/19 – Memoir Writing – 2:00 RSVP rigdoncurrie@mac.com

11/20 – Happy Hour at 4:00 Inauguration Day RSVP jek123@msn.com

1/27 – Book Club – 3:30 – “American Dirt” by Jeanine Cummins RSVP jek123@msn.com
# January 2021

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## Upcoming Events

1:30 pm, February 20: **Current Scientific Results on Alzheimer’s Disease**  
**Jerold Chun, M.D., Ph.D.** Sanford Burnham Prebys Institute

Next SDIS Board Meeting: February 2; Bimonthly 10 am, 1st Tues of month.
SDIS New Member Form and Optional Library Card Form

UCSD Library Cards:
  • If you are 65 or over, affiliation with SDIS entitles you to a discounted UCSD Library card, Level 2 (graduate student) privileges, except for inter-library loans.
  • Your SDIS library card is $25 with this membership form. SDIS will match your $25.
That is, for cards acquired at this time, UCSD charges SDIS $50.

Tax-Deductible Contributions to SDIS are encouraged and welcome. Your dues are also tax-deductible.

MEMBERSHIP: Dues paid in September through March apply to the current fiscal year (Sept-Sept). Those paid from April through August also apply to the subsequent year.

PLEASE provide ALL information for our Directory. Print, or write very clearly.

Date: __________________________________________
Name(s): ______________________________________
Address: _______________________________________
City: __________________________ State: ___________ Zip: _____________
Home Phone: __________________ Work/Alt/Mobile Phone: __________________
Email: ______________________________
Field(s) of Interest, (maximum of three)

APPLICATION FOR OPTIONAL UCSD LIBRARY CARD
Effective for Academic Year Beginning October 1

I assume responsibility for lost, damaged, or overdue materials borrowed on my UCSD/SDIS library card:

Signature: ____________________________ Print Name: _______________________

PAYMENTS
Make checks payable to SDIS. Please mail entire form with payment(s) to
David E. Parker, 8773 Caminito Abrazo, La Jolla, CA 92037

Tax Deductible SDIS Dues ($40/single, $55/couple) $ _______________________
UCSD Library Card (Optional - $25) $ _______________________

Tax Deductible Contributions (Optional)
  Operations $ _______________________
  Helen Hawkins Research Fund $ _______________________
  Jane Ford Book Fund $ _______________________

TOTAL ENCLOSED $ _______________________

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