

LIBRARIES

Visual AIDS

The world's largest collection of AIDS posters goes online.

By Kathleen McGarvey


IT'S BEEN THREE DECADES SINCE AIDS WAS first identified as a disease. Now Rochester is launching a new online database of the largest collection of AIDS posters in the world, providing a unique resource for understanding the visual history of AIDS.

Edward Atwater '50, an emeritus professor of medicine who taught in the School of Medicine and Dentistry for 37 years, collected the posters and donated them to Rare Books and Special Collections. "I started collecting them to chronicle history in medicine, but soon realized that it wasn't medical history as much as social history," says the one-time history major.

The AIDS Education Posters Project website (<http://aep.lib.rochester.edu>)—intended for the general public as well as researchers, historians, artists, and physicians—showcases a collection of more than 6,200 posters in 60 languages from more than 100 countries. It will continue to grow as new collection materials, research papers, and articles are added over time.

Richard Peek, director of Rare Books and Special Collections, calls the collection "an incredibly rich visual history," one that he hopes will engage those in medicine and science, as well as the humanities. "Using the best tactics of Madison Avenue advertising, the graphic messages range from the humorous to the deadly serious, from national concerns to the concerns of politicized risk groups."

The launch of the website is part of a yearlong 30th anniversary "Looking at AIDS 30 Years On" Humanities Project. Scheduled events included a talk by Michael Gottlieb '73M (MD), who is credited as the first researcher to describe AIDS.

For more about the project, visit the website at <http://rochester.edu/college/humanities/projects>. 

HISTORICAL VIEW: Edward Atwater '50, a professor emeritus of medicine, says his collection of AIDS posters represents 30 years of social history.

