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'Zeitgeist' exhibit at Allen Library

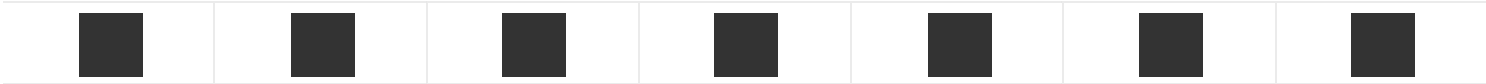
A window into 1920s Seattle

By Anya Farwell Contributing writer
Nov 7, 2024



The Zeitgeist Exhibit in Allen Library on Tuesday, Oct. 29, 2024.

Ashley Yu



When walking around the UW campus, it seems that there is history all around the students. The archaic buildings and archways, brick walkways, and towering stone buildings seem to ——— transport modern experiences into a narrative of the past. But this dynamic makes you think, ———

what elements have changed the most in the university's history? Is it the architecture, the environment, or the campus culture?

A special collections exhibit, in the basement of the Allen Library, answers that very question.

This exhibit, titled "Zeitgeist," opened Sept. 25. The collection takes a deep dive into Seattle's history dating back to the 1920s, connecting aspects such as culture and activism from the past to the present.

"One of the things that I really love about this exhibit is how it takes historical materials, some of which are over 100 years old, and puts them in conversation with our modern lives," Allee Monheim, a public service librarian in special collections, said.

Protected by thick glass, artifacts are laid out on well-lit tables, waiting for eager students and passers-by to take a glance. The collection examines evolutions on campus in architecture, activism, art, tourism, and culture over the history of UW. These examinations of old pamphlets, books, and photos act as a window into the past.

Monhiem also explained how the central idea of the exhibit was to examine the whirlwind decade of the 1920s and inspect the similarities and differences with the 21st century. Touching on the history of women getting the vote, the collection presents old pamphlets of the suffragette movements in New York, drawing a connection to the present by showing modern activism through the LGBTQIA+ movement in modern Seattle. "Votes for Women Empire state campaign committee," reads a pamphlet from the 1920s, displaying the old address or the suffragette headquarters in New York.

Lucy Gerhart, an activism leader from Tacoma, Washington, assisted in collecting the artifacts for the special collections exhibit. Gerhart researched women's roles in the prohibition and temperance movements during the 1920s, which started to protect women and children against the domestic violence ensued by alcohol.

The exhibit artfully connects snippets from the past and strings them together with the present, causing onlookers of the exhibit to marvel at the stride in evolution our city has taken through time.

Whether you're a history buff or not, the exhibit will reveal a unique perspective on the past and the present, making you wonder about all the changes that have taken place over 100 years, and what we might share collectively with the future.

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