Science Instruction Through the Visual Arts in Special Collections

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Introduction

While instruction in academic special collections units has traditionally been the province of humanities departments, the hands-on learning fostered by special collections instruction need not be limited to a single discipline. The University of Colorado Boulder (CU–Boulder) has a reputation for strong educational programming in the sciences and a teaching faculty at the forefront of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education reform. Working in this educational and research climate has inspired and challenged CU–Boulder librarians to find creative approaches for incorporating primary sources—both historic texts and contemporary visual works—into science instruction. National conversations on reinvigorating undergraduate education have also shaped the instruction program, and as a result, librarians collaborate with teaching faculty to design class visits that promote active, student-driven learning. With this approach, the Special Collections reading room has become a dynamic lab environment, one in which students handle rare material them-

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