Since 2006 the Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif., has been home to one of the most important collections in the history of science and technology, the famous Burndy Library. The collection, approximately 67,000 rare books and reference volumes as well as scientific instruments, has made the Huntington Library, already well known in other respects, one of the most important venues for the study of the history of science in the world. Each year a scholar has been selected by committee to be awarded a special fellowship at the Huntington, and be named the Dibner Distinguished Fellow in the History of Science and Technology. There is no application for this fellowship. Selection is made on the basis of contributions to the field of the history of science. For the academic year 2010-11 history professor Bruce Moran has held this distinction.

“This is an enormous honor,” says Moran, “and one that is altogether humbling when you consider all those who might also have been acknowledged.”

One of the best things about being at the Huntington, aside from having time to research and write, is the environment, he notes. “The gardens, galleries and library offer a brilliant space in which to work, but even more important has been the community of scholars in residence. The fellows here meet everyday, sometimes formally, sometimes just for lunch, but the result is an intellectual atmosphere that encourages creativity and the exchange of ideas.” That collegiality, along with the books and manuscripts, has made the year especially productive and memorable, he says.

Moran is eager to point out that Nevada students have access to some of the best teachers and researchers in the country:

“Every once in a while one or another of us may be selected for some sort of recognition, but students are often unaware of the riches that surround them on a daily basis. The reputation of the history of science at Nevada may be better known outside the institution than within it. Classes at the University of Nevada, Reno in the history of science, the history of medicine, the philosophy of science have been around for many years and have been taught by some of the most excellent teachers the University has to offer. We’re very good at what we do. Students should know this and pack those classes.

“I’m thrilled to be at the Huntington,” Moran adds, “but teaching is another love, and when I teach the history of science at Nevada, it’s not just me, but experiences of a world far beyond the classroom, that is standing in front of a class.”

—Staff reports